

Work Experience Guide

f o r b u s i n e s s



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The Cairns Regional Jobs Committee is proudly supported and funded by the Queensland Government

Partner with schools

to influence education, training pathways and youth career development into your workforce and/or industry sector



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Acknowledgements

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for their support, insights and commitment to building a strong future workforce.

For further information about skills, training and resources, visit:
www.cairnsrjc.com.au



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You can't BE what you can't SEE

If we want to ensure the longevity of our professions and industry sectors, we need to support and inspire the next generation of workers. Hosting a student for work experience isn't just a favour to them - **it brings real value to your business.**

It gives you the chance to showcase your industry and road test potential future employees, while also supporting the next generation of workers. Students bring fresh energy and perspectives as they learn directly from your team, asking questions and gaining insight into your industry.



Work experience is a great way to connect classroom learning with real-world practice and you get to play a part in shaping that journey! By offering hands-on experience, you can help young people grow in confidence, independence, and maturity, while also promoting your business as a leader in community engagement and workforce development.

Plus, it's an opportunity to build your talent pipeline and connect with motivated young people who may become valuable employees in the future.



Think of work experience as a **recruitment strategy**. It's a fantastic opportunity for students to gain insight into the working world.

It helps to strengthen their network, build valuable skills and experience that can inform their resumes when applying for future jobs.

By participating in a program with a company that supports work experience, students get a firsthand look at what a professional environment is really like.

It's also a great way to explore a potential career path before committing to further study. Experiencing a profession early on can help students decide whether it's the right fit for them, potentially saving time and effort down the track.

Introduction

Thank you

for considering becoming a host workplace and providing support for school students seeking work experience

This initiative provides a vital link between young people and the world of work and ensure students gain realistic industry experience.

Being a part of work placement programs can help you:

- identify talented future employees in your local area,
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff,
- provide students with knowledge of the value of work,
- raise the quality of those coming into your industry.

By partnering directly with local high schools or organisations such as Vocational Partnership Group (VPG), you have the opportunity to influence education, training pathways and youth career development into your workforce and/or industry sector.

This guide has been **written specifically for employers and workplace supervisors, looking to participate in work experience.**

It explains your role in hosting a student in your workplace and provides resources to further assist you in creating a well-planned meaningful experience for students.





The Benefits

of becoming a host workplace

"Few moments are as rewarding as seeing a former student return to the clinic — not as a learner, but as a skilled professional. Hearing someone say that you were the reason they chose this path is the kind of impact that stays with you forever."

Kimberley Campbell - Little Sparrows Therapy



Participate in the education and career development of young people in the region



Strengthen links with your local community



Promote and raise your business profile



Raise the quality and skills of those coming into your industry



Promote the attitudes and skills you want in your workforce



Support workforce age diversification



Be a part of a 'grow your own' workforce strategy



Identify talented future employees in your local area

REAL outcomes

Dreams take flight

Belenda, a Year 10 student at St Monica's College with an interest in aviation, participated in a VPG-coordinated work experience placement with **Jetstar at the Cairns Airport.**

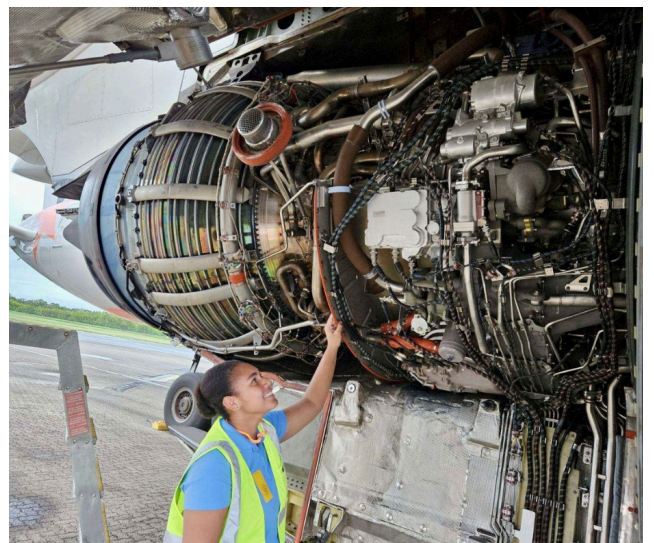
Positioned on the domestic and international tarmac, Belenda worked closely with Jetstar's aviation engineers, assisting with aircraft engineering and maintenance tasks — from changing oil and pumping fluids in cooling systems to learning about cockpit components and their functions.

