

Good Practice Principles

This report was commissioned by the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

MAY 2014

Work Exposure and Work Placement  
Programs in Schools involving   
Group Training Organisations

**Section 1: Background**

**Introduction**

In October 2012, Group Training Australia was commissioned by the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to undertake a project to identify the characteristics of good practice in facilitating work placements for school students, based on the work group training organisations (GTOs) do with schools and students in Years 9-10 and Years 11-12.

The aim of the project was to learn from the experience of GTOs in order to develop good practice work placement principles for VET in Schools (VETiS). Group Training Australia was asked to:

* undertake a series of twenty case studies highlighting a variety of different work placement and work exposure approaches (with different industries, locations and target groups); and
* develop ‘good practice principles’ for work exposure and work placement.

This is the final report of the good practice project. It presents an overview of the findings of the research and a set of good practice principles. Separate reports provide the details of a survey of employers, students and their parents and 20 case studies. It also includes messages ‘from the field’, drawn from the case studies to consider in the further design and implementation of VETiS.

**VET in Schools (VETiS)**

VET in Schools programs have been operating across Australia since the mid-1990’s with large numbers of school students enrolling in Year 11-12 programs which are integrated within senior secondary certificate arrangements in every State and Territory and articulate into a wide range of post-school education and training options. This growth has presented challenges, including the need to re-assess how the VETiS initiative can be improved to provide:

* greater impetus to young people taking up the trades;
* a pathway which takes into account the needs of all students, from those considered ‘at risk’ or struggling in their learning at school, to those travelling well at school who may choose a trades pathway to access a higher degree or business leadership roles;
* a level of engagement in the workplace which involves more intensive exposure to authentic work environments which are meaningful in terms of time allocation and endorsed by industry as relevant workplace learning; and
* for this to be underpinned in Years 9-10 by opportunities for students to undertake a form of vocational learning which includes work exposure activities and the development of work readiness skills to help inform their choices in Years 11-12, especially for those who wish to pursue work in a skilled occupation after leaving school.

The VET in Schools system relies heavily on its three pillars – industry, education and training stakeholders - working together to ensure the arrangements are valued and meet the needs of students, employers and the community.

**How group training fits in**

Many GTOs already have well-established relationships with schools and have been undertaking activities in VETiS for some time.

Surveys of GTOs in July 2011 and October 2012 undertaken by Group Training Australia found that most currently work with Year 11 and 12 school students offering school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and/or VET in Schools programs (VETiS). More than half of the GTOs surveyed indicated they also work with Years 9 and 10, offering career talks, industry visits, work readiness and industry taster programs. There are several GTOs that work with over 200 school students every year.

This research indicates that GTOs do not see their work with schools as a ‘money-spinner’. They tend to take a broad, longer-term view of this side of the business, citing the following motivations for investing in this area:

* They see it as part of their role in supporting their local communities. The vast majority of GTOs are not-for-profit organisations and have a strong commitment to young people’s transitions and career development. This type of work fits with their organisation’s purpose and enhances their community profile.
* If GTOs can encourage schools students to take an interest in trade careers, they are likely to sign up more Australian School-based Apprentices (ASBAs), providing an eventual business return to the GTO. Also, students who begin their apprenticeships or traineeships at school are more likely to complete with less support.
* They want to attract workers into particular industries to tackle skill shortages. Schools provide an easily accessible group of potential workers for GTOs, including industry-based GTOs, to promote awareness of pathways and careers.
* Many GTOs have developed a ‘partnership bond’ with certain schools based on trust and mutual respect built up over time. GTOs prioritise ‘helping out’ their partner schools, in order to strengthen the partnership and maintain a positive reputation within the local community.

Group training organisations are strategically placed to be a serious provider of high quality work exposure and work experience placements due to their existing, established networks with schools and host employers; their expertise in the training, coaching and personal support of apprentices and trainees; and the niche role they have in their communities providing an intrinsic motivation for being involved with schools.

The 20 case studies, provided in a separate report, highlight the range of different models that GTOs currently use to provide career development opportunities for school students.

**About this research**

The aim of this research was to draw on the extensive experience of GTOs and identify how ‘facilitators’ or brokers can work constructively with schools to create quality work exposure and work experience opportunities for students.

The approach included the following:

**1. Case studies**

* In October 2012, the Group Training Australia survey gathered data on the nature of GTOs involvement with schools this involvement to complement the earlier July 2011 survey. GTOs were also invited to nominate to be part of case study research.
* Twenty good practice programs were selected from across a mix of locations, industries and types of programs. DEEWR’s priority industry areas for this program - Community Services and Health, Manufacturing and Agrifood – were taken into account in the selection process.
* A team of researchers were engaged to interview each of the twenty good practice GTOs along with some of the schools they work with to put together the case studies.

