



# MANDATORY WORK PLACEMENTS

POLICY AND RESEARCH PAPER



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# CONTENTS

About this paper.....	<b>3</b>
The value of mandatory work requirements.....	<b>4</b>
Backlog of students needing work placements.....	<b>5</b>
Barriers to high quality work placements.....	<b>7</b>
Enablers of high quality work placements.....	<b>9</b>
Broader issues affecting work placements .....	<b>11</b>
Implications for future policy and projects.....	<b>15</b>
Attachment A. RTO survey findings.....	<b>17</b>



## ABOUT THIS PAPER

In 2021, the Human Services Skills Organisation (HSSO) commissioned a piece of research into the mandatory work requirements of the Certificate III in Individual Support. The research was a response to industry concerns about the numbers of students unable to access work placements to fulfil the requirements of the Certificate III in Individual Support. The research sought to quantify the extent to which students were experiencing difficulties in accessing work placements and to understand the factors contributing to this from the perspectives of different stakeholder groups.

The research findings were used to develop a guide for employers and RTOs to help with creating high quality work placements and supporting students to successfully complete them. The guide, *Preparing Students for Work - Certificate III in Individual Support Work Placement Guide for Human Services Providers and RTOs*, will be made available through the HSSO website.

This Policy and Research Paper presents the findings of the research that underpinned development of the guide, as well as broader policy issues identified through the research.

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The research involved extensive stakeholder engagement, including:



survey responses from 206 representatives of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)



consultations with 27 representatives of aged care and disability support service providers/ employers, industry bodies, unions, Industry Reference Committees, RTOs and training provider peak bodies



focus groups with 22 current and past students of the Certificate III in Individual Support and a student placement facilitator.

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## THE VALUE OF MANDATORY WORK REQUIREMENTS

The nationally recognised Certificate III in Individual Support qualification contains a work placement component (also referred to as vocational placement).

One of the core units of competency (CHCCCS023 - Support independence and wellbeing) from the qualification, includes a Mandatory Work Requirement. This means that students must demonstrate the required skills and knowledge in a workplace and have workplace evidence to support this. In order to complete the unit of competency, and ultimately, the qualification, they must complete 120 hours of direct support work in at least one aged care, home and community care, disability or community service organisation, and safely support at least three people to enhance independence and wellbeing during this time.

Some RTOs also use the 120 hours of work placement as an opportunity to collect evidence of students' competency in tasks related to other units of competency. However, this is not a mandatory part of the qualification.

The HSSO research found that across all stakeholder groups there is support for the inclusion of mandatory work requirements in the Certificate III in Individual Support. Despite significant recent challenges in sourcing placements in areas affected by COVID-19 restrictions, employers remained committed to mandatory work requirements as a means of ensuring students are work-ready and contributing to the quality of training outcomes.

Representatives of the Industry Reference Committees responsible for oversight of the Certificate III in Individual Support advised that they also identified a high level of support amongst stakeholders for mandatory work requirements during their review of the qualification.

Employers who participated in the HSSO research felt that investment in student placements was a cost-effective method of creating a pipeline of future workers, reducing staff attrition rates and defraying recruitment costs. Employers reported sourcing significant proportions of their workforce from student placements, with the proportions increasing as the supply of new workers was affected by COVID-related travel bans. Many employers also expressed feeling a broader sense of responsibility to the industry to do their share in offering student placements.

Students consulted during the research also valued their work placement experiences and saw the mandatory work requirements as an essential component of their course, providing them with a practical opportunity to apply their skills and build their understanding of the realities of work in the sector.

