WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS

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National Context

• Increasing focus on enhancing students employability
• Prominence of WIL in tertiary institutions strategic plans
• Recognition of the importance of WIL as a mechanism for economic growth by government
• National Innovation & Science Agenda
• Strong advocacy for WIL as a mechanism to enhance graduate work readiness:
  – Peak industry groups & Professional associations
  – Office of Chief Scientist
• Development of a National WIL Strategy in Australia
Impact of Work Integrated Learning on Student Work-readiness

• WIL placements do have an impact on student work-readiness and contribute to employability capabilities, as do simulated activities.

• Student experience is enhanced when WIL is embedded and scaffolded across the curriculum both vertically and horizontally.

The studies drew attention to the importance of:

• curriculum and co-curricular factors
• the quality and organisation of WIL activities
• rigorous preparation of students for WIL experiences
• debriefing sessions which enable students to reflect on personal performance

“The impact of work integrated learning on student work-readiness”
Sonia Ferns, Calvin Smith, Leoni Russell, 2014
Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at RMIT

Work Integrated Learning (WIL): an umbrella term that describes a range of learning and assessment models that integrate discipline theory, knowledge and skills with the practice of work.

WIL activities are:

• Aligned to course learning outcomes and program objectives
• Assessed
• Involve authentic engagement with partner organisations
• Integrated across the whole of the program
• Undertaken in a workplace context whether on or off campus or online
WIL: Key Stakeholders

- **RMIT**
- **Student**
  - Career Development Learning
- **Partner Organisation**
  - Collaboration
  - Professional Network
## Types of WIL at RMIT

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WIL Placement</th>
<th>WIL Project</th>
<th>WIL in a simulated workplace environment</th>
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<td>Examples include:</td>
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<td>• Practical placements</td>
<td>• Industry and community based projects</td>
<td>• Mock hospital wards</td>
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<td>• Clinical placements</td>
<td>• Work-based projects</td>
<td>• RMIT TV and radio studios</td>
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<td>• Apprenticeships</td>
<td>• Research projects in a workplace that are designed for and with an industry partner</td>
<td>• Moot courts</td>
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<td>• Traineeships</td>
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<td>• On campus clinics</td>
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<td>• Internships</td>
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<td>• Professional placements</td>
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<td>• Fieldwork placements</td>
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What is Blended WIL?

**Blended WIL** is WIL which has a component of the experience in an online environment. It can vary in amount of time and ways of engagement. Preparation and debrief may be face-to-face and completion of WIL activity is online.

There are three types of WIL activities:

- **Face to face WIL**
  - Whole WIL experience in face to face format

- **Mixed mode WIL**
  - Face-to-face activities and some online engagement
  - Vary in amount of time and ways of engagement
  - Preparation and debrief may be face-to-face and completion of WIL activity is online

- **WIL online**
  - All aspects of WIL is delivered online including:
    - Preparation for WIL
    - The actual WIL placement or project
    - Final debrief
Technology used in the delivery of Blended Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at RMIT

Planning
Designing, meetings, assessments, scheduling, background information, preparation, scope, relationship building, selection, itinerary, timetables, policies, compliance.

Doing
Creating, communicating, tracking, monitoring, learning, supervising, collecting, feedback, reporting.

Evaluating
Assessment, de-brief, reflection, re-designing, feedback, reporting, conclusions, sharing.

RMIT Students
RMIT Staff
Industry

*RMIT Supported

Social Media
Surveys
Content Sharing
Video Conferencing
Project Management

RMIT UNIVERSITY
Bakehouse WIL Project

Bakehouse Project is a workplace based media and events production that involves students from a number of Media & Communication programs including:

- Sound Production
- Live Production
- Photo Imaging
- Screen and Media
- Professional Writing and Editing

Students from the various programs are able to work collaboratively with a group of respected industry professionals to create an event that brings together a live concert with a broadcast television program.
Work-integrated Learning in Australia

Good Practice Principles

• Students are sufficiently prepared and fit for the workplace demands.
• Sufficient resources and infrastructure are available to ensure duty of care to student safety and effective learning experiences that add to students’ education.
• All students have equal access to full participation in a WIL experience where a degree program offers such experiences.
• Indigenous students receive appropriate support in their WIL placements.
• Students with disabilities have access to WIL programs in their course of study and receive appropriate support in their placement.
• WIL programs meet the requirements of professional registration and accreditation organisations.

