



**BACHELOR OF DESIGN**  
CONSTRUCTION MAJOR

**PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE GUIDE**



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# **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE GUIDE**

If this guide does not answer all your questions, please seek advice from Stop 1 via [students.unimelb.edu.au/stop1](http://students.unimelb.edu.au/stop1)

Please note that these guidelines are constantly under review. It is advised that students check the website for updates regularly.

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## **Practical Experience for Construction Students**

Students studying in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne have a unique opportunity to undertake professional practical experience while studying Construction. Practical experience will be beneficial as you will work in settings which will allow you to put theory into practice; develop an awareness of work-place culture; develop an appreciation of a rapidly changing world of work; enhance your skills and abilities; increase employment prospects and build up a network of contacts in the industry for future career opportunities.

Practical experience will also be beneficial for other stakeholders. For example, employers will benefit from having you work for them as they may involve you in a new project, ask you to complete specific tasks, ask you to inject new ideas, use your experience as a recruitment standard and further develop links with the Faculty. Further still, practical experience is also beneficial for academic and teaching staff as they will have the opportunity to see students' skills develop and mature.

This Guide aims to provide you with information about practical experience expectations, professional accreditation, potential career paths and general career advice.

The Faculty encourages you to balance the academic side of your career portfolio with practical experience, in the hope that you will find practical experience rewarding and challenging, and that it will encourage you to return to the Faculty with a wide range of skills to be applied in your final years of study.

Please note that information set out in this Guide applies to students who are studying a Construction major in the Bachelor of Design.

Robert Crawford  
Associate Professor, Construction

# THE HOW/WHEN/WHY OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

## Requirements for practical experience

Practical experience is voluntary for Bachelor of Design graduates, however is highly recommended.

It should ideally be undertaken between the completion of the Bachelor of Design and commencement of the Master of Construction Management program.

It is strongly recommended that you undertake 12 months' continuous full time practical experience on completion of the Bachelor of Design, by which time you will have developed a degree of maturation in your knowledge base. This is the University's preference for academic reasons and the longstanding preference of many employers.

In the majority of cases, construction industry employers will require you to work for a 12-month period to gain the necessary experience within their companies.

## Types of experience

You should try to gain experience across as wide a range of areas as possible, within your chosen field.

Please keep in mind that if you do not complete your practical experience in a specific area, it may not be recognised by certain professional institutes. For example, practical experience undertaken as a labourer in a building firm will not meet requirements.

## International Students

International students wishing to undertake work in Australia are encouraged to investigate different visa options. To find out more, directly contact the Department of Home Affairs (<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au>) and/or seek advice from Stop 1 (<https://services.unimelb.edu.au>)

## Responsibilities of Employees and Employers

Students should expect:

- To be treated fairly and professionally
- Their supervisor to play a vital role in providing adequate supervision
- To be given clear instructions on key tasks and responsibilities within the company, including an overview of the business, its policies and the overall functioning of the organisation
- To have the opportunity to voice questions and concerns to their supervisor.

Employers will expect students to:

- Be punctual
- Commit to the core values of the organisation and understand work practices
- Be hard working and present themselves in a professional manner
- Display honesty about your skills and the level of tasks you are able to perform
- Be able to express insights into the culture of the work environment
- Raise any concerns or questions with their supervisor

## **GAINING A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE POSITION**

It is your responsibility to find employment. You will need to consider companies you would like to work for and be proactive in getting the right job. You need to start this process early – begin thinking about potential opportunities before commencing your third year of the Bachelor of Design.

### **Shortlisting companies**

- Identify 10 to 15 companies with which you would like to work. You should choose these companies based on the research you have done.
- Visit the companies' websites and look at their values, their goals, the size of the company, and possible career or graduate opportunities.
- Look into industry publications and journals for companies that are excelling in business.
- You may have to contact a few organisations - don't just rely on contacting one or two. You need to market yourself and show a professional and willing approach to learn and work hard.
- You have many opportunities to find employment - speak with other students and graduates, academic staff, family and friends, representatives from professional associations, career or personal mentors, people who work in occupations of interest, current and previous employers and co-workers.
- If you would like advice on careers and employment issues, such as job seeking strategies, the application process and preparing for interviews, refer to Stop 1 Careers and Employability (<https://careers.unimelb.edu.au/>), for tools, events, workshops and individual appointments.
- In some cases, employers contact the Faculty seeking a graduate to fill a position. These will be advertised in the Careers Online database, and the student newsletters.

