

BEL Careers and Employability

Student Work Experience Program Placement Guide

SWEP Work Experience Placements

Students who successfully complete the Student Work Experience Program (SWEP) recruitment process have a chance to gain an unpaid work experience placement of up to 30 days during the relevant semester break. Information on the process to gain a placement is outlined on the [SWEP webpage](#). The purpose of this guide is to provide further details of the placements that will be sourced and facilitated by BEL Careers and Employability.

Being assigned to a host company

Students who successfully complete the SWEP recruitment process may become eligible for an unpaid work experience placement sourced and facilitated by BEL Careers and Employability. Students generally cannot choose a host but are offered a placement by BEL Careers and Employability. If you are a successful SWEP student, you are welcome to be actively engaged in sourcing a placement, but must liaise with us early on, and reliably throughout the process. If you decide not to take up a placement opportunity offered to you by BEL Careers and Employability, we will not source any alternative or further opportunities for you, and the declined opportunity will be provided to another student.

You must be available for a four-week work experience placement during the relevant semester break (i.e. Winter for Semester 1 and Summer for Semester 2). Placements are typically full-time over four consecutive weeks, however, depending on business requirements and your availability, some placements may continue on a part-time basis during the following semester. It is generally not possible to defer a SWEP placement to a later semester. If you are not available for a placement during the relevant semester break, you forfeit the opportunity.

Placements typically occur in Brisbane and the surrounding area and usually require students to physically attend the host organisation's workplace. Recent COVID-19 related physical distancing restrictions have on occasion impacted businesses' ability to host students in-person, in which case remote placements (e.g. working from home) may be facilitated.

Types of organisations engaging in SWEP

Most SWEP placement opportunities are sourced through BEL Careers and Employability's business development and industry engagement efforts. Organisations that partner with us in SWEP and are interested in providing placement opportunities to students include:

- Small to medium-sized businesses (i.e. generally up to 200 employees).
- Government departments or agencies.
- Not-for-profit organisations and charities.

To source opportunities for students across the broad range of disciplines and degree programs represented in BEL, we target organisations from industries such as:

- Accounting and finance
- Information systems
- Business management
- Law
- Economics
- Politics and philosophy
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Marketing and advertising
- Human resources
- Tourism, hospitality and events.

We typically do *not* engage the following types of organisations in SWEP:

- 'Big Four' professional services firms.
- Large banks, law firms, insurance companies or management consultancies.
- Small or boutique businesses with few employees.
- Organisations who already run paid internships programs.

One of the purposes of SWEP is to *diversify opportunity* and provide opportunities for BEL students to gain experience in environments they may not have thought of or that are less 'crowded' by competition.

We always aim to match the host company and placement requirements with a successful student's degree program and career interests. However, the exact nature of available placement opportunities varies from semester to semester. We encourage students to maintain a degree of flexibility in evaluating the utility of an experience opportunity for their professional development. For example, an economics student may undertake a broader research and business analysis project to further their research and analysis skills and broaden their networks and industry experience.

Work experience – what's in it for me?

Work experience is an important part of your career planning and professional development. It provides you with practical skills and experience that you simply cannot gain from university lectures or tutorials. SWEP is therefore specifically designed for students who have little or no relevant industry experience.

Employers highly value work experience on your resume as it demonstrates your understanding of how a workplace operates and of specific role tasks and requirements, and therefore helps you stand out from your peers in a real-life recruitment process.

The benefits of completing a SWEP work experience placement include:

- Gaining structured, supervised and hands-on experience which will give you a real sense of the industry and the job you are interested in.
- Applying and developing skills such as communication and teamwork that you can transfer to other future work environments.
- Building confidence in your own ability to perform in a workplace, learn new skills and tasks and build relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.
- Showcasing your commitment, reliability, enthusiasm, and ability to make substantial contributions in the workplace.
- Expanding your professional networks and making meaningful contacts with professionals who may be able to help you on your career journey.

We also recommend that you take the time to document the tasks you performed, challenges you encountered and solutions you found. This is because experiences alone are not enough to development your employability. You need to reflect on:

- The skills and attributes you drew on.
- How you can use them again to best effect in a work context.
- How you can showcase these experiences to future employers.

