

How to Balance Education, Work, and Life - Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

Hospitality study and hospitality work fit together better than most combinations — shifts are often evenings and weekends, and cafe work usually finishes by mid-afternoon. The difficulty is not the timetable. It is that taking too many shifts is the most common way students fail their course.

This page sets out the real load, the rules that constrain it, and the entitlements that exist to help — all of them checkable rather than encouraging.

Plan the week around real commitments

The original guide starts with priorities. Put work shifts, class time, assessment deadlines and rest on one calendar; decide what must be done first and what can wait. Tell your employer, trainer and people at home what time you need for study, and ask for support before the schedule becomes unworkable. Sleep, movement and breaks matter when study is added to paid work. The course-load and funding checks below help you build a plan that fits those commitments.

Start by knowing what the course actually weighs

Most people plan their shifts around a vague sense of how big the course is. The size is published, and it varies enormously.

Code	Qualification	Units	Core	Elective
BSB40520	Certificate IV in Leadership and Management	12	5	7
BSB30120	Certificate III in Business	13	6	7
SIT30622	Certificate III in Hospitality	15	6	9
SIT30722	Certificate III in Hospitality (Restaurant Front of House)	20	9	11
SIT50322	Diploma of Event Management	20	13	7
SIT40422	Certificate IV in Hospitality	21	9	12
SIT30821	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	25	20	5

SIT50422	Diploma of Hospitality Management	28	11	17
SIT40521	Certificate IV in Kitchen Management	33	27	6

The AQF also sets an expected volume of learning, independent of how the course is delivered: Certificate II typically 0.5–1 year, Certificate III typically 1–2 years, Certificate IV typically 0.5–2 years, Diploma typically 1–2 years. That volume must be sufficient for a graduate to achieve the learning outcomes — which is also why a course advertised as much shorter than that range should worry you rather than attract you. "Accelerating or shortening training without allowing students sufficient time for skill development and knowledge application" is a risk the regulator names.

The practical upshot: SIT40521 at 33 units with 27 of them core is a genuinely different commitment from BSB40520 at 12 units with 5 core. Plan the shifts against the unit count, not against the AQF level.

Some of the course needs shifts, not fewer of them

This is the part that turns the tension into a plan. Several units specify a number of observed occasions that can only happen in an operating venue:

Unit	What must be demonstrated
SITHFAB027 Serve food and beverage	5 service periods, including at least one peak period
SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage	12 service periods, with full menu advice in every one
SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails	3 service periods, two cocktails by each of six methods — 12 preparations minimum
SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee	10 specified beverages, on three occasions each
SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety	Hand-washing, uniform and PPE use, personal hygiene practices, hygienic food service — each on at least three occasions

If you are already working in an operational hospitality venue, those shifts can count. There are three placement routes: a vocational placement the provider arranges under its own agreements with venues, a self-arranged vocational placement, or a work placement at your existing paid job. All three require a Placement Agreement completed before the placement commences, covering supervision, conduct and learning outcomes.

So the question is not "how do I fit work around study" but "which of my shifts can be assessment". Ask that at enrolment.

What you must be told about the load before you pay

Before enrolment, or before any fees are payable, a provider must tell you the duration, the modes of delivery, the location, the dates and the scheduling — and every obligation to acquire materials or equipment, undertake a work placement, or travel and pay for accommodation to attend a placement. Unpaid placement hours and travel are a real cost to a shift worker's week and they belong in the conversation before enrolment, not after.

You must also be told the training product code and title , so you can look the unit list up yourself, and whether licensing or occupational licence requirements apply.

The constraint nobody mentions first

If you are on a student visa, two separate rule sets apply at once and both bind.

Your visa limits how much you may work while your course is in session, and lifts the limit during scheduled breaks. The figure has changed more than once in recent years, so read your own grant letter rather than relying on what a friend says. Unpaid and volunteer work can count.

You must also maintain satisfactory course progress and attendance. These are visa conditions in their own right, not just academic expectations. Students who lose their enrolment usually do so here, not through a dramatic breach.

Breaching a work condition is a visa matter, and the consequence falls on you rather than your employer. See working hours, rosters and public holidays and the visa checklist .

As an overseas student you also have a written agreement entered into concurrently with or before any payment, which must list every tuition fee and the period it relates to, your payment options, whether you may pay more than 50% of tuition before commencement, and every non-tuition fee — including reassessment , deferral and late payment . Those three matter to anyone whose shifts might cause a missed assessment. It must also explain refunds in plain English, including what happens if the course is not delivered and the role of the Tuition Protection Service .

