

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

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# WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING IN UNIVERSITIES: FINAL REPORT



UNIVERSITIES  
AUSTRALIA



# CONTENTS

4	INTRODUCTION
6	COLLECTING THE DATA
8	KEY RESULTS
8	Overall student participation
8	Common types of WIL activity
9	Diversity in university-employer relationships
13	WIL participation by discipline
16	Types of WIL activity by discipline
16	International WIL activities
17	Age groups
18	International students
19	International student participation in WIL by age cohort
20	Barriers to engaging in WIL
25	Support services for international students
27	Equity Groups
28	Indigenous students
28	Low SES students
30	Regional and rural students
32	Challenges in WIL
34	FINDINGS

# INTRODUCTION

For Australia to compete in the global economy, our university graduates need to be career-ready. This means they need to be flexible, adaptive and able to apply their technical skills to real-world situations. To support the acquisition of these skills, universities offer a broad range of opportunities for students to engage with the workforce while they undertake their degree.

Work integrated learning – or WIL – is an umbrella term that refers to a range of practical experiences designed to give students valuable exposure to work-related activities relevant to their course of study. To produce the highly skilled workforce that the community and industry needs, universities and employers partner to offer students internships, projects, simulations, fieldwork and other activities.

Over the past few years, universities have increased support to employers so they can involve students in their organisation.<sup>1</sup> Employers are also increasing and strengthening their links with universities through work placements and project work, which demonstrates that they are recognising the many benefits of WIL.

One of the ways that partnerships between universities and employers have been strengthened is through the development of the 2015 *National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education*.<sup>2</sup> Universities Australia, the Australian Collaborative Education Network, AiGroup, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia, the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training and the Office of the Chief Scientist partnered on this Strategy to facilitate deeper connections between universities and employers and to promote the benefits of WIL for all stakeholders.

One of the strategy's actions is to develop a national profile of current WIL activity in the higher education sector, measuring the level of participation in WIL by students enrolled in Australia's universities. In 2018, Universities Australia (UA) undertook a national survey of the WIL activities that occurred in 2017 across Australia's 39 comprehensive universities. The survey is the first data collection of its kind, and the survey results provide the higher education sector with a baseline from which to measure progress. The results clearly demonstrate the extent and diversity of WIL activities across the higher education sector and reflect the commitment of universities to improving graduate employability.

The survey results have also provided a nuanced understanding of the experiences of particular student cohorts in accessing and undertaking WIL, such as international students, Indigenous students, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. This understanding is critical to improving the breadth and depth of WIL opportunities so that all students – regardless of their culture, ethnicity or background – can benefit.

In addition to establishing a baseline for WIL in universities, this work is of particular importance in supporting the Australian Government's *National Strategy for International Education 2025*. The aim of the strategy is to retain Australia's position as a global leader in education, training and research. A key element of the strategy is the need for Australian universities to prepare their students for the global labour market (Action 2.3). For the first time, there is a clear national picture of how universities enhance the nexus between education and employment through WIL. Not only does this report show the extent of participation by international students in WIL, it also examines the challenges facing international students in engaging with WIL opportunities, and provides suggestions on how universities and employers can improve opportunities for international students to have a beneficial WIL experience (Action 2.1).

This project was financially supported by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training's *Enabling Growth and Innovation Program*. UA thanks Sonia Whiteley and Eric Skuja for developing the survey instrument and working closely with universities to quality control the data.

<sup>1</sup> The Australian Industry Group, 2018, *Skilling: A National Imperative*, AiGroup, Melbourne.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Collaborative Education Network, Australian Industry Group, Business Council of Australia and Universities Australia, *National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education*, March 2015.



# COLLECTING THE DATA

## Definition of work integrated learning

To assist universities to collect and provide data for the survey, a set of sector wide criteria was developed outlining the type of activity that could be defined as a WIL activity. While there were differing views as to how to classify WIL, UA determined that there must be a clear link to a workplace or employer to be considered a WIL activity.

## Scope of data collection

UA asked each university to gather data on 2017 WIL activities – both for-credit and not-for-credit – that fell into four broad categories:

- placements – where students spend time in a workplace, such as an internship;
- projects – an activity designed with and for employers, such as client-assigned projects;
- fieldwork – learning activities that occur off campus and in person, such as archaeological excavation or environmental monitoring; and
- simulations – where a student experiences all the attributes of a placement or workplace task in a university setting, such as a moot court.

UA asked universities to collect data for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, both domestic and international. Higher degree by research students were beyond the scope of the survey. In addition to the quantitative data collected, UA consulted with international students to better understand the barriers to their participation in WIL and the unique challenges they face.

Universities collected data according to the following Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) fields of education:

- Natural and Physical Sciences;
- Information Technology;
- Engineering and Related Technologies;
- Architecture and Building;
- Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies;
- Health;
- Education;
- Management and Commerce;
- Society and Culture; and
- Creative Arts.



# KEY RESULTS

## OVERALL STUDENT PARTICIPATION

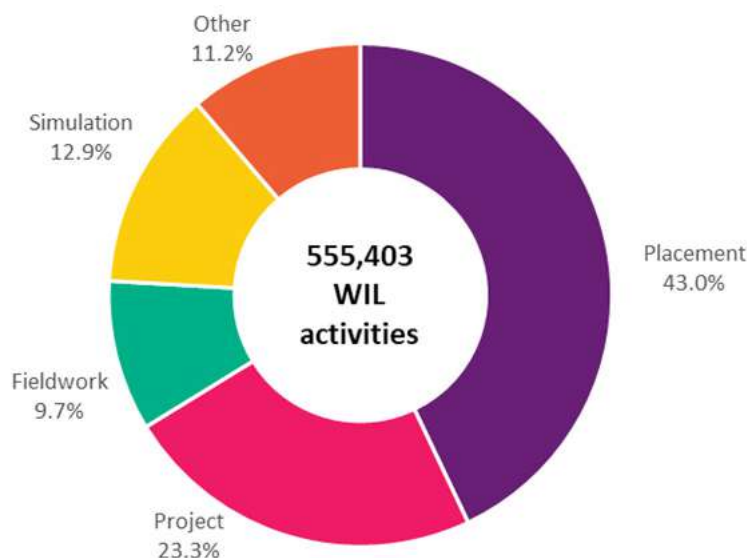
In 2017, 451,263 students had a WIL experience. This equates to one in three university students (37.4 per cent) enrolled in Australia in 2017.

Of the total number of students who undertook a WIL experience in 2017, 104,140 had more than one WIL experience during the year. This made a total of 555,403 WIL activities in 2017.

## COMMON TYPES OF WIL ACTIVITY

As shown in Figure 1, the most common type of WIL in universities was a placement, accounting for 43 per cent of the total WIL activity in 2017. This can be partially explained by placements that are integrated into specific degree programs because they are mandatory for registration in professions such as teaching, medicine and nursing.

