Developing the Young Workforce

Virtual Work Placement Guidance

March 2021

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

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Virtual Work Placements - Standards and Expectations

Purpose:
This guidance document supports teachers and practitioners involved in the planning and implementation of virtual work placements (VWPs) to deliver high quality learning experiences in accordance with a set of national expectations. It also offers some practical advice and exemplification in support of the development of VWPs.

The document articulates closely with the DYW [Work Placements Standard](#).

There will be a review of this document in 6 months' time to ensure the guidance responses to the needs of all learners across Scotland equitably.

Background
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic learners currently face significant restrictions in accessing work placement opportunities and are likely to do so in the foreseeable future. In order to ensure young people still gain insight, knowledge and skills around the world of work it is essential that learners have access to authentic and relevant experiences of the world of work.

Given the future economic challenges Scotland faces it is important that learners continue to have access to an increasingly wide range of work-related learning opportunities, including Virtual Work Placements. This will provide them with essential experiences to consider and pursue their career pathways.

Wider context: Work-related Learning
VWPs are a specific form of Work-related Learning**,** which is the overarching term used to describe any planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding which provides learners with experiences and knowledge about the world of work. This can take the form of project based learning, research, online study and work-based tasks,

Further information can be found in Appendix 4 and also on the Work Placements, Work-Related Learning & Work Inspiration section on the [National Improvement Hub.](#)

Virtual Work Placements

> **Definition**
>
> **Virtual Work Placements (VWPs)** provide young people with relevant, challenging, enjoyable and appropriate online, interactive learning experience delivered in collaboration with employers. The VWP is to be based on the current industry working practices and contemporary workplace environment and meet the *essential requirements* outlined below.
>
> The experience should help the young person to gain up-to-date information and insight in a specific area of work in order to make informed decisions about their future careers.

Virtual Work Placements should also adhere to a set of clear expectations on what this experience is to encompass which are stated below.

Equality and Inclusion

While this VWPs guidance is expressed as a universal entitlement for young people to gain experience of work, it needs to be clear that not all young people enjoy the same advantages, nor face the same challenges.

Therefore all stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of virtual work placements should provide advice, guidance and opportunities that contribute to:

• eradicating discrimination including poverty related digital exclusion; and
• promoting mutual respect and equality of opportunity across genders, social background, disabilities, ethnicities, sexual orientation and religions.

Essential requirements

A meaningful, interactive high quality VWPs include all the following key aspects:

- prior to VWPs learners discuss their career aspirations, skills and interests with a teacher/practitioner/careers' advisor and identify clear goals;
- VWP induction: Learners are provided with an overview of the key aspects of the placement including an introduction to the organisation they will connect with;
- direct, including live engagement with a mentor[1] to provide regular opportunities to reflect on the learners VWP;
- engagement with relevant organisation representatives to broaden their perspectives on the breadth of employment opportunities within an organisation;
- delivery of a tangible outcome/product/output to ensure that the learner gains a realistic understanding of the working environment within an organisation. This could take the form of a project, production of goods, or work-based task;
- feedback from the mentor which allows the learner to assess their strengths, skills, progress and plan next steps;
- evaluation undertaken by the learner in collaboration with the mentor and teacher/VWP coordinator;
- learners are responsible to keep a record of their VWP, this can be a learning log, record or diary;
- a recognition of learning and achievements as a result of undertaking a VWP through profiling, CV writing or reporting;
- health & safety awareness and safeguarding procedures are essential and could take the form of online courses/training.
- the provision of digital devices and internet connectivity to young people who may not have such resources otherwise.

Desirable requirements

Learners would also benefit from:

- working as part of a team during their placement;
- mentoring by senior students with previous experience of a work placement, in particular for those learners that may require additional support;
- relevant certification or qualifications in relation to the VWP. Options outlined in the Certification section below.

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[1] Mentor: Appropriate and trusted individual within the organisation

VWPs can include any of the following component parts:

- online discussions/meetings with organisation representatives/mentor;
- virtual organisation tours/site visits;
- learning in virtual work-based environments;
- attendance of online meetings and other work-related activities;
- virtual shadowing of an employer;
- online career coaching, eg. mock interviews;
- research tasks;
- employer presentations (live and recorded);
- personal skills analysis activities;
- work related project work.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding procedures should be put in place to ensure that the learner is in a secure and safe online environment when engaging with people out with the education environment.