Jetstar's team were impressed by Belenda's enthusiasm and curiosity, welcoming her as part of their crew and giving her a genuine insight into the aviation industry.



This placement not only sparked her motivation but also gave her practical skills and knowledge to help guide her future career choices.

Thank you to Jetstar for providing such a meaningful and immersive experience for local youth like Belenda — helping to inspire the next generation of aviation professionals.



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Host workplaces



A host workplace may be ...

a company, a small business, an association, a local authority, a government department, a statutory authority or any other body that can provide workplace exposure in an area identified as part of a student's educational plan or intended career path.

An ideal host workplace is collaborative, inclusive and maintains high levels of communication throughout. The best school-to-work programs are those in which a solid partnership is fostered between the workplace, school, students and parents.

It is important that **all staff in your workplace are aware of the school-to-work program** your business is offering, the **purpose of the students' work placement and their own role** in supporting this initiative. This way it will be a welcoming and supportive experience.



Supervisors and key contacts

To provide students with the best opportunity to learn in your workplace...

It is important to appoint a Workplace Supervisor.

This person acts as a point of contact, a role model and coach for the student, during their time in your business. This position also provides a **fantastic development opportunity for your staff members to enhance their mentoring and supervisory skills.**

To provide a richer, quality experience, workplace supervisors are fundamental.

An effective workplace supervisor will:



provide a safe and supportive workplace, ensuring the student understands their safety rights and responsibilities



engage the student straight away, as the first hour can set the tone for the week. Likewise, debrief with the student at the end of each day and plan tomorrow's work



provide constructive feedback and encouragement on tasks performed



have a reserve list of tasks if the student works quickly - busy students tend to be happier and learn more



act as a role model and be patient with the student



maintain a record of progress by completing the student's work placement record



raise any concerns and provide feedback to the school or provider in a timely manner



ensure students take breaks within shifts, know where the break room is and where they can store any food items





The Program

“Decide on how many students you will take in a year and stick with that. Don’t over commit yourself, your staff or your business. Doing so may dilute the experience for all involved.”

Andrew Cornes - Grant Thornton

Work experience...

gives students a feel for a particular industry or workplace that they are interested in working in the future

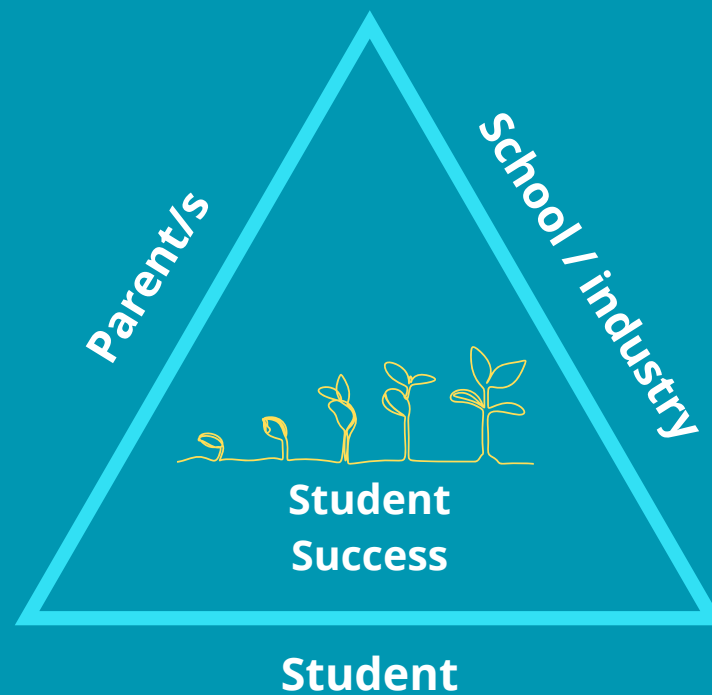
- >> Generally, students enrolled in school (including those registered for home education) will commence work experience in Year 10
- >> Students can participate in work experience for up to 30 days in a calendar year
- >> Generally, students will not have been taught industry specific skills, however they will have acquired soft skills to be able to carry out basic tasks allocated by their supervisor and make observations of the workplace

- >> The aim of work experience is to provide exposure and insights into the industry and the workplace
- >> If you require a relevant qualification (such as RSA or Blue Card for students who are 18 years and over) to undertake work experience, let your student or organising body know well in advance
- >> Activities and tasks should not require extensive training or expertise
- >> Each individual work experience placement must be approved by the school Principal
- >> Work experience may be offered to a student, with a view to progressing to a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship
- >> Work experience is unpaid

“As an aspiring Marine Biologist, work experience on tourism boats to the Great Barrier Reef was extremely beneficial in preparation to my future. I delved straight into the work force and immediately acquired skills that will one day help me to excel in the industry.”