### **Presenting an application**

You will be required to develop a resume to present to employers. Your resume is likely to be the first correspondence you will have with an employer, so you need to ensure you market yourself, expressing interest in the position and the company in which you are hoping to gain employment. You need to highlight your skills and abilities in order to demonstrate how you meet the requirements for the position.

Important points to remember:

- Make your application easy to read
- Ensure it is professionally formatted
- Include contact details, education and previous practical experience
- Include volunteer work, community activities, sporting activities and other interests
- Prepare a list of referees, but don't include them in your application
- Call 3 to 4 days after sending your resume to ensure it has been received by the appropriate person
- Don't send off an application until you have checked for all grammatical and spelling errors
- Don't put any unnecessary information in a resume (e.g. – marital status, health, age)
- Always attach a cover letter to your application, introducing yourself and indicating why you want to work with the particular company

## **PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION**

You may be eligible to apply for membership of the following organisations, depending on the postgraduate course you are undertaking and the practical experience you have completed. The following organisations and professional boards recognise the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning's Construction Management and Property Masters programs and will consider graduates for registration.

### **Australian Institute of Building**

Memberships are available for professionals in the work force and students. As the Faculty's Construction programs are recognised by the AIB, membership is available by completing the forms available at: <http://www.aib.org.au/>

### **Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors**

Memberships are available for both quantity surveyors in the work force and students. As the Faculty's Master of Construction Management program is recognised by the AIQS, membership is available by completing the forms available for download at: <http://www.aiqs.com.au/>

### **Chartered Institute of Building**

To discover the many points of entry for CIOB membership, visit: <http://www.ciob.org.au/>

### **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**

For RICS membership routes and professional membership contact information, visit: <http://www.rics.org.au/>

## **POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS**

Graduates of the Master of Construction Management typically work for construction companies both on and off construction sites. Their roles include planning and scheduling, project management, contract administration, or estimating and tendering. Graduates pursuing a career in construction economics work as construction cost consultants and quantity surveyors with financiers, property developers, and project managers.

Graduates who pursue a career in building surveying work for local government and as consultants assessing building projects to ensure all building regulations are met.

# APPLICATION DETAILS FOR 50 POINTS CREDIT IN MASTERS PROGRAM

## Eligibility for Bachelor of Design Students

Students who have completed the Bachelor of Design with a major in Construction are able to apply for credit in the Master of Construction Management program; lateral entry and students entering the 300 point Masters program are ineligible.

The Masters program is 200 points, or two years full-time (four years part-time is also permitted). However, if you have completed a minimum of one year (as noted below) of relevant, documented full time professional work experience, you may be eligible to receive 50 points of credit towards the Masters course, provided that you prepare a reflective journal and critical review / case study to the required standards. You also must provide an original letter outlining your duties, dates of employment, duly signed by your employer.

The reflective journal and critical review need to be completed and submitted prior to commencing enrolment in the Masters. **No credit points will be given for employment undertaken once enrolment has commenced.**

Practical experience can be obtained with multiple employers.

Part time employment over a longer period, accumulating to the equivalent of one year, (as noted below) will not be considered in applying for credit points. Full time, vacation and/or part time employment undertaken during the years of undergraduate studies will not be considered in applying for credit points.

Essential information is provided under the following headings:

1. Reflective journal
2. Critical review / case study
3. Potential topics for the critical review / case study
4. Competencies (for reflective journal entries)
5. Reflective journal format / template
6. Assessment criteria
7. Employer's role
8. Interim report
9. Submission date etc.
10. Resubmitting
11. Results
12. Key Dates



## **1. Reflective Journal**

During the year of full time professional work experience, you are to keep a reflective journal for a minimum accumulated period of 36 weeks. The 36-week period takes into account allowances for annual leave, statutory holidays, sick leave, time off between jobs, etc., and for submitting the required documentation prior to the commencement of your Masters. The journal consists of a document in which you record and discuss on a weekly basis, what you've been doing in the context of the knowledge gained from your course so far. Your employer / supervisor (the person you are responsible to) will need to confirm that these have been completed on a weekly basis.

