

## FINDING WORK EXPERIENCE

# LET'S GET READY CAREER HACKS

As defined by the Australian Government's Fair Work Ombudsman, work experience is work performed within a business to gain experience in an occupation or industry. It's short-term with specific work functions agreed to by the student and host employer. This fact sheet will help you with hints and tips on how to source and secure work experience opportunities.



## FINDING WORK EXPERIENCE

### BENEFITS

- Develop realistic expectations of the labour market.
- Gain industry knowledge.
- Enhance technical and social skills like communication and interpersonal skills.
- Identify and create industry networks.
- Gain a better understanding of entry level and graduate programs available.
- Provides opportunity to build rapport with people in the industry to start developing your circle of promoters.
- Gives you the opportunity to develop your “stories” – this is the context or evidence you cite against a skill statement in your résumé, when addressing selection criteria or answering an interview question.

If it goes well:

- Populate industry experience and referees on your résumé.
- Approach work experience “colleagues” who can attest and endorse your skills in your LinkedIn profile.

### SOURCING PLACEMENTS

The Good Universities Guide (GUG) is the only publication that rates the quality of Australian universities and the courses they offer. The GUG suggests the following:

1. Think about the type of work experience you want
  2. Decide on your preferred role
  3. Start applying
  4. Prepare for interviews
- As a starting point use Seek, Yellow Pages, Government Jobs Board and LinkedIn to identify companies within a specific industry who you could approach to request unpaid work experience.

- Consider large, medium and small sized business. Don't forget local government and not-for-profit sector as well.
- Ask friends and family to help you identify people you can approach.
- Notify your contacts via social media that you're looking for a placement.
- Research each company's services, products – and where available, their annual reports to see if your knowledge and skills will match the business requirements. Most of this information will be available on the company's website.
- Compile a contact list of 20 companies you would like to approach to request unpaid work experience.
- Email each company expressing interest in unpaid work experience opportunities. Let them know you will contact them by phone to follow-up, and contact them within five working days.
- If you don't have any luck, don't give up! Start the process again using the next 20 companies on your list.

### THE SMALL PRINT

- Work experience is different to volunteering in that a volunteer is someone who works for the main purpose of benefitting someone else (i.e. a church, sporting club, government school, charity or community organisation). Neither work experience or volunteering are employee arrangements and don't have to be paid.
- Your placement cannot replace a paid worker's job function.
- If you source your own work experience, you will not receive course credit, however there are other benefits.
- The placement should be short-term (1-20 working days) only.
- You should negotiate working hours prioritised around your studies.

### Terms and Conditions

- Most work experience placements will require that you provide your own personal accident work experience insurance cover.
  - All current students should refer to the Practicum, Work Experience or Volunteer Activities section on the ECU website and then make contact with Student Transitions and Employability Career Advisers for further instruction, prior to commencing work experience.
  - Prior to starting, both student and host employer need to have realistic expectations of the placement. Will it be observational or limited practical application of your knowledge or skills, or a mixture of both?
  - If you are unable to access ECU personal accident work experience insurance cover, there are third party insurance companies who may be able to provide this on a fee for service basis.
- International Students:
    - Please ensure you have checked your individual visa conditions regarding undertaking unpaid work experience placements that are not a mandatory course requirement. More information is available here: [intranet.ecu.edu.au/student/international](http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/student/international)
    - Hours worked during unpaid work experience may restrict hours worked in paid employment. This information changes regularly, please check your visa details and conditions on the Department of Home Affairs site for the most current and up-to-date information.
  - Alumni:
    - Alumni who have graduated within 6 months of their course completion are able to access the university's personal accident work experience insurance cover. Please contact Student Transitions and Employability Career Advisers for further information.

## FINDING WORK EXPERIENCE

### RESEARCH SHOWS THAT INDUSTRY IS LOOKING FOR GRADUATES WITH STRONG ENTERPRISE SKILLS.

Unpaid work experience is one way to develop these skills by the time you leave university.

#### Before placement:

- Confirm availability and approval of personal accident work experience insurance cover with the university or third party insurance provider prior to commencing.
- Arrange a short face-to-face meeting with your supervisor so expectations of both parties are set in relation to work output, objectives and goals, confirmation of start date, hours of placement, dress standards and workplace etiquette.

- Discuss your skills and knowledge and the type of experiences you would like to be exposed to while there. This should be matched to your previous research on the company.
- Confirm the above information in an email directly after your meeting and reiterate your appreciation for the opportunity.