**2. Parent, student and employer surveys**

* Three online surveys were developed to garner the views of employers, parents and students who participate in school-based programs with the case study GTOs. The surveys were designed to provide specific data for the case studies as well as general information on employer, parent and student views on good practice for work exposure and work experience programs in schools.
* Case study GTOs were asked to encourage the employers, parents and students involved in their programs to fill out the survey.

**3. Consultations on good practice principles**

* A discussion paper was developed which included a set of draft principles focused on good practice. The draft principles were based on desk-top research and data emerging from the case studies and focused on the experience of GTOs implementing programs with schools.
* The discussion paper and principles were used as the basis of a series of national consultations organised with State and Territory Group Training Associations.

**4. National workshop**

* The good practice principles were redrafted based on feedback from the consultation process and presented to a workshop involving all case study GTOs, which was held in Sydney in March 2013.
* At the workshop, case study GTOs shared information about their work with schools and provided feedback about opportunities and challenges. They then helped refine the good practice principles developed through the initial consultation process.

**5. Finalising the set of good practice principles**

* Based on the feedback from GTOs and the case study research a set of good practice principles was developed.

**Section 2: Key Findings**

**How Group Training Organisations work with schools in Years 9 and 10**

The research indicates that GTOs deliver a variety of activities for school students in Years 9-10 as a lead-up to supporting the more structured VETiS programs which are available in Years 11-12. These activities include:

* Visiting schools to give talks about apprenticeships and traineeships and work;
* Organising for past students who are ambassadors/role model apprentices or trainees to talk to school students;
* Providing advice to students as part of a career education program, or career counselling, including assistance in the development of Personal Learning Plans;
* Involvement in Career Expos and open days;
* Organising visits to workplaces for students;
* Involvement in Try-a-Trade programs;
* Providing taster programs;
* Work readiness training such as talks about workplace culture and work health and safety training;
* Training in how to apply for a job and developing interview skills, including assistance with resumes and undertaking mock interviews;
* Contributing advice to workplace examples which might be used to contextualise English and maths classes, for example providing forms, safety data sheets, standard operating procedures etc;
* Organising short-term work experience placements, primarily in Year 10.

**How Group Training Organisations work with schools in Years 11 and 12**

The research shows that for the more structured VETiS programs which are available for school students in Years 11-12, GTOs tend to provide one or more of the following services:

* Finding structured workplace learning opportunities for school students on behalf of schools, sometimes for a nominal fee. Some GTOs also provide workplace supervision during the placement;
* Offering pre-apprenticeship programs involving the development of personal, transferable employability skills, such as developing a work ethic, taking pride in one’s trade, client servicing and occupational health and safety, as well as literacy and numeracy skills;
* Offering a series of regular targeted sessions with VET classes on career pathways, employer expectations and skills in finding a job (sometimes these are combined with pre-apprenticeship programs).
* Employing school-based apprentices or trainees, maintaining rotational placements with host employers and providing associated pastoral care.

Case study GTOs highlighted the following very practical factors involved in their work placement activities:

* **Formally documenting roles and responsibilities of GTOs, schools and employers** to ensure efficient brokerage services, recognising that a diverse range of organisational arrangements, ‘external’ relationships, industry settings, student cohorts and delivery modes and mechanisms can work well;
* **Establishing strong and enduring relationships with stakeholders**, particularly VET coordinators in schools, local businesses and industry bodies and promoting an understanding amongst stakeholders of the value of work placements;
* **Careful selection and matching**, including interviewing students to understand strengths and aspirations and working with employers with different levels of commitment and time limitations;
* **Designing and/or supporting induction activities for students prior to being in the workplace**, including providing training on expectations of the workplace and work health and safety,and arranging an orienting interview with the employer;
* **Undertaking pre-placement interviews with employers and/or supervisors** to ensure the workplace is prepared for the student and that workplace experiences are mutually beneficial and rewarding for employers and students, including Indigenous students, students with a disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and students ‘at risk’ of leaving school early;
* **For Indigenous students, assessing the cultural appropriateness of workplaces**, engagement of the community in the program, providing intensive support if required, and developing good practice advice and guidance for employers and schools;
* **Helping employers design and monitor work placements** that are relevant and related to the VET in Schools program including identifying specific learning objectives, industry competencies and employability skills;
* **Supporting both employers and students** during the work placement through coaching, mentoring and monitoring;
* **Ensuring RTOs take responsibility for monitoring work placements** so that the integrity of their role in any VET assessment processes associated with a work placement is adhered to.

**What outcomes are being achieved through GTO-school programs?**

Case study GTOs and their partner schools indicate a range of outcomes are being achieved through their work together across Years 9-12. Key outcomes identified in the case study research include:

* **Engagement and retention in school**, particularly for disadvantaged students. Participation in industry programs is motivating for students at risk of dropping out of school, including many Indigenous students. A number of case studies noted improved school attendance on days when the programs were run and improved retention for senior school students engaged in GTO programs.

