

Conditions for Working and Volunteering While Studying in Australia

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way of being involved in your community, especially if you are a new resident. It can also be a way of meeting people, making new friends, keeping active, learning new skills and gaining knowledge.

It is important, however, to ensure that you are volunteering in the right way and that you are following what your student visa allows you to do.

The *Department of Immigration and Citizenship* requires that, “If you are doing voluntary or unpaid work you must apply for Permission to Work. It is included in the limit of 20 hours per week.”

Volunteering Victoria strongly recommends students who are interested in doing volunteer work ensure that their visa conditions allow them to do so and that they have the required permission to work.

Students may want to contact DIAC to -

- identify their visa classification
- explain the nature of the volunteer work; and
- confirm that the volunteer work is acceptable for them to undertake.

Who is allowed to work and for how many hours?

Students who have been granted **Permission to Work** are only allowed to work a **maximum of 20 hours per week during term** and **unlimited hours when the course is not in session**.

A **'week'** is defined as commencing on Monday and ending on Sunday. You cannot undertake work until you have commenced your course in Australia.

According to the *Department of Immigration and Citizenship*,

“If you were granted a Student visa on or after 26 April 2008, you and your dependent family members will already have Permission to Work automatically included with your visa.

If you were granted a Student visa before 26 April 2008 and have not yet applied for Permission to Work, you and your family members may only apply for Permission to Work after you have started your course in Australia.”

The [DIAC website](#) outlines the work entitlements of students and dependent family members who have permission to work. There is also information on [How to Apply for Permission to Work](#)

It is also important to note that students and their dependent family members must comply with the State and Territory laws of Australia. Under all State and Territory laws, those under school leaving age - which, in most states is under 15 years of age - cannot work during school hours.

Volunteering Victoria - Strengthening communities in Victoria through our support and promotion of sustainable and equitable volunteering.

Want to volunteer? Visit our website at www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au or call us 9642 5266.

When is your course in session?

DIAC considers your course to be 'in session':

- for the duration of the advertised semesters (including periods when exams are being held)
- if you have completed your studies and your Confirmation of Enrolment is still in effect
- if you are undertaking another course, during a break from your main course and the points will be credited to your main course.

Research PhD students can work unlimited hours if they have already submitted thesis for marking.

Types of study covered by these guidelines

Please note that application of these guidelines may vary across different types of study and on an individual basis.

The application of these guidelines may apply to -

English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS)

Stand-alone English language courses that lead to a certificate I, II, III or IV, or that result in no formal Australian award.

Primary or secondary school course

Primary, junior secondary or senior secondary school courses, and approved secondary school exchange programs.

Vocational education and training

Certificates I, II, III or IV (except ELICOS), diploma, advanced diploma, vocational graduate certificate or vocational graduate diploma courses.

Higher education

Bachelor degree, associate degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, or Masters by coursework.

Postgraduate research

Masters by research or a doctoral degree.

Non-award

Non-award foundation studies, or other full-time courses or components of courses not leading to an Australian award.

Reference: The information on this sheet was adapted from [‘Conditions for Working While Studying’](#) guidelines from The Department of Immigration and Citizenship Website.

For more information, visit the DIAC website at www.immi.gov.au or call 131 881 between 9am-4pm.