

# **WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Guide for Students**



Work experience gives you an insight into the realities of legal practice, including the people, the processes and the pace.

It's your chance to step into a real legal environment, apply your skills, and start building your confidence as a future lawyer.

This guide explains everything you need to know about completing your work experience, such as what counts, where you can do it, how to get it approved, and how we'll support you along the way.

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# EXAMPLES OF WORK EXPERIENCE

There's a wide range of opportunities that may count towards your Practical Legal Training. Examples include:

- Summer clerkships;
- Paralegal work;
- Volunteering at community legal centres;
- A placement with Legal Aid;
- Working with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Legal or tax division of chartered accountants;
- Government policy and planning work of a legal nature;
- Judge's associate or tipstaff;
- Assisting barristers in chambers;
- Working in government or semi-government legal departments;
- Assisting Tribunal members (who are legal practitioners); and
- Company in-house legal departments

Your work experience doesn't need to be in a law firm or done all in one place, you can combine experience from different legal settings, roles, and times.

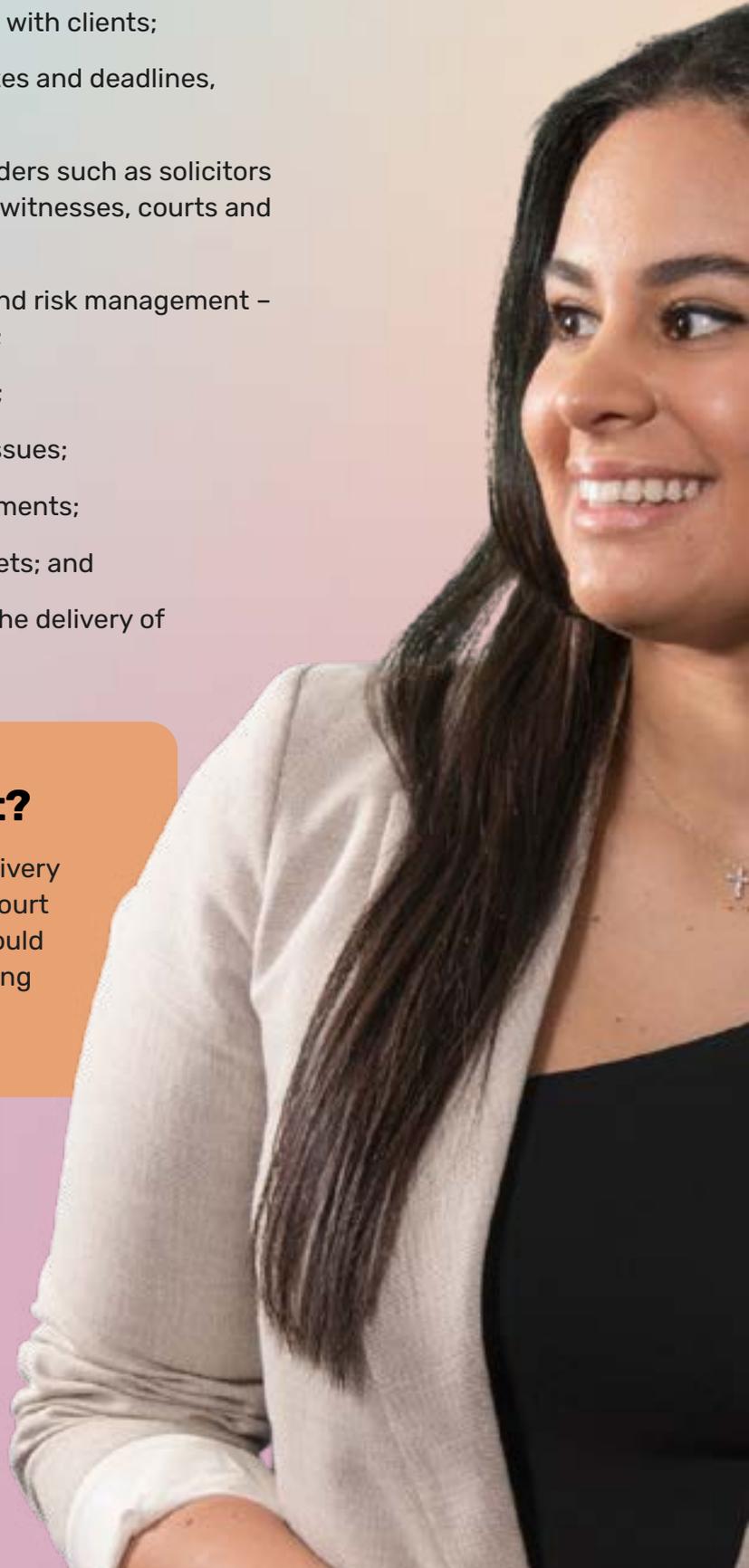
# WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING

