

Tips for Entering the Workforce for the First Time - Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

Before your first shift you need four things set up, and nobody sits you down and explains them: a Tax File Number, a bank account, a superannuation fund, and a Unique Student Identifier if you are doing nationally recognised training. Sort those out first, because two of them cost you money or time if you leave them until later.

Then there are three things you should know but almost certainly do not: which award covers you and what classification you are on, what your employer legally owes you on your first day, and what you legally owe them. This page covers all of it.

Prepare for the first application and interview

The original first-job guide encourages a concise CV showing education, genuine volunteer or placement work and relevant people skills. At an interview, ask what the shift involves, who trains new starters and how performance is reviewed. Practise describing a time you worked with others or solved a problem, even if it happened outside paid work. The rights, pay and credential checks below help you judge an offer before accepting it.

The four-item setup

What	Where it comes from	Why it matters
Tax File Number	Free from the ATO	Without one, your employer must withhold tax at the top rate. You get it back at tax time, but not before.
Bank account	Any bank or credit union	Wages are paid by transfer. You hand the BSB and account number to payroll on your first day.
Superannuation fund	Nominated by you	Super is paid on top of your wage into a fund. If you do not nominate one, your employer pays into a fund already linked to you or its default, which is how people end up with several accounts.
Unique Student Identifier	Free, from the government	Generally required before issue, unless an applicable exemption applies.

The USI is the one most people have never heard of. It is a single number that every nationally recognised training result attaches to, for life, which is why you can pull up a certificate from years ago without contacting the provider.

One trap. If you have done any nationally recognised training since 2015 — a school VET subject, a short course, an RSA — you already have a USI . Recover it rather than creating a second one. A duplicate splits your training history across two records, and an employer checking your transcript will only ever see one half of it.

For the mechanics of the first three, see how to apply for a Tax File Number , setting up a bank account in Australia and the superannuation, tax and payslips guide .

The thing nobody tells a first-time worker: you have a classification, in one of four awards

In hospitality your pay is not a number your manager chose. It comes from a classification inside a modern award, and the award obliges your employer to assign you one. So the first question is which award.

The premises decides, not your job title. The same work — food and beverage attendant, bar attendant, kitchen hand — maps to a different award and a different pay table depending on where you do it:

Where you work	Award
Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos, caterers, accommodation	MA000009 Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020
Not-for-profit registered clubs — RSL, bowls, golf, sporting, community	MA000058 Registered and Licensed Clubs Award 2020
Standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs , reception centres, roadhouses	MA000119 Restaurant Industry Award 2020
Takeaway, food courts, food sold mainly to be eaten away from the counter	MA000003 Fast Food Industry Award 2010

Each covers its industry to the exclusion of any other modern award, so exactly one applies to your employer. Three traps that catch people constantly:

A club is not covered by the hospitality award. MA000009 clause 4.4(d)(i) expressly excludes "clubs registered or recognised under State or Territory legislation". If you work at an RSL, bowls, golf or community club you are almost certainly under MA000058 — which applies where the club is both registered under a liquor, gaming, associations or corporations statute and operating not-for-profit for members and the community .

A night club is not a club. It is a commercial venue, so it falls under MA000119 with restaurants and cafes.

The fast food boundary is sit-down service, not the menu. A food-court outlet or takeaway counter is MA000003 ; a cafe with tables is MA000119 .

Asking which award you are under is a completely reasonable first-day question, and it is the one that determines everything below.

The MA000009 structure, as the worked example

Under MA000009, clause 14 requires the employer to classify every employee in accordance with Schedule A . The structure is an Introductory level plus Levels 1 to 6 , organised across five streams: food and beverage, kitchen, guest services, clerical, and casino gaming.

The other three awards each have their own Schedule A , with their own classification names and numbering. If you are under MA000058, MA000119 or MA000003, read that award's schedule rather than assuming these level numbers carry across.

Introductory level has a clock on it

If you are genuinely new to the industry and under MA000009, you may start at Introductory level, which is for someone who does not yet demonstrate the competency requirements of Level 1. It is time-limited:

You remain at Introductory level for up to three months while undertaking appropriate training and being assessed for competency to move to Level 1.

At the end of that period you move to Level 1 , unless you and your employer mutually agree that further training of up to three months is required.

Six months is the maximum.

