



AGED CARE SERVICES SECTOR
NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE FEEDBACK

SKILLS IQ DISCUSSION PAPER

STUDENT WORK PLACEMENT

MAY 2020

ABOUT ACSA

Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) is the leading aged-care peak national body supporting over 700 church, charitable and community-based not-for-profit organisations that provide accommodation and care to about one million older Australians.

We represent, lead, and support our members to achieve excellence in providing quality affordable housing and community and residential care services for older Australians. ACSA is passionate about the quality and value of the services our members provide, regardless of their size, service mix, or location.

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AGED CARE SERVICES SECTOR

National Consultative Feedback

FEEDBACK ON SKILLS IQ – DISCUSSION PAPER ON VET STUDENTS WORK PLACEMENTS

The Discussion Paper is focused on student work placements in Aged Care within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector and includes Certificate III in Individual Support, Certificate IV in Ageing Support and Diploma in Nursing. The objective is to identify what would constitute a world-class, vocational work placement and steps to achieving that objective.

Feedback exploring suggested best principles and best practices with respect to providing high quality work placements through vocational education and training of aged care programs has been collated against key questions posed in the paper.

<https://www.skillsiq.com.au/ResourcesResearchandSubmissions/Research>

FLEXIBILITY IN PLACEMENT MODEL

There were advantages and disadvantages in each of the work placement models.

Placement models could include:

Block placement

Feedback reflected that most work placement, is block placement occurring at the end of the course, particularly for students undertaking the Certificate III Individual Support qualification. The advantage of this approach is that it provides the student with the maximum benefit of volume of knowledge learning ensuring that the student is better prepared for placement. The disadvantage of this approach is not having the ongoing experience gained through work placement, to 'learn and apply', building on knowledge, as is afforded by either an integrated or distributed placement.

Distributed placement

Feedback identified that a distributed placement would be beneficial in providing a student with a range of different workplace opportunities, however is more difficult for Aged Care Services organisations and Registered Training Organisations to manage, as negotiating with possibly three different employers over the period of the work placement may complicate arrangements.

Integrated placement

Integrated placements, which for example, occur one day per week over the duration of the course, were viewed as providing a consistent approach to work placement offering a range of experiences for the candidate. This however limited the candidate's experience to one work site only. Nursing students in regional and rural South Australia are offered a cadetship of two days per week working in an organisation and travel to a regional centre for the theory aspect of their training.

- A preceptor/mentor style role in an Aged Care Services organisation could be considered, to assist with the supervision of students on placement. Many Aged Care Services organisations expressed an interest in a more consistent approach to preceptor training and/or mentoring training for staff in workplaces who provide support and supervision to work placement candidates.
- Some Aged Care Services organisations provide an additional hourly payment to staff supervising students as they are cognisant of the extra time involved in documenting outcomes/skills/activities, which constitute part of the student placement requirements.
- The development of a similar model like the Hairdressing apprenticeship, or a hybrid, where students undertake blocks of learning for underpinning skills & knowledge first at the RTO site and then undertake part placement, returning to the Registered Training Organisation

for more training and back into the workplace for completion of work placement, was suggested.

AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON WORK PLACEMENTS

- Over the past few years, there has been a focus on ‘volume of learning’ regarding the allocation of training package hours, requiring more classroom delivery. Some Registered Training Organisations deliver a minimum of 120 hours in work placement (22% of 555 nominated hours of CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support), with others delivering 145 hours or more.
- Clarification and standardisation of ‘volume of learning’, best practice methodology for training delivery and standardised placement hours across the sector, including an increase of simulation hours conducted at the Registered Training Organisation, prior to placement, would better enable students to be ‘placement ready’.
- An increase of placement hours would be supported, with the addition of funded workplace mentors and/or a funded clinical workplace role within each Aged Care Services facility.
- Placement hours are more achievable in Residential Care settings, than in Home Care settings, limiting exposure to students of this type of workplace setting.
- Work placements in Home Care, in some Aged Care Services organisations, operate using a buddy method for the support and supervision of the student. Permission to access an older person’s home, for the purpose of student work placement needs to be secured prior to entry in the home of an older person receiving Aged Care Services.
- It was reflected that there is an inconsistency in the design of CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support, regarding the amount of theory, in relation to what is required for the job role. While, allocation of 120 hours is the minimum hours for work placement, outlined in the CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support, most Aged Care Services organisations consulted felt this allocation, was adequate in most cases. Some Registered Training Organisation and Aged Care Services organisations insist that students without sufficient competency complete more than the 120 hours, to demonstrate competency and meet the required standard expected in the role.
- If placements are scheduled early in a course, it is recommended that Registered Training Organisations explore the use of online tools used in the organisation and incorporate these within aligned training modules.