Without Workready many Indigenous students would have dropped out of reaching this achievable NTCET target. Schools in regional and remote areas are seeing their Indigenous students become the first Indigenous students of the school to receive an NTCET. The program has also acted as a re-engagement program for students who were deemed at risk - GTNT, End of Year Report – 2012.

* **Providing a clear pathway to school-based apprenticeships and traineeships** and other vocational options. The structured workplace learning and work exposure activities gives students and their parents an understanding of vocational pathways available and how to access them.
* **Responding to skills shortages in local areas**. Engaging with future workers at a younger age provides a longer-term skills pipeline, ultimately resulting in an improved flow of full time apprenticeships and traineeships to fill local skills shortages. Some GTOs cited evidence of increased numbers and quality of applications for positions submitted by students.
* **Learning employability skills**. Case studies demonstrated the richness of the learning that occurs when students learn about work directly from employers and engage with a real workplace. The programs also help students organise themselves and reflect on their experiences.

The self-awareness certificate run by GAGAL helps give that focus to their goals. - School principal.

* **Improving literacy and numeracy skills**. Several of the case studies indicated that work exposure and work placement activities contextualised learning by making maths and English more relevant. This has led to observable improvements in literacy and numeracy.

It was a hands-on thing for them, they could see why they needed the maths. I definitely saw a benefit with their maths, with their spatial concepts as well. – Gagal.

* **Strengthening community partnerships**. The work preparation activities have led to the development of mutually respectful and committed ‘partnership bonds’ between schools and GTOs. These bonds motivate the GTO and schools to help each other and support the career development and transitions of the young people in a diverse range of ways.

Feedback from parents, employers and students who have been involved in GTO school programs support these findings. Separate surveys conducted with each of these client groups indicate that they are largely very positive about the outcomes achieved from the programs. An analysis of each of the surveys is provided in a separate report. Some highlights are provided below.

**Parents’ responses**

Of the 47 parents who responded to the survey, the large majority considered that the work exposure and work placement programs provided for their children were extremely valuable experiences. 85% of respondents indicated that they thought these programs were ‘extremely valuable’ while only 4% (2 parents) thought they provided ‘a little value’. No parents felt the programs had ‘not much’ or ‘no value’.

One of the clear themes to emerge from the parents’ survey responses was the extent to which engagement with the workplace assisted students to gain a clearer understanding of the skills involved in working in a particular trade, and also in clarifying the differences between occupations in a particular trade. The following comments from parents involved in different programs around the country illustrate this point.

It changed their views of the work involved in the trade they had chosen. - Parent of a Year 11 student.

Very beneficial, he better understood what an Industrial Electrician does compared with an Electrical Engineer. - Parent of a Year 12 student.

A second theme was that practical engagement with workplace-based activity allowed students to either confirm that they had an interest in pursuing a career in a particular industry, or else to discover that it might not be their preferred path after all.

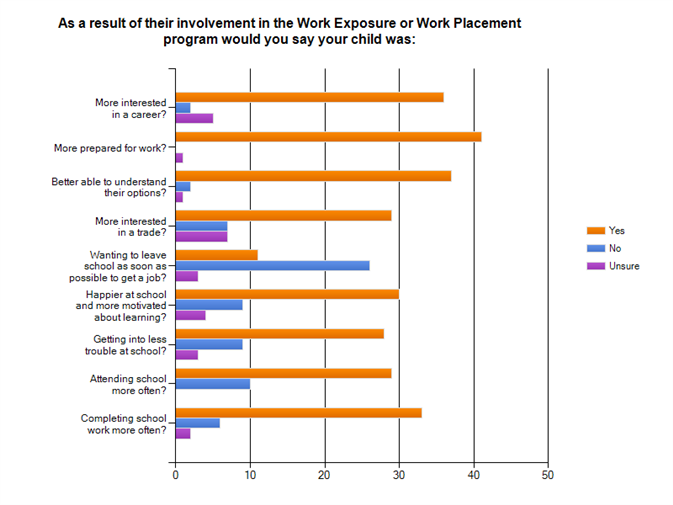
He really enjoyed the work experience and it confirmed to him that this was the field of work he wanted to go into. - Parent of a Year 12 student.

It established what areas they were interested in and what areas they weren't. - Parent of a Year 12 student.

Parents also reported on the value that many of their children found in being able to interact with older workers who could assist them. Several parents noted that their children appreciated the opportunity for ‘practical learning’ in the work environment.