## BACKLOG OF STUDENTS NEEDING WORK PLACEMENTS

### Impacts of COVID-19

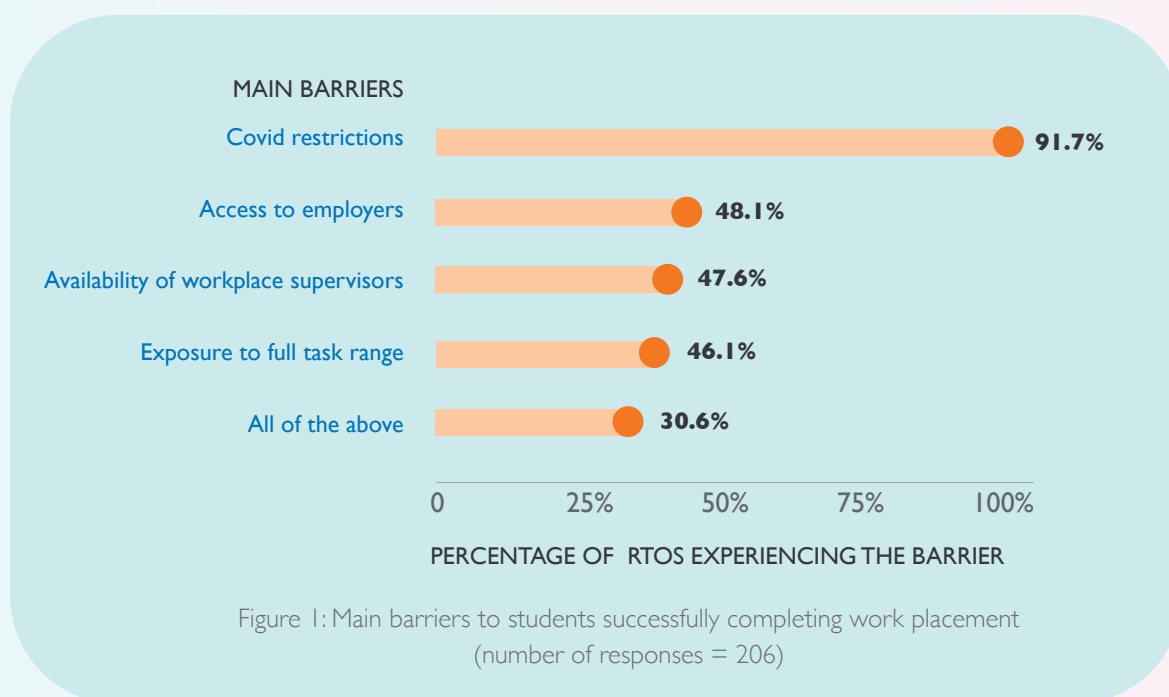
The research identified that backlog of required student placements for the Certificate III in Individual Support varied across the country. Some stakeholders reported significant impacts from COVID-19 restrictions, while others were largely unaffected.

For some employers, COVID-19 and the prioritisation of client safety had had a significant impact on the acceptance of student placements and continues to complicate placement arrangements.

However, at the time of the research, in certain jurisdictions (such as Western Australia and South Australia) and in regional areas, the effects of COVID-19 had been limited, with only short periods of lockdown. Research participants from these areas reported that there had been minimal impact on work placements and that arrangements had largely returned to normal.

Amongst research participants in more affected areas, there was some commentary about staff fatigue arising from the demands of COVID-19 and that students were being welcomed to help with workload issues.

A survey of RTOs in August 2021, to which 206 responses were received, identified COVID-19 as the biggest barrier to students completing work placements at that time.



## BACKLOG OF STUDENTS NEEDING WORK PLACEMENTS

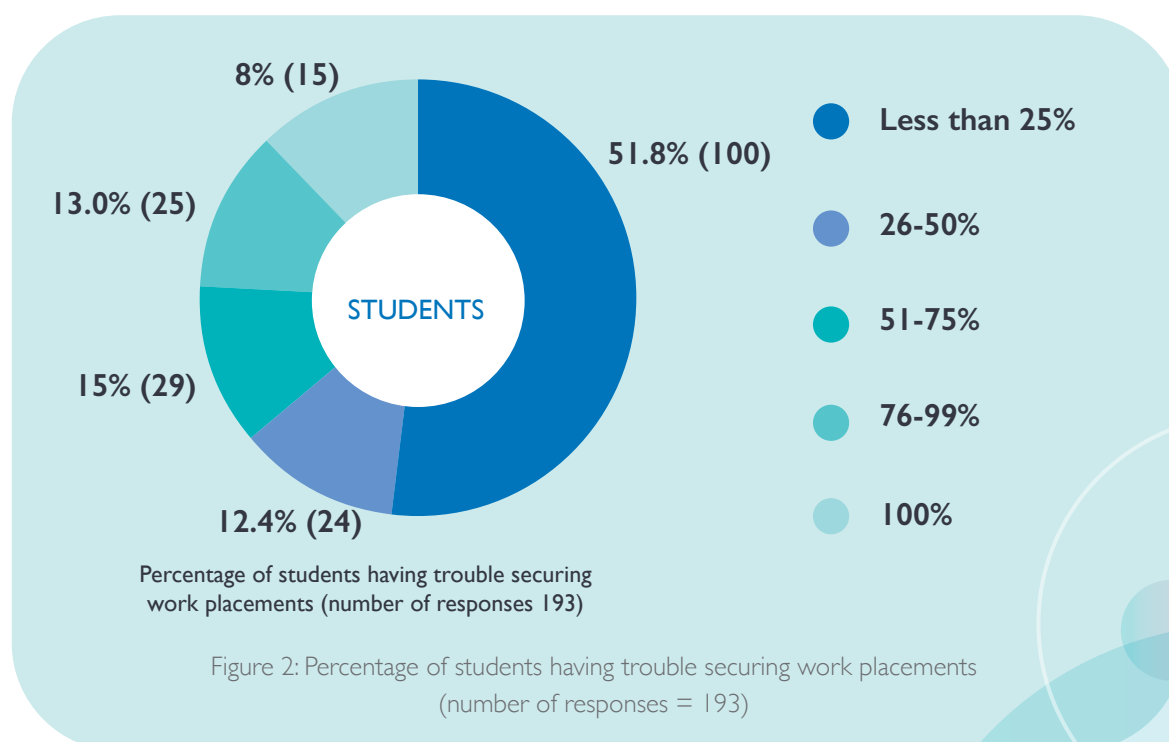
### Ongoing shortages of work placement opportunities

Outside of COVID-19, some employers reported that demand for student placements was generally greater than supply. This lack of supply was particularly acute for in-home care services and disability support services delivered in people's homes and community activities, where the models of service delivery make student supervision more challenging.