Figure 1: Share of WIL participation by type of activity



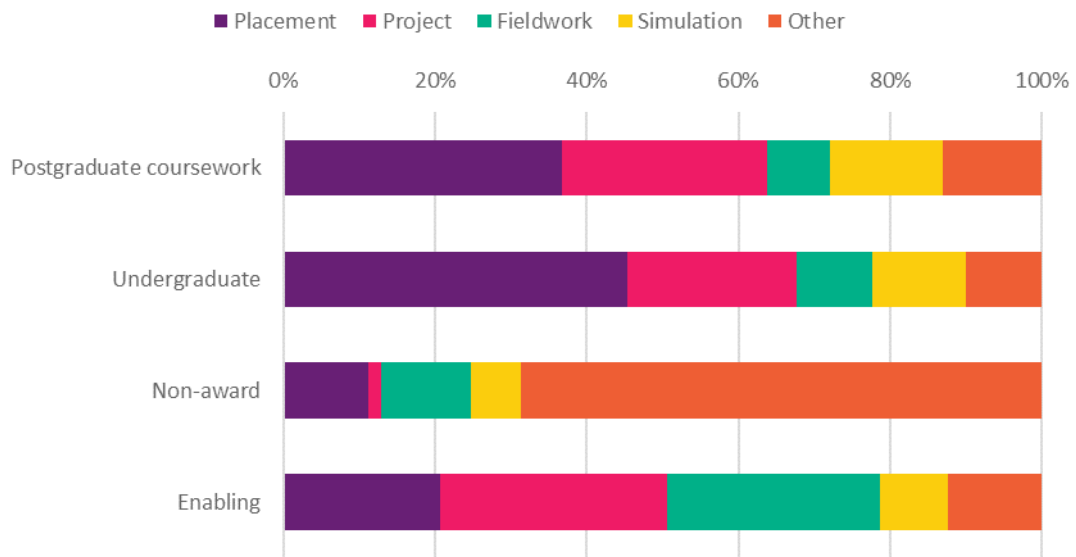
Although a work placement is the most common type of WIL activity, universities are moving beyond this historical approach to WIL to offer opportunities such as projects, simulations and fieldwork.

There is a significant group of WIL activities that are not readily classifiable ('other') but that contributed 11.2 per cent of the total WIL activities undertaken by university students in 2017. Activities included in this 'other' WIL category include volunteering, live performances, mentoring, and case-based learning activities or practical activities that focused specifically on the workplace. 'Other' WIL activities were heavily concentrated in two disciplines: Management and Commerce and Society and Culture. It is not clear from this study whether the 'other' group is an emerging group and a reflection on the evolving nature of WIL, or a reflection on the data collection process.

Despite the assumption that participation in WIL is restricted to undergraduate students, students from across all levels of learning at university were actively engaged in WIL activities (Fig. 2). The profiles of WIL activities for undergraduate and postgraduate students were similar, with the most common being placements and projects. In contrast, non-award students engaged primarily in non-traditional WIL activities. Further work on the nature of these non-traditional WIL activities would be informative.



Figure 2: Share of WIL participations, by type of activity and course level



## DIVERSITY IN UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS

The diversity in types of WIL activity reflects the considerable range of relationships between universities and employers. Institutions are partnering with organisations – both domestically and internationally – in a multitude of ways to ensure that the WIL experiences offered to students are dynamic, meaningful and opportune.

Some of the WIL relationships in place across the sector are outlined below.

### Longstanding relationships between a university and a major organisation at the domestic level

Organisations that universities partner with include banking corporations, technology companies, and major sporting clubs.

Victoria University’s partnership with the Western Bulldogs began in the 1980s, and now includes the Grand Finalist AFL Women’s League and VFL team. This multi-faceted partnership includes collaborative research projects, workplace learning opportunities for students, and joint staff appointments and professional development.

### A relationship between a university and a major organisation at the international level

Organisations that universities partner with include banking corporations, technology companies, and consulting firms.

Swinburne University of Technology’s longstanding partnership with Siemens has resulted in Australia’s first demonstration and application centre called MindSphere. This cloud-based Industrial Internet of Things operating system, housed in Swinburne’s Factory of the Future, will enable students, academics and industry partners to collaborate and co-create local and global projects on the cloud-based platform.

### University relationships with domestic NGOs, not-for-profits and charities

Universities link students with local organisations such as The Smith Family, St Vincent de Paul Societies, and surf life-saving clubs.

The McCusker Centre for Citizenship at The University of Western Australia offers internships for both undergraduate and postgraduate students with not-for-profit, community and government organisations locally, regionally and globally. The purpose of the program is to build the capacity of future generations to foster caring, connected and socially engaged citizens.

### **University relationships with international NGOs, not-for-profits and charities**

Universities link students with international organisations for placements, projects or fieldwork that often contribute to Australia's aid agenda.

Since 2013, medical students from The University of Notre Dame Australia have been working with the charity Team Philippines to provide basic health services for the people of Calauan, a rural township in the Philippines. Students run medical clinics, hold health education classes, offer women's health screening, eye and vision clinics and provide free dental care, including dental prosthetics.

### **University relationships with local, federal or international government**

Students undertake placements at various levels and arms of government including Australian government departments, local MP offices, embassies, and the US Congress.

A partnership between the Noosa Shire Council and the University of the Sunshine Coast allows students to undertake an environment-related project from a portfolio of topics suitable for students. The portfolio of Council projects was designed by a USC student on placement and can include topics such as biodiversity, pest management and waste reduction.

### **University-facilitated start-up or entrepreneurship support**

Some universities have 'accelerator' facilities where students can develop their product or idea under the guidance of industry and research experts.

At The University of New England, students undertaking the unit Business in Action are mentored through the start-up process to bring their independent business project to life. They are connected to an entrepreneurial network through the university's own Smart Region Incubator, which provides a supportive community for start-ups in the region.

### **WIL on campus**

Universities offer work experience within their institutions across a range of areas.

Glassworks students at The Australian National University's School of Art and Design have worked alongside staff and lecturers to design and produce trophies for the Australian of the Year awards. The trophies were commissioned in a partnership between the National Australia Day Council and the ANU School of Art and Design. The trophies are hand-worked by students and staff at the ANU campus leading up to the awards ceremony.

### **Student consultancy**

In this type of WIL, students are 'brokered' by their university to consult to organisations on real social, economic and business issues.

MESH at Murdoch University is a fully functioning student consultancy that sees students from creative arts and communications work collaboratively on projects for real clients. Projects range from developing a social media campaign strategy, to building a search engine optimisation plan.

### **Virtual internships**

This is where students work remotely on a project, connecting with their teams through technology. It provides students with an experience of working with start-ups and multinationals across borders.

The University of Adelaide offers students a virtual internship where they work with start-ups and multinationals who work across borders. While working remotely, students are supported by a host and academic supervisor, and use technology such as Skype, Zoom, Wechat and Slack to communicate and share information with their team and host supervisor.

### **Multi-company client-assigned projects for multi-disciplinary groups of students**

Universities partner multidisciplinary student teams with leading Australian and global industry partners to design solutions for employers.

