**ASSESSING A STUDENT’S**

**‘WORK READINESS’**

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Assessing a student’s ‘work readiness’

Before undertaking work placement, teachers need to consider individual student work readiness to ensure the placement benefits both students and employers.

Work readiness involves students having what employers call ***the right attitude***. This means the student has, to the level that can be expected depending on the student’s age, experience, maturity and capabilities, and according to the specific workplace and level of support to be provided:

* a **positive attitude** to appropriate personal presentation, being reliable and punctual, the work being done and to spending some days in the workplace
* **realistic expectations** of the work that an entry-level student will be able to do, or of the work that needs to be done for the level of the VET qualification the student is preparing to attain
* the **willingness to learn**
* the **willingness to be supervised**, follow instructions and wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as directed
* the **capacity to function and communicate appropriately in an adult environment** without the support of other students
* the **confidence** to ask questions to clarify instructions
* completed preparatory activities that include **OHS awareness and practices, acceptable behaviour** and student conduct in the workplace (including child protection issues) and the circumstances for using emergency contact procedures.

In addition the student should:

* organise travel arrangements that they can safely manage to get to and from the workplace. This may require support from the school or RTO and parents/carers
* make arrangements to ensure their attendance for the duration of the work placement
* understand their individual responsibility for providing and completing relevant paperwork
* understand and demonstrate willingness and capacity to meet employer expectations and priorities
* have some knowledge of how to serve customers, as appropriate
* know how to deal with being really busy in the workplace, and what to do when things appear quieter in the workplace
* understand that, for VET students, their performance in the workplace provides evidence to their teacher and host employer of the student’s developing competency and progress towards reaching industry standards. The placement may also involve assessment of competencies on the job
* understand the consequences of unsuccessful work placement.

Developing readiness

A range of strategies can assist in developing and improving student work readiness, including:

* detailed briefings of students by the relevant teacher such as the careers adviser or the VET teacher and workplace learning coordinator
* workshops and/or breakfasts led by guest speakers, for example, employers and successful ex‑students
* researching potential host employer/s
* developing individual action plans to prepare for placement
* considering various workplace-related scenarios, for example, safety issues, workplace culture, child protection issues and ethical dilemmas and devising appropriate strategies and dialogue to deal with these
* reflecting on relevant experiences in casual and part-time employment
* learning about work, workplace culture and career options in a specific subject area (e.g. Career and Enterprise)
* participating in formal programs of career and work education
* undertaking additional courses, for example, on customer service or first aid
* undertaking enterprise education programs and activities, for example, Dismantle Inc. BikeRescue programs
* providing opportunities for demonstration and practise of desired skills and attitudes, for example, simulations and role plays
* visits to relevant work sites
* mock interviews, preferably involving a person not too familiar to students
* mentoring by successful students or supportive adults
* pre-placement visit to the workplace and induction by the employer.

Anticipating and preventing student disengagement

Strategies that may support students at risk of disengagement and their parents or carers include:

* ensuring Year 10 subject selection information sessions are well-publicised to support the informed selection of appropriate courses. Consider making interpreting services available. Students (and parents) can be invited, beforehand, to relate their experiences of work placement to those attending, for example, through a question and answer format
* ensuring prospective VET students and their parents/carers also attend a short sub-session at the event that highlights the requirements for work placement and the consequences of failure to complete
* ensuring parent/carer and student both sign an acknowledgement of their respective ‘responsibilities’ regarding work placement, for example, using a document developed by the school for this purpose and translated if needed. This may be in effect a local requirement for course entry
* identifying potential problems as soon as possible, for example, by identifying and applying pressure, where appropriate, to students who postpone or cancel work placement opportunities
* providing an early warning letter to students that have not completed work placement by the locally set date. This brings matters to a head, provides a reality check and provides a reason to alert parents/carers to potential problems
* documenting conversations, encouragement, warning letters, meetings with parent/carer/executive to demonstrate ‘pressure and support’ for the student
* buddying the student in question with a suitable and willing student who provides a good role model for developing work readiness
* checking to see if there is a host employer willing to coach or mentor the student. Some host employers identify with disengaged students who remind them of similar experiences at school. They may be happy to assist
* starting small with a carefully supervised successful few hours or half day in the workplace, building up to a full day, two days and so on to reach the required hours.