Results of the RTO survey provide a more detailed picture of the level of unmet demand. RTO respondents reported a total of 11,393 students (6.9 per cent) enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support at the time of the survey were unable to complete their qualification due to their inability to access work placements. Of these, 8,294 were in the aged care stream of the qualification and 3,099 in the disability support stream.

As well as reporting approximate numbers of students having trouble securing a work placement, RTOs were asked to report the percentage range of those students who were having trouble securing placements.

Just over half of the respondents to this question reported that less than 25 per cent of their students had trouble securing work placements. However, over a third of respondents reported that more than 50 per cent of their students had trouble securing work placements. The breakdown of responses is shown in Figure 2.



## BARRIERS TO HIGH QUALITY WORK PLACEMENTS

Despite widespread support for mandatory work requirements, those consulted during the research identified a lack of consistency in the quality of work placements. Besides the impact of COVID-19, there were a number of barriers contributing to this.

### Poor quality practice by some RTOs

Employers reported wanting to diversify the RTOs from which they accepted work placement students, but were unsure how to identify quality training providers. Some noted examples of poor practice by RTOs, including:

- lack of rigorous pre-enrolment screening of students in terms of the necessary level of language, literacy and numeracy skills, physical capability, personal attributes necessary for caring and support roles, and practical issues, such as not having a driver's license or having a criminal history, which may preclude them from working in the sector
- insufficient preparation of students prior to placement and lack of support during placements.

Several of the students who participated in the focus groups were enrolled in courses that were delivered completely online and were required to find their own work placements. They reported that this had been very challenging as many employers were not willing to offer placements to students from online-only courses. Some students reported having to contact 50 employers before sourcing a placement. Where placements could be sourced, the administrative burden on the individual student to liaise between the employer and RTO was challenging.

### Access to suitable workplace supervisors

Stakeholders, RTOs and employers all raised the need to improve the capability and understanding of the workplace supervisors who support students during placement. Some employers had a structured approach to skilling supervisors, such as ensuring that they held the relevant industry qualification and, in some cases, units of competency from the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. However it was recognised that this was not possible in all workplaces.

Employers noted that was often challenging to find appropriate staff who were willing and able to undertake the supervisory role, with many workers lacking formal qualifications and uncertain of their ability to make judgements about student skills. They suggested that some staff were unsuitable to act as supervisors as they lack the personal attributes needed for such a role. Other staff were simply unwilling to take on the extra responsibilities of supervision, given the role does not attract any additional remuneration.

There was strong interest in improving the resources available to support supervisors in the workplace and to build the understanding of employers of their role in creating quality work placement experiences for students.

### Difficulties in providing placements in certain settings

Employers reported that providing supervision for work placements involving in-home care/support and support for social and community participation can be challenging. These services are usually delivered by a single worker in a client's home or when supporting the client in a social or community setting, making it difficult to supervise students.

Student placements in these settings require client consent. Clients may be reluctant to have students in their home given the personal nature of the care involved. For some clients in the disability sector, an additional worker can trigger challenging behavioural responses. It was also noted that in disability group home settings, the consent of all clients to the student placement is required.

There were a range of practical suggestions about how to address these issues, including matching clients with students they may feel more comfortable with, identifying categories of clients (e.g. former teachers and educators) who may be more open to student placements, providing advice and resources for employers on how to engage and seek client consent, and methods to introduce students to clients in a structured way.

### Challenges for particular student cohorts

A number of stakeholders discussed the difficulty in sourcing placements for certain student cohorts, including students from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) and senior secondary school students. It was felt that employers can be reluctant to take on NESB students, especially overseas students, because they are concerned that there will be a language barrier between students and clients and staff, which could result in heightened risk to clients.

Two peak client advocacy groups, Council on the Ageing (COTA) and Dementia Australia, raised the issue of student language skills in the consultation. They noted that elderly clients suffering from dementia and/or hearing loss can struggle to understand students who have poor English language or speak with a strong accent. This can lead to client frustration which may be interpreted as racism when it is in fact an inability to communicate with the students. While it was noted that this was a sensitive matter, stakeholders reported that they would welcome advice and guidance on strategies to address the issue.

Stakeholders facilitating work placements for students undertaking VET courses at school noted that employers often regard school students as immature and lacking in employability skills and can be reluctant to take them on placement. However, some employers said they were actively trying to source school student placements to address the ageing of the workforce and reflect to diversity of their client needs.





## ENABLERS OF HIGH QUALITY WORK PLACEMENTS

The research identified many areas and examples of good practice in providing student work placements, and stakeholders highlighted a number of factors that lead to successful work placement experiences for all parties. These factors formed the basis of advice provided in the Preparing Students for Work guide for employers and RTOs.