Depending on regional guidelines this may include any person involved in the delivery of the VWP being a member of the **Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG)** scheme or other measures deemed proportionate.

The precise arrangements to ensure safeguarding are to be put in place in accordance with Local Authority guidelines and a risk assessment should be conducted in advance. This should be of the same level of scrutiny as the existing work placement health and safety guidelines adhered to within each Local Authority.

It is essential that both the learner and the mentor are prepared for the work placement and have discussed the procedures in place to ensure a safe working environment.

For examples, please refer to **Appendix 3**

Recognising learning and achievement

Undertaking a meaningful VWP will support the young person's development of skills, knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

It is crucial that learners reflect on the VWP and, supported by teachers/practitioners, parents/carers and employers, record their development through learning profiles, CVs or other relevant recording media.
Further information is available here:
Profiling guidance
https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/dyw47-profiling-guidance.pdf;

Learning Resource 8: Personal Learning and Achievement
https://education.gov.scot/media/bzhdgub5/learning-resource-8.pdf

Certification:

SQA – VWP qualification
SCQF Level 3   J58143.pdf (sqa.org.uk)
SCQF Level 4   J58144.pdf (sqa.org.uk)
SCQF Level 5   J58145.pdf (sqa.org.uk)
SCQF Level 6   J58146.pdf (sqa.org.uk)

SQA - Personal Development, Self, and Work - Units (Level 2 - 6)

The general aim of this unit is to allow learners to improve their self-reliance and confidence by developing task management skills while carrying out a vocational, work-based project.

Learners who complete this Unit will be able to:
1 Prepare to develop task management skills within a vocational project
2 Carry out the project
3 Review their own task management skills

This unit is a mandatory component of the **Personal Development Award** at **SCQF level 2 - 6** and is also available as a free-standing Unit.

Further information is available:
Personal development: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57040.html
Work shadowing: http://www.sqa.org.uk/files/nu/DR3V10.pdf

Further information
Wider achievement: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64973.html?sector=379
FA customised units: https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/47035/customised-units-approach-to-assessment-1.pdf
Skills for Work: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/79148.9433.html

VWP Expectations

Learners

In advance of a VWP I will:

- have the opportunity to discuss and plan my VWP with relevant teachers, guidance staff, career advisors, parents/carers etc.;
- in consultation with relevant teachers and practitioners, prepare a plan stating the duration, study components, online platform and intended outcomes;
- consider whether VWP is appropriate for my studies and career aspirations, ability and capabilities, and ask for or suggest an alternative were possible;
- ensure any online learning is safe and appropriate by discussing options with my teacher/career advisor etc.

During a work-related / VWP I will:

- complete a log, learning plan or similar record of my experiences/skills development and work toward achieving agreed goals and targets;
- demonstrate the behaviours and attitudes that my employer would expect to see in an exemplary employee;
- follow training and instructions provided by my mentor;
- take full advantage of the opportunities available to develop skills, gain knowledge and develop a positive attitude;
- reflect on the support provided by my mentor and other partners to allow for adjustments during my placement.

After completing a work-related / VWP I will:

- reflect on my learning using the VWP to support my ongoing learning;
- reflect on feedback from my mentor, record it and agree any improvement action with school/parent/carer;
- add relevant details to my CV, profile and (if applicable) to my social media profile on professional platforms taking account of advice provided around online etiquette;
- share my experience with school staff and peers, highlighting the skills I have acquired and opportunities that were available to me within the specific work context.

Delivery partners (employer/training provider and supporting organisations)

In advance of a VWP we will:

- consider our offer and plan for a VWP in line with current advice and guidance available to us from Education Scotland and the appropriate local authority;
- liaise with the local authority and/or school, Education Scotland and the appropriate Regional DYW Group to promote our opportunities;
- ensure that risks are controlled before the VWP starts, taking on board local authority and education advice with regard to online engagement with young people;
- identify key member(s) of staff to support the young person on their VWP;
- know who the school/local authority link person is to support the young person;
- be provided with, and consider, any information relating to the stage d of the young person undertaking the VWP (in compliance with GPDR) along with their career ambitions, particular interests, skills including any specific needs and required supports;
- have agreed the targets with the school and the young person for their learning plan.