You can refer to the [SEAL Reflection Process](#) to help you structure your self-reflection.

What do employers expect from me during work experience?

Host employers will expect you to fit in with the team, get involved in the day-to-day activities of the business, and demonstrate professional behaviours such as:

- Reliability and a positive attitude.
- Good communication skills.
- Ability to interact and liaise with clients and colleagues.
- Enthusiasm for the industry, the organisation and the work it does.
- Ambition and initiative.
- Effective workload management and prioritisation of tasks.

In relation to technical skills, the host companies appreciate that you are a student and that this experience will be a learning experience for you.

During the placement, the following behaviours are expected:

- Work efficiently and to the best of your ability.
- Manage your fatigue and ensure that you are getting enough sleep.
- Dress professionally.
- Arrive at work on time and do not be a clock watcher; always ask your team if there is anything else that needs to be completed before you leave.
- Be friendly and sociable. For example, have lunch with your team, get to know them, and go to social events and after work drinks – but always be professional.
- Keep your phone on silent and do not check social media during work hours. Some organisations have a strict culture on the use of phones in the office.

- You will have a supervisor as your point of contact – do not be afraid to ask questions. At the same time, however, please respect their time. Do not interrupt them frequently – if your question is not urgent, write it down and create a list. You can then arrange a time with your colleague to discuss your list of questions.
- Do not get involved in office politics.

Before commencing the placement

SWEP work experience placements are not course requirements, i.e. they are extra-curricular, unlike [work-integrated learning internships](#), which are placements for course credit. Unpaid work experience at UQ is governed by the Queensland *Education (Work Experience) Act 1996* as well as UQ's policies and procedures. Under these rules, UQ can approve unpaid work experience for students as part of their education.

Prior to commencing a placement, students and host employers must complete the Unpaid Work Experience Registration Form to obtain formal approval for the placement and ensure the student on placement is covered under UQ's insurances.

Requirements for obtaining this approval and insurance cover include:

- You must be currently enrolled at UQ and not have completed your studies.
- You cannot undertake more than 30 days of work experience in a calendar year.
- The work experience must be relevant to your education.
- The work experience must be unpaid.
- The work experience provider (or host employer) must not provide work experience to more than a permitted number of students at the same time. In most cases, this is a number equal to the number of full-time employees of the work experience provider.
- The work experience provider (or host employer) must not provide work experience to you at a time other than during the ordinary working hours of the organisation.

We will communicate these requirements with the host employer. You will be involved in ensuring the Unpaid Work Experience Registration Form is completed by yourself and the employer.

As per the legislation, UQ can only approve up to 30 days of unpaid work experience per student per calendar year. If you have already completed or committed to other work experience in the relevant calendar year, note that you must have 20 days of work experience left to be eligible to go on a SWEP placement. If in doubt, please contact us as early as possible to discuss.

Other important information

What happens if I do not like my placement?

Your placement is designed to be a learning experience and we try to take into account your interests as much as we can. Each placement may involve a variety of tasks relevant to your studies, including general work experience and project work. If you do not like the opportunity that you have been matched to, the opportunity will be offered to a different student (and no further opportunity will be sourced for you). In a case where you feel unsafe or harassed during your placement, please contact BEL Careers and Employability as soon as you can.

What happens if I am sick or have an exam?

As in a normal job, please consult your supervisor as soon as possible. It is important to be honest with the organisation about the situation so that they can discuss it with you and plan accordingly.

The company wants me to sign forms I do not understand or undertake duties that make me feel uncomfortable, what do I do?

If this scenario occurs and you feel comfortable doing so, as a starting point, speak to your supervisor or a member of the company's HR team for clarification on what is being asked of you. Please then contact BEL Careers and Employability if you do not feel that this resolves the situation, or if you do not feel comfortable speaking to your supervisor or the HR team.

BEL Careers and Employability

Business, Economics and Law

T +61 7 3365 4222

E careers@bel.uq.edu.au

W bel.uq.edu.au/for-students/careers

F facebook.com/UQBELCareers

A Room 107, Level 1
Colin Clark (Building 39)
St Lucia Campus

CRICOS Provider 00025B