### Building strong relationships

A common theme throughout the consultation with stakeholders and employers was the need for RTOs to build strong relationships with employers to ensure student placements were effective. It was suggested that RTOs need to move beyond a 'transactional' approach to sourcing work placements to seeing work placement as a partnership with employers.

Central to these relationships functioning well is the need for clarity about the roles, responsibilities and expectations of each party. Making an investment in getting these arrangements right between RTOs and employers was considered important in laying the foundation for positive student experiences during work placements and ultimately enhancing the employability of students.

### Timing of work placements

Differing views were expressed about how the 120 hours of work placement should be scheduled across the qualification. Some employers prefer for the delivery of the work placement to be toward the completion of the course to maximise their ability to employ suitable students, while others could see the value in providing students with exposure to the job early in their training to test their commitment to the industry.

Others supported the delivery of the work placements in three blocks sequenced at the end of each third of the course. This structure of work placement has a pedagogical benefit of allowing the student to learn, apply and reflect on their training. Some employers and stakeholders also reported that they structure work placements into 90 hours in a residential aged care setting and the remaining 30 hours in an in-home placement. This was done to make the placement more attractive and manageable for in-home service provision.

While these are matters for each RTOs to determine based on their student needs, training plans and industry feedback, all parties agreed it is essential that students cover certain theoretical components of the course prior to their first placement.

### Workplace assessment

Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities for workplace assessments was an issue raised by all stakeholders and employers. There is considerable confusion between RTOs and employers about the responsibility for student assessment during the placement. The complexity of the VET system also needs to be demystified for employers to enhance their understanding of their role and the role of RTOs in student assessment.

Stakeholders felt that getting this concept right was fundamental to the relationship between the RTO and employer and to the experience students.

### Understanding employers' needs

Many of the employers who participated in the research felt that RTOs needed to better understand the business environment of employers (especially in disability services) where financial viability and staff capacity is stretched. The impact of COVID-19 has heightened employers' focus on risk, given the vulnerability of their clients. It was suggested that RTOs should explain the value of placements, ensure students are well-prepared and work ready, and streamline and simplify the administrative impost on employers.

Employers expressed the need for RTOs to make work placement documentation (e.g. the student assessment logbooks) simple to use and easy for supervisors to complete. This includes expressing the tasks that students are required to complete in the workplace in terminology familiar to the supervisor, rather than 'VET' speak.

### Support for students by RTOs

The importance of RTOs remaining active participants throughout the work placement was raised by stakeholders. Regular (weekly) check-ins with their students and employers were considered essential to support their students and resolve any issues that might arise.

RTOs also needed to ensure students were 'placement ready', including:

- addressing legislative and practical requirements, such as criminal history and employment suitability checks, vaccinations, workplace insurance arrangements, and transport arrangements (including driver's license where this is a work requirement)
- ensuring students have completed certain units of competency prior to placement (e.g. first aid) to enable them to work safely
- informing students about what to expect and what will be expected of them during the placement, such as punctuality, appropriate dress standards, respectful language, and how to give and receive feedback in a workplace setting.

### Support for students by employers

Stakeholders and students raised the need for employers to provide adequate support for student placements. Elements that are critical to the success of student placements include:

- appropriate induction for students, including providing clear advice on their scope of practice during placement
- providing students with clarity about their roles and the expectations of the workplace, including clear practical work schedules and support to undertake activities
- continuity of supervisor and/or buddy during their work placement and a single point of contact in the workplace for students to seek information or raise any concerns
- ensuring supervisors are supported to complete third party observations and the student logbook in a timely manner
- supporting students to complete their assessment tasks through exposure to the expected range of learning opportunities, access to the necessary client information and time for reflection on their practice
- ensuring employees throughout the organisation are aware of the need to support student placements, including human resources, office administrators, line managers, supervisors and other staff.

### Ongoing feedback and review

Employers discussed the need for ongoing feedback between the parties to maintain the quality of work placements. Employers reported using a range of strategies to create ongoing feedback loops with students and RTOs, including regular meetings, surveying students at the end of placements and committing to a periodic review of work placement arrangements.

Employers welcomed RTOs seeking advice on whether their students had found employment with them. Some employers were developing tools to assist them to track the conversion rates of student placements to employment outcomes with the intention of assessing RTO performance.



## BROADER ISSUES AFFECTING WORK PLACEMENTS

Stakeholders involved in the research raised a number of issues that are not directly related to the delivery of work placements, but none-the-less have a significant impact on their effectiveness and the capacity and willingness of employers to accept students for work placements.

### NDIS funding model

Disability service providers spoke of the changes to the structure of the sector as a result of the introduction of the NDIS, with block funding of larger organisations replaced by a market-driven approach of client-based funding for services (paid on the basis of billable hours).

This has resulted in significant growth in sole traders (often unregulated) and small businesses receiving capped funding based on client hours. It was reported that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) advises disability providers not to undertake any 'non-essential' work and to reduce unnecessary layers of management in order to deliver services within the funding NDIS model. Employers reported that this restricts disability service providers' ability to provide student work placements.

