

Structured workplace learning

QCE guidelines

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1. What is structured workplace learning?

The QSA understands that learning occurs in a variety of contexts and is not confined to that occurring in a school. The QSA values these other formal and informal types of learning¹ as they can help students develop knowledge and skills which facilitate the transition from school to work.

The QSA has developed a quality assurance process to recognise informal learning courses that may contribute to the achievement of a Queensland Certificate of Education

Structured workplace learning (SWL), as defined by the QSA, is a recognised course that delivers a significant amount of learning in a real workplace. Structured workplace learning courses:

- deliver real employability skills which benefit employers and young people
- are developed by industry and may complement strategies that address skills shortages
- can supplement recruitment drives by giving young people the opportunity to “sample” careers in a particular industry
- provide opportunities for young people to create workplace networks
- supplement core studies that may be undertaken at school, an RTO or a precursor to an apprenticeship.

Note: Recognised SWL is not a component of a training package, an accredited VET course or a QSA approved or accredited course (such as an Authority school subject).

Through its recognition process, the QSA aims to improve educational outcomes for all young people and improve public trust in informal structured workplace learning courses which support the transition from school to work.

¹ Informal learning is learning which is not a component of a training package, an accredited VET course or a QSA approved or accredited course (such as an Authority school subject).

2. What are the benefits?

2.1 SWL for employers

SWL benefits employers by:

- Establishing networks and contacts for future recruitment — participating young people provide a base of contacts for employers in future recruitment exercises.
- Building interest in careers in the industry — SWL can help build interest in future careers in a particular industry among young people.
- Improving allocation of resources — SWL gives young people a “taste” of a vocation and they are more likely to make good decisions about signing up for an apprenticeship or traineeship.
- Creating links with young people while still at school — employers can create links with young people while they are at school and are contactable.
- Raising profile of courses — recognition enhances the credibility of SWL courses and the organisations that deliver these among students at schools and their parents or carers.
- Promoting equity — the recognition process is designed to give smaller, regional organisations access to the same formal recognition as larger, nationally based groups.

2.2 SWL for young people

SWL benefits young people by:

- Enhancing pathways — recognised SWL helps young people access further study, training and employment pathways through formal recognition of skills development.
- Building networks — young people develop contacts for future employment, increasing social capital by broadening the networks of people that can enhance opportunities.²
- Delivering real-world experience — young people increase their work-readiness through development of employability skills (a benefit to both participants and employers).
- Adding value to studies at school — SWL compliments school studies and assists with the transition from school to work.
- Increasing participation — young people who may not be attracted to formal instructional learning options can participate in equally valuable SWL and gain credit towards their QCE.

² Social Capital is explained by Zevenbergen, R and Zevenbergen K (2008): “By being in the workplace, young people can build networks of contacts. These may serve as referees for future employment opportunities either directly in that industry or in another position elsewhere. Building such contacts enhances the employability of the young person.” In *School-to-Work Transitions: Final Report*, Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University

3. Course requirements

This section outlines the requirements that must be satisfied before the QSA will recognise a course.

3.1 Endorsement by employers

SWL courses must be endorsed by employers. They must be developed by industry, business or an industry-related third party and offered to QCE candidates, some of whom may be at school. Results must be reported directly by the employer (or the third party on behalf of the employer).

3.2 Course length

SWL courses must total 60–80 hours of learning, which includes:

- at least two hours devoted to preparatory activities
- at least 40 hours in a real workplace
- at least two hours devoted to post-workplace reflective activities.

3.3 Enhancement of employability skills and lifelong learning skills

SWL courses must promote the development of new, or enhance existing, employability and lifelong learning skills (see Appendix 1) of the young person to help them more readily transition to the workplace and future pathways. In addition to these skills, courses may deliver other technical, job-specific skills.

3.4 Course structure

SWL courses must be delivered in three phases, with a minimum total course length of 60–80 hours, spread across the three phases.

Phase 1: Preparation (minimum two hours)

The activities in this preparatory phase will provide essential underpinning knowledge and preparation for the actual work placement (Phase 2). Learning in Phase 1 is achieved through preparatory tasks before the actual workplace-based activity. Examples of this type of learning may include:

- developing an understanding of employability skills and how these will be assessed in the workplace
- developing an understanding of how to record evidence of learning in their skills portfolio (see 1.6 Use of a skills portfolio) and what might constitute appropriate evidence
- learning about the work environment in which they will be placed
- an appropriate workplace health and safety induction.