If you are studying on a Victorian funded place

Two rules affect your week directly.

Physical presence. You must undertake all training and assessment while physically present in Victoria, or in a listed border-region postcode. The only exception is a student temporarily interstate or overseas on a Practical Placement , capped at no more than 50% of total Scheduled Hours . A funded student who moves interstate mid-course is a compliance event, not a paperwork detail. So a plan involving remote study from another state is not compatible with a subsidised place.

If you are under 17. An exemption from school attendance is required unless you are a school-based apprentice or trainee or have completed Year 12 or equivalent — and that exemption requires full-time training, meaning at least 25 hours per week excluding travel, term and public holidays, or a combination of training and employment. That is a hard floor on study time, not a target.

Money, and reducing the need for shifts

If the reason you are taking too many shifts is the fee, there are two mechanisms worth asking about directly, and neither is discretionary. Under Skills First a provider must offer a concession to eligible students, capped at no more than 20% of the standard tuition fee . And a full fee waiver must be offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Youth Access Initiative students, students from the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre, and young people on community-based orders.

Ask whether you fall into any of those categories, and ask for the total cost in writing. For a Skills First place, the 2026 rules require a clear refund policy before enrolment and, before training starts, written documentation showing that the program is subsidised and the total cost to you, including tuition after the government contribution and any concession or waiver, plus any other applicable fees for services, amenities, goods or materials. Check your own eligibility against the Victorian Government's online eligibility indicator. No fee figures are published here by policy — confirm current fees directly. See what hospitality courses cost in Australia .

What actually helps

Match the shift pattern to the study pattern. Cafe work is early and finished by mid-afternoon, which suits afternoon classes. Bar work is evenings, which suits daytime classes and does not suit early starts. Choosing the wrong one is the most common self-inflicted problem.

Count the assessment occasions before you set your availability. If a unit needs twelve service periods and you work two a fortnight, that unit will take three months. Better to know in week one.

Protect assessment weeks in advance. Tell your employer before the roster is written, not after. Availability given early is respected; availability withdrawn late is not.

Be honest about your availability. Overstating it and then declining shifts is the fastest way to stop being rostered at all.

Use the travel time. Reading between shifts is worth more than a long study session you never actually schedule.

Do not let money decide alone. A shift that costs you an assessment is expensive — and if you are an overseas student, the reassessment fee is one of the non-tuition fees your written agreement has to disclose.

Ask for support earlier than feels necessary

This is the part students skip, and it is a genuine entitlement rather than a favour.

Standard 2.3 requires providers to run pre-enrolment checks, regularly review support services delivered by third parties, ensure you know how to contact your trainers and assessors, and tell you how long to expect to wait for a reply to an enquiry. You must also have channels to disclose a disability at enrolment and at any point afterwards, and an environment where asking for a reasonable adjustment is comfortable — the only limit being that an adjustment must not compromise the integrity of the training product or the industry standard.

Reasonable adjustment has its own standard and its own external reference point. Standard 2.4 of the Outcome Standards for RTOs requires reasonable adjustments to be made to support students with disability, **consistently with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005***, and requires the provider to communicate the reasons where an adjustment is not appropriate or possible. What an adjustment cannot do is change the competency standard itself — the unit's requirements stay the same for everyone, and an adjustment must not jeopardise the integrity of the training product or the industry standard.

Standard 2.6 requires the provider to identify wellbeing needs by reference to the training product content and tell students what is available. Named failures include determining wellbeing needs only at enrolment, having strategies staff do not know about, and not assessing third-party environments such as work placements that could harm a student. Standard 2.5 requires a safe and inclusive environment that is culturally safe for First Nations people.

If you are CRICOS-enrolled, the National Code adds obligations around support and adjusting to study and life in Australia.

In practice: if work is starting to affect study, raise it before you fall behind. A provider can adjust a plan or point you to support; it cannot fix a problem it does not know about. The student toolkit sets out what support you are entitled to at each stage, and policies carries the complaints and appeals processes — which must include independent review at no or low cost.

The thing that actually shortens the course

Recognition of prior learning. RTOs must offer it under Standard 1.6. If you already have relevant units or genuine workplace experience, RPL may reduce what you need to complete — which is the most direct way to reduce the load. It is a real assessment against the same four rules of evidence, valid, sufficient, authentic and current , not a waiver.

How much room there is depends on the qualification. There is a great deal in SIT50422 (17 of 28 units elective) and SIT30622 (9 of 15); very little in SIT40521 (6 of 33). Raise it at the pre-training review , which must consider your language, literacy and numeracy, your digital literacy and your individual requirements before you are placed in a course. It is consistently under-used. See skills assessment , or send a course enquiry .