Disability sector stakeholders noted that many employers in the sector (particularly those that are small or who are sole traders) have limited capacity to manage any additional administrative burden or to consider workforce planning, and often do not hold the qualification that students are undertaking. These factors are limiting the number of disability service providers that are able to offer work placements in the sector.

### Limitations of training and assessment

Some employers raised concerns that students do not have training in palliative care and dementia care prior to work placement, making them unsuitable for the work environment. This was attributed to RTOs being unwilling to offer courses that are more expensive to deliver. Industry Reference Committee representatives noted that this issue had been addressed through recent revisions to the mandatory units of the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing).

RTOs noted that some aspects of the assessment conditions prescribed in the training package can be challenging to meet. For example, palliative care requires students to provide care to clients in the lead up to death on three occasions. There are difficulties in meeting this requirement because the scenarios may not occur during a student placement. One RTO advised that its use of simulation to overcome this challenge had been heavily scrutinised by ASQA in its most recent audit.

A number of stakeholders raised the issue of whether RTOs could make greater use of simulation for training and assessment purposes. They noted that simulation was routinely used for training in other sectors (including nursing and policing) using purpose-built facilities and professional actors in role play.

RTOs and stakeholders called for clearer advice on when simulation can be used and exploration of how it might be employed more broadly.

Concerns were also raised by some stakeholders about the delivery of the Certificate III in Individual Support by some RTOs completely through online training. Stakeholders accepted that some delivery of the qualification could occur online but were concerned about the impact of 100% online course delivery on work readiness. A number of stakeholders described this practice as "dangerous".

### **Payments to employers for placements**

Employers and stakeholders had mixed views about the idea of paying employers for student placements. Some employers regarded it as unethical to seek payment for student placements. A number of RTOs reported being asked for payment by employers, which some did not accept. Other RTOs, however, regarded it as acceptable practice and were willing to negotiate a fee for student placement to cover legitimate employer costs for quality placements.

Many noted that it is industry practice for RTOs, including TAFEs, to pay for nursing and allied health student placements (please see example on page 14). One disability sector stakeholder advised that in light of NDIS funding arrangements, some service providers are questioning why placements are not funded.

Many of the RTOs responding to the survey also felt that incentives and/or financial support for employers could help improve students' access to work placements generally, as well as reduce any short-term backlogs.

### **Traineeships**

A number of stakeholders and employers discussed the merits of making greater use of the traineeship model to develop workers for the sector. Some employers noted that they were relying on both traditional training approaches and traineeships to meet their growing workforce needs. Those employers who had used both traineeships and traditional training felt that both approaches had strengths and weaknesses and did not view it as an either/or proposition.

Some employers noted that some state governments (such as South Australia) are providing employment incentives to encourage the take up of traineeships, but that the NDIS funding model makes it challenging to offer traineeships in the disability sector.

### **Centralised work placement models**

Stakeholders provided examples of place-based arrangements used to successfully manage a centralised approach to arranging student work placements across multiple RTOs and employers. These approaches were relatively ad hoc and funded through one-off workforce development grants programs run by federal and state governments.

Some employers expressed a reluctance to use a centrally based arrangements – preferring to select the RTOs that they were prepared to partner with.

### Managing employers' expectations

A number of stakeholders said that employers expect too much from VET graduates and do not accept that some on-the-job training will be required when they commence employment. It was noted that it is much more widely accepted that higher education graduates will require further training in the workplace, but this is not always the case for VET graduates.

### Criminal history and other employment checks

RTOs and employers expressed frustration with the myriad of employment checks required for employment in the aged care and disability sectors. It was noted that workers are often working in both sectors and need to comply with two sets of requirements, which vary across states and territories and sometimes within jurisdictions. It was noted the checks can often take extended period of time to be returned, especially if the student had a common name or any record of offending.

While the recently introduced NDIS employment checks were regarded as a positive development, it was noted that they were in addition to the existing aged care checks and were subject to differing administrative arrangements across states and territories. RTOs are also required to register as quasi-service providers to apply for checks for their students.

### Technological support

It was noted that student placement arrangements impose a significant administrative burden on RTOs and employers. For example, many RTOs require supervisors to complete paper-based student logbook, which can be very time consuming. While some employers had developed relatively sophisticated placement monitoring, tracking and evaluation approaches using IT, this is not a widespread practice.

Large RTOs also noted that there was a significant administrative burden in managing student vaccination and employment check information.

This may be an area where investment in IT platforms may produce significant dividends in supporting work placements.



## INSIGHTS FROM WORK PLACEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH CARE

Many of the employers and stakeholders consulted during the research had considerable expertise in the delivery of work placements as part of nursing and allied health care qualifications. They were asked whether models for work placement from these sectors might offer insights for the provision of work placements for the Certificate III in Individual Support

Given the occupational licensing arrangements of the health sectors, there are more formalised frameworks for the organisation of work placements for nursing and allied health students. Most work placements are made through a centralised booking system that links training and education providers with hospitals and health providers, through state-based health bodies.