Phase 2: Work placement (minimum 40 hours)

This is the actual workplace-based component of the course and represents the majority of course time. The young person will undertake a series of activities in a real workplace that have been designed to deliver the learning objectives.

During this phase the young person will be responsible for relating their learning to the employability skills in their portfolio on a regular basis (e.g. daily).

Phase 3: Reflection (minimum two hours)

During this period, the young person is to be given the opportunity to reflect on, and consider, their overall learning achievements in each of the employability skills. They should also be given the opportunity to:

- consider how the experiences of the course contributed to their career planning and further skills development
- consider the learning that has occurred in all three phases of the course
- ensure their skills portfolio is up-to-date.

A workplace health and safety induction must be delivered before beginning Phase 2.

3.5 Course materials meet the quality criteria

SWL course materials must meet QSA's quality criteria (see Appendix 2) to be eligible for recognition.

As a minimum, course materials must include the following:

Rationale

Please outline:

- The impetus for the course/activity (e.g. identified business or community need, meeting needs of young people, etc.) — the *Why*.
- Who the course is designed for — is there a particular target group of young people that the course is aimed at and how will they be targeted? — the *Who*.

Learning objectives

Please outline the learning objectives of the course, noting that it is a QSA recognition requirement that the learning objectives align with the employability skills.

Course activities

Please outline the activities that are going to deliver the learning objectives. How are the learning objectives going to be achieved?

Assessment plan

Please outline an assessment plan that lists the items/instruments of assessment that will demonstrate the learning that has been achieved.

Some examples of assessment items you may include in your assessment plan are:

- A learning objective checklist
- The course supervisor/mentor can observe the young person and verify the learning objectives have been achieved.
- A skills portfolio (see 3.6 Use of a skills portfolio)
- An interview with the young person to assess their skills.
- Written tests, quizzes, etc.
- Other items.

Assessment throughout the course and not just at the end is recommended. This will give young people the opportunity to receive feedback and a chance to gain skills not yet achieved.

Samples and templates to assist with developing your course materials are provided in the document *SWL Samples and Templates*.

3.6 Use of a skills portfolio

SWL courses must involve the development and use of a skills portfolio. This is a requirement for recognition by the QSA. Skills portfolios are the responsibility of the young person and are a valuable learning experience in themselves.

What to include

The young person is encouraged to collect samples of learning that reflect specific skills they have developed throughout the course. As a minimum, a skills portfolio must include:

- examples of work done (if possible) — may be annotated by the course supervisor/mentor
- evidence of development of employability skills — this must include a Learner Log and one or more of the following: written reports, plans, a histogram, or other suitable evidence
- a testimonial from the workplace supervisor/employer
- a young person's self-assessment.

Samples and templates to assist in developing your course materials are provided in the document *SWL Samples and Templates*.

Key features of a skills portfolio

Key features of effective portfolios, as identified by Allen Consulting Group, are as follows:

- They are the responsibility of (and “owned” by) the young person.
- They include appropriate materials such as examples of work done, self-assessment tasks, copies of physical output, and are endorsed by the course supervisor/mentor.
- They are able to be used for a variety of different purposes, such as information to include with a resume in an application for a job, or a VET or university entrance process, or for an application for a volunteer role.
- They supply evidence related to the development of each of the employability skills. They identify what has been developed, how it was developed and when it was demonstrated. They include an opportunity for third-party validation.

- They are flexible and adaptable to allow for a variety of uses and provide for different contexts throughout life.
- They are easy to use by the “portfolio owner”.
- They are seen as valuable by individual users for a variety of purposes, for example, such as guiding self-development or assisting with job selection and career planning.
- They are promoted by people and institutions in positions of influence, such as parents, teachers, employers etc.
- They are able to be adapted and developed as the individual develops to meet their emerging needs.
- They are available for use in a variety of formats to account for different individual needs and preferences, for example, through the internet, as a CD-ROM, in print in the form of a kit.

3.7 Roles and responsibilities

SWL courses must provide the opportunity for individuals to fulfil the following responsibilities:

The young person is responsible for:

- collecting evidence of learning achievement for each employability skill in the course, for inclusion in their skills portfolio
- actively participating in the learning and assessment processes in each phase.

The organisation applying for recognition is responsible for:

- ensuring the young person is appropriately mentored by supporting and guiding the young person during all phases of the course
- ensuring that the young person and the provider of the activity are both actively involved in assessing the young person’s learning in the workplace
- reporting results of achievements to the QSA (more information is supplied upon application for recognition)
- maintaining evidence of learning and participating in random sampling by the QSA
- ensuring the course does not encourage or condone contravention of Commonwealth and State laws and that all legislative requirements associated with the course are met.

