

## FAN – Work Experience

**Work Experience:** A limited period of unpaid work placement in an organisation to enable young people to get a feel for a particular type of work and/or professional working environment.

### Support Resources

- [Legal Considerations](#)
- [FAN Planning Template + Task Time Planning Template](#)
- [FAN Select](#)
- [FAN Interview Template](#)
- [Health & Safety Agreement](#)
- [Confidentiality Agreement](#)
- [FAN Induction Checklist](#)
- [FAN Mentoring Tips](#)
- [FAN On-the-job Training Template](#)
- [FAN Evaluation Template](#)

### Background

Most Waikato Secondary Schools offer the Gateway work experience programme where senior students are offered up to 10-weeks, or 80-hours work experience which is attached to credits they can earn toward their NCEA qualifications.

Many tertiary courses also attach compulsory work-placement components to their qualifications, providing employers access to a huge pool of potential future talent for their workplace.

Other work experience opportunities can be ad-hoc and driven by young people, their parents or educators.

Duration, structure and shape of a work experience opportunity is usually flexible and can be negotiated according to the needs and objectives of the employer, student and/or school/tertiary provider. Work experience can be for one day, several days or partial days depending on what you can offer. If offering work experience through the Gateway programme any special clothing or equipment requirements (e.g. safety equipment) can be purchased at the cost of Gateway.

## How do I go about it?

Plan

Select

Induct

Mentor

Evaluate

Communicate

### PLAN

Many employers are concerned about the lost time or productivity in offering a work experience placement, however this can be reduced through planning at the outset.

This means you don't have to waste time thinking up activities for your work experience person to do on the spot, and the activities are more likely to be of value to both you and the student. It also means that any of your employees can pick up the list and allocate tasks to the student at any given time and your plan can be used repeatedly for subsequent work experience students.

If you have identified shadowing or observational opportunities as some of those tasks, consider making a time-table for the student to observe different tasks in different areas at set times. This enables the student to self-manage on the day, taking pressure off the supervisor. It is important that if the student is to be time-tabled in this manner that staff affected are briefed in advance.

- **Identify a list of appropriate activities/projects** someone could do on work experience (take into account ability and Health & Safety issues). Consider tasks that require little training, a combination of individual and team tasks, backlogged tasks, hands-on and observational experiences and projects that a student may be able to help with. Try to think of a wide variety of tasks and include work that is meaningful and that a student can take pride in the outcome (see examples below).
- **Think about observational learning opportunities** such as attending meetings, client visits, site visits, business functions. Brief the student beforehand including the purpose and objectives of the activity, who will be there or what they can expect to see, how they should dress and behave, what their role should be (observer, note-taker, facilitator, participant) and any health and safety considerations. Following the activity debrief the experience - what went well and didn't and why, how the student felt about the experience, what they learned from it, any questions they have about the experience and provide any feedback on their performance (where appropriate. N.b. any negative feedback should be communicated gently).
- **Consider using existing on-the-job training tools/resources** you already have in place for employees (e.g. computer software simulation of high-risk

environments, joining scheduled employee training sessions, trying workplace skills assessments as used for selection or assessment).

- **Consider taking pairs of students** especially if there is a project you would like undertaken or where a student has English as a second language.
- **Use the FAN Planning Template** to help plan a work-experience and identify any pre-selection or eligibility criteria you may have for students (e.g. particular courses, qualifications or interests that fit with your organisation/experience on offer).
- **Contact the appropriate FAN work placement coordinator** to discuss your offer (you can extend your offer to as many schools/tertiary education providers or work transition intermediaries as you wish).
- **Negotiate work experience terms.** Identify mutually beneficial times and duration of experience. Perhaps you can only spare one day, or participate in a full 10-week/80-hour Gateway programme. One day per week for five weeks can be easier to manage than five consecutive days. Student availability in relation to their study and other commitments also needs to be considered. Hours and duration of the work experience can be negotiated with the student, the school or tertiary education provider’s co-ordinator.

### Example Customer Services Tasks

Answer the phone	Greet customers	Gift-wrap
Complete order form	Observe negotiations	Observe customer complaint resolution
Research youth market as potential customers	Problem solving exercise	Participate in employee training session
Record enquiry details	Update product information on website, intranet or print material	

### Example Sales Tasks

Observe customer call	Complete order form	Create product display
Attend customer meeting	Observe negotiations	Stock take
Make EFTPOS transactions	Demonstrate product to customer	Create product PowerPoint presentation
Record enquiry details	Prepare quote	Research competitors

### Example Business/Administration Tasks

Create PowerPoint Presentation	Filing	Binding
Write Proposal	Obtain quotes	Data Entry
Complete purchase orders	Verify accuracy of invoices	Attend meetings
Take meeting minutes	Assist event set-up	Make travel arrangements

### SELECT

For a work experience opportunity you may only have one student put forward by the school or tertiary workplace coordinator, however it is still recommended you 'interview' the student to discuss the offer and expectations in detail and to complete any necessary paperwork (it is a good idea at a minimum to sign a Health & Safety Agreement and Confidentiality Agreement with the student in advance).

