



Preparing Students for Work

Certificate III in Individual Support Work Placement Guide for

# Human Services Providers and RTOs



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>How this guide can help</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Resources and templates</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>The benefits of high quality work placements</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Selecting an RTO – A guide for service providers</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>About work placements</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Selecting a service provider – A guide for RTOs</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Features of quality work placements</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Fact Sheet: Regulation of Vocational Education and Training</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Strong collaboration</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Fact Sheet: Regulation of Aged Care and Disability Support services</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Clear roles, responsibilities and expectations</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Fact Sheet: Meeting legal requirements for work placements</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Effective support for students</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Work placement checklist for RTOs</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Continuous improvement</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Work placement checklist for service providers</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Case Studies 27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Work placement guide for students</b>	<b>59</b>
ARC Disability Services	28	<b>Work Placement Agreement template</b>	<b>64</b>
National Disability Services	31	<b>Work placement student feedback survey</b>	<b>73</b>
Benetas	33	<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>77</b>
Bedford Group	35		

## Work placements in disability support and aged care

Work in the disability and aged care sectors is unique, rewarding and challenging. Many of the required skills and behaviours are hard to teach in a classroom, so it's critical that students preparing for work in these sectors are exposed to real workplaces and real clients as part of their studies.

This exposure:

- helps students to understand what the work involves and whether they are suited to it
- ensures new graduates can apply their skills and knowledge in real-world situations
- makes graduates more employable
- provides service providers and clients with support workers and carers who are skilled and well prepared for work in the sector.

Students undertaking the **Certificate III in Individual Support** gain this exposure through work placements (also referred to as mandatory work requirements or vocational placements).

They must complete **120 hours** of direct support work in at least one aged care, home and community care, disability or community service organisation to complete the qualification.

However, stakeholders in the disability support and aged care sectors report that the quality of these work placements is inconsistent.

While many employers and training providers have established strong collaborative arrangements to ensure work placements are effective and well managed and provide good learning and employment outcomes for students, this is not always the case.



## How this guide can help

This Guide has been designed to help **service providers, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)** and **students** work together to create high quality work placement experiences, which result in graduates who are better skilled and better prepared for work in the disability and aged care sectors.

Drawing on input from stakeholders across the disability and aged care sectors, it provides practical information and advice in the form of:

- Tips
- Resources
- Templates
- Further reading and support

This information and advice will help all parties to understand their respective roles and responsibilities in implementing the work placement component of the Certificate III in Individual Support, and ensure it works well for all involved.

For service providers and RTOs that have been involved in student work placements for some time, much of this information may be familiar to you. However, you might find some tips that help you create an even better work placement experience for students and for your organisation.



# About work placements

Work placements provide students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained from their studies in a work environment. Unlike general work experience, work placements are 'structured learning experiences'. This means that they have specific learning outcomes to be achieved in relation to a qualification.



## What are they?

Work placements form part of the overall assessment of a student's competency in elements of the Certificate III in Individual Support. They require students to demonstrate they can complete particular tasks in real workplace settings to the standard expected by the industry. Evidence provided by the student's workplace supervisor during the placement contributes to the RTO's assessment of the student's competency.

Work placements are conducted in one or more blocks to meet the 120 hour mandatory work requirement. Students undertake a range of agreed tasks during each block and workplace supervisors provide feedback on their performance of these tasks.

Student work placements as part of the Certificate III in Individual Support are unpaid, as they meet the requirements of the Fair Work Act 2009.

## How do they work?

Different RTOs send their students out on work placement at different points within the course, with different benefits arising from the timing of placements. For example:

- Some employers prefer work placements to take place toward the completion of the course to maximise their ability to employ suitable students.
- Others see value in providing students with exposure to the job early in their training to test their commitment to the industry.
- Some suggest that the delivery of work placements in three blocks across the course is ideal as it allows students to learn, apply and reflect on their training along the way.

While the timing of work placements is a matter for each RTO to determine based on their student needs and industry feedback, employers and RTOs agree that it is essential that students cover fundamental theoretical components of their course (such as following safe work practices) before commencing their first placement.

### [Vocational placements \(fairwork.gov.au\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au)

You can read more about the criteria for vocational placements under the Fair Work Act 2009 in this fact sheet.

### A different approach to scheduling work placements

Based on their learnings from the National Disability Services' Disability Workforce Innovation Project, one of the participating RTOs has changed their approach to work placement scheduling. They have moved away from block placements, which were not working well for their students.

Their new approach involves students spending two days a week in first term learning core subjects such as workplace health and safety and participating in skill set workshops in manual handling which prepares them for the workplace.

In the second term, when students are considered job ready, they spend one day a week in class and one or more days a week on work placement.

This enables a weekly check-in with students when they attend class during the work placement. The RTO also visits students on-site every three weeks across the duration.

(Read more in the [National Disability Services case study](#))



# The benefits of high quality work placements

Whilst work placements are mandatory for the Certificate III in Individual Support, investing time and effort in doing them well can lead to numerous benefits for service providers, clients, RTOs and students. Many service providers recognise that investment in student work placements is a cost-effective means of building a pipeline of future workers.



## Benefits for service providers

- an opportunity to meet and assess a diverse pool of potential future employees and increase workforce diversity to reflect your client profile
- positioning of your service to attract high-quality future workers well-suited for employment in your organisation
- relationships with RTOs that may lead to job referrals in the future
- a reduction in workforce attrition rates and recruitments costs
- an opportunity to influence training delivery by articulating expectations of workplace performance
- improvements in the quality of graduates by helping students to translate theoretical learning to practical skills that are relevant to the workplace
- job variety, management training, mentoring opportunities and career progression for existing staff.

## Benefits for clients

- better prepared and skilled workers to provide quality care and support
- exposure to new people, including younger students
- an opportunity to contribute to student learning and quality of care and support for the wider community.

## Benefits for RTOs

- the chance to expose their students to professional learning environments
- improved student completion rates and employment outcomes
- exposure to current industry practice and equipment that helps to keep their training and assessment up to date

- the chance to engage with service providers, which can inform their self-assurance and continuous improvement processes
- relationships with service providers who may want additional training to upskill their staff.

## Benefits for students

- an opportunity to apply knowledge, reflect on practice and learn from experienced workers in a workplace relevant to their future career
- exposure to future job roles and ability to find out about wider areas of work and future opportunities in the industry
- an opportunity to practice skills over a period of time in real life situations, in different contexts and with different individual clients
- access to real work technologies, equipment, clients and procedures
- exposure to real world work including normal operating procedures and unplanned contingencies.



# Features of quality work placements

There are many different approaches to delivering quality student work placements across the aged care and disability support sectors. The case studies included in this guide illustrate some of these.

Despite the differences, placements provided by RTOs and service providers with a track record of strong outcomes and high quality experiences for students share a number of common features:

1. Strong collaboration
2. Clear roles, responsibilities and expectations
3. Effective support for students
4. Continuous improvement.

The following information and tips can help RTOs and service providers to make these features a core part of all student work placements.



# Strong collaboration

Strong collaboration between the service provider and the RTO is the key to effective work placements. It ensures that benefits are achieved for the students, RTOs, service providers, clients and ultimately, the whole industry.

In this section you will find guidance on how to select quality partners for delivering work placements and how to build and maintain the relationship.



## Finding the right work placement partners

Spending time up front determining whether an RTO or service provider is going to be the right partner for your organisation will make work placements a much better experience for all involved.

Finding the right partners to work with is akin to a job interview and both parties should establish a set of criteria that will help inform their selection of partner organisations and provide a framework for engaging in initial discussions.

The tips and resources listed below can help you to find partners that are a good fit for collaboration.

## Building and maintaining a collaborative relationship

Collaborative relationships take time, both to establish and maintain. Again though, the benefits gained through effective partnerships are worth the effort involved in creating them.

Once you have determined that a potential partner shares your organisation's values and a commitment to quality student work placements, you then need to agree on how you will work together. A critical part of building and maintaining a collaborative relationship is effective communication.

You might like to agree on some ground rules for your communication. For example:

- Establish how and how often you'll communicate. You might like to set up regular meeting times or agree to regular email updates on student progress.
- Clarify what kinds of issues each party would like to be told about, and how.
- Set up clear communication channels and appoint a single point of contact for each organisation.

## Resolving issues and disputes

Issues will invariably arise over the course of work placements, and it is important that together you establish and document processes for how to resolve these, including how to resolve any disputes. For example:

- Communicating early can help resolve any concerns or incidents before they escalate or result in long-term problems.
- The RTO should be making regular contact with students and the service provider during the placement to enable issues to be discussed before they become a problem.
- Service providers and students also have a responsibility to bring matters to the attention of the RTO as they arise.

A formal dispute resolution process to deal with serious breaches should be included in the Work Placement Agreement (see the Workplace Agreement template at the back of this guide). This process should give both parties the authority to suspend the placement to allow further investigation and termination of the placement where this is warranted.



### **Tips for service providers**

- As a service provider in aged care or disability, RTOs will often approach you about taking on students for work placement (or the student might contact you directly). Do some research to find out whether the training provider and their students are a good fit for your organisation and whether it's likely to be a satisfying experience for you all.
- You may also wish to proactively approach particular RTOs about establishing collaborative work placement arrangements as a part of a strategy for building your future workforce. Service providers will often work collaboratively with two to three trusted RTOs.
- If you don't know anything about the RTO, you might want to do some background checking to find out about them. The HSSO guide Building a Skilled Workforce contains some practical tips for checking on the quality of RTOs as well as information about the Vocational Education and Training system for those that are unfamiliar with it.
- It's also helpful to find out up front how the RTO runs their training and what they expect from the work placements.
- Look for RTOs that have a demonstrated track history, are rigorous in their student enrolment selection, provide quality training relevant to the service provider's needs, involve the service provider in student selection for placements and are committed to supporting students during placement, including taking responsibility for the assessment requirements.
- You may also wish to visit the RTO's training facilities to gain a deeper understanding of how students are being trained.

### **Selecting an RTO – A guide for service providers**

This resource contains a series of topics to help service providers find out more about an RTO and to assess the quality of an RTO's training and assessment and their suitability as a potential work placement partner.

### **Fact Sheet: Regulation of Vocational Education and Training**

This resource provides some facts about the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system for those who are unfamiliar with it, as well as links to further information.

### **Building a Skilled Workforce: A guide to VET for human services employers**

This HSSO guide contains some additional tips for doing background checks on RTOs.



### Tips for RTOs

- Service providers are reluctant to engage with RTOs that take a purely 'transactional' approach to placing students for work placements. So you will need to demonstrate your commitment to collaborative relationships and explain how you will work together to support the students' placement experiences.
- Approaching service providers to take students on work placements 'cold' or at short notice is unlikely to be well-received, so take the time to build relationships well in advance.
- You may like to do some background research on the service provider before approaching them. The fact sheet on regulation of aged care and disability support services provides information that can help you assess the quality of a service provider.
- Find out how service providers ensure that students will receive a formal induction, be assigned a suitable workplace buddy and/or supervisor, have clarity about their day-to-day work requirements, receive the necessary practical support and instructions, not be expected to work unsupervised or in areas outside a suitable scope of practice, and are exposed to work that provides them with the opportunity to meet their assessment requirements.
- You should also visit the service provider's work premises to build your understanding of the work environment and help inform your assessment of the service provider's suitability to provide work placements.

### Selecting a service provider – A guide for RTOs

This resource contains a series of topics to help RTOs find out more about a service provider, and assess their ability to provide an effective work placement experience for students and their suitability as a potential work placement partner.

### Fact Sheet: Regulation of aged care and disability support services

This resource provides some facts about regulatory arrangements for aged care and disability support, as well as links to further information.



# Clear roles, responsibilities and expectations

The ability to collaborate in the design and delivery of quality work placements is enhanced when the RTO and Service Provider (and the student) have clearly delineated and agreed roles and responsibilities. Having all parties understand and carry out these roles and responsibilities is a critical factor in successful work placements.

There are also a range of legislative issues that need to be discussed and agreed upon before work placements commence.

In this section you will find guidance on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of RTOs and service providers.



## Roles and responsibilities of RTOs

### **RTOs are responsible for assessing students' readiness for work placement opportunities and ensuring they are prepared for placement**

While students are not expected to be fully capable, they are expected to have received sufficient training to safely undertake the placement and to work safely with vulnerable clients.

Properly preparing students for placement helps alleviate any anxiety the students may feel about entering a workplace.

### **RTOs must inform prospective students about work placement requirements before they enrol**

As part of the enrolment process, RTOs have a responsibility to inform prospective students of specific requirements they need to meet to successfully complete the program. For example, students have to successfully undergo pre-employment checks (such as a police check) in order to undertake a work placement in disability or aged care service and may need to meet proof of vaccination requirements.

Students who enrol when they do not meet these requirements may be unable to complete the required work placement and unable to gain the qualification.

### **RTOs need to match their students to suitable placements**

Service providers will want to know about the students being recommended for placement and may wish to be involved in the student selection, including interviewing potential candidates.

RTOs should discuss selection of students with the Service Provider when establishing work placement arrangements.

### **RTOs need to understand workplace assessment requirements**

The Mandatory Work Requirements for the Certificate III in Individual Support are contained in the core unit of competency CHCCCS023 - Support independence and wellbeing.

It is the RTO's role to understand and comply with the formal assessment requirements for this unit and to ensure that workplace supervisors are clear about their role in assessment. The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) provides guidance on assessment of competency using supplementary evidence provided by another party. In the case of work placements, the other party is the workplace supervisor. ASQA explains:

*“Assessment of evidence, and judgement about competency, must be undertaken by a person who meets the specific requirements for an assessor in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015.”*

VET regulators in Victoria (VRQA) and Western Australia (TACWA) provide similar guidance.

In some cases, an assessor cannot directly gather all the required evidence that supports a competency judgement. In these cases, the evidence may be gathered or reported by other people. This type of evidence is categorised as supplementary evidence.

The resources listed below can help you with understanding these evidence requirements.



**RTOs are responsible for assessing a student's competency. This cannot be outsourced to work placement hosts**

Service providers inform the RTO's assessment by collecting supplementary evidence during the work placement. RTO assessors use this supplementary evidence in combination with other information to form a valid judgement about competency against the requirements of the unit.

Competency is not a judgement for a workplace supervisor – this is a judgement for the RTO assessor.

The role of the workplace supervisor is to observe and record that the student can complete a set of tasks satisfactorily to industry standard. Workplace supervisors do not have the full range of information available to make valid assessment about student competence.