The Monash Industry Team Initiative (MITI) partners multidisciplinary student teams from Monash University with leading Australian and global industry partners. Monash and the industry partner work together to define the requirements for the project and the team required, ensuring that students are exposed to relevant learning opportunities throughout the duration of the experience. Industry partners host teams of up to four students to undertake a specific project over 12 weeks from December to February.

### **Bringing industry to campus and campus to industry**

Universities have established offices and technology parks for businesses, and vice versa, to enable students to engage in WIL.

In 2017, RMIT University and ABC News partnered to relaunch the award-winning news service, Fact Check, to be based at RMIT's state-of-the-art Media Precinct. Students from all disciplines are mentored and supervised by RMIT ABC Fact Check staff and industry experienced academics on a one-to-one basis, getting a real experience of journalism without having to leave campus.

### **University involvement in local and international events**

Universities partner with a sporting or festival organisation to offer students an opportunity to work on a high-profile event.

Queensland University of Technology has a longstanding partnership with Rowland, a communication, digital and creative agency that provides pro bono support to the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland (Vinnies). For the past six years QUT interns have worked with Rowland to provide communication and business advice to promote Vinnies' signature event – the Vinnies CEO Sleepout – which aims to raise funds to support those in the community experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

### **Industry innovation challenges**

Industry provides the same challenge to different groups of students within a university to compete for the best solution.

La Trobe University's SHEINC3 is an industry innovation challenge where students from across the university compete to develop the best solution to a real-world challenge. Each team is guided by a postgraduate mentor and the challenge culminates with each team pitching their Challenge solution to the industry partner.

### **Multi-university WIL**

Several universities partner with large organisations, as well as local and state governments, to offer students internships or projects.

The Big Idea is Australia's leading social enterprise immersion and competition for university students. Organised by The Big Issue, students from 13 universities – including CQUniversity and Macquarie University – develop solutions to help homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people to positively change their lives.

### **Placements organised by a third party**

An external provider organises internships and placements that are recognised by the university.

The Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies offers internships for business and law students to complete a placement in Indonesia, which is endorsed and recognised by the University of South Australia.

# GRIFFITH'S GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

With 4,400 top athletes from around the world competing and more than 100,000 visitors, the Commonwealth Games is a major international sporting event that boosts the host city's economy and provides employment opportunities.

Recognising the value of this opportunity early, Griffith University became an Official Partner of the 2018 Commonwealth Games in 2015.

As part of the partnership, students studying a range of disciplines at Griffith University were able to access exclusive internships to work with the event's organising body – the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Organising Committee (GOLDOC).

A key challenge for the organisers was to deliver a major international event on time, within budget and successfully. To help achieve this, students were placed across all functional areas of GOLDOC, spanning engineering, media, venue management and schools liaison.

The 2018 Commonwealth Games was the largest sporting event hosted in Australia for more than a decade. This meant the internship experience was intense and challenging. To recognise the demanding nature of the internships, all placements were credit-bearing and equal to a full semester of study. This was a considerable undertaking because the university needed to specifically design academic coursework around the internship.

Bucking the tradition where WIL experiences are organised at the individual faculty level, Griffith University delivered the internships centrally through a whole-of-university approach. This enabled students from those disciplines where WIL experiences are less common – such as creative arts and commerce – to become interns for the Games.

As a full-time program, 239 students spent 35 hours per week on 12-week internships, working with real deadlines and real budgets. Students had direct experience of working in a project-driven, high-profile organisation. In addition to working in the lead up to the Games, interns worked at the opening and closing ceremonies, the Queen's Baton Relay and the arts and culture program.

Griffith University's partnership with GOLDOC is a concrete example of a university seizing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the employability of its students. The interns got a career-defining experience in every aspect of the Games.

Brittany Bell, a student working as a spectator experience intern, says she knew she would gain worthwhile experience but the internship "exceeded my expectations every day."

"Completing this internship has definitely been one of the best things I have done for my career and future," Brittany says.

Another student, Harry Rodgers, called the internship a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" where he was able to use what he'd "learned in the classroom in a real practical work environment."

For GOLDOC, the partnership enabled them to access bright, enthusiastic students who were keen to have hands-on experience in a time-pressured – and highly visible – environment.

A GOLDOC spokesperson said the interns were "phenomenal" and "out-performed in terms of expectations." The organisation was able to use its partnership with Griffith to streamline its hiring process, with 61 interns being offered paid employment.

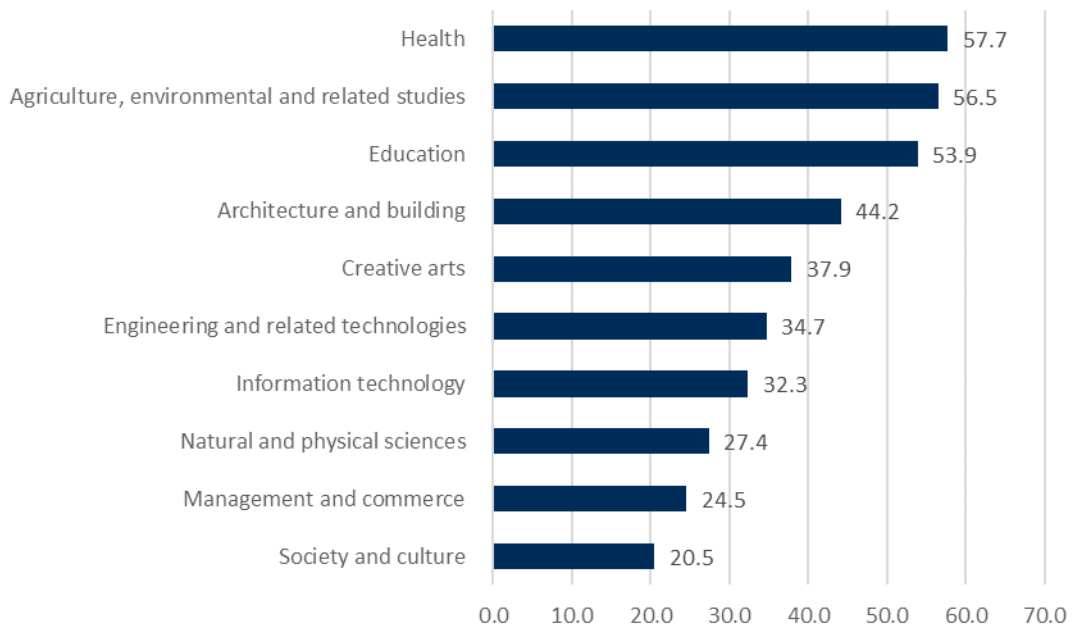
A special partnership between Griffith University and the Commonwealth Games meant students got hands-on skills through internships for the 2018 Gold Coast games.



## WIL PARTICIPATION BY DISCIPLINE

As shown in Figure 3, students enrolled in Health, Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies and Education had the highest WIL participation rates at 57.7 per cent, 56.5 per cent and 53.9 per cent respectively. This contrasted with students enrolled in Society and Culture who recorded the lowest WIL participation rate at 20.5 per cent.

