

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.