The journal needs to be more than just a travelogue of your experience. It should explicitly discuss how your work experience relates to the theories you have learned in particular subjects (directly refer to them). When you are aware that the work you are doing is particularly innovative, articulate that; similarly, where practices are perhaps lagging somewhat behind world's best practice, articulate that too (obviously in a tactful way). Reflect on all aspects of your education so far, including management, construction technology, planning, administration, human resources, environment and sustainability, economics, business management, ethics, technical competences, etc.. It is expected that you can only reflect on those areas that you have been directly involved in during your employment period. Please note that you can reflect on issues that you have encountered since the commencement of your work; that is, you can 'back-date' your journal, but these will only be accepted if confirmed by your employer.

A list of competencies is provided in Part 4 of this section (page 11). You should reflect on as many of these as are relevant to you, typing your reflections on a separate page (or pages) for each weekly entry. You will need to submit a minimum of 36 x A4 reflective journal entry pages.

### **Employer's / Supervisor's Role:**

You should meet with your work supervisor every 4 weeks to discuss your reflective journal. Your supervisor should peruse the reflective journal and record comments about your work during the previous month and make suggestions as to what you plan to do in the month ahead. The quality of the reflections as noted by you, are expected to show progressive improvement over the 36-week period.

## **2. Critical Review/Case Study**

In addition to the reflective journal, you are to carry out an in-depth critical review/case study of one aspect of your experience within an area of the company procedures of interest to you. Seek your work supervisor's input (and permission) as to an appropriate topic that is relevant to your studies, but also of value to your employer / organisation. The critical review/case study is a more in-depth and properly structured document, as opposed to the reflective journal, where you discuss experience broadly and sequentially in time.

It has:

- An introduction, clearly defining what is to be investigated
- The research / investigation completed
- A conclusion which summarises the findings

Refer in detail to specific course material and literature that you can access within the limitations of your current circumstances (i.e. not assuming access to the University Library). Analyse whatever aspect you have chosen in a thorough and scholarly manner, comparing in detail the actual practice and the theory (5000 words minimum).

### **3. Critical review / case study potential topics (a guide only)**

#### **Project and Construction Management:**

- Project feasibility study, including client's brief, needs analysis, business case requirement, market research, development and planning permit requirements, project option analysis.
- Project scope definition, control and management, project procurement and delivery methodology, project organisational structure and reporting responsibilities.
- Project costing and budgeting, S-curve development, funding and cash flow requirements, Earned Value Analysis.
- Work break down structure, activity sequencing and time schedule development, time management and control.
- Project quality control and management, project risk assessment and management, project communication and human resources management, project integration.
- Current project management practices in terms of project control, cost control, scope change management, contractors/subcontractors management, lessons learnt.
- Industrial relations
- OH&S issues
- Environmental management systems
- Contractual and legal issues
- Estimating

#### **Construction Systems and Technology:**

- Innovative construction techniques
- New construction materials, applications and technologies
- Hybrid construction systems
- Cost effective construction solutions
- Alternative construction systems proposed at tender stage

#### **Quantity surveying / Construction Economics:**

- A procurement advice case study. Peculiarities of the project; observations from client meetings; review of all procurement and tendering options; review of the procurement option selected and an explanation of the reasons for this selection.
- A cost planning and cost estimating case study. The cost planning process from budget to detailed proposal to tender and documentation stage. Methods and techniques used at different stages; decision-making process; potential for cost-saving; problems and challenges encountered; evaluation – may include discussion of level of accuracy achieved by comparing different stages of estimated cost; comparison between what was presented in class and what was evident in practice.
- Feasibility Studies (FS), Life Cycle Costing Analyses (LCCA), Tax Depreciation (TD). Reasons for conducting FS, LCCA and TD for a selected project, techniques used, process, challenges and difficulties faced, outcome.
- A tender evaluation and reporting case study. Tender evaluations on a selected project.

