



Unpaid Work Experience in Australia

Prevalence, nature and impact

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Executive summary

Rationale and objectives

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that internships and other forms of unpaid work experience (UWE) are becoming increasingly common in Australia.

Well-designed work experience programs can clearly play an important role in the transition from education to work, helping to develop valuable work-based skills, enhancing employment prospects through the development of professional networks and assisting job-seekers to match their human capital profile to labour market demands. Research consistently shows that the majority of UWE participants consider it has a positive impact on their critical and analytical thinking, interpersonal and social skills and improved career management and job search skills. They also consider UWE to be helpful in gaining employment.

At the same time, however, numerous studies, including a 2013 report for the Fair Work Ombudsman and a 2014 NSW parliamentary inquiry, have highlighted some risks associated with the growth in such arrangements. These include inequality of access to learning opportunities that well-structured internships may provide; variable quality experiences in terms of the development of skills and capacities considered desirable by employers; the costs of undertaking some forms of UWE; and the displacement of regular employees by UWE participants.

There has been no reliable, national data on the prevalence or quality of internships in Australia. In order to redress this knowledge deficit, the Commonwealth Department of Employment agreed to fund a team of researchers from UTS, QUT and the University of Adelaide to conduct a study of UWE. The research comprised a nationally representative online survey of working-age Australians to examine the prevalence of UWE in Australia, the characteristics of UWE placements and participants, the experiences of UWE participants, and the self-reported impact of UWE on employment outcomes.

Methodology

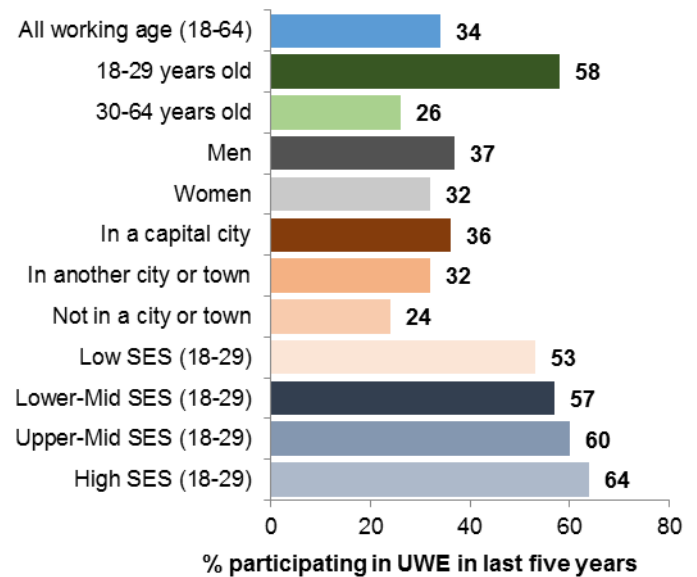
A questionnaire was developed based on previous surveys undertaken internationally and in Australia. The draft survey was provided to Project Reference Group members for input in February 2016. The questionnaire was tested with a small group of university and TAFE students in April 2016.

Respondents were recruited to the survey from the research panel maintained by the Online Research Unit (ORU), an Australian social and market research company. Online surveys do have some acknowledged limitations and it cannot be known for certain whether the respondents here were equally, more, or less likely to have participated in UWE than if an alternative sampling frame had been adopted. Nevertheless, those limitations were addressed in a number of ways, including by the offline recruitment of participants and the adoption of a quota sample which was broadly representative of the Australian population. The survey entered the field on 19 April 2016 and closed on 4 May 2016. Australians already registered with ORU between the ages of 18 and 64 (inclusive) were invited to take part in the survey.

There were 3800 usable responses, which included valid answers to whether the respondent had participated in UWE in the last five years and essential demographic information (age, sex, state/territory). The sample is representative by sex and broadly representative by state (Victoria is over-represented by 5% and other states under-represented by a smaller amount).

Younger respondents (18-29) were deliberately over-sampled on the basis that this group was more likely to have recently participated in UWE. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect the distribution of the Australian working age (18-64) population by sex and age.

A third of working age Australians have participated in at least one episode of UWE in the last five years.

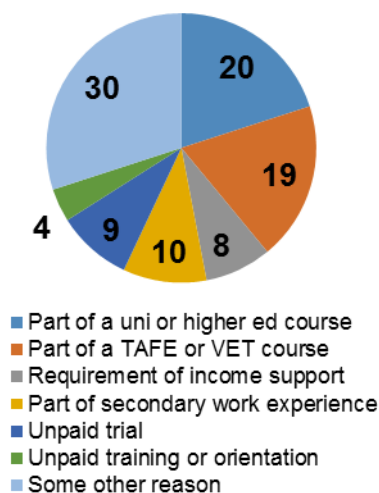


Prevalence and characteristics of UWE

UWE is very common in Australia. More than half (58%) of respondents aged 18-29 and just over a quarter of respondents (26%) aged 30-64 had participated in at least one episode of UWE in the last five years. Overall, a third of Australians (34%) aged 18-64 reported at least one episode of UWE in the last five years.

Around half of UWE is not connected with a course of study.

Reason for undertaking most recent UWE



Although a significant number of older respondents reported undertaking UWE, including 16% of 50-64 year olds, the likelihood of participating in UWE generally decreased with age. By contrast, the likelihood of participating in UWE increased according to the socio-economic status (SES) of respondents aged 18-29, as measured by parents' highest level of education. Location was also significant, with individuals living in a capital city more likely to have undertaken UWE than those in a city or town and much more than those not living in a city or town. Men were more likely to have participated in UWE in the last five years than women (37% compared to 32%).

Of the respondents who had undertaken UWE in the last five years, a third had undertaken a single episode, while

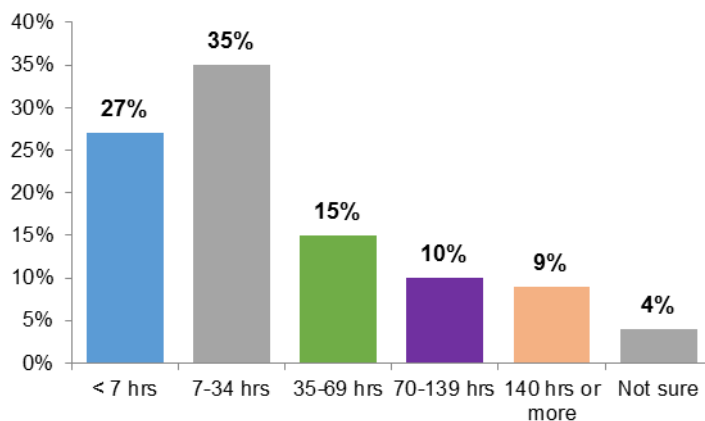
another quarter had undertaken two episodes. One in five had undertaken five or more episodes and one in ten had undertaken eight or more episodes of UWE in the last five years.

Respondents gave a variety of reasons for undertaking UWE, although half of UWE experiences were associated with some form of formal education or training. One in five respondents (20%) undertook UWE as part of a higher education course, while another one in five (19%) did so as part of a VET course. Nearly one in ten (8%) had participated as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart, as part of secondary school work experience (10%), or as part of an unpaid trial while applying for a job (9%).

Approximately one in 20 (4%) said they had been offered a paid job and the UWE was part of their training or orientation. Almost one in three (30%) nominated some other reason for undertaking UWE. This latter category incorporated UWE arrangements that were likely to have been organised independently by participants themselves, or arranged through informal networks outside of educational requirements or other institutional programs. Many arrangements in this category would typically be termed or thought of as internships. The high frequency of such arrangements is consistent with evidence from previous studies (both here and overseas) suggesting the expansion of 'open market' forms of UWE – that is, those not associated with either formal education or training, or government programs for labour market assistance.

Overall, experiences of UWE were quite recent. Of the participants who had undertaken UWE in the last five years, more than half indicated the most recent episode had occurred in the previous year.

Most UWE episodes last for less than 70 hours in total.



The majority of respondents (61%) indicated their most recent episode of UWE took place over a period of less than one month. However, for over one third (36%) of the sample, the UWE took place over a total period of longer than one month and for one in ten respondents, the duration was for six months or more. However, when considering total hours, a majority of respondents (62%) reported that the number of hours that they actually spent undertaking UWE was less than 35 hours. Comparing this data related to the overall duration of UWE and total hours suggests that many episodes of UWE were undertaken on a part-time basis. Respondents undertaking UWE as part of a higher education course tended to report the longest durations. A third (34%) reported UWE episodes lasting at least 70 hours in total, noting that those hours could span a period of weeks or even months.

The industries in which respondents undertook their most recent experience of UWE varied widely. Together, three industries – Education/Training, Social/Community Services and Health Care – accounted for around 40% of all UWE episodes. Unpaid trial/training work undertaken before being offered or starting a paid job was most often found in the Social/Community Services (13%) and Construction (13%). For UWE undertaken as part of a VET course, the most frequent industry was Social/Community Services (20%), whereas if it was undertaken as part of a higher education course, Health Care was the most frequent industry (21%). Social/Community Services (19%) also predominated in the category of UWE undertaken to maintain Youth Allowance or Newstart eligibility.

Just less than half (46% overall) of respondents had undertaken their most recent episode of UWE in an organisation in the private/for-profit sector.

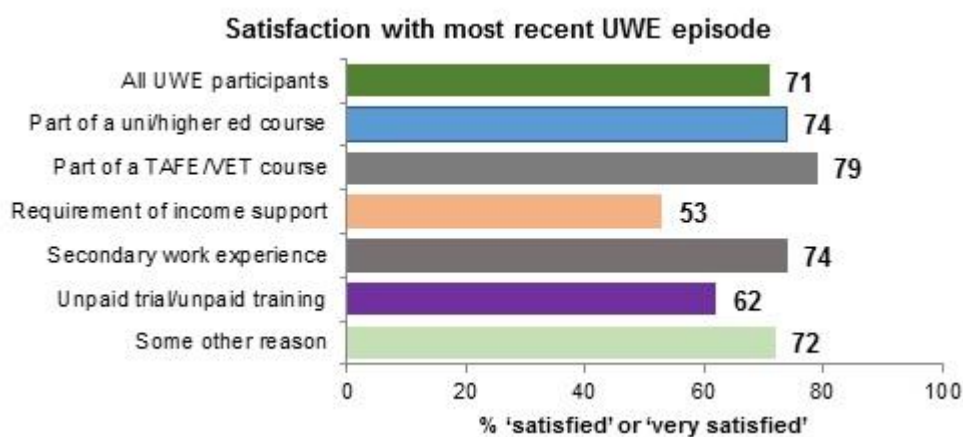
Finding and managing UWE

The most common search strategy overall was the individual organising the placement themselves (47%), followed by the placement being organised by the individual's university, school, TAFE or training provider (39%).

The majority of UWE is undertaken by individuals who are engaged in education or training. However, as noted earlier, a great deal of UWE aligns with the typical definition of internships, that is, being self-organised by students outside formal course requirements, but while still enrolled as a student and prior to the completion of a course of study.

For those undertaking UWE as part of a course of study, the most common field of study overall was management and commerce, followed by society and culture (including psychology, economics and other social sciences, philosophy and the humanities, but not including law). For higher education specifically, health was the most common field (excluding nursing and medicine which were categorised separately), followed by education. This reflects the dominant practice of placements in these disciplines.

Seven out of ten UWE participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their most recent episode.



Experiences and costs of unpaid work experience

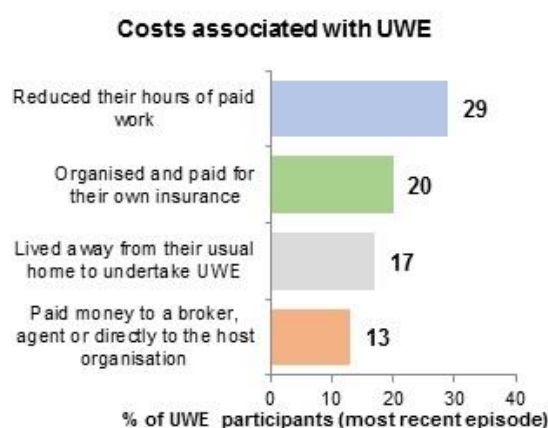
Over 70% of respondents indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the most recent period of UWE. Respondents participating in UWE as part of a course of study indicated higher levels of satisfaction than other participants. Respondents who participated in UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart reported the lowest levels of satisfaction, though more than 50% of these respondents still indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied. Respondents also reported high levels of support being received from within the organisation hosting the UWE.

Around one in five UWE participants received some financial compensation associated with the experience, and a similar proportion reported some reimbursement of expenses.

Respondents reported a variety of costs associated with their most recent period of UWE, including that:

- over a quarter of respondents reduced their hours of paid employment in order to participate in UWE
- one in five respondents organised and paid for their own insurance
- more than one in ten respondents paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the UWE, and
- nearly one in four respondents had to travel longer than one hour to get to their UWE host, and one in six respondents lived away from their usual home to participate in UWE.

Many UWE participants incurred various direct and indirect costs.



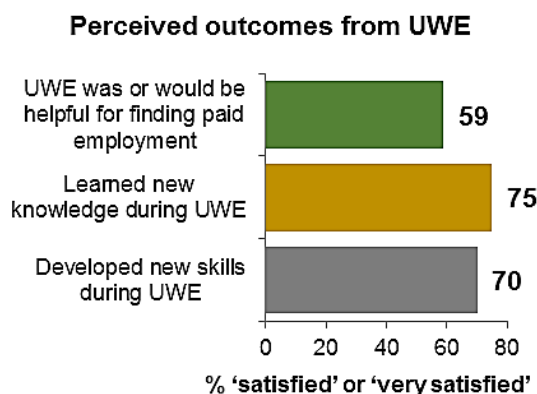
Respondents undertaking UWE as part of a higher education or VET course were more likely to reduce their hours of paid work than those undertaking UWE for other reasons, as might be expected if they were already combining paid work and study.

Perceived outcomes of UWE

Respondents reported a range of specific benefits that had resulted from UWE, especially with respect to skills and knowledge. Around 70% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed relevant skills and new knowledge and this applied to both major age categories. Respondents were slightly less positive about whether the work experience had helped them know how to dress, speak and behave at work. For all reason categories, the extent to which the UWE contributed to knowing how to dress, speak and behave at work was lower than the contribution to skills and knowledge.

Around one in four UWE episodes led to an offer of paid employment with the host organisation.

A majority of UWE participants felt that UWE had helped them develop their skills and knowledge and would assist them to find paid employment



More than one in four respondents (27%) were offered paid employment by the host company or organisation following the period of UWE. The highest proportion of offers was indicated by those undertaking unpaid trial/training work (55%), followed by those who were undertaking UWE as part of a VET course (36%), and those who participated in UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (29%). Current university and VET students and recent graduates were more likely than UWE participants who were not studying to receive an offer of paid employment. UWE participants who were working part-time were more likely to receive an offer of paid employment than respondents who were working full-time, who were unemployed, or who were not working and not looking for work at the time of undertaking UWE. Not unexpectedly, respondents whose most recent episode of UWE had led to an offer of employment viewed the UWE placement more positively, overall, compared to respondents who indicated UWE did not lead to an offer of paid employment.

However, respondents who had participated in UWE in the previous five years, and who were not currently studying, were equally likely to be in full-time employment at the time of completing the survey when compared with respondents who had not undertaken UWE in the last five years. On the face of it, the data does not give any clear indication as to whether or not participating in work experience improves the chances of finding a job, although further analysis may provide some pointers.

1. Introduction

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that unpaid work experience (UWE) has become more common in Australia, in part as a response to a deteriorating youth labour market, but also in recognition of the value of ‘work integrated learning’ (WIL). This is part of a global trend with which many other developed economies are grappling (Owens & Stewart 2016).

The transition from full-time education to paid employment has become more prolonged and more uncertain (Circelli & Oliver 2012). Employers want an assurance that new recruits have ‘employability’ skills as well as good academic or technical credentials (ACCI & BCA 2002). Work placements are well entrenched in some university disciplines and vocational education and training (VET) courses, but their usage is expanding into new disciplines, as universities and vocational education providers are keen to provide their graduates with a labour market advantage (PhillipsKPA 2014).

Governments too are looking to place a greater emphasis on work experience, as part of active labour market schemes to address the needs of the long-term unemployed. This is evident in both the National Work Experience Programme, unveiled in October 2015 by the Turnbull Government (Cash 2015), and its more recent proposal to introduce the PaTH (Prepare-Trial-Hire) Programme, with effect from April 2017 (Australian Government 2016).

UWE arrangements have the potential to provide students, recent graduates and other job-seekers with valuable industry or professional experience as well as contacts. However, although they fit within a long established tradition of work-based learning that includes apprenticeships and traineeships, their form can sometimes be hazy and poorly regulated (Stewart & Owens 2013: 32–38). Yet analysis is limited because there are no reliable national figures as to the prevalence of UWE in Australia, its characteristics, or its impact on future employment outcomes (Parliament of NSW Children and Young People Committee 2014: 19; Stewart & Owens 2013: 28–29).

The project

In late 2015, the Department of Employment agreed to fund a team of researchers to conduct a survey and prepare a report examining the extent and impact of UWE in Australia. The team comprises Dr Damian Oliver (UTS), Professor Paula McDonald (QUT), Professor Andrew Stewart and Associate Professor Anne Hewitt (University of Adelaide).