All parents considered that their child was ‘more prepared for work’ as a result of their involvement in the programs, and almost all parents reported that their child is ‘better able to understand their options’ and ‘more interested in a career’. Interestingly, while the students enjoy being in the workplace and learning about the world of work, the programs do not have an effect of encouraging students to leave school as soon as possible to get a job. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Impact of GTO school programs – parents views



**Students’ responses**

Thirty-five students, involved with 20 different GTOs responded to the survey on their experience of work exposure and work placement programs whilst with their GTO. The largest number of respondents was from Year 11 (43%), followed by Year 10 (33%), then Year 12 (23%). Only one respondent was from Year 9. Two thirds of the respondents were male.

Key findings from the student responses include:

* The most common activity that the students said they had undertaken was short term work experience (75%), followed by a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship (66%). However most had also been involved in career expos, visits to workplaces and career education programs.
* Students found the most useful programs to be short-term work experience, visits to workplaces and assistance with learning how to apply for a job. Most students considered each of these activities as ‘very useful’, with short-term work experience being considered ‘very useful’ by 80% of respondents.
* ‘Hands-on’ was the most common term students used when asked about the value of learning involving employers. Students said they valued the realistic, practical experience, as opposed to just hearing about the theory.

It allows you to be hands-on and actually do all the things that you want instead of just reading about it in books. – Year 11 student.

* A number of students felt that information coming from an employer is more useful and believable because employers have first-hand experience.

The person in the workplace knows a lot more than the teacher and has actually experienced it. – Year 11 student.

* The most useful work placement activities from the students’ point of view were being mentored by an employer or an employee in the work place and undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.
* Structured work placements were considered ‘extremely valuable’ by 58% of students who had tried them, and considered ‘highly valuable’ by a further 25%.
* When students were asked what was the most valuable thing about working with an employer in a work placement they said they valued getting real life experience and a true understanding of the nature of the job.

I didn't realise all the different parts of the job. Being a tradesman is a lot more involved than I thought - the job would be more interesting than I first thought. – Year 10 student.

* Learning how to do things correctly, directly from the experts, was also considered important. A number of students enjoyed the people aspect - building relationships in the workplace, interacting with people, and having access to people to listen to and explain how to do things.

*The employer can tell you first-hand what goes on behind the scenes and the answers are sure to be true because they know just what happens. –* Year 12 student*.*

* Just over two thirds of respondents received preparation for work placements. Thirteen per cent said they did not receive any preparation and 23% were unsure whether they received preparation.
* Of those that were aware they received some preparation, half said that the school provided the preparation, a third said the GTO provided preparation. The others said it was both the GTO and the school who provided the preparation or it was provided by the host employer.
* All except one of the student respondents achieved a positive outcome from the program. The vast majority of students (83%) felt they were more prepared for work as a result of the program and more than two thirds became more interested in a career.
* More than half of the students said that as a result of participating in work exposure or work placement activities they feel happier at school and more motivated.

**Employers’ responses**

Fifty-two employers spread across a range of industries and from small, medium and large organisations, provided their feedback on the value of work exposure and work placement programs involving GTOs.

The main reasons employers said they become involved in work exposure or work placement programs is to promote careers in their industry (75%), to assist students develop relevant skills in a practical environment (69%) and to develop student understanding about work (65%). About a third of employers wanted to assist disadvantaged students.

The most important contribution that employers feel they make through these programs is real life practical experience, including an understanding of how a business operates, the pressures involved in work and expectations of employers. Employers said that they help develop confidence and employability skills through exposure to customers, work teams and workplace rules.

The practical real life experiences they gain in areas such as problem solving, working in a team environment and time management.

They said that contact with workplaces also gives students the opportunity to use their school learning applied in real settings. It makes schoolwork real and tangible, makes sense of the theory and validates learning.

It can reinforce what schools are trying to teach and puts their learning in a real time perspective.

Employers considered that work exposure and placement activities also allow students to get a feel for an industry which will help them make a more informed decision when it comes to choosing a career, including understanding the sorts of occupations available within a particular industry.

The large majority of employers (90%) saw significant value in using a facilitator, like a GTO, to coordinate work exposure and work placement activities. They said that GTOs help with compliance and accountability, take the hassle out of finding suitable students, and provide support to students. Several employers said it was absolutely necessary or essential to have a facilitator.

Important to have a training organisation in place to make all the pieces come together for the benefit of the student and the business together.

This is very beneficial. They have an understanding of the student prior to them being placed in my workplace. They have links to additional information that I may not have.

Employers felt the most valuable work exposure activities that they provide are short term work experience and literacy and numeracy activities. On the whole, however, they felt that all employer provided activities were believed to be highly or extremely valuable, apart from ‘visiting the school to give talks’, which was seen as ‘fairly valuable’.