Luka De Campo - Year 11 Smithfield State High School





In education, the "triangle of support" is a collaborative model involving students, parents, and schools/community/industry, all working together to support student success.

Students are both at the centre and the foundation of the triangle, responsible for actively engaging in their learning and commit to their own development through effort, communication, and openness to feedback.



REAL outcomes

Building a future

Milla, a Year 10 student at St Monica's College, took her first step into the working world through a VPG-coordinated placement with **Lekker Urban, a local Cairns-based civil engineering business.**



During her placement, Milla worked alongside engineers on development plans and projects, used AutoCAD for design, attended site inspections, and immersed herself in the corporate environment. Her passion for drawing, design, and problem-solving came alive, with the role of maths in engineering standing out as a highlight.

Exploring both engineering and architecture as career pathways, this experience deepened her interest and enthusiasm for the industry.

Josh Affleck, Civil Lead at Lekker Urban, shared,

"Giving young people opportunities like this is key – it helps inspire the next generation of engineers and addresses the growing skills shortage within the industry. It's all about building the future."

We couldn't agree more. A big thank you to Lekker Urban for hosting Milla and supporting local youth to gain meaningful exposure to the field.



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The Employers' role & responsibilities

Getting Started

- >> Generally, a school/work placement agency will contact an employer in their student's interest field to see if opportunities are available. The school will have their own documented processes and procedures
- >> If you believe you have an opportunity available in your workplace, for a work experience placement, you can contact your local school directly, or an organisation such as Vocational Partnership Group (VPG)
- >> Workplace position arrangements are negotiated & agreed with the school, student and parent
- >> Required documents are completed:
 - ☒ Risk Assessment (schools are required to complete a risk assessment of the workplace)
 - ☒ Work Experience Agreement form
 - ☒ RSA, White, Yellow or Blue Card if applicable
 - ☒ Any others specific to your workplace
- >> Complete your own due diligence (check your insurance, risk assessments, safety requirements and ensure all documents are signed)



Preparing the workplace

- ✓ Appoint a workplace supervisor or key contact for your student.
- ✓ Discuss / document their role and ensure they have the resources to fulfil this role. It is important that students are supervised for their safety and yours.
- ✓ Develop a documented induction plan to provide the student a structured introduction to the workplace - a description of the business, key staff, roles and responsibilities, health & safety, workplace rules and discuss confidentiality.
- ✓ Implement reasonable adjustments where appropriate, for students with disability or additional educational needs - ask your provider for assistance.
- ✓ Ensure all staff understand why your organisation is involved, the purpose of the student's work experience and the part they play in supporting the student's time in the business.

“Offering work experience to local students helps us stay engaged with the community while supporting the next generation of tradies. It gives young people valuable, hands-on experience and helps them explore what a career in manufacturing could look like. For us, it’s rewarding to be part of that early journey. It’s also a great way to future-proof our workforce by connecting with potential apprentices.”

Jaime McIntosh - Norweld



#HOTTIP Meet your student before they start.

This is an opportunity to discuss your expectations face to face and clarify any details. This should happen 2-4 weeks prior to day one.

(See Employer checklist & student induction form)

Day 1 of placement



The student should be met by their workplace supervisor



Discuss the tasks and observations that student will undertake



Complete an induction and tour of the workplace with the student



Check in on them throughout the day

#HOTTIP - provide your student with some identification such as a name tag so everyone knows who they are and why they are in your workplace!

Simon
Work Experience Student



During placement



Provide a safe working environment for the student



Regularly check-in with the student and provide an opportunity to ask questions



Mentor and coach the student, providing on the job training and observations relevant to their placement



Raise any issues or provide feedback immediately to the school or workplace provider



Have realistic expectations of your student. Remember they are not an adult, yet!