ALIGNMENT OF TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS

- Training should be driven by the needs of industry. The inclusion of industry representatives in focus groups and networks would provide opportunities for discussion and input into all aspects of training and include elements such as recruitment needs, and the development of staff. Each state and territory may have established industry related initiatives such as ACSA’s Workforce Innovation Networks or similar providing a conduit for such discussions to occur. Many organisations expressed that they have existing relationships with Registered Training Organisations, that they have built over many years to support the facilitation of work placement and the use work placement as a vital recruitment model for the workforce.
- Direct input from industry into units that are selected by RTO’s enhances student work placement as it allows the Aged Care Services organisation to evaluate how the student would fit within the Aged Care Services organisation and results in a more effective placement for both parties, often leading to increased employment outcomes. Aged Care

Services organisations insist that it is vital to have input into the selection of the electives used in training to suit the needs of their workplace.

- Currently stand-alone qualifications sit isolated, forcing an individual to ‘start again’ when transitioning between the roles of an Aged Care Worker and an Enrolled Nurse. Articulation between the Community Services and Health training packages reflecting pathways, that support career progression and recognition of unit competencies gained would be of benefit. Often recruiters scanning for an Aged Care qualification exclude part qualification completion in Enrolled Nursing. There may be sufficient training achieved, that could be mapped to the Aged Care qualification.

STRONG EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- It is agreed that building industry partnerships is of benefit to all parties and work placement enables the employer to assess suitability and the student to self-assess their ‘right fit’ for industry. Engaging industry in each step of the process from recruitment of the students into vocational training ensures ‘right fit’ for the student as well as ‘right fit’ for the sector from commencement, reducing the likelihood of dropouts and non-completions.
- Dealing directly with a Registered Training Organisation enables the Aged Care Services sector to develop relationships, enhances consultation regarding placement, increases resolution of issues and provides a conduit for industry feedback.
- The quality of the relationship between the Aged Care Services sector and Registered Training Organisations, plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of a student work placement. A trusted partnership is one that is underpinned by high-quality flexible training that reflects the changing needs of the Aged Care Services sector, and where all parties are fully informed regarding work placement role expectations. The Aged Care Services sector benefits from direct on-going consultation with Registered Training Organisations, where solid relationship development can occur and knowledge of stakeholder operations gained, leading to better placement outcomes, for all stakeholders involved.
- A fully functioning relationship provides some assurance that students are screened for ‘right fit’ suitability, ensuring a higher calibre of student, better prepared through training, prior to placement, therefore easing the burden on the Aged Care Services sector by the creation of unnecessary issues that increases stress for both the workplace and the student.
- The Aged Care Services sector and Registered Training Organisations working together result in the development of productive relationships which meet the needs of all parties, the student, workplace, and the training organisation. Quality assurance should form part of this arrangement.

CENTRALISATION AND STREAMLINING OF PLACEMENT PLANNING

- Standardisation of units (within reason) would ensure a more consistent workforce regarding the expected level of ability and skills of students undertaking placement.
- Formal agreements negotiated between both parties with a standardised template outlining the basic expectations and legislative requirements would be supported. While some Registered Training Organisations and Aged Care Services organisations engage in formal agreements (MOUs) or have informal arrangements, some Registered Training Organisations and Aged Care Services organisations are not clear regarding expectations and role responsibilities, leaving it open to practices of poor performance by either and/or both parties.
- Aged Care Services organisations have strict legislated workplace processes /procedures and audit compliance requirements. Ideally work placement students are ‘orientated’ both in

organisational policies and site practices prior to commencement. Currently each Aged Care Services organisation, would have their own process for pre-work placement and the collation of police checks, Registered Training Organisation insurance paperwork, etc. Templates and/or a streamline process may assist.

