2012 Work Experience Information  
School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

Work Experience Summary

- You need a minimum of twelve weeks of work experience before you can graduate. A minimum of six of the twelve weeks must be engineering work experience.
- It is your responsibility to find work experience.
- After completing the work experience you can claim it using the form available at: http://www.ecms.adelaide.edu.au/students/forms/Work_Experience_Form_Template.pdf
- Your work experience form should be submitted at least six weeks before the date of your expected graduation ceremony.
- The form should be submitted to the Faculty Student Office (mailing address and fax number is provided on the work experience claim form).
- You should receive confirmation of your work experience within four weeks of submitting the form.

Questions? Read the frequently asked questions below. If you need further help contact the Work Experience Coordinator:

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Frequently Asked Questions Categories

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I. Basic Work Experience Questions

Why do I need to do work experience?

The engineering course is mainly focussed at giving you the basic technical skills required of an engineer.

Work experience gives you hands-on experience on what being an engineer is really like. For instance, it enables you to appreciate the nature of the work environment and the particular points of view of a range of employees - their attitudes towards work and working conditions, unions, engineers and management. You will be able to learn about company structure and operation, to appreciate the responsibilities of engineers at various levels, and you will be exposed to a far greater diversity and scale of plant and equipment than we can provide at the university.

Why is it useful for me in finding a job?

Searching for work experience allows you to practice the same skills as you will use later when you search for a job. Relevant work experience will help you stand out from other graduates. If you enjoy your work experience, then having worked for a company before will give you a great advantage over other graduates in applying for a position there. If you don’t enjoy the type of work or the field of work, then at least you know where not to apply for in the future.

What happens if I finish the engineering course but don’t complete my work experience?

You will not be able to graduate until you have completed your work experience. However once you finish the course, you will be able to obtain a letter from the Faculty indicating that you have completed the academic requirements of the course and are only needing to complete the work experience component before being able to graduate. This situation should not prevent you from finding employment as employers normally recognise that as soon as you start working you will obtain the work experience.

Is work experience paid?

Some organizations pay work experience students a significant fraction of a graduate starting salary, while some give small allowances, but many others only offer unpaid work experience. Note that if your work experience is unpaid you will need to apply to be covered by the University of Adelaide insurance. For more details see the insurance information below.

What types of work experience are there?

There are two types of work experience, engineering work experience and general work experience.

Engineering work experience must be undertaken in an engineering environment, under the supervision of an engineer or someone of equivalent experience. It may comprise activities such as: analysis; design; drafting; construction; manufacture; installation; operation; maintenance; testing or repair of engineering works, facilities, equipment or software.

It is not necessary that the engineering work match exactly with your degree course. For instance a Telecommunications Engineering student could work on engineering maintenance in a power station.

General work experience must bring you into contact with an organization where you might have an opportunity to develop a leadership role, or which presents problems similar to those faced by an engineer. The following are examples of areas of work not appropriate for engineering work experience, but that may be used for general work experience: shop assistant with a supervisory role; non-engineering computer software development such as basic website development; tradesperson's assistant (e.g. plumber, electrician, mechanic); process worker on assembly line; youth camp leader, administrative or secretarial work in an office environment.

Is any type of work unsuitable for engineering or general work experience?

The following examples are areas of work which are not generally appropriate for either engineering or general work experience: shop assistant (non-supervisory); bar, hotel or restaurant work; fruit picking or general gardening; shelf
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stacker in a supermarket; delivery or courier work; painting and decorating.
It is also not acceptable to do work experience with a business owned by a close family member. This is because it does not give the student experience in finding a position themselves and also because of the potential conflict of interest in authenticating the student's work experience.

If I am offered a work experience position with a company, how will I know whether this will qualify for general or engineering work experience?
First of all, read the above guidelines. If you are still unsure you can email a paragraph or two explaining which organisation you will be working for and what sort of work you will be doing to the Work Experience Coordinator. The Coordinator can give you an indication of whether this will be suitable for engineering or general work experience, or perhaps not acceptable for either.

How much work experience do I need to do?
You need to do a minimum of twelve weeks of work experience of which a minimum of six weeks must be engineering work experience. You can of course do all twelve weeks as engineering work experience! The option of including up to six weeks of general work experience in the twelve weeks is because we recognise that engineering work experience is not always easy to find.

