Career-ready Placement Activity Work Health and Safety (WHS) Risk Assessment Procedure

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) This procedure details how the University will assess the work, health and safety (WHS) risks associated with activities undertaken by students completing a career-ready placement (placement).

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) The objective of this procedure is to ensure that:

a. students understand and can manage the risks associated with their placement;
b. the University offers high quality and safe student placement activities; and
c. the University meets its WHS duty of care responsibilities through effective risk identification and management.

(3) The procedure establishes the requirement for WHS risk assessment of placements. All WHS risk assessments must align with the University's Risk Management Framework, the Work Health and Safety Policy and the associated Health Safety Management System (HSMS) Framework.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This procedure applies to all WIL and placement activities within undergraduate and postgraduate programs and courses. This document must be read in conjunction with the Work Integrated Learning Policy, Work Integrated Learning and Career-ready Placement Management Procedure.

Section 4 - Audience

(5) This Procedure and the related documents are designed for students, University staff, host organisations, and third-party providers involved in or holding responsibilities relating to placement.

Section 5 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document:

a. Career-ready placements (placement) is the University's flagship WIL initiative. Career-ready placements include student experiences of work within the curriculum that are undertaken in partnership with and for industry, business or community partners, through engagement with authentic and genuine activities, and which are credit-bearing and assessed.
b. ‘control measures’ means actions that can be taken to eliminate or minimise the identified risks.
c. ‘inherent risk’ means risk that is evident before control measures are implemented to treat the risk.

d. ‘reasonably practicable’ as defined by the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW).
e. ‘residual risk’ means the risk that remains once the control measures are implemented to treat the risk.
f. ‘Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an umbrella term that refers to a range of practical experiences designed to give students valuable exposure to work-related activities during and relevant to their study.

Section 6 - Requirements

Overview of the Career-ready Placement Activity WHS Risk Assessment (WHS Risk Assessment)

(7) Risk assessments must be undertaken in line with the University's Health and Safety Management System Framework and Risk Management Framework.

(8) The completed risk assessment is expected to identify and address risks that could be reasonably foreseeable at the time of the assessment, based on industry standards, knowledge of the workplace, and consultation with the host organisation. If an incident or injury occurs and unforeseeable hazard is the cause, this will be considered in any investigation. Should a risk present during placement that was not known at the time of the risk assessment, this risk must be assessed by the relevant Course Co-ordinator.

(9) The risk assessment process requires the host organisation to provide detailed information on any identified risks and controls that may impact the health, safety, or wellbeing of students during the placement. This information will allow the University to determine if it is reasonable to proceed with the placement.

(10) The management of risk must be in line with the Risk Management Framework, Work Health and Safety Policy and associated Health and Safety Management System Framework and the Career-ready Placement Activity WHS Risk Assessment Procedure by:

a. identifying appropriate control measures that may be implemented;
b. assessing the effectiveness of the control measures; and
c. understanding the residual risk.

(11) All information collected relating to the placement will allow the completion of the WHS risk assessment using the Career-Ready Placement Activity WHS Risk Assessment Tool (WHS Risk Assessment tool). This includes:

a. results of the host registration form;
b. placement activities agreed between the Course Co-ordinator and the Host Organisation;
c. existing WHS risk assessments generated by the host organisation or third-party provider where these resources are shared with the University; and
d. any additional information obtained.

(12) The risk assessment is focused on the host organisation’s systems of work and may cover multiple students. However, each placement host organisation and location must be individually considered and assessed. Where the same activities are undertaken and common risks and mitigations are identified, these can be applied across similar scenarios. This ensures that all unique aspects of each location are addressed while maintaining consistency in managing common risks.

(13) The completed risk assessment will be valid for subsequent terms for the identified activities, location and host organisation. The risk assessment must be reviewed if any incidents, hazards, or near misses occur during the placement, if new risks emerge, or when the host agreement is renewed.

(14) During the risk assessment the Course Co-ordinator may determine that further information is required where the information provided by the host organisation does not allow the assessment of the inherent or potential risk exposure arising from the placement, and that a review should be undertaken by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team.

Identifying Potential WHS Risks

(15) During the placement, the primary duty of care resides with the host organisation in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. The host organisation, University staff, and students share the responsibility to reduce the risk of harm from placement so far as reasonably practicable.

(16) Refer to HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management for guidance on WHS Risk Management.

(17) The information required by those undertaking and accepting the risk assessment include:

a. the placement type, the activities the student(s) will undertake, and what will be required of the student;
b. the location of the placement and the work environment in which it will take place;
c. identification of known WHS risks based on the placement type, activities and the site of the placement (information available from SafeWork – Your industry site);
d. validation, to the extent possible, of the host organisation's existing control measures that effectively address or minimise the identified risk;
e. identification of any additional control measures where the host organisation's control measures do not minimise the risk to an acceptable level; and
f. a reasonable assessment of the likely level of residual risk if the control measures were implemented.

