

Structured Workplace Learning Program (SWL) Employer FAQs

What is structured workplace learning?

Structured workplace learning (SWL) is on-the-job training that is required to embed and extend classroom learning within a nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) course undertaken as part of either the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), including placement required within School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT). SWL provides an opportunity for students to enhance and apply their learning and be assessed against new found skills and knowledge. You may have had students undertaking work experience or have heard of work experience. SWL is different to work experience.

What is the difference between a structured work placement and work experience?

Work experience is generally undertaken in Years 9 or 10. It involves secondary school students in short-term industry placements, which broadens their experience and understanding of the world of work and career opportunities. In general, students observe different aspects of work within the industry and may assist with tasks allocated by their supervisor.

This is different to structured workplace learning students who are undertaking Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools programs. These students must undertake tasks or activities that enable them to acquire skills and knowledge in an industry setting as part of an accredited vocational training program.

Do all students have to complete a SWL placement?

No, not all vocational education courses require SWL, the students' teacher or trainer will let the students know if placement is required.

I am an employer and I want to take on a student placement, what do I do?

Once an employer has made the decision to have a student on placement they can contact the BGK LLEN to discuss how to proceed.

What information should be discussed during the placement interview?

This is an opportunity for an employer to let the student know the hours of work, appropriate dress for the workplace, the name of the person who will supervise them and the required duties.

Is there any paperwork that needs to be completed during the interview?

Yes, if the employer and the student decide to go ahead with the placement the SWL arrangement form, which the student will bring to the interview, must be completed. This is to be signed by the student, parent, school and the employer. The employer will receive a signed copy of this form before the student begins the placement.

What is the employers 'duty of care' to a student on placement?

Employers have legal obligations to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all employees and contractors including students undertaking structured workplace learning.

What sort of tasks should students on placement be given?

Students should be given tasks which are interesting and which will give them an understanding of the business and industry area. Remember that students on placement must be supervised at all times.

What day of the week do students' complete SWL placement?

Schools, students and employers may work together to negotiate a suitable schedule for SWL. Some schools will have preferred release days for SWL students or alternatively a block placement can be negotiated.

What hours should students work?

The hours can be negotiated between the employer and the students; however they should reflect a true work day.

How long does an SWL placement last?

It is desirable for an employer to commit to at least a minimum of one school term (8- 10 weeks) however having the students for the number of hours required by their course of study would be appreciated. A block placement can be either one or two weeks depending on requirements of the VET certificate.

What responsibilities do students have during placement?

The students should:

- ensure they understand their obligations in relation to Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) in the workplace
- complete and sign the required paperwork and log book records
- behave like an employee and follow requirements of the workplace and instructions given to them by their supervisor
- be polite and courteous, wear clothing appropriate to the workplace and be punctual in attendance
- perform tasks which will enable their skills and competencies to be assessed where appropriate
- show enthusiasm and initiative and be willing to learn
- immediately seek advice from their supervisor when unfamiliar with workplace procedures in regard to OH&S, or uncertain about how any task should be done

What responsibilities does an employer have during placement?

Employers should ensure that:

- students are inducted into the workplace on their first day of placement
- students receive the agreed opportunities to learn and be formally assessed against skills and competencies
- students understand the tasks and activities they will complete during placement, and how to complete them in a safe manner
- if required, students are provided with personal protective equipment and instructed in its use
- students are given adequate support and directly supervised at all times during placement

Is it important for an employer to plan what will happen during the placement?

The most rewarding structured workplace learning programs – and the safest – are those planned in advance. The BGK LLEN can provide the employer with further information about preparing for placement.

Do the students have to complete any OH&S training before placement?

Yes, at school all students must complete the OH&S units and/or the work safe module relevant to the industry area they are doing a placement in prior to starting their placement.

What OH&S training should a student on placement receive?

Students on placement must be fully informed of safe work practices and must receive the required training to complete the tasks allocated to them during placement in a safe manner. It's important to take time to explain to the students what the hazards in the workplace are, why the risk controls are in place and how they are put into practice.

Do students need to be supervised during placement?

Yes, students must be supervised at all times, however the supervision role may be shared.

Do students on placement need to complete a workplace induction?

Students on placement are no different to any new starter, so on their first day at work they should receive a standard workplace induction.

What should be covered during the workplace induction for students on placement?

An employer should ensure that:

- students are introduced to their supervisor and knows what to do if their supervisor is not present at any time
- students familiarise themselves with where they will be working
- students understand if any areas of the workplace are deemed 'no-go' and why
- students understand the tasks they will be completing during placement
- students are aware of and understand the workplace rules and procedures that apply to the workplace and the work they will be doing
- students know who the workplace first aider is, and what to do if they need first aid
- emergency arrangements are explained, and evacuation plan and assembly points identified, ensuring students understand what they should do in an emergency
- students know to raise any health or safety issues, incidents or concerns with their supervisor

Does the employer need to collect personal information about the students on placement?

An employer needs to collect basic contact information and next of kin details for students on placement; additionally it is important that the employer is made aware of any medical condition (e.g. asthma or epilepsy) that could require treatment, including any medication being taken by the students, in case of a medical emergency.

Do students get paid for SWL?

Yes an employer must pay the students a minimum of \$5.00 per day. This covers the students for work cover by the Department of Education and Training. The employer can choose to pay the students more if they wish.

Are the students covered by insurance?

The Department of Education and Training provide work cover for students during placement provided the SWL form has been completed and signed by the student, parents, employer and school.

Is there any paperwork that needs to be completed during placement?

Students may have a log book which they will complete during work hours as part of their placement. The employer may also be required to record some information about the tasks completed by the students.

What if the placement is not working out?

If the placement is not working out employers should speak to the student's school contact person so that any issues can be addressed. If students are unhappy with any area of their placement, they should first talk to their supervisor, then if still unhappy talk to their teacher and parents.

If you have further questions, please contact the BGKLEN

by phone 95848845 or email yva.klaric@bgkllen.org.au