Figure 3: WIL participation rates by broad discipline area—unique headcount (per cent)



For students in Health and Education disciplines, a WIL placement is a requirement for professional accreditation, which may explain the high participation rates. WIL activities in other disciplines are optional, which may explain the lower participation rates. The outlier is students enrolled in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies, where WIL tends not to be a mandatory part of the course but where participation by students in WIL is extremely high.



A student-managed investment fund to support equity scholarships was launched at ANU last year. It gives business and economics students real-world experience at investing.

## MANAGING REAL MONEY AND REAL PEOPLE FOR A GOOD CAUSE

In 2017, The Australian National University implemented a ground-breaking model of WIL in its College of Business and Economics. The ANU Student Managed Fund (SMF) gives students with an interest in investment, finance and economics the experience of managing a real endowment fund — and its proceeds support equity scholarships.

The SMF was established with a generous donation from Russell Clark, an ANU alumnus who completed his Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Asian Studies in 2000 and is now the Portfolio Manager at Horseman Capital Management in the UK. His donation was matched by the Research School of Finance, Actuarial Studies and Statistics, on behalf of the university.

The fund now has assets worth over \$660,000.

What makes this credit-bearing WIL experience ground-breaking is the nature of student participation and the management structure of the SMF.

As part of their enrolment in two academic units, two overlapping cohorts of undergraduates work together over a period of 12 months to manage the fund. The senior cohort take on management positions in the first session and train the junior cohort, with the junior cohort taking those management positions in the following semester. The opportunity to supervise junior students – thereby developing management and mentoring skills – is a key attraction of the program.

A challenge in setting up the fund was ensuring that the money was invested in accordance with ANU policy and procedures, while also giving students the freedom to invest. It was also critical that the management structure of the SMF enabled ANU to have oversight of the fund while giving students the ability to make decisions.

There are four teams of students, responsible for asset allocation, Australian equities, risk and compliance and external relationships. These teams are managed by the Chief Investment Officer, a senior student. Under the guidance of the CIO, the four teams research investment options and make recommendations to ANU. These are then reviewed and endorsed by an Investment Advisory Committee of ANU staff and finance industry practitioners, before the recommendations are implemented.

Managing actual money not only hones the students' practical skills and technical knowledge — it also helps them develop vital 'softer' skills like leadership, teamwork, problem solving, creative thinking and communication.

Finance student Olaide Yinka-Kehinde said the fund was a unique opportunity for students to gain invaluable real-world experience in finance.

"The ANU Student Managed Fund has been an excellent practical opportunity. Working with students who are passionate and excited and willing to push the boundaries of their own learning makes the course very rewarding."

Another student from the project says their skills in funds management were transformed by the chance to apply their knowledge in a real-world situation.

"The real value and gravity of this student fund was truly reflected to me during the interviews for the Morgan Stanley Investment Banking scholarship — it was all they wanted to talk about," they say.

"Yes, I have had internships and done the usual student activities, but to have real valuation experience, and manage real money under the guidance of such incredible academics was the standout."

By being part of the SMF, students also have the opportunity to be part of ANU's commitment to equity and inclusion. The SMF educates them about philanthropy and the importance of giving back to society.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Schmidt says: "Students participating in the fund will not only come out with better understanding of how real-life investment works through managing a slice of the ANU endowment funds, they will also be well-equipped for the challenges of our modern workforce."

The SMF also plays an important role in bringing ANU students, industry and alumni together to work for the greater social good.

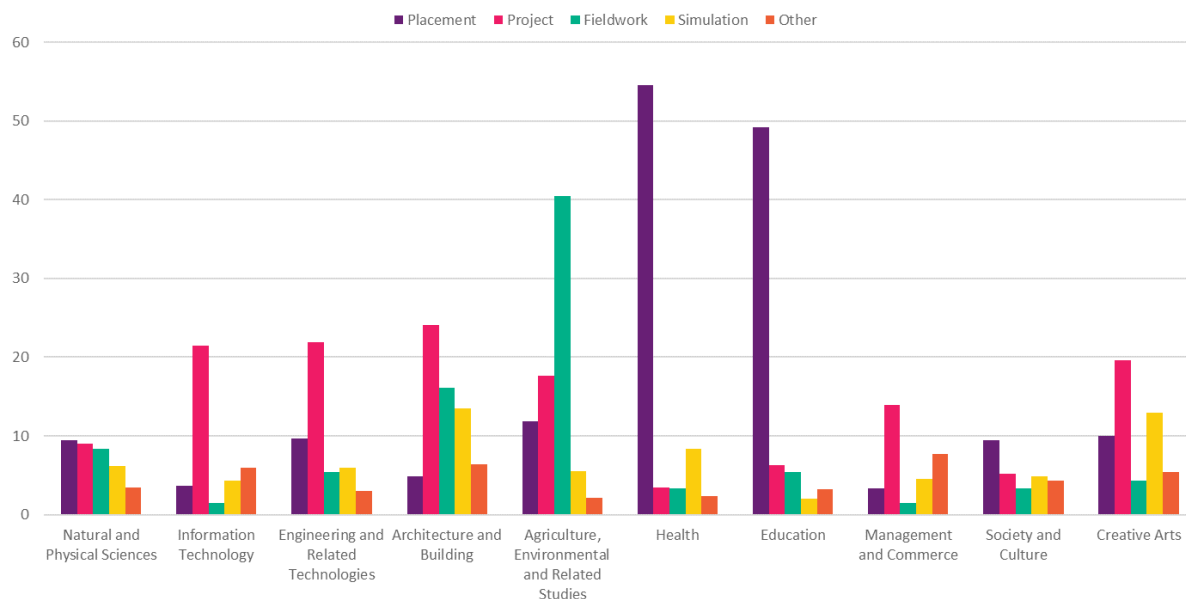
Over the long-term, it is hoped that the SMF may create a virtuous feedback loop, whereby some of the university's best students become successful alumni who are more inclined to give back to ANU.

While it is still early days for the program, it has seen major success. Several students from the program have already landed jobs in the investment industry, including with JP Morgan and Queensland Investment Corporation.

## TYPES OF WIL ACTIVITY BY DISCIPLINE

It is important to note that while placements are the most common type of WIL activity overall, there is considerable variation in WIL activity across disciplines, as shown in Figure 4. For example, projects are the most common WIL activity in Information Technology, Engineering and Related Studies, Architecture and Building, Management and Commerce and Creative Arts. This reflects the nature of employment in these fields, which are often project-based and client-driven. By working on authentic problems, students encounter richly contextualised issues that further their experience and in turn, their employability.

Figure 4: WIL participation rate by type of activity within broad discipline area



Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies students had a relatively low participation rate in placements but the highest participation in fieldwork (40.5 per cent).

Students in Creative Arts, Management and Commerce, Information Technology, and Architecture and Building most commonly undertook 'other' types of WIL. This suggests that universities are thinking beyond the traditional work placement when providing WIL opportunities to their students. Alongside the increase in WIL activity participation by students enrolled in degrees where WIL is voluntary, this suggests that the higher education sector is rapidly evolving when it comes to workplace learning and ensuring students are career-ready when they graduate.