It is not an indefinite holding classification. And it is not the same as being a trainee: a trainee under a registered training contract is paid under the National Training Wage , not at Introductory level. If you are still at Introductory level after eight months, ask why.

Under clause 3.3 you are entitled to read the award

Your employer must make copies of the award and the National Employment Standards available to all employees, either on a noticeboard or by accessible electronic means. The document that decides your pay is not confidential.

This page prints no rates, because award rates re-set every 1 July and a figure published on a web page goes stale. Check current rates in the Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay and Conditions Tool, against the award code that covers your venue.

And a qualification changes the floor — in three of the four awards

This is the single most useful thing to know before you start, because it is the concrete answer to whether training pays for itself. A relevant AQF Certificate III or higher, used at work , sets a minimum classification of Level 4 :

Award	Floor	Rate clause
MA000009 Hospitality Industry (General)	Level 4	clause 18.1
MA000119 Restaurant Industry	Level 4	clause 18.1
MA000058 Registered and Licensed Clubs	Level 4	clause 18.3
MA000003 Fast Food	no equivalent provision	—

And under MA000119 that floor lands on a named grade. Schedule A defines Level 4 as "Food and beverage attendant grade 4 (tradesperson)" and "Cook grade 3 (tradesperson)" , and the award's own standard rate is the Level 4 rate . So in a standalone restaurant or cafe, a relevant Certificate III used at work is an explicit route to a tradesperson grade without serving an apprenticeship . For someone starting out, that is the most valuable sentence on this page.

Three differences worth respecting, because this is a pay entitlement rather than a courtesy:

MA000009 and MA000119 require that you make use of the skills and knowledge derived from the Certificate III competencies. It is not automatic on completion.

MA000058 states the floor for "AQF Certificate III qualifications" without the words "or higher", and adds that the Fair Work Commission may require the employee to demonstrate that they utilise the relevant skills.

Dispute routes differ : clause 40 under MA000009, clause 34 under MA000119, and referral to the Fair Work Commission under MA000058.

Usefully for someone starting out, MA000009's definition of "appropriate level of training" in clause 2 is satisfied by a qualification or one or more appropriate units of competency forming part of a training package . Individual units count, not just whole qualifications.

What your employer owes you on day one, by law

Work health and safety is not a policy folder; it is a duty that cannot be transferred to anyone else. It also does not vary by which award covers you.

In Victoria , an employer must provide and maintain a safe working environment so far as is reasonably practicable — safe plant and systems of work, safe handling and storage of substances, adequate welfare facilities, and such information, instruction, training or supervision as is necessary for you to do your work safely. Apprentices and trainees count as employees. Employers must also ensure people who are not their employees are not exposed to risks from the business, which is what covers a student on work placement.

In New South Wales the duty holder is a person conducting a business or undertaking , and a student gaining work experience is expressly defined as a worker — so you get the full protection of the primary duty, not a lesser version of it.

In practice, on your first day you should receive:

A general industry safety induction covering hospitality hazards, before you commence work .

A site-specific induction on day one — where the first aid kit is, what the emergency and evacuation procedures are, what plant and equipment this kitchen has, where chemicals are stored, and what hazards this particular building has.

Hazard-specific training for the work you will actually be doing, reviewed and updated as conditions change.

Supervision should also be proportionate to your experience . Workers under 18, trainees and apprentices, new staff and anyone on a high-risk task are the categories the safety material singles out for closer supervision, so if you are all three of those things at once, more supervision is the expected standard rather than a sign of distrust.

If you are on a work placement through a training provider, the split is defined: the training organisation delivers a general safety induction before the placement and keeps evidence of it; the host delivers a site-specific induction on day one and confirms it in writing; and the training organisation monitors the placement and records that monitoring. The placement agreement should state which tasks you may and may not perform, the induction the host will deliver, and the monitoring schedule, and it must be completed before the placement commences . In New South Wales there is an extra layer — section 46 requires everyone holding a duty for the same matter to consult, cooperate and coordinate with the others, which means the provider and the host cannot each assume the other handled it.

You also have a right to be consulted. In Victoria employers must consult employees about hazard identification, control measures, welfare facilities and changes to the workplace, and must give a reasonable opportunity to express views and take them into account. New South Wales goes further: workers must be able to contribute to the decision-making and be advised of the outcome in a timely

manner .

