

# APPRENTICESHIPS VICTORIA



Supervising apprentices  
and trainees

**Guidance note for  
employers and  
supervisors**

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## Context

*By employing and training apprentices or trainees, employers play a valuable and important role in developing their own workforce and the workforce of their industry. Supervision in the workplace is essential to supporting an apprentice or trainee to become competent in their chosen trade or vocation, and to work safely, confidently and effectively. Victorian law requires employers to supervise apprentices and trainees in the workplace. The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (the VRQA) is responsible for regulating apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria, including monitoring and enforcing compliance.*

*This guidance note provides information about appropriate and effective supervision to help employers meet their training obligations and support their apprentices and trainees to work safely while they become competent and complete their qualification.*

## Legal obligations

### Overview of the legislation

Apprenticeships and traineeships combine paid work with structured training and are government regulated. *The Education Training and Reform Act 2006* (ETRA) governs the legally binding arrangement between the employer and the apprentice or trainee. Apprentices and trainees work towards the completion of a nationally recognised qualification under the guidance of a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) while learning valuable skills at work.

When an employer takes on an apprentice or trainee, they enter into a formal agreement known as a Training Contract, binding both parties to obligations under the arrangement. The employer is required to enrol the apprentice or trainee in a vocational education and training (VET) course within three (3) months of their commencement, and to arrange for the signing and lodgement of a Training Plan – the document which describes what training is to be provided and by whom, as well as how, including when and where the training will be delivered. This includes on-the-job training and assessment of competency in the necessary skills for the trade or vocation.

Before an employer can enter into a Training Contract with an apprentice or trainee, they must be approved. This is to ensure employers comply with the Training Contract and have appropriate premises, equipment, methods and supervision in place to provide suitable training, enhancing the skill levels and future employment prospects of the apprentice or trainee.

The VRQA is responsible for regulating apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria, this includes:

- determining which qualifications may be undertaken as an apprenticeship or traineeship, also known as an *Approved Training Scheme*.
- approving employers who are suitable to employ apprentices or trainees
- approving the Training Contract between parties, and
- keeping a register of apprentices and trainees.

### Supervision responsibilities for employers

Employers are required to provide a level of supervision in accordance with the Training Contract and the Approved Training Scheme. This supervision should enable the apprentice to safely attain the standards of skill and knowledge required for the qualification. Employers are responsible for providing appropriate facilities and ensuring an apprentice or trainee is:

- supervised by a person:
  - » with appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skill; and
  - » is otherwise a 'fit and proper person'<sup>5</sup> to supervise the training
- provided with work relevant and appropriate to the trade or vocation and the achievement of the qualification described in the Training Contract<sup>6</sup>
- supported and monitored to progress their training<sup>7</sup> by receiving on-the-job training and training and assessment from the RTO in the competencies laid out in the agreed Training Plan<sup>8</sup>.

Regardless of who is tasked within the organisation to carry out the role of supervisor, the employer always remains responsible for the quality of the on-the-job training, and the safety and supervision of their apprentice or trainee in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) (detailed further below).

The employer must also work with the RTO and the apprentice or trainee to follow the Training Plan, ensuring skills are developed and progression occurs, and must keep training records up to date<sup>9</sup>.

The VRQA has powers under the ETRA to reduce the risk of harm to apprentices and trainees by revoking an employer's approval to employ apprentices and trainees where obligations are not being met.

### Other obligations - safety

The OHS Act places a duty on employers to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes both physical and mental safety. The supervisor has an important role in demonstrating safe behaviour and intervening where safety may be compromised.

To satisfy this obligation, employers must provide such supervision to employees as is necessary to enable the employees to perform their work in a manner that is safe and, so far as reasonably practicable, without risks to health. The information contained in this guidance note in no way removes or limits the employer's responsibility under occupational health and safety legislation to provide a safe workplace.

Safety supervision plays a key role in reducing injuries and fatalities in the workplace. WorkSafe has developed a brochure '[Safety supervision: Creating an environment for effective supervision](#)' which outlines how workplaces can set up effective health and safety supervision in the workplace.

