

Work Experience

Students who engage in work experience are able to apply theory learned in their studies and develop an understanding of their suitability for the work.

Other advantages of gaining work experience as a student are:

- Practice in making job applications and presenting at interviews.
- Opportunity to preview a job or organisation.
- Networking opportunities in the industry.
- Increased professional self-confidence.

Employers acknowledge that graduates who have gained industry relevant experience often have an edge in recruitment. Many larger employers use such programs to 'try before they buy'; seeking good potential recruits well before graduation.

Types of Work Experience

- Vacation work—usually paid, often a requirement of your degree and taken on at the end of your second last year of study for up to 12 weeks.
- Cooperative education—a full time year of paid industry based learning, generally taken as the third year of a 4-year degree. It usually gains credit points and is a requirement of the degree.

Sponsored opportunities:

- Cadetships—paid employment while the student is studying, including financial support to complete studies. The student may work full time during the vacation and part-time during semester.

- Internships—a period of supervised employment which has specific learning objectives. It may be paid or unpaid, full time during vacation periods or part-time during semester.
- Scholarships—financial grants provided by government, industry or private organisations. Relevant work experience with the sponsoring organisation is often part of the scholarship

Where to Find Placements

Work experience that is an integral part of a course of study is often arranged by your academic school. Examples may be nursing, teaching, medical science and social work. In other fields, a staff member may liaise with industry and advertise vacancies to students.

Organisations that use work experience as part of their graduate recruitment strategy have formal programs and advertise them to students, check:

- On the websites of large companies and government departments
- In Graduate Opportunities and Undergraduate Opportunities www.graduateopportunities.com and Unigrad www.unigrad.com.au, guides published annually and online
- CareerHub employment portal for students www.careerhub.rmit.edu.au

RMIT Career Development and Employment runs a Vacation Work Expo and some RMIT Business Schools run their own Cooperative Education Fairs.

Finding Your Own Work Placement

Often, it is up to the student to find their own work experience and this can be seen as good practice for the world of work, see:

- www.careerone.com.au
- www.mycareer.com.au
- www.seek.com.au
- Professional associations' websites
- Professional associations are a good way to meet potential employers through careers events and mentor programs. emedia.rmit.edu.au/careerstoolkit/industrylinks
- Newspapers—local, state, national and overseas papers. Note organisations that are advertising graduate positions as some of these may also offer vacation work.
- Industry specific websites. Two examples of where to search for opportunities within industry related fields are www.theloop.com.au and www.glassdoor.com.au
- Use your research skills to identify organisations to apply to directly.
- Yellow Pages telephone directory is a great source of business names and contact details conveniently arranged by business type. www.yellowpages.com.au
- The RMIT Library guides on industry contain a wealth of information on Australian and overseas companies and industries.
- Annual reports, newspapers and business journals are also available via the library.
- Databases such as the Australian Government Directory lists government and non-government organisations. www.directory.gov.au/

Ask a librarian for assistance if you are unfamiliar with accessing any of this information.

Use your networks. People you know may be useful sources of information on available jobs. Start with your lecturers, tutors and later-year fellow students.

Linkedin can also be useful for connecting with employers and forming networks. www.linkedin.com

How and When to Apply

Applications for formal vacation work programs for the summer close from about mid year. Year long placements usually need to be finalised in the previous semester.

- Getting in early is important.
- Having a professional resume and cover letter is essential.
- Have your application checked after completing the relevant modules of Application Express www.rmit.edu.au/careers/applicationexpress

Payment and Insurance

Students undertaking work experience as a requirement of their course are usually paid at a rate that is a proportion of the relevant graduate starting salary. If the student is not being paid, the following applies:

- Higher Education students are covered by RMIT's student accident insurance (look under Student Services support services).
- TAFE students are covered in the workplace by Skills Victoria's WorkCover policy.
- For any insurance-related matter or query, RMIT staff and students should seek advice from an RMIT Insurance Officer (look under University services/Financial services/Information and Services/Insurance).

Further information

See the Resumes section on our Jobs and Career advice web pages

www.rmit.edu.au/students/life-and-work-opportunities/jobs-and-career-advice

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