## Work Experience

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### What is a work experience?

A work experience (WE) is part of a program in which a student applies and practices skills and knowledge learned in the program in a work-place setting. It is provided by a host organization in a formal agreement with the school. Work performed by the student must be relevant to the learning objectives of the program. The student must be supervised by a person who is employed or retained by the host organization and is qualified in a career occupation relevant to the student’s program.

"**clinical placement**" means a type of work experience component

(a) that is part of an approved program that leads to a career occupation in a health field,

(b) in which no more than 12 students are supervised by one instructor, and

(c) that consists of not more than 50% of the total hours of the program

"**cooperative placement**" means a type of work experience component

(a) that consists of not more than 50% of the total hours of the program, and

(b) for which a student is paid;

"**practicum**" means a type of work experience component

(a) that, subject to subsection (2), consists of not more than 20% of the total hours of the program, and

(b) for which a student is not paid;

"**preceptorship**" means a type of work experience component

(a) in which one student is supervised by one preceptor, and

(b) that, subject to subsection (2), consists of not more than I0% of the total hours of the program.

All work experiences in approved programs must be one of these four types, and each must comply with its definition as set out in the regulation. For example, you may not refer to a work experience as an ‘internship’. The only exception to the definitions and duration limits above is when a regulator (e.g. a College under the Health Professions Act) requires a WE to have a different duration or title.

### Can a program have an optional work experience?

No. A work experience is an integral part of a program. There may be two versions of a program, one with a work experience and one without: these would be considered two separate programs, and a complete program application would be required for each.

Students may transfer between programs with or without a work experience, but this must be their own choice. If a student has enrolled in a program with a WE and there is no placement available, the student may be entitled to a full refund and may make a complaint to PTIB.

### Can students be required to find their own placement?

No. Every student who enrolls in a program with a work experience and successfully completes the coursework and any other reasonable requirements for participation in the work experience must be provided with a placement. Students may be encouraged to seek their own placement, e.g. by including job search skills and exercises in the program curriculum, but it is still the institution’s responsibility to ensure there is a placement for every student in the program by the end of the program.

Similarly, participation in work experience cannot be conditional on such factors as students passing interviews or receiving an offer from a host. If the institution has contracted with the student for a program with a work experience, it must provide the work experience.

### What are the requirements when applying for a program with a work experience?

Every application for a new program with a work experience must include:

* a work experience policy (sample/template is available on the PTIB website – see link below)
* a list of the organizations that will provide placements. There must be enough hosts already in place to accommodate the maximum number of students in the program. PTIB staff may ask to see your agreements with hosts either when you apply for a new program or after a program is approved.
* **Effective September 1, 2021**: a description of the activities that students will undertake during the work experience component(s) of the program. (See #7 below for more information on expectations for this list.) A sample/template work experience agreement with space for this information is available on the PTIB website – see link below.

### What is a work experience policy?

A work experience policy provides specific required information about the work experience component(s) of a program.

Every program that has a work experience must have a work experience policy, and each work experience policy must include the following information:

(a) the process by which a student is placed in a work experience component;

(b) the process by which a student in a work experience component is evaluated;

(c) the intervals at which work experience monitoring of a student will be undertaken;

(d) the requirements for participation in a work experience component;

(e) the number of hours of the work experience component;

(f) identification of the work experience component as a clinical placement, cooperative placement, practicum, or preceptorship.

### Common problems with work experience policy in applications

Common reasons why PTIB staff may say that you need to revise your work experience policy:

* It does not include all the required elements listed in the Private Training Regulation s.41
* One or more of the provisions of the work experience policy is non-compliant with any applicable provision of the regulation
* There are inconsistencies within the policy, or between the policy and other program documents or information (e.g. the duration of the work experience in the policy doesn’t match that in the program outline)
* The policy is not fair and reasonable (whether due to terms of one of the required elements, or any other aspect of the policy)

### What is required for the list of activities student will undertake during WE?

Institutions must develop for each work experience a set of activities reasonably achievable within its duration, based on and supporting students’ achievement of the program’s learning objectives (LO). This ensures students are informed and have realistic expectations about their work experience. It helps institutions in monitoring placements to ensure they are consistent with terms of their agreements with both hosts and students, and in maintaining records to show compliance with work experience requirements. It provides hosts with clarity as to their role, and with specific criteria for student evaluation which the institution can then link with program learning objectives.

PTIB will look for:

* A number, type and variety of activities sufficient and appropriate to give students some experience with, or practical exposure to, all or most of the program-level learning objectives.
* A number, type and variety of activities that are realistically achievable within the duration of the WE.
* Adherence to WE requirements of other regulator(s) where applicable.
* For some WE, activities may be focused in specific skill areas that make up a subset of the program learning objectives – e.g. an HCA practicum focused on Acute Care skills.
  + If the WE has a focus specific to a subset of the program LO, that should be clear in the WE information in the program documents – program outline, course outline, and/or WE policy, or clearly indicated in the WE title, not only in the description of activities.
* For a short WE in a long program with many LO, the purpose is more to expose the student to the workplace environment than to involve them in comprehensive hands-on experience across the program LO. Activities for these WE will likely be more geared to observation and assistance than tasks or projects that the student is responsible for.
* The list is specific and firm, and avoids exceptions and qualifiers (e.g. “a selection of”, “as applicable”), that reduce or make it unclear which activities or how many on the list a student might actually do.

### Can a third party be used to manage a work experience?

If you choose to contract with an organization that offers work experience management services to handle this for you, you are still responsible to ensure that all aspects of your work experience and work experience policy are compliant with the Private Training Act and Regulation. Read their materials carefully to ensure their policies, procedures and practices are compliant. Be prepared to provide copies of any of their materials and your agreement with them to PTIB if requested, either as part of a new program application or at any time after the program is approved.

Regardless of who manages the work experience your institution must monitor students on placement directly: you may not assign this responsibility to a third party.

### Common problems with work experience in program-related applications

Whether in applications for new programs or for changes to approved programs, common problems include:

* Work experience type not specified
* Work experience type not consistent: different types are mentioned in different parts of the application materials
* Terms of the work experience are not compliant with the regulatory requirements (e.g. a practicum that exceeds 20% of overall program duration, or an unpaid co-op)
* The list of hosts is missing, or is not adequate to accommodate the maximum class size
* The hosts listed are not suitable to provide work that is relevant to the learning objectives of the program

*This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of requirements relating to this subject found in the Private Training Act, Private Training Regulation, and/or Fees and Student Tuition Protection Fund Regulation.   
It is your responsibility to be aware of all regulatory requirements that apply to your business.*

### Other PTIB resources on work experience

* [Work Experience Agreement – Sample (DOCX)](http://www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca/sites/www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca/files/files/work_experience_agreement_sample.docx)
* [Work Experience Policy – Sample (DOCX)](http://www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca/sites/www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca/files/files/work_experience_policy_sample.docx)