The supervision of apprentices and trainees is a significant responsibility for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) across all industries. It is important that you understand your obligations under South Australian work health and safety laws.

Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) (WHS Act), PCBUs have a primary duty of care for ensuring the safety of workers and to provide information, instruction, training, and supervision that is necessary to protect workers from risks to health and safety.

In South Australia, the Training and Skills Commission (‘the Commission’) is charged with responsibility for administering the State’s traineeship and apprenticeship system. It derives its authority from the Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (TSD Act).

The Commission’s guideline for persons who supervise apprentices or trainees (the guideline), sets out specific details on supervisor requirements and supervisor/apprentice/trainee ratios.

Where a registered employer (eg Group Training Organisation) places an apprentice or trainee with a PCBU for their employment and on-the-job training, the registered employer must ensure that the PCBU complies with the requirements of the guideline, as far as is reasonably practicable.

### Levels of supervision

**Direct supervision:**

The provision of direct supervision requires:

- staying within constant visual contact and/or earshot – this cannot be provided by electronic means.

Direct supervision is mandatory for first and second year/stage apprentices.

**General supervision:**

The provision of general supervision deemed appropriate by the employer, based upon:

- accepted industry supervision standards
- the level of competence and experience of the trainee/apprentice in a task or skill, and
- the risk associated with the worksite and task.

General supervision is applicable to trainees, and third and fourth year/stage apprentices.

While trainees and apprentices may act as mentors, they must not be responsible for supervising other apprentices/trainees.
### Supervisor to apprentice ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of apprenticeship</th>
<th>Persons responsible for supervision: Apprentice ratio (maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>1:1 Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>1:5 General</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Supervisor to trainee ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/stage of traineeship</th>
<th>Persons responsible for supervision: Trainee ratio (maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
<td>1:5 General</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To exceed the supervision ratio for apprentices and trainees, approval must be granted by a delegate of the Commission. A copy of the approval should be readily accessible at the workplace and available for inspection if and as required by SafeWork SA.

### Meeting your obligations

PCBUs and persons responsible for supervision must ensure apprentice and trainee training, instruction and most importantly, supervision, is met according to the WHS Act and the guideline. A breach of the WHS Act occurs when:

- an action is taken that places a person at risk of injury, illness or death
- steps are not taken to avoid placing workers at risk
- there is a failure to comply with regulatory requirements.

### Steps to effective supervision

- Explain the task, including safety risks.
- Explain the purpose and why you do it that way.
- Explain all the steps in completing the task, including safety control measures to minimise risk of injury.
- Demonstrate the task.
- Provide opportunity to practice the new skill and observe their progress.
- Provide encouragement and feedback and maintain open communication.
- Openly support a healthy workplace free from threatening behaviours, such as; bullying, violence, intimidation and verbal, physical, racial and sexual abuse.

### More information

For more information on supervision of apprentices, visit the Training and Skills Commission at [www.tasc.sa.gov.au](http://www.tasc.sa.gov.au) or call the Traineeships and Apprenticeships Infoline on 1800 673 097.

### SafeWork SA can help

For tips and advice on work health and safety, SafeWork SA offers a free workplace advisory service.

An experienced WHS advisor can visit your workplace to help you to identify hazards and risks as well as offering practical safety solutions that will suit your specific circumstances.

Our advisors have no inspector powers, so you can feel comfortable inviting them in to help.