A project reference group was formed to provide advice to the research team on the conduct of the research project and in particular to provide comment on the questionnaire design. In addition to representatives of the Department of Employment, representatives of the following organisations participated in the project reference group:

- Fair Work Ombudsman
- Interns Australia
- Universities Australia
- National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services
- Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN)
- National Employment Services Association (NESA)
- Business Council of Australia
- Australian Council of Trade Unions, and
- TAFE Directors Australia.

Initial research questions

Although there is ongoing research into regulatory issues surrounding UWE, what is missing is data that establishes the extent and nature of the phenomenon and the impact of work experience on the transition from education to work. This research project was conducted in order to redress this knowledge gap, and in particular to offer answers to the following research questions:

- (1) How common are UWE arrangements in Australia?
- (2) What are the characteristics of UWE placements?
- (3) How do the prevalence and characteristics of UWE placements vary by field of study/work and personal characteristics?
- (4) To what extent do individuals combine UWE with paid work and/or study?
- (5) If UWE is associated with an education or training course, what type of support does the education/training institution provide?
- (6) What search strategies do individuals use to secure UWE? To what extent do internship brokers facilitate UWE and what are their terms and conditions?
- (7) What perceived skills and capacities are acquired through different types of UWE?
- (8) What costs are involved in undertaking UWE, including self-funded insurance and transport?
- (9) What is the perceived impact of UWE on employment outcomes?
- (10) How does that impact vary by field of study/work and personal characteristics?

Outline of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Part 2 describes the background to the survey, reviewing what is already known about the prevalence, nature and impact of work experience schemes in Australia and internationally. Following the review in Part 3 is a concise description of the methods used to design, implement and analyse the survey. The survey presents current, reliable, national data on:

- the prevalence and features of UWE,
- the motivations and experiences of UWE participants,
- the support provided to UWE participants by education and training institutions, and
- the perceived outcomes from UWE.

The results from the survey are organised into five main parts. The first (Part 4) addresses the incidence of UWE and the characteristics of individuals and organisations participating in UWE; the second (Part 5) presents the way in which Australians find and manage UWE arrangements; the third (Part 6) examines the experiences of individuals during UWE; the fourth (Part 7) details the perceived outcomes from UWE. Part 8 presents some of the comments offered by respondents to an open-ended question about their experiences. The conclusion in Part 9 draws together the major findings from the survey, identifies implications for policy and canvasses areas for further research.

2. Background: Previous research on work experience schemes

Profound social and economic changes over the last two decades have created significant challenges for young people seeking entry to the labour market. Participation in unpaid work, often undertaken in the form of internships, work integrated learning (WIL) or episodes of volunteering (Figiel 2013; Perlin 2012), provides evidence of this shift (Gregory 1998). Already seemingly ubiquitous in the education to work trajectories of creative professionals such as artists and journalists, it appears that in the context of competitive graduate labour markets, UWE is becoming increasingly commonplace in other fields of endeavour (Grant-Smith & McDonald, 2016). Whilst advocates underscore the benefits of increased workplace exposure in enhancing the prospects of employment through the development of professional networks and social and professional skills (Gault et al 2010; Knouse & Fontenot 2008), others have highlighted the potential for unsafe work practices and social exclusion (e.g. Brown & Hesketh 2004; Burke & Carton 2013; Allen et al 2013).

Employers, education providers and governments have all contributed to the expansion of participation in UWE. Increasingly, youth employment policy emphasises the importance of providing job-seekers with 'real world' and 'relevant' work exposure and experience (Cullen 2011). The National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER, 2016) recently set out the key features of work-based learning and work-integrated learning with the aim of fostering engagement with industry and employers. The Australian National Career Development Strategy (2013: 8) calls upon Australian businesses and industry 'to provide opportunities for young people to gain exposure to the world of work' to improve what the strategy refers to as 'their employability'. Employability can be understood as the package of skills, personal attributes, knowledge and experiences that provide an individual access to employment (Pool & Sewell 2007). Recent policy proposals illustrate this perceived link between work experience and employability. Under the National Work Experience Programme which was announced in October 2015, eligible job-seekers can volunteer to undertake UWE for up to 25 hours a week, over four weeks, while still receiving income support (Cash 2015). The \$840 million Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare-Trial-Hire) Programme, announced in May 2016, includes employability skills training and access to voluntary internships of four to 12 weeks for job seekers under 25 who are registered with jobactive, as well as a new youth bonus wage subsidy to support the employment of young people (Australian Government 2016).

Despite some emerging Australian and international evidence on the practice of UWE, many gaps in knowledge remain. Most research to date suggests an expansion of the practice, especially by university students, but the extent of participation in different disciplinary fields and industry contexts is largely unknown. Even less attention has been afforded to the employability strategies, including UWE, for vocational education and training (VET) students, secondary students and job-seekers not engaged in education. Given the apparent diversity of experiences, there is also an urgent need to understand the nature and quality of participation by different cohorts. Further, there is very limited evidence as to the extent to which UWE is effective in facilitating employability; that is, in developing the capacities and skills considered desirable by employers and in assisting young people to gain secure employment in their chosen field (Price & Grant-Smith 2016).

Defining unpaid work experience

The concept of UWE is variously defined and delineated in existing international literature. Terms used to describe different kinds of UWE include work integrated learning (WIL) (also referred to as supervised work experience or practicum placements); volunteering; internships; (unpaid) traineeships; and unpaid trial work. Depending on the national context, discipline of study or author's perspective, the definitions and characterisations of these terms are often blurred, overlapping or sometimes not articulated at all. With respect to the latter for example, a recent Australian report into volunteering and unpaid work placements among children and young people (Parliament of NSW Children and Young People Committee 2014) suggested volunteering among young people should be universally promoted and supported. Unpaid work placements on the other hand, whilst acknowledged as an effective means of exposing young people to the workforce and providing them valuable experience if it was 'legitimate' and 'lawful', were considered to create concerns due to 'the impacts of unethical and unlawful placements on young people and the wider workforce' (Parliament of NSW Children and Young People Committee 2014: ix). However, nowhere in the report was there any clear attempt to distinguish between the two terms. The focus in this report is on UWE that does not exhibit the accepted dimensions of volunteering. Volunteering, as defined for this project, is unpaid work that is performed with the *primary* purpose of benefiting someone else or benefiting a particular organisation (e.g. a church, charity or club), rather than to gain experience or contacts that may improve the prospects of future employment.

WIL is defined by Hewitt (2015) as learning experiences organised by educational institutions and in which students are required or encouraged to participate, usually for academic credit. WIL is distinguished from work because it is primarily designed to benefit the study participant who, it is assumed, is receiving a genuine educational benefit from their experience. According to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, WIL can encompass initiatives in which students engage in real-world workplace activities such as internships, practicums and clinical placements, and can also cover involvement in simulated workplace learning environments (Orrell 2011). Each of these learning experiences is united by the fact that they are an intentional aspect of an educational curriculum and that students' learning is situated within the act of working (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden 2010).

The practice of WIL has been embedded in some university disciplines and vocational education and training (VET) courses for many years. In many professional disciplines a set period of WIL is a requirement imposed by licensing or registration bodies (as with medicine, law, nursing and teaching) or professional associations (e.g. engineering and social work). In VET, some training packages set work placement hours as a requirement for certain qualifications (e.g. Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, Certificate III in Individual Support). However, WIL has been expanding into new disciplines and fields of study where such external requirements do not exist as universities and registered training organisations (RTOs) are motivated to provide their graduates with a labour market advantage (PhillipsKPA 2014). Many degree programs in Australian universities now offer supervised work experience with external employers as a structured part of the curriculum, in order for students to gain skills and knowledge which it is presumed they cannot learn in the formal classroom (Orrell 2011, see also Burke & Carton 2013). This appears, in part, to be a response to the belief of some employers that universities are providing students with a strong knowledge base but without the ability to intelligently apply that knowledge in a work setting (Cleary et al 2007).

Outside of WIL placements, students, graduates and others may also undertake additional UWE that is organised through informal networks or via intermediaries or 'brokers'; usually private, for-profit companies. These types of 'open market' UWE are often referred to as internships. However, it is worth noting that in the US context, the term internship generally includes work experience either linked or unlinked with a formal educational program. Such arrangements are seen as containing elements of both work and education/training, even if not organised by universities for the express purpose of education (Jordan-Baird 2013). For example, according to Tovey (2001: 226) an intern in the US context is:

[s]omeone who is involved in part-time or full-time work experience that is related to the student's career goal or major, who may be paid or unpaid, may or may not be receiving academic credit for the internship.

In the European context, 'traineeship' is a term generally used to encompass both WIL, as defined for this report, as well as work experience not connected to formal education. Here however, we distinguish internships from WIL on this basis. The term 'internship' originated in the context of medical education, where it is still used to denote a period early in the postgraduate training of doctors in which they work in hospitals for relatively low pay. Today, interns can be found in a range of industries and occupations, working, sometimes for pay, sometimes not, for private sector businesses, non-profit organisations and government agencies alike (Perlin 2012).

Internships, as the term is typically used in industrialised economies, sit at the boundary between employment and formal education and training. In contrast to the more established notion of an apprenticeship which involves a structured combination of practical work experience and periods of theoretical learning as part of an indentured period of paid employment (Fuller and Unwin 2013), internships are characterised by a student, graduate or other job-seeker spending anywhere from days to months in an organisation, performing actual or mock tasks or assignments, shadowing or observing a more experienced worker, or performing menial tasks for those who have secured positions in the occupation or profession, with the purpose of gaining entry to a job, profession or industry (Hadjivassiliou et al 2012). Unlike WIL programs, internships may be established by an organisation for its own purposes, without any direct link to an educational institution. Or they may be mandated, funded or facilitated by governments as part of proactive labour market policies designed to assist the unemployed (Hadjivassiliou et al 2012). The recently announced National Work Experience and PaTH Programmes in Australia fall into this latter category.

Drivers of unpaid work experience

Several key features of the environment in which young people must negotiate education to work transitions are believed to be influential in the expansion of UWE. From the demand side, labour markets in many fields of endeavour have contracted and competition for entry level jobs has increased. As the International Labour Organisation (2013: 64) has asserted:

Work experience is highly valued by firms and so the lack of such experience constitutes a major obstacle for first-time jobseekers. Many young people are trapped in a vicious circle: they are unable to acquire work experience because they cannot find a first job, but they cannot obtain a job because they do not have work experience.

The more precarious transition to full-time career employment experienced by the current cohort of young people is despite having higher levels of formal qualifications than previous generations. In the UK for example, there are now 30-40% more graduates than jobs needing graduates as measured by skill level (Felstead et al 2007) and over a third of new graduates are now employed in lower skill level jobs not requiring a degree (ONS 2012),

which in turn crowds out lower-skilled youth from the labour market. In Australia, findings from the most recent Australian Graduate Survey show that over a quarter of 2014 university graduates who were available for full-time employment were yet to secure full-time work about four months after completing their studies and were either unemployed or working part-time (Graduate Careers Australia 2015).

Governments and higher education policies are also driving the expansion of UWE. With respect to the former, a wide range of active labour market programs have been adopted to address the issue of youth participation, including encouraging unemployed job-seekers to undertake UWE as part of their government assistance programs. As already mentioned, there are important recent examples or proposals of this kind in Australia.

In response to demands from governments, industry and the broader community that graduates be better prepared for the world of work, universities have (as already noted) incorporated a commitment to WIL in their strategic policies and significantly expanded their WIL programs. This is associated with the perception by educators that WIL is a legitimate pedagogy and a powerful way to learn, as well as responding to feedback from students for more real work experience that will develop their employability (Hewitt 2015; McLennan & Keating 2008). For example, a high proportion of Canadian students who participated in WIL agreed or strongly agreed that the experience had a positive impact on their critical and analytical thinking, improved their knowledge and skills in areas related to their study and helped them appreciate how concepts learned in the classroom applied to the real world (Kramer & Usher 2011).

However, it has been noted that some higher education institutions may also be adding WIL pedagogies to their curricula as one way to strengthen the employment outcomes of traditional academic courses, and make them more attractive to potential students seeking the highest future return for their investment in education (Abeysekera 2006). Additionally, whilst universities generally ensure a substantive academic experience carefully integrated with a carefully monitored or structured period of work (Hewitt 2015), financial pressures may lead some institutions to implement WIL as a cost cutting exercise. This is where tuition for WIL based courses is received without having to provide classrooms, equipment or substantial instruction from educators (Burke & Carton 2013). However, this is mitigated to some extent in Australia by the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. This provides that if WIL courses are to be funded at the same level as other academic courses, they need to be directed and meet specific academic criteria to do with the quality and nature of the university input.

Extent and nature of unpaid work experience

Prior to this study, there were no reliable national figures detailing the prevalence of UWE in Australia, its characteristics and its perceived impact on future employment outcomes. The Australian Workplace Relations Study (AWRS), conducted by the Fair Work Commission in 2014-15,¹ included a small number of questions about unpaid workers (including contributing family members, volunteers, students and interns). This provides some information about the characteristics of workplaces hosting unpaid work experience (split across the categories of students and interns) but not of the UWE participants themselves. Unpublished data from AWRS suggests that up to 27% of enterprises were hosting students and 22% of enterprises

¹ See www.fwc.gov.au/resources/research/australian-workplace-relations-study. We are grateful to the Fair Work Commission for allowing us to use unpublished data from the AWRS.

were hosting interns at the time of the survey. A higher proportion of enterprises in the health care and social assistance; arts and recreation services; education and training, public administration and safety, and information, media and telecommunications industries hosted students. Interns were more common than the national average in enterprises in the information media and telecommunications; arts and recreation services; and health care and social assistance industries. On average, unpaid workers comprised around 3% of enterprises' total workforce. These were predominantly volunteers and unpaid family workers, with students and interns making up less than 1% of the total.

A small number of studies in Australia and internationally provide some insights into the shifting contours of UWE in countries where its prevalence appears to be trending upwards. Seibert and Wilson (2013) for example, discussed the preparedness of creative industries graduates in the UK to work significant unpaid hours. In their report for the Fair Work Ombudsman, Stewart and Owens (2013) conducted small-scale surveys of both educators and law and journalism students that revealed significant evidence of extracurricular UWE arrangements in Australia. Grant-Smith and McDonald (2016), in a small study of urban planning students in Australia, also found that students were engaged in both practicum placements as well as independently sourced UWE, sometimes through what are called internship brokers. These intermediary agents, which charge a fee to place students or recent graduates into internships either in the individual's country of origin or internationally, seem to be increasingly numerous and visible in the youth employment landscape. In relation to international internships specifically, there are already major concerns about the activities of these agencies and their conduct is often resistant to effective national enforcement of labour standards (Gordon 2015).

Carnevale & Hanson (2015) estimate that interns now represent 1.3% of the United States labour force, with around half of all college students reporting having completed internships during their studies, around 50% of which were unpaid.

In Europe, where a more comprehensive survey of 27 countries was undertaken in 2013, 46% of people aged 18-35 years reported having undertaken at least one and often more than one, traineeship, which was defined as 'a limited period of work experience and training spent in a business, public body or non-profit or institution by students of young graduates' (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2013). The report revealed participation rates as high as 79% in The Netherlands and 74% in Germany, and as low as 8% in Lithuania and Slovakia. Of all respondents, 59% reported the most recent traineeship was unpaid and of the remainder which were paid, less than half considered the amount sufficient to live on (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2013). It is unclear what proportion of internships are paid or unpaid in Australia. However, a recent survey of 160 respondents by Interns Australia (2015) suggested that more than 85% of internships were unpaid.

A 2008 national scoping study into the practice of WIL in Australia identified a diverse range of opportunities and experiences, which extend from internships to virtual placements to engaging in simulated work environments (Patrick, Peach & Pocknee 2008). In 2012, Australian university students in health and medical disciplines completed 34.5 million clinical placement hours (Health Workforce Australia 2013). At the University of Sydney alone, students from 12 health and medical disciplines completed 2.4 million hours of WIL in 2012 (Buchanan, Jenkins and Scott 2014). In their report for the Fair Work Ombudsman, Stewart and Owens (2013) reported that one Australian tertiary institution completed an internal audit which revealed thousands of students were undertaking 121 different external placements embedded within its compulsory and elective courses. A Canadian survey has

found similarly widespread experience, with 42% of university students reporting having taken part in some of institutionally organised WIL (Kramer & Usher 2011).

Benefits and risks of unpaid work experience

Evidence suggests that well-designed and managed UWE can develop valuable work-based skills and knowledge, but the longer term impact of UWE on employment outcomes is unclear. Proponents of the practice emphasise the benefits of increased workplace exposure in enhancing employment prospects through the development of professional networks and interpersonal, social and professional skills (Gault et al 2000; Gault et al 2010; Knouse & Fontenot 2008). In particular, formal WIL programs which are embedded into degree programs, well supervised and structured alongside clear learning outcomes, are generally considered by academics, students and prospective employers to provide much-needed exposure to professional practice and valuable learning opportunities (Coiacetto 2004; Freestone, Thompson & Williams 2006; King 2008). From a mainstream employability perspective, UWE which improves skills, knowledge and experience can assist an individual to match their human capital profile to labour market demands and enhance their long-term marketability, which is advantageous in a fluctuating, uncertain economy (Smith 2010; Thijssen et al 2008). Internships undertaken as part of a university degree have also been claimed to improve students' career management skills (Jackson 2016).