Nursing and allied health care work placement arrangements are relatively mature, with an acceptance of the requirement for payment of around \$5000 per placement in return for a formalised supervisory approach by the employer. It was also noted by stakeholders that nursing relied on a greater use of high-quality simulation practice as an industry norm.

Stakeholders noted, however, that many of the underlying work placement barriers and enablers are similar across all fields of endeavour. Essentially, the pre-conditions for and conduct of best practice work placements are the same, regardless of the industry sector.

Stakeholders noted that as the aged care and disability services sectors continue to evolve in response to changing regulatory and funding models, these sectors may need to look to the nursing and allied health care sectors for models of more formalised approaches to the organisation of work placements.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY AND PROJECTS

These research findings point to a series of issues that would benefit from consideration in future policy development and/or future project work undertaken by the sector.

### **Building the skills of supervisors**

It has long been acknowledged in the delivery of traineeships and apprenticeships that the quality and outcomes of student workplace learning experiences are highly dependent on the skills and capabilities of their workplace supervisor. This is also true for work placements.

The research has highlighted the importance of supporting workplace supervisors to understand what is required of them and to develop their skills accordingly. Examples of good practice were identified during the research in which employers and/or RTOs provided guidance and training for supervisors, including supporting supervisors to complete relevant units of competency from the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

This may be an area in which further resources and initiatives (beyond the information included in the *Preparing Students for Work* guide) could be developed to assist with building the skills and capabilities of supervisors.

### **Support for employers**

There is a need for further guidance for employers on efficient and cost-effective ways to manage work placements and ensure students have appropriate supervision in the workplace.

The research suggests that employers are supportive of student work placements, but may not have the capability and/or capacity to offer them to students.

This may be another area in which further resources or initiatives could be developed to better support employers and build their willingness and capacity to accept students for work placements. This may include consideration of the idea of financial incentives for employers/supervisors (see discussion below).

Of particular benefit to employers would be provision of further examples and guidance on how to facilitate effective provision of work placements (including cost-effective approaches to workplace supervision) for the more challenging settings of in-home care and of community participation support for people with disability.

Another area of benefit to employers could be the investigation of the use of technology to reduce the administrative burden of work placements and student supervision.

### **Financial support for work placements**

The research identified that in some highly-regulated industry sectors, such as nursing and allied health, it is common practice for employing organisations to be paid for work placements. This helps to offset the cost of supervision of students and to encourage the provision of high-quality supervision.

Given the shortages of skilled workers for the aged care and disability sectors, this may be an approach worth considering as part of a strategy to support high quality skill development for the sectors.

The Australian Government provides incentives for employers of trainees undertaking the Certificate III in Individual Support, in recognition of the time they invest in supporting trainees' learning 'on-the-job'. There may be potential to consider some kind of incentive for those who take on work placement students, with criteria attached to eligibility.

Such an approach may be of particular benefit in the disability support sector where NDIS funding arrangements provide very little scope for supporting the costs of training and supervision.



### **Trialling of centralised work placement approaches**

The Preparing Students for Work guide provides some case study examples that include centralised approaches to work placements.

There may be potential to trial similar approaches across other regions or with particular cohorts of students who may struggle to find work placements (e.g. students for whom English is not their first language, but who may be well-suited to working with clients from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds).

### **Guidance for RTOs on use of simulated learning environments and appropriate use of online learning**

There is strong interest amongst stakeholders for further investigation and guidance on the appropriateness of and potential for use of simulated learning environments in the delivery of the Certificate III in Individual Support.

The extent to which online learning is appropriate for use in the delivery of the qualification is also an issue that would benefit from further guidance.

The development of guidance on these issues would require involvement of the bodies responsible for training product development, as well as the national and jurisdictional training regulators.

### **Criminal history and other employment checks**

The research has highlighted the challenges created by duplication of employment checks across the aged care and disability support sectors and the differing approaches across jurisdictions.

There may be opportunities to advocate to aged care and disability support regulators for simplified or more streamlined approaches for students.





## ATTACHMENT A. RTO SURVEY FINDINGS

### Data limitations

The online survey was open to all interested RTOs. The response rate from the potential pool of RTOs delivering the Certificate III in individual Support in aged care and disability support was relatively high.

It should be noted, however, that the open nature of the survey, combined with a commitment to maintain the confidentiality of respondents, meant that it was not possible to restrict multiple responses from the same RTO.

While obvious duplications have been removed, the survey results may include duplicate data. Therefore findings should be used as a guide only and care should be taken when interpreting the actual numbers of students reported as being currently enrolled, as well as those having trouble securing a work placement. The total number of responses varied across survey questions.