What requirements are there on my work experience supervisor?
We are unable to accept work experience with inadequate or inappropriate supervision. All work experience must be supervised by a person with substantial experience in the relevant field or industry. In addition, for engineering work experience, the supervisor should be eligible for corporate membership of the Institution of Engineers, Australia. This generally means them being an engineering graduate with at least three years experience.

Must I do all twelve weeks of work experience in one period with one organization?
No. Work experience can be accumulated with different organizations at different times, but see the next question about minimum periods of time.

What is the minimum work experience period allowable?
Work experience must be done in blocks of no less than three weeks of equivalent full-time work. The exception is if you have less than three weeks remaining to complete your twelve weeks. Note that work experience is approved as an integer number of weeks.

What is considered full-time work?
At least 37.5 hours per week.

What about part-time work?
Part-time work experience is acceptable as long as it is greater than about ten hours per week. This will be converted to the equivalent full-time number of weeks based on a standard 37.5 hour week. For instance, seven weeks of work experience at 27 hours a week equals five weeks equivalent full-time.

What about public holidays or if my company shuts down for a week or two over Christmas?
For standard full-time work (that is, at least 37.5 hours per week), the work experience period in weeks is calculated as the number of days you actually worked, which does not including public holidays, company shutdowns, personal leave or sick leave etc, divided by five days. For instance, if you worked 12 weeks, but lost a total of ten days due to public holidays and personal leave, then you would only have an equivalent of ten weeks of full-time work experience.

What happens if I work more than 37.5hrs per week, can I claim twelve equivalent full-time weeks, if I work long hours for only ten actual weeks?
No. Working more than 37.5 hours per week does not allow you to claim more weeks of work experience than were actually spent with the company. However, working more than 37.5 hours per week can be used to replace up to three days of public holidays/leave taken during the work experience period.

Can I claim work experience done before I started the engineering course?
Yes, as long as it was done after completing high school and it meets the standard requirements above.

Can I do my work experience interstate or overseas?
Yes.

2) Finding Work Experience

Does the School help me find work experience?
Unfortunately due to the large numbers of students we are not able to arrange work experience for students. However when we receive information from employers seeking work experience students, we place the School work experience website:
http://www1.eleceng.adelaide.edu.au/students/undergraduate/workexperience.html

How do I find information about writing cover letters and resumes?
The University of Adelaide Career's website provides a great starting point for information about how to write resumes and cover letters.

When I apply, do I specify that I am looking for work experience, or do I apply like a normal job?
You should indicate that you are applying for work experience.

I am having difficulty finding engineering work experience, what should I do?
Due to the large number of students looking for work experience it is common for students, especially at the end
of their first and second year, to have difficulty finding engineering work experience. In this situation you may wish to search for some work experience which is suitable for general work experience to at least reduce the amount of work experience which you need to complete.

3) Claiming Work Experience

I have finished work experience with a company, how do I claim this?

Complete the form:
http://www.ecms.adelaide.edu.au/students/forms/Work_Experience_Form_Template.pdf

and submit it to the Faculty Student office (in the Engineering South building) in person or via fax or mail. The fax number and mailing address is given on the form.

Who in the company should sign my work experience form?

Forms claiming engineering work experience should be certified by a qualified engineer, NOT a personnel manager or accountant etc., else they may not be accepted. The name and qualifications of this engineer must also be legibly written on the application.

An alternative to having your form signed is to show written evidence of having completed the work experience. For instance, this could be a copy of a letter on the company letterhead stating your period of employment and your position.

How do I know if my form has been approved?

You should receive either an email or a written confirmation mailed to the address given by you on the form within four weeks of submitting your form. If you do not receive anything within this period you should email the Work Experience Coordinator (see first page) to check on the status of your form.

How soon before graduation must I submit the form?

It is best to submit the form at least six weeks before the graduation ceremony which you plan to graduate at. Forms can usually still be accepted until about the time when the exam results come out. Please do not leave it too late or else it may not be possible to process this in time for you to graduate.

Why is it a good idea to complete and submit my work experience form soon after finishing the work experience?

This is because the later you leave it, the harder it may be to have your form signed by your employer. It is also recommended to have your work experience approved soon after completing it to be sure that it is acceptable.

Do I need a formal work experience report?

The Faculty does not require formal reports from students regarding their work experience; only the single page form is required to approve your work experience. Note, however, that a work experience report/diary may be useful for you to show to future employers.

4. Work Experience "Waiver" for Having Accepted a Full-Time Engineering Position

Under what circumstances does the School "waive" the work experience requirement?