## INTERNATIONAL WIL ACTIVITIES

In addition to WIL experiences within Australia, universities are also providing opportunities for students to undertake WIL overseas. For example, Health and Rehabilitation students from The University of Queensland can now undertake a placement in Vietnam or Timor Leste; Bond University students can do their clinical placement in the Solomon Islands; and Flinders University students can undertake a political internship in Washington D.C.

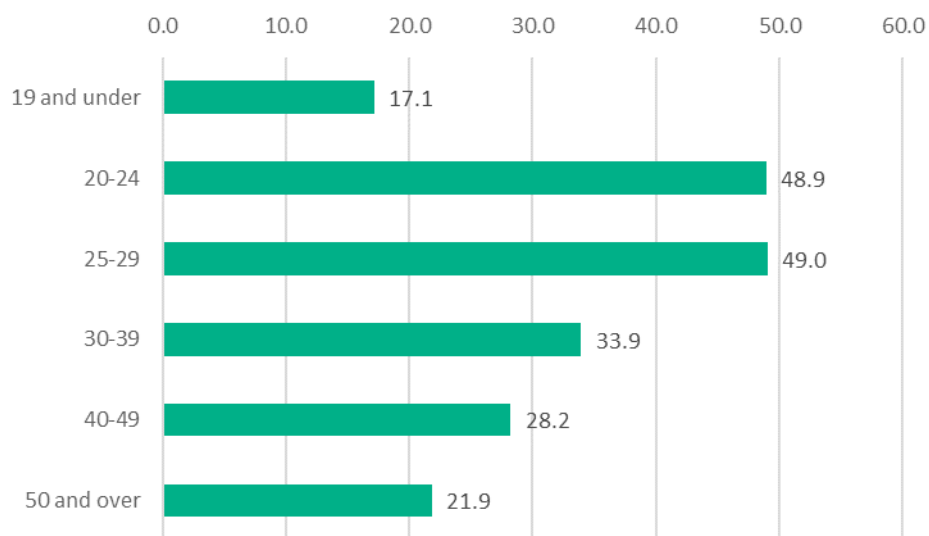


## AGE GROUPS

As shown in Figure 5, students aged between 20 and 29 had the highest WIL participation rate at 49 per cent. This suggests that students at all stages of their study are engaging with WIL, particularly where higher education is undertaken to prepare for entry into the workforce.

One of the lowest participation rates was for those aged 50 and over, with only one in five students in this age cohort engaging in WIL. Anecdotal evidence suggests that for many students in this cohort the nature of their study and time commitments outside of the academic environment may make engaging with WIL difficult. Further analysis of this age cohort would be instructive; however, the number of those aged 50 and over enrolled at university is significantly lower than other age cohorts.

Figure 5: WIL participation rates by age cohort (per cent)



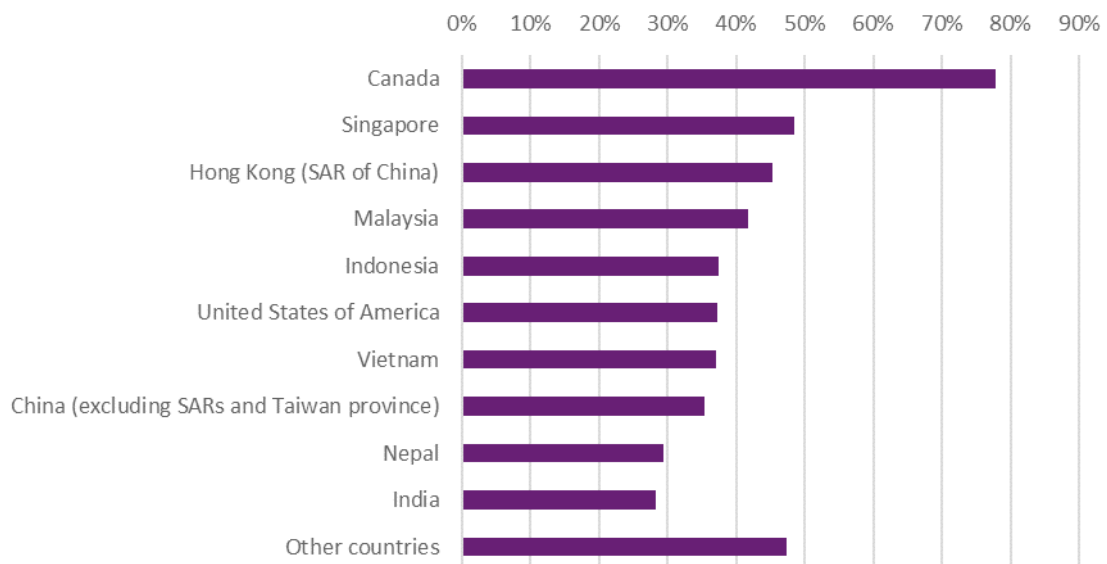
## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The overall WIL participation rate of international students – 38.2 per cent – was relatively similar to that reported for domestic students (37.1 per cent), and participation rates were also comparable at both undergraduate (39.5 per cent vs 38.7 per cent) and postgraduate coursework levels (36.6 per cent vs 36.7 per cent).

Of the 450,932 students that participated in WIL in 2017 whose citizenship status was known, 20.7 per cent of these were international students. This proportion is consistent with the proportion of domestic and international students enrolled in Australian universities in 2017.

As shown in Figure 6, students from Canada (77.9 per cent) and Singapore (48.5 per cent) participated in WIL in 2017 at a higher rate than students from other countries. This reflects the large number of students from Canada and Singapore enrolled in health disciplines, where there are entrenched cultures of work-based learning and where a WIL placement is needed for professional registration. In contrast, students from the People’s Republic of China (excluding Hong Kong and Macau Special Administration Regions) had a lower WIL participation rate (35.4 per cent) compared to students from other countries. This is most likely because 50.9 per cent of Chinese students enrolled in Australian universities are undertaking degrees in Management and Commerce<sup>3</sup>, where WIL is optional.