#### During placement:

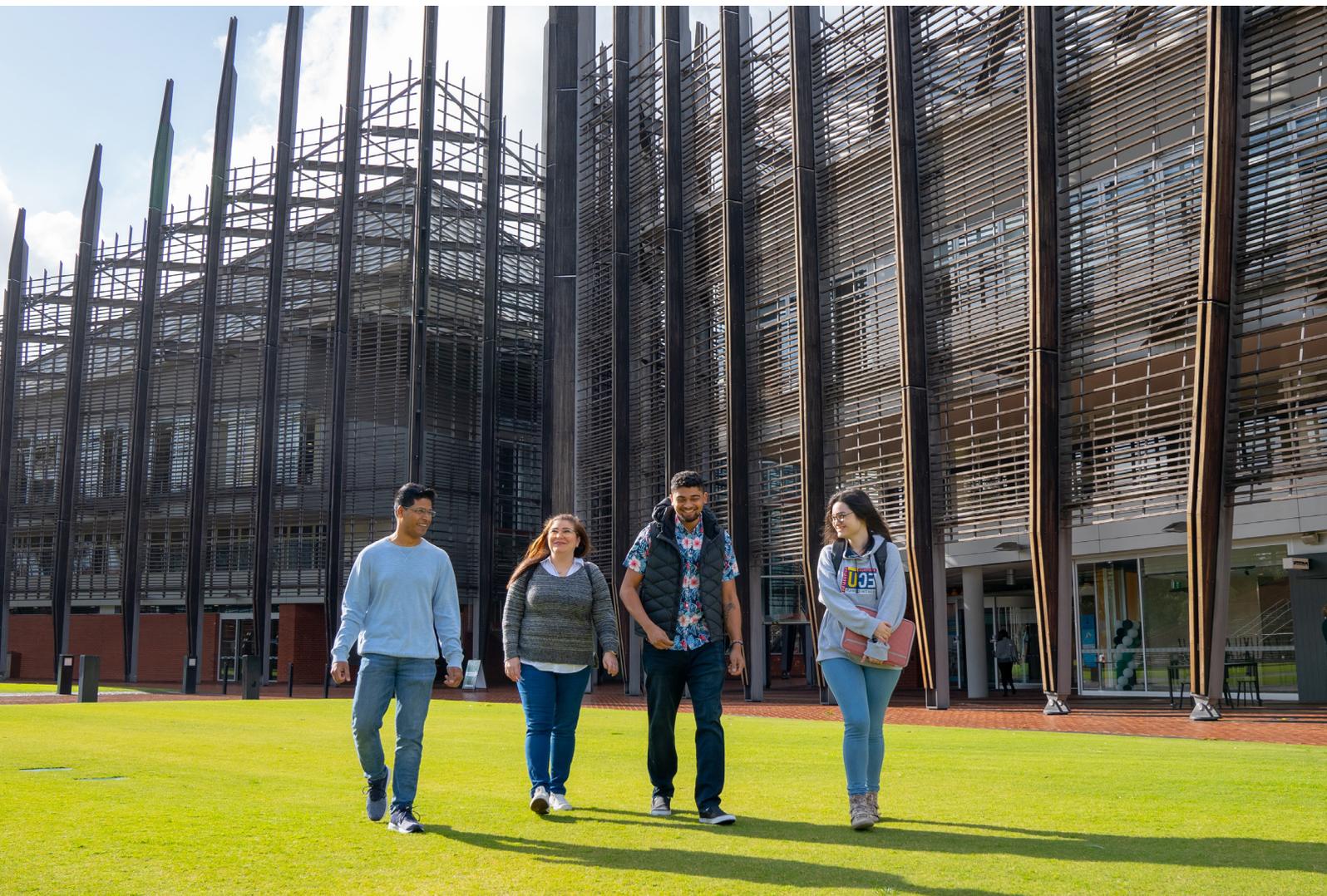
- Normal business practices apply. If you're running late or are sick, you must contact the host employer to advise them.
- Be proactive. Invite colleagues for coffee during your lunch break and perform an information interview; get the lowdown on the industry, personal attributes and skills requirements, explore career path entry points, etc.