An important part of creating a safe working environment is ensuring apprentices and trainees are provided at least their minimum pay and entitlements as outlined in the relevant award, agreement, contract, or legislation. In Victoria, deliberately and dishonestly withholding wages or other entitlements is considered wage theft and is a criminal offence.

1. ETRA section 5.5.7  
2. ETRA, clause 4(1), Schedule 4 – State training and employment provisions  
3. National Training Contract - Employer obligation (b)  
4. ETRA section 5.5.7(2)(c)(i)  
5. ETRA section 5.5.7(2)(c)(ii)  
6. National Training Contract - Employer obligation (d)  
7. National Training Contract - Employer obligation (h)  
8. National Training Contract - Employer obligation (c)  
9. National Training Contract – Employer obligation (h)



# About supervision

## What is supervision?

Supervision is an essential component of the training arrangement.

It is the oversight and coordination of on-the-job training provided to an apprentice or trainee engaged under a Training Contract. Supervision is provided to guide the work undertaken such that it is undertaken safely (without risks to health), effectively and efficiently to accomplish the task to the standard required.

## Types of supervision

Apprentices and trainees need varying levels and types of supervision as they acquire skills and gain confidence in the workplace. There are three (3) types of supervision in the workplace. The table on the following page provides information describing each level and when it is appropriate to supervise directly, indirectly, or broadly.

In determining the right level of supervision to be provided to each apprentice or trainee at any given time, the following are relevant factors for employers to consider:

- any industry supervision standards, regulations or licensing requirements. Some examples include: *Electrical Safety (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 2020 for electrical apprentices*<sup>10</sup>; *the Australian Communications and Media Authority (Cth) Provider Rules for persons undertaking cabling work*<sup>11</sup>; *Victorian Building Authority registration/licensing requirements for plumbing work*<sup>12</sup>. Employers should consult their industry body for information
- the apprentice or trainee's age and maturity and whether they are a new or existing worker
- the information contained in the Training Plan (such as the qualification enrolled in and progress made to date, competencies achieved, interaction with RTO delivered training units etc)
- the complexity of the task and whether the task is new to the apprentice or trainee
- the apprentice or trainee's level of experience, skill, confidence, and willingness to seek guidance and support in performing the task

- the training and health and safety risks associated with the worksite and the task arising from:
  - » characteristics of people (for example co-workers, clients, customers, patients) with whom they will be interacting
  - » the tools, machinery, equipment and materials to be used
  - » the environment in which they are working
- the obligations under the OHS Act to maintain a workplace safe and without risks to health, so far as reasonably practicable (detailed further below)
- for apprentices or trainees with a disability, any additional supervision or other supports to ensure the apprentice or trainee can undertake their task/s effectively and safely
- for school-based apprentices and trainees, constant and direct supervision is likely to be required unless a careful risk assessment determines otherwise.

Some apprentices or trainees will be in greater need of direct supervision and others less so. The time required to progress from direct supervision to indirect and broad supervision will vary from worker to worker. The objective is to gain competency progressively and safely in the skills they need to function more independently over time.










The employer and supervisor's responsibility is to make a reasonable assessment of what is appropriate for your apprentice or trainee in your workplace at the time after considering these factors. Keeping training records up to date (which may include supervision arrangements) is one of your obligations as an employer and will help you to explain the approach you have taken and why to the VRQA, who may ask you to do so as part of their compliance monitoring activity. It will also assist you to work with the RTO and your apprentice or trainee to achieve competence in the required skills and to support progression.