The provider of the actual workplace activity (may be the same party as above) is responsible for:

- providing as many opportunities as possible for the young person to develop the employability skills
- assisting the young person to identify appropriate evidence of learning in their skills portfolio
- actively participating in the learning and assessment process during Phase 2
- adhering to all legislative responsibilities associated with engaging them in a workplace-based learning activity, including appropriate inductions etc.

Mentors are responsible for:

- taking the young person into the organisation as a member of a team
- assisting their socialisation into the organisation
- customising learning experiences for the young person
- giving and receiving feedback.

Some advice: mentors interpret and empower young people to arrive at their own decisions and conclusions without judging or over-instructing. They provide support while challenging the young person. A high level of support with a high level of challenge is the best combination to achieve the learning objectives of the course. Too little of either can leave the young person afraid or under-stimulated.

3.8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

When planning a course that involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges or cultures, consideration needs to be given to: understanding and following community protocols; conscious examination of the ethics of various practices; and cultural rites, responsibilities and sensitivities.

Assistance should be sought from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members or education workers in both planning and developing a course. It is important to identify areas that may need special consideration within the SCL, and fundamental to the success of the course. The following guidelines may help.

Collaboration and consultation

Aboriginal knowledges and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are diverse, and local communities are the custodians of their unique knowledges. Consulting with local community provides insight into one of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups within Australia.

Courses considering local community knowledge should be developed in collaboration with the local community to ensure that the course has mutual benefits for both the student and the community. Consultative processes that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people before, during and after the course enable negotiation, and protection of local knowledges.

Copyright and intellectual property

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is shared community knowledge and protocols exist within these communities to protect this knowledge and associated cultural practices. When planning a SCL, it is important to negotiate the copyright and intellectual property rights afforded to the student and those of the community.

It is imperative that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement within a SCL is acknowledged, particularly in publicly available materials. Where community knowledge is shared knowledge the language group of origin should be recognised. Identifying key contacts or representatives who have the right to share community knowledge is an important part of developing a learning project.

Cultural rites, responsibilities and sensitivity

The teaching of culture is the responsibility of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people only. However, as circumstances may arise in the course, where adhering to the

protocols surrounding one (or more) of these cultural practices, learners need to be aware of these sensitive areas.

Due to the diversity within and between Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures, protocols will vary. Learners are encouraged to be aware of the sensitivity surrounding working with these knowledges and following community protocols. It is vital that students consult with appropriate local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members to discuss any matters that arise.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers within schools, districts, dioceses or regions can assist and support people that are considering development of a SWL course incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges or cultures.

3.9 The nature of the relationship must be explicit

SWL courses must clearly identify the young person as:

- a paid employee
- an unpaid employee
- a participant under a work experience agreement
- a participant in an employment skills development program.

4. How do I apply for recognition?

Before making an application for recognition, please contact the QSA to discuss the requirements. Phone (07) 3864 0255 or email recognition@qsa.qld.edu.au

To apply, download the application form from the QSA website. Go to www.qsa.qld.edu.au, click on QCE > Recognised Studies from the menu options.

Complete the application and post it to the QSA.

What happens next?

Applications are first reviewed by a panel of experts, then by an independent committee which advises the QSA Governing Body. The Governing Body makes the final decision as to whether a course is recognised, its type and the assigned credits. Applications are generally processed within three months of receipt.

If your application is successful, you will be notified in writing by the QSA and will be sent a *Recognition Agreement*. This outlines the responsibilities of the course owner in delivering a course and reporting to the QSA.

Appeals

Unsuccessful applications may be appealed. Contact us for more information on the appeal process.

Retrospective recognition

The legislation governing the QSA clearly states that achievement in courses cannot be recognised retrospectively. That means that a result cannot be recorded on the QCE for a course that was completed prior to formal recognition of that course by the QSA Governing Body.

More information

Please contact the QSA Curriculum Services Division on (07) 3864 0255 or email recognition@qsa.qld.edu.au

Appendix 1: Employability and lifelong learning skills for structured workplace learning

In 2004, Allen Consulting Group together with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) identified eight key employability skills desired by employers.

Communication

The capacity to communicate effectively with others using a range of spoken, written, graphic and other non-verbal means of expression. This may include:

- active listening, speaking clearly, being assertive
- reading and interpreting documentation
- writing effectively for a particular audience and working with numbers.