**RTOs need to develop a workplace learning plan for each student**

The learning plan:

- documents the learning objective of the placement
- specifies the units of competency from the Certificate III in Individual Support that need to be covered in the work placement
- translates the VET competency statements into workplace tasks that are easily understood by workplace supervisor
- specifies requirements for access to types of clients, the use of specialist equipment and access to provider and client documentation
- is supported by a logbook and other supporting templates that a student must complete
- sets out clearly the role of the supervisor to sign off student logbooks and the framework for evidence collection and supervisor judgements
- establishes a mutually acceptable time(s) for the RTO assessor to visit the workplace, to observe and assess the student in the workplace performing daily tasks.

The RTO and service provider should discuss the workplace learning plan to ensure the student learning needs can be met during the placement.

The tips below can help you with developing learning plans.

**RTOs need to ensure workplace supervisors understand their role and are supported to record evidence of student practice**

The RTO should provide support, and where necessary, training, to workplace supervisors to ensure they understand the requirements of the student's learning plan, the RTO's assessment processes and the workplace supervisor's role in the assessment process.

The RTO should also make clear any specific requirements for workplace supervisors in terms of relevant qualifications and/or length of service.

As much as possible the RTO should seek to reduce the administrative burden for workplace supervisors by streamlining and simplifying processes for reporting feedback and supplementary evidence. Large amounts of paperwork can be a deterrent for service providers to offer student work placements.

**RTOs need to ensure that students understand the supervisor's role in the placement as well**

Where a student is under the misapprehension that their workplace supervisor will determine their competency, this can cause unnecessary anxiety. This can especially be the case for students from disadvantaged or non-English-speaking backgrounds or in situations where there is a personality clash between a student and their workplace supervisor.

Making sure students clearly understand the supervisor's role in the placement can help to alleviate any anxiety they may have.



### **Tips for workplace learning plans**

- Use simple language that has relevance for the workplace, rather than technical VET language. Describe specific work tasks rather than making broad statements about competencies.
- When describing the role of the RTO assessor use the terms like “assessment”, “performance evidence” and “competency”.
- When describing the role of the workplace supervisor use different words, such as “confirming the student is able to perform tasks in a safe way to industry standards”.
- Make workplace learning plans easy for workplace supervisors to use and consider moving away from paper-based logbooks.

### **Selecting a service provider – A guide for RTOs**

This resource contains a series of topics to help RTOs find out more about a service provider, and assess their ability to provide an effective work placement experience for students and their suitability as a potential work placement partner.

### **Fact Sheet: Regulation of aged care and disability support services**

This resource provides some facts about regulatory arrangements for aged care and disability support, as well as links to further information.

### **CHCCCS023 - Support independence and wellbeing**

This link will take you to the entry for this unit of competency in the National Training Register.

### **Using other parties to collect assessment evidence | Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)**

You can find further information about assessment by another party in this ASQA fact sheet. If your RTO is regulated by the VRQA or TACWA you will need to check any additional guidance they may provide.

### **Mandatory workplace assessment – CHCCCS023 Support Independence and Wellbeing - YouTube**

This video also contains useful guidance for RTOs on workplace assessment requirements.



## Roles and responsibilities of service providers

### Service providers need to select appropriate workplace supervisors and/or buddies for student placements

Workplace supervisors provide guidance and support to students during their work placement and sign off on the completion of tasks specified in the learning plan. Every student needs to be assigned a workplace supervisor. Some service providers also assign the student a buddy to provide practical daily support for students.

Depending on the size and the type of service delivery, these roles may be undertaken by the same person, or by a combination of a formal supervisor and an informal supervisor or buddy. It is important that students have continuity in these arrangements across the duration of their placement.

Some larger service providers may establish additional roles to support work placements, such as administrative and liaison roles.

Service providers will need to select staff who hold relevant qualifications, are experienced and well-suited to the role, and are positive advocates for the service provider and the industry. The RTO should tell you about any requirements for workplace supervisors' qualifications or experience in your initial discussions. You should also discuss your internal support arrangements with the RTO to ensure there is clarity about these roles and responsibilities.

### Service providers need to consider how to support their workplace supervisors and buddies to undertake their roles

Consider how you will:

- ensure the roles, responsibilities and expectations for the roles are clearly documented
- ensure workplace supervisors and buddies understand the student's work placement plan, including the learning objective of the placement and have contact with the RTO trainer/assessor as needed
- consider the impact of undertaking these roles on other work responsibilities and outputs

- provide training to support these roles. This may take the form of training provided by the RTO on workplace supervisor roles, their processes to collect evidence, and expectations of supervisor feedback and judgements
- recognise and reward staff undertaking these roles.

The role of workplace supervisors is to:

- discuss the work placement learning plan with the student and the RTO assessor to ensure there are appropriate learning opportunities available to meet the objective of the placement
- ensure the student is provided with an appropriate orientation and/or induction to the work environment, including key policies and procedures such as Workplace Health and Safety
- ensure there is a clear understanding of the training the student has received and that work tasks do not exceed the student's scope of practice
- sign off on the student's attendance and completion of tasks specified in the workplace learning plan
- monitor the student in the workplace and provide regular feedback to them
- schedule mutually acceptable time(s) for the RTO assessor to visit the workplace during the placement to observe and assess the student in the workplace performing daily tasks
- participate in scheduled meetings at agreed points or complete forms in a timely manner to provide formal feedback on student performance in the workplace. This feedback will be used by the RTO as part of the student's assessment evidence for the course.



Where a workplace buddy has been assigned, their role is to:

- identify learning opportunities relevant to their training programs
- provide instruction to students before and during tasks and informal feedback after
- share knowledge while demonstrating tasks
- act as a point of contact and role model for good practice

provide advice and information to students and clarify student concerns or queries.

## Legislative requirements

There are a range of legal requirements, such as insurance, pre-employment checks and vaccinations, that will need to be discussed and documented prior to the work placements to ensure there is complete clarity about which party is responsible for these matters and to mitigate risk for all parties.

The fact sheet below provides more information about these requirements.

## Documenting agreements

Once you have come to an agreement about the roles and responsibilities of each party, these should be documented in a Work Placement Agreement. This should be signed by the RTO, service provider and the student before the work placement starts.

The template below provides an example of a Work Placement Agreement.

### [Fact Sheet: Meeting legal requirements for work placements](#)

This resource outlines current legal requirements related to student work placements.

### [Work Placement Agreement template](#)

This template can be used as a basis for developing your own Work Placement Agreements.

### [An approach to buddying](#)

ARC Disability Services appoints a student facilitator to provide support to students.

As the designated person to guide students through the work placement process, the student facilitator provides continuity and a single point of contact for students throughout their four-week placements, as well as a deep understanding from their own experience as a student.

The student facilitator is also a support worker, which enables them to keep their skills up to date, and they have a Certificate IV in Teaching and Assessment (TAE). This means they can fulfil a workplace supervisory role if required. They are allocated 15-20 hours a fortnight to undertake the student facilitator role.

(Read more in the [ARC Disability Services case study](#))



# Effective support for students

For students, their work placement experience can be 'make or break' for their willingness to consider the service provider as a future employer and for their commitment to finishing their training and working in the industry.

Both service providers and RTOs need to make a commitment to support students through their placements. Students also need to make a commitment to this learning opportunity.

In this section you will find guidance for all parties on what this commitment involves.



## What students say helps them

- **A positive first day** – a well-organised and welcoming first day is critical in setting students up for success.
- **Having one consistent contact point** – students need continuity in either their supervisor, buddy or workplace coordinator so they know who to go to and can form a relationship with them.
- **Clear work expectations** – like other workers, students need to know what is expected of them each day, have a clear roster of tasks and access to supporting information and equipment.
- **Access to client and service provider files, including time to access IT** – students need this to complete their assessment tasks and meet their learning goals.
- **Not being asked to undertake tasks outside of their scope of practice** – it is unfair to put students in such a situation and can pose a risk to clients and other staff.
- **Flexibility** - students appreciate flexibility that helps them balance their work/life responsibilities.
- **Feeling welcome** – by having all of the staff at the organisation knowing the students are there and being welcoming and supportive. This includes human resources, administration and management staff.
- **Supervisor feedback** – students need supervisors to provide formal feedback and complete student logbooks in a timely way.

## RTO commitment

The start of the work placement does not signal or imply that the RTO is handing over responsibility for the student to the service provider. RTOs should be careful not to convey this message unintentionally. The best way to avoid this is by active participation throughout the placement. For example:

- The RTO trainer/assessor attend the student's orientation and induction program
- The RTO schedules weekly check-ins with the student and their workplace supervisor (preferably on-site) to make sure the placement is going as intended and to resolve any issues as they arise.

As the co-ordinator of the placement, the RTO is best placed to mediate any issues that may arise between the student and the service provider. They can intervene if there are issues with the student's performance, problems with the service provider, or if a student's learning needs are not being met.

The RTO also has a responsibility to identify and raise any issues in relation to a student's fitness for duty immediately with the service provider, for the protection of the service provider's clients, staff and the student.

It is also essential that RTO trainers/assessors can be easily and readily contacted throughout the placement by both students and workplace supervisors.

### Work placement checklist for RTOs

This checklist can help RTOs to meet their commitments before, during and after work placements.

## Service provider commitment

### Induction

The service provider takes on a level of responsibility for the student once they are on-site and needs to exercise its own due diligence in ensuring the student is properly prepared to interact safely with clients.

By providing the student with a full induction and an orientation to the site and the organisation, the service provider gets the opportunity to observe the student's confidence in the workplace and help them to settle into the workplace culture and rhythms.

### Supervision

During the placement, the service provider needs to ensure the student is subject to an appropriate level of supervision at all times.

Supervision can be direct or indirect depending on the activities the student is performing and the level of risk to clients, staff and/or the service provider.

- Direct supervision is when the supervisor is physically present to observe, guide and direct the student undertaking an activity.
- Indirect supervision is when the supervisor works in the same facility as the student but is not constantly physically observing the student undertaking the activities. The supervisor should be available for reasonable access which will depend on the activities the student is undertaking.

Realistically, a student should expect a combination of both forms of supervision during a placement. Service providers will need to ensure these arrangements are appropriate and encourage students to seek support as required.

Use of a workplace buddy can help ensure day-to-day issues can be resolved quickly and ensure students receive the support they need.

Students may also need support to strike the right balance between showing initiative by enthusiastically taking on additional tasks and not exceeding their developing capabilities.

You can find further information about addressing supervision challenges later in this section.



## Feedback

Workplace supervisors will be required to provide a level of managerial oversight for students, including providing formal and informal feedback as part of a student's learning plan.

It is important to give students both positive feedback and constructive feedback on areas where they need to improve.

Ensure that the feedback is:

- aligned with the student's learning goals
- focused on observed behaviours
- positive and encouraging
- based on facts and specific (not generalised).
- documented as required.

Allow the student to reflect on the feedback and discuss strategies for addressing performance issues, which can then be revisited at a later time.

## Supporting a diverse range of students

Students seeking to enter the aged care and disability support services workforce come from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Some are young and may come directly from school, while others will be mature aged workers seeking to re-enter the workforce after caring for children or making a career change later in life. Some students come from overseas and may come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Service providers play an important role in supporting this diversity amongst students as it contributes to building an aged care and disability sector workforce that can respond to client diversity.

Some students will require more, or different kinds of support.

For example, students from culturally diverse backgrounds can benefit from service providers implementing strategies such as:

- providing cross-cultural awareness training to staff in preparation for student placements
- introducing cross-cultural visits and activities for clients
- appointing a buddy to support these students with learning, documentation, and practical matters (e.g. lunch-room etiquette).

It is important that workplace supervisors and buddies have an understanding of the cultural barriers that can be faced by some students and the effects this may have on their workplace experiences. For example, some aged care providers have noted that elderly clients suffering from dementia and/or hearing loss can struggle to understand students who have poor English language or speak with a strong accent. This can lead to client frustration which may be interpreted as racism, when it is in fact an inability to communicate with a student.

### Work placement checklist for service providers

This checklist can help service providers to meet their commitments before, during and after work placements.

### **Supporting students on their first day**

Disability service provider, Bedford Group, ensures that students are well supported on their first day of a work placement.

Induction for students is like new staff member induction. They meet with their manager/supervisor on the first morning and do a tour of the site, undergo workplace health and safety induction, discuss the program, how it operates and Bedford's expectations of them.

They are then introduced to clients and buddy up with the staff member they will work alongside for their placement.

Bedford makes sure everyone is clear about what students can and can't do on placements. Students are reminded that during placement they will always be under supervision and are told who to speak to if at any point they feel unsafe or not being supervised appropriately.

(Read more in the [Bedford Group case study](#))



### Challenges of work placement supervision in particular settings

Service providers often report that providing supervision for work placements involving in-home care/support and support for social and community participation can be challenging.

These services are usually delivered by a single worker in a client's home or when supporting the client in a social or community setting. In these circumstances, provision of a safe level of supervision to students while also meeting the client's needs and preferences, requires some careful planning.

Whilst challenging to do, it is not impossible. As illustrated in the Bedford Group case study, there are examples of it working well.

Some service providers use a combination of placements in a residential care setting supplemented by field work. Some structure 'buddy shifts' in which the student works alongside an experienced worker. In the aged care sector, some service providers report that they structure work placements so that students complete 90 hours in a residential aged care setting and the remaining 30 hours in an in-home placement. This makes the placement more manageable for in-home service provision.

While it does require more effort, the importance of offering student placements in these types of settings is critical given the growth in demand for this type of service. Ensuring students can access and have a positive experience in these placements will help meet future workforce needs.

In certain settings, service providers will need to seek the consent of their clients for the work placement. In some situations, especially those that involve going into client's homes, gaining consent from clients (and their families) will require particular attention.

### Tips for gaining client consent

- Some clients, particularly those who have been in the field of education or been active mentors, may be more open to student placements.
- Look at matching students with particular clients who may feel more comfortable with having them in their home or involved in their social life.
- Provide structured opportunities for clients to meet students in a public setting (e.g. a group activity) before asking if they are willing to have a student in their home.
- Providing information to clients and their families on the benefits of student placements on the quality of care can be helpful.
- Sharing positive stories of student placements with clients and their families through newsletters can also encourage others to give consent.



## Student commitment

Whilst this guide has been designed to help service providers and RTOs create better work placement experiences for students, students' commitment to the work placement obviously plays a critical role in its success.

The checklist and tips below can be used by service providers and RTOs to help prepare students for their work placement and help them understand what is expected of them and how they can get the most from their work placement experience.

### Work placement guide for students

This resource can be given to students to help them prepare for and make the most of their work placements.

### Tips for students

#### Workplace behaviour

- Work placements provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate that they would be an ideal employee and learn more about your career and study pathways.
- Students need to treat the work placement as a job and adopt appropriate workplace behaviour. They are being entrusted with caring for vulnerable clients and need to understand and comply with the service providers code of conduct, policies and procedures.
- Students need to be ready to take direction in the workplace, but this should be reasonable and not involve them working outside of the scope of practice.

