



Work Integrated Learning:
A Template for Good Practice

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The following practices described are derived from retrospective feedback from academic supervisors supported by relevant documentation (e.g. course/paper outlines, graduate competencies, etc.) and existing literature/research. It is expected that this resource can be applied by any tertiary provider either offering or considering Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as an option for enhancing student learning.

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Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

WIL is the heart of the program

WIL inspires students

WIL is fantastic for setting up networks.

There is increasing emphasis on work integrated learning (WIL) or work-based experiential learning within tertiary organisations to enhance graduates' employability by increasingly embedding workplace and applied learning opportunities within the curriculum.

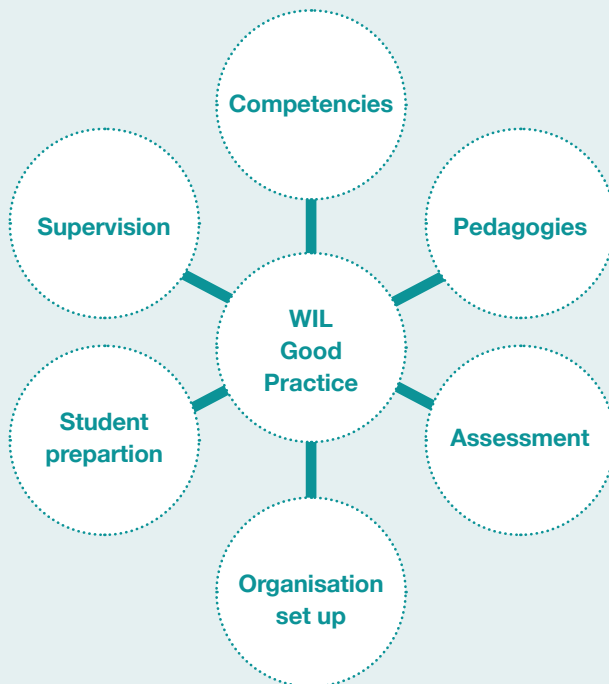
Experiential learning is a cyclical process that involves observation, reflection and action, where learning occurs as a result of problem solving and requires thinking and reflection guided by educators. Similar characteristics define the pedagogical approach of WIL.

A range of pedagogies provide students with content knowledge and theory, linked to practical work through the placements/ practicum or project. Programmes should be applied in nature, employing group work and other pedagogies to foster both industry skill development and behavioural soft skills development.

A template for good practice

Learn how to talk to different people and realise that people need to be communicated with in different ways.

Six key factors are derived through the analysis of comments obtained by interviewing academic supervisors from different disciplines where WIL is included. The information is aimed at both academic and workplace supervisors for them to use to guide WIL practice and to support students to develop personally and professionally during their Work Integrated Learning experience.





Organisation set-up

Our relationship to particular institutions is very close; it needs to be highly professional...it's a matter of negotiating under what circumstances the student can undertake the project.

Key aspects

Placement requirements and support

Placement selection and location

Risk management issues

Placement requirements and support

There are certain foreshadowing considerations that influence what is done, why and how, with respect to WIL within an academic programme or course. These include:

- Is it a programme completion requirement and/or does it carry academic credit/points?
- Is it undertaken within an academic year or outside of the academic year?
- Is it an individual/standalone paper or is it a component integrated within a programme?
- What number of hours are involved?
- How many students are involved?
- Does it involve a scaffolded approach over a number of years with multiple exposures, or is it a single exposure in one year only?
- Is it stipulated as part of an accreditation requirement, or for registration and recognition by a professional field/body/agency?
- Does it involve a scaffolded approach over a number of years with multiple exposures, or is it a single exposure in one year only?



Organisation set-up

Placement selection and location

- Typically WIL is seen as an off-campus activity; however, there are on-campus simulated activities which also can be effective demonstrations of WIL.
- Placement is either specified by the supervisor or is self-selected by the student.
- Self-selection allows students the capacity to choose an environment or organisation about which they feel passionately; another strong motive is the prospect of future employment.
- Placements commonly require the tertiary organisation to have a long-standing relationship between them and the workplace organisation.
- Developing and maintaining ongoing good relationships with industry staff and organisations in the field is vital for the success of WIL programmes.

Risk management issues

- Manage expectations, define lines of responsibility, and mitigate risk, by articulating the academic requirements and making known all obligations (e.g. ethics and confidentiality) – including online
- Encourage workplaces to expose students to the same level of induction training as they would for permanent employees.