- Peculiarities of the project; tender method adopted and reasons; tender evaluation process and report; outcome. May include contract negotiation process.
- A contract administration case study. Conduct of site meetings; interim valuation, financial reporting and final accounts (including techniques and approaches). Conflict scenarios (specific examples) – what went wrong, details of conflict, reactions of different parties to conflict events, escalation, how conflict was managed, outcome and impact on project, evaluation - how things could have been managed better.

You should retain copies of the above submissions as most professional institutes require some of them for entry (usually in turn requiring at least two years of relevant professional work experience which can include this practical experience year).

#### **4. Competencies guide for reflective journal entries**

You may reflect on some or all of the competencies listed below, but only reflect on them if you become familiar with them during professional experience. This list is not exhaustive; you are free to reflect on other relevant competencies.

##### **General:**

- Ethics
- Communication
  - Oral
  - Written
- Management
  - Self
  - Business
- Data collection
- Research
- Client contact
- Negotiation skills

##### **Specific:**

- Quantity surveying
- Construction management
- Contract administration
- Measurement
- Construction technology
- Cost planning
- Estimating
- Progress payments
- Final accounts
- Variations
- Risk analysis

##### **Types of projects and properties:**

- Residential
- Commercial
- Retail
- Industrial
- Hotel

## **5. Reflective journal format / template**

Head up your reflective journal with your name on each page, and the week number and date to which the reflections refer. Each page must be signed by your work supervisor, who should make comments on the reflections at the end of each month (at a minimum). Weekly entries need to be a minimum of one A4 page. A typical format / template can be found in Appendix 2.

## **6. Assessment criteria**

The submissions will be assessed by two academic staff members. Candidates will need to achieve an average mark of at least 65% to be eligible for 50 points of credit.

Students who receive a mark of between 50% and 64% will be given the opportunity to resubmit as detailed in Section 10 (page 13).

Students who receive a mark of less than 50% will be ineligible to resubmit and ineligible to receive 50 points credit. These students therefore will be required to complete a 200 point Masters program. Credit points will not be granted on a pro rata basis.

A copy of the assessment criteria is shown in Appendix 1. This gives a clear indication as to how each submission will be assessed and the marks allocated to each section. Please peruse this section to ensure that your submission meets the criteria.

## **7. Employer's role**

### **Reflective journal**

The work supervisor should meet with you at least once every 4 weeks to discuss, sign off, and provide comments on the reflective journal. The supervisor should peruse the reflective journal and record comments about your work in the previous month and make suggestions as to what you should be doing in the month ahead. The quality of the reflections is expected to progressively improve over the 36-week period.

At the conclusion, you need to write a summary critiquing the learning experiences gained as a result of the reflection process. Your supervisor should also provide a concluding summary. The summaries should demonstrate that you are a reflective learner, able to transfer knowledge and skills, and have improved performance over the period of employment.

### **Critical review / case study**

The supervisor is expected to provide guidance in the choice of an appropriate topic that is relevant to your studies and knowledge gained thus far. The supervisor should declare that the topic is of value to the company or organisation. Your progress needs to be monitored every 4 weeks, in conjunction with the journal entries. At its conclusion, the supervisor should sign the final review / case study, and comment on its accuracy, relevance and benefit to the employer.

## **8. Interim report**

An interim report is required to be submitted to the Melbourne School of Design practical experience coordinator (contact details available at <https://edsc.unimelb.edu.au/graduate/assessment/practical-experience>), on completion of the first 3 months of employment.

The report should include:

- copies of the first 12 journal entries
- a brief outline (maximum 1 page) of the critical review / case study topic

Feedback on the interim submission will only be given in cases where the quality of work submitted is below a pass standard (50%).

