



Gaining Paid Work Experience

This handout deals with ways to increase your employability through vacation work, internships, part-time and casual work. If you'd like to read about additional ways to increase your employability, see the handout **Gaining (Unpaid) Work Experience**. You'll find information on the skills employers value and ways to develop those skills in the handout **Increase Your Employability**.

Working while studying helps you apply your skills and gain on-the-ground experience, build networks and boost your income. Working while studying also breaks the cycle of 'can't get a job to get the experience to get a job'. To apply for formal vacation programs, part-time and casual work you need a resume and cover letter tailored to each role

Vacation work

In Australia, the term 'vacation work' usually denotes summer holiday structured vacation placements and not, for example, a casual retail or hospitality job over the summer holidays. Vacation work placements are formal programs of paid work, usually in large corporations and normally run from early December to late February.

The programs usually target penultimate year students (the year before the final year of full-time undergraduate study), and the salary is a percentage of what you'd receive as a graduate recruit in that organisation.

Employers often run vacation work programs as a way of seeing how well you'd perform in and fit with that particular organisation. Performing well can improve your chances of being offered a graduate recruitment program role with that organisation on completion of your degree (see the handout **Graduate Recruitment** for information on these programs).

A vacation work program also gives you an idea of what it might be like to work longer term for that organisation. Whether or not your vacation work program results in future employment with that employer, the skills you'll have developed in the program are likely to be transferable into another

position.

Given the potential learning and employment opportunities of vacation work programs, competition for these places is keen. Applicants will ideally have a credit average or higher academic record.

Many well-known organisations advertise vacation work programs. Promotion begins from as early as April on our **Current Vacancies Database**, on our **Vacation Work pages**, and on noticeboards at your Careers Centre. You'll also find vacation work programs advertised on Faculty noticeboards and on the Graduate Opportunities website at **www.graduateopportunities.com**.

You may be asked to address selection criteria in your application. For information on how to do this, see the handout on **Selection Criteria**. In addition to the advertised programs, some private organisations may offer programs that aren't advertised. These employers will choose from applicants who have approached them with expressions of interest. Up to 80% of jobs aren't advertised, so it's important to read the handouts **Where to Find Jobs** and **The Job Search Process** to find out how you can explore the 'hidden' job market.

Internships

Internships are similar in many ways to vacation work programs, and some employers use the term 'vacation work' and 'internship' interchangeably. One difference between vacation work programs and internships is that although vacation work programs are conducted entirely in vacation time, internships are usually conducted during the semester, often with an extension into vacation time. There are two main types of internships: those integrated into the curriculum - e.g. for Media and Communications, and Government and International Relations – and those independent of course structure. The first type is organised by the relevant academic department. The second type is covered below.

This type of internship is similar to formal vacation work programs in that it's a paid, structured program

offered to penultimate year undergraduate (and occasionally postgraduate) students. As with vacation work programs, the recruitment process is highly competitive.

Internships that are independent of course structure are usually one semester long plus vacation time; however, in negotiation with the employer they may be extended. Some internships last a whole year, and are advertised as such in the organisation's promotional material. Start and end dates are determined by the organisation when offering the placement.

It's expected that you'll combine work and study commitments, for example, four days per week internship with one day a week at University (and full-time work during University holidays). Full-time students would need to adjust their study programs during and after the internship. There are various ways to make up the missed units of study, so for assistance in this area please speak to your academic advisor.

If your internship is located overseas, it's likely to be a full-time placement. In this case you'd need to defer your studies until your return to Australia. You're not obliged to accept an offer of an internship but if you do, you're committed to staying with the organisation for the duration of the program.

Internship salaries are usually paid as a percentage of graduate rates. As with vacation work programs an internship gives you the opportunity to develop your skills and decide if you're interested in working for the organisation on a longer term basis. These programs also allow the employer to assess your performance and fit.

Internships are advertised in a similar manner as vacation work programs. Please also see [the internships page of our website](#) for opportunities. Many internships are not advertised, but may be negotiated with an organisation by the student approaching the employer directly. This is especially the case for small to medium employers.

Occasionally employers will offer unpaid internships. Unpaid internships are a form of work experience and for further information, you should read the handout on Getting (Unpaid) Work Experience. In particular, you need to read the section on Insurance and Work Experience because if it is an unpaid internship, you may not be covered either by the organisation's insurance policy or by the university's insurance policy.

Part-time work

Even if it's not specifically degree-related, part-time work can help you to develop key transferable skills

required for your ideal job at the end of your degree. Part-time work can be offered on a casual, permanent or contract basis. With some degree areas it's possible to find part-time work very similar to the type of job you may obtain as a graduate; however, for the majority of degrees, you may have difficulty finding something that closely matches your ideal job. All part-time jobs are worth including on your resume as they are very relevant to both your studies and your employment prospects. A part-time job will help you develop your skills in areas such as customer service, using computers, supervising staff, working with minimal supervision and communication. Working with a wide variety of people is very useful when you're required to submit group University assignments, so the benefits of a part-time job can have a 'flow on' effect to your studies.

A part-time job also provides real workplace experience. Taking on a junior role in an organisation you're interested in can be a very positive step. Keep in mind that the context in which you learned a particular skill is not nearly as important as the fact that you have that skill, so don't ever underestimate the value of your part-time jobs. Think about them in terms of the skills you can learn, the networks you can develop and the money you can earn.

In successfully combining work and study you demonstrate that you have self discipline and good time management skills. Be careful, however, that you don't accept so many shifts that your studies suffer.

A part-time job can also show that you're 'not afraid to get your hands dirty' in terms of what may be considered menial tasks, e.g. photocopying, filing and office procedures. After all, having a degree does not give you a shortcut to a CEO's role! Having a job also gives you the opportunity to create valuable networks - remember that up to 80% of jobs aren't advertised.

Places to find part-time work include:

- our Current Vacancies Database and noticeboards
- the University's Casual Employment Service
- your local newspaper and local shopping centre
- jobs websites, e.g. seek.com.au, mycareer.com.au
- your own contacts.

Casual Work

Casual work can be offered on a part-time, full-time or contract basis. Many jobs in retail, hospitality and customer service are offered on a casual basis. This means that you're paid an hourly rate that includes sick and holiday leave. For places to look for casual work please see the information for part-time work.