### Survey respondents

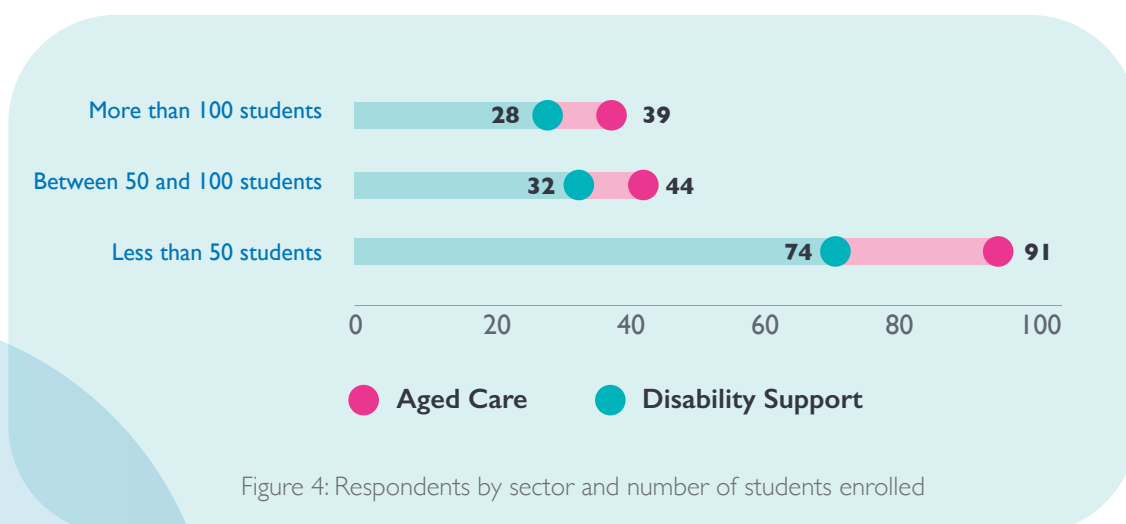
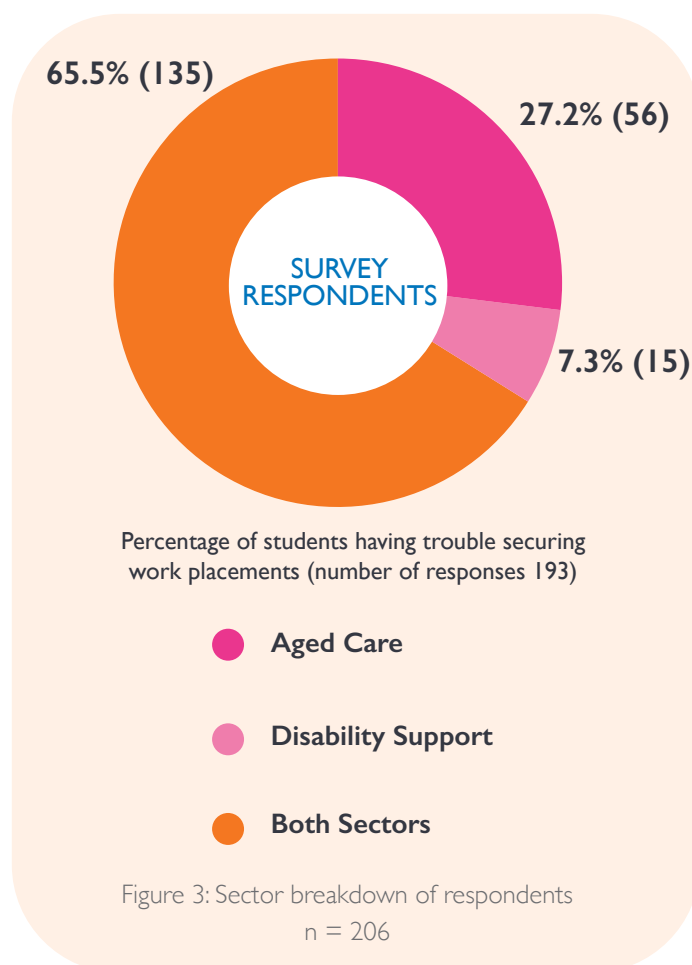
A total of 206 responses to an open online survey were received from RTOs who received invitations directly from the HSSO as well as through ASQA, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA).

Most respondents were for-profit RTOs (51.5 per cent).

Two-thirds of respondents were delivering training for both the aged care and disability support sectors (see Figure 3).

### Student enrolments

Of the respondents, 174 reported a total of 21,009 students enrolled in the aged care stream of the Certificate III in Individual Support and 134 reported they had 9,877 students enrolled in the disability support stream.



### Students unable to access mandatory work placements

Respondents reported a total of 11,393 of students currently enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support who were unable to complete the qualification due to inability to access mandatory work placements. Of these:

- 8,294 were in aged care
- 3,099 were in disability support.

As well as reporting approximate numbers of students having trouble securing a work placement, RTOs were asked to report the percentage range of students who were having trouble securing work placements.

### Difficulties finding aged care placements

More than half of respondents from NSW and Victoria reported that 50 per cent or more of their students were experiencing difficulties in finding aged care work placements (see Figure 5).