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training , RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Level 3, 28 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, and 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Contact melbourne@cht.edu.au or +61 3 9654 1554 .

We link to the relevant course and regulatory sources in this guide. Check those sources for current requirements, and confirm course availability, delivery, fees and entry requirements with us before enrolling.

Source records and further guidance

We link the unit records and regulator guidance relevant to this page below. Check the current source before making an enrolment, licensing or employment decision.

SIT40521 Certificate IV in Kitchen Management

BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management

SIT30622 Certificate III in Hospitality

SIT50422 Diploma of Hospitality Management

SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee

Skills First (Victoria) — VET Funding Contract obligations

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 — Standards 1 to 11

Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2025 (full text)

Unique Student Identifier (USI) requirements for RTOs

How many hours can I work on a student visa?

There is a limit while your course is in session and it lifts during scheduled breaks. The figure has changed more than once, so check your own grant letter and the current Department of Home Affairs position rather than relying on second-hand advice. This page is not migration advice.

Does volunteer work count towards the limit?

It can. Check before agreeing to unpaid work.

How much time will the course actually take?

Start from the unit count and the AQF volume of learning: Certificate III typically one to two years, Certificate IV typically half a year to two years, Diploma typically one to two years. Then compare unit counts — SIT40521 is 33 units, BSB40520 is 12. Both are Certificate IVs.

Can my current job count towards the course?

Often yes, through the work placement route, provided it is an operational hospitality environment and a Placement Agreement is completed before it starts. Ask which units your shifts can cover.

How many shifts do the practical units need?

It depends on the units. SITHFAB034 alone needs twelve service periods with full menu advice in every one; SITHFAB030 needs twelve cocktail preparations across three service periods; SITHFAB025 needs ten specified beverages on three occasions each; SITXFSA005 needs four behaviours on at least three occasions each. Ask for the numbers at enrolment.

Will I be paid for placement hours?

Only on the work placement route, which is your existing paid employment. A vocational placement, whether the provider arranges it or you do, is not paid employment — and the provider must disclose any obligation to travel or pay for accommodation to attend one before you pay.

What if I am falling behind?

Contact student support early. If you are on a student visa, course progress is a visa condition, so this is worth acting on quickly. A provider must make sure you know how to contact your trainers and how long to expect to wait for a reply.

Can I ask for extra time or a different assessment method?

Yes, through reasonable adjustment, and fairness expressly contemplates it along with reassessment where necessary. You must have a channel to disclose a disability at enrolment and afterwards. The limit is that an adjustment cannot compromise the integrity of the training product or the industry standard.

Can I reduce my study load?

Ask — but note that for student visa holders, load and progress are tied to visa conditions, and for a Victorian funded student under 17 an exemption from school attendance requires at least 25 hours per week of training. Get advice before changing anything.

Can I study a Victorian funded course from interstate or online?

No, other than in a narrow case. All training and assessment must be undertaken while you are physically present in Victoria or a listed border-region postcode, with an exception only for a Practical Placement, capped at no more than 50% of Scheduled Hours.

Is there any way to pay less so I can work less?

Ask about a concession — capped at no more than 20% of the standard tuition fee for eligible students — and about the full fee waiver cohorts. Also ask whether RPL can reduce the units you need. Check your eligibility against the Victorian Government's online eligibility indicator.

What happens to the units I did finish if I have to stop?

You receive a Statement of Attainment for them, carrying the full title and national code of each unit, and they credit-transfer into a later enrolment. Finish units rather than abandoning them mid-way — a completed unit is a permanent asset attached to your USI.

Where should I read next?

Getting the most out of your training ([/news/getting-the-most-out-of-your-training/](#)) for the levers, how to keep learning online ([/news/how-to-keep-learning-online/](#)) for the remote options, and your guide to selecting the right hospitality course ([/news/your-guide-to-selecting-the-right-hospitality-course-for-you/](#)) if you have not chosen yet. The courses list ([/courses/](#)) and an expression of interest ([/eoi/](#)) are the practical next steps.

Which standard covers reasonable adjustment?

Standard 2.4 of the Outcome Standards for RTOs, which requires adjustments consistent with the Disability Standards for Education 2005, and requires the provider to tell you the reasons if an adjustment is not appropriate or possible.

Can an adjustment change what I have to demonstrate?

No. It changes the method, not the standard. The unit's competency requirements are the same for everyone, and an adjustment must not compromise the integrity of the training product or the industry standard.