

School of Environmental and Rural Science

Practical Experience Regulations

(B RurSc, BLstkSc, BAgr, BAgr/BLaw, BAgr/BBus)

A. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND WORK EXPERIENCE

The purpose of "Practical Experience" is to provide students with opportunities to examine how properties and various agribusinesses are managed, to identify the factors which limit production and efficient resource management, to develop skills in the assessment of management and to relate components of the curriculum to agricultural practice. The development of manual skills - though important - is secondary.

B. ADMINISTRATION

The regulations are administered through the School of Environmental & Rural Science Teaching and Learning committee and coordinated by Associate Professor Geoff Hinch (ghinch@une.edu.au). Mrs Karen Morris (kmorris4@une.edu.au) is responsible for matters relating to the administration of the practical work component of the degrees of B RurSc, BLstkSc, BAgr, BAgr/BLaw, BAgr/BBus and maintains records of practical work completed. Claims for practical work should be submitted to Mrs Karen Morris at following address.

Mrs K Morris
Practical Experience Claim
School of Environmental and Rural Science
University of New England
Armidale 2351

Karen can also be contacted at ersteach@une.edu.au

Note: Claims may be rejected if they do not meet the requirements as set out below. An appeal, which must be in writing, referring to rejected claims will be considered within four weeks of submission.

C. REGULATIONS

These regulations are based on the general philosophy that practical experience is an important aspect of employability at completion of the degree and that students should be exposed to a variety of environments and enterprises/agribusinesses across Australia and even internationally. Therefore:

Each candidate for the **BRurSc** and **BLvstkSc** will complete 24 weeks approved practical work, each candidate for the **BAgr** will complete 16 weeks or for **BAgr/BLaw** and **BAgr/BBus** a minimum of 12 weeks.

A) Climate Zones All students are required to spend a minimum of 3 weeks in at least **two** of five climatic zones. These zones are largely defined by seasonal rainfall zones on the BOM web site (http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/climate/cgi_bin_scripts/clim_classification.cgi) - Map type: Seasonal Rainfall - major zones.

These zones are designated as: Arid, Tropical (summer dominant), Sub-Tropical (wet summer/low winter rain), Temperate (Uniform) and Mediterranean (winter dominant). Maps on the walls outside the office of Karen Morris (Natural Resources Building) provide the fine detail of zones if these are needed.

B) Enterprises/Agribusiness Categories: **BRurSc** students are required to complete work on a minimum of **five** enterprises and **BAgr** students on a minimum of **four** enterprises. Students may work on their **own family property/agribusiness** for a maximum of **four** weeks. Home properties/agribusinesses **cannot** be used as the basis of **final reports**.

BLstkSc students must complete work on five enterprises with a minimum of three (3) that specialize in animal production or associated agribusiness. A choice from the broader range of enterprises listed for **BRurSc** is acceptable to complete the five required

BAgr/BBus and **BAgr/BLaw** students must complete work in a **minimum of three** enterprises but in these cases the enterprises can be focused on rural business and law firms that are not directly related to agricultural or natural resource management activities. **There are no climate zone requirements for these degrees**

The enterprise/business categories are:

1. Dryland cropping
2. Irrigation cropping
3. Horticulture (vegetables or flowers)
4. Horticulture (fruit and nuts)
5. Viticulture
6. Forestry
7. Grazing sheep
8. Grazing beef
9. Dairy
10. Pigs
11. Poultry
12. Feedlot beef
13. Alternative animal systems (eg aquaculture, goats, horses, housed sheep etc)
14. Agribusiness (eg merchandising, agronomic advisors and consultants)
15. Agricultural contracting (eg shearing, bug checking etc)
16. Research and Administration (University labs, CSIRO, State government DPI, Private research organizations and also Natural resource managers such as Landcare and Catchment management authorities)
17. Approved special courses: these include such activities such as: Meat Judging (max of 2 weeks), Artificial Insemination Course (max 1 week), Farm Chemicals Course (1 week) and other similar courses **approved prior to the activity** by the chair of practical experience committee). Normally a maximum of a total of 4 weeks in this category is possible.

Students enrolled in **BAgr (Primary Industries)** can claim teaching practicum as part of work experience to a maximum of 9 weeks. **NOTE. You also must complete a Chemical Safety Certificate before commencing teaching (A course is usually run at UNE, in conjunction with NSW Farmers, at beginning of Semester 1 - see Dr P Lockwood)**

NOTE: International work experience: Prior approval is required for this to be counted but normally this will be considered as an alternative (6th) climate zone and can match to any of the enterprise categories above.

To claim for an enterprise category a **minimum of two weeks** work must be completed in that enterprise/business. It does not necessarily have to be on the same property/business as long as a total of 2 weeks is completed within the category.

Students are required to **nominate** the enterprise category and climate zone worked on any claim form. This will be clear where the claim is for a single-enterprise property but for a mixed farm, one enterprise can be identified as the major enterprise category eg. sheep could be a major enterprise on a wheat/sheep farm in some seasons; wheat at other times).