- Streamlined placement planning needs to ensure that no-one is 'locked out' of the market with larger Registered Training Organisations pushing out smaller private competitors.
- A centralised unit may potentially result in an additional level of complexity. When external organisations become involved in quality assurance procedures, it can shift the focus to meet the needs of the external body foremost, rather than an overall continuous improvement approach. This can increase stress for parties and rather than foster consultation, may discourage some organisations from taking placements.
- Centralised placement options in South Australia and Victoria "**INplace**" or **Placeright** have proven successful in organising placement, with Aged Care Services organisations registering their capacity to support students ahead of time, giving both the Aged Care Services organisation and the Registered Training Organisation the opportunity to plan accordingly. This system is currently, only available to government funded organisations. There is a Fee-for-Service involved, in using these centralised placement platforms and this cost would need to be covered by either the Registered Training Organisation or the Aged Care Services organisation. The possible downside to a centralised placement option is that relationships with Aged Care Services organisations are not developed and maintained, as it would be in a direct request approach for placements by a Registered Training Organisation.
- SONIA, a student placement, and management software has no mirror side for Aged Care Services organisations. A method of recording placements that is beneficial to Aged Care Services organisations would be useful, and that links back to Registered Training Organisations.
- While an external body to monitor work placements would ensure a consistent approach, it is important that it is not too rigid or introduces another level of complexity to the mix.

ASSESSMENT AND SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

- Some Registered Training Organisations offer online-only training which does not prepare the students for the workforce effectively, others have no practical workshops prior to placement and expect that the Aged Care Services organisation take carriage of that responsibility. Aged Care Services organisations in this consultation, unanimously agreed that a fully online training programs for Aged Care workers was unacceptable as the nature of the job role is very practical and 'hands on'.
- Registered Training Organisations must provide the assessment of skills in the workplace. Some fail to adequately provide trainers to support and assess in the workplace. Aged Care Service organisations do not have the time and/or adequately skilled employees to assess for competency. Aged Care Services organisations can provide access to older people on site, ensuring that students are safely supported in activities carried out within the facility. Aged Care Services organisation onsite trainers /educators while willing to assist, may not be trained as Vocational Education and Training Assessors and therefore are not qualified to interpret Vocational Education and Training competencies and/or assess student competence.
- Placements are not offered to Registered Training Organisations who do not provide an assessor to attend the work site to sign off competencies and who enrol students who do not meet 'right fit' expectations.

- Some Aged Care Services organisations offer existing staff, mentor training to support placement, but many agreed free external mentor training would be of benefit. This would ensure more mentors are trained in a consistent manner.
- External mentor training would increase the capacity of Aged Care Services organisations to offer additional student placements. The training ideally would supply sufficient mentors who understand how to engage with students, present information, advice, and constructive criticism, in a manner that supports student success. This would assist to enhance the placement experience for students and produce graduates that are 'work ready' and 'right fit' for the job role. Relying on insufficient workplace mentors or those solely trained within organisations, reduces the experience for the student by limiting exposure to a range of workplace activities required to achieve competence and sector-wide employability.

WORKERS ALREADY EMPLOYED IN THE INDUSTRY

- The use of online learning for existing workers was considered acceptable as practical application is available through on-the-job role responsibilities. Additional funding would support the release of existing employees to complete online training while in the workplace as part of a professional development program.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- In general, the training model preferred to foster learning, is a blend of training simulation, face-to-face delivery, and work placement. This training approach encourages engagement and creativity by offering new and alternative ways of learning which allows students to progress at an individual rate. Students have more control and as adults, this is often more attractive to them.
- Online training can introduce new skills and serves to prepare students for use of workplace online systems used for documentation, human resource purposes, etc. The use of a variety of tools enhances the learning experience and enables opportunities for learners to progress at their own rate.
- However, some students do not have access to home computers and are not computer literate and are disadvantaged.
- Face-to-face learning or classroom delivery is also essential for aged care training, as the role involves a large practical component. Communication skills can be practiced and honed, within the workplace environment.
- Set ratios or mandate topics within units, that require face-to-face or classroom-based delivery.

ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

- The key competencies required of Personal Care Workers and Enrolled Nurses are similar, including the need for 'right fit' people, for the Health and Community Services industry. Screening processes of students prior and during training would assist to identify appropriate individuals and enable 'self-identification' their suitability based on personality profiling, core values and workplace role expectations.
- There is insufficient understanding from some Employment Service Providers regarding the Aged Care Services sector, referring their clients to undertake online-only Aged Care training. Vulnerable job seekers are often targeted by aggressive Registered Training Organisations on social media platforms to undertake online training. These Registered

Training Organisations often do not arrange work placements and the quality of training is questionable, leading to graduates being under-skilled and obtaining a nationally recognised qualification, which they can not be re-enrolled in.