However, research addressing the effectiveness of UWE and internships in facilitating longer-term and/or secure employment is scarce and the findings available mixed (Price & Grant-Smith 2016). Some small scale studies indicate that job-seekers may be more effective in acquiring employment if they have undertaken an internship, but that a number of factors impact upon and qualify this relationship (see for example Arcidiacono 2015; Nunley et al 2014). In the European survey cited above, over 70% of respondents considered their most recent traineeship helpful in getting a regular job, although only a quarter reported being offered employment following completion (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2013). A recent review of 57 peer-reviewed articles addressing the impact of internships completed by university students supported the existence of a wide variety of benefits for students, employers and higher education institutions, including improved changes of employment in a career-oriented job after graduation, enhancing job and social skills, and assistance in deciding on career paths (Sanahuja Velez & Ribes Giner 2015). However, the evidence for such claims is largely anecdotal. Predictors of internship effectiveness were greater autonomy during the internship, challenging assignments, students' positive attitudes, and mentoring (Sanahuja Velez & Ribes Giner 2015).

Econometric analysis of the impact of UWE on the likelihood of subsequently finding paid employment is very scarce, probably due to the relative newness of the phenomenon and the difficulty of collecting adequate data. Available evidence tends to focus on the outcomes from work experience placements undertaken by people receiving unemployment benefits as part of active labour market programs. Internationally, most studies have found no positive effect on employment outcomes of participating in mandatory work placements (Heckman, Lalonde and Smith 1999).

Polidano and Tabasso (2013) looked at the impact of combining WIL with VET subjects for upper secondary students, using data from the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY). They found that combining classroom-based VET with short-term structured workplace learning increased the likelihood of subsequent full-time employment and securing a career job. Otherwise, analysis of national datasets (for example) has focused on other factors, such as the influence of participation in part-time work while studying (Anlezark and Lim 2011; Polidano and Zakirova 2011) on later employment outcomes.

Access to unpaid work experience

The trend towards participation in UWE has also raised some concerns about equity of access. Those who are economically disadvantaged may not have the same opportunities to participate in unpaid work due to the imperative of juggling unpaid WIL or internships while also undertaking paid work (often in retail, hospitality and other industries with low levels of professional employment) in order to cover living expenses. These limits to participation may function as a structure of reduced social mobility within the labour market by constraining career opportunities and access to certain employment pathways for those without adequate financial, social and education resources (Curiale 2010; Frenette 2013; Graeber 2011; Grant-Smith & McDonald 2016; McDonald, Oliver & Grant-Smith 2016).

As has been highlighted by the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (Milburn 2009), the Sutton Trust (2014) and the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) in the UK, professions such as politics, journalism, law and finance are dominated by those from privileged backgrounds, not just because of the effect of existing social networks but because wealthy families can afford to support their children undertaking work experience in high cost cities such as London. The problem of equity of access may arise not only in relation to informal, privately organised internship arrangements, but also to what we would define as genuine WIL placements, in the sense that students need to be able to afford travel and accommodation costs if the host employer is not located close to where they live (Grant-Smith & McDonald 2016; Hewitt 2015). In Britain, the Conservative Government is considering banning or at least limiting unpaid internships, out of concern over their potential impact on social mobility (Mason 2016).

Regulating unpaid work experience

The regulatory challenges posed by UWE are increasingly being acknowledged by policy-makers overseas (e.g., ILO 2012; Council of the European Union 2014; Owens & Stewart 2016). For example, a 2012 International Labour Conference resolution encouraged trade unions and employers to engage in collective bargaining as to the working conditions of interns and apprentices and raise awareness about the labour rights of young workers (ILC 2012). In a European Union Council Recommendation (2014), it was noted that while quality traineeships often deliver productivity benefits, improve labour matching and promote mobility, there were potential socio-economic costs associated with traineeships when they replaced regular employment, especially entry-level positions.

The European Union Council Recommendation also asserted that low-quality traineeships with little learning content do not lead to significant productivity gains. Sub-standard learning outcomes may also result from other practices that have been uncovered such as unreasonable workloads (Union of Students in Ireland 2014), or being asked to undertake unethical tasks (Biyana 2009) or engage in risky activities without proper precautions (Perlin 2012). Furthermore, the European Commission (2015) has identified that 'information asymmetry means that applicants for work experience opportunities have real difficulties assessing the quality of placements before committing to them'. The European survey of traineeships revealed that 30% of programs were deficient in terms of either learning content or working conditions and that those who had participated in a substandard traineeship were significantly less likely to find a subsequent job (European Commission 2013).

In Australia there is a growing awareness that unpaid internships and even WIL occupy an ambiguous space in employment and workplace law, and this was highlighted in research commissioned by the Fair Work Ombudsman (Stewart & Owens 2013). However, the *Fair Work Act 2009* provides that an individual undertaking an unpaid placement as a

requirement of an education or training course is not an employee and thus is not entitled to minimum wages, leave entitlements and so on. The *Social Security Act 1991* also has provisions to exempt certain 'approved programmes' of work from the operation of the Fair Work Act.

The Fair Work Ombudsman (2014) has produced a factsheet entitled 'Internships, Vocational Placements and Unpaid Work'. This suggests that UWE in Australia that does not constitute WIL may still be lawful if the person on placement is not doing 'productive' work; or where the main benefit of the arrangement is for the person doing the placement; and the person is receiving a meaningful learning experience, training or skill development. The agency has taken active steps in recent years to address the prevalence of potentially unlawful forms of open market UWE. This has included successfully instituting a number of proceedings against organisations, including media and marketing companies, for using unpaid or underpaid 'interns' to do the work of employees (Stewart 2016).

The achievement of consistent, quality learning outcomes from WIL may also require higher education regulatory authorities to apply more rigorous oversight (Hewitt 2015). Yet the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) imposes only light regulation on self-accrediting universities. This means that students are dependent on the local policies and practices implemented by the specific university in which they are undertaking WIL (Cameron 2013; Hewitt 2015). In VET a similar situation prevails. The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has expressed concerns about the quality of some placement arrangements, such as in early childhood education (ASQA 2015: 12), but the regulator does not play a role in directly auditing placements.

Finally, in terms of responses to the phenomenon of UWE in Australia and overseas, there has been a concerted effort by activist groups of young people to raise awareness of the potential vulnerability of interns and other unpaid workers via social media. Such advocacy groups include Interns Australia, the Geneva Interns Association, the Canadian Intern Association and, in the UK, Intern Aware.

As these responses indicate, there is a tension associated with promoting participation in UWE, whether as a component of a formal course of study or not. The challenge is to continue to provide young people with opportunities for gaining work experience and increase their chances of finding and securing employment, whilst also safeguarding their employment conditions and protecting them in the early stages of their careers.

3. Survey methodology

Objectives of the survey

The primary objective of the survey was to identify the prevalence of UWE in the Australian population. All respondents were asked a series of questions about the number of episodes of UWE they had undertaken in the past five years and more detailed questions about the most recent episode of UWE they had undertaken, including (1) university, VET or secondary school sanctioned work experience placements; (2) unpaid work undertaken to maintain an entitlement to social security benefits; and (3) 'open market' internships or other UWE arranged privately or through an internship broker, without a formal connection to a course of study or labour market assistance program.

The focus on the most recent episode was to avoid reliability issues associated with recall. Specifically, the survey included questions as to:

- duration of the UWE
- any benefits (other than pay) provided, including reimbursement of expenses
- working hours, working conditions and job tasks
- whether completed as part of a course of study
- through what means it was organised/facilitated
- whether the participant was covered by insurance for work-related injury, and
- respondents' perceptions of the skills, capacities and knowledge acquired.

For students undertaking UWE as part of a course of study, the survey instrument also included the following items:

- level of education (secondary school, vocational education and training, higher education institution and degree)
- discipline or field of study, and
- level and type of support provided by the education institution (eg pre-placement induction, visits to the placement, placement screening, associated learning or assessment opportunities, etc.).

Background demographics, including access to government and family financial support, as well as educational background of respondents' parents, were also collected.

Instrument design

In January 2016, the research team prepared a draft survey instrument. A survey conducted across the European Union (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2013) provided a useful starting point for the design of the questionnaire, though the final design took into account Australia's distinct educational and workplace relations frameworks. Reference was also made to the 2015 Interns Australia survey, the Australian Graduate Survey, and the Student Outcomes Survey.

Project reference group members were invited to provide feedback on the draft instrument in February-March 2016.

In April 2016, cognitive testing on the draft instrument was conducted using students from TAFE SA and the University of South Australia. Following the cognitive testing, minor changes were made to the questionnaire, mainly in relation to the collection of income information and items relating to the activities conducted by participants during UWE.

A small online pilot was conducted in April 2016 using volunteers from Interns Australia. The purpose of this pilot was mainly to test the programming of the online survey and check for any errors. No substantial changes to the questionnaire were made following the pilot.

The final questionnaire administered for the research is provided in Appendix A.

Definition of unpaid work experience

For the purposes of the survey, the research team defined UWE as follows:

Work experience is any period of time spent in a workplace to develop skills and gain experience. This could be part of a course of study at university, TAFE or another registered training organisation, or at school. It could be part of a formal placement or internship program at an organisation. It could be work for the dole or another activity organised by a Jobactive provider. Or it could be an informal period of unpaid work experience that you have arranged yourself.

Unpaid work experience is work experience for which you do not receive an hourly or weekly wage. If you receive reimbursement of expenses or a small allowance, but not wages, that will still count as unpaid work.

Please do not include instances of volunteering. We define volunteering as unpaid work that is performed with the primary purpose of benefiting someone else or benefiting a particular organisation (e.g. a church, charity or club), rather than the primary purpose being to gain experience or contacts that may improve your prospects of future employment.

To avoid difficulties with respondent recall, and to focus on current practices and experiences of UWE, the survey asked respondents only to consider UWE that had occurred within the last five years.

Target population and sample

The population of interest was adult Australians of working age (18–64). The sample was constructed to be nationally representative (with strata based on state, age and sex). Young people (18–29) were over-sampled since they were anticipated to be more likely to have recently participated in UWE. Many of the tables reported in the results reflect this emphasis on age differences.

The sample was accessed using an online panel. The survey was branded as a university research survey and hosted on the secure Qualtrics server through the UTS Business School account. The Online Research Unit (ORU), an Australian-based online research panel provider with experience working with universities, provided the sample. Acknowledged limitations of online surveys include that some respondents may falsify their demographic information and that they may suffer from coverage error, which is the difference between the defined target population of interest and the population frame used for the study (Couper, 2000). That is, it cannot be known for certain whether these survey respondents were equally, more, or less likely to have participated in UWE than if an alternative sampling frame had been adopted (for example, a household survey).

However, mitigating these general limitations of panel surveys is that ORU adopts a range of techniques to ensure the integrity of its research panel, such as predominantly recruiting offline and only sending incentives and participation rewards by post. Methodological comparisons of panel surveys and telephone surveys show that panels can produce more reliable and consistent data estimates (Braunsberger et al, 2007). Further advantages of using an existing research panel are the ability to easily stratify the sample (such as by age,

gender and location) and speed. Online panels are increasingly being used by governments and businesses as an alternative to telephone interviewing for surveys.

The target number of responses was 2000 18-29 year olds and 1500 30-64 year olds.

Ethics approval

Approval from the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee was obtained on 1 March 2016. As part of the approval process, the researchers gave assurances that the survey would be free from undue influence from research sponsors and stakeholders. As a requirement of ethics approval, survey participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

Field work

The survey entered the field on 19 April 2016. Australians registered with ORU between the ages of 18 and 64 (inclusive) were invited to take part in the survey. Survey respondents were asked an initial question to confirm their age. A small number of respondents stated that they were outside the age range for the survey. These respondents were screened out. Survey responses were monitored daily to check age, gender and location targets. The quota for male and female respondents aged between 30 and 64 was achieved on 29 April 2016. The survey was then closed to these respondents – any responses from respondents aged 30-64 after this date were also screened out. The quota for male and female respondents aged 18-29 was reached on 4 May 2016 and the survey was closed at this point.

In total, 39,250 panel members were invited to participate in the survey. Of these, 4050 panel members commenced the survey (yielding a response rate of 10%). This includes 63 respondents who were screened out because they were out of the 18-64 age range, 72 respondents who were aged 30-64 and who responded after the quotas for this age range were met, 108 respondents who started but did not complete the survey, and 7 respondents who completed the survey but who were currently resident outside Australia.

There were 3800 usable responses, which includes valid answers to whether the respondent had participated in UWE in the last five years and essential demographic information (age, sex, state/territory). Some other items may have a lower number of responses due to respondents choosing not to answer that question.

Table 1 shows the age, sex and state breakdown for the survey sample and compares this data to population benchmarks from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The sample is representative by sex and broadly representative by state (Victoria is over-represented by 5% and other states under-represented by a smaller amount). After taking into account the deliberate decision to oversample 18-29 year olds, the sample under-represents 18-24 year olds by approximately 5%.

Table 1 Breakdown of survey sample by age, sex and location and comparison with national benchmark

Location	Survey 'N'	Survey % (unweighted)	Australia (ABS %)
NSW	1109	29.2	31.7
Victoria	1121	29.5	25.2
Queensland	715	18.8	19.9
Western Australia	393	10.3	11.1
South Australia	286	7.5	7.0
Tasmania	80	2.1	2.1
ACT	80	2.1	1.7
Northern Territory	16	0.4	1.1

Sex	Survey 'N'	Survey % (unweighted)	Australia (ABS %)
Male	1960	51.6	49.9
Female	1837	48.3	50.1
Indeterminate/ Intersex/ Unspecified	3	0.1	-

Age	Survey 'N'	Survey % (unweighted)	Australia (ABS %)
18-24	996	26.2	15.3
25-29	1037	27.3	11.8
<i>Total 18-29</i>	2033	53.5	27.1
30-39	491	12.9	22.4
40-49	435	11.4	21.6
50-64	841	22.1	28.9
<i>Total 30-64</i>	1767	46.5	72.9
Total usable responses	3800	100	

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. *n* = 3800.

In the main survey, only respondents who participated in UWE as a requirement of a course of study were asked for details of the qualification they were enrolled in. Once the survey was closed, the research team decided to re-survey 423 respondents who indicated that they had been enrolled in a course of study, or had recently graduated from a higher education or VET course, but who had undertaken UWE separate from the formal requirements of their course. This provided information about the course of study for individuals who had undertaken UWE as a requirement of, as well as external to, a formal course of study. This re-survey opened on 11 May 2016 and closed on 25 May 2016. Of the 423 initial respondents, 235 responded to the follow-up survey.

Responses were weighted to reflect the overall incidence in the Australian population by age and gender.

In the survey, SES was measured using the approach taken by Long and Hayden (2001) in their survey of undergraduate student finances. This involves asking respondents about both parents' highest level of education (where known and applicable). The distribution was then divided into quartiles, with the top quartile (high SES) equivalent of both parents having completed a bachelor degree (or higher), the bottom quartile (low SES) equivalent to both parents having some secondary schooling, the second quartile equivalent to both parents having completed secondary schooling and/or a trade, and the third quartile equivalent to one parent having a bachelor degree, or both parents having some combination of post-secondary education. To avoid conflating SES and age effects, the report only presents cross tabulations by SES for respondents aged under 30.

4. Prevalence and characteristics of UWE

This part addresses the following research questions:

- (1) How common are UWE arrangements in Australia?
- (2) What are the characteristics of UWE placements?
- (3) How do the prevalence and characteristics of UWE placements vary by field of study/work and personal characteristics?

The survey results clearly indicate that UWE is very common in Australia. As Table 2 demonstrates, more than half (58%) of respondents aged 18-29 and more than a quarter of respondents (26%) aged 30-64 had participated in at least one episode of UWE in the last five years. The survey results suggest that, overall, a third of working age Australians (34%), or approximately 5.1 million Australians, have participated in at least one episode of UWE in the last five years.

Table 2 “In the last five years, have you undertaken any unpaid work experience” by age (column %)

Undertaken unpaid work experience in last five years	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
Yes	58.1	25.5	34.4
No	38.5	71.9	62.8
Don't know/ Not sure	3.5	2.6	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 2033; n (30-64) = 1767.

Table 3 indicates the likelihood of participating in UWE as a function of demographic grouping. In terms of age of respondent, there was a decreasing and linear relationship between the age of respondents and whether they had participated in UWE in the last five years. That is, although older respondents were by no means unlikely to have done UWE (indeed 16% of 50-64 year olds had participated), the older the respondent, the less likely this was to be the case.

A similar linear trend was evident for SES. As the SES of respondents aged 18–29 increased, so did the likelihood of participating in UWE in the last five years. Further evidence of differential levels of participation according to opportunities is that individuals living in a capital city were more likely to have undertaken UWE than those in a city or town and much more than those not living in a city or town. Men were more likely to have participated in UWE in the last five years than women (37% compared to 32%).

Table 3 Participation in unpaid work experience, by age, sex, socio-economic status, location (row %)

In the last five years, have you undertaken any unpaid work experience?		Yes	No	Don't know / Not sure	Total
Age	18-24	65.3	31.0	3.6	100.0
	25-29	48.7	48.2	3.1	100.0
	30-39	40.2	56.1	3.6	100.0
	40-49	23.5	74.2	2.3	100.0
	50-64	15.7	82.3	2.0	100.0
Sex	Female	31.5	66.1	2.5	100.0
	Male	37.2	59.6	3.2	100.0
SES (18 to 29 only)	Missing	50.5	40.4	9.1	100.0
	Low SES	53.3	44.4	2.2	100.0
	Lower-Middle SES	57.3	41.0	1.7	100.0
	Upper-Middle SES	59.9	36.6	3.4	100.0
	Higher SES	63.7	32.7	3.5	100.0
Location	In a capital city	36.2	60.7	3.1	100.0
	In another city or town	31.9	66.1	1.9	100.0
	Not in a city or town	23.5	73.3	3.2	100.0
	Not sure/ Don't know	45.0	35.0	20.0	100.0
Total		34.4	62.8	2.8	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n =3800 (except SES). SES unweighted n=1031.