If you accept a permanent, full-time engineering position the School is willing to "waive" the work experience requirement. It is not uncommon for students to receive job offers during the last semester of their studies. Acceptance of a job offer may thus allow them to graduate at the next ceremony.

What does "waiving" the work experience requirement mean?

The School does not actually waive the work experience requirement; instead, we are willing to approve it in advance. Thus you still need to fill in a work experience claim form explaining the type of work you will be doing and why this work is relevant to an engineer.

What evidence do I need to show of having accepted a full-time engineering position?

You will need to attach a copy of your offer letter (you may wish to blank out confidential details such as salary etc) and show written evidence of your having accepted the position and having a definite start date. It is not necessary to have your future employer actually sign your work experience form.

Why is it a good idea to apply to graduate even though you haven't actually done enough work experience?

It is not uncommon for students in the last semester of their course to receive job offers which allow them to "waive" the work experience requirement and graduate. However, due to the strict deadlines imposed by the Graduations Office, if you wait and only apply to graduate when you receive an offer you may find it is too late.

Why is it a good idea to try to finish all my work experience before finishing my degree despite this "waiver"?

Relevant work experience helps you stand out from other graduates when you search for a position.

If you enjoy your work experience, then having worked for a company before will give you a great advantage over other graduates in applying for a position there. If you don't enjoy the type of work or the field of work, then at least you know where not to apply for in the future.

5. Work Experience Within the School

Does the School offer unpaid work experience?

Due to the large number of students, the School is normally unable to offer work experience to students. The main exception is where students have fully completed the entire course and are only waiting for work experience to be able...
to obtain their degree. In such cases, the School will try to offer unpaid work experience during the summer break. Normally it is preferred that the students be available to do a full twelve weeks of work experience; however, shorter periods, e.g. six weeks can sometimes be accommodated.

I expect to finish the entire course by the end of year, but have not completed my work experience, how do I apply for unpaid work experience in the School?

After 1st October, send an email to the Work Experience Coordinator giving your ID number, name, degree, the number of weeks of work experience you would like to do, and your preferred starting date. Note that you can always withdraw your application later if you receive a job offer.

6. Unpaid Work Experience Insurance Requirement Questions

Why do I need to be concerned about insurance if I am doing unpaid work experience?

If you are being paid by a company, as an employee you are generally covered by the company's liability insurance policy. If you are not being paid by the company then you will need to have your own liability insurance coverage. The University of Adelaide liability insurance is available to students doing appropriate work experience which is unpaid.

How do I apply for unpaid work experience insurance cover?

Fill in the “Work Experience or Community Placement (General) " form available at:
https://www.adelaide.edu.au/legalandrisk/insurance/information/

You should fill in the details and sign it. You should then have the company sign it and attach a copy of their insurance policy. You should then return this to the School office to be passed to the Work Experience Coordinator.

Why does the University need a copy of the company's insurance policy?

The University of Adelaide liability insurance will cover you if you do something wrong which causes damage or injury to the company. The University also needs to be sure that the company has insurance in the case, for instance, if one of their employees does something wrong and causes you injury or loss.

7. International Student Questions

Can I claim work experience done with overseas companies, as part of my military service, or as part of the work experience requirements of my diploma?

Yes, as long as it meets our requirements as listed above. If it is not convenient to have the organization sign your work experience form, you can submit proof of having done the work experience using methods such as (a) an official letter on company letterhead indicating that you worked for the organization over certain dates and had a certain position, (b) an official document showing your period of military service and position, or (c) an official transcript or document from your polytechnic stating you have completed “x” weeks work experience with a certain company.

As an international student, can I obtain work experience in Australia?

You are welcome to apply to Australian companies for work experience. However you should note that companies generally prefer students who have permanent residency (PR). Due to the large number of students looking for work experience, it is thus difficult (though still possible) for international students to obtain work experience in Australia. The majority of international students find it easier to obtain work experience back home.

It is recommended that international students who are applying for work experience in Australia, also apply within their home country at the same time, to maximise their options.

I need a letter stating that I am an engineering student at the University of Adelaide and that I need to complete twelve weeks of work experience in order to graduate. This letter is called an "Introduction to Work Experience" letter. To obtain one please email the Faculty Student Office: ecms_office@adelaide.edu.au and state your name, student ID, and indicate that you want this type of letter. The Office will then do the letter and then email you when it is available for you to come and collect it.