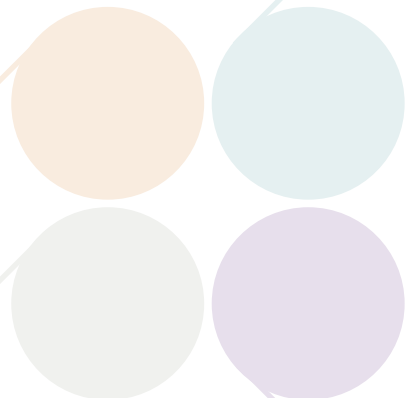
Key aspects

Placement requirements and support

Placement selection and location

Risk management issues

The most important thing is they are self confident... that they can work with people and they feel confident to actually go into the workforce.





Student preparation

WIL provides opportunities for the students to integrate their theoretical knowledge with practice skills.

Key aspects

Pre-requisites and theoretical basis

Careers interview skills and CV preparation

Readiness for practice

Pre-requisites and theoretical basis

- Students should gain the theoretical knowledge and skills either prior to or concurrently with WIL and scaffold an early work experience with a later year assessed WIL activity.
- The students' knowledge base often comes from other papers which integrate with a practicum course.
- Learning related to ethics, confidentiality, conflict management, stress management, time management etc can be achieved through role plays, lab work, action-reflection etc



Student preparation

Careers, interview skills and CV preparation

- Invite tertiary organisation careers' and employment service professional support staff to a designated slot within the timetabled lectures in order to develop students' CV and interview techniques, awareness of professional requirements, and the soft skills advantageous for the workplace environment (eg team skills, communication skills, coping skills).

Readiness for practice

- Provide information which clearly indicates expectations of the student, suitable work activities, required competencies, assessment requirements, and theoretical resources.

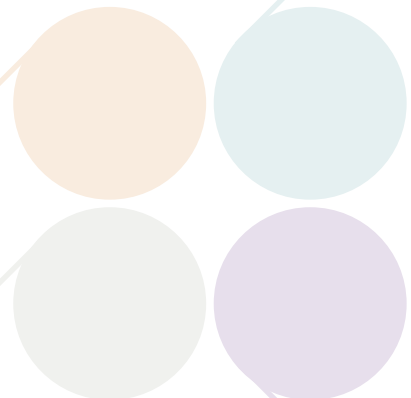
Key aspects

Pre-requisites and theoretical basis

Careers interview skills and CV preparation

Readiness for practice

We have documents that the students have to do before we look at placements for them... they are given specific guidelines of what we want and we check those before they go out.





Supervision

Part of the requirement of placement – they have to have formal supervision – settle the learning goals that fit under the learning outcomes... that is when a lot of the teaching happens as well.

Key aspects

On campus academic supervisor and mentor

Work place employer

Work place tertiary organisation staff

On-campus academic supervisor and mentor

- The academic supervisor or academic mentor provides advice and support to the student while the student is on placement and is a point of reference within the tertiary organisation to whom the student can turn for either academic or administrative matters related to the placement.
- As the WIL activity progresses, mentoring encourages the student to align the theory learned in lectures with practice in the workplace.
- Mentoring entails oversight of and regular contact with the student. It is time consuming and resource intensive and to some extent dictates the possible scale of WIL in an institution.



Supervision

Workplace employer

- The workplace supervisor is the local expert, the internship host, who knows intimately what the business is trying to achieve.
- The workplace supervisor should have a good understanding of the academic requirements in relation to learning outcomes and WIL objectives, and are often, but not always, asked to contribute towards the assessment process.

Work-place tertiary organisation staff

- Some professions, such as health, require the presence of tertiary organisation staff in the workplace to act as supervisors for the students on placement.

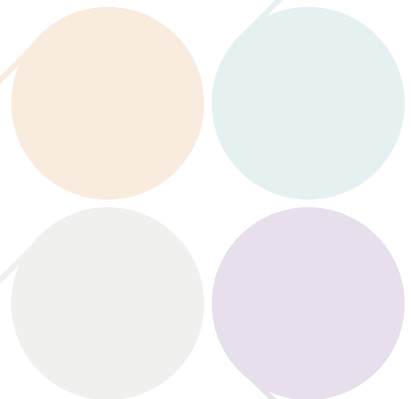
Key aspects

On campus academic supervisor and mentor

Work place employer

Work place tertiary organisation staff

The best resources are the discussions they have from time to time with [the] mentor.





Competencies

Part of that formative assessment is the students saying “this is the sort of person that I am, I understand working in this environment”... learning about who they are as people, how they work in a group environment.

Key aspects

Self-confidence

Communication and people skills

Team work

Professional standards

Self-confidence

- Developing self confidence through WIL exceeds the possibilities of classroom-based learning.
- The students gain confidence by seeing how industry works and why their technical skills are going to be needed by the industry.

Communication and people skills

- Enhancing communication skills, oral, non-verbal (gestures, kinaesthetic) and written begins very early in the process and is important when liaising with industry stakeholders.



Competencies

Team work

- Team or peer based on-campus activities provide complementary learning opportunities that closely resemble the real world environment in which employers value collaborative effort and teamwork.