Of the respondents who had undertaken UWE in the last five years, a third had undertaken a single episode, while another quarter had undertaken two episodes. However, as Table 4 shows, a minority of respondents had experienced more than two episodes. One in five had undertaken five or more episodes and one in ten had undertaken eight or more episodes of UWE in the last five years. The median number of episodes was two, and this was the same regardless of age, sex, socio-economic status, or reason for undertaking UWE.

Table 4 Number of episodes of UWE in last five years

Number of episodes	Percent	Cumulative percent
1	37.3	37.3
2	25.9	63.2
3	11.2	74.4
4	4.9	79.3
5	7.0	86.3
6	2.5	88.8
7	0.7	89.5
8	0.6	90.0
9	0.2	90.3
10	3.8	94.0
11	0.1	94.2
12	0.8	95.0
14	0.1	95.1
15	0.3	95.4
20 or more	4.6	100.0
Total	100.0	

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1477.

Across all reasons for undertaking the most recent episode of UWE, a majority of UWE participants had only undertaken one or two placements in the last five years (see Table 5). The reason categories with the largest number of participants reporting 6 or more episodes in the last five years were those nominating some other reason for their most recent episode (21%) and respondents undertaking their most recent episode as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (20%).

Table 5 Number of episodes of UWE in last five years by reason for undertaking most recent episode of UWE (column %)

Number of Episodes	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason	Total
1	30.1	35.6	41.2	54.4	40.0	35.4	37.3
2	30.0	26.2	16.6	22.8	30.4	24.3	25.9
3	16.2	13.1	9.2	11.2	10.9	7.0	11.2
4	7.2	4.2	7.5	2.6	5.5	3.6	4.9
5	6.7	9.2	5.4	1.8	5.8	8.4	7.0
6-10	8.6	5.1	8.2	6.0	4.0	11.2	7.8
11 or more	1.2	6.5	12.0	1.2	3.4	10.1	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1477.

Reason for undertaking unpaid work experience

Overall, approximately two in five respondents (39%) participated in their most recent episode of UWE as part of a higher education or VET course. As Table 6 shows, this participation rate amounted to nearly half (46%) of 18-29 year olds. However a majority of the sample had undertaken their most recent episode of UWE for reasons aside from education. Around 9% had undertaken unpaid trial work – that is, where the work was undertaken in an organisation as a way of assessing whether the person was suitable for the job. A further 4% had completed unpaid training or work orientation following a job offer. Finally, 8% of respondents indicated the UWE was a requirement of maintaining Youth Allowance or Newstart and this participation rate was higher for older than younger respondents. Approximately a third of the sample (30%) indicated ‘none of the above’, but the survey did not collect further details on their reasons. This category incorporated UWE arrangements that were likely to have been organised independently by participants themselves, or arranged through informal networks outside of educational requirements or other institutional programs. Many arrangements in this category would be typically thought of as internships. The high frequency of such arrangements is consistent with evidence from previous studies (both here and overseas) suggesting the expansion of open market forms of UWE, as noted in Part 2.

Table 6 Main reason for undertaking unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Reason	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
It was organised as part of a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider	29.9	11.1	19.8
It was organised as part of a certificate or diploma course at TAFE or another registered training organisation	15.7	21.5	18.8
It was a requirement of maintaining Youth Allowance or Newstart	6.6	9.5	8.2
It was organised as part of secondary school work experience	16.2	4.0	9.6
I was applying for a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was a trial to see if I was suitable	7.3	10.5	9.0
I had been offered a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was part of my training or orientation	3.9	4.7	4.4
None of the above	20.4	38.6	30.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

Men and women were about equally likely to do unpaid work for all reasons except for Youth Allowance/Newstart where men were twice as likely than women to participate for this reason (10% vs 6%). A full breakdown by sex is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Main reason for undertaking most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by sex (column %)

Reason	Female	Male	Total
It was organised as part of a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider	20.1	19.4	19.8
It was organised as part of a certificate or diploma course at TAFE or another registered training organisation	21.0	17.0	18.8
It was a requirement of maintaining Youth Allowance or Newstart	5.6	10.3	8.2
It was organised as part of secondary school work experience	8.1	10.9	9.6
I was applying for a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was a trial to see if I was suitable	8.0	9.9	9.0
I had been offered a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was part of my training or orientation	4.2	4.5	4.4
None of the above	33.0	28.0	30.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Characteristics of unpaid work experience placements and participants

Overall, experiences of UWE were quite recent. More than half of all respondents who reported undertaking UWE indicated the most recent episode had occurred in the previous year (see Table 8). This included one in seven of those respondents who were undertaking UWE at the time the survey was administered. Those aged 30-64 were even more likely than those in the 18-29 year age group to be undertaking UWE currently.

Table 8 Occurrence of most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Most recent episode?	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
I am currently undertaking unpaid work experience	13.6	16.6	15.5
In the last three months	17.4	19.7	18.6
At least three months ago but less than six months ago	10.7	12.2	11.5
At least six months ago but less than a year ago	13.1	14.9	14.1
One year or more ago	43.8	33.2	38.1
Not sure/ Can't remember	1.4	3.3	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

As Table 9 shows, those who had undertaken UWE as part of a secondary school work experience program were far more likely to say that it was not a recent experience (one year or more ago) than those who had done UWE for other reasons. For those who had done UWE for other reasons, there were no major differences in terms of the recentness of the experience.

Table 9 Occurrence of most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Occurrence of most recent episode	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
I am currently undertaking unpaid work experience	17.1	15.7	25.0	9.0	5.4	17.4
In the last three months	19.0	26.3	20.3	14.0	16.8	15.4
At least three months ago but less than six months ago	11.3	10.8	14.8	8.5	13.4	11.3
At least six months ago but less than a year ago	14.8	10.1	15.3	8.7	17.3	16.0
One year or more ago	34.9	36.0	23.0	59.8	45.1	35.5
Not sure/ Can't remember	2.9	1.1	1.7	-	1.9	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Further supporting the pervasiveness of UWE in Australia were findings about duration, as shown in Table 10. The majority of respondents (61%) indicated their most recent episode of UWE was for less than one month. Respondents in the older group were more likely than younger individuals to indicate the UWE was for one day or less. However, for over one third (36%) of the sample, the UWE lasted for more than one month and for one in ten respondents, the overall duration was for six months or more. More is said below about comparisons between duration and total hours.

Table 10 Duration of most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Duration	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
One day or less	7.9	13.5	10.9
More than one day but less than a week	19.3	25.6	22.7
At least a week but less than a month	35.7	20.2	27.3
At least a month but less than three months	16.8	14.3	15.4
At least three months but less than six months	10.0	9.4	9.7
Six months or more	8.2	13.3	10.9
Not sure/ Can't remember	2.2	3.7	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

There were also some apparent differences in UWE duration by sex, as shown in Table 11. Although men were more likely to have participated in unpaid work, the duration over which the unpaid work experience lasted was longer for women. For around half of women (43%), the unpaid work experience was undertaken over a period of more than one month, whereas only one-third (30%) of men participated over this longer period of time.

Table 11 Duration of UWE, by sex (column %)

Duration	Female	Male	Total
One day or less	8.6	12.8	10.9
More than one day but less than a week	20.1	24.9	22.7
At least a week but less than a month	24.9	29.4	27.3
At least a month but less than three months	18.5	12.9	15.4
At least three months but less than six months	11.1	8.5	9.7
Six months or more	13.7	8.6	10.9
Not sure/ Can't remember	3.2	2.9	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

Table 12 shows the duration of UWE according to the reason it was undertaken. The reasons with the highest proportion of durations lasting less than a week were as part of an unpaid trial or unpaid training (43%) and as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (36%). Respondents who participated in UWE for some other reason were the most likely to have participated in UWE over a period of three months or more (34%).

Table 12 Duration of most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Duration of most recent episode	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
One day or less	8.7	7.9	11.0	7.3	13.8	14.1
More than one day but less than a week	19.1	26.2	24.9	23.1	28.7	19.5
At least a week but less than a month	30.7	29.1	24.9	55.1	31.5	14.1
At least a month but less than three months	22.4	19.8	13.8	6.4	12.4	12.8
At least three months but less than six months	9.0	8.0	11.8	2.9	8.9	13.0
Six months or more	8.4	7.1	11.4	3.8	3.4	20.5
Not sure/ Can't remember	1.7	1.8	2.2	1.4	1.3	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Duration only tells part of the story about the degree of investment in UWE because some UWE episodes may be commensurate with full-time hours whereas others may involve only very short hours, either over a long or short time period. Another way to assess the pervasiveness of UWE is to ask about the total number of hours comprising the most recent episode, noting that those hours may be worked over a period spanning weeks or even months. Comparing the findings in Table 12 and Table 13, it seems many of the episodes of UWE reported were undertaken in part-time hours. For example, although only 11% of respondents indicated they worked for one day or less, around a quarter (27%) stated they had worked for seven hours or less. Similarly, whilst only one quarter (23%) worked for more than one day but less than a week, more than one-third had undertaken UWE for more than seven hours but less than 35 hours (or one week full-time). However, for one in five respondents (9%) who had undertaken UWE, participation had involved more than four weeks of full-time hours in total. In a similar trend to duration, there was a slight tendency for older respondents to indicate shorter hours overall and for younger respondents to indicate they had invested longer hours.

Table 13 Number of hours spent during most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Number of hours	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
Seven hours or less (approximately one full day)	20.9	33.0	27.4
More than seven hours but less than 35 hours (approximately one week full-time)	37.4	33.1	35.0
At least 35 hours but less than 70 hours (approximately two weeks full-time)	17.6	12.6	14.9
At least 70 hours but less than 140 hours (approximately four weeks full-time)	10.3	9.5	9.8
140 hours or more (more than 4 weeks full-time)	10.9	7.8	9.2
Not sure/ Can't remember	3.1	4.1	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

In a similar trend to duration, women participated in significantly more total hours of unpaid work than men. As shown in Table 14, around one quarter (24%) of women participated in unpaid work experience for four weeks full-time or longer, compared to only 14% of men.

Table 14 Number of hours of most recent episode of UWE, by sex

Number of hours	Female	Male	Total
Seven hours or less (approximately one full day)	28.3	26.7	27.4
More than seven hours but less than 35 hours (approximately one week full-time)	31.3	38.2	35.0
At least 35 hours but less than 70 hours (approximately two weeks full-time)	12.2	17.1	14.9
At least 70 hours but less than 140 hours (approximately four weeks full-time)	12.7	7.4	9.8
140 hours or more (more than 4 weeks full-time)	11.6	7.1	9.2
Not sure/ Can't remember	3.8	3.5	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Table 15 considers the number of total hours (as opposed to hours per week) spent undertaking paid work according to reason and shows an even stronger trend towards more intensive engagement in UWE where it was part of a higher education course than was indicated in the duration statistics. Here, the results show that more than one third (34%) of respondents who reported UWE as part of a higher education course spent 4 weeks full-time or more doing so. This compared to only 19% for UWE that was undertaken as part of a VET course, 16% for where the UWE was a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart and 13% for those doing unpaid trial work or unpaid training. Conversely, less than half of respondents in the higher education course category undertook paid work for one week full-time or less, whereas for all other categories, this figure was more than half. These findings suggest that individuals undertaking higher education are investing the longest hours and the longest periods of time in UWE. Of course it might be expected that for many in this category, the hours in question would be part of their expected studies, rather than requiring an additional time commitment.

Table 15 Number of hours spent during most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Number of hours	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
Seven hours or less (approximately one full day)	18.9	17.0	24.8	15.4	29.4	25.2
More than seven hours but less than 35 hours (approximately one week full-time)	29.1	39.6	37.1	58.1	35.9	32.1
At least 35 hours but less than 70 hours (approximately two weeks full-time)	16.4	21.9	21.3	19.6	18.0	13.0
At least 70 hours but less than 140 hours (approximately four weeks full-time)	15.0	12.3	2.6	4.2	8.6	9.9
140 hours or more (more than 4 weeks full-time)	18.7	6.5	13.2	1.5	4.6	13.0
Not sure/ Can't remember	2.0	2.8	1.1	1.2	3.5	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Characteristics of organisations providing unpaid work experience

As Table 16 illustrates, nearly two-thirds of all UWE reported by the sample was undertaken in small to medium sized organisations employing 5 to 199 workers. Only 9% of UWE arrangements were undertaken in larger organisations with more than 200 workers. This result may challenge some common public and media perceptions that those undertaking UWE, especially interns, gain experience primarily in large organisations.

Table 16 Size of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Size of organisation	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
1 to 4 workers	14.3	17.1	15.8
5 to 19 workers	37.4	36.1	36.7
20 to 199 workers	29.8	30.2	30.0
200 or more workers	10.3	8.0	9.1
Don't know/ Not applicable	8.2	8.6	8.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

Overall, Table 17 shows that the patterns of UWE participation in organizations of different sizes, for different age groups, also held for reason. Most respondents, irrespective of the reason for participating, reported the UWE occurred in small to medium sized organisations. One exception to this was UWE that was undertaken as part of a higher education course, where about twice as many respondents indicated they had worked in a large organisation (200+ workers) than those whose work experience was part of a VET course, Newstart or secondary work experience.

Table 17 Size of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Size of organisation	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
1 to 4 workers	10.7	12.2	13.6	11.5	19.7	21.8
5 to 19 workers	30.7	43.3	52.3	39.2	39.4	30.1
20 to 199 workers	36.6	36.0	27.6	35.5	24.4	23.4
200 or more workers	13.8	4.9	2.3	9.2	12.5	8.9
Don't know/ Not applicable	8.1	3.7	4.1	4.5	4.0	15.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

The industries in which respondents undertook their most recent form of UWE varied widely. As Table 18 shows, together, three industries: Education/Training, Social/Community Services and Health Care, accounted for more than 40% of all UWE episodes. However, the remaining five industries listed as categories² in the survey constituted between 5 and 10% each of reported UWE arrangements and a further 19% of respondents indicated 'Other'.³ Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to have worked in Social/Community services but less likely to have worked in Retail, Hospitality, Commercial and Legal Services, and Media, IT and Creative Industries. The final column of Table 18 shows the proportion of total national employment in each industry category, to indicate which industries are over- or under-represented in terms of UWE. The industries whose

² The eight industry categories are based on ANZSIC categories at the Division and Subdivision level. All other ANZSIC categories were collapsed into the other category.

³ It is likely that many respondents who indicated 'Other' did not know the industry category in which they had undertaken UWE.

share of UWE participants exceeds their national share of employment are: Aged Care, Child Care and Other Social/Community Services (12% difference), Education and Training (7%), Media, IT and Creative Industries (5%), and Health Care (4%). The distribution of industries is broadly consistent with the AWRS data referred to in Part 2. The AWRS results would suggest that the most common industries in the other category are likely to be Public Administration and Safety, and Manufacturing.

Table 18 Industry of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by age, and corresponding share of national employment (column %)

Industry	UWE participants 18-29	UWE participants 30-64	UWE participants 18-64	National employment
Aged care, child care and other social/community services	13.3	20.9	17.4	5.4
Commercial and legal services (includes accounting, banking, finance, insurance, law, marketing)	8.3	6.2	7.2	10.0
Construction, architecture, building, property and real estate	9.1	8.7	8.9	12.7
Education and training	13.2	15.5	14.4	7.9
Health care	12.0	10.7	11.3	7.6
Hospitality (includes accommodation, cafes, restaurants, pubs)	8.3	5.0	6.5	7.1
Media, IT and creative industries (includes publishing, broadcasting, graphic design, web design, fashion, design, public relations)	11.0	6.7	8.7	3.7
Retail (includes supermarkets, fashion stores, bakeries and other food retailing)	7.9	5.7	6.7	10.4
Other	16.9	20.6	18.9	35.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.; ABS Cat no 6291, May 2016

Comparing industry sectors by reason for UWE, Table 19 shows that UWE in each category was undertaken in a wide range of settings. Aged Care, Child Care and Other Social/Community Services was the most common industry for respondents undertaking UWE as part of a VET course (20%), and as a requirement of Youth Allowance and Newstart (19%). If UWE was undertaken as part of a higher education course, Health Care was the most frequent industry (21%).

Table 19 Industry of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Industry	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
Aged care, child care and other social/community services	12.8	19.5	18.6	10.9	13.3	22.7
Commercial and legal services (includes accounting, banking, finance, insurance, law, marketing)	13.4	10.0	4.9	7.4	7.0	1.9
Construction, architecture, building, property and real estate	5.0	12.2	13.5	11.9	13.1	5.2
Education and training	18.2	14.4	11.0	14.4	10.5	14.7
Health care	20.6	8.5	8.7	12.6	5.6	9.7
Hospitality (includes accommodation, cafes, restaurants, pubs)	4.2	8.9	6.3	7.9	9.8	4.7
Media, IT and creative industries (includes publishing, broadcasting, graphic design, web design, fashion, design, public relations)	8.4	5.7	9.5	11.8	8.8	9.5
Retail (includes supermarkets, fashion stores, bakeries and other food retailing)	5.8	6.2	10.2	12.4	11.3	2.9
Other	11.5	14.6	17.3	10.7	20.5	28.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Just less than half (46% overall) of respondents had undertaken their most recent episode of UWE in an organisation in the private/for-profit sector. As Table 20 indicates, this was followed in terms of frequency by not-for-profit organisations and finally public sector organisations. Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to have participated in for-profit and public sector organisations and less likely to have participated in not-for-profits. The final column of Table 20 shows the share of national employment within each sector (based on figures from June 2013, the latest available data for the not-for-profit sector). The results strongly indicate that the not-for-profit sector hosts more UWE placements, and the for-profit sector fewer UWE placements, than their share of employment would indicate, while the public sector shares of UWE placements and employment are practically identical. Sectors are closely related to industries, however, and the finding could be an artefact of the high proportions of UWE participants undertaking placements in Aged Care, Child Care and Other Social/Community Services and Health Care, where not-for-profit organisations are more common.