NUMBER OF RTOS

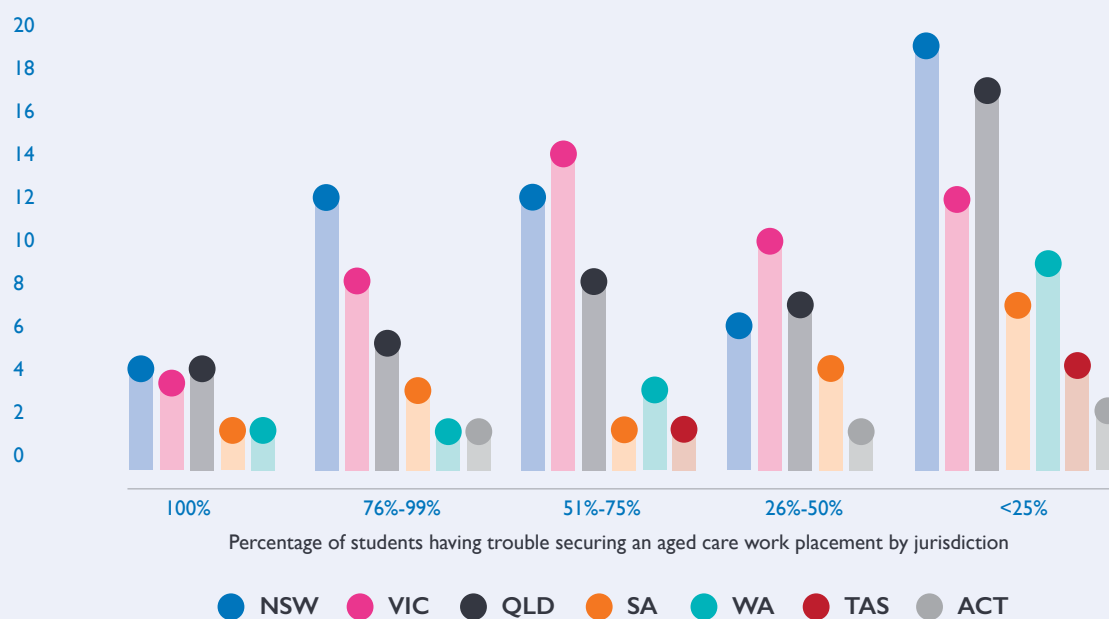


Figure 5: RTOs with students having trouble securing an aged care work placement by jurisdiction

### Difficulties finding disability support placements

Like aged care, more than half of respondents from NSW and Victoria reported that 50 per cent or more of their students were experiencing difficulties in finding disability support work placements (see Figure 6).

### Barriers to completing mandatory work requirements

A total of 189 RTOs (91.7 per cent) reported that COVID restrictions were the main barriers to students successfully completing work requirements. Access to employers was the second most common barrier (48.1 per cent), followed by availability of workplace supervisors (47.6 per cent) and exposure to the full task range (46.1 per cent).

Other reported barriers included:

- Students' personal circumstances, for example, age, financial, family responsibilities, mental health, transport, work commitments and student not feeling ready
- mandatory vaccinations
- required clearances and screening, including the cost of these
- the nature of community work (e.g. difficulties with gaining client consent, irregular hours, travel requirements, insurance and assessors being unable to conduct onsite assessments).

NUMBER OF RTOs

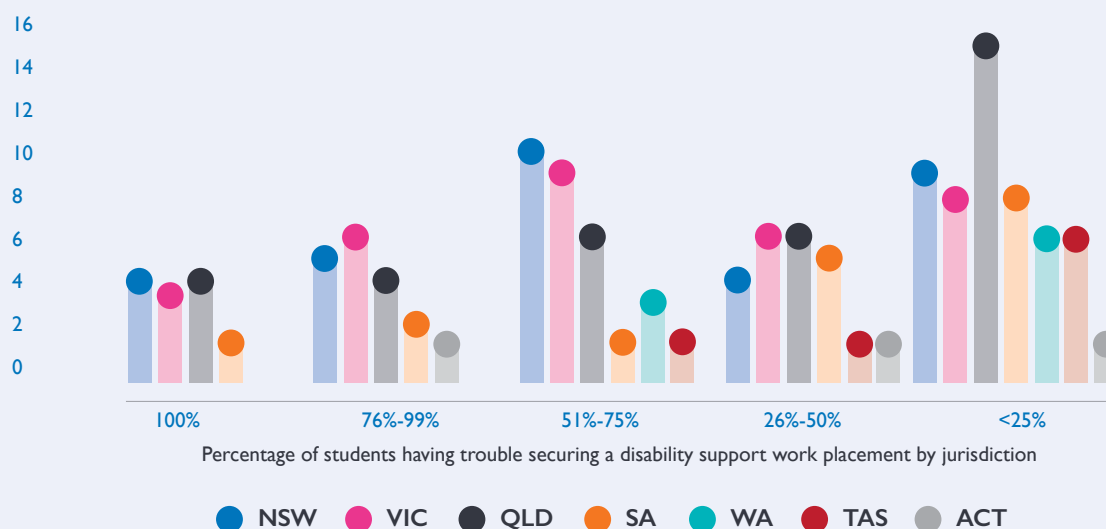


Figure 6: RTOs with students having trouble securing a disability support work placement by jurisdiction



The Human Services Skills Organisation Pilot is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment through the Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow program.