During a work-related / VWP we will:

- support the young person by providing appropriate information in appropriate accessible formats, guidance and training including a health and safety briefing, to enable them to both undertake essential tasks and explore areas of particular interest as we would with any new employee;
- provide ongoing feedback to the young person;
- offer a rich and varied experience which enables the young person to both understand the business' culture and practices, and to develop practical skills whilst undertaking meaningful tasks;
- take stock of the young person's knowledge and skills, and their views about the business/organisation in relation to the ethos and the way they work;
- invite the young person to suggest ways in which the approach to VWP could be enhanced.

After completing a work-related / VWP we will:

- take the opportunity to share views on the young person's performance relating to their personal goals/targets with the school and young person;
- receive and reflect on feedback from the young person and the school regarding the VWP.

Parents/Carers

In advance of a VWP I will:

- be invited to give my permission to enable my child to participate in a VWP opportunity which takes account of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and any specific support needs;
- be fully informed of which organisation is providing the VWP, its duration, location and online platform;
- acquaint myself with the purpose of the VWP and what my child should expect to gain from it;
- agree along with the employer and the school the duration of the VWP, this will be tailored to provide the best possible experience for my child;
- communicate, where appropriate, with the school link person overseeing my child's VWP;
- be aware of my child's goals and targets concerning the VWP.

During a work-related / VWP I will:

- support my child to complete the VWP and encourage their enthusiasm;
- encourage my child to think beyond the specific role they are carrying out to help them gain broad insights about what 'work' means for them;
- show interest in their VWP and discuss it with them.

After completing a work-related / VWP I will:

- support my child to reflect on their VWP learning plan and feedback from the employer;
- encourage my child to use the VWP to think more about what they want to do in the future, how they will get there and the skills they will need to get a job;
- take the opportunity to participate in a quality assurance survey of my child's VWP as a means of influencing local work placement policy.

Schools and Local Authorities

In advance of a VWP we will:

- liaise with the appropriate Regional DYW Group to promote the VWP opportunity;
- advise on and/or set up relevant online platforms for the effective and safe delivery of the VWP;
- have robust record keeping in place which monitors and tracks where and when each young person participates in a VWP;
- identify how the VWP aligns with the young person's studies, career aspirations, abilities, and capabilities;
- ensure we pass on any information on the young person relating to their physical, social and emotional wellbeing and specific support needs (in compliance with GPDR);
- note that the goals and targets the young person will be working towards during their VWP are appropriate and productive and liaise with the employer until this is achieved;
- be satisfied that the employer/placement provider has arrangements in place to manage health and safety risks and safeguarding procedures;
- prepare young people for their VWP including information on health and safety in the workplace and how to deal with any issues which may arise whilst on placement;
- ensure that the duration, timing and online platform of the VWP will be mutually agreeable to the young person, the employer and the parent/carer.

During a work-related / VWP we will:

- monitor and track the success of the VWP in unison with the young person, parent/carer and employer, taking account of the length, nature and online platform of the placement, and the needs of the young person;
- work with the young person, employer and the parent/carer to resolve any issues that may hinder a successful placement.

After completing a work-related / VWP we will:

- support the young person in maximising the learning from the VWP and retain evidence from the learning plan for relevant certification;
- ensure the VWP quality assurance process is contributed to by constructive feedback from the young person, the employer and the parent/carer;
- give feedback to the employer on any aspects of the VWP that were particularly strong or might be enhanced – from both the young person's view and the school's;
- explore ways for the whole school community to gain maximum benefit from the VWP, enabling the young person to continue developing their skills to enhance learning and teaching;
- identify ways of sharing knowledge of the workplace with staff and young people;
- grow relationships with the employer alongside our school's self-evaluation processes. This will contribute to the Career-long Professional Learning of staff.

