

400 Hour Work Experience Policy

Attaining all 400 work experience hours in an actual restaurant or foodservice operation is not always feasible in states due to rural locations, transportation, scheduling conflicts, etc. However, students are participating in other industry-related events or working in industry-related capacities that promote interest and provide experience in the restaurant and foodservice industry, and we would like to recognize those hours as meeting a portion of the required work experience.

We remain committed to our requirement that students achieve 400 hours of industry related experience, but would like to recognize the importance of allowing flexibility within our state programs. As a result:

- To attain a ProStart® National Certificate of Achievement, students must still show proof of work or involvement in our industry totaling 400 hours.
- Students may meet the requirement by participating in either paid foodservice jobs or “alternative” hospitality-related jobs or activities. These alternative hospitality-related jobs may be paid or unpaid (due to the nature of the task).
- ProStart State Coordinators are ultimately responsible for maintaining quality assurance when students are participating in alternative hospitality-related jobs or activities.
- In order to maintain quality assurance, ProStart State Coordinators will complete the ProStart Workplace Validation Form. These forms briefly outline the number of hours students will have spent on paid work hours, alternative hospitality-related jobs or activities, and approve the total number of hours spent on those activities. As its original purpose, the form will validate proof of 400 work experience hours earned.
- Students may receive credit on their Student Work Experience Checklist for involvement in alternative activities if specific competencies from the Checklist can be identified and completed.
- If specific competencies cannot be met during the alternative hospitality work experience hours, please make sure the alternative hospitality-related jobs or activities cover items outlined in the ProStart learning objectives.
- Suggested activities:
 1. Working in hospitality-industry related manufacturers’, suppliers’ or vendors’ offices.
 2. School-based enterprises (foodservice or restaurant)
 3. Hospitality/culinary volunteer community service (food bank or recycling programs).
 4. Working in association offices, state trade show events, on behalf of hospitality programs at public relations events.
 5. Experience or jobs in travel and tourism (convention and visitors bureau, convention centers, airlines, attractions.)

Please follow the ProStart testing procedures, which includes instructions for submitting proof of 400 work experience hours.