10. [ESV\\_\\_YourResponsibilities\\_ApprenticeA5.pdf](#)  
 11. [ACMA cabling provider rules August 2020 updated 13.08.20.pdf](#)  
 12. [Plumbing registration and licensing | Victorian Building Authority \(vba.vic.gov.au\)](#)

TYPES OF SUPERVISION		
Direct supervision	Indirect supervision	Broad supervision
<b>What is it?</b>		
Close and constant monitoring of the apprentice or trainee.	Intermittent monitoring and oversight of the apprentice or trainee at a frequency assessed as safe and appropriate for the individual's circumstances at the time. The supervisor stays in close proximity to the apprentice or trainee.	Broad supervision is when the supervisor is not always in close proximity to the learner. This method of supervision may involve periods where the supervisor is not physically present at the worksite.  Provides for quality checking of completed tasks and supervising the apprentices or trainee's overall performance.
<b>When should it be provided?</b>		
This is the default type of supervision and is essential for every new apprentice or trainee.  This must be maintained during the training of a particular skill, and until the apprentice or trainee has demonstrated their competence in that skill and can perform that skill safely.	When an apprentice or trainee has demonstrated competence in a given skill, they may move from direct to indirect supervision. This applies only to the skills where they have demonstrated competence.  The employer should be able to justify that indirect supervision is reasonable in the circumstances with regard to the OHS Act, any applicable industry supervision standards or regulations, any health and safety risks and their assessment of the apprentice or trainee's skills and competencies.  It will be common for apprentices and trainees to require a combination of direct and indirect supervision as they gain skills that allow them to function more independently and perform their role safely. This requires a frequent and individualised assessment of competency, training needs and work risks by the supervisor.	When an apprentice or trainee has demonstrated a high level of competence across a broad range of skills, including the ability to assess and respond to worksite health and safety risks and perform their role safely, in accordance with the OHS Act, and any applicable industry supervision standards or regulations. When the apprentice or trainee does not require constant guidance from the supervisor whilst performing familiar tasks.  When an apprentice or trainee has been assessed as competent in the skills required to undertake the tasks they have been allocated AND they have gained the confidence and experience required to respond safely and appropriately to unexpected events or challenges on the worksite.
<b>What are the expectations?</b>		
The supervisor must remain on the same worksite and be physically able to see and hear the apprentice or trainee whilst they work.  The supervisor must provide instruction and guidance to the apprentice or trainee and observe all aspects of their work to ensure it is performed safely and correctly.  The supervisor must be accessible to the apprentice or trainee at all times and be available to respond to issues as they arise.	Before the apprentice or trainee commences a work task under indirect supervision for the first time, the supervisor should discuss and plan that task with them in person, including identifying any potential health and safety risks.  While the apprentice or trainee is performing a task, the supervisor should intermittently observe them to ensure the task is being completed safely and to a satisfactory standard.  If the supervisor leaves the worksite for any reason (e.g. lunchbreak) the apprentice or trainee should not be engaged with a task for which direct supervision is required or that is high-risk.	The supervisor shall consult with the apprentice regarding the tasks being undertaken, and provide instruction and direction as required, including in relation to any potential health and safety risks.  The apprentice or trainee should at all times be able to communicate with their supervisor, either in person or via electronic means. A supervisor should be able to attend the apprentice or trainee's physical location within a reasonable time if an issue arises.  Adequate supervision of apprentices and trainees cannot solely be provided from an offsite location by electronic means. Electronic means include, but are not limited to, telephones, radio and webcams.

## Supervisor requirements

Employers are responsible for ensuring the people they nominate as supervisors are suitable and appropriate to oversee and coordinate the training of an apprentice or trainee on the job.

QUESTIONS EMPLOYERS SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN PUTTING IN PLACE SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS INCLUDE:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the potential supervisor have an aptitude for and interest in training others?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the potential supervisor have appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills? Are they competent and experienced in the tasks they will be overseeing?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the potential supervisor have a good understanding of the trade or vocation?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the potential supervisor a 'fit and proper' person to guide and oversee trainees and apprentices? Do they pose any risks to the trainee/apprentice? Do they have any serious criminal history? Employers should remember that apprentices and trainees are often young and lack life experience.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the potential supervisor capable of using the correct type of supervision for each apprentice or trainee in consideration of their age, life experience, competence and workplace risks?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the potential supervisor capable of confirming<sup>13</sup> on-the-job competency and updating training records for the apprentices and trainees they are responsible for?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the potential supervisor understand their obligations under the OHS Act?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the appropriate number of apprentices or trainees the potential supervisor can supervise at a given time to ensure workplace safety and comply with the Training Contract, relevant industrial agreements, the level of supervision required and all applicable laws?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the apprentice or trainee is a child or young person (under the age of 18), is the supervisor (and other people working with the apprentice or trainee) suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice?</li> </ul>