Table 20 Sector of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by age and corresponding share of national employment (column %)

Sector	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64	National employment
Private sector/for-profit organisation	47.3	43.9	45.5	74.5
Not-for-profit organisation	23.0	34.7	29.3	9.3
Public sector organisation	18.8	13.8	16.1	16.2
Don't know/ Not applicable	10.9	7.6	9.1	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432; ABS Cat nos 5256, 6248, 6202, June 2013

Table 21 shows that differences by sex were also apparent across sector. Women were significantly more likely than men to participate in unpaid work experience in the public sector (21% compared to 12%), whilst men were significantly more likely than women to do unpaid work in the private/for-profit sector (50% compared to 40%) and the not-for-profit sector (31% compared to 27%).

Table 21 Sector of organisation hosting most recent episode of UWE, by sex (column %)

Sector	Female	Male	Total
Private sector/for-profit organisation	40.3	49.8	45.5
Not-for-profit organisation	27.2	31.1	29.3
Public sector organisation	21.1	11.8	16.1
Don't know/ Not applicable	11.3	7.3	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Large differences were evident with respect to the reason for undertaking UWE by sector. As Table 22 shows, a majority of respondents undertaking UWE as part of a higher education course (55%) or as part of an unpaid trial or unpaid training after an offer of employment (64%) took place in the private/for-profit sector. Half of all respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (53%) and over a quarter of respondents undertaking UWE as part of a VET course (27%) or for some other reason (40%) worked in not-for-profit organisations.

Table 22 Sector of organisation hosting unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Sector	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
Private sector/for-profit organisation	55.3	50.5	38.5	36.9	64.4	32.1
Not-for-profit organisation	16.6	27.2	52.9	22.7	17.1	40.1
Public sector organisation	22.9	16.4	4.9	28.3	10.6	13.0
Don't know/ Not applicable	5.2	5.9	3.6	12.0	7.9	14.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

The survey did not collect information about the occupation linked to the UWE placement. Many interns in particular identify UWE as linked to a particular industry rather than a particular job role or occupation. However, some insight into the types of jobs in which UWE participants are training can be gained from their current occupations. This assumes that there is a connection between the UWE placement and the current occupation for many respondents. However it is also possible that, particularly for more recent UWE participants, there is not a match between their current occupation and their UWE if the reason for undertaking the UWE was to move to a different field.

Table 23 shows the top 25 current occupations for UWE participants. To attempt to gain a more accurate picture of this data, respondents who were currently studying were excluded from the analysis (as were respondents who were not currently working). The percentages also exclude responses that could not be accurately coded. The top occupation (grouped at the ANZSCO 2-digit level) is Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals. Other manager categories (Managers not further defined, Specialist Managers, Chief Executives) also featured in the top 20. The second most common occupation was Sales Assistants and Salespersons, reflecting that many UWE participants may be yet to transition to full-time employment. Education Professionals (which includes Teachers), ICT Professionals, Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals, and Health Professionals are also in the top ten. VET-trained roles in the top 25 occupations included General Clerical Workers, Inquiry Clerks and Receptionists, Health and Welfare Support Workers, Office Managers and Program Administrators, Carers and Aides, Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers, and Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians.

Table 23 Top 25 current occupations of UWE participants (excluding current students) (column %)

Current occupation (ANZSCO 2 digit level)	Percent
Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals	8.9
Sales Assistants and Salespersons	6.9
Education Professionals	5.8
ICT Professionals	5.4
General Clerical Workers	5.3
Managers not further defined	5.2
Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals	4.5
Specialist Managers	3.9
Health Professionals	3.7
Inquiry Clerks and Receptionists	3.3
Chief Executives, General Managers and Legislators	3.2
Health and Welfare Support Workers	2.9
Office Managers and Program Administrators	2.8
Carers and Aides	2.7
Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers	2.3
Numerical Clerks	2.2
Arts and Media Professionals	2.1
Hospitality Workers	1.9
Protective Service Workers	1.8
Sales Support Workers	1.8
Food Preparation Assistants	1.8
Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians	1.7
Construction Trades Workers	1.7
Other Technicians and Trades Workers	1.6

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 436.

5. Finding and managing unpaid work experience

The following section addresses three research questions:

- (1) What search strategies do individuals use to secure UWE? To what extent do internship brokers facilitate UWE and what are their terms and conditions?
- (2) How do the prevalence and characteristics of UWE placements vary by field of study/work and personal characteristics?
- (3) To what extent do individuals combine UWE with paid work and/or study?

Search strategies

The survey asked a series of questions about the kinds of search strategies used to secure UWE, including the use of brokers or external agencies which are thought to be increasing in number and influence in the expansion of UWE as a phenomenon. Search strategies are distinct from the reasons for undertaking UWE. For example university students who undertake UWE as a course requirement may have the placement organised by the higher education institution, or it may be self-organised through existing networks, current employers or an open advertisement. Respondents could select multiple strategies. The results in Table 24 demonstrate that the most common search strategy overall was the individual organising the placement themselves (47%), followed by the placement being organised by the individual's university, school, TAFE or training provider (39%).

Table 24 Search strategies for obtaining unpaid work experience placement, by age (% answering yes, multiple responses possible)

Search strategy	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
The work experience was organised by my university, school, TAFE or training provider	49.3	29.7	38.7
The work experience was organised by my job services provider	19.8	21.8	20.9
I responded to an advertisement about the work experience opportunity	24.7	22.4	23.4
I already had a paid job at the organisation	14.3	17.2	15.9
I organised the work experience through a broker or external agency	13.8	15.3	14.6
A family member, friend or someone else in my personal network helped me organise the work experience	29.3	23.3	26.0
I organised the work experience myself	43.8	48.8	46.5

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

The search results are broadly consistent when examined by reason for undertaking UWE (see Table 25). As would be expected, when the work experience was part of a higher education or VET course, the placement was most commonly organised by the university, school, TAFE or training provider. Respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart mostly indicated that the placement was organised by their job services provider. Where respondents had some other reason for undertaking UWE (what might be called open market UWE), the placement was most commonly organised by the respondent herself/himself, and then by a family member, friend or someone else in the respondent's network. However there is evidence that respondents commonly adopt multiple search strategies.

It is also possible that some terms in these questions (e.g. job services provider, broker) were interpreted by respondents more broadly than anticipated during questionnaire design. The most commonly combined strategies were:

- organised through job services provider and responded to an advertisement
- organised themselves and responded to an advertisement
- using a broker or external agency and already having a job at the agency, and
- using a broker or external agency and organised through job services provider.

Table 25 Respondents using particular strategies for obtaining unpaid work experience placement, by reason (% answering yes, multiple responses possible)

	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
The work experience was organised by my university, school, TAFE or training provider	69.6	67.7	35.9	59.5	14.7	5.2
The work experience was organised by my job services provider	22.8	35.7	51.7	14.7	18.2	5.4
I responded to an advertisement about the work experience opportunity	29.0	29.2	23.0	13.4	29.8	16.7
I already had a paid job at the organisation	18.1	25.4	24.3	13.6	17.8	6.0
I organised the work experience through a broker or external agency	20.2	26.4	27.9	14.2	9.9	2.3
A family member, friend or someone else in my personal network helped me organise the work experience	25.9	22.4	31.6	28.1	29.4	24.7
I organised the work experience myself	34.0	41.5	35.9	40.8	51.5	60.3

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Field of study

The survey also asked about respondents' field of study at the time they undertook their most recent period of UWE in order to provide comparisons with the prevalence and characteristics of UWE.

Table 26 presents these results. Just under half the sample (47%) were studying full- or part-time at a university or higher education provider or had completed a degree course in the previous 12 months at the time they undertook the UWE. Another quarter of the sample were studying or had recently completed a diploma/certificate course at TAFE or another registered training organisation; and a further 10% were at secondary school when they undertook the UWE. The remainder, 30%, were not engaged in education at the time they undertook the work experience. Together, these findings suggest that the majority of UWE is undertaken by individuals who are engaged in education or training. However, as the review above indicates, the UWE may have comprised a combination of mandatory components of the curriculum, institutionally-supported but not compulsory UWE, and UWE organised completely outside the education/training provider environment.

Table 26 Study status during most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by age (% answering yes, multiple responses possible)

Status of study	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
Studying full-time at university or another higher education provider	39.1	14.2	25.6
Studying part-time at university or another higher education provider	11.3	13.9	12.7
Recently (within last 12 months) graduated from a degree	9.4	8.2	8.7
Studying full-time at TAFE or another registered training organisation	12.0	10.6	11.2
Studying part-time at TAFE or another registered training organisation	6.8	10.9	9.0
Recently (within last 12 months) graduated from a diploma/certificate course	19.5	1.0	9.5
At secondary school	19.5	1.0	9.5
Not studying	12.6	45.2	30.2

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

An interesting result was the low proportion of respondents nominating “Some other reason” who were recent higher education or VET graduates. Table 27 shows that around 10% of those participating in UWE for some other reason (i.e. not as part of a course of study, active labour market program or unpaid trial/training) were recent higher education or VET graduates. Even when only looking at 18-29 year olds (table not shown), less than 15% were recent graduates, although nearly half were currently higher education or VET students. This indicates that a great deal of UWE aligns with the typical definition of internships, that is, being self-organised by students outside formal course requirements, but while still enrolled as a student and prior to the completion of a course of study.

Table 27 Study/graduate status of UWE participants, by reason for undertaking UWE (% answering yes, multiple responses possible)

Study/graduate status	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
Studying full-time at university or another higher education provider	75.5	13.3	19.6	5.5	11.6	15.0
Studying part-time at university or another higher education provider	16.0	25.5	21.4	13.1	4.5	3.7
Recently (within last 12 months) graduated from a degree	7.4	12.8	14.5	10.5	9.2	4.8
Studying full-time at TAFE or another registered training organisation	3.6	35.3	12.7	6.4	9.2	3.3
Studying part-time at TAFE or another registered training organisation	3.1	24.5	9.9	3.7	7.6	5.2
Recently (within last 12 months) graduated from a diploma/certificate course	2.3	6.3	12.1	2.0	2.5	4.7
At secondary school	2.5	3.4	3.5	65.0	4.6	4.0
Not studying	1.5	2.1	30.9	4.1	56.5	63.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

The survey also collected field of study information from respondents who participated in UWE as part of a course of study. The results were coded according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), although a fairly high proportion of responses could not be coded because the respondents provided insufficient detail. Respondents who had participated in UWE and who were also students and/or graduates at the time of undertaking the UWE were asked their field of study in a follow up survey. However, the

response rate was only approximately 50% for the follow up. The results, shown in Table 28, show that overall, management and commerce was the most common field of study, followed by society and culture (which includes psychology, economics and other social sciences, philosophy and the humanities, but from which law has been excluded as a separate category). For higher education, however, health is the most common field (excluding nursing and medicine, which have been presented as separate categories), followed by education, reflecting the dominant practice of placements in those disciplines. The most common fields of study for participants undertaking UWE outside a course of study were management and commerce and information technology.

Table 28 Field of study by reason for undertaking UWE (column %)

Field of study	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	All other reasons	Total
Management and Commerce	9.5	19.9	9.9	12.7
Society and culture (excl Law)	9.1	18	5.3	10.2
Health (excl Medicine and Nursing)	13.2	5.2	3.4	6.9
Education	11	7.2	1	5.9
Information technology	4.2	2.3	6.2	4.5
Engineering and related technologies	8.5	1.7	2.9	4.2
Food, hospitality and personal services	1.5	8.3	0.5	3.1
Nursing	5.5	1.4	1.9	2.8
Creative arts	3.5	0.4	3.1	2.4
Natural and physical sciences	2.4	0.8	3.4	2.3
Architecture and Building	1.2	1.6	0.9	1.2
Law	2.5	0.2	0.6	1.1
Agriculture, environmental and related studies	0.2	2.1		0.7
Medicine	1.9	0.2		0.6
Mixed field programs		0.3	0.3	0.2
Could not be coded	26.0	30.4	5.0	18.8
Missing			55.7	22.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted $n = 1588$.

Labour force status

As well as field of study, the survey gathered information about labour force status at the time of the work experience and this is reported (together with respondents' study status) in Table 29. Unemployment amongst the sample was very high; indeed, much higher than the national average and equally so across the 18-29 and 30-64 age groups. This suggests that for many of these individuals who had participated in UWE in the previous five years, UWE was being used as a strategy to improve the prospects of employment.

Table 29 Combined labour force/study status during most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Labour force/study status	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
Working and studying	31.6	17.8	24.2
Working and not studying	14.6	25.1	20.3
Not working and studying	29.7	21.9	25.5
Not working and not studying, unemployed	15.7	21.0	18.5
Not working, not studying, not looking for paid work	5.9	9.4	7.8
Not sure/Can't remember	2.5	4.8	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted $n (18-29) = 1156$; $n (30-64) = 432$.

Table 30 shows the combined study/work status of UWE participants by reason for undertaking the UWE. Participants who were undertaking UWE as part of a higher education course were most commonly working and studying (59%) whereas those undertaking UWE as part of a VET course were most commonly studying but not working (36%). Interestingly, only 30% of respondents who reported they were undertaking UWE as part of a requirement for Youth Allowance or Newstart said that they were unemployed and not studying, although another 36% said that they were not working and studying.

Table 30 Combined labour force/study status during most recent episode of unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Labour force/study status	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
Working and studying	58.6	32.8	17.4	10.9	11.4	7.9
Working and not studying	3.4	16.7	14.6	25.0	26.6	30.8
Not working and studying	34.1	36.3	35.7	14.3	16.1	18.1
Not working and not studying, unemployed	2.0	8.7	29.7	27.2	33.2	23.2
Not working, not studying, not looking for paid work	1.2	3.8	2.6	15.7	8.1	13.2
Not sure/Can't remember	.6	1.7	-	6.9	4.5	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

6. Experiences and costs of unpaid work experience

This part focuses on the experiences of respondents during the most recent period of UWE. After examining overall satisfaction with the placement, the chapter addresses the following questions:

- (1) What perceived skills and capacities are acquired through different types of UWE?
- (2) What costs are involved in undertaking UWE, including self-funded insurance and transport?

Overall satisfaction

As Table 31 indicates, nearly 70% of those aged 18-29 and those aged 30-64 indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the experience. However, around 25% were either dissatisfied or neutral about the experience. This suggests that although the majority of respondents felt positive about their UWE overall, the quality of experiences varied.

Table 31 Overall satisfaction with most recent period of unpaid work experience, by age (column %)

Overall satisfaction	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
Very dissatisfied	4.9	4.0	4.4
Dissatisfied	5.7	5.6	5.7
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.1	16.6	15.0
Satisfied	42.4	37.8	39.9
Very satisfied	29.8	32.1	31.1
Unpaid work experience not complete	2.1	2.7	2.4
Don't know/ Unsure	1.9	1.2	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

There was substantial variation in the level of overall satisfaction based on the reason for undertaking UWE. As Table 32 indicates, participants undertaking UWE as part of a VET course (79%), as part of secondary school work experience (74%), or as part of a higher education course (73%) reported the highest level of satisfaction. Respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (20%) and respondents undertaking UWE as part of an unpaid trial or unpaid training (16%) reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction, though a majority of both groups still reported that they were satisfied with their most recent episode of UWE (53.2% and 61.9 respectively).

Table 32 Overall satisfaction with most recent period of unpaid work experience, by reason (column %)

Overall satisfaction	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason	All reasons
Very dissatisfied	3.3	2.1	10.0	1.0	11.8	2.9	4.4
Dissatisfied	4.6	5.9	9.7	6.8	4.1	5.5	5.7
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14.5	9.9	22.7	16.4	20.2	13.7	15.0
Satisfied	37.7	41.3	28.2	51.6	32.8	43.1	39.9
Very satisfied	35.8	37.9	25.0	22.3	29.1	28.9	31.1
Unpaid work experience not complete	3.1	2.4	2.6	1.4	0.3	3.2	2.4
Don't know/Unsure	1.0	0.4	1.8	0.5	1.6	2.7	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Activities, treatment and support

More than half of respondents reported that the work they undertook during the most recent UWE episode was similar to regular employees in terms of working conditions, equipment, workload and treatment; and also in terms of the type of work undertaken (see Table 33). Around one in five reported a neutral response to these questions and around one in six disagreed that the tasks and conditions were the same as regular employees.

