

## More Changes to TRA Skill Assessments

In January 2005 we reported on the major assessment change TRA had decided upon, the enforcement of 900 hours of work experience. This change was due to come into effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2005.

TRA has now announced a change to satisfy all of those who complained about this unfair announcement in January.

TRA has now announced;

**“From 1 July 2005, applications for the international skill assessment – pre-migration which include an AQF qualification obtained through acceptable formal training that commenced after 31st January 2005, must also provide evidence of relevant and directly related work experience equalling not less than 900 hours.”**

## What does this mean?

In simple English, this means that **if you have already started your trade course before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005 then you will not have to prove the 900 hours of work experience even though you will be lodging your TRA application after the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2005.**

So if you started your course before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2005 it will not matter when finish your course and lodge your TRA assessment application! When you do you will be judged under the old rule of not having to prove 900 hours of work experience. A trade certificate will be enough (Certificate III) on its own without any work experience.

This is of course great news for hundreds of students who were no doubt depressed about the prior TRA announcement.

## Do not rush your applications!

We are aware many people were planning to rush their applications to TRA before the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to beat this new 900 hour rule. You can now relax and celebrate as long as you started your course before the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005. By rushing your applications mistakes can be easily made.

## TRA 900 hour definitions

The TRA have released more detail now on what they will be looking for to prove the 900 hours of work experience. This will affect all students who have started their trade qualifications after the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

## 900hrs of relevant and directly related work experience

Students supplying an AQF qualification obtained through acceptable formal training must also provide evidence of relevant and directly related work experience equalling not less than 900 hours. This means the work experience must be obtained outside the classroom environment. It should be in a practical functioning business enterprise, a real life situation.

This experience must be able to be proved to the TRA so they can verify it (check it) if they wish to. It also needs to be carried out whilst under supervision of a suitably qualified trade's person. As yet the TRA have not elaborate how you prove this.

## Experience at the trade level

You need to be able to demonstrate that the work you were doing is at the normal tradesperson or trainee level.

So of course if you are working as a manager or supervisor of a restaurant for example it will not count towards 900 hours of cooking experience. TRA must be able to see that you have been in a position where you can learn the trade skills necessary to become a tradesperson.

## Working as part of your course

TRA has recognised that there are a number of schools which also run retail or commercial enterprises which give students practical real life training as part of their teaching. If you can provide evidence of this to TRA then they may be able to count these hours of training towards your 900. I think we will find in the future more schools will organise this type of training as part of their courses to ensure their international students can meet the 900 hour requirement.

## Does the work experience have to be paid?

Initially in January the TRA claimed that students had to prove they were being paid for their work experience at the appropriate level. It was noted at the time they did not elaborate what level they were talking about.

**The TRA has now said that the work does not necessarily have to be paid employment.** This opens the door to voluntary unpaid experience and will be a relief for many students who are struggling to find paid employment at 20 hours per week.

TRA does state that this experience must be quantifiable and able to be verified as authentic. In other words they do not want hundreds of applications from people claiming to have received training experience with just one written reference from an employer. In paid employment you have at least the tax records to prove you were working there but in voluntary positions this will be more difficult to prove.

Our office is now preparing an example of an assessment book which may be used to document the type of training and work experience. This will be useful not only for those being paid but more so for those who fill voluntary positions. Please e-mail our office to request the format example to be sent to you.

**You may receive the 900 hours of training before, during or after your AQF trade qualification and it does not have to be in Australia only.**

## A better result

Our office has hoped the TRA would come to its senses and not be so harsh on students who had already started their course. It's a shame that they did not take this approach in the beginning for it would have saved a lot of heart ache for many international students.

Congratulations to all of you who complained.

It now means the 900 hours is more realistically obtainable which will be great news for you all.