#### Learning from the work placement

- Students need to feel confident that they understand the Work Placement Agreement and their Workplace Learning Plan. They can ask their RTO questions about these prior to the placement and ask their workplace supervisor during the placement
- During the work placement, students need to be self-motivated learners, willing to accept and respond to feedback, both informal and formal, in a professional manner.

- Sometimes workplace practices can differ from their classroom training. Students should clarify this with their workplace supervisor in a respectful way.

#### Role of workplace supervisor

- Students need to understand that their workplace supervisor does not undertake the assessment of their competence. Their RTO trainer should explain how this works.

#### Accepting and responding to feedback

- Students should accept both positive feedback and constructive feedback and focus on strategies to improve their performance.
- They should reflect on how they will address feedback and discuss this with their supervisor.
- Students need to be curious and seek out advice and guidance from experienced workers. There will be many opportunities for them to talk with other workers and they should take advantage of this experience to find out more about working in the industry.
- Students should focus on the client needs and take the time to learn about the clients. They should try to put themselves in the client's shoes and make sure their practices are informed by their needs.

#### Raising issues

- If students can't make their work placement due to an unforeseen issue, they must contact the service provider.
- Students have a responsibility to raise concerns about practices that are putting clients at risk with the service provider, through the appropriate channels.
- If students are experiencing any problems or feel they are not getting exposed to the agreed learning experiences, they should act early to raise these issues with their workplace supervisor and/or RTO trainer.
- Students should expect to see your RTO trainer/assessor regularly, but can contact them immediately if they have an urgent concern.



# Continuous improvement

The willingness of the RTO and service provider to seek and act on feedback from students, workplace supervisors and RTO trainers is essential to the quality of work placements.

Service providers and RTOs should also evaluate their arrangements at appropriate intervals to inform their continuing commitment and the updating of the service agreement as circumstances change.

This section provides guidance on how to ensure your work placement arrangements continue to work well for all parties involved.



## Post-placement feedback

At the end of each student placement, feedback should be gathered from the student, workplace supervisor and relevant RTO staff. This feedback can inform debriefing meetings and be used to improve future rounds of student placements.

### Tips for service providers

- Seek feedback from the workplace supervisor, buddy and other employees about the student's suitability for future employment.
- Depending on this feedback and where the student is in their qualification, service providers may wish to interview the student for a potential job offer.

Participate in a debriefing session with the RTO to provide feedback and discuss any improvements for future work placements.

### Tips for RTOs

- Create a process for capturing feedback from students, workplace supervisors, buddies/other service provider staff and from relevant RTO staff at the end of each placement. For example, email a simple survey to students, service providers and relevant RTO staff (e.g. trainer/assessor).
- Conduct a debriefing session with the service provider to discuss what worked and what could be improved and use this feedback to inform preparation for future work placements.

## Review and evaluation

After work placement arrangements have been in place for enough time to be refined (around 12 to 18 months), both the RTO and service provider should reflect on whether the benefits they envisaged at the beginning of the relationship are being realised.

This should be followed up by an open and robust evaluation discussion. This will be easier if at the beginning of your collaboration you documented the benefits you were seeking to achieve, including any quantitative outcomes.

While this might be a reasonably informal process for some organisations, others may want to undertake a more formal evaluation, including consideration of performance information and data. For example, some service providers are tracking the conversion rate of student placements to employment outcomes with a view to comparing results across their RTO partners.

Building in a formal commitment to review the workplace arrangements at a particular date can be an effective mechanism for both parties to actively consider whether they wish to continue to collaborate and whether the benefits being achieved could be further enhanced.

### Work placement student feedback survey

This template can be used by RTOs to design post work placement feedback surveys for students.

### Data collection and analysis

Aged care provider, Benetas is in the process of developing a sophisticated IT infrastructure system to track work placements and student to employee conversion rates.

The system is recording data on student numbers from RTOs, when placements are required and the conversion rate of students to employment to inform future strategic relationships with high performing RTOs.

(Read more in the [Benetas case study](#))



# Case Studies



## ARC Disability Services

**A student-centric approach to work placements has doubled the conversion rate to employment for a disability provider in regional and remote Queensland, providing a reliable pipeline of skilled workers.**

ARC Disability Services (ARC) is a community-based organisation providing disability support services in Cairns and far north Queensland. Of its 350 staff, 300 are care workers. ARC offers a range of services, including centre-based programs, supported independent living within peoples' homes, home respite from its own 'holiday house' facility and social and community participation access.

ARC's student support approach evolved from the appointment of a former student to the role of student and volunteer facilitator in November 2019, who was encouraged by management to develop the role.

Student facilitators have hands-on experience and are invested in what the students are doing – not just doing the scheduling and collecting the paperwork.

As the designated person to guide students through the work placement process, the student facilitator provides continuity and a single point of contact for students throughout their four-week placements, as well as a deep understanding from their own experience as a student.

The student facilitator is also a support worker, which enables them to keep their skills up to date, and they have a Certificate IV in Teaching and Assessment (TAE). This means they can fulfil a workplace supervisory role if required. They are allocated 15-20 hours a fortnight to undertake the student facilitator role.

ARC believes it is important for its student facilitator to have a level of understanding of what it is like to be new to the industry and to be a student and a support worker. Hence the facilitator is very much a carer and mentor for students, rather than just an office-based supervisor.

The cost/benefit aligns with and demonstrates ARC's values in general regarding staff and participants. While the outcomes aren't measurable in dollars, it's about ARC being an employer of choice, a participant in the local community within the industry, and a recognised training location for student placements.

Reconciling service delivery with the extra cost of supervising students reflects ARC's value of investing in people in the industry.



“

***We get good employees, and that pays back the investment in the facilitator's position.***

ARC believes its facilitator model could be adapted for small service providers, for example, one day a week.

Between 50 and 60 per cent of students who undertake their work placements with ARC are successful in gaining jobs with ARC. The conversion rate has more than doubled as ARC has become better at engaging with the right Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and the right students for the job.

The students who get jobs are ARC's biggest champions – because they feel very valued that ARC gave them a head start and an opportunity to gain the hands-on experience required.

## Partner selection

ARC maintains arrangements with a small number of RTOs, both public and private, who share a commitment to ethical practice and quality training outcomes. They are expected to be active partners in supporting work placements.

The diversity of ARC's client base is mirrored in the diversity of their workforce and hence partnerships are being explored with a local First Nations organisation and schools with similar ethics.

## Pre-placement

ARC places immense importance on nurturing people into the industry/workforce, especially because many students have never worked before or never been in an environment with people with disabilities.

ARC conducts regular RTO talks to students about the industry, how to get a job, and what to expect on the job. Before they go on an agreed placement, students are invited to visit an ARC centre and participate in an interview to check expectations and ensure they are the right fit for a role.

For ARC it's important that someone's first impression of the industry or workplace is a positive experience because that will set the tone for where they eventually work – whether it is for ARC or someone else.

*“We have a duty to the industry to [set the tone] for the workforce.”*

## Placement

Students are treated in a similar manner as new employees.

At the start of each placement, the student facilitator conducts a three hour on-site induction which covers the basics of being in a workplace, including safety practices (such as incident reporting). It also provides ARC with the opportunity to question the students about how they would approach certain circumstances and what behaviours would be acceptable.

As well as the RTO's student placement agreement, ARC has a placement agreement with each student. At induction, students are provided with a copy of ARC's code of conduct and other documents, including emergency contacts, and employment records.

Students observe personal care tasks and are given a list of duties they can undertake and the restrictions in ARC's workplace (see below). This clarifies ARC's expectations and helps to reduce student anxiety by giving them the confidence to work safely.



Duties and Restrictions	
<b>Students can do these duties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist with programs.</li> <li>- Interact with participants in a positive manner in programs or at mealtimes.</li> <li>- Set-up and pack down the room including gathering participants and resources.</li> <li>- Assist with being a second person.</li> <li>- Assist with filling out the program overview sheet and communications books.</li> </ul>
<b>Students cannot do these duties until they are trained and deemed competent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist with personal care tasks.</li> <li>- Manual handling including hoist (2:1 ratio with staff who have experience with manual handling)</li> <li>- Assist to push a wheelchair.</li> </ul>
<b>Restrictions that students cannot do under any circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assistance or administration of medication.</li> <li>- Meal assistance.</li> <li>- Shaving and cutting nails.</li> <li>- Students cannot be left alone with participants during programs unless it is an emergency that staff need to assist with immediately.</li> </ul>

Students always have a supervisor on-site and are encouraged to ask questions of other support workers. The majority of supervisors have qualifications toward individual support. The majority currently also have a Certificate IV in TAE, which is desirable and valued by ARC, although not proactively sought as a prerequisite.

When selecting supervisors or facilitators, ARC looks for prior supervisory or leadership experience, a background in support worker roles, knowledge of business practices and workplace health and safety, and an industry-specific, leadership, management or business qualification.

ARC takes the approach that a new person doesn't necessarily know what they are doing until ARC can verify that they are competent to do it. Feedback is provided either directly by supervisors or through the student facilitator.

Although students don't have the same responsibilities as employees, they are treated with the same duty of care as ARC's employees.

## Post-placement

An informal feedback loop with students is currently used at the end of placements. A more formal feedback process occurs when a student applies for a position of support worker. This is when the student facilitator provides a written evaluation or recommendation to ARC's Human Resources department.

The facilitator also supports students who have undertaken their placements with ARC and are a good fit for the organisation as they progress through each step of the recruitment process.



## National Disability Services

A sector-led initiative has successfully developed ongoing collaboration between training providers and disability service providers in regional Victoria to deliver hundreds of student work placements.

The Workforce Connector model, which was developed through the National Disability Services (NDS) Disability Workforce Innovation Project, employed four regionally based connectors in Victoria to engage with stakeholders to identify and solve local workforce issues.

NDS is Australia's peak body for non-government disability service organisations, representing more than 1200 non-government service providers. Collectively, NDS members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disability. NDS provides leadership on workforce issues in Victoria and contributes to national disability workforce issues.

The project was funded by the Victorian Government in recognition of the complex disability services ecosystem and the need to tackle issues through collaborative place-based arrangements, to find innovative solutions and to initiate and spread good practice.

The model used Workforce Connectors to create, consolidate and build on existing, trusting relationships with local people and to operate in a manner that brings about positive place-based solutions.

### Collaboration

The connector project found there was a need to improve the range and frequency of contact between training providers and employers. For example, some training providers were connected with only a small number of employers, while others kept infrequent contact.

In 2020, the Workforce Connector located in northeast regional Victoria identified there was a disconnect between training providers and employers, leading to insufficient student placements being offered to meet the area's workforce needs, which was also creating a barrier to students completing their training. The Connector worked with three local RTOs – Wodonga TAFE, GoTAFE and The Centre for Continuing Education – to document the local demand, and identified that 350 students needed to undertake work placements to complete their training. Working closely with the three RTOs, the Connector emailed employers in the region seeking support to help students graduate.

Through connections with NDS providers in the area, 270 placements were filled in less than four weeks.



“

*The workforce connector started when COVID-19 was hitting hard, achieving such a fantastic shift in work placements that proves it is possible to overcome barriers.*

The RTOs reported receiving requests from employers they had not engaged with in the past and that it opened opportunities for new relationships.

Fostering these closer working relationships is ensuring that training keeps up with changing needs. Staff from the sector are now being involved in the training, placements are easier to organise, and some providers are sourcing new employees before they qualify – producing great outcomes for students, employers and training providers alike.

## Continuous improvement

The Workforce Connector model was built on learnings from other projects, demonstrating successful regional change projects can occur in complex disability ecosystems with place-based solutions.

The model provided the extra energy and focus to bring local disability service providers, RTOs and other stakeholders together. The Workforce Connectors recognised when there was a promising idea with enough support and were able to foster development on a local solution.

The two-way communication role of Connectors also proved very valuable when emergencies arose. They were trusted with frank and specific local information that they could quickly feedback through their networks. Regional stakeholders reported that because of this they felt included and not forgotten during especially challenging times of COVID-19.

The partnership with the three RTOs demonstrated that a co-ordinated place-based approach works well in regional areas.

The four Workforce Connectors had a broad range of workforce knowledge, skills and networks that were considered important to the success of the project. They were recruited due to their existing local networks and connection to regional areas. To be effective in their roles, they were required to have relevant disability workforce expertise, great relationship skills, exceptional written and verbal communication skills, and project management and facilitation expertise.

Because they worked from home, the connectors also needed to be self-motivated, curious, organised, quick to adapt and practical team players.

The combination of connectors (with the necessary skill set) and management support ensured the model delivered great value.

*“It is a flexible, organic and adaptive model that can take advantage of opportunities, providing a powerful way to bring about change.”*

For one of the RTOs, the experience has resulted in a change in approach to work placement scheduling, moving away from block placements that were not working well for their students.

The new approach involves students spending two days a week in first term learning core subjects such as workplace health and safety and participating in skill set workshops in manual handling which prepares them for the workplace. When they are considered job ready, in the second term the students spend one day a week in class and one or more days a week on work placement.

This allows the RTO to check in with the students weekly in class while they are on work placement. The RTO also conducts site visits every three weeks during the student’s work placement.

*“We find this approach allows us to take the student through the whole learning journey. It helps enrich and deepen their learning, so they are confident when they finish their training.”*



## Benetas

The sheer number of people required to meet workforce demands, combined with an aging workforce has led a Victorian aged care provider to create multiple pipelines to source future employees.

Benetas is a leading not-for-profit organisation with a mission to provide older Victorians, their families and carers with a full range of quality, community-based services, residential care homes and retirement communities.

The organisation has changed its model of attracting new people to work in the sector, successfully using traineeships as a supplementary source of new workers who are aligned to the values of the organisation.

*“It’s quite a different model and a huge culture change to the business.”*

Traineeships are not the only pipeline and Benetas continues to take student work placements, welcoming the ‘try before you buy’ opportunity they provide and the chance to make early decisions if the student is not suited to the job.

Benetas is currently considering how the learnings from its traineeship program could be applied to the organisation of its student work placements.

### Partner selection

The traineeships operate as a centralised model. Currently TAFE is the partner of choice for Benetas’ traineeships.

For student work placements, Benetas has a decentralised approach where there are existing relationships with local RTOs. While local providers are important wherever possible, Benetas is developing a more strategic approach to supporting the establishment of these placement arrangements.

Cold calls from RTOs are referred to the central program for discussion about partnership expectations and arrangements.



Finding the right RTO is important to Benetas, regardless of whether they are public or private. All RTOs are assessed for quality and alignment, including whether the RTO understands Benetas’ business.

By adopting a more strategic approach to work placements, Benetas is looking to ensure it can replicate the benefits. Benetas also wants to know that the RTO has a high employment conversion rate for their graduates and seeks out longitudinal data.

## Data collection and analysis

Benetas has found that most personal care workers want to work and learn within a 10-kilometre radius from home and they are in the process of developing a sophisticated IT infrastructure system to track work placements and student to employee conversion rates.