Table 33 Workplace activities and support during most recent period of unpaid work experience, by age (row %)

Workplace activities	Age	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure/NA
Apart from pay, my working conditions were equivalent to those of regular employees (in terms of equipment, workload, treatment, etc.)	18-29	6.4	10.4	18.6	42.2	17.2	5.2
	30-64	5.6	9.7	23.4	37.4	16.4	7.5
	18-64	6.0	10.0	21.2	39.6	16.8	6.4
For most of my work experience, the work I did was the same as that done by regular employees	18-29	3.8	14.3	21.0	40.9	15.0	5.0
	30-64	2.2	11.4	22.5	39.5	17.6	6.8
	18-64	2.9	12.7	21.8	40.1	16.5	6.0
I spent most of my time observing the work of regular employees or performing mock/simulated tasks	18-29	5.8	17.3	25.9	33.9	12.6	4.4
	30-64	7.7	21.9	23.4	28.4	11.9	6.8
	18-64	6.8	19.8	24.6	30.9	12.2	5.7
During this work experience, there was someone in the company or organisation who I could turn to for advice or support	18-29	3.0	3.9	14.7	43.9	30.2	4.3
	30-64	2.5	4.5	16.0	44.3	26.3	6.3
	18-64	2.7	4.2	15.4	44.1	28.1	5.4

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

The range of responses to the activities, support and treatment questions were examined by the reason for undertaking UWE (see Table 34). It is clear that respondents undertaking UWE as part of a higher education or VET course were the most likely to report their conditions were the same as regular employees, and they were supported in the workplace.

Respondents undertaking an unpaid trial or unpaid training after an offer of employment, were also likely to report that they did the same work as regular employees. Respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart were least likely to report that their working conditions were the same as regular employees, and also least likely to report that they had someone in the organisation to turn to for advice or support.

Table 34 Respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to questions relating to workplace activities and support during most recent period of unpaid work experience, by reason (%)

Reason	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason	Total
Apart from pay, my working conditions were equivalent to those of regular employees (in terms of equipment, workload, treatment, etc.)	62.7	68.0	43.6	54.7	54.2	49.9	56.4
For most of my work experience, the work I did was the same as that done by regular employees	60.4	65.8	47.9	47.5	62.7	50.9	56.6
I spent most of my time observing the work of regular employees or performing mock/simulated tasks	51.0	60.2	42.4	49.7	45.0	24.6	43.1
During this work experience, there was someone in the company or organisation who I could turn to for advice or support	79.4	79.5	60.6	67.4	71.7	67.9	72.2

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

In assessing the significance of these findings, in particular those involving comparisons with regular employees, it needs to be borne in mind that they reflect the perceptions of respondents, who may be unaware of the full range of duties and responsibilities of regular employees. There can also be a blurred line between ‘shadowing’ employees, training and the performance of ‘productive work’.

Recognition and financial support

The survey also asked a series of questions about the financial and other aspects of UWE and these results are reported in Table 35. A substantial minority of participants (14%) had undertaken the work experience at least partly overseas and this varied only marginally by age. It is possible that this figure is related to whether the participants were international students or recent migrants. However, it is not possible to explore this directly because the survey did not contain questions about residency status.

Almost two thirds of the UWE participants had not signed any kind of written agreement or contract with the organisation in which they undertook the UWE, suggesting it was an informal arrangement. Informal arrangements were more common in the older age group (70% compared to 58%).

The survey also asked about four kinds of tangible outcomes that might have eventuated from the episode of UWE. Nearly half the sample received a certificate or letter of reference describing what they had done during the work experience (younger respondents were far more likely to experience this outcome than older respondents). Around a quarter reported that they received: an offer to renew or extend the work experience; financial compensation such as an allowance or honorarium; and/or reimbursement for some expenses such as parking or special clothing.

Table 35 Various financial and other aspects of unpaid work experience, by age (% answering yes)

Aspects of unpaid work experience	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
The work experience took place at least partly overseas	14.5	13.6	14.0
I signed a written agreement or contract with the organisation or company	42.5	30.4	35.9
At the end of the work period of work experience, the organisation or company offered to renew or extend the work experience	28.7	25.6	27.0
At the end of the period of unpaid work experience the organisation or company gave me a certificate or a letter of reference describing what I had done	47.1	35.7	40.9
I received some financial compensation for the work experience (e.g. allowance, honorarium)	22.6	21.2	21.8
I received reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., parking costs, special clothing)	22.3	23.9	23.2

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

As shown in Table 36, men were significantly more likely than women to receive financial compensation for the work experience, such as an allowance or honorarium (26% compared to 16%). Men were also significantly more likely than women to receive reimbursement for some of the expenses incurred, such as parking costs or special clothing (27% compared to 18%).

Table 36 Financial compensation and reimbursement during UWE, by sex (% answering yes)

Financial compensation/reimbursement	Female	Male	Total
I received some financial compensation for the work experience (e.g. allowance, honorarium).	16.3	26.4	21.8
I received reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., parking costs, special clothing)	18.2	27.4	23.2

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

When examined by reason for undertaking UWE, the highest proportions undertaking UWE at least partly overseas were respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (26%) or as part of a VET course (23%). It is possible that the finding in relation to VET is influenced by international students (the survey did not include any questions on citizenship or residency status). The finding in relation to respondents undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart is more surprising, since placements undertaken in connection with these government programs would be expected to take place in Australia. The finding is based on only a small number of “Yes” responses (37), as “requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart” comprises the smallest reason category. Given the anomalous nature of the finding, it is also possible that some respondents may have misunderstood the question. Other financial and documentary aspects of the UWE placement are shown in Table 37. Respondents undertaking UWE for some other reason were the least likely to undertake a placement overseas, sign a written agreement or contract, be given a certificate or letter confirming participation, or receive any compensation or reimbursement for expenses.

Table 37 Various financial and other aspects of unpaid work experience, by reason (% answering yes)

Aspects of unpaid work experience	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
The work experience took place at least partly overseas	16.5	22.9	26.4	11.8	11.3	5.4
I signed a written agreement or contract with the organisation or company	52.1	47.2	48.7	38.8	31.0	16.2
At the end of the period of unpaid work experience, the organisation or company offered to renew or extend the work experience	31.1	33.3	30.5	23.1	29.7	19.5
At the end of the period of unpaid work experience the organisation or company gave me a certificate or a letter of reference describing what I had done	54.0	51.2	36.0	49.1	35.1	27.2
I received some financial compensation for the work experience (e.g. allowance, honorarium)	26.5	28.9	34.6	18.7	21.5	12.1
I received reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., parking costs, special clothing)	21.3	31.5	28.1	21.6	25.0	17.6

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Despite the reasonably high levels of satisfaction with UWE reported earlier, respondents also indicated significant costs (see Table 38). Indeed, over a quarter of respondents reported that they had cut back their hours of paid work in order to undertake UWE and around the same number indicated they had received financial assistance from family or friends to cover living expenses. In relation to both of these costs, those in the 18-29 year age bracket reported this more often than those aged 30-64. Additionally, around one in five reported they had paid for their own insurance whilst undertaking the UWE and another one in five indicated they had to live away from their usual home in order to participate. One quarter (24%) travelled for longer than an hour to the location of the UWE. Finally, and providing further evidence of the increasing use of brokers or agents to facilitate UWE, a significant minority (13%) had used one of these agencies or paid money directly to the organisation in which the work experience took place, in order to secure UWE. A majority of respondents who undertook at least part of the UWE overseas had paid money to a broker, agent, or directly to the organisation (59%). This could suggest a connection between the use of brokers and international students.

Table 38 Costs associated with unpaid work experience placement, by age (% answering yes)

Costs associated with placement	Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
During the work experience, I cut back my hours of paid work	33.0	25.4	28.9
During the work experience, I received financial assistance from family or friends (parents, partners, others) to cover living expenses	34.0	24.1	28.7
I organised and paid for my own insurance for the work experience	20.5	19.8	20.1
I had to travel for longer than an hour to get to my work experience	27.8	21.1	24.1
I had to live away from my usual home to undertake the work experience	20.1	14.7	17.2
I paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the work experience (this does not include course fees)	12.7	12.4	12.5

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

Gender differences in costs associated with unpaid work were also evident. Men were significantly more likely than women to pay money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in unpaid work (15% compared to 9%). As shown in Table 39, men were also significantly more likely than women to pay for their own insurance for the unpaid work experience (24% compared to 16%).

Table 39 Costs associated with unpaid work experience placement, by sex (% answering yes)

Costs associated with placement	Female	Male	Total
I organised and paid for my own insurance for the work experience	15.6	24.0	20.1
I paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the work experience (this does not include course fees)	9.4	15.1	12.5

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

Differences by socio-economic status were also apparent. Those aged 18-29 in the highest SES quartile were significantly more likely to have organised and paid for their own insurance for the work experience (26% compared to an average of 20% for the other three SES bands). Table 40 also shows that respondents in the highest SES band were more likely to travel for longer than an hour to get to the work experience (24% compared to an average of 20% for the other three SES bands).

Table 40 Costs associated with unpaid work experience placement by socio-economic status (% answering yes – respondents aged 18-29 only)

Costs associated with placement	Missing	Low SES	Lower-Middle SES	Upper-Middle SES	Higher SES	Total
During the work experience, I cut back my hours of paid work	16.0	35.4	34.3	30.9	38.2	32.9
I organised and paid for my own insurance for the work experience	10.0	21.9	19.4	18.4	26.4	20.4
I had to travel for longer than an hour to get to my work experience	18.0	27.1	26.9	26.7	34.0	27.8
I had to live away from my usual home to undertake the work experience	10.0	18.8	21.6	19.0	23.8	19.9
I paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the work experience (this does not include course fees)	2.0	15.6	15.6	10.9	13.2	12.5

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 599.

When comparing these costs against categories of reason for UWE (see Table 41), it was clear that those undertaking unpaid trial/training work and those who had completed secondary school work experience were much less likely than the other categories to have cut back their hours of paid work. For the unpaid trial/training participants, this was probably because they were participating in this form of unpaid work to secure a job in the first place and for the secondary school work experience, it is likely they were full-time students and less likely to be participating in paid work. Conversely, those undertaking UWE as part of a higher education or VET course would seem more likely to be combining work and study and thus have to reduce their working hours to fit in a course-related placement.

Table 41 Costs associated with unpaid work experience placement by reason (% answering yes)

Costs associated with placement	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
During the work experience, I cut back my hours of paid work	51.5	43.3	34.3	16.0	23.0	10.4
I organised and paid for my own insurance for the work experience	27.0	31.5	27.3	15.4	17.9	9.0
I had to travel for longer than an hour to get to my work experience	40.4	27.6	26.1	21.9	19.5	13.5
I had to live away from my usual home to undertake the work experience	26.7	23.7	17.9	18.3	13.4	8.0
I paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the work experience (this does not include course fees)	16.2	25.1	21.8	13.2	8.3	1.5

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Study-related unpaid work experience

Table 42 shows the type of support provided by education or training institutions by respondents undertaking UWE as part of a course of study. Around 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their classes or course materials adequately prepared them to undertake work experience and also the statement that during the work experience there was a lecturer or other contact to support them. An even higher proportion agreed or strongly agreed that the work experience was relevant to their course. Together, these results suggest that in many cases, UWE arrangements undertaken as part of an education or training course were closely linked with and highly relevant to the curriculum being studied and that education providers were providing adequate support to most students in order for them to benefit from the experience.

Table 42 Experience of course-related aspects of unpaid work experience (row %)

Experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure/ Not applicable
My classes and/or course materials prepared me adequately to undertake my work experience	3.4	5.8	15.2	43.3	31.7	0.7
During my work experience, there was a lecturer or another contact available to support me	3.8	4.9	18.3	41.4	29.4	2.3
The work experience was relevant to my learning in the course	2.7	3.4	11.4	33.9	47.3	1.3

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 672.

When comparing work experience that was part of a higher education course compared to part of a VET course, there were no statistically significant differences between them on measures of preparedness, support or relevance to learning. For completeness, the results are shown in Table 43.

Table 43 Respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to course-related aspects of unpaid work experience, by reason

Experience	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Total
My classes and/or course materials prepared me adequately to undertake my work experience	71.5	78.6	74.9
During my work experience, there was a lecturer or another contact available to support me	70.1	71.5	70.8
The work experience was relevant to my learning in the course	80.3	82.1	81.2

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 672

7. Perceived Outcomes

This chapter looks at perceived outcomes from UWE, focusing on the following research questions:

- (1) What is the perceived impact of UWE on employment outcomes?
- (2) How does that impact vary by field of study/work and personal characteristics?

Impact on skills, knowledge and behaviours

In a similar trend to earlier questions asking about satisfaction with UWE, respondents were, overall, fairly positive about the specific benefits that had resulted from UWE, especially with respect to skills and knowledge (see Table 44). Around 70% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed relevant skills and new knowledge and this applied to both major age categories. Respondents were slightly less positive about whether the work experience had helped them know how to dress, speak and behave at work; and this was especially the case for those in the 30-64 age category, where less than half the sample indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Table 44 Perceived contribution of most recent period of unpaid work experience to skills and knowledge, by age (row %)

Perceived contribution	Age	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure/ NA
During the unpaid work experience, I developed relevant skills	18-29	2.5	5.7	18.6	43.9	25.2	4.0
	30-64	2.8	5.0	17.3	45.2	24.8	4.9
During the unpaid work experience, I learned new knowledge	18-64	2.6	5.3	17.9	44.6	25.0	4.5
	18-29	1.8	4.9	15.5	45.9	28.3	3.6
	30-64	2.9	2.7	15.2	47.2	27.6	4.3
The unpaid work experience helped me know how to dress, speak and behave at work	18-64	2.4	3.7	15.4	46.6	28.0	4.0
	18-29	3.4	9.6	22.6	38.3	22.0	4.1
	30-64	4.9	7.5	26.0	35.5	18.7	7.4
	18-64	4.2	8.4	24.4	36.8	20.2	5.9

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

When comparing these contributions across categories of reason for UWE (see Table 45), those who participated in UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart indicated lower agreement that the UWE developed skills, knowledge and ways of speaking and behaving at work, compared to all other categories. For all reason categories, the extent to which the UWE contributed to knowing how to dress, speak and behave at work was lower than the contribution to skills and knowledge.

Table 45 Respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to skills and knowledge (excluding not sure/NA responses), by reason (%)

	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
During the unpaid work experience, I developed relevant skills	80.4	77.9	52.4	64.3	69.1	63.9
During the unpaid work experience, I learned new knowledge	80.3	78.0	56.5	73.6	71.9	74.9
The unpaid work experience helped me know how to dress, speak and behave at work	71.0	67.9	41.3	54.0	52.6	33.8

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Impact on career development

Further questions addressed benefits in relation to finding employment, improving networks, deciding to pursue that field of work and building an understanding of career opportunities. Again, as Table 46 shows, more than half of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UWE offered all of these benefits. However, the attribution of benefits was not universal, with around one in four respondents indicating a neutral response as to whether UWE offered these various benefits. A minority disagreed or strongly disagreed they benefitted in these ways. Fewer respondents in the older age category believed their UWE would benefit them in terms of finding paid employment, whereas age was not a determinant of perceived benefit for the remaining questions.

Table 46 Perceived impact of recent period of unpaid work experience on employment opportunities, by age (row %)

Perceived impact	Age	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure/ NA
The unpaid work experience was or will be helpful for me to find paid employment	18-29	3.8	11.6	22.7	36.9	20.9	4.2
	30-64	4.0	8.0	23.1	39.5	20.1	5.3
	18-64	3.9	9.6	22.9	38.3	20.5	4.8
The unpaid work experience helped me to improve my contacts and networks	18-29	2.0	4.6	19.4	40.2	28.5	5.2
	30-64	3.8	7.2	21.6	38.9	21.0	7.6
	18-64	3.0	6.0	20.6	39.5	24.4	6.5
The unpaid work experience helped me to decide whether that field of work was right for me	18-29	2.6	4.7	18.1	47.2	22.9	4.5
	30-64	3.2	5.4	19.3	46.1	19.7	6.4
	18-64	2.9	5.1	18.8	46.6	21.1	5.5
The unpaid work experience helped me understand the kinds of job and career opportunities that are available in that field of work	18-29	3.8	11.6	22.7	36.9	20.9	4.2
	30-64	4.0	8.0	23.1	39.5	20.1	5.3
	18-64	3.9	9.6	22.9	38.3	20.5	4.8

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n =1588.

In a similar trend to opportunities for skills and knowledge presented earlier, respondents who had undertaken UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart indicated fewer opportunities, compared to the other reason categories, for finding paid employment, improving networks, deciding on a field of work to pursue and understanding the career opportunities available.

For example, only 48% of respondents who undertook UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart agreed or strongly agreed that the UWE placement would be helpful in finding paid employment (see Table 47). Across all the reason categories, respondents were most positive about their UWE helping them to understand what kinds of job and career opportunities are available in that field of work.

Table 47 Respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on job and career outcomes of recent period of unpaid work experience on employment opportunities, by reason (%)

	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason
The unpaid work experience was or will be helpful for me to find paid employment	70.4	70.6	47.9	49.2	59.7	43.7
The unpaid work experience helped me to improve my contacts and networks	70.3	69.7	40.5	50.7	56.7	52.8
The unpaid work experience helped me to decide whether that field of work was right for me	74.8	73.8	45.6	63.8	67.1	54.4
The unpaid work experience helped me understand the kinds of job and career opportunities that are available in that field of work	75.0	80.5	56.6	70.5	64.0	58.8

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Impact on employment

Arguably the most important potential benefit – being offered employment by the host organisation – was achieved by 27% of respondents following their most recent period of UWE (see Table 48). More 18-29 year olds were offered employment by the organisation in which they had participated in UWE (29%) than 30-64 year olds (25%).

Table 48 Unpaid work experience leading to offers of paid employment, by age (column %)

Paid employment offered at end of UWE period		Age 18-29	Age 30-64	Age 18-64
At the end of the period of unpaid work experience, the organisation or company offered me paid employment	Yes	29.2	24.8	26.8
	No	59.3	59.8	59.6
	Not sure/ NA	11.5	15.4	13.6

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n (18-29) = 1156; n (30-64) = 432.