- Ask questions on the job and clarification if you're unsure of anything.
- Extend yourself. Embrace opportunities in areas you have no experience in. Your colleagues understand you are there for work experience, which includes learning.
- Don't be afraid to find solutions to problems you may encounter, but be sure to seek approval from your supervisor before implementation.
- Look for opportunities to grow your skills while on placement. Don't be afraid to ask for tasks within other areas of the business.
- Most importantly, use PebblePad to undertake reflective journaling and concentrate on your areas for improvement, what you've learnt, skills you've applied to each task, and new skills developed. Be specific and explicit when listing competencies developed (i.e. using technology abc to complete xyz). This information is incredibly useful for your job search documentation.

### Post placement:

- Send a thank you email to your supervisor, the manager of the business area and, if applicable, the person who helped organise the placement for you.
- Keep in contact with the people you met during your placement either by email or connecting via LinkedIn.
- Keep the network alive by sending thoughtful information, articles, blogs linked to topics they might be interested in, using email or LinkedIn as a platform to communicate further.
- Where appropriate, ask for a referee for your résumé or endorsement of your skills on LinkedIn.
- Ask the organisation to keep you up-to-date on internships, graduate programs or paid work opportunities.
- Update your résumé and LinkedIn profile with placement information, paying particular attention to skills and experience sections.



### THE APPROACH

Depending on the nature of your contact with the organisation (referred to by a friend or cold contact), your initial approach will differ. We have developed a list of points suggested to populate either a verbal or written request. Remember to remain friendly, courteous and professional in all verbal and written communications.

Depending on how the contact is made and who you speak to, pick one sentence from each of the following sections to formulate your request:

#### Introduction

My name is [insert full name] and I'm a first/second/third year student studying [insert degree name] at ECU. I'm enquiring about opportunities you may have for a short-term unpaid work experience placement in the area of [insert your relevant study area here].

or

A friend/acquaintance [insert full name] suggested I make contact with you regarding unpaid work experience opportunities you may consider/have available within [company name].

#### Based on your research of the company

I'm interested in working in this area because... [insert interest here]. My request for work experience is to gain insight/knowledge/overview of/in [insert area of interest]. I would appreciate the opportunity to use my [insert skills/knowledge/ability] in [insert project/area/service of the company].

#### What you can offer in return

A relevant unit I have recently completed at university is [list unit linked to business requirement] where I would be able to provide knowledge in/ability [see learning outcomes from your unit] to your organisation in relation to the [insert project/area/service of the company].

#### Insurance

I have gained approval from my university to access personal accident work experience insurance cover for an unpaid placement.

or

I have sourced personal accident work experience insurance cover from a third party insurance provider at no cost to you.

#### Close

Please find attached my résumé detailing my education and work history. Thank you for your consideration of my request, my contact details are [insert phone number and email address].

or

I would be pleased to attend your office to introduce myself in person at a time convenient to you.

People are busy. Don't be offended if no one has returned your call/email immediately. It is absolutely fine to make secondary contact to remind them you are keen to discuss further. If your request is declined, ask if there is opportunity to speak to someone working in the occupation you are interested in for 10 minutes (you may have to schedule this for a time mutually convenient to you both) so you can perform an information interview instead.

## USEFUL LINKS

Visit ECU **CareerHub** at [careerhub.ecu.edu.au](http://careerhub.ecu.edu.au) for a list of useful website links to assist with the development of your résumé. You can book drop-in sessions and workshops to develop your employability skills.

For additional information to become a career ready graduate, see the **Get Career Ready Online Module**.

Visit the Fair Work Ombudsman website at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) for specific information and advice on unpaid work experience.

## HACK SERIES

Résumé

Interview Skills

Selection Criteria

Cover Letter

Finding Work Experience

### Contact

P (61 8) 6304 5899  
E [careers@ecu.edu.au](mailto:careers@ecu.edu.au)  
W [ecu.edu.au/careers](http://ecu.edu.au/careers)  
W [careerhub.ecu.edu.au](http://careerhub.ecu.edu.au)

### Find us at

 [students.ecu](https://www.facebook.com/students.ecu)  
 [ECU](https://twitter.com/ECU)  
 [edithcowanuniversity](https://www.instagram.com/edithcowanuniversity)

### Student Hub

Joondalup Campus: Learning and Career Hub, Building 31  
Mount Lawley Campus: Building 3  
ECU South West: Building 1

 [edithcowanuniversity](https://www.youtube.com/edithcowanuniversity)  
 [school/edith-cowan-university](https://www.linkedin.com/school/edith-cowan-university)

