

Navigating the Future: Integrating Student Employment into Transition Pathways

Abstract

Young people in Aotearoa New Zealand are navigating increasingly complex transitions between education and employment. While secondary schools focus on qualification pathways and career direction, one critical factor remains under-integrated in transition planning: paid employment during study.

For many tertiary students, part-time work is essential to sustain participation in education. When well balanced, student employment supports skill development, confidence, and early professional identity. However, the relationship between work and study is nuanced. Moderate work hours can support positive outcomes, while excessive hours increase academic and wellbeing risk.

This session presents an evidence-informed and practice-based perspective on the student employment landscape. Drawing on national research and Student Job Search (SJS) data — including over 60,000 student-suitable roles and 300,000 applications annually — it introduces a practical framework to help careers practitioners integrate student employment into transition conversations.

Participants will explore:

- The realities of the student employment market in Aotearoa
- The difference between student, graduate, and full-time labour markets
- The types and hours of work most compatible with study success
- The core skills employers prioritise in student roles
- Practical strategies to better prepare students to access and sustain work alongside study

The session reflects on the application of this approach in practice and the insights gained from working with students, educators, and employers across New Zealand.

Participants will leave with tools and strategies to strengthen career conversations and better support students to successfully navigate both study and work.

Key Contribution

This session introduces a practice-based framework for integrating student employment into transition planning, informed by large-scale real-time labour market data. It reframes student employment from a financial necessity to a structured component of career development and adaptability, offering a new lens for careers practitioners working in secondary and tertiary contexts.

Evidence Base / Methodology

This work integrates:

- International research on work–study balance and educational outcomes
- National labour market trends in New Zealand
- Practice-based analysis of SJS administrative data (60,000 roles; 300,000 applications annually)

Reflection on Practice

Application of these insights across SJS and engagement with educators and employers highlights:

- A consistent gap between student expectations and labour market realities
- The importance of explicitly teaching students how to navigate work alongside study
- The value of reframing student employment as a developmental, not just financial activity.