Planning and organising

The capacity of an individual to plan and organise their own work activities, including making good use of time and resources, sorting out priorities and monitoring performance; being able to locate, sift and sort information in order to select what is required and to present it in a useful way. This may involve:

- collecting, analysing and organising information
- evaluating the relevance, reliability and authority of information
- managing a number of tasks, planning and setting clear goals.

Team work

The capacity to interact effectively with other people both on a one-to one basis and in groups, including understanding and responding to the needs of a client and working effectively as a member of a team to achieve a shared goal. This may involve:

- working effectively in diverse teams
- understanding the role of the individual and the accountability to other members
- working towards consensus in a team environment.

Problem solving

The capacity to apply problem-solving strategies in purposeful ways to achieve an outcome. This involves:

- identifying problems (troubleshooting)
- using a range of strategies to solve problems, including the use of data
- providing customer service and offering solutions based on a range of options.

Technology

The capacity to apply technology/operate equipment with the understanding of principles needed to explore and adapt systems. This may include:

- having basic IT skills in a range of software applications
- operating machinery and technologies effectively
- applying new technology skills, understanding of OHS in relation to technology.

Initiative and enterprise

These skills contribute to innovative outcomes and translating ideas into actions:

- adapting to new situations
- identifying opportunities
- being creative.

Self-management

The capacity of an individual to explain their own personal goals, to develop strategies and take action to achieve them, including:

- having a good understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses
- time management skills (managing tasks and meeting deadlines)
- working safely.

Capacity to learn independently

The ability to develop independent learning strategies to supplement group learning exercises. The individual has the capacity to understand and apply new knowledge and information learned independently of others³.

Appropriate supervision of the young person is to be provided at all times during the course.

³ For more information on the recording employability skills please see Allen Consulting Group for DEST (2004), *Employability Skills – Final Report: Development of a Strategy to Support the Universal Recognition and Recording of Employability Skills – A Skills Portfolio Approach*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Appendix 2: Quality criteria for structured workplace learning

Criterion 1 — Rationale

A course of study will describe learning opportunities that, in the opinion of the QSA, enhance employment pathways.

This means each course of study will include a rationale that:

- establishes for whom the course has been developed
- establishes why the course and its intended learning outcomes are appropriate for the educational needs of these people
- provides details of how employment is enhanced by completing the course including, if applicable, any relevant links to other accredited learning.

Criterion 2 — Course specification

A course of study will include details about:

- **what young people should know and be able to do when they complete their learning**
- **the extent to which young people can demonstrate this**
- **what evidence of achievement is required**
- **a time component for completion of the course of study.**

This means that each course of study will include:

- specific details of:
 - key ideas and concepts
 - expected learning outcomes
- details of (if applicable):
 - required learning experiences
 - resource requirements
- details of the amount of learning required for completion of the course:
 - core elements (breadth and complexity of learning)
 - sequence of learning
 - the typical length of a course of study
- details of (if applicable):
 - elective elements (breadth and complexity of learning)
 - compulsory formal and/or experience-based learning (extent)
- details of conditions of significant junctures, for example, completing the course, interim judgments of achievement, or significant stages of recognition
- a description of the process to be used to make judgments of achievement (for example, application of criteria and standards) including:
 - the process for differentiating achievement
 - details of any relevant links to other accredited learning
 - a description of the assessment techniques that will be used to make judgments about achievement
 - an outline of the assessment requirements of the course, for example, a combination of techniques, or formative and summative judgments
 - a disclosure, if applicable, of any weighting or processes that privilege one judgment of

achievement over another

- details of procedures for making reasonable, accountable and transparent decisions about achievement*, including processes for validating evidence of achievement, for example:
 - cross-marking, conferences, professional development opportunities, and the like
 - formal meetings for discussing performance decisions
 - external moderator (provide details of qualification)
 - use of common assessment device
 - other moderation processes
 - details of an appeal process regarding achievement decisions*.

If there is scope for a provider to interpret a parent document, for example, in the case of an Authority syllabus developing a work program, additional information will be required including:

- details of the criteria that will apply to interpretations developed at a provider level
- details of the processes for ensuring interpretations are consistent with the criteria.

In addition, a course developer may be requested to supply any other information the Authority requests to clarify its understanding or interpretation of the course.

Criterion 3 — Compliance

A course of study will not encourage or condone contravention of Commonwealth and State laws.

This means that each course of study:

- will not either implicitly or explicitly encourage or condone contravention of Commonwealth and State laws
- may make reference to specific law/s important to its delivery.

* Where a course is one of a suite offered by an organisation, or where a course has been developed from a parent document, for example an Authority syllabus, this extra information will be requested by the QSA, but need not be part of the given syllabus.

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