Figure 6: International student WIL participation rate by country of permanent residency

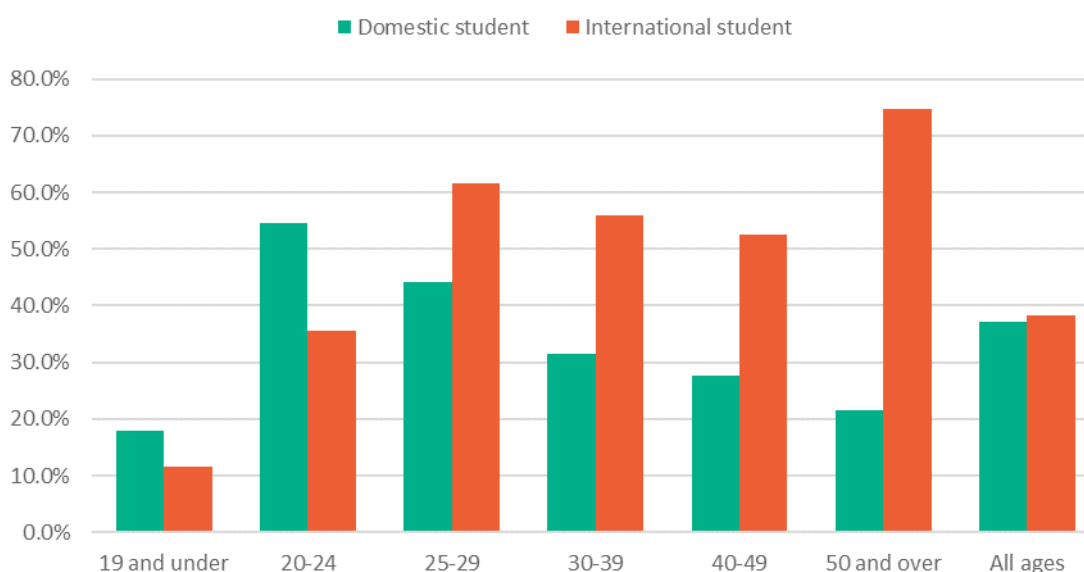


<sup>3</sup> HEIMS data

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN WIL BY AGE COHORT

Although the overall rates of participation in WIL by domestic and international students are comparable, WIL participation has a different age profile for these groups. In older age cohorts, WIL participation rates of international students were significantly higher than domestic students. Of students aged 30 and over, more than 50 per cent of international students had a WIL experience, compared with less than 30 per cent of domestic students aged 30 and over. As shown in Figure 7, the largest difference in participation rates is in the 50 and over category, where the international student participation rate far exceeds that of domestic students.

Figure 7: WIL participation rates, by age cohort and citizenship status



The gap between international and domestic student WIL participations rates may be explained by several factors. Domestic students over the age of 50 years old may have different motivations to be in higher education. Some may use the opportunity for professional development – for example, undertaking a graduate diploma – while others are in study for leisure. There are also those older students who study alongside full-time paid employment, making it difficult to devote additional time to undertake WIL.

The higher WIL participation rate of older international students is noteworthy. This may be related to the course these students undertake; courses designed for professionals frequently feature industry engagement. Students undertaking professional ‘up-skilling’ study are also often able to undertake parts of their course (such as projects) in the course of their employment. Although visa conditions restrict the number of hours per week that international students may work in Australia, unpaid WIL experiences that are part of a course do not generally count towards these limits.

The gap may also be explained by the sample size of the respective categories. As previously mentioned, the number of domestic students aged 50 years old and over was significantly smaller than the other age groups assessed. The pool of international students aged 50 years and older was even smaller than the cognate group of domestic students, which may make comparable analysis of these groups difficult.

## BARRIERS TO ENGAGING IN WIL

In addition to the quantitative data collected, UA consulted with international students to better understand the barriers to their participation in WIL and the unique challenges they face. These students identified several barriers to engaging in WIL.

### Access to information

Several international students highlighted that prior to studying in Australia they had little experience in using email. This has led to a lack of confidence in relation to email conventions. As such, many found it difficult to adjust to receiving important information through email, which is the most common method of communication in Australian universities. Students communicated that they may have missed out on opportunities for WIL because they were unfamiliar with emails, didn't feel confident emailing, or hadn't seen the information in their email inboxes. Students also mentioned feelings of being overwhelmed by the volume of emails received during the year and adopting methods to screen emails, which may result in them missing relevant communications about WIL opportunities.

In addition to emails, Facebook is routinely used by both universities and employers to advertise and distribute information about WIL opportunities. While Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Australia, it may not be effective in reaching international students given the popularity of other social networking platforms in their home countries. For example, WeChat is the most popular application and social network in China and has grown to have a billion users; in Japan, LINE is a messaging and free calling app, with 200 million active users; in South Korea, Kakaotalk is used by 93 per cent of smartphone owners.

### Language and cultural barriers

While not borne out in this study, there is evidence that employers are concerned about international students' perceived weaker language capabilities.<sup>4,5</sup> This can lead to employers preferencing domestic students over international students when it comes to WIL, as well as employment after graduation. This was echoed by some international students who identified language as "the biggest barrier for international students participating in WIL."

There are also cultural barriers that international students face in Australian workplaces. In North-East Asian countries, certain behaviours and norms dictate the workplace and workplace interactions, such as using honorific language with superiors. As one international student noted:

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"The working culture in Australia might be very different from cultures in other countries. For example, co-workers in Australia are more friendly to their seniors but still maintain the professional attitude. International students might not adjust and fit in as quickly and may experience culture shock."

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To help international students develop their language skills and increase their knowledge of Australian workplace culture, The University of Adelaide offers the program 'Talking with Aussies'. The program provides an opportunity for international students to ask questions and make connections with the local community. It also helps create networks with potential employers.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson, D & Greenwood, K 2015, *Enhancing Work-Integrated Learning Outcomes for International Students in Australia*, Edith Cowan University, retrieved 12 July 2018 from <http://acen.edu.au/docs/enhancing-wil-international-students-acen-research.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Felton, K & Harrison, G 2015, 'Supporting inclusive practicum experiences for international students across the social sciences: building industry capacity', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(1), 88-101.

## Visa restrictions and citizenship requirements

As holders of student visas (sub-class 500), international students have restrictions on the numbers of hours per fortnight they can work while studying. When their course is in session they cannot work more than 40 hours a fortnight; when in a recognised vacation period there are no work restrictions.<sup>6</sup> International students reported confusion about the relationship between WIL and visa work restrictions, and sometimes chose not to engage in WIL in fear of inadvertently breaching their visa conditions.

During the academic session, international students indicated they may be less likely to take up a WIL opportunity because it may require leaving or suspending their part-time employment. International students are keenly aware of the advantage that WIL gives them, but financial stress may significantly hinder their ability to participate. Furthermore, many international students feel obligated to return home in vacation periods to see their family and friends, which limits their ability to undertake WIL between semesters.

As noted by one international student:

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“Most of us have to work, but while on placement, we can't. We miss out on the money we sometimes need to get by.”

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Some WIL experiences are also limited by immigration status and only allow permanent residents or Australian citizens to participate. For example, many internships or placements at major banks require students to be a citizen of, or hold permanent residency in, Australia or New Zealand. With the majority of international students enrolling in Management and Commerce in Australian universities (46.7 per cent)<sup>7</sup>, this presents a significant challenge for students in these subject areas to gain work-based experience in relevant areas.

<sup>6</sup> No work limits apply to those enrolled in a Masters by research or Doctorate course in Australia.

<sup>7</sup> DET uCube





## TAKING LOCAL BUSINESSES TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

To enhance the value that international students bring to Australia – soft diplomacy, research expertise and cultural capital – Southern Cross University has developed an exciting initiative to improve the study experience and employability of its international students.

The Volunteer Connect Program, supported by Study NSW, connects international students with local businesses during their first few months of studying in Australia. Students and staff of the business work together to help the business solve real-world challenges, with the businesses drawing on the students' cultural insights and skills. Students complete 15 hours of workplace experience with the business.