If required, ensure the student and supervisor are completing a record of activities

Participants may **observe day-to-day tasks** and **ask questions** to better understand the role, **perform simple duties under supervision**, **meet different team members** to explore various career paths within the industry, and **gain valuable insight** into workplace culture and professional expectations. Try to design a fulfilling program and if possible, tailor it to the student's career interests.

After placement



Review and evaluate the student and your workplace. Provide feedback about the work experience program to assist with future planning.

Insurance and cover

Note: In all Queensland schools public liability insurance is the responsibility of the Department of Education

In Queensland, students undertaking approved work experience placements are covered by specific insurance arrangements under a contract of insurance with WorkCover Queensland.

This policy provides coverage for injuries, permanent impairment, or death that may occur while the student is:

- Undertaking work with the approved provider
- Travelling directly between their home or school and the work experience site

NB: Work experience that is part of a vocational placement through a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course/qualification, provided through a non-school Registered Training Organisation (RTO) **is not** covered by this procedure. They will have their own insurance.

Individuals who are no longer in the high school system may seek work experience as part of further study or a career change. If you choose to host non-school-aged participants, you can include a clause in your public liability insurance - at no additional cost - to ensure you are indemnified.



Public Liability insurance

The Department of Education has an arrangement with an insurer to indemnify students from state and non-state schools and work experience providers (employers) on approved work experience placements.

Workers compensation

The Department of Education insures students from state schools and approved home education attending an approved work experience placement under a Contract of Insurance with WorkCover Queensland. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland purchase from WorkCover, on behalf of their students.

For more information about insurance specific to work placements, view the Supporting Information ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/work-experience-placements-for-school-students-procedure



“Providing work experience students access to business systems creates valuable learning opportunities—but it must be managed carefully. That’s why we’ve introduced a dedicated user profile with restricted access, ensuring students gain real experience without compromising data or system integrity.”

Monica Smith - WGC Lawyers

REAL outcomes

Onsite and On track

Lars, a Year 10 student from Cairns State High School, is focused on pursuing a practical trade after school — exploring options like carpentry, mechanical work, or diesel fitting.

Through a VPG-coordinated placement with Bryant Building Contractors, Lars spent the week working across various job sites, including the large-scale construction of a new HMAS building. He gained hands-on experience in workplace health and safety, using new tools, reading site plans, and tackling practical on-site tasks.



The camaraderie among the team stood out as the highlight for Lars. He felt like a valued member of the crew and looked forward to showing up each day.

Site Supervisor Aidan, who remembers the mentors who helped him early in his career, was eager to pass on his knowledge and help guide Lars through the week.

Thanks to Aidan and the Bryant team, Lars wrapped up the placement with greater confidence in his ability to communicate, ask questions, and take initiative — and even more motivation to pursue a career in trade.



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for over 25 years.*

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

STUDENT INTERVIEW

1 Tell me about yourself - what do you like to do in your free time (hobbies, sports, clubs etc)

2 Do you currently have a job? If yes, where and how long have you been there?

3 Have you had any previous experience in ...

4 What career path are you looking to explore after you graduate?

5 What are your goals for the next five years?

6 What are you hoping to get out of this work experience opportunity?

7 Have you had any experiences that sparked your interest in this industry / profession?

8 What qualities do you think are important for someone working in this industry / profession?

9 Do you have any barriers to being on time, transport, medical or otherwise that we need to be aware of?

10 Do you have any questions or concerns about your placement?

If the student is the right fit, ask them to take home and complete the Confidentiality Agreement and return it ASAP.

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Employer tool kit

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Useful links

>> The Cairns Regional Jobs Committee

cairnsrjc.com.au

>> Vocational Partnership Group

<https://vpginc.com.au/>

>> Queensland Government

ppr.ged.qld.gov.au/pp/work-experience-placements-for-school-students-procedure

ppr.ged.qld.gov.au/attachment/frequently-asked-questions-about-work-experience.pdf

desbt.qld.gov.au/training/employers/gateway-schools

desbt.qld.gov.au/training/employers/s2wt

>> Fair Work Ombudsman

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

>> Business Queensland

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/>

References

This guide was created using some information from the following

- >> Redlands Regional Jobs Committee
- >> Little Sparrows Therapy
- >> Department of Trade, Employment and Training
- >> Jude Di Giacomo (Queensland Department of Education)

Get in touch with the Cairns Regional Jobs Committee to be connected with schools, Government support representatives, training providers and vocational partnerships across the Cairns region.

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