



# **WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Guide for Supervisors**

ACT | NSW | NT | QLD | SA | VIC



This guide is to help you understand the purpose of a student's work experience placement and the College of Law's expectations about the nature of the supervision required.

## **What is the purpose of work experience?**

Work Experience is one of the three components of The College's Practical Legal Training (PLT) Program which qualifies successful graduates to apply to be admitted to practice as an Australian lawyer. College students can choose between 15 days of work experience plus an additional study module, or the more traditional 75 days.

The purpose of work experience is to provide students the opportunity to:

- apply relevant knowledge and skills to solve real life problems for clients either hands-on or by observation; and
- reflect on what is learned in the PLT coursework.

## **What are the key takeaways of work experience?**

At the end of the work experience placement, students should have:

- applied their PLT coursework to real-life legal practice;
- been under the supervision of a member of the legal profession;
- gained an understanding of what a legal practitioner does; and
- reflected on their work experience.

## **Who can provide work experience?**

The College recognises that appropriate practical experience can be gained in a wide range of places, 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.

## Who can be a supervisor?

A person may be a supervisor if they are an Australian legal practitioner and are currently practising and:

- hold a full practising certificate as a legal practitioner;
- hold a restricted practising certificate as a legal practitioner which they have held for 2 years;
- are a judge;
- are a tribunal member who is a legal practitioner; or
- are a person who does not hold a practising certificate but is eligible to do so and who provides acceptable written submission that satisfy the Committee that they can provide appropriate practical experience.

If a supervisor holds a practising certificate outside Australia they may be eligible to be a supervisor for the additional period ([see rule 8](#)).

A supervisor must be of good standing in the legal profession or make full disclosure which establishes why they should not be excluded as a supervisor.

## What do you need to do to provide work experience?

Can you provide the opportunity for a law student or graduate to:

- experience the delivery of legal services in a real-world context;
- apply knowledge and skills to real-life problems;
- understand the importance of clear communication, identification of clients' problems and effective and efficient advice; and
- understand how legal practice professional operate?

If you can answer 'yes' to these questions, then you can provide a work experience opportunity.

## How long a period do you need to provide?

You may provide part of, or the full 15 days or 75 days depending on the student's choice of work experience option. It is up to your particular circumstances and needs

**The student's options are:**

| Format   | Structure  |
|----------|--|
| Short    | 15 days of approved work experience + Clinical Experience Module |
| Standard | 75 days of approved work experience                              |

Students must complete a minimum 15 days work experience within Australia either concurrently with or after the Coursework component and accrued at a minimum of 2 days per week (which can be made up of 4 half days).

Students can complete any remaining work experience before, during or after the Coursework component accrued at a minimum of 1 day per week.

A day is 7 working hours and a half day is 4 working hours.

## What is the role of the work experience supervisor?

Your role as supervisor goes beyond supervision to include coaching, counselling, mentoring, delegation and appraisal.

Your role is to aid the students' development by providing opportunities to:

- apply legal knowledge and skills to the resolution of real-life legal problems;
- experience the routines, procedures and dynamics of the delivery of legal services; and
- understand the processes of becoming a professional, including the majority of:
  - significant contact with external or in-house clients;
  - drafting documents;
  - legal research documents; and
  - using a file management system.

The lessons learned from a good supervisor will last throughout a student's career. A rewarding and enjoyable placement can be an important step to becoming a competent and motivated practitioner.

## What type of support should be provided?

To help develop the student's skills, a supervisor should:

- provide opportunities to observe and review the exercise of professional skills by experienced practitioners;
- give feedback and guidance on work;
- provide any necessary support, and
- give opportunities to discuss problems.

### **We suggest that supervisors:**

- give work and tasks that are well defined;
- give clear instructions and check that they have been understood;
- provide sufficient factual background;
- provide a realistic framework for completion of work tasks;
- answer questions which arise;
- assign tasks and work with an increasing degree of difficulty;
- ensure there is enough but not too much work;
- provide work which requires the use of a range of different skills;
- create an environment where a student feels comfortable about asking questions;
- provide regular guidance and feedback on performance;
- ensure that achievements and improvements are recognised and praised;
- ensure that aspects of performance which require improvement are thoroughly discussed; and
- encourage self-development.

## Suggested work experience activities

While the opportunities a work experience placement might provide will vary depending on the type of organisation, here are some examples of the type of activities students should experience, both hands-on and by observation.

It is **not** necessary that the placement addresses all of these activities, merely the majority.

- 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 sector 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 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.

You are advised to consider whether your unpaid work experience position is in fact a complying vocational work experience position. For more information, please refer to the Fair Work Ombudsman website.





## Insurance

College students on unpaid approved work experience placements are insured for personal injury and civil liability.

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

## Is there a lot of paperwork?

Very little – essentially three forms.

**01** The Work Experience Supervisor needs to sign the [Work Experience Application for Approval of Placement Form](#) at the start of the placement. If the student is working variable days per week then we ask that the form have an [annexure](#), signed by you, listing the days worked or to be worked.

**02** At the end of the placement, the Work Experience Supervisor should sign the [Work Experience Declaration Form](#). The student must submit the form to the College.

**03** If, in one work experience placement a student has more than one supervisor, each supervisor must complete the second page of the [Work Experience Application for Approval of Placement Form](#) and a [Work Experience Declaration Form](#).



If a student is completing the 75-day work experience option, the student must complete a work experience journal for the minimum 15 day period which must be signed by you as the approved Work Experience Supervisor.



## Can work experience be approved retrospectively?

Yes. In fact, this is quite common – especially in cases where students undertake work experience while completing their law degree.

The Work Experience Supervisor needs to sign the [Work Experience Application for Approval of Placement Form](#), the [Work Experience Declaration Form](#), and the [journal](#) (where applicable) which may be submitted at the same time.

## How can I find a College student for a work placement?

You can use our free [Jobs Noticeboard](#) to advertise your work experience placement.

The [Jobs Noticeboard](#) attracts over 55,000 views per month. It's easy – just go to [collaw.edu.au](http://collaw.edu.au) and create your employer profile. You can also review the resumes of current students looking for work experience placements.

# WHERE'S NEXT?

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