The system is tracking trainee progress and feedback that allows early intervention by managers.

It is also recording data on student numbers from RTOs, when placements are required, and the conversion rate of students to employment, to inform future strategic relationships with high performing RTOs.

## Benefits

The appeal of traineeships was the ability for Benetas to recruit the people that are the right fit for the organisation and giving the employer greater control over the selection of students working in services.

Hence the employer selects trainees and then partners with the RTO to deliver courses that are structured to fit employer's needs for units of competency required for employment in dementia and palliative care.

Benetas finds the traineeship model provides them with the ability to work closely with their TAFE partner to influence student training. The traineeships also enable people to quickly make decisions about whether the job is right for them or not. Likewise, Benetas is able to make decisions quickly.

*“We know what we are looking for – we believe if we get the values alignment, we can teach them the skills of aged care because they are much easier to learn than if someone has a poor attitude or the values alignment isn't there.”*

All Benetas support staff are qualified, or in the process of a traineeship, with a minimum of a Certificate III in Individual Support.

Within the first two years of the traineeship model, Benetas has retained 84 per cent of trainees with most of the remainder relocating interstate.

The model is resourced with a 0.5 FTE role focused on traineeships.

Benetas foresees further scope with the potential for trainees to comprise up to 30 per cent of its future workforce.

Benetas will also continue to rely on students as a pipeline for its future workforce needs. By taking the lessons learned from the traineeship model and applying them to the student work placements, Benetas expects to realise similar benefits.

## Preparation

Before starting work, traineeship candidates attend a site visit for a couple of hours to get to see the home firsthand and meet the manager, learn about the traineeship and how it works.

For Benetas, the most important thing at this point is understanding why someone wants to work in aged care.

Candidates are then offered three shifts of work experience, during which they partner with a buddy.

*“We give them a front row ticket to the job.”*

Benetas asks each candidate to learn the back story of one of the residents because this helps them immediately understand that the job is about bringing meaning and purpose to a person's life and the importance of their life story.

Through the work experience the candidate can judge if they want to continue with the role, and the buddy and manager can also evaluate the placement. Some considerations are how well the candidate engaged, their curiosity, the questions they asked and their willingness to learn.

## During training

During the traineeship, the trainee is on the job with a buddy as a supernumerary for 14 weeks, comprising three shifts a week of on-the-job learning.

About half-way through this period, they commence their 12-month traineeship during which they will work many more than the mandatory work placement requirement of 120 hours.

They are placed on the roster when they are job ready and complete the traineeship within 9 to 12 months and then are offered work at the fully qualified rate.

One of the biggest barriers is finding staff who have the willingness and skill to buddy and mentor the trainees. Some of the best carers may not want to mentor, and there is no overt reward or incentive for the additional responsibility.



## Continuous improvement

Both traineeships and student work placements only operate in Benetas' residential settings at this stage.

While Benetas has an instinctive understanding of how it could take on students for in-home placements, a pilot model is yet to be developed due to the complexities and challenges of the in-home care setting.

*“Employers have a social responsibility to make work placements available, although they will always have an eye on recruitment benefits.”*



## Bedford Group

For a large disability service provider in South Australia, selecting the strongest workers as team leaders to supervise students has proven successful in providing opportunities in both residential and in-home work settings.

The Bedford Group is the second largest employer of people with disability in Australia, providing a range of services for more than 1300 clients across 18 sites in South Australia.

Wherever it has capacity, Bedford is committed to supporting the disability services sector by facilitating work placements and offering potential workers good experiences and learning opportunities.

Bedford provides both student placement and traineeship models, seeing a need for both in generating high quality workers.

*“It’s a good opportunity here because Bedford has people living in houses and we have community centres, so it gives them some quite varied roles and experiences to explore before they go out to full-time employment.”*

### Placement settings

The main settings for student work placements and traineeships are Bedford’s centre-based and community-based services that provide clients with independent living skills.

Student placements for supportive and independent living services, which are more challenging to manage, have not been operating for the past six months due to COVID-19 and a shortage of staff. Nevertheless, Bedford’s past experiences with student placements in supported independent living services were successful.

Students started their work placements in Bedford’s residential care centre before moving to the environment of independent living houses. Clients were supportive of students in their homes.

The need to have a good balance was very important so that each student felt they were a valued member of the team where they were encouraged and able to learn and develop.

*“valuable opportunity for them to be having their placement on site rather than them feeling that they are a hinderance.”*



“

*It’s beneficial both for the residents and for our team to see what is happening and the changes and value students can bring into the team as well. There are benefits from both sides, but it is labour intensive and challenging financially.*

The main challenges Bedford identified were gaps in student training and the cost of supervising students where margins in supported independent living services were reducing. Training in manual handling and personal care are two areas that students needed to be well prepared for when undertaking work placements in supported independent living. Despite the challenges, Bedford is looking to taking on students for in-home settings again in the future.

## Partner selection

Bedford has relationships with a select few RTOs for student work placements, and a single RTO for traineeships.

Setting clear expectations about student readiness and RTO support during the placement is very important for Bedford. This includes communication with the RTOs about the electives Bedford considers to be the right fit for their work environment and discussions about key elements for work placement booklets and the practical support supervisors need to provide.

*“We tend to have a bit more influence around what we think will be beneficial to the support worker from a workplace point of view and service provider point of view that at the end of this placement these are the things we would prefer you had knowledge of to come on board with Bedford.”*

## Engagement points

Bedford is invited by RTOs to speak to trainees about the services it offers and has been involved in workshops so students can identify what settings they would prefer, and Bedford can determine who is a better fit for their services/organisation.

Before a traineeship or work placement starts the RTO attends a meeting with the manager and student in the first instance and complete any of the paperwork. The RTO also returns for onsite visits during the placement.

## Induction

Induction for students and trainees is like new staff induction. They meet with their manager/supervisor on the first morning and do a tour of the site, undertake a workplace health and safety induction, discuss the program, how it operates and Bedford’s expectations of them. They are then introduced to clients and buddy up with the staff member they will work alongside for their placement.

Bedford makes sure everyone is clear about what students can and can’t do on placements. Students are reminded that as a placement rather than a traineeship they are always under supervision and told who to speak to if at any point they feel unsafe or not being supervised appropriately.

## Supervisor selection and support

Bedford ensures line managers have teaching and assessment qualifications so that they can support workplace supervisors to feel confident with the students in a variety of settings and situations. Bedford likes to have the student’s work placement book in advance so the supervisor can work through it during the placement while encouraging the student to adopt a practice of self-directed learning.

## Continuous improvement

Bedford’s experiences from student work placements have been positive and a key learning has been to not take on too many students at one time so they can receive a quality experience.

With demand for quality workers continuing to increase, trainees and students are a good recruitment pipeline.

*“Student placements can offer a lot of positives in an industry that does have its retention challenges.”*



# Glossary



## ASQA

The Australian Skills Quality Authority is the national regulator for Australia's VET sector.

## Assessment

The process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package or a VET accredited course.

## Certificate III in Individual Support

A qualification that reflects the role of workers in the community and/or residential setting who follow an individualised plan to provide person-centred support to people who may require support due to ageing, disability or some other reason.

## Mandatory work placement

A form of assessment in some qualifications and units of competency that requires a learner to complete a certain amount of time on the job before competency is determined.

## RTO

A Registered Training Organisation is a provider registered by ASQA (or a state regulator) to deliver nationally recognised VET training and qualifications. RTOs can be public (TAFEs), private or community-based organisations. The RTO will have the necessary authority to require and facilitate the work placement.

## RTO Assessor

An appropriately qualified educator for Certificate III in Individual Support who has current industry practice as a Personal Care/Support Worker, and who is employed by the RTO to facilitate student learning and assessment, off campus in the workplace setting. The RTO assessor will hold a valid Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or higher qualification.

## Service provider

An organisation providing services to aged care and disability support clients. The service provider will have the necessary authority to host the work placement.

## Student

The person enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support with an RTO. The student is not an employee, contractor or agent of the service provider and is not entitled to receive wages or other remuneration from the service provider for the tasks performed as part of the work placement.

## Student co-ordinator

A worker designated by the service provider to arrange student placements, oversee administrative requirements and liaise with students and RTOs. Not all service providers will have this position.

## Student facilitator

A worker designated by the RTO to recommend students for placements, execute placement processes and checks, and liaise with the service provider. Not all RTOs will have these positions.

## Student logbook

A document designed to support the workplace learning plan and be used:

- by the student and workplace supervisor during the work placement to monitor and record student attendance
- for workplace supervisors and RTO assessors to log any discussions, feedback, incidents or concerns during placement
- for the student to reflect on their own performance.

## Supplementary evidence

Additional documentation used by assessors to support a candidate's claim of competence. This could include reports from students' supervisors, colleagues and/or clients, testimonials from employers, work diaries and evidence of training.

## VET

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is training in technical, job-related skills. It provides students with specific skills to help them in the workplace, and enables them to gain qualifications for all types of employment.



## Work placement

An essential component of the education process to enable students to achieve overall competence in specific units and ultimately the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing, Home and Community). It can also be referred to as vocational placement or student placement.

## Work placement agreement

An agreement between the three parties to the work placement – the RTO, service provider and student. It documents the terms of the agreement and the roles and responsibilities for each party. It should be signed by each party to demonstrate their understanding and commitment to the placement arrangements.

## Workplace buddy

A worker designated by the service provider to provide day to day support and guidance to the student. The buddy has the capacity to demonstrate tasks, provide informal feedback and answer any student queries.

## Workplace learning plan

A document that describes the learning objective of the placement and the agreed learning experiences and workplace tasks that the student will be exposed to during the placement.

## Workplace supervisor

A worker designated by the service provider to develop and confirm the learning plan in collaboration with student and the RTO and to provide formal supervision. The workplace supervisor monitors the student's completion of required tasks and provides constructive feedback as required.



# Resources and templates



## Selecting an RTO: A guide for service providers

### Questions to ask RTOs

This resource is for service providers who are looking for an RTO to partner with in offering work placements to students, or who've been approached by an RTO to offer work placements. It provides a list of topics to explore and issues to discuss with RTOs to determine whether they deliver high quality services, how they approach, or would approach, work placements, and to help you decide whether they'd make a suitable work placement partner.

### About the RTO

Find out some general information about the RTO such as:

- how long they've been delivering nationally accredited training in individual support
- the scope of their operations (e.g. do they specialise in health and community services, or do they offer qualifications in a range of industry areas?)
- how many students they have.

If you've been approached by an RTO to host student work placements, you might like to ask why they've approached your organisation. This will give you a sense of what they're looking for in a work placement partner and whether their values align with yours.

### Evidence of high-quality delivery and outcomes

Discuss with the RTO:

- their completion rate and employment outcomes for students enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support
- how they deliver the Certificate III in Individual Support (e.g. online, classroom or a combination. Note that 100% online delivery is not considered best practice)
- whether they offer the full range of elective subjects
- whether students have access to simulated workplaces with modern equipment to practise their skills before a work placement

- how they keep up to date with changes in the industry
- how they make sure their trainers and assessors have current knowledge and skills.

Note: You might want to do a background check of the RTO to find out whether it's been subject to any adverse decisions by the regulator. You can find more about how to do this in the guide – Building a Skilled Workforce.

### Preparing students for work placements

Work placements tend to be more successful when RTOs have properly prepared students for the experience.

Discuss with the RTO:

- how they prepare students for work placements. For example, how they make sure students:
  - understand the nature and requirements of the job and are suited to work in the industry
  - know what's expected of them in the workplace, including dress standards, punctuality, how they'll interact with supervisors and clients etc
- which components of the qualification students complete before their placement
- how they assess whether students have the basic skills and knowledge needed for a work placement, including:
  - communication skills
  - knowledge of infection control procedures
  - understanding of workplace health and safety requirements
  - manual handling skills
- processes for getting criminal history clearances for students
- processes for ensuring students meet government mandated vaccination requirements.



## Working together

Ideally the RTO will involve you at all stages of the work placement.

Discuss with the RTO:

- what role you'll have, if any, in selecting students for work placement with your service
- whether you'll have the opportunity to interview students prior to placement
- how and how often they will engage and communicate with you during the placement
- what their process is for identifying and resolving issues that arise during the placement.

## The RTO's approach to work placements

Find out how the RTO conduct work placements, or intend to conduct work placements, and what they expect from you. You could discuss:

- how their work placements are structured (e.g. one block near the end of the qualification or several blocks through the training)
- what kind of workplace experiences they hope students will have (e.g. what type of service delivery, range of clients and work tasks do they expect students to be exposed to?)
- whether they prepare learning plans for student placements which articulate learning objectives and the intended scope of workplace experiences and tasks. If so, you might like to ask to look at one
- what supporting documents they provide, such as student logbooks. Again, you might like to ask to have a look at these
- whether students can fit in with your hours of operation and preferred dates and times
- how they conduct assessments in the workplace, including:
  - the respective roles of the workplace supervisor and RTO assessor
  - what's expected of workplace supervisors in collecting supplementary evidence
  - how RTO assessors conduct their assessments in the workplace

- whether they offer any support and training for workplace supervisors
- whether they have a standard work placement agreement they enter with service providers. If so, ask for a copy. If not, discuss the kind of agreement you'd like to have with them
- whether they can provide a forward schedule of work placements and numbers of students over a given period.

## Support for students

It's critical that students are well supported by the RTO during the placement. Find out how the RTO does this. For example:

- whether they have a student facilitator who can liaise with you and the student and help with logistical requirements
- how often someone will visit the student at the workplace during the placement
- how often they will contact you and the student during the placement
- what extra support do they give students who need it, including:
  - students with additional learning needs
  - vulnerable students and young students
  - students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- what they do if concerns or issues can't be resolved on site between the student and your staff.



## Review and evaluation

Ideally you can establish a process for reviewing and evaluating work placements, so they improve over time.

Discuss with the RTO:

- whether they'll record and share students' feedback about their work placement experience
- whether they have processes for receiving and discussing feedback from workplace supervisors at the end of placements
- how they action any agreed improvements
- how they measure the success of work placements.

## References

At the end of the discussion, ask if the RTO is willing to give you the names of two or three other service providers they work with, who'd be willing to talk to you about their experience of working with the RTO.



## Selecting a service provider: A guide for RTOs

### Questions to ask service providers

If you're looking for a service provider to take students on work placement, before entering an agreement, take some time to find out about the values of the organisation and the quality of services they provide.

This checklist gives you some sample questions to ask.

#### About the service provider

Find out some general information about the service provider. For example:

- how long they've been operating
- the range of services they offer
- whether they have multiple delivery sites
- the number of staff employed at each site
- the number of clients and client profile (e.g. whether they service clients with dementia, challenging behaviours, physical or intellectual disabilities, CALD or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background).

