Work integrated learning and internships explained



Undertaking work integrated learning while studying enables you to:

- Gain exposure to career pathways and workplace environments
- Apply academic learning in real-world settings
- Develop and strengthen your capabilities and learn new skills
- Grow your professional networks
- Develop professional confidence
- Build evidence of your skills for future job applications.

Work integrated learning takes several forms depending on your degree, for example you may have the opportunity to undertake an internship, professional placements, practicums, field experience, or work-based projects. Learn about work integrated learning in your study area on the Placements website.

Even if your degree does not include an internship or placement requirement, gaining industry-relevant experience is highly recommended. It can help you develop skills that strengthen future job applications, explore career options and build professional relationships. You may pursue additional internships, cadetships, vacation programs and volunteering roles outside your coursework requirements. Note that these activities will not be automatically covered by JCU's insurance. International students should also ensure they comply with any visa conditions that apply to work experience undertaken outside their required course placements.

JCU timelines and application processes

Discipline-specific information about placement requirements, application processes, deadlines and preparation steps can be found on Placement essentials for students under *Preparing for placements*.

It is important to understand your placement requirements and start planning early to ensure you meet all deadlines and preparatory tasks. Monitoring email communications from the Placements team and your course coordinators is also essential.

After reviewing the available information, if you still have questions, contact the Placements team for further assistance.

Finding opportunities

The JCU Placements team provides varying levels of support throughout the placement process depending on your course. In some disciplines, placements are coordinated or sourced by JCU, while in others, students are responsible for identifying and securing their own opportunities. Refer to your discipline-specific information to understand your responsibilities and the support available within your placement process.

Self-sourced internship, cadetship and vacation programs are often advertised through:

- JCU CareerHub
- Prosple
- SeekGrad
- Industry-specific jobs boards – check our Career Snapshots to identify sites relevant to your study area
- The Work Integrated Learning organisation site on LearnJCU relevant to your study area

Students from equity groups may also be eligible for specialised programs. Examples include:

- Career Trackers and Aurora Education Foundation for First Nations students.
- Australian Disability Network Internship Program and GradWise for students living with disability.

In addition to seeking advertised opportunities, you could take a proactive approach by reaching out to employers to express interest in undertaking work experience with them. Partner with JCU provides information for employers about offering student placements, including the Placement Toolkit.

Securing an internship or placement

Applying for an internship or placement, whether it is a JCU-sourced or self-sourced opportunity, is often just like applying for a job. It is important to approach the process professionally and present yourself well throughout the application process. In many instances, you will be required to submit a resume and a tailored cover letter that:

- Expresses an understanding of the organisation and why you are interested in gaining experience there
- Articulates the experiences you bring and the strengths you have to offer
- Identifies the learning goals you'd like to achieve through your experience.

Many employers also require applicants to attend an interview to discuss their application further and assess their suitability. This may include evaluating applicants' communication and interpersonal skills, motivation, and capacity to learn and contribute in the workplace.

For highly competitive internships, particularly with large organisations and government departments, employers may also use assessment centres and other recruitment activities. These processes can involve multiple stages such as one-way video interviews, psychometric testing, individual or group tasks and other assessments.

Making the most of your work integrated learning

To gain the maximum benefit of work integrated learning:

- Approach the experience with a positive attitude and willingness to learn
- Be punctual, reliable and prepared to fulfil your responsibilities
- Maintain professional conduct, follow workplace policies and respect confidentiality requirements
- Be proactive and look for opportunities to observe or participate in different tasks to broaden your understanding of the organisation and industry
- Ask questions, seek feedback regularly and take initiative in your learning
- Reflect on the skills, knowledge and experiences you gain
- Keep a record of projects, achievements and capabilities developed
- Build relationships with colleagues and maintain the professional connections you make.

Work integrated learning can lead to future employment opportunities by helping both you and the employer determine whether there is a strong fit for future roles. Even where this is not the case, supervisors can be valuable referees for future job applications, so making a positive professional impression is important.

Support through JCU Careers and Employability

While Careers and Employability is not directly involved with work integrated learning and placement processes, we can support you to explore and prepare for opportunities in a range of ways. We can assist you to:

- Understand your career options and employment outcomes related to your course
- Identify relevant opportunities through industry-specific job boards and other sources
- Build your confidence and capabilities to network within your industry in-person and through LinkedIn
- Prepare an expression of interest to approach employers where an advertised opportunity does not exist
- Refine and tailor your resume and cover letter
- Prepare for interviews, assessment centres and other recruitment activities.

Access our extensive suite of information sheets for further guidance and book your personalised appointment with our team.