

VICTORIAN BAR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHARTER OF EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS UNDERTAKING WORK EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE SEC WORK EXPERIENCE AND MENTORING PROGRAM

Barristers who participate in the SEC's work experience and mentoring program work hard to provide you with a meaningful insight into life as a barrister at the Victorian Bar. To ensure that you get the most out of your work experience placement, **all students should read this document carefully before starting work experience.**

As you may know, barristers are sole practitioners. This means that they work for themselves – they are not employed in the way that solicitors are employed by a law firm. Because barristers are each running their own business, in circumstances where they or their clients may be dealing with difficult or distressing matters, it is important that you are appropriately respectful of their time, and the importance of the matters in which they permit you to be involved, during your work experience placement.

During your work experience placement, you are expected to behave appropriately. For example, you are expected to:

- **Be punctual:** Be on time to meetings with your barrister mentor.
- **Be respectful of your barrister mentor's time and efforts:** Even if you find yourself doing a task that is not as enjoyable as you had hoped, please appreciate that your barrister mentor is devoting time, energy and resources to hosting you for work experience. You may use this as an opportunity to ask your barrister mentor what they enjoy about their jobs, or what they used to find challenging when they were a more junior lawyer (or student).
- **Wear appropriate clothing:** You may be required to dress more formally than you are used to if you are invited to attend court or a conference with clients. It is a good idea to wear neat, conservative clothing that is appropriate for business contexts.
- **Be courteous and respectful:** Your barrister mentor is devoting time and energy to providing you with a meaningful insight into life at the Bar. Also, if you are invited to attend client conferences or court hearings, be aware that clients (who may be distressed or anxious, as participation in the legal system can be stressful or upsetting) are permitting you to observe their cases. Please respect that, and respect them.
- **Keep what your barrister mentor tells you about their cases confidential, unless they tell you it is not necessary to do so:** You will get the most out of your experience with your barrister mentor if they are able to speak candidly with you about their cases. Sometimes this may involve your barrister mentor sharing with you their confidential thoughts about a matter. You should respect this, and keep what they tell you confidential – this means not telling anyone else (either verbally or in writing) what your barrister mentor has told you. You

should ask your barrister mentor what their expectations are about confidentiality when you start your placement.

Finally, **if you are not sure about anything – ask!** If you are not sure what a particular context or task requires, ask your barrister mentor.

If you follow these suggestions, you will increase the chances of an enjoyable and productive work experience placement for all involved.

Enjoy!