Early Learning

Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy

1. Policy Statement

The safety, rights and best interests of children are of paramount consideration for all decisions made by all Uniting (Victoria & Tasmania) staff.

Uniting (Victoria & Tasmania) has a duty of care for all children attending our early learning services.

Our practices safeguard children from child abuse and harm and prioritise their safety and wellbeing. Uniting has zero tolerance for child abuse and actively promotes the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Supporting connections with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake practicum placements as part of their studies
- Building relationships with community members and providing suitable opportunities to engage volunteers to contribute to the programs and activities of the service
- Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of each child at the service, family day care residence/venue through consistent compliance with this policy and procedures when engaging volunteers and students

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following persons:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians, volunteers and students.

3. Executive Summary

Uniting Early Learning values, the participation of students at our early learning services. Students gain practical experience, develop crucial interaction skills, and build pathways to ECEC careers.

Students may participate in programs and activities at the service from time to time including observing and experiencing the provision of centre-based education and care. This will be encouraged and facilitated by Uniting Early Learning wherever appropriate and possible.

Uniting Early Learning values the participation of parents/guardians and other family members, and the voluntary contribution they make to the education and care of their own and other children. Volunteers strengthen service's connection to the local community, fostering belonging and shared decision-making.

4. Current Environmental Context

The role that volunteers and students play in education and care services varies and can include working with groups of children, preparing materials or food, assisting with administrative tasks or working one-on-one with individual children. The service is responsible for ensuring that volunteers

and students are suitable to work with children, and that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

To strengthen child safety across Australia, in 2025 Education Ministers agreed to make new requirements under the Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) regarding inappropriate conduct.

Under section 166A of the National Law, a child at an education and care service must not be subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate at an education and care service. This applies to all educators, staff, students and volunteers.

Definition of 'inappropriate conduct'

The National Law sets out the following circumstances to consider when determining if a person is subjecting a child or children to conduct that is inappropriate, while they are being educated or cared for at the education and care service.

Inappropriate conduct is conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account any of the following circumstances:

- Whether the conduct aligns with generally accepted education and care practice
- The child's age and developmental stage
- Whether the conduct is likely to cause or result in harm (including emotional, psychological or physical harm) or injury to a child or children
- Whether the conduct is sexual, aggressive or violent.

In deciding if the conduct is inappropriate, it does not matter if:

- The child consented (agreed to the conduct, either by directly expressing their consent or implying consent through their actions)
- The person subjecting the child to the conduct believes the child has consented
- The person subjecting the child to the conduct is related to the child.

Subjecting a child to inappropriate conduct can occur in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- In-person via words or behaviour, including both adult to child or between adults in the presence of a child/ren
- Filming and capturing images or recordings
- As a single occasion or as part of a pattern over time
- Either directly or indirectly (for example, exposure to inappropriate language or conversations, or leaving inappropriate material accessible to children)
- Online
- As an omission (for example, deliberately excluding a child).

It is important to note that while all of the matters set out above must be considered, not all of them would need to be met in order for the conduct to be considered inappropriate by a reasonable person.

Examples of inappropriate conduct towards children and young people

- Humiliating and threatening children and young people
- Using physical contact that could be construed as sexualised or intrusive
- Making physical threats
- Engaging in and using any touching that is intimate, sexualised or overly personal
- Initiating, requesting or encouraging kissing

- Using retaliatory, insulting or humiliating remarks (which could include shouting or yelling in a hostile tone)
- Force-feeding
- Photographing and recording children in a state of undress or during toileting and hygiene care routines
- Engaging in one-to-one personal direct online or digital messages to children and young people
- Following children's and young people's accounts and tagging in a social media post, including online 'friend requests and personal messaging (noting social media age restrictions).

Inappropriate conduct in the presence of children and young people

- Using disrespectful language and behaviours between adults, for example yelling and shouting in a hostile tone
- Using threatening or intimidating body language between adults, for example getting in someone's face or following them while continuing to yell at them
- Engaging in sexualised or racially charged conversations
- Engaging with inappropriate images, videos or written content
- Discussing children and young people in a derogatory manner
- Talking disrespectfully about children's and young people's families, culture or home environments
- Talking about or initiating experiences that are inappropriate for children's age and development and may negatively shape thoughts and behaviour.

