

# Preparing to transition into work and lifelong learning



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# Transitioning into work and becoming a lifelong learner are challenging tasks for secondary school students. This guide shares a framework which supports students' transition into work and discusses the implications for teachers and career practitioners.

## Why is the transition to work so complicated?

Transitioning into work involves moving from a familiar, structured education environment into an unfamiliar, changeable work environment. Not only that: to survive and thrive in the world of work, students need to become lifelong learners, navigating the move from guided, curriculum-based learning to self-motivated, self-directed learning.

While this is complicated, research suggests that students can be supported to make the transition to work by equipping them with relevant strategies, knowledge and skills (Vu et al., 2022).

## How can students effectively transition into work and prepare for lifelong learning?

This guide shares two interlinked models which can be used together to support students' preparation for work and lifelong learning.

- *The 4-Gap Model for Transition* guides the transition from school through four gaps and into work.
- *The 4-S Model of Dynamics in Workplace Learning* describes work in relation to the individual, work context and learning strategies needed for workplace adaptation.

## 4-Gap Model for Transition: moving from one system to another

The 4-Gap Model presents the present (school) and the future (work) as two systems between which the individual is moving. Within each system the Model considers the individual's *Situation*, *Self*, *Support* and *Strategies* (4S) as derived from Anderson et al.'s (2012) transition framework. Think of them as follows:

**Situation** What is happening?

**Self** To whom is it happening?

**Support** What help is available?

**Strategies** How does the person cope?

In the transition framework, we think about how *Situation*, *Self*, *Support* and *Strategies* relate at a specific time. The Model expresses the gaps between an individual's current knowledge and their desired knowledge, which they can bridge by learning (Dervin et al., 2003). Figure 1 presents the 4-Gap Model in the context of a student's transition from school to workplace.

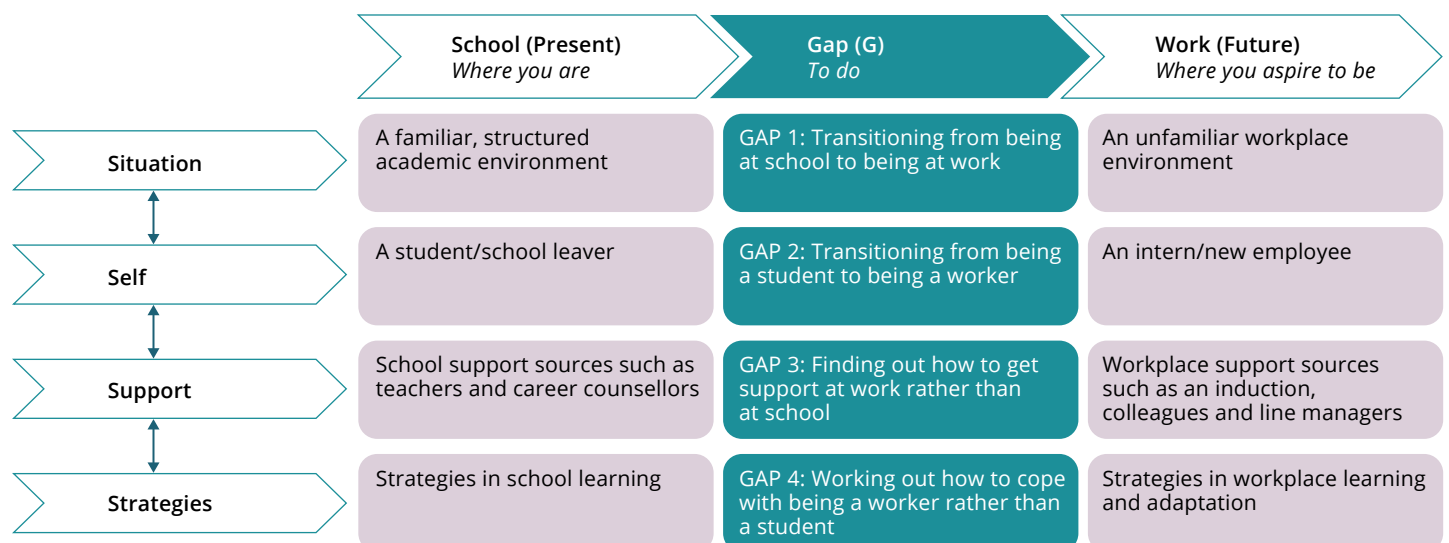


Figure 1. The 4-Gap Model for Transition (*Situation, Self, Support and Strategies* adapted from Anderson et al., 2012)