Support for Virtual Work Placements

Exemplar 1:

Blairgowrie High School

[Blairgowrie High School Virtual Work Placement – Developing the Young Workforce Blog (glowscotland.org.uk)](#)

Exemplar 2:

DYW Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian Virtual Work Placement Toolkit

[Virtual work placement development](#)

Exemplar 3: Sample schedule to demonstrate how VWP days can be combined to suit the organisation, this will allow anything from a 1 to a 5 day placement.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Induction	Shadowing	Task Feedback	Task 2 from Mentor	Presentation Preparation Discuss with Mentor
Who are we?	Task from Mentor	Attend meeting	Employee QA Session	
Workplace behaviour	Project intro	Discuss meeting and action points	Task feedback	Project presentation
Career Pathways QA				
Project				
End of the Day Chat				

Induction	Introduce your organisation and the agenda for the placement. It is also a chance to get to know the young person/people and find out what they want to gain from the placement.
Who are we?	Provide the young person/people with a link to your organisation website and provide them with a list of questions that they can find the answers to on the website. Agree a time to then reflect on what they have discovered.
Shadowing	Allowing a young person to observe an employee at work can be a great way of letting them experience some tasks that an employee does day-to-day. This could be done virtually by talking over a process while sharing screens.
Career Pathways	Arrange for the young person to chat to one or two employees about the journey they have been on to get to where they are in the organisation now.
Employee QA Session	Virtual meeting with some employees to give some real-life insight into the world of work. Young person will have the opportunity to ask questions of different employees with the organisation.
Workplace Behaviour	Share some of your organisation's policies: GDPR, Health & Safety and Disciplinary Discuss what young people thought and if they were surprised by any of these. Discuss expectations of employees in the work place.

Exemplar 4:

Balfour Beattie

[Virtual Work Experience (Scotland) (thinkific.com)](#)

Appendix 2

Virtual Work Placements Resources

- **Founders 4 Schools**
  https://www.support-founders4schools.org.uk/f4s-in-scotland

- **Education Scotland DYW Virtual Work Placement Wakelet**
  https://wke.lt/w/s/5nATiE

- **Uptree**
  Week_16_01.12.20_.pdf (mcusercontent.com)

- **CISCO**
  Cisco Work Experience Goes Virtual

- **Dumfries & Galloway Safeguarding Advice**
  Safeguarding Guidance

- **Foundation Apprenticeships**
  foundation-apprenticeships-scqf-level-6-placement-options.pdf (skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

Appendix 3
Safeguarding Sample Policy (based on Gateway Guidance)
Background

We ask all young people and employers to sign an Online Behaviour and Safeguarding Policy (which outlines how we expect them to behave when they are online, and/or using school networks, connections, internet connectivity and devices, cloud platforms and social media).

Employers are asked to sign this document before they provide online work-related learning for young people. Many of these rules are common sense – if you are in any doubt or have questions, please seek advice from relevant school contact (add school details)

What are the rules?

- I understand that I am a role model and will promote positive online safety and model safe, responsible and positive behaviours in my own use of technology, including social media

- I will not behave any differently towards students compared to when they attend an onsite work placement. I will never attempt to arrange any meeting, without the full prior knowledge and approval of the relevant school contact (add school details).

- I understand that any activity on using school or college networks, platforms, internet and logins may be captured by one of the school's systems security, monitoring and filtering systems and/or viewed by an appropriate member of staff.

- Live online sessions (e.g. webinars) will only be delivered using GLOW or Microsoft Teams. If other platforms require to be used permission should be sought from ….(relvant person's name)…

- I will conduct any online sessions in a professional environment. This means I will be suitably - attired and ensure that the background is as close to a workspace as possible (e.g. no bedroom furniture or personal items visible on screen). The camera view will not include any personal information or inappropriate objects and where it is possible to blur or change the background, I will do so.

- I will not take photographs/screenshots or audio/visual recordings of the online session or of pupils/students. If required (for marketing purposes) I will seek permission from the relevant people.

- Where possible, all live online sessions will take place with a minimum of 2 staff from my organisation.