Professional standards

- Professional standards and prescribed competencies support the culture of an organisation. Employees are expected to be honest, trustworthy, courteous and conscientious.

Key aspects

Self-confidence

Communication and people skills

Team work

Professional standards

The company isn't interested in the fact they've got a degree... that's [technical knowledge] kind of taken as a given... what they want to see is can the students' communicate... what sort of personality they have... can they work in teams?



Pedagogies

Be prepared to teach your student how to use computer programs if necessary and continue to mentor them until they feel confident.

Key aspects

Theory lectures and labs

Scenario-based learning and project work

Oral presentations

Theory lectures and labs

- The theory taught should be reflected in the learning outcomes for the course.
- Students are initially provided with theoretical understanding and knowledge. Applied papers then link theory and practical skills required in industry.
- Guest lecturers, such as tertiary organisation careers' service professionals, external industry experts, or recent graduates, serve to provide an expanded view and the link between tertiary organisation/course and workplace/career/profession.



Scenario based learning and project work

- The strength of scenario based learning (SBL) or project work is that several competencies can be taught during one session.
- Working on specific projects in groups or teams prior to the WIL experience, provides opportunities to develop skills that will enhance project work in the workplace.
- Students should undertake group work throughout their degree. Their experiences can be imparted to other students so that they learn from each other.

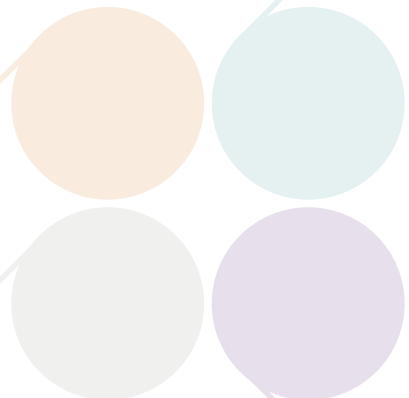
Key aspects

Theory lectures and labs

Scenario-based learning and project work

Oral presentations

When we are teaching theoretical concepts we make them come alive through case-based learning, case studies, role plays, demonstrations.





Assessment

All of our assessment follows our learning outcomes so everything is tied to those learning outcomes that we've set for the papers.

Key aspects

Learning contract

Reflective journal

Final report

Industry based
competency checks

Oral presentations

Learning contract

- A learning contract describing work activities and project focus is prepared and negotiated by the student with the host organisation, which is then approved by the academic supervisor.
- In this initial assessment document students set specific tasks, objectives and expectations of the practicum experience. They should sign the learning contract, which is the foundation for the placement.

Reflective journal

- A reflective journal outlines the tasks performed and includes reflections on all activities that take place throughout the practicum experience. In some instances a regular summary report of the student's reflective journal is also submitted to the academic supervisor. The use of technology is developing through, for example, electronic blogs and e-portfolios.



Final report

- The final report typically brings together the formative reflection from the various earlier contacts coupled with the summative outcomes as the student reflects on the overall activity.
- Students should show how they've met their learning objectives.

Industry based competency checks

- Some professional accredited programmes require specific competency based assessments and are often the style of assessment throughout the entire programme of study.

Oral presentations

- Informal, formal or even on-line oral presentations are common ways to provide opportunities to reflect on action both during and at the end of the placement projects.

Key aspects

Learning contract

Reflective journal

Final report

Industry based competency checks

Oral presentations

We assess the student's report which states what skills they took to their placement, what new skills they've learnt, what they've learnt about the place where they were working, and also the broader context.

The Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Experience

They get to see what it's like in the real world as opposed to the class room world. They get to figure out whether or not this field of practice is for them or not in terms of clients, and in terms of the profession.

Increasingly, the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experience is providing a point of difference for students in enhancing their employability after tertiary education. There is a variety of WIL practice, with passionate staff leading WIL programmes across a range of disciplines. Structured guidelines provide clear outcomes for students, academic and workplace supervisors. Preparation is important and applied learning should be integrated as part of the whole programme of learning. However, the following represent a number of considerations that are important for resourcing effective WIL programmes.

ITEM	ISSUE	IMPLICATION	SOLUTION
SCALABILITY	Elective or core paper	Increasing the scale of WIL programmes has resourcing implications	Group/team learning is one approach where WIL is a core paper. On campus SBL is another
ASSESSMENT	Quality control	Balance/triangulation of assessment is desirable	Use of both formative and summative
ASSESSMENT	Moderation of assessment	It is easy to over-assess WIL	Only the learning outcomes should be assessed
WORKLOAD	WIL is time consuming for staff	Workload management	Resources, administrative support
INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS	Credibility of students, academic and industry staff	Complex industry relationships	Formal agreement and assessment
RESOURCING	Priority of WIL	Coordination of effort	Administrative and liaison staff to assist



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