## 9. Submission Dates

The final submission date is the last working day in November in the year before Masters enrolment commences (to coincide with the closing date for course applications). For mid-year entry students, the submission date is the last working day in May in the year Masters enrolment commences. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The document must be submitted to Stop 1 (addressed to the practical experience coordinator) and be spiral bound with the following information on the front cover:

- Title
- Student name, student number and signature
- Company name and contact details
- Work supervisor's name and contact details

## 10. Resubmissions

Students who receive a mark of between 50% and 64% will be given one only opportunity to resubmit. Revised documentation must be submitted within one calendar month after notification of results. Late submissions will not be accepted.

## 11. Results

Students with a result of 65% or above will receive 50 points of credit in the Master of Construction Management program.

Since the reflective journal and critical review / case study submissions are not being assessed within a registered University of Melbourne subject where student fees would be incurred, no marks will be given to students. There will be only 3 categories of results: No credit given, Resubmit and Credit granted.

## 12. Key Dates and Checklist

Weekly during employment	Complete weekly journal entries (36 minimum) and develop case study
Every 4 weeks during employment	Meet with work supervisor to discuss case study and have previous month's journal entries signed off and supervisor's comments recorded
On completion of first 3 months of employment	Submit interim report – first 12 journal entries; plus case study outline
On conclusion of 36 weeks of employment	Finalise report - write journal summary, finish critical review and organise conclusive comments from supervisor on both components (journal and case study)
Last working day in November (or May for mid-year entry)	Submit full report - reflective journal and critical review / case study; including summaries on both from employer

# APPENDIX 1

Melbourne School of Design  
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning  
The University of Melbourne



## Construction

### REFLECTIVE JOURNAL/ CRITICAL REVIEW ASSESSMENT SHEET

(A minimum mark of 65% is required in order to achieve a 50-point credit in the Masters)

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

EXAMINER No.1 COMMENTS:

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EXAMINER No.2 COMMENTS:

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EXAMINERS' SIGNATURES: \_\_\_\_\_

EXAMINERS' NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

DATES: \_\_\_\_\_

FINAL ASSESSMENT MARK \_\_\_\_\_%

# REFLECTIVE JOURNAL & CRITICAL REVIEW ASSESSMENT SHEET

(To be considered for 50 points credit in Master of Construction Management program)

## Reflective Journal

60%

1. Was an interim 3-month reflective journal provided?

No	Provided	Comprehensive report provided
0	1 – 4	5

2. Is the journal well written and clearly structured (chronological format to be followed)? Have all weekly entries been included and has the journal been signed off by the student's supervisor on a monthly basis?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2	4	6	8	10

3. How well does the journal carefully reflect upon prior studies and knowledge gained while at University? Did this thought process deepen as experience was gained in the workplace?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
3	6	9	12	15

4. Have all the major discipline specific knowledge areas (construction technology, construction management and construction economics) received equal and extensive coverage? Have specific systems and processes been referenced to demonstrate an emerging mastery as a construction professional?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
3	6	9	12	15

5. Does the summary critique the learning experiences gained as a result of the reflection process?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5



6. Does the workplace supervisor's assessment of the journal in their opinion, demonstrate that the student is a reflective learner, able to transfer their knowledge and skills, developed at University, to the workplace? Has this process improved over the period of employment?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2	4	6	8	10

SCORE OUT OF 60% \_\_\_\_\_

**Critical Review (Case study) 40%**

Selection of a topic / area for review needs to be made in conjunction with the practical experience coordinator and approved by the employer.

1. Has the student clearly justified the reasons for selecting this particular area or topic? Does it relate directly back to one of the discipline knowledge areas (construction technology, construction management or construction economics), with specific reference to the other knowledge areas? Have the scope and limitations of the review been appropriately acknowledged?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2	4	6	8	10

2. Is the review structured, clear, logical, informative and easy to understand? Has an in-depth review been conducted within the appropriate guidelines and prescribed word limits?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
3	6	9	12	15

3. How well do the conclusions clarify issues learnt and additional knowledge gained?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

4. Does the supervisor's comment of the review indicate that it is an accurate and thoughtful reflection on the topic selected? Has the review benefited the student's employer?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2	4	6	8	10

SCORE OUT OF 40% \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2

### INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE - REFLECTIVE JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Week No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reflective comments by candidate:

Reflective comments by supervisor:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_