As Table 49 shows, those who had participated in secondary school work experience were the least likely to indicate that the UWE had led to an offer of paid employment. The highest proportion of offers was indicated by those undertaking unpaid trial/training work (55%), followed by participants who were undertaking a VET placement (36%) and participants where it was a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart (29%). This is despite the fact that, as noted above, respondents undertaking UWE for these reasons were less likely than those undertaking UWE as part of a course of study to report that they had learnt valuable skills and knowledge and that it had assisted their career development.

Table 49 Unpaid work experience leading to offers of paid employment, by reason (column %)

Offer of employment	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason	Total
Yes	28.3	35.8	28.7	25.8	54.5	7.8	26.8
No	60.2	52.7	62.1	66.9	37.2	70.4	59.6
Not sure/ Not applicable	11.5	11.6	9.2	7.3	8.4	21.8	13.6

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

A similar pattern emerges when offers of paid employment are cross-tabulated with the respondent's study status at the time of undertaking the most recent episode of UWE (see Table 50). Part-time university students were the most likely to report that UWE had led to an offer of paid employment (46%), followed by recent university graduates (39%), full-time VET students (36%) and full-time university students (31%). Respondents who were not currently studying and who were not recent graduates were least likely to report that UWE had led to an offer of paid employment (18.2%).

Table 50 Respondents reporting UWE led to an offer of paid employment, by study status at time of UWE (row %)

Study status at time of undertaking UWE	Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable	Total
Studying a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider full-time	31.1	58.7	10.2	100.0
Studying a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider part-time	46.2	41.6	12.2	100.0
Recently (within the previous 12 months) completed a degree	39.0	48.6	12.5	100.0
Studying a certificate or diploma at TAFE or another registered training organisation full-time	36.4	53.4	10.2	100.0
Studying a certificate or diploma at TAFE or another registered training organisation part-time	25.2	63.4	11.4	100.0
Recently (within the previous 12 months) completed a certificate or diploma	32.4	55.0	12.6	100.0
At secondary school	22.3	69.8	7.9	100.0
Not studying, none of the above	18.2	63.2	18.7	100.0
Total	26.8	59.6	13.6	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

As Table 51 shows, respondents who were already active in the paid workforce were more likely to receive an offer of paid employment at the organisation hosting their most recent UWE episode. Respondents working part-time (33%) were the most likely to receive an offer of paid employment, followed by respondents working full-time (27%), unemployed respondents (25), followed by respondents who were not working and not looking for work (20%).

Table 51 Respondents reporting UWE led to an offer of paid employment, by labour force status at time of UWE (row %)

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable	Total
Working full-time	26.7	59.5	13.8	100.0
Working part-time	33.3	52.8	13.9	100.0
Unemployed	24.6	64.0	11.5	100.0
Not working and not looking for work	20.2	65.2	14.6	100.0
Not sure/Cannot remember	16.2	60.3	23.5	100.0
Total	26.8	59.6	13.6	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

The industry of the UWE placement also appears to be related to the likelihood of an offer of paid employment. As the results in Table 52 make clear, the industries where UWE was most likely to lead to a job offer were Commercial and Legal Services (38%), Hospitality (38%), and Retail (37%). The industries which were least likely to result in an offer of paid employment were Aged Care, Child Care and Other Social and Community Services (21%), Health Care (20%), and all other remaining industries (20%).

Table 52 Respondents reporting UWE led to an offer of paid employment, by industry (row %)

Industry	Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable	Total
Aged care, child care and other social/community services	20.7	65.5	13.8	100.0
Commercial and legal services (includes accounting, banking, finance, insurance, law, marketing)	37.9	53.2	8.9	100.0
Construction, architecture, building, property and real estate	31.2	60.8	8.1	100.0
Education and training	29.9	55.3	14.8	100.0
Health care	20.1	64.4	15.4	100.0
Hospitality (includes accommodation, cafes, restaurants, pubs)	37.7	55.1	7.2	100.0
Media, IT and creative industries (includes publishing, broadcasting, graphic design, web design, fashion, design, public relations)	27.7	58.4	13.9	100.0
Retail (includes supermarkets, fashion stores, bakeries and other food retailing)	37.2	46.8	16.0	100.0
Other	19.8	63.2	17.1	100.0
Total	26.8	59.6	13.6	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

However, there was no consistent pattern between whether the most recent episode of UWE had led to an offer of paid employment and satisfaction with the work placement, both overall and in relation to particular aspects. These results are summarised in Table 53.

Table 53 Respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on job and career outcomes of recent period of UWE on employment opportunities, by whether UWE led to offer of paid employment (%)

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable	Total
During the unpaid work experience, I developed relevant skills	78.8	69.6	51.7	69.6
During the unpaid work experience, I learned new knowledge	79.6	76.5	56.1	74.5
The unpaid work experience was or will be helpful for me to find paid employment	75.0	52.8	40.5	57.1
The unpaid work experience helped me to improve my contacts and networks	70.0	56.9	44.8	58.8
The unpaid work experience helped me to decide whether that field of work was right for me	75.8	63.1	44.5	64.0
The unpaid work experience helped me understand the kinds of job and career opportunities that are available in that field of work	77.0	68.0	48.2	67.7
The unpaid work experience helped me know how to dress, speak and behave at work	66.8	50.9	32.6	52.6
Overall satisfaction	80.0	81.6	72.0	79.9

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 1588.

Table 54 presents results relevant to the prevalence of UWE in the previous five years by current employment status and age. This is distinct from earlier results which examined work status *at the time of the UWE*. To achieve a better approximation of the potential impact of UWE on future employment outcomes, respondents who were studying at the time of completing the survey (whether part-time or full-time) were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, respondents who were undertaking UWE at the time of the survey have been separated into a different category, as any outcome from UWE cannot yet be observed for this group.

Respondents aged 18-24 and those aged 30-64 who *had* participated in UWE in the previous five years and who were not currently studying, were equally likely to be in full-time employment at the time of completing the survey when compared with respondents who *had not* undertaken UWE in the last five years.

Respondents aged 25-29 and 30-64 who *had* participated in UWE had a higher incidence of part-time employment than respondents who *had not* recently participated in UWE. However, this relationship did not hold for 18-24 year olds. For all age categories, the likelihood of being unemployed (i.e. not working and looking for work) was higher among those who *had* recently participated in UWE. When comparing respondents who had undertaken UWE in the previous five years with those who had not, these differences are statistically significant overall, and for ages 30-39, 40-49, and 50-64.

Table 54 Age and current employment status, by whether undertaken unpaid work experience in last five years (excludes current students) (column %)

Age	Current employment status	Undertaken unpaid work experience in the previous five years			Total *
		Yes#	No	Currently doing UWE	
18-24	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	46.5	45.1	40.8	44.8
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	32.9	39.5	33.2	35.5
	Not working and looking for work	14.8	8.9	14.9	12.1
	Not working and not looking for work	4.0	3.3	7.3	4.3
	Not sure/don't know	1.8	3.2	3.8	3.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	58.4	64.5	30.7	60.9
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	25.7	22.8	46.4	24.8
	Not working and looking for work	10.2	5.7	22.8	7.9
	Not working and not looking for work	3.9	6.0		5.0
	Not sure/don't know	1.8	1.0		1.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
30-39	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	60.4	53.4	40.5	55.3
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	18.2	24.8	19.6	22.3
	Not working and looking for work	12.5	8.3	30.1	10.1
	Not working and not looking for work	5.7	12.4	9.8	10.2
	Not sure/don't know	3.2	1.2		2.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
40-49	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	41.9	47.6	9.2	45.6
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	28.3	24.6	27.3	25.4
	Not working and looking for work	13.4	8.6	54.5	11.1
	Not working and not looking for work	13.4	18.4	9.0	16.8
	Not sure/don't know	3.0	.7		1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
50-64	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	23.6	29.9	17.3	28.9
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	34.2	20.4	18.3	22.1
	Not working and looking for work	16.5	6.5	13.5	7.8
	Not working and not looking for work	24.4	42.0	50.9	40.0
	Not sure/don't know	1.2	1.3		1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
18-64	Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	47.9	42.7	24.8	43.5
	Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	26.7	23.4	25.0	24.3
	Not working and looking for work	13.4	7.5	27.0	9.5
	Not working and not looking for work	9.6	25.3	22.6	21.2
	Not sure/don't know	2.3	1.2	0.7	1.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: # Excludes respondents currently undertaking UWE

* Includes "Don't know/Not sure"

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n = 870.

There is substantial variation in labour market outcomes when examined by the reason for undertaking UWE. As Table 55 shows, respondents who undertook UWE as part of a higher education course had the highest incidence of full-time employment as their current labour market status, while those undertaking UWE as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart had the lowest.

Table 55 Current labour market status by reason for undertaking UWE (excludes current students) (column %)

Labour market status	Part of a higher education course	Part of a VET course	Requirement of YA or Newstart	Secondary work experience	Unpaid trial/unpaid training	Some other reason	Total
Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	65.6	48.3	27.8	53.7	42.6	39.1	45.3
Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	22.2	26.7	34.5	26.6	32.1	24.0	26.5
Not working and looking for work	10.1	14.2	21.1	17.6	18.4	13.8	14.9
Not working and not looking for work	0.5	10.6	13.6	2.1	6.5	18.9	11.1
Not sure/don't know	1.7	0.3	3.0		0.4	4.2	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey of unpaid work experience. Unweighted n =870.

To take account of the time elapsed since undertaking UWE as well as other factors, more advanced econometric analysis is required. Further analysis of the survey data could more extensively analyse the relationship between UWE and employment outcomes, while controlling to a much greater extent the influence of other exogenous factors (such as age, sex, location, previous labour market experience) and endogenous factors (such as highest education level). In essence, the analysis would compare respondents who had undertaken UWE with similar respondents who had not. The survey data would make it possible to explore the impact of UWE on:

- the likelihood of being in employment
- the likelihood of being in full-time, permanent employment, and
- the occupational status of those in employment.

As well as considering participation in UWE as the independent variable, future analysis could also consider:

- the length of the UWE
- the duration of the UWE, and
- the reason for undertaking UWE.

8. Individual comments

Of those who responded to the survey, 594 added comments in response to the open-ended question, 'Are there any experiences with unpaid work experience that you would like to share with the research team?'

The following offers some highlights or impressions of these responses, to provide a flavour of what some respondents felt or had experienced, though of course they cannot necessarily be taken as representative of the survey audience as a whole.

Positive views

246 respondents expressed positive views about the UWE they had undertaken, with general themes to these responses including:

- It allowed them to gain skills and experience.
- It helped their career choice (it allowed an insight into the types of work they enjoyed, or helped them decide if they were suited to a particular field of work or industry).
- They had a belief they would gain employment as a result of doing the work experience.
- They gained employment (which might have been immediately after, or later on with a different organisation as a direct result of their work experience).
- It gave them something to add to their CV, and references for job applications.

Other benefits of UWE nominated by respondents included:

- It gave them confidence.
- It allowed for social interaction, and a connection with others.
- It created friendships or allowed them to meet new people.
- It was better than sitting at home (they were able to get out and communicate with others; and it helped to stop the downward spiral that unemployment creates – anything to get routine and purpose is a good thing),
- Very beneficial for those who suffer with mental illness.
- It allowed them to build networks and meet working professionals.
- They felt they were of service to the community.
- They felt they didn't have stressors like paid work; there was no threat to losing their job, so they could ask tougher questions.
- It was a means to showing their potential to an employer.
- It helped them establish themselves in the field.
- It gave an opportunity to see what goes on inside companies, how employers perceive workers, and their expectations.

- It brought recognition and appreciation.
- It instilled a work ethic (working hard for things).

For those working in health, sport, disability, there was a also general theme of quotes that included words such as 'enjoyable', 'rewarding', 'life changing'. It also taught them other qualities, such as 'caring', or made them a 'role model for peers'.

Negative views

182 respondents expressed negative views about UWE, with general themes here including:

- The work involved menial or unrelated tasks (no real experience due to menial or repetitive tasks with no variety; made you do the 'dirty work' or the jobs no one else wants to do; tasks with no responsibility)
- The work was risky or unpleasant (dangers to health and safety; unsafe and hurt themselves; not recorded as being there so concerned about injuries at work; insufficient toilets for number of people working there).
- The employer was confused about whether the 'volunteer' was covered for accident or illness.
- They were exploited and used as free labour (for example, a musician asked to work for 'exposure' rather than payment; a pastry maker used for 160 hours of work experience, told he was a great worker, but then let go at the end as the patisseries knew they would get another free worker; a report needed writing, so a company dressed up the task as an internship to get a student to write it for free; international students being used to fill in for absent staff members).
- They experienced hardship (relying on support from family and friends; needed to live somewhere cheaper; childcare costs; petrol costs when on benefits; struggled with living while doing unpaid work; cost them money, such as fuel, hard taking unpaid leave from work); threats from employer they would lose their job if they took time off; having to negotiate flexibility with paid employer).
- The work experience was over-regulated (WorkCover, insurances).
- Not enough UWE opportunities were available.

Other negative aspects of UWE reported by respondents included:

- They found it difficult to balance paid work, family life, study and unpaid work.
- There was not enough training.
- They felt that the organisation's staff didn't have time for them.
- They required a supervisor/mentor with patience, who could teach skills; but had limited time with mentors so it was hard to meet these expectations.
- It was not clear what the guidelines were, or the expected experience the unpaid worker should gain (unstructured, unclear, unplanned, disjointed).
- The experience was limited by the ability of their mentors at the organisation.

- They were treated poorly as they were not employees (taken for granted, not appreciated or recognised, felt degraded due to status in the workplace).
- It took time and energy away from finding paid employment.
- As an immigrant they had no other option but to do UWE to get a reference or experience, as they felt their home country experience did not count.
- With declining union influence or protection, it was easier for them to be exploited.
- Employers were using UWE as a way to solicit government funds when there was no ongoing work.
- The work was unsupervised, with no training.
- At event work experience, there was no food, water or reimbursement.
- There was disillusionment, as paid jobs go to others.
- There were no paid employment positions available (performing unpaid work with the belief they would be hired and nothing eventuated, then meeting others who have had the same experience with the same company; although identified as a good worker, funds were not available to hire them).
- They were exposed to poor work practices and treatment.
- Clinical placement hours were too high.
- For older people, placements are difficult to find.
- They were exposed to discrimination, racism or sexual harassment in the workplace.

9. Conclusion

This project constitutes the first comprehensive national survey of UWE in Australia. The report has thus far set out the background, survey methods and findings of the analysis. The conclusion which follows provides a summary of key findings, highlights issues where policy responses may be warranted and canvasses important areas for further research.

Key findings

The survey results show that UWE is a widespread practice in Australia; one that extends beyond placements in medicine, nursing and teaching and internships in professional fields such as law, finance and journalism, to a wide range of professional, intermediate and entry-level roles across many industries. Amongst young Australians in particular, UWE has already become a majority practice. However, there are also substantial numbers of Australians aged 30 and over participating in UWE, and their expectations and experiences are overall similar to those of younger Australians.

Of those undertaking unpaid work experience, 36% reported that their most recent period of unpaid work experience lasted over one month. One third had undertaken a single episode, while another quarter had two such experiences. One in five participants had undertaken five or more episodes in the past five years.

Men are more likely to participate in UWE than women, especially for the reason of maintaining Youth Allowance/Newstart, although women participate for longer durations. Men are also more likely to receive financial compensation or reimbursement for UWE.

Around half of all UWE occurs in connection with a formal course of study (or secondary schooling). However, this means that the workplace learning associated with the other half may be taking place in a less structured context.

Overall, respondents report high levels of satisfaction with their UWE placements, and report positive outcomes in relation to developing skills and knowledge and improving their employment and career prospects. Self-reported skill development is not necessarily an objective measure of *actual* skill development, but it does indicate a high level of confidence in this particular aspect of UWE. However, satisfaction levels were highest among respondents undertaking UWE as part of a course of study, with lower (though still positive) levels reported by respondents nominating other reasons for participating in UWE.

The survey results also indicate that for many respondents, UWE involves significant costs, whether directly (in the form of insurance or broker's fees) or indirectly, in the form of longer transport times, or cutting back on availability for paid employment. These costs are disproportionately borne by respondents from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Issues for policy consideration

The survey results clearly demonstrate an access gap in relation to UWE, with Australians aged 18–29 from lower socio-economic status backgrounds (as defined by parents' highest level of education) less likely than those from higher socio-economic status backgrounds to have participated in UWE within the last five years. The implications of the SES gap may be magnified if the phenomenon of UWE continues to expand and becomes a critical prerequisite for securing ongoing work and career employment. Consideration should be

given to the kinds of policy responses which might redress unequal access to UWE, such as scholarships or additional/top up income support for UWE participants.

The survey results also show clear differences in the experiences of participants undertaking UWE as part of a higher education or VET course of study, and other UWE participants. Participants undertaking UWE as part of a course of study are more satisfied overall and more likely to report that UWE developed their skills, knowledge and career prospects. However, ongoing attention should be afforded to strategies which ensure those engaging in UWE through an educational provider continue to experience high levels of satisfaction.

It seems likely that, in addition to the course of study providing a structure to the UWE placement, the involvement of an education institution also provides resources to the host organisation or company. Given how widespread UWE placements outside a course of study have become, policy consideration could be given to what resources could be provided to organisations hosting UWE placements outside a course of study to support better learning, career and employment outcomes for UWE participants.

The results suggest policy opportunities to encourage the for-profit sector of the Australian economy to offer additional opportunities for relevant workplace exposure for graduates and other job seekers.

