PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Membership of, or contact with, Professional and Industry Associations can be a great resource in your career development, job search, and networking. It can also show that you are connected to your career sector and view yourself as a committed professional within it.

WHAT ARE THEY?
Professional Associations exist to further the interests of their members and related stakeholders. They may also regulate their members’ practice for the benefit of the public. Their activities could include:

- promoting and providing professional and career development activities to members to maintain currency within the specific field
- providing a forum for networking amongst members
- promoting the profession in the community
- providing careers information to students and graduates
- producing regular publications on professional and industry issues e.g. newsletter or magazine/journal and other professional resources for members
- establishing and monitoring quality standards, professional codes of practice and accreditation
- advising educational institutions on curriculum development.

WHY JOIN?
Students in any degree can benefit from membership of a Professional Association. Student membership will usually be offered at a reduced membership rate (in some cases it is even free). Through involvement with a Professional Association you could:

- increase your knowledge of the profession and industry you are interested in - many Professional Associations have extensive careers information on their web site
- increase your knowledge of relevant organisations and the career opportunities they offer
- learn about day-to-day issues you will face in the workplace
- keep up-to-date with trends and developments in the field
- meet professionals already working in the field you wish to enter, and network with employers
- socialise with your student peers who share similar interests and career goals
- develop skills through participation in professional development activities, conferences, events and training
- learn about, and apply for, vacation work, co-op placements and other work experience opportunities
- receive assistance with job-seeking through workshops, mentoring opportunities, seminars, site visits, employer functions, vacancy listings etc.
- volunteer for the Association on projects/events and develop new skills
- improve your business etiquette and communication skills.

MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP
Look for opportunities to participate in the activities of the Association – for example, assist in the running of an event, join a committee or help with the newsletter.

Remember to include the fact that you are a member of a Professional Association early on in your resume! This reflects your active interest in your chosen field at a professional level.

In some cases, joining certain Professional Associations can be quite expensive, even with student rates. However, it may still be possible to attend training events at subsidised rates.

HOW DO I FIND ONE?
Check the links to Professional Associations from the online GradFacts for your degree.
Check out information on specific occupations at the My Future website as the relevant Professional Association is usually listed: www.myfuture.edu.au/

Ask relevant University academic staff for their recommendations.

The Directory of Australian Associations (available at the Flinders University Library).

Join student groups on campus, for example, AIESEC. (www.flindersone.edu.au/).

COMMENTS FROM FLINDERS GRADUATES

“In my second year I became a member on the committee of the Golden Key International Honour Society and that is a title I used to highlight the quality of my skills.” Nicoline, Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting), Graduate Officer, Department of Treasury and Finance.

FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS IN YOUR CAREER SECTOR

You can also demonstrate your professionalism through keeping your career sector knowledge base current and documenting this on your resume. Here are a few examples of free email Subscriptions:

- AusAID In Focus Magazine (aims to increase community awareness and understanding of the Australian Government’s overseas aid program): www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubs.cfm?Type=PubFocus
- HealthInsite newsletter (provides access to information about human health): www.healthinsite.gov.au/content/newsletters/mailistsubscribe.cfm
- Subscribe to beyondblue updates with the latest research and information related to depression, anxiety, and substance-use related disorders: www.beyondblue.org.au (Getting involved)

SOURCES

- www.graduateopportunities.com/