(Office of Learning and Teaching website)
Student perspective

Best Aspects of WIL Placement

Student proxy-longitudinal study produced a total of 669 comments relating to the *Best Aspects of WIL placement*. Top three responses

**Authenticity** – respondents agreed that their WIL programs provided exposure to real world problems and opportunities to gain industry experience

**Integration** – respondents described the benefits of applying theory and knowledge to real life situations

**Collaboration** – respondents described gains of developing peer and professional collegiality with other staff and students and the importance of teamwork

The impact of work integrated learning on student work-readiness”
Sonia Ferns, Calvin Smith, Leoni Russell, 2014
Dimensions of Successful WIL Programs

- Leadership
- Curriculum
- Inclusive WIL
- Partnerships
- Staff Capability
- Quality & Risk management
- Evaluation & Feedback
Curriculum Dimensions

• Authenticity of the WIL activity – autonomy, responsibility, consequentiality
• Preparation and induction processes for students and partners
• Quality of supervision, monitoring of progress and learning
• Integration of theory and practice – integrated learning
• Alignment of WIL activity and assessments
• De-briefing session that enables reflection on the experience and the learning
• An element of risk to contribute to profound learning for students

Good Practice Report: Work Integrated Learning Prof. Janice Orrell 2011,
The impact of work integrated learning on student work-readiness”
Sonia Ferns, Calvin Smith, Leoni Russell, OLT, 2014
WIL Partnerships

• Design is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders
• Relationships between Institution and industry / community is intentional and resourced
• Industry and community partners and tertiary institutions should collaborate on curriculum development and design, supervision of students and feedback on assessment.
• Flexibility and responsiveness to accommodate
Industry Partner support

- Guidelines for hosting a WIL student
- Industry Resources for Supervisors:
  - Support for supervision
  - Feedback to students on performance
  - Role in assessment of students
  - Developing partnerships

www.acen.edu.au
Staff Capability

- WIL practitioners should be skilled, experienced and supported
- Appropriate professional development opportunities should be available
- Industry supervisors need to be supported
- Recognition, reward and work load for staff
Quality & Risk

• Systems to effectively manage risk are implemented

• Systems for trouble shooting

• Expectations of all parties are identified and communicated (OHS, IP, security, WIL agreements etc)

• Student preparation and induction occurs

• Compliance with institutional and government regulations and frameworks is built in to processes and systems
Evaluation & Feedback

• Evidence from a variety of sources is used to monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of diverse WIL program arrangements.

• Evaluation framework outlining quality assurance standards for high quality WIL should be developed

• Industry partners are supported to provide feedback to students

• Industry partners are encouraged to provide feedback on engagement with tertiary institution
Current Challenges

• What contribution will WIL play in preparing students for the future world of work:
  • Portfolio careers
  • Virtual workplaces
  • SME’s
  • Self directed work

• What innovative WIL models do we need to adopt to include these emerging organisations?

• How can we collaborate more effectively to provide students quality WIL opportunities?
The project will facilitate the opportunity for meaningful student placements and local industry access to new skills and talent in Melbourne’s North.
National WIL Strategy

- Partnership between the university sector, industry and government
- Aims to build capacity for universities and employers to engage in WIL
National WIL Strategy (March 2015)

1. Provide national leadership to expand Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
2. Clarify government policy and regulatory settings to enable and support growth in WIL
3. Build support – among students, universities, employers across all sectors and governments – to increase participation in WIL
4. Ensure the investment in WIL is well targeted and enables sustainable, high quality experiences, stakeholder participation and growth
5. Develop university resources, processes and systems to grow WIL and engage business and community partners.
6. Build capacity for more employers to participate in WIL
7. Address equity and access issues to enable students to participate in WIL
8. Increase WIL opportunities for international students and for domestic students to study off-shore
WIL Resources

- HERDSA WIL Guide
- NCVER Work-based Learning and Work Integrated Learning: Fostering Engagement with Employers
- ACEN: resources, research grants, newsletter, conferences, research symposium [www.acen.edu.au](http://www.acen.edu.au)
- Asia-Pacific Journal of Co-operative Education
- WACE website, conferences, institutes, research symposium
- Office of Learning and Teaching, Australian Government Department of Education and training: website
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