#### Evidence of high-quality delivery and outcomes

Ask the service provider about:

- their client satisfaction rate
- the general levels of qualifications held by staff.

#### Their approach to work placements

Find out whether the service provider currently offers work placements and how they approach them, or how they would approach them if they don't already. Discuss with the service provider:

- how many students they can accommodate on work placements
- how their hours of work are structured for placements (i.e. start and finish times and available work days)
- the kinds of clients students will work with
- what equipment students have access to

- whether students can access service and client documentation, including access to IT facilities if needed
- the range of workplace experiences and tasks they can offer students
- whether they have someone in a student co-ordinator role to oversee student placement arrangements and liaise with the RTO
- workplace supervision, including:
  - how they select and support workplace supervisors
  - what qualifications and experience their workplace supervisors have
  - whether workplace supervisors have experience in completing documents associated with work placements, such as student logbooks
- whether staff are familiar with work placement learning plans
- whether they're willing for relevant staff to receive training and support from you in relation to workplace assessment practices, completing student logbooks and other arrangements
- whether they have a documented process to support work placements
- What public liability and professional indemnity insurance they have
- whether they're willing to sign a work placement agreement which sets out the roles and responsibilities of each party
- whether they're willing to agree to a forward schedule with numbers of students and timing of work placements.



## Support for students

It's critical that students are well supported through the placement. Find out what support the service provider currently offers or would be able to offer. For example:

- what introduction to the organisation students are given
- what measures are taken to make sure other staff know students are coming and help to make them feel welcome
- how they communicate with students about their daily roster and work duties
- how they ensure students aren't asked to do tasks that are outside the agreed scope
- how often their workplace supervisor meets with students and provides feedback
- whether students are given:
  - a designated workspace
  - a locker to store their personal belongings
  - a uniform and name tag
- what procedures they follow when students or RTO staff experience a problem during the placement which can't be resolved onsite
- whether students are given a work buddy to provide informal supervision and day-to-day support
- how work buddies are selected and what support they would be given.

## Review and evaluation

Ideally you can establish a process of working with service providers to review and evaluate work placements, so they improve over time. Ask the service provider:

- whether they record and share students' feedback about their work placement experience with RTOs
- how they measure the success of work placements for their organisation
- how they refine and improve their work placement processes, based on student and RTO feedback
- how they use their experience in hosting work placements to help RTOs improve the quality of their training and assessment.

- whether students can access service and client documentation, including access to IT facilities if needed
- the range of workplace experiences and tasks they can offer students
- whether they have someone in a student co-ordinator role to oversee student placement arrangements and liaise with the RTO
- workplace supervision, including:
  - how they select and support workplace supervisors
  - what qualifications and experience their workplace supervisors have
  - whether workplace supervisors have experience in completing documents associated with work placements, such as student logbooks
- whether staff are familiar with work placement learning plans
- whether they're willing for relevant staff to receive training and support from you in relation to workplace assessment practices, completing student logbooks and other arrangements
- whether they have a documented process to support work placements
- What public liability and professional indemnity insurance they have
- whether they're willing to sign a work placement agreement which sets out the roles and responsibilities of each party
- whether they're willing to agree to a forward schedule with numbers of students and timing of work placements.



## Fact Sheet: Regulation of Vocational Education and Training

The provision of Vocational Education and Training is regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or a state regulator in Victoria or Western Australia. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) must be registered with the relevant regulator to deliver nationally recognised VET training and qualifications. RTOs are required to comply with the [Standards for Registered Training Organisations \(RTOs\) 2015](#) and deliver training and assessment as set out in the relevant industry training package.

The [qualification details](#) for the Certificate III in Individual Support (CHC 33015) are part of the Community Services Training Package.

ASQA publishes the [Users' guide to Standards for RTOs 2015](#) to help RTOs and other stakeholders understand the standards expected of RTOs. Of particular interest to service providers is the requirement that RTOs [engage with industry](#). The Users' Guide also advises how RTOs must [conduct effective assessment](#) and [use other parties to collect assessment evidence](#).

ASQA publishes certain regulatory [decisions and notices](#) about RTOs on its website, including administrative sanctions, conditions and rejections.

The national register, [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au), maintains a complete list of RTOs, including those registered to deliver the Certificate III in Individual Support. The national register includes information about the decisions and notices made by regulators.

The Australian Government also operates [My Skills](#), which is designed to help consumers choose courses and training providers that best suit their needs. It's a national directory of VET organisations and courses, with functions to search for and compare VET courses and training providers.

For more information about how the VET sector operates, refer to ASQA's [VET sector overview](#).



## Fact Sheet: Regulation of Aged Care and Disability Support services

### Aged Care

Aged care services are regulated by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Its role is to approve providers' entry to the aged care system, to accredit, assess, investigate and monitor aged care services against requirements, and to hold providers to account when they don't meet their obligations.

The Commission publishes all non-compliance by providers and regulatory actions taken by the Commission in the [Non-compliance against the Quality Standards register](#).

Regulations cover both [Residential services](#) (which include residential aged care services and flexible care services which provide short-term restorative care in a residential care setting) and [home services](#) (which include home care services, Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) services and flexible care services which provide short-term restorative care in a home care setting).

More detailed information about an individual service's performance against the Quality Standards is available from the [Find a report](#) section of the Commission's website. More information about the Quality Standards can be found on the Commission's [Quality Standards page](#).

### Disability Support

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) is responsible for registering and regulating providers and the quality and safety of NDIS services. The NDIS Commission publishes the following information about disability service providers:

- [Part 1 of the NDIS Provider Register](#) contains information about all registered NDIS providers and is regularly updated. The information on the NDIS Provider Register includes:
  - Identifying information including the provider's legal name, suburb and Australian Business Number (ABN).
  - Registration groups, which are the groups (or classes) of supports and services being delivered by the provider under the NDIS.
  - Additional conditions of registration imposed under the NDIS Act. These conditions are displayed on the NDIS Provider Register in the 'Additional conditions of registration' section.
- [Part 2 of the NDIS Provider Register](#) contains the compliance and enforcement actions taken against NDIS providers where requirements for delivering NDIS supports and services have not been met. The NDIS Commission may take action against an NDIS provider where it determines that the provider has not met its conditions of registration or the NDIS Code of Conduct. The NDIS Commission also publishes the actions taken concerning providers who are not registered but who are subject to the NDIS Code of Conduct.



## Fact Sheet: Meeting legal requirements for work placements

Below are some of the common legal requirements that need to be addressed prior to work placements.

Note that these details were correct as of November 2021. You will need to check with the relevant authorities for any updates since this time.

### Pre-employment checks

Students undertaking work placements in aged care and disability support services may require specific checks to gain admission to particular work environments.

RTOs need to allow sufficient time for these checks to be finalised ahead of placements and need to have discussed with students the implications of a negative outcome, ideally prior to enrolment into the course.

Where a student is under 18 years of age, parental consent may be required to apply for pre-employment checks. RTOs also need to ensure that they have sought the student's express consent to share the outcome with service providers and will need a policy to govern the retention, storage and destruction of these records.

Depending on the work environment, one or more of the following may be required:

- National Police Check –
  - This is mandatory for programs under Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997, which includes students on vocational placement.
  - International students and others who have lived overseas for any period of time after the age of 16 must provide an additional statutory declaration.
  - Where an aged care provider is a registered NDIS provider, the NDIS Worker Screening Check may be recognised so that both clearances are not required.
- NDIS Worker Screening Check –
  - Registered NDIS providers must ensure that key personnel and other workers in certain types of roles have a worker screening clearance that meets the requirements of the NDIS Practice Standards.
  - In certain circumstances, some of the acceptable checks from the transitional period can continue to be relied on to meet the worker screening obligations.
  - The circumstances are specified in the provisions that relate to the relevant state or territory in Part 4 of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Practice Standards – Worker Screening) Rules 2018.
- Working with Children Check –
  - certain people who work, or will be working, for a registered NDIS provider, in a risk assessed role and who work with children will need to be screened and hold both a Working with Children (WWC) Card and an NDIS Worker Screening Check (NDIS Check) clearance in order to do so.
  - The NDIS Check and WWC Check both involve different legislation. The NDIS Check is based on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Worker Screening) Act 2020. There is no national framework setting out the requirements for obtaining a Working With Children Check. Each state and territory has their own procedures and requirements.



## Vaccinations

RTOs need to ensure that their students meet any mandated vaccination requirements prior to their placement and ideally students should be informed of these requirements before they enrol in the qualification.

All residential aged care workers are required to provide their employer with evidence of their COVID-19 vaccination or authorised exemption. Residential aged care providers are required to keep a record of workers' vaccination status, in line with the direction set out in the relevant state or territory public health order.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee is considering mandating COVID-19 vaccination for all in-home and community aged care workers nationally.

Some states and territories have included these workers in the mandatory requirements:

- On 1 October 2021, the Victorian Government announced mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for all authorised workers. This includes in-home and community aged care workers.
- On 13 October 2021, the Northern Territory Government announced the introduction of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for workers in high-risk workplaces. This includes in-home and community aged care workers.
- On 15 October 2021, the New South Wales Government announced that it is a requirement for all in-home and community aged care workers to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This includes all in-home aged care and Commonwealth Home Support Programme workers.
- On 20 October 2021, the Australian Capital Territory Government announced the introduction of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for in-home and community aged care workers.

The Australian Government has not mandated vaccinations for disability support workers but strongly urges these workers to get vaccinated. Requirements may differ across state and territory governments.

[Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination in aged care | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

[Information for disability workers about COVID-19 vaccines | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

These links provide information about vaccination requirements across different jurisdictions.



## Workplace Health and Safety

Workplace Health and Safety requirements for work placements and the agreements between training providers and service providers also vary across jurisdictions.

RTOs need to make sure that the workplace in which students are going to undertake their placement provides a safe environment, that students have undergone relevant workplace health and safety training before the work placement and that the worksite provides a safety induction for the student and appropriate supervision during the entire placement.

The service provider will have certain legal responsibilities relating to the duty of care required for all people on their premises and some legislation treats students on placements similarly to employees.

## Insurance

Both RTOs and service providers need to consider their own insurance needs and take legal advice on their obligations.

In some instances, insurance arrangements for student placements may be covered by a Volunteers Insurance Policy but this would need to be confirmed by service providers.

If a student is required to drive a service provider's vehicle, they will need a suitable driver's license and insurance arrangements should be clarified and documented.



## Work placement checklist for RTOs

This checklist is designed to help RTOs work through the tasks involved in organising successful work placements for their students. Before organising placements, you'll need to have found a suitable service provider to work with (see the resource *Selecting a service provider – a guide for RTOs*) and have a work placement agreement signed or ready to sign (see the *Work Placement agreement template*). Note that this checklist list may not cover everything you agreed to do as part of your agreement.

It's likely that various staff members will take responsibility for different aspects of the work placement. You might find it useful to assign some of the checklist tasks, along with timeframes, to those with appropriate responsibility. Completed checklists and supporting documents can be stored with student management files for future reference.

### Pre-placement

#### Check that students are suitable and ready

Before students can start work placements, you need to confirm that they're suitable and ready to enter a workplace. Students must undergo criminal history screening, meet other legislative requirements (e.g. hold vaccination certificates), and be fit enough to perform workplace roles. They also need to have enough knowledge and skill to complete the required tasks safely.

Note that pre-employment criminal history checks can take some time, depending on whether parental (or guardian) permission is required, how common the student's name is and whether there are any matters to be considered. Make sure you allow enough time for these checks to be finalised.

Check that the following have been done before the start of placements.

- Have you (or your students) applied for the relevant pre-employment checks? Students may need one or more of these clearances:
  - National Police Check – required for aged care services
  - NDIS screening check – required for disability support services
  - Working with Children Check – required for services involving young people under the age of 18.

- Have you assessed your students' knowledge and skills in the following areas?
  - workplace health and safety
  - manual handling skills
  - infection control procedures
  - communication skills.
  - (Note that students may still be developing in some areas, but they should at least have enough knowledge and skills to work safely and minimise harm to themselves and others.)
- Have you checked that students have complied with all relevant government health directives regarding vaccinations?
- Have students been made aware of the following obligations they have in the workplace?
  - not attending unwell – students must not come to the workplace if they're unwell as they could put vulnerable clients at risk
  - presenting to work in a fit state – students must not present to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including certain prescription medications)
  - behaving in a professional manner – students must comply with relevant codes of conduct and behave appropriately in the workplace
  - workplace health and safety (WHS) – students must comply with all workplace health and safety policies and procedures
  - documentation requirements – students need to complete all documents and records required by the service provider, legislation and accrediting body
  - following directions – students are to comply with safe and reasonable directions and let staff know if they're asked to do tasks that are beyond their capability
  - not attempting tasks beyond their learning – while students are encouraged to show initiative, they shouldn't attempt work tasks that are outside their scope of practice



- confidentiality – students must keep all information about clients, visitors, other staff and the service provider confidential
- dealing with challenging behaviour – students should know how to deal safely with challenging behaviours and have strategies to de-escalate issues
- duty of care obligations and mandatory reporting – students should know their duty of care obligations and when and how they're required to report suspected abuse
- taking care of property – students must not misuse or damage property while on work placement
- any other matters as agreed with the service provider.

### Liaise with the service provider about selection of students

- Have you confirmed with the service provider:
  - the type of students that will be best suited to a placement in their service
  - the range of learning experiences and work tasks they can offer students
  - the location of placements
  - placement work hours?
- Have you talked to the service provider about how students will be selected and their role in the selection process? For example, the service provider may want to interview potential students before the placement. If so, you'll need to give them student details and let students know about the interview process.
- Let students know when they've been selected for work placements and confirm that they have accepted the offer. Advise students who were not selected by the service provider.

### Develop workplace learning plans

- Have you worked with students to develop workplace learning plans which include a learning objective, associated learning experiences and work tasks?
- Have you confirmed with the service provider that they can offer the tasks and experiences in the plan and provide an appropriately qualified supervisor?

### Confirm agreements and arrangements

- Have you, the student and service provider all signed the work placement agreement?
- Does each party have a copy of the agreement, workplace learning plan and any other supporting documents for their records?
- Does the service provider have copies of all relevant student documents? For example:
  - criminal history screening clearances
  - vaccination certificates
  - driver's license (if required).
- Has the service provider given students the information they need to start the placement, such as when and where to turn up?
- Have you introduced the workplace supervisor to relevant RTO staff? Have you confirmed that they understand their role and the role of RTO staff in conducting assessments and completing documentation?
- Have you offered a briefing session and other support to the supervisors, buddies, student co-ordinator or other staff about the student placement arrangements and objectives?
- Have you inspected the workplace site to check workplace health and safety arrangements? Has this been documented?
- Have you considered inviting staff from the service provider and/or previous work placement students to talk to students about what to expect at their workplace, how they support students on work placement and to answer any questions students may have?