Less than half of UWE participants received a certificate or letter of reference describing what they had done during the placement. It is likely that being able to reliably demonstrate the nature and duration of any past work experience is an important component of developing a CV for a graduate or job seeker. An educative strategy for employers/managers could emphasise the importance of providing such evidence at the end of each UWE placement.

Future research

This survey has provided the first national data on the incidence and impact of UWE in Australia. However, it was not possible to address all issues in the survey and the results point towards some important areas in need of further investigation:

- The data from the survey can be used to more extensively explore the relationship between participation in UWE and employment outcomes, looking more closely at the impact of the length and duration of the UWE placement, the reason for undertaking the UWE, and underlying education and background characteristics.
- The survey did not include questions on non-English speaking background or Australian citizenship/residency status. British studies have pointed to the exclusion of ethnic minorities from internships in the elite professions (Milburn 2009) and more recently (indeed, since the survey entered the field) there have been stories in the Australian media about the poor treatment of international students seeking internship opportunities.⁴
- Future research could explore in more detail the reasons why people undertake UWE, especially when not in connection with a course of study or to maintain welfare benefits. The results here suggest there may be some ongoing work

⁴ See e.g., “‘Internships’ at PwC advertised by Top Education Institute for thousands of dollars”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 2016; and see also McDonald, Oliver and Grant-Smith (2016).

experience arrangements where the line with volunteering may become quite blurred. Another iteration of the survey could further include questions on the intended occupation connected with the UWE placement.

- There is a need for more specific research on designing and delivering effective WIL programs.
- Although UWE that was undertaken as unpaid trial/training work and as a requirement of Youth Allowance or Newstart were the most likely to result in an offer of employment, it remains unknown whether the jobs gained through these avenues were sustained or, alternatively, whether they were short-lived.
- The survey revealed that a relatively high proportion of respondents undertook at least part of their most recent period of UWE overseas, and also a high proportion of respondents using 'internship brokers'. These issues could be explored through more targeted research.
- The strong relationship between SES and access to, and experience with, UWE placements also warrants further investigation.
- The perspective of employers remains a 'black box' in terms of research on UWE specifically and, more broadly, with respect to better matching job-seeker capacities with actual job opportunities. Future research could inform a richer understanding of employer perspectives on the issue of unpaid work as a component of employability. This would inform future policy development and implementation.

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Appendix A – The Survey Instrument

A. WELCOME/INTRODUCTORY SCREEN

 THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE	 Queensland University of Technology Brisbane Australia	 UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY
Survey of Work Experience (UTS Approval Number ETH16-0247)		
<p>The purpose of the research is to find out more about unpaid work experience in Australia: how common it is, who undertakes unpaid work experience, and what impacts it has. Even if you have not recently undertaken unpaid work experience, we would still like you to participate in the survey.</p> <p>The survey asks questions about your work history, including both paid work and unpaid work experience. Completing it should take no more than 15 minutes. Your responses are completely confidential and anonymous. You will not be identified in any way.</p> <p>You can change your mind at any time and stop completing the survey without consequences.</p> <p>If you agree to be part of the research and to research data gathered from this survey being published in a form that does not identify you, please continue with answering the survey questions.</p>		
ABOUT THE RESEARCH		
<p>The project has been commissioned by the Australian Department of Employment. It is being conducted by Dr Damian Oliver from the University of Technology Sydney, Professor Paula McDonald from the Queensland University of Technology and Professor Andrew Stewart and Associate Professor Anne Hewitt from the University of Adelaide.</p>		
FOR MORE INFORMATION		
<p>If you have concerns about the research that you think I can help you with, please feel free to contact me on (02) 9514 4033 or Damian.Oliver@uts.edu.au.</p> <p>If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the UTS Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9772 or Research.ethics@uts.edu.au and quote this number (ETH16-0247).</p>		
<p>QUT Approval Number: 1600000236 Adelaide Approval Number: ETH16-0247</p>		

Please circle the relevant response or write in the box provided.

Many of the following questions are about unpaid work experience.

Work experience is any period of time spent in a workplace to develop skills and gain experience. This could be part of a course of study at university, TAFE or another registered training organisation, or at school. It could be part of a formal placement or internship program at an organisation. It could be work for the dole or another activity organised by a Jobactive provider. Or it could be an informal period of unpaid work experience that you have arranged yourself.

Unpaid work experience is work experience for which you do not receive an hourly or weekly wage. If you receive reimbursement of expenses or a small allowance, but not wages, that will still count as unpaid.

Please do not include instances of volunteering. We define volunteering as unpaid work that is performed with the primary purpose of benefiting someone else or benefiting a particular organisation (e.g. a church, charity or club), rather than the primary purpose being to gain experience or contacts that may improve your prospects of future employment.

If you are unsure whether to count a particular arrangement as work experience or volunteering, please treat it as work experience but add a comment about that in the comments box that you will find at the very end of the survey.

Please do not include unpaid work undertaken in the home or in a family business.

Q1	In the last five years, have you undertaken any unpaid work experience?	RQ1	-
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(One response only)

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/ Not sure	9

If Q1 > 1, go to Q21.

Else if Q1=1, go to Q2.

Q2	In the last five years, how many times have you undertaken unpaid work experience?	RQ1	-
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(One response only)

The following questions relate to your most recent period of unpaid work experience.

Q3.	When was your most recent period of unpaid work experience?	RQ1	-
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(One response only)

I am currently undertaking unpaid work experience	1
In the last three months	2
At least three months ago but less than six months ago	3
At least six months ago but less than a year ago	4
One year or more ago	5
Not sure/ Can't remember	9

Q4.	How long did the most recent period of unpaid work experience last? <i>If you are currently undertaking unpaid work experience, how long do you expect the period to last?</i>	RQ2	EC_Q8
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(One response only)

One day or less	1
More than one day but less than a week	2
At least a week but less than a month	3
At least a month but less than three months	4
At least three months but less than six months	5
Six months or more	6
Not sure/ Can't remember	9

Q5.	Approximately how many hours did you spend undertaking the unpaid work experience? <i>If you are currently undertaking unpaid work experience, how many hours in total do you expect to spend undertaking work experience?</i>	RQ2	
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(One response only)

Seven hours or less (approximately one full day)	1
More than seven hours but less than 35 hours (approximately one week full-time)	2
At least 35 hours but less than 70 hours (approximately two weeks full-time)	3
At least 70 hours but less than 140 hours (approximately four weeks full-time)	4
140 hours or more (more than 4 weeks full-time)	5
Not sure/ Can't remember	9

Q6.	During your most recent period of unpaid work experience, which of the following applied?	RQ3	-
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(Multiple responses possible)

I was studying a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider full-time	1
I was studying a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider part-time	2
I had recently (within the previous 12 months) completed a degree	3
I was studying a certificate or diploma at TAFE or another registered training organisation full-time	4
I was studying a certificate or diploma at TAFE or another registered training organisation part-time	5
I had recently (within the previous 12 months) completed a certificate or diploma	6
I was at secondary school	7
I was not studying	8

Q7.	During your most recent period of unpaid work experience, which of the following best describes your <u>paid</u> work status?	RQ3	-
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(Single response)

I was undertaking paid work	1
I was unemployed	2
I was not undertaking paid work and was not looking for paid work	3
Not sure/can't remember	9

If Q7=1, Go to Q8.

Else go to Q9

Q8.	During your most recent period of unpaid work experience approximately how many hours per week were you in paid work?	RQ4	-
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(One response only)

Q9.	How many people worked in the company or organisation where	RQ3	EC_Q9
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	you undertook your most recent period of unpaid work experience?		
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(One response only)

1 to 4 workers	1
5 to 19 workers	2
20 to 199 workers	3
200 or more workers	4
Don't know/ Not applicable	9

Q10.	Which of the following best describes the industry of the company or organisation where you undertook your most recent period of unpaid work experience?	RQ3	ANZSIC
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(Single response only)

Aged care, child care and other social/community services	1
Commercial and legal services (includes accounting, banking, finance, insurance, law, marketing)	2
Construction, architecture, building, property and real estate	3
Education and training	4
Health care	5
Hospitality (includes accommodation, cafes, restaurants, pubs)	6
Media, IT and Creative Industries (includes publishing, broadcasting, graphic design, web design, fashion, design, public relations)	7
Retail (includes supermarkets, fashion stores, bakeries and other food retailing)	8
Other	99

Q11.	Which of the following best describes the company or organisation in which you undertook the most recent period of unpaid work experience?	RQ3	-
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(Single response only)

Private sector/for profit organisation	1
Not for profit organisation	2
Public sector organisation	3
Don't know/ Not applicable	9

Q12.	Which of the following best describes why you undertook your most recent period of unpaid work experience?	RQ2	-
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(One response only)

It was organised as part of a degree or other course at university or another higher education provider	1
It was organised as part of a certificate or diploma course at TAFE or another registered training organisation	2
It was a requirement of maintaining Youth Allowance or Newstart	3
It was organised as part of secondary school work experience	4
I was applying for a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was a trial to see if I was suitable	5
I had been offered a paid job at the same company or organisation and it was part of my training or orientation	6
None of the above	9

If Q12=1 or Q12=2, go to Q13.

Else go to Q15.

Q13.	The following questions relate to your most recent period of unpaid work experience. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements	RQ3 RQ7	
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(One answer for each item only.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	My classes and/or course materials prepared me adequately to undertake my work experience	1	2	3	4	5	9
2	During my work experience, there was a lecturer or another contact available to support me	1	2	3	4	5	9
3	The work experience was relevant to my learning in the course	1	2	3	4	5	9

Q14.	What is the full name of the qualification in which you were enrolled when you undertook your most recent unpaid work experience?	RQ9	-
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Open response

Q15.	The following questions relate to your most recent period of unpaid work experience. For each statement, please indicate Yes, No, or Not sure/not applicable	RQ3	EC_Q10
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(One answer for each item only)

		Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	The work experience took place at least partly overseas	1	2	9
2	I signed a written agreement or contract with the organisation or company	1	2	9
3	At the end of the period of unpaid work experience, the organisation or company offered me paid employment	1	2	9
4	At the end of the period of unpaid work experience, the organisation or company offered to renew or extend the work experience	1	2	9
5	At the end of the period of unpaid work experience the organisation or company gave me a certificate or a letter of reference describing what I had done	1	2	9
6	I received some financial compensation for the work experience (e.g. allowance, honorarium)	1	2	9
7	I received reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., parking costs, special clothing)	1	2	9

Q16.	The following questions relate to how your most recent period of unpaid work experience was organised. For each statement, please indicate Yes, No, or Not sure/not applicable	RQ3	
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(One answer for each item only.)

		Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	The work experience was organised by my university, school, TAFE or training provider	1	2	9
2	The work experience was organised by my job services provider	1	2	9
3	I responded to an advertisement about the work experience opportunity	1	2	9
4	I already had a paid job at the organisation	1	2	9
5	I organised the work experience through a broker or external agency	1	2	9
6	A family member, friend or someone else in my personal network helped me organise the work experience	1	2	9
7	I organised the work experience myself	1	2	9

Q17.	The following questions relate to any costs associated with your most recent period of unpaid work experience. For each statement, please indicate Yes, No, or Not sure/not applicable	RQ8	
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(One answer for each item only.)

		Yes	No	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	During the work experience, I cut back my hours of paid work	1	2	9
2	During the work experience, I received financial assistance from family or friends (parents, partners, others) to cover living expenses	1	2	9
3	I organised and paid for my own insurance for the work experience	1	2	9

4	I had to travel for longer than an hour to get to my work experience	1	2	9
5	I had to live away from my usual home to undertake the work experience	1	2	9
6	I paid money to a broker, agent or directly to the organisation to take part in the work experience (this does not include course fees)	1	2	9

Q18.	The following questions relate to your most recent period of unpaid work experience. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements	RQ3 RQ7	EC_Q10
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(One answer for each item only.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	Apart from pay, my working conditions were equivalent to those of regular employees (in terms of equipment, workload, treatment, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	9
2	For most of my work experience, the work I did was the same as that done by regular employees.	1	2	3	4	5	9
3	I spent most of my time observing the work of regular employees or performing mock/simulated tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	9
4	During this work experience, there was someone in the company or organisation who I could turn to for advice or support	1	2	3	4	5	9

Q19.	<p>The following questions relate to your most recent period of unpaid work experience.</p> <p>For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements</p>	RQ3 RQ7	EC_Q10
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(One answer for each item only.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure/ Not applicable
1	During the unpaid work experience, I developed relevant skills	1	2	3	4	5	9
2	During the unpaid work experience, I learned new knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	9
3	The unpaid work experience was or will be helpful for me to find paid employment	1	2	3	4	5	9
4	The unpaid work experience helped me to improve my contacts and networks	1	2	3	4	5	9
5	The unpaid work experience helped me to decide whether that field of work was right for me	1	2	3	4	5	9
6	The unpaid work experience helped me understand the kinds of job and career opportunities that are available in that field of work	1	2	3	4	5	9
7	The unpaid work experience helped me know how to dress, speak and behave at work	1	2	3	4	5	9

Q20.	Taking all things into consideration, overall how satisfied were you with your most recent period of unpaid work experience?	RQ3 RQ7	ATSD16
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(Single response only)

1	Very dissatisfied	1
2	Dissatisfied	2
3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
4	Satisfied	4
5	Very satisfied	5
8	Unpaid work experience not complete	8
9	Don't know/ Unsure	9

Q21.	Which of the following best describes your current paid work status?	RQ9	*
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(One answer for each item only.)

Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	1
Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	2
Not working and looking for work	3
Not working and not looking for work	4
Not sure/ Don't know	9

If Q21=1 or Q21=2, Go to Q22. Else Go to Q 26.

Q22	Approximately how many hours per week are you in paid work?	RQ4	-
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(One response only)

Q23	Which of the following best describes your current paid work status?	RQ9	*
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(One answer for each item only.)

Permanent/ongoing position	1
Fixed-term position	2
Casual position	3
Self-employed/ Independent contractor	4
Not sure/ Don't know	9

Q24.	What is the title of your occupation in your current paid job? That is, what is your job usually called? <i>If you have more than one paid job, please answer in relation to your main job. This is the job in which you work the most hours.</i>	RQ9	ESSG6
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(Open response)

Q25.	What is your current gross (pre-tax) annual income from your (main) job? <i>Estimate if necessary. Answer in Australian dollars.</i>	RQ9	AGS
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Yearly	Weekly	
\$1 - \$4,159	\$1 - \$79	1
\$4,160 - \$8,319	\$80 - \$159	2
\$8,320 - \$15,599	\$160 - \$299	3
\$15,600 - \$25,999	\$300 - \$499	4
\$26,000 - \$31,199	\$500 - \$599	5
\$31,200 - \$36,399	\$600 - \$699	6
\$36,400 - \$41,599	\$700 - \$799	7
\$41,600 - \$51,999	\$800 - \$999	8
\$52,000 - \$64,999	\$1,000 - \$1,249	9
\$65,000 - \$77,999	\$1,250 - \$1,499	10
\$78,000 - \$90,999	\$1,500 - \$1,749	11
\$91,000 - \$103,999	\$1,750 - \$1,999	12
\$104,000 - \$116,999	\$2,000 - \$2,249	13
\$117,000 - \$129,999	\$2,250 - \$2,499	14
\$130,000 and more	\$2,500 and more	15
Don't know/ Not sure		98
Rather not say		99

Q26	Which of the following best describes your current study status?	RQ9	*
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(One answer for each item only)

Currently studying full-time	1
Currently studying part-time	2
Not currently studying	3
Not sure/ Don't know	9

Q27.	What is your highest completed level of education	RQ9	-
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(Single response only)

Less than Year 12	1
Year 12	2
Certificate I or Certificate II qualification	3
Certificate III or Certificate IV qualification	4
Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualification	5
Bachelor qualification (including honours)	6
Postgraduate qualification (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD)	7
Not sure/ Don't know	9

Q28.	What is your age?	RQ10	-
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(Single response only)

18-24	1
25-29	2
30-39	3
40-49	4
50+	5
Prefer not to say	9

Q29.	What is your sex?	RQ10	-
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(Single response only)

Female	1
Male	2
Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified	3

Q30.	What state or territory do you live in?	RQ10	-
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(Single response only)

ACT	1
NSW	2
NT	3
QLD	4
SA	5
TAS	6
VIC	7
WA	8
None of the above	9

Q31.	Where do you live?	RQ10	-
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(Single response only)

In a capital city	1
In another city or town	2
Not in a city or town	3
Not sure/ Don't know	9

Q32.	How many years in total have you spent in paid (full- and part-time) work?	RQ10	-
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(Single discrete integer)

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Q33.	When you were in secondary school, what was the highest level of education of your parents? (Answer for up to two parents)	RQ10	-
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There are aspects of family background that are often thought to be important influences on learning about work. We would like to find out the extent to which these aspects have been important in determining responses to this survey.

Even if you have been independent of your parents for a considerable time, please try to answer the questions below.

	Highest level of education	Parent 1	Parent 2
1	No formal schooling/primary school only	1	1
2	Some secondary schooling	2	2
3	Completed secondary school	3	3
4	Trade or other certificate course	4	4
5	Diploma or Associate Diploma	5	5
6	Partial degree course	6	6
7	Other special training after secondary school (eg armed services, police)	7	7
8	Completed Bachelor degree course	8	8
9	Completed higher degree (e.g. Grad Dip, Masters, PhD)	9	9
10	Other	10	10
99	Don't know/Not Applicable	99	99

Q34.	Are there any experiences with unpaid work experience that you would like to share with the research team?	NA	-
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(Open response)

END. THANKS FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!