Source: Information sheet - Inappropriate conduct | ACECQA

All volunteers and students are responsible for strictly following Uniting policies including but not limited to:

- Child Safety
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- E-Safety Technology
- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Emergency & Evacuation
- Dealing with Medical Conditions.

All volunteers and students are responsible for completing mandatory Uniting training modules and mandatory national child safety training

Uniting Early Learning is responsible for ensuring all volunteers and students have a current WWCC/WWVP check. Services are responsible for ensuring:

- Volunteers and students complete the visitor register each day of attendance
- Adhere to the aforementioned policies
- Are never left unsupervised with children.

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Accept or reject a potential volunteer or student based on the circumstances of the service at the time, in consultation with the nominated supervisor	✓	✓			
Obtaining a valid WWCC/WWVP and provide details prior to commencement *R149*	**R**				✓
Check the status of the WWCC/WWVP Clearance of volunteers and students where required, and ensuring that the details, including identification number and expiry date are recorded in the staff record *R149*	**R**	✓			
Immediately declare to the nominated supervisor any changes that mean they do not meet the requirements relating to being a volunteer or student, such as ceasing their studies or if their WWCC/WWVP has been revoked *R149*	**R**				✓
Ensure that no child is subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service while that child is being educated and cared for by the service *S2A & S166*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Keep a record for each day on which each student or volunteer participates with the date and the hours of participation *R149*	**R**	✓	✓		
Complete and maintain the National Educator Register in the National Quality Agenda IT System for all educators, volunteers and students, non-educator staff, teachers (regardless of whether or not they are registered or accredited with a teacher registration body), nominated supervisors and directors/co-ordinators *Early Childhood Legislation (Child Safety) Amendment Bill 2025*	**R**				
Follow the guidelines for applications from volunteers and students at the service	✓	✓	✓		✓
Develop guidelines for accepting applications from volunteers and students to work at the which are aligned with the *Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy and E-Safety & Technology Policy S167*	**R**				
Ensure a copy of the volunteer (ongoing)/student record is kept at the service *R149*	**R**	✓	✓		
Inform the service in writing about training requirements, including timesheets and evaluation forms					✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Maintain open communication with work experience and placement students, as well as with the students' course supervisor, about their performance		✓	✓		✓
Collaborate with the student to establish clear goals, deliverables, and a plan for a successful placement					✓
Stay up to date with all written work requirements					✓
Ensure that the Child Safe Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct Acknowledgements are attached to the volunteer/student Record *S2A*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure volunteers and students have completed the induction checklist (*refer to form 34.1*)	✓	✓	✓		
Ensure that volunteers, and students are adequately supervised and under direct supervision at all times and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected *S2A, S165 & S167*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure volunteers and students on placement at the service are not affected by alcohol or drugs (including prescription medication) that would impair their capacity to supervise or provide education and care to children *S2A, S166 R82 & R83*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop a range of strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians as volunteers	✓	✓	✓		
Provide volunteers, students and parents/guardians with access to all service policies and procedures and access to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 and Education and Care Services National Law R171 & R185*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	
Ensure that volunteers, students and parents/guardians comply with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and *Education and Care Services National Law* and all service policies and procedures *S2A & R170*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that volunteers and students and do not carry their personal electronic devices while providing education and care to children, except for authorised essential purposes *S2A, S175H, S175I, S175J & R168*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensuring that volunteers, students and parents/guardians are aware of how to comply with child protection law and Child Safe Standards obligations *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) & Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas) & S2A*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring volunteers, students and parents/guardians can identify children with medical conditions, the child's medical management plan and the location of the child's medication *S2A, R90, R168, R170 & R171*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Familiarise all volunteers and students with the centre's emergency and evacuation procedures, ensuring they fully understand the processes *S2A*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure volunteers and students understand how to report any child safety concerns to the nominated supervisor *S2A*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discuss any concerns raised by the student with the educational leader if advice or assistance is required		✓	✓		
Immediately escalate any concerns about the visitor's behaviour, works being undertaken or any risk to children to the nominated supervisor *S166A & S2A*	**R**	✓	✓		
Inform families, children and educators when volunteers and students on placement are present, including their role and planned hours at the centre		✓	✓		
Ensure visitors, volunteers and students understand they must not discuss concerns, issues or complaints with families or visitors *R181*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure all volunteers (ongoing participation at the service) and students complete the mandatory ULearn modules: • Child Safety • Work Health and Safety • Emergency Management • Privacy • Family Violence Awareness • Trauma Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure all volunteers (ongoing participation at the service) and students complete the mandatory national child safety training *S2A*	**R**	✓	✓		
Provide all details required to complete the volunteer/student application				✓	✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensure that volunteers and students comply with the relevant law and regulations and all policies including: • Child Safety • Code of Conduct • Child Safe Code of Conduct • E-Safety Technology • Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing • Emergency & Evacuation • Dealing with Medical Conditions • Supervision of children • Privacy • Safe Arrival of Children • Relaxation & Sleep • Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness • Food Safety • Hygiene & Infectious Disease • Administration of First Aid • Interactions with Children *R185 & S2A*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Undertake a WWC Check (Vic) WWVP check (Tas) and valid Fit 2 Work police check *R358*	**R**				✓
Understand and acknowledge the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service (*refer to Privacy Policy*) *R181*	**R**				✓
Comply with the requirements of the relevant regulations and with all service policies and procedures, including the Child Safe Code of Conduct Policy while at the service *S2A & S167*	**R**				✓
Undertake the induction process and complete the induction checklist prior to commencement at the service *Form 34.1*					✓
Follow the directions of educators/staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected *S2A & S167*	**R**				✓
Read and sign the Code of Conduct and Child Safe Code of Conduct to acknowledge you understand them and will adhere to them					✓

