

5 Work Placement

The Board of Studies has formally endorsed the following principles for HSC VET courses:

5.1 Principles Underpinning Work Placement in the Higher School Certificate

Preamble

Industry curriculum frameworks have been developed to provide students with the opportunity to gain credit towards the NSW Higher School Certificate and credit towards national vocational qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Industry curriculum frameworks are derived from national Training Packages. Courses within the frameworks specify the range of industry-developed units of competency from the relevant Training Packages that have been identified as suitable for the purposes of the Higher School Certificate. VET courses in industry curriculum frameworks are aligned to national vocational qualifications.

Although not all Training Packages mandate work placement it is a mandatory HSC requirement of each course within the frameworks. Indicative hours have been assigned to the work placement requirement for each course.

Learning in the workplace will enable students to:

- progress towards the achievement of industry competencies
- develop appropriate attitudes towards work
- learn a range of behaviours appropriate to the industry
- practise skills acquired in the classroom or workshop
- develop additional skills and knowledge, including the key competencies.

Under some circumstances, students' part-time work in an appropriate workplace may be used to fulfil work placement requirements. For further details, teachers and principals should consult the *Assessment, Certification and Examination (ACE) Manual* or relevant Board of Studies' Official Notices.

The following principles should be read in conjunction with any system's documentation relating to work placement, for example the Industry Curriculum Frameworks Information Package (ICFIP).

Principle 1

Work placement must have a clearly articulated and documented purpose. The structure of the work-based learning experience needs to be planned and developmental.

A range and number of purposes are possible including, for example:

- learning about a particular industry, workplace culture and career opportunities
- practising skills learnt off the job
- developing new skills
- improving work-related skills
- developing skills including key competencies such as teamwork, using technology, problem-solving

- achieving entry-level competencies
- achieving workplace performance of particular competency standards
- assessing in a realistic environment or allowing for holistic assessment
- providing opportunities to build skills in a developmental manner from the simple to the complex
- providing opportunities for the learner to reflect upon the workplace learning experience in the context of individual current knowledge and understanding
- encouraging students to undertake further education and training.

Principle 2

The scheduling of the work placement should reflect student readiness and should complement off-the-job learning programs.

The scheduling of the work placement should take account of:

- whether or not students are workplace-ready in terms of the competencies they will need to develop and demonstrate in the workplace
- how the timing of the work placement links to overall course planning
- the degree of flexibility available at both the workplace and the school
- how the alignment of both on- and off-the-job competencies can be best achieved.

An individual work placement program focusing on a developmental approach should be negotiated with the workplace supervisor/employer. This approach should focus on students moving from simple to more complex tasks. Dependence on supervision should reduce over time as students move towards greater independence in the workplace. The ultimate goal of a work placement should be competence and autonomy in the range of tasks required for the job being undertaken.

Principle 3

Work placement should be relevant to the VET courses being undertaken.

The ‘real’ tasks being undertaken in the workplace should complement the tasks and learning being undertaken by the students in their VET courses at school. Work placement may also provide students with the opportunity of having learning outcomes/units of competency assessed in the workplace by accredited trainers and assessors.

Principle 4

Work placement can provide opportunities for work-based assessment.

Not all industry curriculum frameworks specify that it is mandatory for competencies to be assessed in the workplace. Assessment events should relate to overall course planning and the purpose of the work placement. In a competency-based course, assessment of competencies is criterion-referenced. This means that a participant’s performance is judged against a prescribed standard – not against the performance of other participants.

The purpose of assessment is to judge competence on the basis of performance against the performance criteria set out under each element of competency. A participant is judged either **competent** or **not yet competent**.

Competency-based assessment is based on the requirements of the workplace. Competence incorporates all aspects of work performance, including problem-solving and the capacity to apply skills and knowledge in both familiar and new situations. Assessment of competence involves the assessment of skills and knowledge combined.

Assessors should adopt an **integrated** or **holistic** approach to assessment. This means that a number of elements of competency or even several units of competency are assessed together. This method of assessment is encouraged in line with the concept of competence as the integration of a wide range of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

5.2 Work Placement for Retail Services courses

HSC courses in Retail Services are designed to provide participants with the skills, knowledge and work-related attitudes required to perform the role of an entry-level employee in a range of retail services enterprises.

Teachers should use their professional judgement in the selection of relevant work placements in related industry areas and the mix of retail services-specific and more general workplace experience undertaken by each student.

Ideally, work placement should occur in workplaces within the retail services industries.

The scheduling of work placement should reflect student readiness and complement off-the-job learning programs.

Some of the learning experiences for the HSC for the following units of competency may be best addressed before students undertake a work placement:

- SIRXCCS002A Interact with customers
- SIRXCOM001A Communicate in the workplace
- SIRXOHS001A Apply safe working practices.