**The views of GTOs - What are the challenges in establishing successful programs?**

GTOs face some challenges in establishing successful work exposure programs at Years 9-10 and work placement programs at Years 11-12. Many of these challenges cannot be overcome by the GTO alone. They need to be considered in the design of work exposure and work placement programs to ensure adequate participation by students, employers, schools and VETiS Coordinators. Suggestions for dealing with many of these issues are reflected in the implementation of the good practice principles outlined in the table at the end of Section 3 of this report.

**1. Varying status of VET programs in schools**

A number of schools are still only interested in academic pathways and do not let GTOs access their students at all, or only give access to a limited number of lower achieving students. This perpetuates the view that VET pathways are second best and is unhelpful to employers who need high achieving students to take up trades.

Other schools have clear processes in place and an organisational culture which values both the traditional academic and vocational aspects of school curriculum. They design ‘stepping stones’ between programs for students so that the Year 9 and 10 programs assist students in their choice of an appropriate program in Years 11-12 and beyond and students know that the program they are undertaking is not a ‘one-off’ but provides a pathway that ‘will lead somewhere’, if they choose it. At the same time students need to know that if this direction does not ‘work out’ for them, they will still have options and not be penalised.

It is imperative to document and share early evidence of positive outcomes to assist in convincing those in schools who hold values which devalue VET pathways to change their views and organisational culture and for parents and opinion leaders in their communities to change their views.

**2. Inconsistent Messaging to parents and communities**

GTOs and schools often deliver different messages to parents about VET programs and the suitability of their children to these programs. Also, it is sometimes unclear to parents what the role of the GTO is in the process. Messaging needs to be consistent, positive and clear.

**3. Starting age**

Many GTOs believe partnerships between schools and employers need to start earlier than Year 9 or 10, to help students explore the world of work and to help make schooling more relevant to future working life, given that some students have left before completing their senior secondary years. Schools are yet to be convinced of this. It is also recognised by GTOs that the resourcing of lower-level initiatives on a mass scale may be prohibitive and difficult to resource from their perspective. However, local-level initiatives should be explored and supported where appropriate.

**4. Paid versus unpaid work placements**

Students are obviously attracted to paid work, over unpaid work placements. Some GTOs which have focussed on school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, believe it will be difficult to convince students to undertake an unpaid VETiS pathway when they have the option of receiving wages under a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. Work placement programs need to be clearly positioned amongst the range of options available to students. They have the advantage of not requiring a long-term commitment from the student, and allowing students to try out different vocational pathways.

**5. Resourcing demand**

A number of GTOs feel restricted in how innovative and expansive they can be in their school-based activity due to limited resources. Demand from schools in many places is high but GTOs have to ‘put a brake’ on how much they can do and how many school requests they can respond to. Working with schools tends to be targeted rather than widespread as it is not the GTO’s core business. GTOs could increase their activity if the resources were provided to assist.

**6. Ability to provide support in the workplace**

Some schools are reluctant to allow GTOs to provide the support and monitoring of the student in the workplace. Schools have a duty of care for students and some prefer to manage the relationship with the employer themselves to mitigate any risks involved in contracting a third party. This can make it difficult for GTOs to ensure the work placement is successful.

**7. Availability of off-the-job training**

With the current funding focus on higher-level qualifications, some GTOs have had difficulty finding high-quality RTOs willing to develop and deliver Certificate I and II level programs to school students.

**8. Working with disadvantaged students**

GTOs stress that additional resources need to be available to assist employers and GTOs to coach and motivate the less aspirational and less confident students in the workplace, particularly those with very low literacy and numeracy skills. Some GTOs believe that the evidence of improved literacy and numeracy outcomes through industry partnerships may provide a case for redirecting existing resources to industry partnerships.

**Section 3: Good practice principles underpinning a successful GTO-school program**

**A set of good practice principles**

Many of the factors that contribute to a successful GTO-school program are the same for both Year 9-10 and Year 11-12 programs, even if they are operationalised differently for different types of programs. These factors stood out in the case study research as particularly important for success in the Start-up, Implementation and Monitoring and Reporting phases. They have provided the basis for the development of a set of 11 good practice principles outlined below, for consideration within the development of VETiS initiatives.

***Start -up***

1. **Comprehensive information is provided for students, parents and employers**

Students and their parents/guardians should be provided with comprehensive information about the VETiS program prior to enrolment, outlining the value of the VETiS pathway, its equal status within the school curriculum with the traditional academic curriculum and its recognition for entry into employment and into higher education. Employers should be provided with similar information, including expectations, prior to their agreement to participate.

**2. Collaborative arrangements are established based on trust**

Most GTOs have been working in their communities for many years and believe that the main reason their programs work so well is because they have built up mutually respectful relationships with local schools over a long time and both parties have consistently delivered on their promises. GTOs have a regular presence in the schools and are happy to be used by school staff as a generic career resource.