What you owe your employer, by law

Workers carry their own duties. You must:

take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others in the workplace;
cooperate with your employer on any action taken to comply with WHS law;
not intentionally interfere with or misuse anything provided for health and safety;
report hazards and incidents in line with workplace procedures; and
participate in the WHS management practices and consultation processes the workplace has set up.

The hazards you are being inducted on

The safety material sorts hospitality hazards into four categories : the physical environment (slips, trips, falls and ergonomics), plant (equipment and machinery), work practice (unsafe procedures) and security (cash, documents, equipment, keys and people). Knowing the categories is useful because it tells you what a proper induction should have covered.

Category	What it is in a hospitality venue
Physical environment	Slips, trips and falls on wet or greasy floors and in poor lighting; manual handling of deliveries, stockpots and kegs; repetitive physical work; heat stress and fatigue ; noise from extraction systems and dishwashers
Plant	Unguarded mixers, slicers and food processors ; lacerations and amputations from machinery and knives; burns from hot surfaces, liquids and chemicals; electricity, including damaged leads and cleaning electrical cooking equipment; glassware and broken glass ; carbon dioxide gas
Work practice	Chemical exposure to degreasers, sanitisers and beer line cleaners; cross contamination and the spread of illness
Security	Cash, documents, equipment, keys and people — including occupational violence and aggression from intoxicated patrons

Two of those deserve naming separately, because they are the ones a first-time worker is most likely to assume are not safety matters at all.

Psychosocial hazards — bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and workplace culture — are hazards in the same sense a wet floor is. In Victoria health expressly includes psychological health , which puts them inside the employer's primary duty rather than in a separate grievance process.

Occupational violence and aggression from intoxicated patrons is a foreseeable hazard in any licensed venue, not bad luck. It belongs in the venue's risk assessment and in your induction, and if nobody has told you what to do when a patron becomes aggressive, that is a gap worth raising.

One more mechanical point: guards on plant must be fitted and interlocked , equipment must be isolated before cleaning or clearing , and you should never clean energised electrical equipment . If you are asked to reach into a running machine, the answer is no.

Controls follow a hierarchy — elimination first, then substitution, isolation, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment last. PPE is the weakest control, which is why a venue that hands you gloves and calls it a safety system has not done the work. See health and safety best practice in hospitality .

Two credentials you may need before you start, not after

An RSA Statement of Attainment is a national training record, but permission to serve alcohol depends on the destination's rules. NSW permits eligible temporary interstate workers; permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements, using bridging where eligible. Victoria offers bridging to eligible interstate holders. SA applies approved-provider rules to training from 1 November 2020, with earlier training not required to be repeated solely for that change. QLD and WA require suitable national RSA evidence. Tasmania distinguishes staff from licence holders; the ACT and NT have local currency and refresher requirements. Check the regulator before your first shift. See RSA recognition by jurisdiction , NSW's rules and SA's rules .

If you will handle food you need food handler training completed before you start the activity. Under Standard 3.2.2A it must cover safe handling of food, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising, and personal hygiene. It does not have to be nationally accredited , there is no mandated refresher period , and the business is not required to keep records of it — a free non-accredited course satisfies the law. The accredited unit SITXFSA005 buys portability and proof, not permission. The separate five-year clock belongs to the Food Safety Supervisor certificate, which is an appointment the business makes rather than something every food handler needs. See food handling course .

Victorian RSG is free approved training: online modules through RSG Online and venue-arranged sessions with venue support workers. National SITHGAM training does not replace it. See the official training requirements and our RSG guide .

If you are in Victoria, training may be subsidised

Victorian government-subsidised training runs through Skills First , and eligibility turns on you rather than on the course. Three threshold limbs, from Schedule 1 clause 2.2 of the funding contract:

You are an Australian citizen, a permanent visa holder, or a New Zealand citizen .

You enrol and commence between the contract commencement date and 31 December 2026 inclusive .

You undertake all training and assessment while physically present in Victoria , or in a listed border-region postcode .

There is a further limb about what you already hold: if you are 20 or over at the reference date , you must not already hold a qualification higher than Certificate I . A first-time worker usually satisfies that limb without having to think about it, which is a genuine reason to train early rather than later.

The physical-presence rule is the one that catches people. There is no general online or interstate concession for a funded student, and moving interstate part-way through a course is a compliance event rather than a private matter. The single exception is a student temporarily interstate or overseas for a Practical Placement , who may be trained and assessed online for no more than 50% of total Scheduled Hours .

