

POST PLACEMENT FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

This recommended support document emphasises the importance of following up placements, suggests particular approaches, identifies types of placement activities, provides sample proformas and includes advice on acknowledging employers and evaluating, reporting and improving workplace learning programs.

References

Workplace Learning Policy, 2005: 1.1, 5.3, 7.1-7.3

Procedures and Standards: 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.6, 1.4.7. 1.5.4, 1.5.5, 1.6.2

Resources

Employment Related Skills Logbook (see Workplace Learning section)

Vocational Learning in the KLA booklets (2005) See sections 2 and 5

For starters....

Workplace learning opportunities provide rich, valuable and sometimes unexpected learning for students and teachers and deserve to be tapped fully, made explicit and shared.

This learning is integral to the delivery of the VET course or to the related program such as work experience or career and enterprise education or mentoring or community learning. Workplace learning is also part of the student's expanding learning journey.

Students need teachers' expertise in learning to help students share and describe what they have done and identify what they have learned, how to test it, use it and apply it. This provides a good model for students to use in the future when they are expected to independently pursue lifelong learning.

Why critical?

Follow up activities immediately after placements are **critical** for the following reasons:

- to capture any undisclosed child protection or injury matters that *must* be reported
- to identify any welfare, health or safety issues that need to be followed up, either directly with the host employer or supervisor or parent/carer, and where relevant with the Local Community Partnership
- to see that curriculum outcomes are being achieved through workplace learning, and if not, what adjustments are needed
- to help students identify and document what they have learned from their workplace experience and importantly, how they will apply this learning, for example, what they will do better or differently in their practice, or how they will transfer this learning to other contexts
- to maximise shared learning from the range of students' experiential learning
- to monitor and review the workplace learning program through client feedback. This may include evaluation and reflections from students, reports or comments from host employers and input from parents/carers and teachers. This varied client feedback will also assist reporting to the school and community, future inclusion of workplace learning in the school management plan and continuous improvement of the programs.

The need for **immediate follow up** is highlighted by evidence from one study that memory retention from experiential learning 24 hours afterwards has been found to be 65 per cent for boys and 58 per cent girls.* This was substantially better than for other forms of learning such as reading, demonstration and proximal learning (discussion). The data points to the benefits of following up as soon as possible.

* Ian Lillico, *Boys' Education in the Middle Years*, a presentation at the DET NSW Middle Years Conference: *resilience, engagement, success*, 5-6 October, 2005

Focusing on the **positives and success** achieved by students from workplace learning and consciously minimising any anxiety in follow up activities should:

- help students better recall their workplace learning experiences
- build confidence in each student about their ability to learn in other settings
- promote engagement and connections between school/TAFE NSW studies and the wider community
- provide evidence that students are already on the path of lifelong learning
- enhance student knowledge of themselves, their personal attributes and their vocational and/or employment related skills
- instigate reflection on their future subject selection and personal career development plans
- encourage a more enterprising approach to identifying or creating future workplace learning opportunities and connections and networks for the future
- encourage optimism about their future working lives.

A lesser, but sensitively managed emphasis on areas for individual **improvement** should help students:

- build resilience, for example, through monitoring and responding to feedback
- develop responsibility and improved self-management, for example, by evaluating their own performance and setting goals for the future
- encourage initiative and enterprise, for example, through learning from mistakes and identifying ways to show initiative and become more enterprising.

Types of post placement follow up activities

Some pointers

- Ensure students understand that follow up activities are not optional and are important for student safety, well being and optimal learning and career pathways planning.
- Evaluations or reports from employers, parents/carers, staff and work placement programs are usually valuable in follow up work with students, either in the classroom or on an individual basis.
- Wherever possible, decide with students on the follow up activities well before students start their placement. This way, students can also be involved in **self-directed** learning by choosing the type of follow up activities that suit their preferred learning styles, having a clear idea of the expectations and criteria for follow up, and taking more explicit responsibility for completing the follow up.
- Consider a **small suite of activities** to comprise the follow up.
- Consider engaging **students to generate ideas** and templates for follow up, for example, using their employment related Technology skills.

- Wherever possible, **include discussion** with students as part of the follow up. This facilitates responses that are immediate, holistic and capture the spirit of the placement. Discussion also allows probing for clarification, expansion and synthesis of learning.
- For follow up activities to VET placements, also consider liaising with the Local Community Partnership to avoid duplication of effort. It is worth considering how best to differentiate the purpose of the follow up by the school/TAFE NSW institute and that of the LCP, and how to draw on both for maximum benefit for all parties.