**3. Decision-making structures and processes are clear to all partners**

Partnerships are well served by processes that bring the partners together regularly to allow joint design of programs and opportunities to problem solve and innovate. Such processes allow all partners to have a shared vision, clarity over expectations and confidence in delivery. Some partnerships use MOUs to define the boundaries of the relationship.

**4. Employers have a prominent role**

Employers can provide opportunities to help students understand the nature of work, of workplaces and the profile of vocations, as well as providing opportunities for skill development. Successful GTOs understand how to communicate with employers both to help them appreciate how important they are to young people as well as to provide advice on how to approach young people in ways that inspire and engage. Employer feedback is sought and acted upon in program development.

***Implementation***

**5. Extensive employer networks enable careful matching of students and workplaces to take place**

Placements are much more likely to be successful for both the student and the employer if time is invested in matching suitable candidates to suitable workplaces. GTOs have found that significant damage can be done to both parties if sufficient attention is not given to this stage of the process. GTOs often interview students to find out what their interests are, what their capabilities are, what their limitations might be (eg transport), what subjects they are doing etc. They also undertake a similar process with employers. GTOs have a healthy network of local host employers that want to support local young people and through these contacts have a stronger chance of finding a good match. Employers particularly appreciate this aspect of the GTO role because it ‘takes the hassle’ out of finding suitable students. Employers often provide feedback to students and to schools on student progress in a work placement.

**6. Parents/guardians are involved throughout the program**

Programs will be more successful where parents/guardians are not only provided with information but are involved throughout the process. Good-practice GTOs encourage regular dialogue with parents/guardians about the vocational pathways chosen and dialogue between parents/guardians and the student to help in guiding and supporting them and in keeping them informed of their child’s progress throughout the program, especially about progress in the workplace.

**7. Learning is structured and relevant through contact with real work**

Students understand that the GTO staff members come from industry. This gives them credibility when offering insights and information about the labour market and career development. Successful GTOs make an effort to employ field officers who have experience in building rapport with young people, who understand their needs and can support them in decision-making related to their career choices. They design programs that allow time to get to know the young person before placing them in workplaces and build in processes for peer learning, coaching and mentoring and pastoral care. They also design pre-employment type programs that embed core skills into vocational content and focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the development of employability skills, as part of real work, to motivate students.

GTOs notice that students are motivated and engaged simply by getting outside of the classroom into a work environment and engaging with GTO staff in an informal way. Students and parents strongly supported this observation in their feedback.

**8. Classroom work is aligned with the workplace**

When GTOs are able to work closely with schools to make sure that classroom-based VET and work studies programs are relevant to the workplace, the work placements are much more successful. This ensures the workplace learning builds on the classroom learning and vice versa. Employer feedback is important in this process and can have a ‘washback’ effect on the school curriculum. Schools may contextualise literacy and numeracy content to complement workplace requirements, following advice and examples provided by GTOs and their host employers.

Students indicated that they appreciate being able to apply the theory they learn in the classroom to the ‘real world’.

**9. Diverse learning opportunities are planned**

Students need a variety of approaches to learn about work and some students respond to some approaches better than others. Good work exposure programs underpin the success of more structured VET programs and their associated work placement and offer a range of ways to learn. Beginning in Years 9-10 these include the use of individual counselling, group activities, excursions, ‘conversations’, ‘hands-on’ activities, simulated learning and computer-assisted learning etc.

GTOs have found that students need to ‘touch, smell and feel’ the occupations to truly understand what is involved, not just observe them.

**10. Employer participation is publicly recognised**

Employers should be included in a public recognition system to be developed which acknowledges employers with a record of contributing to Work Exposure programs for school students and providing quality Work Placements based on the principles outlined in this document.

GTOs have found that recognising and even rewarding the “community minded” efforts of the employers who nurture young people is valuable to maintaining employer commitment.

***Monitoring and reporting***

**11. Continuous monitoring mechanisms are in place**

As an employer of apprentices ‘hosted out’ to a third party employer under the group training arrangements GTOs are required to be skilled and experienced in working directly with employees and employers on a range of issues, particularly as they relate to young people. These include providing advice, support and guidance on progress with skill development in the workplace (and in reporting on this) as well as managing human resources, disciplinary and industrial relations issues in the workplace.

Under a VETiS initiative, formal and informal mechanisms for seeking feedback from teachers, field officers, parents, employers and other brokers need to be in place to ensure that:

* a continuous assessment can be made of the student’s experience and progress in the workplace;
* any problems for individuals are identified and dealt with quickly;
* reporting on outcomes is able to be reported in a rigorous manner.

**Implementation of the principles**

The School Principal and the school leadership team have an important role to play in supporting the implementation of vocational pathways and in ‘setting the scene’ for how vocational programs are perceived in the school. If a balanced view of the different pathways available is presented, highlighting both university and VET pathways, students and parents will feel more confident and comfortable about being involved.

