

Internships

Should I apply for an Internship?

Some businesses offer unpaid internships to provide potential employees with work experience or exposure and insight into their desired careers. While this may seem like a great opportunity, it is also possibly against the law.

There are very few situations where an employer can get you to work without pay.

Under the Fair Work Act 2009 (the FW Act), employees working for a business are entitled to get paid and are entitled to the other conditions set out in the relevant award or agreement. The only work that does not need to be paid is work undertaken as part of a vocational placement.

What is a vocational placement?

There is a specific legal definition of "vocational placement". For it to be a legitimate vocational placement it needs to be work:

- for which you are not entitled to be paid; and
- undertaken as a requirement of an education or training course; and
- authorised under a law or an administrative arrangement for the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory.

Unless all of the above criteria are met, you should be paid for all hours worked.

Can they ask me to work an unpaid trial?

Some employers may ask you to do an unpaid trial. If you participate in one of these trials and are performing work for the business, you'll probably be considered an employee and are entitled to be paid.

More information?

For more information on internships, vocational placements and unpaid work or your general workplace entitlements, visit www.fairwork.gov.au or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.