Special situations/exemptions

a) **Scholarship holders** who are expected to complete practical experience with companies as part of their scholarship agreement may be exempt from the normal climate and enterprise rules. This will be examined on an individual basis and these students should consult Dr Hinch about this.

b) **Students who have been employed full-time for at least 6 months in the agricultural, natural resource or food & fibre sectors** before initial enrolment may be given advanced standing (normally for at least 12 weeks). Students will require documentary evidence of previous employment and a written application **as soon as practical after commencement of the degree.**

c) **External students** working full- or part time in the agricultural/natural resources sector during their enrollment may also be given advanced standing, normally for a maximum of 12 weeks for part time and 24 weeks for full time work. Students will require documentary evidence of this employment and an application as soon as practical.

d) Students who consider that they have a case for individual treatment on equity or other grounds should make a written application. In special circumstances (e.g., financial hardship) the enterprise requirements may be relaxed.

Verbal claims for exemption from any part of these regulations will not be considered and applications should be emailed to Dr G Hinch (ghinch@une.edu.au) with a copy to ersteach@une.edu.au.

Claim and Extended report forms :

Can be downloaded from the School web site (<http://www.une.edu.au/rsa/prac-work.php>). The form seeks details on local environment, property/business location, size, production statistics and work undertaken and shall be completed by the **student**, signed by the property/business owner or manager and returned to Mrs Morris.

Claim Forms must be submitted within twelve months of completion of the work. Unsatisfactory Claim Forms will be returned to the student for rewriting but if the standard remains unacceptable, the relevant period will not be credited towards the practical work requirements.

D. DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL POLICY

1. A "Week" shall be interpreted as any 7-day working period irrespective of weekend work requirements. Work of shorter duration than one week will not normally be accepted. Where **prior** approval has been granted, in writing, part-time work (eg weekend work on local properties) may be aggregated.

2. Climate **Zone** demarcation is as indicated at (http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/climate/cgi_bin_scripts/clim_classification.cgi) or on the maps displayed outside McClymont lecture theatres 2 and 3.

E. FRAUDULENT MISREPRESENTATION

Where a student is detected in fraudulently misrepresenting the time worked on a property or is found to have given deliberately misleading information in Claim Forms the following **minimum** penalties shall apply:

- a) The time claimed shall be disallowed, and
- b) A period equivalent to that disallowed shall be added to the total time required of the student. Such additional work may be subject to restrictions imposed by the Practical Experience Committee.

Where a student is shown to have falsified a Property Report, the following minimum penalties shall apply:

- a) The Property Report shall not be accepted, and a further report will be required.
- b) The new Report must be equivalent in standard and length to that originally required and must be relevant to a Property:
 - i) upon which the student has worked for at least three weeks after the imposition of the penalty, and
 - ii) in other than an "home zone".
- c) A period of **six calendar weeks** shall be added to the total time requirement of the student. Such additional work may be subject to restrictions imposed by the School T&L or Head of School.

Students may appeal to Faculty against penalties, or other restrictions, imposed by the Committee.

G. INSURANCE

Details of student responsibilities and insurance are available from Mrs Morris (kmorris4@une.edu.au).

H. PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

NOTE In all cases this assessment cannot be based on a "home property" (a property owned or managed by parents)

- a) **BRurSc** - Are required to submit a 3000 word Major Property Report (on one property they have completed work on) at the commencement of the semester in which they are enrolled in AGSY 410.
- b) **BLvstKSc** - If not enrolled in AGSY410 are required to complete an extended practical experience claim form (<http://www.une.edu.au/rsa/prac-work.php>) within 3 months of planned graduation.
- c) **BAGr (and combined degree combinations)** - are required to complete an extended practical experience claim form (<http://www.une.edu.au/rsa/prac-work.php>) within 3 months of planned graduation.

The details requested vary between degrees but it is suggested that students should if at all possible be aware of the following information on most of the properties/agribusinesses in which they work.

1. Name and address of the property/business, name and address of the owner or manager.
2. District summary: climate, soils, topography, vegetation, main district activities/business, availability of marketing and service facilities.
3. Farm/business description: situation, area and tenure, managerial organisation, physical resources, transport staff etc

4. Business activities. Eg areas of crops, types of crops grown, numbers of livestock, types of livestock (Explain why these activities occur on the farm).
5. Managerial analysis. Objectives, company structure, delegation of authority, decision making processes, management of employees, activity management, annual calendar, pest management, market management (where applicable). Include an appreciation of the managerial technology present on the farm and its use in decision making (budgeting, computers, etc.). Include also in this section an appreciation that the farm is a series of sub-systems which are controlled by management. What you are trying to do is analyse the property in terms of a series of benchmark measurements.
6. Farm business data to allow an analysis and construction of benchmark and business budgets and enterprise gross margins

A little advice on final reports!

- It is a good idea to ask the questions above (particularly Rural Science students) well before the intended date of submission as some information is not easy to obtain quickly!
- Direct questioning of the owner/manager on debt levels is often resented, and is unnecessary, if full financial details are not available, it is expected that reasonable estimates be substituted by the student usually from state DPI information on production levels and gross margins.
- A good report requires careful observations of resources and management policies. It also demands a critical evaluation of current practices and possible methods of improving the business. Exercise lateral thinking, use your imagination and powers of enquiry to ask why some practices are followed and others not.

G N Hinch
January 2009