The VETiS Coordinator role is also critical in supporting students and their parents/guardians and working constructively with employers. VETiS Coordinators across Australia operate in different ways - sometimes they are appointed from the teaching workforce, sometimes as external appointments; sometimes they operate within a single school and other times across schools through cluster arrangements. Irrespective of the mode of employment and scope of the role, advice developed within the consultations and based on the experience of GTOs suggests that in addition to being able to provide clear evidence of having the capability and capacity to implement the good practice principles outlined above, the following should be considered in the appointment of a VETiS Coordinator responsible for arranging work exposure and work placement programs:

* a strong community profile and capacity to draw on a network of committed employers;
* a record of commitment to the training of young people ‘on-the-job’;
* a record of involvement in partnerships with schools and in building trust between schools and employers, or the demonstrated capacity to develop such relationships;
* an understanding of the OHS/WHS issues to be considered in arranging for student visits to workplaces as a component of Work Exposure programs and the capacity to assess and place students in a safe workplace environment to undertake a Work Placement program;
* staff with the time and expertise in providing pastoral care, coaching and mentoring to support school students and the capacity to supervise and train new staff to take on this role, or the capacity to employ and train new staff in this role.

The consultations with individual GTOs in developing the case studies and at the national workshop provided a range of mechanisms for implementing these principles. These are outlined in the table below.

