

Student Internships and Placements

A Safe and Respectful Workplace



You have a legal right to a safe and healthy workplace.

These rights are documented by relevant Australian and Victorian legislation including the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic). The Equal Opportunity Act introduces a positive duty requiring all organisations covered by the law, including government, business, employers and service providers, to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. Other laws including the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) also clearly state that supervisors, managers, or work colleagues are unable to discriminate, bully, sexually harass, coerce or mislead a student completing an internship or placement. If you live with a disability or health condition you have a legal right under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), to request adjustments to accommodate your disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship.

Host organisations and all their staff are legally obliged to ensure your health, safety and rights are protected while you are on placement or completing an internship within their workplace. Your protection from discrimination and harassment extends to all activities that occur in connection with your placement or internship, for example, if you attend a staff farewell held at another location out of business hours or while joining an online meeting. The WIL teams work proactively with host organisations and supervisors ensuring they clearly understand their rights and responsibilities prior to offering an internship or work placement to Deakin students.

You may not be sure that the things you are experiencing fit the legal definition of discrimination or sexual harassment. Some examples are provided below however, if at any time during your internship or placement, you feel that something isn't quite right, don't hesitate to seek advice and support. You are encouraged to share your concerns with someone you trust at your workplace or with staff at Deakin who are trained to assist you with any questions or concerns. You can talk with them about your experience and ask questions without having to make an official complaint. The University will respond to your concern promptly and your privacy and rights will be protected, including ensuring any personal information concerning your situation is kept confidential, except as otherwise required or permitted by law or under Deakin's policies and procedures.

Case study

Aya is completing her final placement at a local government department, supervised by a very busy male manager. Her supervisor regularly cancels their scheduled supervision sessions and is unavailable for meetings within business hours. Aya has an Access Plan in place at Deakin and was told that agreed adjustments would be available during her placement. It is week two of her placement and, without these adjustments, Aya is finding it difficult to complete her work.

Lack of action by the local government department may constitute disability discrimination. Aya may choose to speak with her WIL Team, contact the Disability Resource Centre or speak with a Deakin Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer (HDCO).

Case study

Rodney is completing his internship at a local legal practice. Over the course of the internship Rodney has been very distressed by the behaviour of his female supervisor who regularly makes negative, belittling and public comments about the quality of Rodney's work. When Rodney raised the issue with another worker, they advised Rodney to 'not make a fuss'. They advised Rodney to 'act like a real lawyer' and 'stick up' for himself.

The behaviour exhibited by Rodney's supervisor may constitute bullying. Rodney may choose to speak with his WIL Team or with a Deakin Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer (HDCO).

Support services

Deakin Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your WIL Team • Safer Community Services BH: 9am - 4pm, Monday – Friday, Tel: 9244 3734, • Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officers • Student Counselling • Disability Resource Centre
24/7 Australian Crisis Counselling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 • Lifeline: 13 11 14 • BeyondBlue: 1300 224 636 • Headspace and Headspace Online Telephone Support
24/7 Victorian Sexual Assault and Family Violence Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 1800 806 292 • Sexual Assault Services • Safe Steps (family violence response centre): 1800 015 188 • Child Protection
Fair Work Commission: 13 13 94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixing a Workplace Problem Fact Sheet • Help with Bullying in the Workplace Fact Sheet • Student Placement Fact Sheet • Student Placement Unpaid Work Fact Sheet • Protections at Work • Work Experience and Internships Fact Sheet

Case study

Soth is completing his final social work at a local Family Support Service. Soth works with a Senior Social Worker who has a case load of clients who require intensive family support. Over the course of 4 home visits to a local family with the Social Worker, Soth notices that one of the children, continually wants to sit on his knee, give him cuddles and kisses and on one occasion, asks Soth to take her home. The parents and Senior Social Worker don't seem to notice the child's behaviour. Soth is unsure of what to do.

Soth should case note and discuss the different types of behaviours the child has exhibited and that he has witnessed, with the Senior Social Worker and/or his clinical supervisor. The child's behaviour may indicate that they have experienced some form of child neglect and/or abuse. Soth and the Senior Social Worker may consult with, and possibly report to the Intake team, Child Protection, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. Soth should also report the issue to the Deakin Liaison worker, Social Work Field Placement team and if required, seek support from Deakin's Safer Community.