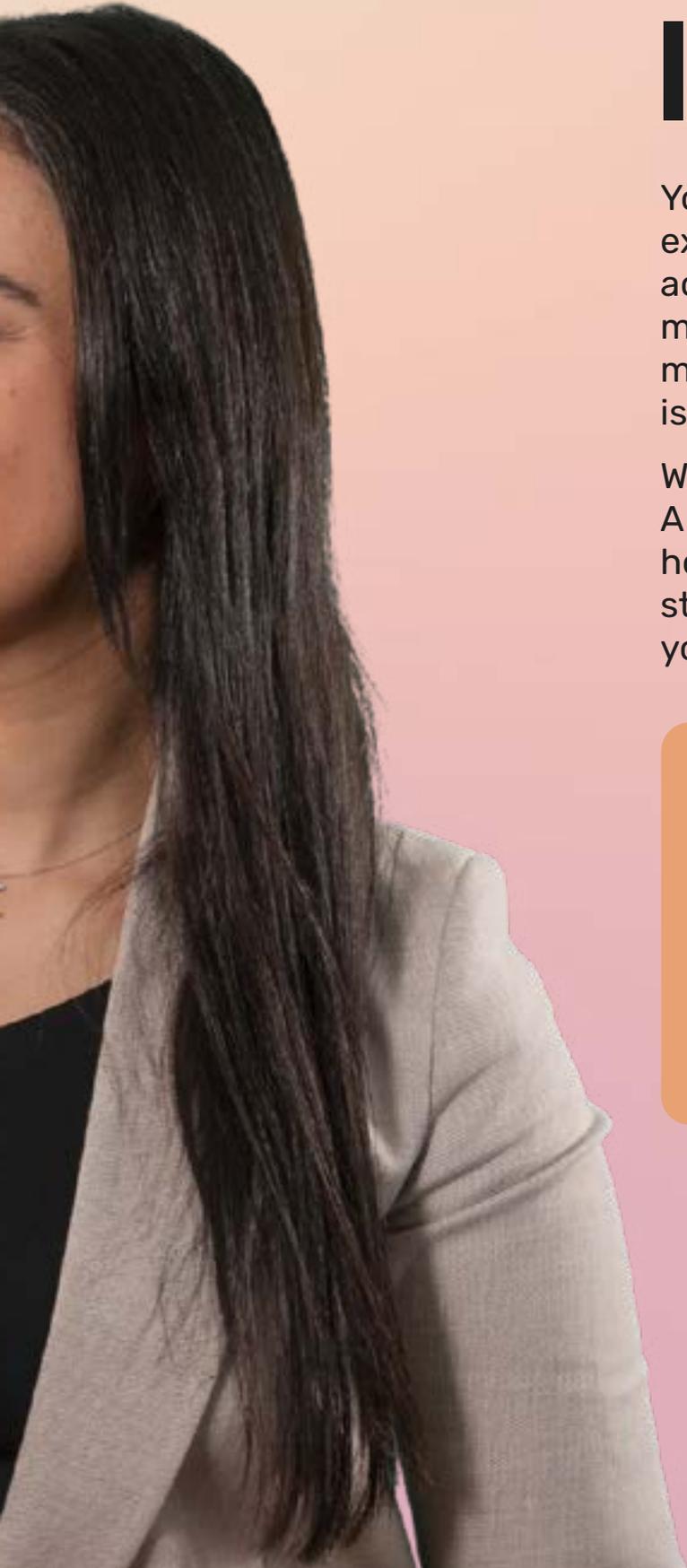
Some examples of the type of activities you should experience, both hands-on and by observation include:

- Meeting, communicating and interacting with clients;
- File management – managing critical dates and deadlines, timetabling and schedules;
- Interacting with other legal service providers such as solicitors in other organisations, barristers, expert witnesses, courts and other justice section administration;
- Management processes for client work and risk management – e.g. conflict checks and costs disclosure;
- Legal research and legal factual analysis;
- Considering professional responsibility issues;
- Drafting correspondence and legal documents;
- Financial and accounting systems, budgets; and
- Administrative activities which support the delivery of legal services.

