

PROVIDING A WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT



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YOUR GUIDE TO WORK EXPERIENCE

Let us demystify work experience for you and explain the benefits for your private or in-house legal practice, community legal centre, or other organisation involved in the delivery of legal services. Following are the answers to some frequently asked questions we receive about work experience.

INTRODUCTION

- Have you thought about recruiting a law graduate for work experience but weren't sure what was involved?
- Would you like to help the lawyers of tomorrow complete their qualifications?
- Were you aware that The College's work experience requirement can be completed in 25 days and a placement can be as short as two weeks?

WHAT BENEFITS ARE THERE IN PROVIDING WORK EXPERIENCE?

Work experience placements are an opportunity for the profession to "give back" by supporting the career development and training of new lawyers. They can "showcase" different parts of a diverse profession, and introduce students to a range of career options – eg. rural and regional practice, community legal and legal aid, in-house and government, commercial and private client.

A WE placement can be an opportunity to see if the law graduate is a good fit with the culture of the organisation and could contribute if employed as an admitted lawyer. There is no obligation to employ at the end of the placement but many organisations have successfully used WE placements to attract and retain talent.

WHO CAN PROVIDE WORK EXPERIENCE?

The College's Work Experience Committee has recognised that appropriate practical experience can be gained in a wide range of organisations such as

- A solicitor or barrister in private practice
- A government, semi-government or corporate legal office or department, an employer or employee association
- A judge to carry out legal research and provide legal services

WHAT EXACTLY IS WORK EXPERIENCE?

Put simply, Work Experience (WE) is about experiencing legal practice - the delivery of legal services in a real-world context.

WE 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 25 days of work experience plus an additional study module, or the more traditional 75 days.

Work experience enables students to observe and take part in the professional application of the relevant knowledge and skills to solve real problems for real clients. WE consolidates what the student learns in the PLT coursework.

A fruitful work placement experience can not only help a student complete their qualification as a lawyer, but may encourage them to practise in an area which they have not previously considered.

We have hundreds of employers who have taken work experience students year on year, all around Australia and in all types of legal employment.

And of course, PLT students can add value by being another pair of hands to take part in the day-to-day work, or by being an added resource for special projects – such as research, compiling documents for litigation or reviewing internal work processes.

- An employer or employee association
- A tribunal member (who is a legal practitioner) to carry out legal research and provide legal services
- A Community Legal Centre



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?
- Experience a legal practice environment?
- Understand how legal practice professionals operate?
- Understand the importance of clear communication, identification

of clients' problems and effective and efficient advice?

- Apply knowledge and skills to real-life problems?

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?

The WE rules vary from state to state but currently you can provide a minimum 1 day per week in NSW and SA (which can be made up of half days) and Victoria, and a minimum 2 full days per week in Queensland and West Australia.

Subject to minimum blocks of 10 days (weekdays only in WA and Qld) you may provide up to the full 25 or 75 days of placement. It is up to your particular circumstances and needs.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE WORK EXPERIENCE SUPERVISOR?

The role of the work experience supervisor is to aid the student's development by providing opportunities to:

- Experience the routines, procedures and dynamics of the delivery of legal services
- Be exposed to clients for whom legal services are provided
- Have experience in the process of becoming a professional

- Receive supervision and feedback from an experienced professional.

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 EXPERIENCE 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
- Give opportunities to discuss problems.

While the opportunities a work experience placement might provide will vary depending on the type of organisation, following 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 these activities.

SUGGESTED WORK EXPERIENCE ACTIVITIES

Meeting, communicating and interacting with clients

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

Preparing draft correspondence and legal documents

File management, financial and accounting systems, budgets

Attending client conferences

Administrative activities which support the delivery of legal services



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IS THERE A LOT OF PAPERWORK INVOLVED?

Very little. The Work Experience Supervisor merely needs to sign the Work Experience Declaration which is completed by the student and submitted to the College. It is very straightforward.

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NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Please call The College in your state for more information as below

NSW GREG DWYER Director Special Projects | Call **02 9965 7122** | Email gdwyer@collaw.edu.au

VIC GEOFF NICHOLSON Executive Director | Call **03 8689 8609** | Email gnicholson@collaw.edu.au

QLD CATHERINE KENNY Executive Officer | Call **07 3234 4555** | Email ckenny@collaw.edu.au

SA MORTON HERSCHDERFER Assistant Director PLT | Call **02 9965 7168** | Email mherschderfer@collaw.edu.au

WA MICHAEL COLE CEO | Call **08 9214 0202** or **0402 336 073** | Email mcole@collaw.edu.au

Or for any general enquiries or more information call Greg Dwyer as above.

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