Regional businesses learn more about international students and gain an insight into the preferences of this important consumer group, building mutually beneficial relationships.

Chinese students studying business at Southern Cross University are working with Australian gourmet food producer Brookfarm to help them grow their business in China. The company has seen significant growth in their business as China's desire for macadamia-based products increases.

Students Nanxi (Nancy) Liu, Xinwen (Wendy) Fu and Qunyao (Ann) Liu have worked with Brookfarm's sales and marketing team, sharing their insights on a range of breakfast products and helping conceptualise and develop a Chinese-language product information website.

"Accessing business students through Southern Cross has really assisted us in better understanding our key Chinese demographic," says Clinton Bown, Head of Marketing at Brookfarm.

"The students confirmed a strong desire amongst the Chinese consumer to access Australia's 'clean green' products and also highlighted online consumer trends in China.

"Nancy, Wendy and Ann brought different skills to the table but importantly they're all very academically focused and I think the key to this program has been their ability to come into a practical environment and show practical application of their studies."



Students Qun Yao (Ann) Liu, Xinwen (Wendy) Fu and Nanxi (Nancy) Liu are tucking into the world of work by helping food producer Brookfarm grow their business in China.

Nancy, Wendy and Ann are thrilled to have worked alongside the Brookfarm team.

"The Volunteer Connect program is a good chance for me to prepare for future employment and has developed my teamwork skills and people-relation skills. It really made sense for me," Wendy says.

The program is also giving the international students a practical experience of business in Australia — helping to cement closer ties between Australia and its largest trading partner.

"As an overseas student, most of my understanding of Australia has come from my university life. This program gives me more understanding about Australia's companies and economy," says Ann.

The Volunteer Connect program includes three weeks of workshops on Australian business culture, networking and job search skills. Students are also matched with an alumni mentor.

"We are delighted with industry and student responses, with over 40 students gaining valuable work experience through Volunteer Connect," says Leanne Baker, Manager of Careers and Employability at SCU.

"It is rewarding to see strong connections being formed between industry and students for mutual benefit."

Four Southern Cross University students from the US have also teamed up with local Tweed Heads business 'Catch a Crab' to design a social media campaign targeting the North American market.

These communications students have provided important insights into the US market – knowledge that only international students can bring to local companies.

In addition to the technical work for the campaign, students had a hands-on experience feeding pelicans, pumping yabbies and trapping for live mud crabs. This experience enabled them to refine their ideas for the social media campaign, combining their degree-related skills with the realities of growing a business.

Economics student Riley Smith said the Volunteer Connect Program had given him valuable experience in the workforce ahead of applying for graduate positions in less than two years.

"This experience helps me narrow down my ideas for what I want to focus on and for what my passions are as well as helping with my resume," he said.

## Lack of work experience prior to university study

Some international students have had no work experience prior to enrolling in university study. This can partially be explained by differences between their home countries' cultural norms on working while studying, and the norms in Australia where part-time work while studying is very common. Within the OECD, Australia has the fourth highest percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 in employment.<sup>8</sup>

In 2017, 82 per cent of domestic students had a paid job while only 50 per cent of international students were in paid employment.<sup>9</sup> Feedback from international student groups suggests that those international students who lack some form of work experience may be at a disadvantage when trying to secure a competitive WIL activity. In addition, some international students don't participate in extra-curricular activities that can help build soft skills, such as communication and working as part of a team. This can put them at a disadvantage when trying to demonstrate their value to potential employers post-graduation. As such, a WIL experience can be of particular importance to international students in preparing them for long-term employment.

International students communicated they were unsure how to construct a relevant and effective resume for use in Australia, and that universities needed to show greater understanding of international students' lack of knowledge in this area.

Recognising this challenge, The University of Sydney's Career Development Program for international students teaches them Australian resume basics, how to transition to an Australian workplace, and interview skills. The university's annual international student employability forum also provides insights into how they can build their employability skills while they are studying.

## Employer perceptions of international students

Several international students noted that there is a perception among their peers that companies do not employ international students after they graduate. Some international students also report that employers may not be familiar with post-study work visas available to international students after they graduate, with some employers assuming that international students must return home after completing their degree. Students advised that this can make employers not only less likely to offer them a job after graduation, but less likely to take them on WIL placement because of the fear of business knowledge being taken back to the student's home country. Moreover, there was a perception that employers were more likely to offer a WIL experience to a domestic student who the employer felt might be a suitable candidate for long-term employment at their end of their study period.

To help employers better understand the value of international students, the University of Tasmania has partnered with TasTAFE to develop the I-PREP program, which connects international students with Tasmanian workplaces. The benefits of having international students in the workplace are promoted heavily by the university: access to students with global knowledge; enrichment and diversification of organisation culture; and enhanced visibility of the employer in global markets. In turn, international students get the opportunity to recognise and adjust to workplace culture and improve their communication skills.

<sup>8</sup> OECD 2019, Employment rate by age group (indicator), doi: 10.1787/084f32c7-en, accessed 5 November 2018

<sup>9</sup> Universities Australia 2018, 2017 Universities Australia Student Finances Survey, Universities Australia, Canberra. Available from <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/submissions-and-reports/Students-Finances-Survey-2017>.



## SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Every university provides an avenue for international students to seek support in undertaking WIL. This is in accordance with Standard 6: Student Support Services in the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (the Code). Standard 6 of the Code requires all CRICOS registered institutions to provide international students with access to 'career services', which often encompass WIL.

The types of student support services provided to international students to undertake WIL range from targeted networking events to industry mentoring to international-student-only WIL opportunities. Examples include:

- specialised WIL support officers, staff and appointed faculty members;
- dedicated support officers for Australia Awards Scholarship students and Home Government Sponsored students;
- resume writing workshops, where international students are taught how to write a CV for Australian employers;
- courses in conversational English, where international students talk with an 'Aussie' informally once a week to improve their conversational skills and better understand Australian colloquialisms;
- networking events, where local businesses meet with international students to identify WIL opportunities;
- online career hubs, where WIL and job employment opportunities are posted and students can access resources;
- professional development programs, where international students attend seminars, workshops and lectures on workplace culture, employer expectations and recruitment; and
- international student career weeks, which include expert sessions on skilled migration, practical workshops, employer networking and industry presentations.

## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: TAILORED COURSE GIVES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THE EDGE

At the University of Wollongong Australia, international students enrolled in a business-related Masters degree can undertake a credit-bearing elective unit – exclusively for international students – that is designed specifically to enhance their employability. Through educational seminars and practical job-seeking activities, students learn about career management strategies, acquire job search skills, improve their business communication skills and gain knowledge of theories of intercultural competence. Students who complete the unit can apply for a post-session internship.

Indian student Anish Bhattacharya says: “I chose to enrol into GWP900 as I wanted to understand the functioning of the Australian labour market and the mindsets of recruiters in Australia.

“I have learnt that expectations of recruiters in Australia are very different from those in India...I had to adopt unconventional techniques of job hunting to make my mark and attain a job in my organisation of choice.”