Two things to do rather than assume. Check your own position against the Victorian Government's own online eligibility indicator , which is the authority on this rather than any provider's website, including this one. Then ask the provider in writing, because under the contract it is the provider that determines eligibility and carries the evidentiary burden.

Eligibility to enrol and eligibility for a subsidy are separate questions. Outside Victoria, our delivery is fee-for-service and unsubsidised.

Hospitality has a real entry point

Most skilled industries make you buy a diploma or a degree before anyone will look at you. Hospitality does not. Certificate III sits at AQF level 3, which describes someone who can work with some autonomy, and it is a genuine starting qualification rather than a token one. Neither Certificate III in Hospitality has entry requirements. That is unusual, and it is the practical reason hospitality absorbs so many first-time workers.

SIT30622 is 15 units; SIT30722 Certificate III in Hospitality (Restaurant Front of House) is 20 units and makes RSA and cash handling core rather than elective, which is worth knowing if a bar or floor job is the target.

What to ask before you accept the shift

Ask which award covers the venue, what your classification is, what stream you sit in, how far ahead rosters are published, and how public holidays are treated. These are normal questions, and asking them signals you understand the job is a contract, not a favour. Our guide to working hours, rosters and public holidays covers the mechanics.

Ask one more: what happens when you cover a shift above your classification. Under clause 22 of MA000009, two or more hours in a day at a higher classification attracts the higher rate for the whole day; less than two hours attracts it for the time worked only. Food and beverage attendants grades 2 and 3 are excluded from that clause. Keep a dated note of those shifts — it supports the higher duties position, and it becomes the workplace evidence recognition of prior learning is assessed against later.

Then decide what to train in

You do not need to pick a career on day one, but notice which part of the venue you gravitate to, because kitchen and floor lead to different qualifications. The course list shows both paths, and the expression of interest form is the low-commitment way to start a conversation. The three interpersonal habits that get people promoted fastest are set out in 3 crucial soft skills.

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training — legal name Complete Hospitality Training (Vic) Pty Ltd, RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E, ABN 27 006 947 262, ACN 006 947 262. Registered as RTO 3722 since 1 June 1994. Regulated nationally by ASQA since 8 September 2017, when registration transferred from the Victorian regulator (VRQA). The current registration period runs 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2032, exercised by ASQA under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011.

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.

Trading names on the RTO 3722 record. Five are current — Victorian Bar School (from 1 June 1994, the original), Complete Hospitality Training (2011), Ready Serve Achieve Melbourne (2018), Coffee School by CHT (2021) and Alchemy Institute of Australia (2024). A sixth, Complete Healthcare Training, ran from 24 October 2023 to 19 April 2025 and has ended. A certificate issued under any of those names is an RTO 3722 credential.

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.

Do I need a USI before I enrol or before I finish?

For nationally recognised training, a USI is generally required before your qualification or Statement of Attainment can be issued, unless an applicable exemption applies. We can explain the requirements for your enrolment. See the official USI exemption guidance (<https://www.usi.gov.au/students/create-your-usi/exemptions-usi>). Creating a USI is free; recover an existing one rather than creating another.

I think I might already have a USI. What do I do?

Recover it rather than creating a new one. Anyone who has done nationally recognised training since 2015 already has one, and a duplicate splits your training history in two.

Which award covers my venue?

It turns on the premises, not your job title. Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos and caterers fall under MA000009; not-for-profit registered clubs under MA000058; standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs, reception centres and roadhouses under MA000119; takeaway and food-court outlets under MA000003.

I got a job at an RSL club. Is that the hospitality award?

No. MA000009 clause 4.4(d)(i) expressly excludes clubs registered or recognised under State or Territory legislation. A registered not-for-profit club is covered by MA000058.

I got a job in a night club. Is that the clubs award?

No — night clubs fall under MA000119, the Restaurant Industry Award, because a night club is a commercial venue.

I work in a food court. Which award?

MA000003, the Fast Food Industry Award, because food courts and takeaway counters sell food primarily to be consumed away from the point of sale. A cafe with sit-down tables is MA000119 instead.

Will finishing a Certificate III change my pay?