- If I am given access to school and/or college networks, cloud platforms or other technology:

  - I will use them exclusively for the purposes to which they have been assigned to me, and not for any personal use.
  - I will not attempt to access any pupil / staff / general school data unless expressly instructed to do so as part of my role.
  - I will not attempt to make contact with any pupils/students out with the agreed online work related learning activity.

- I will not share any information about the school/college or members of its community that I gain as a result of delivering online work related learning or on any platform except where relevant to the purpose of my online session and agreed in advance with the school.

- I will not do or say anything to undermine the positive online-safety messages that school disseminates to pupils/students and will not give any advice on online-safety issues unless this is the purpose of my online learning session and this is pre-agreed by the school.

- I will report any behaviour which I believe may be inappropriate or concerning in any way to the relevant school contact (add school details), this is for my protection as well as that of students.

Further Information and Resources

If you would like to find out more information about online safety and safeguarding you may find the links below helpful:

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/social-media-and-online-safety
https://www.npfs.org.uk/downloads/online-safety

Digital Learning and Teaching – Safeguarding Guidance for Staff – Dumfries & Galloway :
Dumfries_and_Galloway_Online_Safeguarding_Guidance_v10_13082020.pdf (scotland.gov.uk)

Appendix 4
Work-Related Learning

> **Definition**
>
> **Work-related learning** is planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable the learner to have experience of the **world of work**.
>
> This may include learning through experiences of the world of work, **project-based learning** and other activities which help the learner to have a better understanding of the working practices required to be successful in the world of work.

Essential requirements

Deliver work-related learning activities to allow the learner an opportunity to experience project-based learning around the world of work. This could take the form of a project, simulated activities or work-based tasks.
Health & Safety awareness is essential and could take the form of online courses/training.
Safeguarding procedures should be put in place to ensure that the learner is in a secure and safe environment.

Desirable requirements

The learner should identify key skills that they would like to enhance during the work-related learning. This could be discussed at an initial learner conversation with school staff.
Learners should discuss their career aspirations, skills and interests with a teacher/practitioner/careers' advisor.

Qualifications would provide additional value and there are a few options available to schools. This is highlighted in the **Accreditation Section** later in the guidelines.

VWP and Work-Related Learning
Key information

Virtual Work Placements	Work-Related Learning
Essential Elements	
- prior to VWP learners discuss their career aspirations, skills and interests with a teacher/practitioner/careers' advisor and identify clear goals; - VWP induction: Learners are provided with an overview of the key aspects of the placement including an introduction to the organisation they will connect with; - direct engagement with a mentor to provide regular opportunities to reflect on the learners VWP; - engagement with relevant organisation representatives to broaden their perspectives on the breadth of employment opportunities within an organisation; - delivery of a tangible outcome/product/output to ensure that the learner gains a realistic understanding of the working environment within an organisation. This could take the form of a project, production of goods, or work-based task; - feedback from the mentor which allows the learner to assess their strengths, skills, progress and plan next steps; - evaluation undertaken by the learner in collaboration with the mentor and teacher/VWP coordinator; - learners are responsible to keep a record of their VWP, this can be a learning log, record or diary; - a recognition of learning and achievements as a result of undertaking a VWP through profiling, CV writing or reporting; - health & safety awareness and safeguarding procedures are essential and could take the form of online courses/training. - the provision of digital devices and internet connectivity to young people who may not have such resources otherwise.	- Deliver work-related learning activities that provide learners with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding which provides learners with experiences and knowledge about the world of work. This could take the form of a project-based learning, research, online study, simulated activities or work-based tasks. - Health & Safety awareness is essential and could take the form of online courses/training **Safeguarding procedures** should be put in place to ensure that the learner is in a secure and safe environment
Desirable Elements	
- working as part of a team during their placement. - mentoring by senior students with previous experience of a work placement, in particular for those learners that may require additional support. - relevant accreditation or qualifications in relation to the VWP. Options outlined in the **certification section**	- learners should discuss their career aspirations, skills and interests with a teacher/practitioner/careers' advisor - learner should identify key skills that they would like to enhance during the work-related learning. This could be discussed at an initial learner conversation with school staff. - qualifications would provide additional value, there are options available to schools. This is highlighted in the **certification** section.

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