# The 4-S Model of Dynamics in Workplace Learning: How do new workers adapt to a workplace?

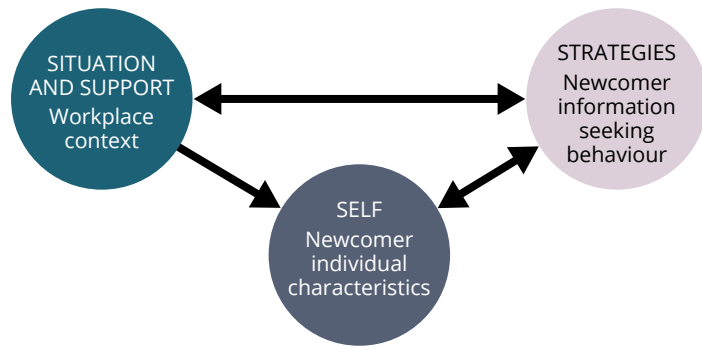


Figure 2. The 4-S Model of Dynamics in Workplace Learning (integrated from Vu et al., 2021; 2022; 4S adapted from Anderson et al., 2012).

The 4-S Model illustrates how the *Situation and Support*, *Self*, and *Strategies* (4S) are experienced in the workplace. It untangles how newcomers learn in, and adapt to, the workplace environment. The Model has three broad elements and the relationships between them are shown by the arrows. When supporting students, we need to consider all three.

**Situation and support** in the workplace can take the form of enablers and constraints. Inductions, and access to workplace supervisors and co-workers are good examples of strategies which **enable** newcomers to learn about the workplace and ask questions. **Constraints** might include working across multiple sites and a lack of consistent staffing and support.

**Self** is essential as everyone is different. Students might, for example, have previous work experience or none at all; low or high belief in their abilities (self-efficacy); and cultural or language differences to overcome.

**Strategies** take the form of 'newcomer information seeking behaviour' (newcomer ISB). This is how people who are new to a workplace find the information they need. Timing, tactics and access to sources are vital (see Morrison, 2002; Vu et al., 2022). Students can learn some of these in advance.

## Preparing students for transition

The workplace is beyond the immediate control of teachers and career practitioners. However, we can facilitate students' transitions by making them aware of the *Situation*, *Self*, *Support* and *Strategies* experienced at school.

### 1 Create experiences in school that prepare students for work.

Share the two models with students and use them as a conversation starter to identify challenges and opportunities relating to the transition into work.

By enhancing students' understanding of *Situation* and *Support*, teachers and career practitioners can enable students to develop their *Self* and *Strategies* (for example, information seeking skills) in time for their transition into work.

### 2 Teach students to seek information.

Information seeking is vital to students' ability to manage the *Situation*, *Self*, *Support* and *Strategies* needed in their work and workplace learning. Newcomer ISB is impacted by the workplace, the individual, and the ways in which *Situation*, *Self*, *Support* and *Strategies* interrelate (see Fig 2).

Newcomers who are prepared for transition often influence the workplace context by asking questions early. The changed context, in turn, can enhance their future development.

Similarly, newcomers can be coached to overcome shyness so that they feel confident in proactively seeking information from co-workers and supervisors. Newcomers who develop effective workplace communication skills (such as receiving and responding to feedback) are likely to better manage their transition into work (Vu et al., forthcoming).

Table 1 suggests ways in which teachers and career practitioners can support students to prepare for the transition between school and work.

Gap	Preparing students for transition
<b>G1: Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise students' awareness of the nature of the transition and encourage them to talk about their concerns.</li> <li>• Engage students in self-directed learning and explain that this is how they will manage their learning at work.</li> </ul>
<b>G2: Self (Student)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the Situation, Self, Support and Strategies of the present system (school) and discuss with students how to negotiate these in a work setting.</li> <li>• Guide students to develop an understanding of potential workplace dynamics (4-S Model).</li> <li>• Guide students to identify gaps (4-Gap Model) and simulate what these can feel like through role-play.</li> <li>• Support students in generating and implementing strategies for bridging the gaps, guiding them to evaluate their individual strengths and challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>G3: Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise students how to mobilise sources of support. For example, guide students on who in the workplace is best placed to answer questions, how to ask them, and when.</li> <li>• Encourage students to practise these strategies through role-play or changes to in-class communication, and challenge students to put them into practice elsewhere in their lives.</li> </ul>
<b>G4: Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop students' ability to identify when they need help and assure them that everyone needs help at some point.</li> <li>• Teach students to seek information proactively and effectively and use the 4-S Model to show them how this can improve Self, Situation and Support when they are at work.</li> </ul>

Table 1. A framework for supporting students' transition.

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