



## Unpaid work - print and broadcast media

Unpaid work can take on different forms. In the print and broadcast media industry these arrangements typically involve unpaid work experience, unpaid internships, or volunteering.

Unpaid work arrangements can be entered into for a number of reasons. These include:

- to give a person experience in a job or industry
- to test a person's job skills
- to volunteer time and effort to a not-for-profit organisation.

These arrangements can be initiated by employers, the person wanting the work or experience, or education/training institutions.

### Is unpaid work lawful?

Some unpaid work arrangements are lawful and others are not. Depending on the nature of the arrangement, the person doing the work may be an employee and be entitled to be paid the legal minimum rate of pay for the type of work they're doing, along with other minimum employment entitlements.

Whether an unpaid work arrangement is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (FW Act) depends on:

- whether an employment relationship exists, or
- whether the arrangement involves a vocational placement.

### Vocational placements

A vocational placement is a formal work experience arrangement that is part of an education or training course.

Vocational placements can give students important skills to help them transition successfully from study to work, while giving industry and business the opportunity to enrich student learning experiences and increase the number of work-ready graduates.

Vocational placements that meet the definition under the FW Act are lawfully unpaid, regardless of whether an employment relationship exists or not.

For more information, including the criteria that an arrangement must meet to be a vocational placement under the FW Act, see our [Vocational Placements Fact Sheet](#).

### Unpaid work experience and unpaid internships

A work experience arrangement or internship is when a person works for a business to gain experience in a particular occupation or industry.

These arrangements can be a valuable way for prospective employees to make the transition from study to work or explore a new career path. Sometimes these arrangements span several months and can lead to ongoing employment.

An unpaid work experience arrangement or unpaid internship can be lawful if it is a vocational placement (see section above) or if there is no employment relationship found to exist.

For more information on identifying an employment relationship or a vocational placement, please see our [Unpaid Work Fact Sheet](#).

#### Example 1

A commercial radio station placed an advertisement looking for students to work on a voluntary basis for one day a week over a 6 month period. The placement offered hands on experience with a potential for job opportunities, but wouldn't count towards the students' course credits. The station's HR manager explained to candidates that the internships were observational in nature, with no expectation of productive work.

When they started, the radio station asked the interns to sign agreements that detailed the training they would receive. As part of their internships, the students would observe the program producers creating and developing radio programs, and listen in while radio producers presented live on-air or created pre-recorded content. They never undertook those activities themselves, other than on a 'dummy' or test basis.

While participants primarily watched and learned, in a few cases they did some hands on work under supervision, such as selecting music tracks and editing advertisement packages.

An employment relationship didn't exist and the students didn't need to be paid, because there was neither a significant benefit to the radio station from the work, nor any expectation on the interns to perform productive work.

#### Example 2

Casey was a media and communications student in her 3rd year of study. She spent several months interning at a fashion magazine one day a week. Casey was primarily tasked with helping the features department undertake research for articles, and also helped out with administrative tasks that no one else had time for.

As her understanding of the work grew, she also drafted copy for the magazine and its website. While the internship was related to her field of study, it was not organised through an education or training provider and it didn't count as course credit or towards the completion of her degree.

In the following year, after her graduation, Casey undertook another internship with a prominent television network. Again, she spent time undertaking essential work for the business including production duties and administrative tasks for the executive producer. For her work, she was given audience tickets to the network's top rating game show

In both of these examples, Casey should have been paid because there was most likely an employment relationship between Casey and each business.

### Example 3

Sally was in her final year of a journalism degree. Wanting to work in print and broadcast media when she finished her studies, she took an unpaid internship with her local newspaper. Sally's lecturers encouraged her to seek out the opportunity because it would help her gain experience in the industry. She also knew that it would be very difficult to secure a cadetship in the industry if she didn't have any relevant work experience. The internship didn't count towards the completion of her degree and wasn't directly organised by the university.

The internship lasted for six months. Sally spent many hours each week interviewing people and attending events for the newspaper. She also researched background information for articles and drafted and submitted her articles under publication deadlines.

Sally should have been paid for her work as there was most likely an employment relationship. The newspaper gained a significant benefit from Sally's work, and she was obliged to perform to the newspaper's standards.

## Contact us

Fair Work Online: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Fair Work Infoline: **13 13 94**

### Need language help?

Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)  
on **13 14 50**

## Volunteering

A volunteer is someone who does work for the main purpose of benefiting someone else, such as a church, sporting club, government school, charity or community organisation. Volunteers are not employees and don't have to be paid.

As with work experience and internship arrangements, all relevant factors must be considered to determine whether a person is a genuine volunteer or whether, in fact, an employment relationship exists.

For more information on volunteering, please see our [Unpaid Work Fact Sheet](#).

### Example 4

Tom has volunteered at his local community radio station for 5 years. The station is funded from grants from local and state governments and from donations from community members and through fundraising events. The radio station has a number of volunteers from the local community who contribute time to assist with announcing, fundraising and administration.

As a keen gardener, Tom runs a 2 hour talk back segment on Saturday mornings where members from the community can ring up to ask questions, offer seed swaps and tell their stories. He also helps out with fundraising drives by coordinating volunteers running food and drinks stands, kids' activities and musical performances.

Tom gives his time to the radio station voluntarily out of a desire to support his local community. Tom could change or stop the arrangement at any time if it no longer suits him. There is no obligation from the radio station that Tom continues his volunteering. As a not-for-profit organisation, even though the radio station receives a benefit from Tom's activities, this arrangement is a genuine volunteering relationship.

## Further information

For information and resources to help you understand your rights and obligations on the topic of unpaid work, visit [www.fairwork.gov.au/unpaidwork](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/unpaidwork) or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

### Hearing & speech assistance

Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

For TTY: **13 36 77**. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline **13 13 94**

Speak & Listen: **1300 555 727**. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline **13 13 94**