Control Measures

(18) Control measures must be proportionate and reasonably practicable for the host organisation to implement. Control measures will vary depending on the nature of the activities, the location, the work environment and the persons undertaking the activity. See Safe Work Australia - How to Determine What is Reasonably Practical to Meet a Health and Safety Duty.

(19) Control measures for each WHS risk should be informed by external resources such as SafeWork - Your Industry site and should be validated or developed through appropriate consultation with the Course Co-ordinator, host organisation and/or the University's Health Safety and Wellbeing Team to ensure they are effective.

(20) Control measures should be considered in the context of the WHS "hierarchy of controls" including the elimination of a task from the activity, and engineering controls that limit exposure. Noting that the weakest controls include debriefing, counselling, training and preparation, or supervision and personal protective equipment. The 'residual risk rating' will be determined following the assessment of the WHS risk level remaining when controls are effectively implemented.

(21) Information by industry type, on the management of WHS risks and the hierarchy of risk controls is available from the relevant section of the SafeWork - Your Industry site.

Delegate Approval of the Career-ready Placement Following WHS Risk Assessment

(22) A completed and accepted WHS risk assessment is required for the relevant delegate to approve the placement.

(23) The completed risk assessment will allow the delegate to:

a. agree to the accuracy of the risk assessment and approve the placement activity;
b. request further investigation to determine if additional control measures can be implemented before approving

the placement;

c. raise concerns as to the accuracy and extent to which the risk assessment covers the activities, and require the risk assessment be reviewed in consultation with the host organisation before approving the placement;
d. indicate concerns as to the accuracy and extent to which the risk assessment covers the activities, and refer the risk assessment for specialist review by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team before approving the placement; or
e. determine that the risks cannot be reasonably mitigated to protect the student, and the placement should not proceed.

(24) Where further assessment, information, or control measures are required to allow the host organisation to take steps to eliminate or minimise the risk. Details of the identified risk and the host organisation's response must be updated in the risk assessment and an assessment of the residual risk undertaken.

Determination

(25) Completion of the Risk Assessment Tool will determine a residual risk rating for the placement. Approval levels of the differing risk levels are listed in Table 1.

(26) Where the residual risk is medium, the approving delegate must consider whether further controls can be applied to further reduce the residual risk, or approve the placement and thus accept a medium risk rating for the placement.

(27) Where the residual risk rating confirmed as High or Extreme, the placement must not proceed.

Table 1 – Placement Approval

Placement Approval	Holders and limits	Conditions
Approve a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement.	Course Co-ordinator – limited to instances where the residual risk rating is low.	
	Head of School – limited to instances where the residual risk rating is medium.	The exercise of this authority is subject to consultation with the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team.

Placement Risk Monitoring and Evaluation

(28) The completed Risk Assessment Tool will be provided to students via the University's Placement Management System. Acceptance of the risk assessment will form part of the placement acceptance process completed by each student.

(29) Where the student or host organisation advises the Course Co-ordinator that the circumstances or conditions described in the risk assessment change during the placement, the Course Co-ordinator will, where warranted, revise the WHS risk assessment (see clause 13).

(30) Any incidents, hazards or near misses that occur during the placement must be reported to the host organisation and through the University through the All Incident Management System (AIMS). Depending on the severity, such a report may result in a University WHS investigation. This information may be used to assess future placement risk.

Training and Advice

(31) In addition to this Procedure, the University provides training for University staff through the Careers and Employability team. Collaboration by the College Professional Experience Units and the Career-Ready Graduates Community of Practice (CoP) builds expertise and capacity across the institution. The University's Health Safety and

Wellbeing Team is also available for advice when needed.

Record Keeping

(32) Assessment process records must be retained to document the steps taken to assess the risks involved in the placement activity. If a risk assessment is revised to incorporate additional control measures, both the original and revised risk assessments should be retained. This will help protect staff and the University in the event of an incident.

(33) Records, including the completed WHS risk assessment, must be managed in accordance with the Records Governance Policy.

Section 7 - Appendices

(34) Career-ready Placement Risk Assessment Tool

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	12th December 2024
Review Date	12th December 2027
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Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	Eleanor Edwards Executive Officer

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Risk assessment" - The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Credit" - When referring to course credit, credit is the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit can reduce the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Postgraduate" - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Undergraduate" - Refers to any qualification up to and including the level of a Bachelor Honours degree.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Delegate" - (noun) refers to a person occupying a position that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority, or a committee or body that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority.

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