## During the placement

Once the placement starts, the RTO plays a critical ongoing role in supporting students and conducting assessments. Your continued investment and commitment will help to make the work placement a success, and will also help foster a strong, collaborative relationship with the service provider.

Have you done the following?

- Planned for an RTO staff member to attend the site orientation and induction with the students, so you know that students understand what's required of them and their questions have been answered.
- Scheduled weekly check-ins with the student and workplace supervisor, allowing enough time to discuss and resolve any issues (usually about an hour). Agree how you'll meet (i.e. remotely or onsite).
- Given contact details of relevant RTO staff to students and supervisors in case any issues arise.
- Agreed with the supervisor when and how you will carry out assessments.
- Agreed on a process for resolving any issues, including:
  - when and how you'll be notified if there's a student concern or issue which can't be resolved directly between the student and the other party
  - when and how you'll be notified if the service provider has a concern or issue which can't be resolved directly between the staff member and the student
  - who from the RTO and the service provider will meet to discuss these concerns or issues
  - who will investigate the concern or issue further if it is of significant concern and remains unresolved
  - who will initiate the formal dispute resolution process as outlined in the agreement.

## Post placement

After the placement, it's a good idea to gather feedback as soon as you can, and to reflect on and document what went well and what you'll do to improve future placements.

When the placement has ended:

- check that the supervisor has completed all necessary documentation
- seek written feedback from students, RTO staff and service provider staff on their placement experience
- arrange a briefing session with your staff to discuss and document what worked well, any issues or concerns, and opportunities for improvement
- arrange a meeting with the service provider to discuss student and staff feedback and the outcomes of your staff debriefing session
- agree and document actions that can be taken to improve future work placements
- consider how feedback from the service provider can be used to improve the quality and industry currency of your training and assessment services
- document feedback from the service provider to inform self-assurance and continuous improvement strategies and as evidence of industry engagement
- record the costs and benefits to your organisation of the placements, including whether students go on to work for the service provider and the service provider's performance during the work placement. This will help you track performance improvement over time and will contribute to future evaluations.
- consider recording interviews with students who have completed their placement, to show future students
- if your students received exceptional support from any particular staff at the service provider, consider passing this on to their senior manager(s)
- consider promoting work placements in your newsletter or through social media, congratulating students, the service provider and your staff on the successful completion of their placement.

## Work placement checklist for service providers

This checklist is designed to help service providers work through the tasks involved in organising successful work placements. In the first place, you'll need to have signed a work placement agreement with an RTO which sets out your respective roles and responsibilities.

It's likely that various staff members will be responsible for different aspects of the work placement. You might find it useful to assign some of the checklist tasks, along with timeframes, to those with appropriate responsibility. Completed checklists and supporting documents can be stored with student management files for future reference.

### Before the placement

#### Select students

It is good practice for service providers to be actively involved in selecting students for work placements. This helps make sure students are well-matched to the needs and culture of your organisation.

- Establish and document a process for assessing prospective students referred to you by RTOs.
- Agree with the RTO about what type of information you'd like to receive about prospective students, when you'd like to receive it and in what form. For example, you might like to know a bit about students' background, prior work experience, strengths, career goals and whether they have any additional support needs.
- Nominate staff to be involved in the selection process. For example, you may appoint a student co-ordinator to oversee work placements who can:
  - review student information and select students to interview
  - conduct interviews
  - inform the RTO of outcomes.
- Develop your approach to interviews and the questions you'll ask. While interviews may be quite informal, it's important that the selection process is fair and non-discriminatory. Interview questions should relate directly to the placement requirements and all students should be asked the same or similar questions.

- When you receive information from the RTO about prospective students, confirm that students:
  - are suited to the placements you're able to offer
  - can work within your desired work hours
  - can travel to your site
  - meet any other requirements you have.

### Confirm that students are prepared for their placement

- Confirm that students have the required knowledge and skills for their placement. The RTO should assess students' knowledge and skills in the following areas:
  - workplace health and safety awareness
  - manual handling skills
  - infection control procedures
  - communication skills – the RTO should feel confident that students have sufficient English language skills to communicate effectively with clients and staff.

Note that students may still be developing in some, or all these areas. At this stage, it's enough that they have the knowledge and skills to work safely on placement.

- Confirm with the RTO that students have:
  - Had any required pre-employment screening checks, such as:
    - National Police Check
    - NDIS Worker Screening Check
    - Working with Children Check
  - confirmation of vaccination
  - driver's license (if required).



- ❑ Confirm with the RTO that students have been made aware of their obligations on work placement, which include:
  - ❑ not attending unwell – students must not come to the workplace if they're unwell as they could put vulnerable clients at risk
  - ❑ presenting to work in a fit state – students must not present to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including certain prescription medications)
  - ❑ behaving in a professional manner – students must comply with relevant codes of conduct and behave appropriately in the workplace
  - ❑ workplace health and safety (WHS) – students must comply with all workplace health and safety policies and procedures
  - ❑ documentation requirements – students need to complete all documents and records required by the service provider, legislation and accrediting body
  - ❑ following directions – students are to comply with safe and reasonable directions and let staff know if they're asked to do tasks beyond their capability
  - ❑ not attempting tasks beyond their learning – while students are encouraged to show initiative, they shouldn't attempt work tasks that are outside their scope of practice
  - ❑ confidentiality – students must keep all information about clients, visitors, other staff and the service provider confidential
  - ❑ dealing with challenging behaviour – students should know how to deal safely with challenging behaviours and have strategies to de-escalate issues
  - ❑ duty of care obligations and mandatory reporting – students should know their duty of care obligations and when and how they're required to report suspected abuse
  - ❑ taking care of property – students must not misuse or damage property while on work placement
  - ❑ any other matters as agreed with the service provider.

### Appoint a workplace supervisor and workplace buddy

Workplace supervisors and buddies play a critical role in making sure students are well supported and have a successful work placement.

- ❑ Develop duty statements for the roles of workplace supervisor and workplace buddy and consider how these extra duties will be accommodated and recognised.
- ❑ Appoint suitable staff to these roles.
- ❑ Brief supervisors and buddies on the work placement agreement, workplace learning plans and their roles and responsibilities.
- ❑ Provide supervisors and buddies with information about each student and the work placement arrangements, including a copy of the work placement agreement, workplace learning plan and supporting documents.
- ❑ Arrange for supervisors and buddies to receive coaching, mentoring, or training as required.
- ❑ Let supervisors and buddies know if any students have any additional support needs.
- ❑ Arrange an introductory meeting between workplace supervisors and buddies, and the RTO student facilitator and/or RTO assessor to discuss roles and responsibilities in supporting and assessing students and completing documentation.



## Preparing for placement

- Check that you have the following information and documents:
    - a copy of a signed workplace agreement and workplace learning plan for each student
    - relevant information about the student, such as:
      - contact details
      - proof of identity – passport, birth certificate
      - pre-employment checks
      - vaccination certificates
      - driver's license.
    - a copy of any relevant supporting documentation such as student logbooks.
  - Send the student (and cc the RTO) a letter of introduction that includes relevant information about your organisation and the work placement, such as:
    - arrangements for the first day—where to go, what time to arrive and who will meet the student
    - transport options for travelling to the facility—carparking, bike racks, change facilities and public transport options
    - a map of the site and facility
    - what to bring (and what not to bring) to the workplace on the first day
    - dress and uniform standards (if relevant)
    - facilities available for personal storage
    - facilities nearby (food outlets, banks, post offices and other amenities)
    - a roster with mealtimes and breaks
    - name and contact details of their supervisor and buddy
    - who to contact if they are unwell or unable to attend.
  - Inform residents/clients and their families about the work placement, explaining the purpose and benefits of student placements, and seek their consent (where necessary) to the student providing care and support.
- Tell your staff about the work placement and explain the benefits to your clients, staff and the sector of student placements.
  - Make sure the student is entered into relevant information technology (IT) and human resource (HR) systems before the placement begins.
  - Organise a space for the student to store their personal belongings and to work on assessment tasks.
  - Organise an orientation and induction session for the student/s' first day.



## During the placement

### Site orientation and induction

It's important that students receive a thorough orientation and induction on their first day. Placements can be daunting. A comprehensive introduction to your organisation will help the student feel welcome, comfortable and confident, and to enjoy their work placement experience. It also helps to protect the student, clients and other staff during the placement, and serves to build your reputation as an employer of choice.

- ❑ Organise an orientation that includes:
  - ❑ a general introduction to the organisation (mission statement, philosophy, services offered, units/departments, standards of practice, lines of communication/reporting, hours of operation, etc)
  - ❑ a tour of the site and facility
  - ❑ an introduction to key staff members, including supervisors and buddies.
- ❑ Check that on the first day, the student is given all the information and documents they need.

### Important workplace policies and procedures

- code of conduct
- how to identify and report any concerns about resident/client welfare
- WHS and emergency procedures
- confidentiality and privacy policies, conflict of interest policies, codes of practice and any other documents regarding ethical issues
- bullying, harassment, and discrimination policies
- expectations of professional behaviour, including any written protocols on behaviours (for example, protocol for observing clients, codes of conduct)
- information or guidelines for providing sensitive and culturally appropriate communication and care for specific client groups
- dress/uniform standards (where relevant).

### Relevant information about staff and the organisation

- map of the workplace
- staff lists with roles/delegations
- a list of staff you'd like the student to meet during the placement
- information on routine procedures (in/out communication board, phone messages and use of email/internet/computers)
- job descriptions, particularly of roles the student is learning
- policy and procedures manuals and how to access them
- administrative procedures (report writing protocols and standards, guidelines for recording information/statistics)
- relevant legislation of which students should be aware
- other special or specific workplace requirements.



### Other helpful information

- who to go to if they have concerns or questions
- facilities nearby (for example, food outlets, banks, gyms, post office, public phones and amenities)
- mealtimes/breaks
- use of site facilities, for example, lunchrooms and other amenities.
- Conduct and document your own assessment of the student's knowledge of WHS requirements.
- Clarify work tasks with the student, distinguishing between:
  - tasks they can perform on their own with indirect supervision
  - tasks they can perform with direct supervision
  - tasks they should not perform under any circumstance during the placement.
- Let them know what to do if they're asked to do tasks that are outside the agreed rules.
- Collect relevant information and forms, for example, next of kin and emergency contacts.
- Give the student what they need for the placement, such as a locker key, access card, IT system access and uniforms.
- Give the student a copy of their roster with details of their work tasks and expectations.

### Support for the student

- Explain to the student the role of the workplace buddy and supervisor.
- Set up a process for checking that supervisors and buddies are performing their roles adequately.
- Make sure the supervisor schedules regular meetings with the student, allowing enough time to:
  - check the student is receiving adequate guidance and feedback
  - check if the student is experiencing any difficulties e.g. with tasks or because of differences between work practices and their training
  - check the student is getting the learning experiences, tasks, equipment and documentation they need to meet the learning objective of the workplace learning plan

- review the student's written work
- give constructive feedback that is:
  - aligned with the student's learning goals
  - focused on observed behaviours
  - positive and encouraging
  - based on facts (not generalised)
  - documented as relevant, and
  - followed up at a later date
- complete relevant sign-offs and other documentation.
- Make sure the student is informed if buddies or supervisors aren't available on any given day or for a period of time.
- Offer to debrief students, either individually or as part of a group, if an incident occurs. Debriefs should be structured and timely—usually within 48 hours of an incident occurring.
- Check that the RTO assessor (or student facilitator) is meeting regularly with the student and the workplace supervisor. If not, follow up with the RTO.
- Check that the RTO assessor has (or plans to) attend the workplace to formally assess the student's performance.



### What to do if there are issues or concerns

- Establish and communicate processes for dealing with issues or concerns, including:
- who the student can approach if they have a concern about or issue with their buddy, supervisor, or other member of staff (including contractors or other students or volunteers)
- who the student's buddy or supervisor, or other member of staff can approach if they have a concern or issue with the student
- who will notify the RTO if the concern or issue cannot be resolved on-site directly between the student and the other party
- who, from the service provider and RTO will meet to discuss the concern or issue if it cannot be resolved on-site directly between the student and other party
- who's responsible for investigating the concern or issue if it remains unresolved and of significant concern
- who's responsible for initiating the formal dispute resolution process outlined in the agreement.
- 

### After the placement

To fully realise the benefits of a work placement and improve future placements, it's important to take the time at the end of the placement to:

- finalise any outstanding requirements
- discuss possible job opportunities with the student (if appropriate)
- reflect on what went well and what could be improved
- capture written feedback.
- At the end of the placement, check that:
  - you've formally recorded the end of the placement and cancelled IT and site access
  - the supervisor has completed all necessary documentation
  - the student has returned any equipment or items belonging to the service provider
  - the buddy, supervisor and other staff have given feedback on the student's performance to the student co-ordinator or other nominated staff member

- a nominated staff member has conducted an exit interview with the student and sought feedback on their placement experience.
- Debrief with your own staff and with the RTO:
  - schedule an internal meeting with relevant staff to discuss what worked well, issues or concerns, and opportunities to improve future placements
  - schedule a meeting with the RTO to jointly consider student and staff feedback and outcomes of internal meetings
  - agree and document actions in response to these learnings.
- Assess and record the costs and benefits to your organisation of hosting the placement, including whether the student goes on to work for your organisation. This will help you to track performance improvement over time and will contribute to future evaluations.
- Consider celebrating and promoting a successful work placement. For example:
  - hold a social function for staff, residents/clients and their families to mark the end of the student placements
  - write an article for your site's newsletter and/or social media site congratulating students and staff on the successful completion of their placement.



## Work placement guide for students

This checklist is designed to help students prepare for and get the most out of their work placement experience. Work placements give you an opportunity to put into practice the theory you're learning in the classroom, and to demonstrate your abilities to a potential future employer. In fact, placements are sometimes called 'long interviews' because employers often use them to assess whether students would make suitable employees. A work placement can also help you decide what areas of work you enjoy, which can help with future career and study choices.

You'll get the most out of your placement if you prepare well, put in your best effort and learn all you can while you're there.

### Before the work placement

#### Do you have the right knowledge and skills?

It's up to your training provider to make sure you have the knowledge and skills needed for a work placement. You should have learned some theory and had the chance to practise your skills in a simulated workplace before your placement. Your training provider will assess whether you have the knowledge and skills you need, such as:

- your awareness of workplace health and safety requirements
- manual handling skills—you may still be developing these, but you should be able to work at a level that is safe for yourself and others
- infection control procedures
- communication skills – your training provider should feel confident that you have sufficient English language skills to perform in a work setting.