There is no requirement for a single supervisor. It is common for apprentices and trainees to work with a number of supervisors on different worksites or tasks. In fact, exposure to several supervisors may enhance the training experience for the apprentice or trainee as each supervisor will bring their individual strengths and skills to the role, and the learner will be exposed to different approaches, team members and environments.

However, it is important supervisory arrangements are clearly made for each work period by the employer and communicated to the apprentice/trainee and the nominated supervisor/s so each party understands their responsibilities and appropriate oversight and guidance is provided to the apprentice/trainee at all times.








<sup>13</sup> As part of the competency-based completion process the RTO will ask the employer to confirm if apprentice or trainee demonstrates on the job proficiency in the competencies assessed by the RTO

## Effective supervision

Effective workplace supervision is critical to your apprentice or trainee's success. Not only can supervisors act as a role model and coach for your apprentices and trainees but also they play an important part in building a positive workplace

culture that motivates, inspires and contributes to the success of your business. That is why it is important that employers not only choose the right supervisors for their apprentices and trainees but also ensure they are effective when supervising.

### THERE ARE 7 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION:

	<p><b>1. Explain the big picture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People learn best when they understand context and why doing something in a certain way is important.</li> <li>Explain the task, its purpose and any key requirements before you begin, including any safety considerations.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2. Take it step-by-step</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break down the task into manageable chunks or components.</li> <li>Use clear, simple language and assume no prior knowledge. Ask your learner to repeat the instructions to confirm understanding.</li> <li>If appropriate, you may refer to any written procedures, diagrams, signs or flow charts that are used or available in the workplace that summarise the steps involved, highlight safety issues and provide visual cues.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>3. Demonstrate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully show your learner how to correctly do the task and what an acceptable standard or outcome looks like.</li> <li>Ask the learner if they are clear about what will be assessed by the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and how they should seek information from the RTO if they are unsure.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>4. Practice makes perfect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow time for your learner to practice their new skills. Spaced repetition of skills will build competence. Watch, coach and be patient.</li> <li>Provided safety is not compromised and the job is ultimately completed to standard, there may be different ways to perform the task. Effective supervisors may allow their learner to perform the task in their own way, where appropriate.</li> <li>Be prepared for skills to build over time.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>5. Provide feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure your feedback is provided in a positive and constructive manner, even if mistakes are made along the way.</li> <li>Never belittle or ridicule your apprentice or trainee – and remember what you say is only a small part of what is communicated. Your body language and tone of voice send a powerful message to the learner and also to others in the workplace.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>6. Advise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure to advise the learner of their progress in a positive and constructive way.</li> <li>Advise the RTO of your view of the learner's progress when requested to confirm competency. Update your own supervision records accordingly.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>7. Engage with the learner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask what specifically is being done at the RTO so there can be, where possible, consistent learning and reinforcement of the skills and knowledge learned on and off the job.</li> </ul>



## Record keeping requirements

Employers are required to keep training records up to date and to follow the Training Plan for each apprentice or trainee they employ. By keeping evidence of the on-the-job training they provide, employers can demonstrate their adherence to their responsibilities under the Training Contract and support their apprentices and trainees to progress. Training records can be kept in a variety of forms – some RTOs provide online learning management systems for their apprentices and trainees to use with their employer, whilst for some workplaces written records or a logbook may be more suitable. Employers should discuss options and what suits your workplace best with your apprentice or trainee and the RTO they are enrolled with.

The RTO develops the Training Plan in conjunction with the employer and apprentice/trainee and is required to provide an updated copy to both parties as training and competency progresses.

The above records are separate and additional to the employee entitlement records an employer must also keep.