## Does admin work count?

Only if it's directly connected to the delivery of legal services. For example, filing a court document or preparing a client brief would count, but answering phones or scanning documents would not.





# HOW WORK EXPERIENCE IS COUNTED

You can complete your work experience with one organisation or across multiple placements. What matters is that each placement meets the [Work Experience Rules](#) and is supervised by an eligible lawyer.

Work experience is counted in hours. A full day is equal to 7 hours, and 4 hours counts as a half day. You can structure your days in a way that fits your placement and your schedule.

## **You may already have some days completed**

In some states, eligible legal work completed in the two years before starting your PLT may count toward your total.

# WHERE YOU CAN COMPLETE YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE

Your work experience can be completed in a wide range of legal workplaces, including:

- a solicitor or barrister in private practice;
- a government, semi-government or corporate legal office or department, employer or employee association;
- a judge to carry out legal research and provide legal services;
- a tribunal member (who is a legal practitioner) to carry out legal research and provide legal services; and
- a Community Legal Centre.

Work experience can be undertaken in any Australian jurisdiction. Overseas placements may be approved in some circumstances ([eligibility rules apply](#)).

## Your Supervisors

Your supervisor can be:

- An Australian legal practitioner with a full practising certificate, or
- An Australian legal practitioner with a restricted practising certificate for at least two years, or
- A judge or tribunal member who is also a legal practitioner
- A person who does not hold a practising certificate but is eligible to do so and who provides an acceptable written submission to satisfy the Committee that they can provide appropriate practical experience.

Your supervisor must be in good standing within the profession and able to guide you through real legal work.

You can have more than one supervisor if your placement is split between organisations.

# WORK EXPERIENCE OPTIONS

## Choose the option that fits your life

Your work experience requirements depend on the state or territory where you complete your PLT.

Most students find that one option clearly suits their circumstances, and if you're unsure, we're here to help you choose.

### ACT, NSW (Courses Starting Before 1 March 2026), NT, QLD, SA, VIC

|                              | <b>Option 1<br/>75 Days</b>   | <b>Option 2<br/>15 Days + Coursework</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Amount</b>                | 75 days   | 15 days   |
| <b>Who It's For</b>          | Ideal if you've already built substantial experience or have a longer placement lined up.   | Great for students balancing work in non-legal roles, caring responsibilities, or anyone who prefers a shorter placement.   |
| <b>How it works</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 15 days' work experience must be completed in Australia, after starting your PLT and accrued at a minimum of 2 days per week.</li> <li>The remaining days can be completed in Australia or overseas (<a href="#">eligibility rules apply</a>), either in the two years before your PLT or after you start, at a minimum of 1 day per week.</li> </ul> | All 15 days' work experience must be completed in Australia, after you start your PLT, at a minimum of 2 days per week.   |
| <b>Additional Coursework</b> | None  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Six-week online program</b><br/>Advanced interviewing and negotiation session</li> <li>Five written reflections</li> <li>Approx. 20 hours online study per week.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Additional Fee</b>        | None  | Additional \$1,690 (FEE-HELP available)   |

If your experience doesn't fully meet the requirements, the College can review and approve it on a case-by-case basis.

## New South Wales (Courses Starting After 1 March 2026)

|                              | <b>15 Days</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Amount</b>                | 15 days   |
| <b>Who's this for</b>        | This is the only option available for NSW courses starting after 1 March 2026.  |
| <b>How it works</b>          | All 15 days' work experience must be completed in Australia, after you start your PLT, at a minimum of 2 days per week. |
| <b>Additional Coursework</b> | None  |
| <b>Additional Fee</b>        | None  |