A relevant Certificate III or higher, used at work, sets a minimum classification of Level 4 under MA000009 (clause 18.1), MA000119 (clause 18.1) and MA000058 (clause 18.3). The fast food award has no equivalent provision.

What does Level 4 mean in a restaurant?

Under MA000119, Schedule A defines Level 4 as "Food and beverage attendant grade 4 (tradesperson)" and "Cook grade 3 (tradesperson)", and the Level 4 rate is that award's standard rate. A relevant Certificate III used at work is a route to a tradesperson grade without an apprenticeship.

Is the Level 4 floor automatic once I finish?

Not quite. MA000009 and MA000119 require you to make use of the skills derived from the Certificate III competencies in the work you do. MA000058 omits "or higher" and adds that the Fair Work Commission may require you to demonstrate that you utilise the relevant skills.

What is my classification and who decides it?

Your employer must classify you under the Schedule A of whichever award covers you. Under MA000009 that structure runs from Introductory level through Levels 1 to 6 across five streams. You are entitled to see the award under clause 3.3.

How long can I be kept at Introductory level?

Under MA000009, three months, extendable once by mutual agreement by a further three. Six months is the maximum, after which you move to Level 1.

Is Introductory level the same as being a trainee?

No. A trainee under a registered training contract is paid under the National Training Wage, not at Introductory level.

What should my first-day induction include?

A general industry safety induction covering hospitality hazards before you commence work, then a site-specific induction on day one covering emergency and evacuation procedures, the first aid kit location, the plant and equipment in that kitchen, chemical storage and the hazards of that particular workplace. Hazard-specific training follows for the work you will actually do.

Which hazards should that induction actually cover?

The four categories are the physical environment, plant, work practice and security. In a venue that means slips, trips and falls on wet or greasy floors and in poor lighting; manual handling of deliveries, stockpots and kegs; heat stress and fatigue; noise from extraction and dishwashers; unguarded mixers, slicers and food processors; lacerations and amputations; burns; electricity and damaged leads; glassware and broken glass; carbon dioxide gas; chemical exposure to degreasers, sanitisers and beer line cleaners; cross contamination; and security matters including occupational violence and aggression from intoxicated patrons.

Is bullying a safety matter or something else?

A safety matter. Bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination are psychosocial hazards, and in Victoria health expressly includes psychological health, so they sit inside the employer's primary duty of care rather than only in a grievance process.

Can I be asked to clean a machine while it is running?

No. Plant must be isolated before cleaning or clearing, guards must be fitted and interlocked, and energised electrical equipment must never be cleaned.

I am on a work placement. Who is responsible for my safety?

Both the training provider and the host. The provider delivers a general safety induction before placement and monitors it; the host delivers the site-specific induction on day one. In New South Wales a work experience student is expressly a worker, and duty holders must coordinate with each other.

Do I have to report a hazard even if it is not my job?

Yes. Reporting hazards and incidents in line with workplace procedures is one of your own legal duties as a worker.

Am I eligible for subsidised training in Victoria?

The threshold limbs are Australian citizenship, a permanent visa or New Zealand citizenship; enrolling and commencing by 31 December 2026 inclusive; and undertaking all training and assessment while physically present in Victoria or a listed border-region postcode. If you are 20 or over at the reference date you must also not already hold a qualification higher than Certificate I. Check the Victorian Government's own online eligibility indicator, then get the provider's determination in writing.

Can I do a Victorian subsidised course online from another state?

No, as a general rule — there is no general online or interstate concession. The one exception is a student temporarily interstate or overseas for a Practical Placement, capped at no more than 50% of total Scheduled Hours.

Can I work in hospitality with no experience at all?

Yes. Entry-level floor and kitchen-hand roles are the standard on-ramp, and neither Certificate III in Hospitality has entry requirements.

Do I need a food safety certificate before my first shift?

You need food handler training completed before you engage in the activity. It does not have to be accredited and there is no mandated refresher period.

What if I have done casual work already?

Mention it at the pre-training review before you enrol. Recognition of prior learning under Standard 1.6 assesses evidence of your existing skills against the unit requirements, and it is consistently under-used. Bring documents rather than recollections.

I covered a supervisor's shift. Does that change my pay?

Under MA000009 clause 22, two or more hours in a day at a higher classification attracts the higher rate for the whole day. Keep a dated record.

Who can I talk to about all this?

Send a course enquiry (/contact/), or use student support (/toolkit/).