- Some Registered Training Organisations do not offer Recognised Prior Learning at commencement. If a Registered Training Organisation clusters all units, within a whole qualification, with the expectation of student competency achieved through a successful work placement, then students who do not complete their work placement are unable to obtain any unit exemptions, if transferring to another Registered Training Organisation, as no units will have been fully completed.
- The provision of funding for an 'on-site clinical trainer' skill set and /or funding for employment of clinical trainers was supported.
- Registration of support workers as a strategy, will assist to raise the profile of Aged Care workers, along with the requirement for regular upskilling and training of existing workers.
- There are some barriers to engaging in traineeships, as Aged Care Services organisations are time poor and unlike students in placements, trainees are not 'work ready'. Existing worker traineeships are not attractive as there are no compensations or incentives for employers, unlike new trainees, where there are incentives.
- Some Aged Care Services organisations use the traineeship model as their primary method of recruitment, due to sound working relationship with a preferred Registered Training Organisation.

CURRENT MODELS

- Juniper – Perth's leading Aged Care Services provider, has introduced a Fee-for-Service model where an Registered Training Organisation is charged for the placement of each student on-site. This funding supports a 'clinical trainer' who in turn supports the Aged Care Services organisation's employees and act as conduit between the organisation and the Registered Training Organisation. This assists to remediate when training differs from the workplace expectations.

SUMMARY

Effective work placement is dependent upon strong relationships between Registered Training Organisations and the Aged Care Services sector. These stakeholders are responsible for ensuring the preparation of the student, the timing of the placement and clarity of role responsibility towards the student. Clear communication regarding role responsibilities of all parties, the Registered Training Organisation, the Aged Care Services organisation, and the student is essential for an effective work placement.

There are advantages and disadvantages regarding the use of block placement, distributed placement, and integrated work placement models. It is important that whatever model is chosen, that it is, the most suitable model according to the needs of the specific stakeholders.

The time allocated to work placement should be no less than the prescribed amount in the training package, however an increase of placement hours may be required to meet individual student needs, based on their level of competency and their previous experience. Mandatory increase in work placement hours may not suit all parties and /or address individual student needs.

Assessment of student competency must be carried out by the Registered Training Organisation, however the Aged Care Services sector, can support this process, by the collection of evidence through an allocated work placement supervisor.

It was overwhelmingly agreed that it is vital to have competent and informed supervisors or mentors in the workplace and that there is a real advantage in having a formal training process for this role, ensuring consistency across the Aged Care Services sector.

Incentives were viewed as being a positive inclusion for work placement. Employers are remunerated for placement of students studying Enrolled Nursing in all jurisdictions. These placements are sought after by Aged Care Services employers. Incentives other than remuneration were discussed including in-kind training delivered by Registered Training Organisations for Aged Care Services employees within organisations that undertake mentoring and/or supervisory roles.

Stakeholder representatives of Aged Care Services organisations and Registered Training Organisations agreed that work placement is a vital part of the Aged Care qualifications.

- Organisations consulted included:
 - Anglican Care Booragul (NSW)
 - Peninsula Village Woy Woy (NSW)
 - Focus Care Solutions (NSW)
 - Smart Training and Consultancy (NSW)
 - Aspire Training (NSW)
 - 3 Bridges Community (NSW)
 - Training Services (NSW)
 - Evergreen Living Communities (NSW)
 - Suncare (QLD)
 - Ozcare (QLD)
 - Challenge Community Services (QLD)
 - Feros Care (QLD)
 - Leading Aged Services
 - Centacare (QLD)
 - Torrens University Australia (NSW)
 - Integrated Living (Tasmania)
 - Emerton Park Aged care (Tasmania)
 - AETS Tasmania/NSW
 - Work and Training Tasmania
 - Meercroft Care (Tasmania)
 - Southern Cross Care (Tasmania)
 - Madec Registered Training Organisation (SA)
 - TAFE South Australia
 - South West TAFE- Warnambool (Vic)
 - The Gordon Geelong (Vic)
 - South Metropolitan TAFE (WA)

Swan Care (WA)

Juniper Perth Aged Care & Retirement (WA)

Community Services, Health, Education, Industry Training Council (WA)

Avivo: Live Life – Individual & Family Services (WA)

Silver Chain – In-Home Aged Care Services (WA)

Department of Training and Workforce Development (WA)

Amana Living Training Institute (WA)

RAAFA Aged Care & Nursing Homes (WA)