Examples of post placement activities include:

- class discussion, debriefing and documenting workplace learning in the student's *Employment Related Skills Logbook* (see Workplace Learning section)
- reviewing the student's School to Work planning in the light of their workplace learning and reflection
- interviews with students in small groups, or individually, for example, with the relevant VET or KLA teacher, careers adviser or School to Work team member. Alternatively, students may conduct interviews with peers, for example, in small groups or individually and then present key discussion findings to another small group or whole class, and where feasible, to parents/carers and local employers
- individual presentation or report to class or small group
- completion of questionnaires, feedback or evaluation sheets and then discussion where possible. See samples provided below.
- completion and submission of workplace learning journals or assignments with follow up component included
- using photos or video records of student experiences in the workplace as the basis for a report or evaluation by students
- composing a narrative that highlights the student's learning insights from the workplace
- 360 degree assessment or evaluation: student plus host employer, supervisor, fellow worker, parent/carer, teacher, fellow student
- peer-assessment or evaluation – likely to require organisation and preparation before the placement
- self-assessment based on reflection on the evaluation or report on the student provided by the host employer
- self-assessment based on reflection about the student's work or subject area, for example, *Did I achieve my purpose and focus for the placement? What industry-specific skills have I learned? What employment related skills have I learned? How well can I articulate the elements of those employment related skills? How can I apply what I have learned immediately and in the future? What will I change about my career planning?*
- self-assessment based on reflection about the student's developing identity and sense of self, for example, *What have I learned about my strengths? My personal attributes? My preferences for working in this field in the future?*
- setting up and documenting networks and connections – initially a supervised activity that ensures students start to set up a personal network of contacts, mentors, industry associations and relevant websites for advice, information, e-newsletters and possible opportunities in the future. As we know, many job opportunities arise through contacts rather than through an advertised vacancy.
- developing standard or personalised certificates of achievement in workplace learning and meaningful ways of presenting or awarding these.
- composing an item for the school newsletter or local press or radio that demonstrates how the student (and the community) has benefited from their workplace learning.

Acknowledging host employers

Ensure that letters or emails of appreciation have been sent to all employers by

- the school, or where relevant by the TAFE NSW institute or private or community registered training organisation (P/C RTO) or private provider, and
- each student.

Prepare items for the school newsletter and local press or radio to acknowledge

- the valued efforts of host employers, and
- how students and the local community have benefited from the opportunities for workplace learning provided by the listed employers.

Invite host employers to receive a framed Certificate of Appreciation from the school or TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO, for example, at an appropriate function. Alternatively, post the certificate to the employer. You are advised to first liaise with the Local Community Partnership to avoid duplication of effort.

Consider ways of also acknowledging the efforts of your Local Community Partnership in supporting your students and the quality placements they source and coordinate.

Evaluating, reporting and improving workplace learning programs

- An evaluation of each workplace learning program using feedback obtained from the follow up activities and a formal evaluation of the full range of workplace learning programs, usually on completion of the final sessions for the year, supports quality improvement of workplace learning programs and helps monitor the achievement of curriculum outcomes.
- Obtaining meaningful client feedback will assist this process and ensure that the relevant registered training organisation standard (RTO) standard is met.
- The evaluation could also be considered in conjunction with the post-school destination surveys.
- These activities also support the reporting of workplace learning programs, annually or as required, to the school and where relevant to the TAFE NSW institute, private or community registered training organisation, education managers, parents and carers and to the wider community.
- A brief policy and documented procedures for evaluating workplace learning programs will help focus on the continuous improvement of the programs.

Sample follow up proformas –recommended to be used in conjunction with conversation and discussion with others.

Below are two examples of follow up proformas in Word that may be adapted or used to stimulate further ideas. Other samples will be added over time. Completed follow up activities can be stored in the student's *Employment Related Skills Logbook* (Workplace Learning section).

POST PLACEMENT FOLLOW UP – SAMPLE A

Student's name:	Year/Roll:	Host business:
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Type of placement

Period

Focus of placement

Date of follow up

1. Have you already reported any injury, incident or emergency that happened during the placement?

Circle/underline

Nothing to report OR Yes, already reported

If **Yes, already reported** please *tick* the relevant response:

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| a) | to your host employer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | to your school/TAFE NSW institute/P/C RTO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | to your parent or carer only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Are there any matters you wish to tell to the school/TAFE NSW institute/P/C RTO?

Circle/underline

Yes / No

If **Yes**, *tick* if it is about:

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| a) | child protection | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | the way you were treated in the workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | work safety issues in the workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Did your host employer provide you with a workplace induction?

Circle/underline

Yes / No

If **Yes**: was it satisfactory?

Yes / No

Comment:

4. Remember to document your placement in your *Employment Related Skills Logbook*.

5. What are 2-3 things you really learned about working in this field from your placement?
How will you apply this learning?

6. What was the most useful experience for you in the workplace? Why? Was it planned or accidental?

7. What new thing did you learn about yourself?

8. How has this placement affected your career planning and goals for the future?

9. Did the school/TAFE NSW institute /P/C RTO prepare you adequately for the placement?
Yes / No

What would you change or improve about the preparation?

10. Compose a 5-10 second media grab to answer ***How was your placement?***

POST PLACEMENT FOLLOW UP – SAMPLE B

Student's name:	Year/Roll:	Host business:
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Type of placement

Period

Focus of placement

Date of follow up activity

What I expected

What I got

What I value most

What I'll do next /by when

Any issues or concerns to be followed up?
Yes/ No

Connections /Networks to develop

Compose a 5 -10 second media grab to answer, *How was your placement?*

Due @ later date:

Have I completed my actions?

Any further reflections?