

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.

