

WORK READINESS

Developing student work readiness

- Aim to develop student work readiness through preparatory activities. Work readiness helps increase the benefit of workplace learning for both student and host employer.
- Work readiness can be critical to the successful placement of HSC VET students, particularly if the student is to be assessed on the job.
- Many schools and TAFE NSW institutes schedule work placement for Year 11 VET students in Term 3 or 4 to allow maximum time to develop student work readiness.
- Work readiness can be viewed as both a process and a goal that involves developing a student's workplace-related attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. This enables students to become increasingly aware and confident of their role and responsibilities, usually as entry-level workers in enterprises where customer satisfaction, operational performance, and frequently financial return, are vital.

Assessing a student's 'work readiness'

Before undertaking placement, teachers need to consider individual student work readiness to ensure the placement benefits both student and employers.

Work readiness involves students having what employers call *the right attitude*. At the most fundamental level this means the student has:

- a positive attitude to appropriate personal presentation, being reliable and punctual, the work being done and to spending some days in the workplace
- realistic expectations of the work that an entry-level student will be able to do, or of the work that needs to be done for the level of the VET qualification the student is preparing to attain
- willingness to learn
- the willingness to be supervised, follow instructions and wear protective equipment (PPE) as directed
- the capacity to function and communicate appropriately in an adult environment without the support of other students
- the confidence to ask questions to clarify instructions
- completed preparatory activities that include OHS awareness and practices, acceptable behaviour and student conduct in the workplace (including child protection issues) and the circumstances for using emergency contact procedures.

In addition the student should:

- organise travel arrangements that they can safely manage to and from the workplace. This will require support from the school or TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO and parents/carers
- make arrangements to ensure their attendance for the duration of the work placement

- understand their individual responsibility for providing and completing relevant paperwork.
- understand and demonstrate willingness and capacity to meet employer expectations and priorities
- have some knowledge of how to serve customers, as appropriate. For example, see Customer Service Institute of Australia <http://www.csia.com.au/>
- know how to deal with being really busy in the workplace, and what to do when things appear quieter in the workplace
- understand that for HSC VET students, work placement is a compulsory part of the student's HSC VET course and their performance in the workplace provides evidence to their teacher and host employer of the student's developing competency and progress towards reaching industry standards. The placement may also involve assessment of competencies on the job.
- understand the consequences of unsuccessful work placement.

Developing Readiness

A range of strategies can assist in developing and improving student work readiness, including:

- detailed briefings of students by the relevant teacher such as the careers adviser or KLA teacher and for VET students, by the VET teacher and where appropriate, the Local Community Partnership (LCP) workplace learning coordinator.
- workshops and/or breakfasts led by guest speakers, for example, employers, successful ex-students
- researching potential host employer/s and documentation findings in the research pages in the workplace learning section of their *Employment Related Skills logbook*
- developing individual action plans to prepare placement
- considering various workplace-related scenarios, for example, safety issues, workplace culture, child protection issues and ethical dilemmas and devising appropriate strategies and dialogue to deal with
- reflecting on relevant experiences in casual and part-time employment
- learning about work, workplace culture and career options in a specific subject area
- participating in formal programs of career and work education
- undertaking additional courses, for example, on customer service or first aid
- undertaking enterprise education programs and activities e.g. Young Achievement Australia (YAA) programs. See also Section 5.3 in *Vocational Education in the relevant KLA booklets, 2005*.

- providing opportunities for demonstration and practise of desired skills and attitudes, for example, simulations and role plays
- visits to relevant work sites
- mock interviews, preferable involving a person not too familiar with students
- mentoring by successful students or supportive adults
- pre-placement visit to the workplace and induction by the employer
- building from one day per week work placement in Year 11 to block placement in Year 12, where appropriate

For further information and ideas on developing student work readiness, consult with your vocational education consultants in regions, TAFE NSW institute consultants – TVET, VET teacher networks, careers advisers in schools, School to Work team members and the local Community Partnership.

You may also wish to access various work readiness programs developed by your colleagues prior to the Workplace Learning Policy, 2005 at

https://det.www.det.nsw.edu.au/directorates/vet_schools/1_vl/workplace/wkpl.htm

Anticipating and preventing student disengagement

Some students may become disengaged from their courses. This may involve not completing their mandatory HSC VET work placement.

Strategies that my support students at risk of disengagement and their parents or carers include:

- ensuring Year 10 subject selection information sessions are well-publicised to support the informed selection of HSC courses. Consider making interpreting services available. As well as including requirements of HSC VET courses with a mandatory work placement, students (and parents) can be invited, beforehand, to relate their experiences of HSC work placement to those attending, for example, through a question and answer format.
- ensuring prospective VET students and their parents/carers also attend a short sub-session at the event that highlights the mandatory HSC requirement for VET work placement and the consequences of failure to complete.
- ensuring parent/carer and student both sign an acknowledgement of their respective ‘responsibilities’ regarding mandatory HSC VET work placement, for example, using a document developed by the school for this purpose and translated if needed. This may be in effect a local requirement for course entry.
- identifying potential problems as soon as possible, for example, by identifying and applying pressure, where appropriate, to student who postpone or cancel work placement opportunities
- being alert to deadlines for notifying a student of intention to issue an N determination, and working backwards to set local dates for completion of HSC VET work placements. These dates must take account of the need to provide **at least two warning letters** to the student about the prospect of an N determination and time for

the student to rectify matters. Refer to the NSW Board of Studies Event Timetable, for example

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/hsc_event_timetable_06.pdf

- providing an early warning letter regarding a likely N determination to students that have not completed work placement by the locally set date. This brings matters to a head, provides a reality check and provides to alert parents/carers to potential problems. The N determination can be lifted if the placement for the Preliminary course is completed in Year 12 and can be rescinded if the Year 12 placement is subsequently completed within the appropriate timeframe.
- documenting conversations, encouragement, warning letters, meetings with parent/carer/executive to demonstrate 'pressure and support' for student
- buddying the student in question with a suitable and willing student who provides a good role model for developing work readiness
- checking with the Local Community Partnership (LCP) to see if there is a host employer willing to coach or mentor the student. Some host employers identify with disengaged student who remind them of similar experiences at school. They may be happy to assist.
- Starting small with a carefully supervised successful few hours or half a day in the workplace, building up to a full day, two days and so on to reach the required hours.