## Western Australia

|                              | <b>Option 1<br/>75 Days</b>  | <b>Option 2<br/>25 Days + Coursework</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Amount</b>                | 75 days  | 25 days   |
| <b>Who's this for</b>        | Ideal if you've already built substantial experience or have a longer placement lined up.  | Great for students balancing work in non-legal roles, caring responsibilities, or anyone who prefers a shorter, focused placement.  |
| <b>How it works</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 15 days' work experience must be completed in Australia, after you start your PLT, at a minimum of 2 days per week</li> <li>The remaining days can be completed in Australia or overseas (<a href="#">eligibility rules apply</a>), either in the two years before your PLT or after you start, at a minimum of 1 day per week.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 15 days' work experience must be completed in Australia, after you start your PLT, at a minimum of 2 days per week.</li> <li>The remaining days can be completed in Australia or overseas (<a href="#">eligibility rules apply</a>), either in the two years before your PLT or after you start, at a minimum of 1 day per week.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Additional Coursework</b> | None   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Five-week online program</b><br/>Advanced interviewing and negotiation session</li> <li>Four written reflections</li> <li>Approx. 20 hours online study per week.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Additional Fee</b>        | None   | Additional \$1,620 (FEE-HELP available)   |

# GETTING YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE APPROVED

To make sure your placement counts toward your PLT, follow these simple steps:

- Read the [Work Experience Rules](#) carefully.
- Give your supervisor a copy of the [Work Experience Guide for Supervisors](#).
- Submit your [Work Experience Approval Form](#) (signed by your supervisor) before, or soon after, your placement begins.
- The College will review your application and confirm once approved.
- After completing your placement, submit the [Work Experience Declaration Form](#) signed by your supervisor.

If you've already completed work experience, it can be approved retrospectively. This is a common scenario.



# FINDING WORK EXPERIENCE

**You're not expected to figure this out on your own. Here are some tools to help you start your search.**



## Career Coach

When you study with the College of Law, you'll have free access to a career advisor during your Practical Legal Training and for 12 months after graduation.



## Jobs Board

Browse and apply for work experience, paralegal, graduate roles on our Jobs Board:

[jobs.collaw.com](https://jobs.collaw.com)



## Free Resources

Access free online resources to help you:

- [Craft your résumé](#)
- [Write a standout cover letter](#)
- [Prepare for interviews](#)

[collaw.edu.au/resources](https://collaw.edu.au/resources)



## Monthly Webinar

Join our free monthly webinars for expert advice on finding legal roles and planning your career.

[collaw.edu.au/events](https://collaw.edu.au/events)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **I completed work experience while at university. Can it be counted towards my PLT?**

If you're completing the 75-day or 25-day work experience option, some previously completed work experience may count.

You must still complete at least 15 days after starting PLT.

Any remaining days can be completed in the two years before you begin PLT.

## **Do I need to submit my approval before I start?**

Not necessarily. Approval can be granted retrospectively if the experience meets the rules, but we recommend submitting it before you start, so you can be confident it will count.

## **Does work experience have to be paid?**

Not necessarily. To quote the Fair Work Ombudsman:

"Unpaid work can include work trials, volunteer work, work experience and internships. It also includes a vocational placement as defined under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Unpaid work is lawful if it is a genuine work experience, vocational placement or volunteering arrangement."

Work experience undertaken as part of College PLT is a vocational placement and as such can be unpaid.

The College does not recommend or endorse any positions, nor does it check the position for compliance with the Fair Work Act or

any state award legislation or the Work Experience Rules. It is up to the student and the prospective supervisor to satisfy themselves in this regard.

## **Can work experience be completed remotely?**

Yes, as long as your supervisor can provide appropriate remote supervision. You'll need to complete a [Remote Supervision Diary](#) available on our website.

## **Am I covered by insurance while completing work experience?**

Yes. Students on unpaid, approved work experience placements are insured for personal injury and civil liability.

You can request a copy of our Certificates of Currency by emailing [support@collaw.edu.au](mailto:support@collaw.edu.au)

## **Can work experience be completed overseas?**

All students must complete at least 15 days of work experience in Australia after starting PLT.

Any remaining work experience can be completed overseas in a common law jurisdiction, as long as it meets the requirements and is properly supervised (eligibility rules apply).

If your experience doesn't fully meet the requirements, the College can review and approve it on a case-by-case basis.

# WHERE'S NEXT?

The College of Law is Australasia's leading provider of practice-focused legal education, with over 100,000 alumni. We offer flexible, practical programs to enhance legal careers, prioritising the practical application of law. Enrolment is simple, and we tailor education to fit your lifestyle. We work within the profession, for the profession—alongside you and for you.

## To find out more about our courses:



**Practical Legal Training** call +61 2 9965 7078 or 1300 856 111

**Postgraduate, CPD** and **Short courses** call +61 2 9965 7111



**Email** [enrolments@collaw.edu.au](mailto:enrolments@collaw.edu.au)