## Definitions and abbreviations

**Approved training schemes** are determined by the VRQA<sup>14</sup> and specify which qualifications are available as apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria. Each scheme includes terms and conditions such as the nominal duration of an apprenticeship or traineeships, probationary periods and minimum hours for employment and training. See [here](#) for list of approved training schemes.

**Registered Training Organisation (RTO)** is a provider and assessor of nationally recognised vocational education and training qualifications. To deliver this training the organisation must be approved by the national regulator – the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or if operating in Victoria may be registered with the VRQA. There are a range of RTOs including Technical and Further Education (TAFE) which are public institutions, private providers, professional or industry associations, some schools and universities as well as not-for-profit community-based education providers.

**Training Contract** is a legally binding agreement signed by the employer and the apprentice or trainee (and a parent or guardian if applicable), in accordance with the ETRA and other regulatory requirements. It must be completed with the assistance of an Apprenticeship Network Provider who should provide advice and information about the employment and training arrangement. They will also lodge the contract with the VRQA for their approval and registration.

**Training Plan** means the plan for training and assessment to be delivered by the RTO. It describes what training is to be undertaken and outlines how, when and where that training will be delivered. It also includes how assessments will occur (including where the employer is asked to confirm that competency has been achieved) and when the apprentice or trainee is deemed competent. It is developed by the RTO in conjunction with the apprentice/trainee and their employer. The Training Plan is a living document, requiring review and updating on a regular basis and should reflect the current status of the apprentice or trainee's training.

**Vocational Education and Training (VET)** is training delivered by a TAFE or private RTO to provide students with practical skills and knowledge in a vocational area. Apprentices and trainees undertake a VET qualification specified as an apprenticeship or traineeship in an approved training scheme.

14. Education Training and Reform Act section 5.5.2

## Who can help

### Apprenticeships Victoria

Apprenticeships Victoria's Apprenticeship Support Officers are located across Victoria and provide confidential and independent support and advice to apprentices, trainees and employers. They can assist to resolve workplace, training and personal issues that may impact on an apprenticeship.

*Apprenticeship Support Officer Hotline*

☎ 1300 311 820

✉ [apprenticeship.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:apprenticeship.support@education.vic.gov.au)

🌐 [www.apprenticeships.vic.gov.au](http://www.apprenticeships.vic.gov.au)

### The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

The VRQA is an independent statutory authority that works to assure the quality of education and training in Victoria. The Authority regulates apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria and makes routine visits to workplaces to ensure both parties are meeting their obligations. The VRQA can also provide advice and help to resolve disputes, as well as investigate when required.

*Apprenticeship and traineeship enquiries*

☎ 1300 722 603

✉ [vrqa.apprenticeships@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vrqa.apprenticeships@education.vic.gov.au)

🌐 [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au)

### WorkSafe Victoria

WorkSafe is Victoria's workplace health and safety regulator, and workplace injury insurer. They provide a wide range of information and guidance on their website or via a telephone advisory service.

*Advisory Services*

☎ 1300 136 089

🌐 [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

Online enquiry form:

[www.myworksafe.vic.gov.au/s/customer-enquiry](http://www.myworksafe.vic.gov.au/s/customer-enquiry)

### Apprenticeship Network Providers (ANP)

ANP's are contracted by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to provide a free advice and support service to employers and apprentices/trainees to help them from pre-commencement to completion of the apprenticeship or traineeship. The ANP is required to personally visit employers and apprentices/trainees to assist in the completion of the Training Contract. The providers contracted to deliver services in Victoria can be located at:

☎ 13 38 73

🌐 [www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/search-aasn](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/search-aasn)

### Wage Inspectorate Victoria

Wage Inspectorate Victoria investigates allegations of wage theft. They provide information via their website and through their Helpline:

☎ 1800 287 287

🗣️ Language help: 131 450

🌐 [www.wageinspectorate.vic.gov.au](http://www.wageinspectorate.vic.gov.au)

General information on pay and entitlements for apprentices and trainees is available from the Fair Work Ombudsman via the website: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)