#### Have you met mandatory requirements for the workplace?

Before you're allowed into the workplace, you'll need to meet some mandatory requirements. You'll need to have all vaccinations mandated by the government and you'll also need to apply for pre-employment criminal history checks, which include one or more of the following:

#### Have you met mandatory requirements for the workplace?

Before you're allowed into the workplace, you'll need to meet some mandatory requirements. You'll need to have all vaccinations mandated by the government and you'll also need to apply for pre-employment criminal history checks, which include one or more of the following:

- National Police Check—to work in aged care
- NDIS Worker Screening Check—to work for registered National Disability Insurance Scheme providers
- Working with Children Check—to work for registered National Disability Insurance Scheme providers, in a risk assessed role and who work with children.

If you're under 18, parents/guardians may have to provide consent for some of these applications.

Talk to your training provider if you haven't been told about these checks or the costs involved. Costs may have been included in your student fees or they could be additional.

If you're studying on a student visa, check whether you need to provide any extra information before you can attend workplaces.

Check whether you need to hold a current driver's license for your work placement.

#### Do you understand your workplace obligations?

Your training provider should make you aware of your obligations while on a work placement. These include:

- medical fitness—you need to be healthy while on work placement. Turning up unwell could put vulnerable clients at risk.
- presenting to work in a fit state—you can't present to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including certain prescription medications)
- behaving in a professional manner—you need to comply with codes of conduct and behave professionally in the workplace
- strictly adhering to the site's workplace health and safety policies



- understanding the importance of documentation—you need to fill in documents as required by the employer and by laws and accrediting bodies
- complying with safe and reasonable directions—you need to follow all safe and reasonable directions and let staff know if you're being asked to do something that's beyond your capability
- not attempting tasks beyond your current level of learning—it's great to show initiative, but don't take on work tasks that are beyond your scope of practice
- keeping information confidential, including any information about the employer, clients, visitors, and other staff
- dealing with challenging behaviour—you should have strategies for dealing with clients' challenging behaviour and for de-escalating issues
- understanding duty of care obligations and mandatory reporting of suspected abuse—make sure you know what your obligations are and the procedure for raising concerns
- taking care not to misuse or damage property.

If you're unclear about any of your legal or ethical obligations, or how to work safely, make sure you ask your trainer for advice.

### Do you have a workplace learning plan?

Your trainer should involve you in developing a workplace learning plan for your placement that includes a learning objective, the learning experiences and work tasks you'll be exposed to and how your performance will be assessed. This plan will help your training provider match you to a suitable service provider for work placement.

- Check that you fully understand your workplace learning plan, what's expected of you, the role of the supervisor and how the training provider will conduct the assessment.

### Do you understand the selection process?

Your training provider is likely to send relevant information about you and your work placement learning plan to an employer for their consideration. You may be asked to attend an interview.

At an interview, the employer will want to know that:

- you're interested in learning about their work
- you have the maturity and aptitude needed to work in your selected area
- you'll cope with the complexities and challenges of a placement
- you're able to take the lead in your own learning
- you have good spoken and written communication skills.

It's a good idea to prepare for the interview and to think about how you'll demonstrate that you're suited to a placement with the organisation. Think of some questions to ask the employer. For example, you could ask for their perspective on your learning plan objectives or ask questions about the organisation.

If you're currently employed by a service provider and want to do your work placement with them, you can ask your training provider if that's possible.

### Do you have a Work Placement Agreement?

Before your placement, you'll be required to sign a Work Placement Agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of the placement. Check you understand the work placement agreement and that you can comply with its requirements. If you're not sure about any aspect of the agreement, talk to your training provider.

- Check you've been given a copy of the signed agreement and any supporting documents.

Note that the employer will also sign the agreement and be given relevant information about you, such as copies of your criminal history checks and confirmation of your vaccination status.



### Are you prepared for Day 1 of your placement?

The employer or your training provider should give you all the information you need to start your work placement, including instructions for the first day, such as when to arrive, where to go, who will meet you, what to wear and who to contact if you have a valid reason for not attending.

- Contact your trainer if you don't have this information.

It's normal to feel a bit nervous about your placement. It can help to do some preparation beforehand. For example, you could:

- revise relevant course material
- talk to other students about their placement experiences
- do some research about the employer by browsing their website
- find out what support is available during your work placement.

### Starting your placement

On the first day, you should be given a thorough orientation and workplace induction, with information about the organisation, a tour of the site and facility and an introduction to key staff members. There'll be lots of information to take in. It's a good idea to take notes for future reference, including names of people you're introduced to and any questions you want to follow up about.

Below is a checklist of things you should find out on your first day.

### Workplace policies and procedures

It's important to know about the following workplace policies and procedures and where to find them if you need to refer to them during the placement. These include:

- workplace health and safety and emergency procedures
- confidentiality and privacy policies
- conflict of interest policies
- codes of practice
- bullying, harassment, and discrimination policies

- expectations of professional behaviour, such as protocols for observing clients and codes of conduct
- guidelines for working with particular client groups, such as clients from CALD backgrounds
- how to identify and report concerns about resident/client welfare
- protocols for report writing and guidelines for recording information
- relevant legal obligations of workers
- dress/uniform standards (where applicable)
- where to find policy and procedures manuals.

### Information about the organisation and staff

- map of the workplace
- site facilities, such as carparks, shower and change facilities, lunchrooms, lockers and other amenities
- facilities nearby, such as food outlets, banks, gyms and post office
- staff lists with roles and delegations
- descriptions of roles in the organisation
- information about communication procedures, for example, using computers, internet and email, phone messages, in/out communication board.



## Student information

On your first day, you should be introduced to your buddy, supervisor and other key staff. You should also be told who you can go to if you have any questions or concerns. You should be given practical information about your placement, such as when you can take mealtimes and breaks, and what tasks you'll be given.

- Check that by the end of the first day, you have:
- met your supervisor, buddy, and other key staff
- been given an orientation of the site and the organisation
- been given (or know you will be given) an induction
- IT access, an access card, personal storage facilities and access to equipment you need, such as personal protective equipment
- a roster, role description and a clear understanding of your daily tasks and work expectations.

If you don't have all of these, speak to your buddy or supervisor.

## During the placement

### After the first week

By the end of the first week, you should feel confident that:

- you're clear about the work tasks and learning opportunities you'll be given and that they meet your placement learning objectives
- you're getting enough day-to-day guidance and feedback from your buddy or other staff
- you're doing tasks that are within your skill level and that you can do safely
- you have access to the equipment you need, including equipment to do your assessment such as IT, and patient and organisational files
- your supervisor and RTO assessor are scheduled to meet with you regularly
- your RTO is checking in to see how you're settling into the placement
- you know how to raise any concerns you may have about the placement or about the safety of residents/clients.
- Talk to your supervisor if you're not confident about any of these aspects of your placement.

## Meetings with your supervisor

The role of your workplace supervisor is to oversee your placement and meet with you regularly to:

- confirm you're being given suitable work that aligns with your workplace learning plan
- check that you're able to handle the work you're being given and that work practices align with your training
- make sure you have access to the learning experiences, equipment and documents you need
- make sure you're receiving constructive feedback and guidance
- complete sign-offs and other relevant documents
- review your written work
- help to resolve any issues that come up.

Your supervisor should give you constructive feedback that is:

- aligned with your learning goals
- focused on observed behaviours
- positive and encouraging
- based on facts and specific (not generalised)
- documented.
- They should also follow up and check how you're going in addressing feedback.

While the supervisor will collect evidence about your performance to give to the RTO, it's not their job to formally assess your performance. That will be done by the RTO assessor.

You'll get the most out of meetings with your supervisor if you come prepared. Be ready to reflect on your practice and to discuss how you've addressed any previous feedback. Have written work and required documents with you and write down any questions you have for the supervisor. Raise any issues you might be having.



## What if things go wrong?

Working in the aged care and disability support sectors can be very rewarding but can also present personal challenges and expose you to some confronting, distressing and demanding situations. If a particularly difficult incident occurs during your placement, your employer should offer you a chance to debrief with someone, within 12 to 48 hours of the incident. A debrief is a formal, structured reflection about the incident and actions taken, designed to give you a safe environment to openly express your feelings. The intention is to help you positively process incidences and reflect on what could have been done differently.

Some of the challenges of a work placement will come from interactions with other workers or clients/residents. During your placement you're expected to interact in a mature and professional way and to keep smaller issues in perspective. However, if you have significant concerns about how you're being treated by a staff member or resident/client, their families or visitors, you should raise this with your supervisor. If the concern persists, you should notify your training provider.

Most issues will be able to be resolved on-site quickly with the help of your trainer or workplace supervisor. If that's not the case, the work placement agreement sets out a formal dispute resolution process, which can be used as a last resort. If you end up in a dispute with someone during your placement, remember that you should not make any disparaging remarks about the organisation or its staff, residents, and clients. This includes on social media.

## After the placement

Below is a list of things that should happen at the end of or after your placement.

- You may want to thank residents/clients and their families with whom you've had regular contact, for their contribution to your learning.
  - If you enjoyed your placement and want to be considered for future work opportunities, let your supervisor know.
  - There may be aspects of your placement that you haven't enjoyed. If you want to give professional and constructive feedback to the service provider, use formal channels (not social media) such as a survey or a confidential email to the service provider and your training provider.
- Complete all relevant forms before you leave, including feedback forms, and hand back any equipment or documentation that belongs to the service provider.
  - Your supervisor should complete any outstanding sign-offs or documentation. Talk to your training provider if you don't have these within a reasonable amount of time.
  - Formally thank the staff that have helped you during your placement. This can be as simple as an email or a cup of coffee. If someone's been especially supportive, you might want to email their supervisor to let them know.



## Work Placement Agreement template

Below is a sample work placement agreement.

Before using this template, please note the following:

### Check whether you're obliged to use a different agreement

Find out whether your organisation or industry association has an existing work placement agreement template that you're obliged to use.

### Some issues may not be covered in this template

This template is intended as a starting point only. It may not cover all aspects of work placements and you might want to add clauses to address issues such as:

- gambling or smoking in the workplace
- whether students may be subject to random drug and alcohol testing on work placements
- the use of protective clothing
- the protection of intellectual property and conflict of interests
- whether the RTO holds personal accident insurance that will cover the student in the event of accidental injury, disability or death where no party is at fault.

While the template relates to mandatory work requirements in the Certificate III in Individual Support, it could potentially be used for other qualifications. If so, unique requirements of the qualification might need to be included in the agreement, such as clinical requirements for a nursing placement.

### Due diligence is required

Service providers and RTOs are advised to do their own due diligence and to seek legal advice before signing agreements.

### Acknowledgement

The *Human Services Skills Organisation* would like to acknowledge and thank *Aged and Community Services Australia* for permission to adapt their work placement agreement template to reflect the requirements of Certificate III in Individual Support.



# Work Placement Agreement template

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The service provider has agreed to accept a student enrolled in a Certificate III in Individual Support at the RTO for the purpose of undertaking a voluntary, unpaid work placement.
- 1.2.** The student is undertaking study in an area relevant to the service provider and the student wishes to complete a work placement with the service provider to complete the mandatory work requirement of this qualification.
- 1.3.** The RTO has specified the learning objective/s, learning experiences and workplace tasks to be undertaken by the student during the work placement in support of the formal assessment requirements of the Certificate III in Individual Support to be undertaken by a qualified assessor.
- 1.4.** This Work Placement Agreement (this agreement) sets out the terms and conditions of these arrangements and the role and obligations of each of the parties.

## 2. Work placement details

**2.1.** This agreement is made on the [INSERT DAY] day of [INSERT MONTH] of [INSERT YEAR]

between the parties:

- [INSERT FULL NAME] of [INSERT ADDRESS] in the State of [INSERT STATE OR TERRITORY] ("Student"), and
- [INSERT SERVICE PROVIDER'S NAME] of [INSERT SERVICE PROVIDER'S ADDRESS] in the State of [INSERT STATE OR TERRITORY] ("Service provider"), and
- [INSERT RTO'S NAME] of [INSERT REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATION'S ADDRESS] in the State of [INSERT STATE OR TERRITORY] ("RTO").



## Work Placement Agreement template

### 3. Summary of work placement

<b>Position title</b>	[INSERT POSITION TITLE]
<b>Effective start date</b>	[INSERT START DATE]
<b>Expected completion date</b>	[INSERT EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE]
<b>Total number of placement hours</b>	[INSERT EXPECTED NUMBER OF HOURS]
<b>Hours of duty</b>	[INSERT HOURS OF DUTY] For example Hours as rostered between the hours of 6.00 am and 8.00 pm Monday to Friday
<b>Remuneration</b>	The student will not receive remuneration, payment, or similar benefit (of any form) for the placement. The benefits to the student are outlined in this agreement.
<b>RTO name</b>	[INSERT RTO NAME]
<b>Service provider name</b>	[INSERT SERVICE PROVIDER NAME]
<b>Student name</b>	[INSERT STUDENT NAME]



## 4. Purpose

**4.1.** The purpose of this agreement is to document the arrangements that have been agreed between the RTO and the service provider to support student work placements for the Certificate III in Individual Support.

**4.2.** By signing this agreement (at schedule 1), the parties to the agreement, students, service providers and RTOs, are committing to upholding these arrangements.

## 5. Work placement

**5.1** A work placement is a structured learning experience which gives students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom in a work environment. Students undertake tasks that relate to their vocational course and their competency is assessed in the workplace by a suitably qualified assessor.

**5.2** In the context of this agreement, the work placement is a mandatory requirement of the Certificate III in Individual Support and students are not required to be paid. The student benefits from this arrangement by gaining practical experience in the workplace and by having the opportunity to satisfy the mandatory work requirements of the Certificate III in Individual Support.

## 6. Definitions

**“Agreement”** means this work placement agreement.

**“Buddy”** is the staff member appointed to provide daily guidance to the student during their work placement. The buddy should be a trusted staff member with the skills and abilities to convey best practice through example and the capacity to answer questions and to help the student to translate theory into practice during the work placement.

**“Confidential information”** includes any information (in any form) relating to the service provider’s business including names of residents or care recipients, information relating to the service provider’s fees, technical matters and data, trade secrets, marketing procedures and information, accounting programs and procedures, financial information, salaries, strategic and business plans and any like information relating to the service provider’s business and all other information which is imparted to the student and/or the RTO in

circumstances which the student and/or the RTO knows or ought to reasonably to know that the information is confidential to the service provider. It does not include information that is in the public domain.

**“RTO”** is the Registered Training Organisation the student is enrolled with to undertake the Certificate III in Individual Support.

**“RTO assessor”** is an appropriately qualified educator for Certificate III in Individual Support who has current industry practice as a Personal Care/Support Worker, and who is employed by the RTO to facilitate student learning and assessment, off campus in the workplace setting. The RTO assessor will hold a valid Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or higher qualification.

**“Schedule”** means the schedule to this agreement.

**“Service provider”** is the aged care or disability support service provider that is hosting the student on a work placement.