5. Related Documents

Uniting Students Graduates Interns Work Experience Policy
Position Description Early Learning Volunteer
Position Description Early Learning Student

Forms

Form 34.1 - UF-EL-068-Participation of Volunteers & Students Induction Checklist 34.1.docx

Review

This procedure is to be reviewed by: June 2029

Early Learning
Student Placement and Volunteer Process

Purpose

To outline the process for coordinating student placements and volunteers within Early Learning services, ensuring appropriate screening, support, and positive outcomes for both the service and the individual.

Student Placement Process

1. Initial Enquiry

Requests for student placements may be received directly from the student or a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). These requests may be received directly by Early Learning Access and Support, or via services who then forward the information through to Access and Support.

2. Placement Details Confirmation

The following information must be obtained and confirmed:

- Name of RTO
- Qualification the student is working towards
- Required placement hours
- Proposed start and end dates
- Preferred service location
- Age of children for required placement

3. Service Consultation

Access and Support will liaise with the relevant Service and Program Manager to:

- Confirm capacity to host a student
- Ensure a qualified teacher/educator is available to support the placement
- Assess whether the placement will be of mutual benefit to both the service and the student

4. Placement Confirmation

Once approved, confirmation is provided to the student and/or RTO, including next steps.

5. Screening and Compliance

Prior to commencement, the student must complete all required screening and documentation, including:

- Valid Working with Children Check (Volunteer)
- Police Check - National (International required where applicable)
- Reference checks

- Interview conducted by a Program Manager, with support from Access and Support
- Completion of any organisational onboarding documentation

6. Service Engagement and Commencement

- The student will contact the service directly to arrange orientation, shifts, and commencement details
- The student will commence placement as agreed

7. Completion of Placement

- Upon completion, the service will provide any required assessment documentation to the RTO in a timely manner

Volunteer Process

1. Initial Enquiry

Volunteers may express interest directly with Access and Support or via services.

2. Service Consultation

Access and Support will consult with the relevant Service and Program Manager to:

- Determine whether a volunteer is suitable for the service
- Ensure the placement will be of benefit to the service and the volunteer

3. Screening and Compliance

Volunteers must complete the same screening requirements as students prior to commencement, including:

- Valid Working with Children Check (Volunteer)
- Police Check – National (International required where applicable)
- Reference checks
- Interview process
- Completion of onboarding documentation

4. Engagement with Service

- The volunteer will liaise directly with the service to agree on days, times, and responsibilities
- The volunteer will commence once all requirements are met

Responsibilities

Access and Support Team

- Coordinate enquiries and placements
- Facilitate communication between RTOs, students, volunteers, and services
- Ensure compliance requirements are met

Program Manager and Service

- Assess suitability and capacity
- Conduct interviews
- Provide supervision and support
- Complete required documentation for placement outcomes