By interviewing the student you are providing them with an invaluable learning experience – it is likely their first exposure to a job interview. Remember that you are not obliged to accept someone you have concerns about – work placement coordinators want it to be a positive experience for you too.

#### The student will want to know:

- A brief background to your industry and business
- Detail of the opportunity you are offering
- The kinds of tasks they can expect to perform and with whom
- When they are expected to be at work and hours
- What your expectations are – punctuality, behaviour, dress, attitude
- Who their point of contact is

**Good questions to ask the student** to establish their genuine interest in your workplace and address any potential issues include:

- What do you already know about the job/industry?
- What interests you about the job?
- What do you hope to get out of the experience?
- Do you have any questions or concerns about the opportunity?
- Is getting to and from work likely to be an issue for you? *N.b. transport issues are often behind 'no-shows', tardiness and 'sickies' – if this is acknowledged upfront a solution can be discussed and agreed. Potential solutions include asking a relative or friend's parent who works nearby to give them a lift, an employee giving them a lift, providing the student with bus money (they will also need to be able to get to a bus stop).*
- See **FAN Select** for more about selection.
- The **FAN Interview Template** may be useful.

## INDUCT

- **Introduce the student to their workplace mentor.** Include a tour of the workplace and introductions to staff, explain about the company, its clients, its philosophies, at-work behavioural expectations (phone/internet use), breaks, format/itinerary of experience, Health & Safety briefing. In the Health & Safety briefing include (where appropriate) emergency exits, procedures and equipment, highlighting hazards, safe approaches to tasks, first aid, personal protective equipment and procedures for reporting an accident. If they haven't already, get the student to sign a Health & Safety Agreement. If you have concerns or want to know more about work experience students and workplace health and safety see Legal Information.
- **Treat your work-experience student as you would any other employee** – their dress, behaviour and issues around privacy/confidentiality must be adhered to. If they haven't already, consider having the student sign a Confidentiality Agreement. Be very specific about your expectations – for many students this will be their first exposure to a work environment.
- **Be mindful of the student's inexperience.** While your work-experience student should be treated as any other employee on-site, as young adults with limited workplace experience they are likely to require more supervision, guidance and instruction than your permanent employees. If you have expectations of them to show initiative tell them and give examples of what types of things they could look to do if there is any down-time. Young people are often afraid of looking 'stupid' so may avoid asking questions. Encourage big and small questions as unasked ones lead to mistakes and misunderstanding.
- **See FAN Induction Checklist** for a useful induction tool.

## MENTOR

- **Identify who will supervise the student on work experience** - where possible match the supervisor/buddy/mentor as closely as possible with the student (age, gender, ethnicity).
- **Brief the supervisor/mentor** on your expectations and benefits to them, including developing their training, communication and management skills. Discuss balancing mentoring with their usual workload – especially if they will be conducting on-the-job training. If using the mentoring opportunity to develop the leadership skills of an employee consider including the experience as part of their performance review and/or rewarding them for it.
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- Provide the mentor with FAN Mentoring Tips.
- To help plan on-the-job training see FAN On-the-Job Training Template.
- Brief the student on what they can expect from their supervisor/mentor.

## EVALUATE

- **Evaluate how the experience is going** - work experience should be positive for both the student and employer. If for whatever reason the experience or student is not working out, contact the workplace coordinator to discuss resolution or termination of the experience.
- **Evaluate the performance of the young person** and provide constructive feedback.
- **Evaluate the performance of the mentor** and consider rewarding good performance.
- **Evaluate the experience** and look for improvements for next time.
- **See FAN Evaluation Templates**.
- **If the experience did not go well** it is important to review why and not to be discouraged from trying again. If there was an issue with the student their work placement coordinator should be notified.

## COMMUNICATE

- **Keep in contact with students who have potential to make good future employees** – ‘future stars’.
- **Periodically update future stars** with company/industry news or opportunities, invite them to industry events, offer an ongoing mentoring relationship, offer part-time work, an internship, a cadetship or apprenticeship.
- **Build and maintain networks** with the FAN network through FAN events.
- **Offer another opportunity** through FAN Contacts.

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