Good practice principles and their implementation

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| Good practice principles | Implementation |
| 1. **Comprehensive information is provided for students, parents and employers** | Schools undertaking a VETiS program should:  Provide students and their parents/guardians with comprehensive information about the VETiS program for prior to enrolment, outlining the value of the VETiS pathway, its equal status in the school curriculum with the traditional academic curriculum and its recognition for entry into employment and into higher education.  Employers involved in Work Exposure and Work Placement programs should:  Be provided with similar information, prior to their agreement to participate, plus advice and guidance to assist in being effectively engaged in program delivery with school students, specifically:   * to help employers understand their commitments under the program; * to understand the roles and relationships of the various organisations involved in the partnership developed to deliver the program effectively, in particular the role of the school, other providers (where applicable), the employer and the VETiS Coordinator; * to ensure OHS/WHS issues are considered in arranging for student visits to workplaces as a component of Work Exposure programs; * on avenues for providing feedback on implementation to their peak industry organisations responsible for providing advice on the design and delivery of Work Exposure and Work Placement programs under the VETiS initiative. |
| 1. **Collaborative arrangements are established based on trust** | VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers should:  In supporting schools and employers involved in the implementation of VETiS programs for school students, have the capacity to:   * negotiate with schools and employers for Work Placements to be organised in a flexible manner to take into account both the school timetable, the workplace arrangements of employers (e.g. block release, one day per week, seasonal needs) and a realistic assessment of their potential levels of commitment and time.   Partnerships between industry and schools should ensure:  Work Placement activities and planning about student learning during the Work Placement are designed through cooperative arrangements involving the VETiS Coordinator, the school, relevant industry organisations and any other provider (where applicable). |
| 1. **Decision-making structures and processes are clear to all partners** | Partnerships between industry and schools should ensure:  A shared vision and approach and clear set of expectations and responsibilities is developed by the school/s, industry and he VETiS Coordinator, , which should be underpinned by a formal agreement, such as a jointly developed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The agreement should include provisions to ensure:   * that students’ needs and employers’ capacity to deliver quality programs are central to decision-making; * a code of conduct is established to guide roles, responsibilities and practices within the partnership; * staff are nominated by the school and the VETiS coordinating organisation to have primary responsibility for the implementation of the partnership arrangements; * joint governance arrangements are established, including regular opportunities for meeting, for reviewing progress and for problem-solving.   The partners jointly develop a risk management approach to ensure potential risks are identified and mitigated, including any legislative or regulatory risks which might impact on the long-term success of the program. |
| 1. **Employers have a prominent role** | Employers involved in Work Exposure and Work Placement programs under VETiS should:  Prior to a Work Placement:   * participate in a pre-placement interview with the VETiS Coordinator to ensure:   + the workplace is prepared for the student and that workplace experience will be mutually beneficial and rewarding for employers and students;   + any specific support is identified as required for Indigenous students, students with a disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students ‘at risk’ of leaving school early;   + the student will be working in a safe workplace environment to undertake a Work Placement program; * participate in an induction/orienting interview with the student.   Following a work placement provide feedback to students and to schools.  VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers, should:   * Have the capacity to organise for employers to be involved who can provide activities in the workplace for school students which enable the skills they have learnt off-the-job to be reinforced with practical experience on-the-job; * Be adequately resourced to prepare and support employers in working with students from different age groups, different cultures and of different capacities. |
| 1. **Extensive employer networks enable careful matching of students and workplaces to take place** | In a VETiS program in Years 11-12 involving a Work Placement students should:  Seek enrolment in a VETiS program through:   * an ‘application to enrol’ or screening process designed to demonstrate suitability for the program in terms of work readiness skills and that the pre-requisite subjects for employment have either been completed to a satisfactory industry standard or have been chosen for study within the Year 11-12 program; * participation in a selection process simulating a job interview.   Prior to the Work Placement:   * be selected and matched with an employer; * undertake an induction program, including training on the obligations of the student and the employer and on expectations of the workplace and OHS/WHS; * attend an orienting interview with the employer; * be aware that, for Indigenous students the cultural appropriateness of workplaces will be assessed, the community engaged in the program and that intensive support will be provided, if required.   VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers should:  Have the capacity to:   * support school staff in the identification of students to participate in the program (subject to school enrolment arrangements); * carefully select and match students and employers, including:   + interviewing students to make an assessment of their skills, capabilities and aspirations;   + conducting pre-placement interviews with employers and/or supervisors to ensure the workplace is prepared for the student;   + identifying workplace experiences that have the potential to be mutually beneficial and rewarding for employers and students, including Indigenous students, students with a disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students ‘at risk’ of leaving school early;   + assessing the cultural appropriateness of workplaces for Indigenous students, engaging the community in the program, providing intensive support if required, and developing good practice advice and guidance for employers and schools. |
| 1. **Parents/guardians are involved throughout the program** | Reporting to parents/guardians on progress takes place via normal reporting processes, with mechanisms to be explored for enabling VETiS Coordinators to provide regular updates on student progress in the workplace and how advice on the way parents/guardians can support/guide students in their work placements. |
| 1. **Learning is structured and relevant through contact with real work** | In Years 11-12 VETiS programs involving a Work Placement, students should:  During the Work Placement:   * develop skills defined by industry and delivered to industry standards by teachers or trainers with relevant experience; * undertake a Work Placement of sufficient length and nature to allow for the demonstration of designated skills;   as determined by Industry Skills Councils and reflected in the curriculum.  VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers, should:  Have the capacity to:   * design and/or support induction activities for students prior to their Work Placement, including training on expectations of the workplace and OHS/WHS and arranging an orientation interview with the employer; * closely monitor Work Placements to ensure students are receiving the required learning and support in the workplace and that employers are coached and mentored in providing support for school students; * provide continuous support to students throughout Years 11 and 12 including personal support, coaching/mentoring, self-development and career development. |
| 1. **Classroom work is aligned with the workplace** | In Work Exposure programs in Years 9-10 students should:  Within the design and delivery arrangements established for these programs:   * acquire a broad understanding of the range of jobs in a ‘family of occupations’ within an industry and the various pathways available and skills required leading to employment within this industry sector; * develop language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills contextualised to the world of work in a general manner; * develop a broad understanding of relevant OHS/WHS requirements.   In VETiS programs in Years 11-12 involving a Work Placement, students should:  Acquire a detailed and practical understanding of a family of occupations within an industry and of the specific pathway they wish to take post-school; and as a result of the design and delivery arrangements associated with these programs:   * develop language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills specifically related to each ‘family of occupations’ within an industry; * undertake specific instruction in WHS/OHS requirements and of their responsibilities in relation to these.   VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers should:  To support students, schools and employers involved in the implementation of VETiS programs, VETiS Coordinators should have the capacity to:   * work directly with schools and any other providers to integrate examples from the workplace into the school’s Years 9-10 Work Exposure curriculum and into aspects of the Years 11-12 VETiS program. |
| 1. **Diverse learning opportunities are planned** | In Work Exposure programs in Years 9-10 students should:   * participate in a range of programs delivered in a practical and intellectually stimulating manner, involving real tasks, hands-on learning and dialogue with a range of employers and employees. * experience diverse teaching and learning approaches, applied to meet the range of student needs and capacities. Approaches might include reflective learning, self-directed and team based active inquiry or structured work exposure activities. |
| 1. **Employer participation is publicly recognised** | Mechanisms for publicly recognising employers contributing to Work Exposure programs for school students and providing quality Work Placements, based on the principles outlined in this document, need to be established locally eg through the provision of certificates of appreciation, employer nights or events highlighting involvement, speech nights etc. |
| 1. **Continuous monitoring mechanisms are in place** | Employers involved in Work Placement programs in VETiS should:  During the Work Placement monitor progress to ensure students are receiving the required learning and provide support in the workplace, where required.  VETiS Coordinators, in their role supporting students and employers should:  Have the capacity to:   * closely monitor Work Placements to ensure students are receiving the required learning and support in the workplace and that employers are coached and mentored in providing support for school students; * provide continuous support to students throughout Years 11 and 12 including personal support, coaching/mentoring, self-development and career development. |