**“Site”** means any site on which the service provider operates an aged services or disability services facility or on which the service provider provides services.

**“Student”** is the person enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support undertaking the work placement. The student is not an employee, contractor or agent of the service provider. They do not receive any wages or other remuneration from the service provider for the work placement apart from reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses required to safely complete their work placement.

**“Supervisor”** is the staff member designated by the service provider to develop and confirm the learning plan in collaboration with the RTO and to provide formal supervision to the student. The supervisor monitors the student’s completion of required tasks and provides constructive feedback as required.

**“Supplementary evidence”** is additional evidence presented to RTO assessors to support a candidate’s claim of competence. This could include reports from supervisors, colleagues and/or clients, testimonials from employers, work diaries and evidence of training.

**“Workplace learning plan”** documents the learning objective of the placement and the agreed learning experiences and workplace tasks that the student will be exposed to during the placement. It is prepared by the RTO and agreed to by the service provider.



## 7. Supporting documents

**7.1** This agreement should be supported by a workplace learning plan that is developed by an RTO and agreed to by the service provider prior to the placement to ensure the workplace can offer the required learning experiences.

**7.2** The workplace learning plan should include the following information and supporting documentation:

- the learning objective of the placement
- the units of competency to be assessed during the placement
  - the type of residents/clients the student will interact with
  - the equipment, documents, policies and procedures the student will have access to
- guidance for workplace supervisors about:
  - how to make consistent judgements about student's skills in performing tasks
  - the requirements of the RTO's assessment process
  - the documentation they'll need to complete.
- supporting documentation such as student logbooks and learning portfolios
- advice on the RTO's assessment plan including when the assessor needs to be on-site and contact details for the assessor.

## 8. Student obligations

**8.1** The student is responsible for undertaking tasks to the best of their ability while at the service provider's site, in line with the learning objective of the placement and their individual learning needs as documented in the workplace learning plan.

**8.2** The student acknowledges the voluntary nature of the placement and that they are not an employee of the service provider for the purposes of the work placement. The student acknowledges that no remuneration is payable.

**8.3** The student agrees to:

**8.3.1** attend the site of the service provider at the agreed dates and times or notify the service provider and RTO when this is not possible due to ill health or any other reason

**8.3.2** be in a fit state of health to carry out their agreed duties and be unaffected by illegal or prescription drugs and/or alcohol. The possession of illegal drugs while on the placement will result in this agreement being immediately terminated

**8.3.3** comply with all relevant government health directives and the service provider's policies and procedures in relation to vaccination against and management of communicable diseases

**8.3.4** behave in a professional way at all times by complying with the service provider's code of conduct, speaking respectfully to residents, clients, staff, volunteers and members of the public, and dressing appropriately

**8.3.5** act honestly and in the best interest of the service provider

**8.3.6** comply with all occupational health and safety requirements of the service provider

**8.3.7** promptly follow lawful and suitable directions of the service provider and staff in respect to carrying out the agreed duties

**8.3.7** carry out all duties carefully, safely and responsibly

**8.3.8** cooperate and assist management and others as and when required

**8.3.9** inform the service provider of any accident, injury, near miss or hazard, in which an injury occurs or could reasonably be expected to have occurred as soon as practicable

**8.3.10** not place themselves or others at risk by practising outside their level of student learning or work placement learning plan

**8.3.11** immediately inform the workplace supervisor or other nominated staff member if they are requested to undertake any task/s that they feel uncomfortable about or not yet capable of performing



**8.3.12** keep all information relating to the service providers, residents/clients, staff, or volunteers confidential and, when in doubt, seek guidance from the supervisor before disclosing any information to anyone not associated with the work placement

**8.3.13** notify the supervisor of any observations or suspicions of verbal or physical abuse of a resident or client by another resident, client, employee, volunteer or visitor while undertaking the placement

**8.3.14** not misuse or damage property belonging to the service provider or resident/client and immediately notify the supervisor of any misuse if witnessed during placement

**8.3.15** not make comments about the service provider, its clients and residents to the media (including social media) unless expressly authorised to do so by the service provider

**8.3.16** immediately notify the service provider if arrested, charged or convicted of a criminal offence during the placement.

**8.4** The student understands that they may not be covered for personal injury, loss or damage of property if no-one is found to be at fault. The student should consider making their own arrangements for personal injury insurance after checking with their RTO.

## 9. Service provider obligations

**9.1** The service provider is responsible for providing supervised learning opportunities in a safe work environment which meet the objectives of the work placement learning plan.

**9.2** The service provider agrees to:

**9.2.1** keep confidential all personal details about the student and provide them with the same privacy and confidentiality afforded to staff and volunteers as detailed in the service provider's policies and procedures

**9.2.2** make available to the student all service provider's policies and procedures necessary to carry out a thorough orientation and induction of the student at the commencement of the work placement. The student's signature will be sought to demonstrate that they understand and agree to these requirements. This process will include but not be limited to:

**9.2.2.1** familiarisation with worksite, amenities, equipment, relevant staff, reporting structure, coaching support and debriefing

**9.2.2.2** assessing the student's workplace health and safety competence and compliance appropriate to their level of responsibility and relevance to the workplace learning plan

**9.2.2.3** overview of management policies and procedures relating to code of conduct, bullying and harassment, information technology, the use of illicit and prescription drugs, alcohol, privacy and confidentiality, residents'/clients' rights, mandatory reporting and the duty of care to ensure students understand that these requirements apply to them as well as staff

**9.2.2.4** clinical care responsibilities such as medication handling and infection control.

**9.2.3** provide learning experiences for the student in accordance with the workplace learning plan and in collaboration with the RTO

**9.2.4** act in accordance with workplace responsibilities as set out in the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 and the Regulations made under that Act

**9.2.5** not provide tasks which are known to exceed the student's learning or level of skill expected to be achieved from the work placement.



**9.2.6** Designate a member of staff who has the necessary skills to act as a buddy to the student and convey best practice, provide constructive feedback, instruction and guidance to assist the student to achieve the work placement learning plan objectives for the duration of the work placement.

**9.2.7** Designate a member of staff who has the qualification and/or length of experience as agreed to by the RTO, as the student's supervisor to collect supplementary evidence, provide feedback to the student and RTO about the student's workplace performance, confirm attendance and complete student logbooks.

**9.2.8** Effect and maintain [INSERT AMOUNT] public liability insurance and [INSERT AMOUNT] professional indemnity insurance for the purposes of indemnifying the RTO and the student from and against all claims, actions, proceedings or demands in respect of any loss, death, injury, illness or damage howsoever arising out of the service provider's employee's negligent acts and omissions or breach of this agreement during the placement. The service provider agrees to produce to the RTO evidence of the insurance policies as and when required by the RTO.

## 10. RTO obligations

**10.1** The RTO is responsible for supervising the student on work placement in collaboration with the service provider and for assessing their competence against nationally accepted requirements.

**10.2** The RTO agrees to:

**10.2.1** adequately assess students prior to work placements to ensure students are suitable and willing to undertake the tasks that are required to fulfil the work placement objectives, including possessing the adequate communication skills and understanding of the English language to perform the tasks necessary to meet the objectives of the work placement

**10.2.2** obtain from the student a current [INSERT NAME OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT CLEARANCE] which remains current for the duration of the placement and ensure the student has no previous convictions which would exclude them from working in the [INSERT NAME OF SERVICE SECTOR] current as outlined in [INSERT NAME OF RELEVANT LEGISLATION] and provide a copy to the service provider

**10.2.3** ensure students have complied with all relevant health directives in relation to vaccination for communicable diseases

**10.2.4** discuss with the student their functional capacity and fitness to perform the tasks and duties necessary to work in [INSERT NAME OF SERVICE SECTOR] and make reasonable effort to screen those students who, due to fitness or functional capacity, would be placed at risk of harm or injury to themselves, or others during the work placement

**10.2.5** provide assurance to the service provider that the student has achieved minimum skill level to commence the work placement component of their course

**10.2.6** prepare the student for the work placement by delivering instruction about industry expectations relating to documentation and the pace required in a work environment, the purpose and importance of the service delivery environment, and awareness of how to respond to client abuse, and challenging behaviours that may be encountered in the workplace

**10.2.7** meet their obligations under the Workplace Health and Safety legislation including, but not limited to, ensuring that a service provider site risk assessment is completed at least annually

**10.2.8** gather the evidence required to assess the student's competency against the work placement objectives in conjunction with the service provider, and perform the assessment

**10.2.9** take responsibility for initiating regular contact with the student and service provider to obtain feedback and discuss progress for the duration of the work placement



**10.2.10** provide mediation between the student and the service provider in the event of any dispute, performance management issue, misunderstanding etc. which cannot be resolved on site

**10.2.11** immediately make the service provider aware of any reason that becomes apparent which indicates that the student may not be fit to perform their duties to an acceptable standard without presenting a risk to themselves or others, at any time during the work placement

**10.2.12** effect and maintain [INSERT AMOUNT] public liability insurance and [INSERT AMOUNT] professional indemnity insurance for the purpose of indemnifying the service provider from and against all claims, actions, proceedings or demands in respect of any loss, death, injury, illness or damage howsoever arising out of the RTO's employees or the student's negligent acts and omissions or breach of this agreement during the work placement. The RTO agrees to produce to the service provider evidence of the insurance policies as and when required by the service provider

**10.2.13** advise the student that they may not be covered for personal injury or loss or damage to property by the service provider if no one is found to be at fault and discuss insurance cover with the student prior to the placement.

## 11. Dispute resolution

**11.1** The parties agree that this agreement may be suspended by the service provider or RTO if the service provider or RTO reasonably believe that any party has committed a serious breach of this agreement.

**11.2** In the event of a suspension pursuant to clause 11.1, the party initiating the suspension must conduct an independent investigation of the alleged breach.

**11.3** Upon conclusion of the investigation and receipt of the findings of the investigation, the party who has initiated the suspension may in its absolute discretion determine whether the agreement should be terminated without notice or whether the agreement shall continue.

**11.4** The service provider, the student and/or the RTO will meet and make every effort to resolve any dispute that arises between the parties out of, or in connection with, the work placement or this agreement.

**11.5** Should the service provider, the student and/or the RTO fail to resolve any dispute that has arisen between the parties out of, or in connection with, the work placement or this agreement, the recommended next course of action is to appoint an independent mediation service. If the dispute remains unresolved, either party may serve a Notice of Dispute on the other. Every effort must be made to ensure the student is not embroiled in a Notice of Dispute or legal proceedings.

**11.6** At the expiration of 14 days after service of the Notice of Dispute, the service provider, the student and/or the RTO shall, if any attempt to resolve the dispute has been unsuccessful, have the right to commence legal proceedings.

## 12. Variation/Cancellation

**12.1** The parties agree that:

**12.1.1** the terms and conditions of this agreement form an agreed minimum standard and cannot be varied. Any additional requirements must be agreed to in writing by the RTO, the service provider and the student, and attached as a separate document

**12.1.2** the agreement may be terminated at any time by the RTO, the service provider or the student by giving seven days' notice in writing to each of the other parties as long as every effort has been made to minimise any resulting disadvantage to the student

**12.1.3** this agreement may be terminated by the service provider or the RTO summarily at any time with immediate effect if any party fails, omits or neglects to comply with the service provider's policies and procedures, or if the student is guilty of misconduct in connection with the performance of the duties under the work placement.



## 13. Schedule 1

### Declaration

By signing this agreement, I declare that I understand and agree to the terms and conditions in full as outlined in the agreement.

### Student

Name:

Signature:

Date:

### [INSERT SERVICE PROVIDER ORGANISATION NAME] representative

Name:

Signature:

Date:

### [INSERT RTO NAME] representative

Name:

Signature:

Date:



## Work placement student feedback survey

It's important that both Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and service providers monitor and evaluate work placements, so they continue to improve over time. Capturing structured post-placement feedback from students, service provider staff and training provider staff will help you understand what's working well and what could be improved.

It's best practice for student feedback to be shared openly between service providers and RTOs, and for parties to discuss and document opportunities for improvement and action to be taken. Service providers and RTOs should also seek feedback from their own work placement staff, to inform a debrief between the parties.

Below are some suggested questions to ask in a student survey at the end of a placement.

### Student feedback survey questions

Your feedback is important to both your training provider and work placement employer because it helps improve work placements for future students and improve training overall.

**All feedback is kept strictly confidential.**

Please complete this survey form to the best of your ability by providing honest and constructive feedback.



Placement details	
Student name (optional)	
Qualification Certificate III in Individual Support	Certificate III in Individual Support
Organisation name and site location	
Placement length	
Placement dates	
Workplace supervisor/s	
Workplace buddy/s	
Workplace manager	

Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Before placement - preparation by your training provider	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
My training prepared me well for my work placement.						
I felt involved in developing my workplace learning plan.						
Please comment on any areas in which you didn't feel adequately prepared for the placement by your training provider. How could this be improved?						
Before placement - preparation by your work placement employer	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The information I received from the employer before my first day was helpful.						
The workplace orientation and induction prepared me well for my placement.						
Please comment on any areas in which you didn't feel adequately prepared for the placement by the employer. How could this be improved?						



Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

During placement – support from the employer	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Work tasks and expectations were made clear to me.						
The work tasks and learning experiences supported my learning objectives.						
I had sufficient access to equipment and documentation to complete my work.						
There was sufficient variety in the residents / clients I interacted with.						
I received enough guidance to complete my daily work tasks.						
I received enough informal feedback.						
I was able to access my supervisor when needed.						
The feedback I received from my supervisor was constructive and helpful.						
My logbook and other materials were completed promptly.						
I felt welcomed and valued during my placement.						
Please comment on any ways in which support from the employer could be improved.						



During placement – support from your training provider	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	
I felt supported by my training provider.							
I understood the assessment process.							
I was able to access my trainer or assessor when needed.							
Please comment on any ways in which support from your training provider could be improved.							
<b>General feedback</b>						<b>Rating</b>	
On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent), how would you rate your placement experience?							
What's the main reason for your rating?							
						Yes	No
Would you recommend this placement host to another student?							
Would you consider working for this employer in the future?							
Are you still committed to working in the industry?							
Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make about the work placement experience?							



## Acknowledgement

The Guide was designed following extensive consultation with RTOs, service providers, students and other stakeholders. A number of these organisations also generously shared their own resources.

The HSSO would like to thank all those who contributed their experience and insights to inform development of the guide, including the 206 RTOs that took the time to respond to a survey and the four organisations that gave their time to development of the case studies. These contributions are highly valued.

The HSSO would also like to acknowledge the work of Aged Care Services Australia (ACSA) in developing Best Practice Guidelines for Vocational Placements in the Aged Services Sector. The Guide draws on this earlier work in recognition of the quality of those guidelines.





Preparing Students for Work

Certificate III in Individual Support Work Placement Guide for

# Human Services Providers and RTOs