## LEARNING FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW

La Trobe University’s new Working in Australia Mentoring Program (WAMP) is an innovative industry-led twelve-month program initiated by the La Trobe Innovation and Entrepreneurship Foundry and funded by Study Victoria. Through this program, 300 international students get an exclusive opportunity to enhance their employability in Australia by being matched with industry professionals who are former international students. Mentors provide advice and support to advance student knowledge of the Australian workforce and improve enterprise skills, which are vital for any career pathway. Mentors have the opportunity to share their personal experience to help inspire and shape young professionals.

The WAMP helps international students get a more holistic understanding of the Australian workforce from people who have ‘been there before them’ and understand first-hand the challenges and opportunities to find meaningful work experience in Australia. It also enables undergraduate and postgraduate international students to begin developing professional networks in Australia.

## CASUAL CHATS LEAD TO CAREER SUCCESS

Monash University is breaking the mould of traditional academic-to-student teaching by offering a range of courses in conversational English – called ‘Let’s Chat’ – that are peer-to-peer. Over 30 undergraduate and postgraduate students from Monash are specially trained by the university to become English Ambassadors and run seminars with international students to help them understand study, work and life in Australia. The courses focus on building students’ confidence in English and developing their linguistic and sociocultural skills, readying them for the workplace. The ‘Language for Employment’ module teaches international students about communicating their best in interviews, how to talk to colleagues and how to network effectively. In the ‘Living and Working’ module, students focus on cross-cultural communication and developing an understanding of specific community groups in Australia, including LGBTIQ+ and Indigenous communities. Other modules include Public Speaking and Email Writing.

One program participant said, “It’s really a great way to improve a lot in conversation and make me confident.” Students who complete the courses are then able to become English Ambassadors and run the ‘Let’s Chat’ courses with new international students.

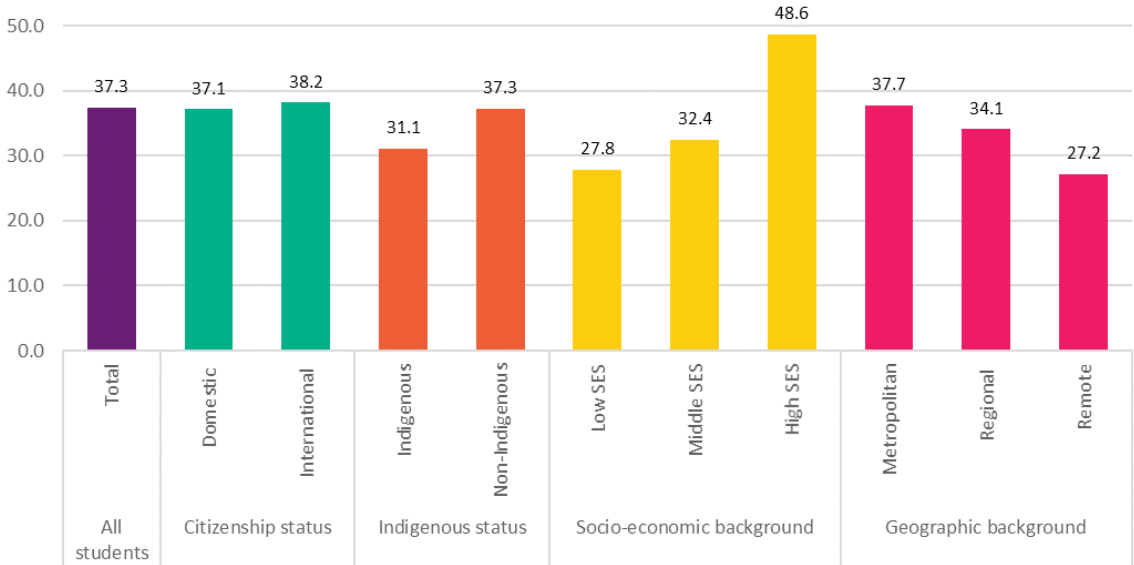


RMIT University - Ellen McCutchan

### EQUITY GROUPS

Students that face issues in accessing higher education – Indigenous students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and regional and rural students – also face similar challenges in accessing WIL opportunities, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: WIL participation rates, by student characteristic (per cent)

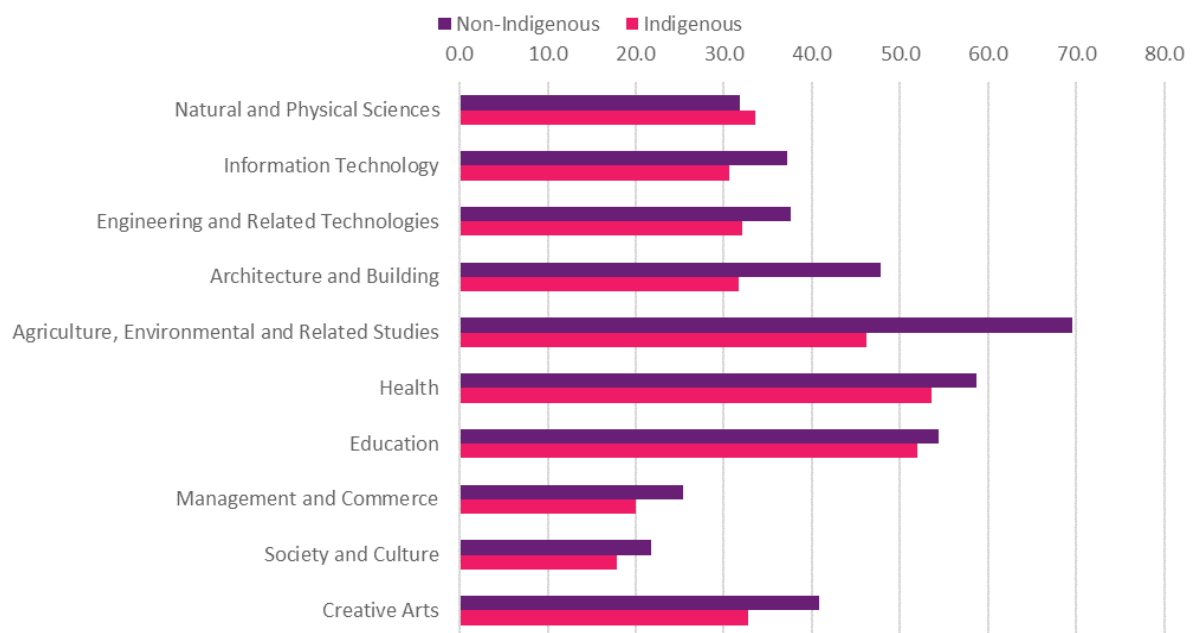


## INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Encouragingly, almost one in three (31.1 per cent) Indigenous students participated in WIL, but this participation rate was lower than non-Indigenous students (37.3 per cent).

As seen in Figure 9, Indigenous students had a higher participation rate than non-Indigenous students in Natural and Physical Sciences, but lower rates in all other disciplines. The largest differences were in Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies (46.3 per cent vs 69.6 per cent) and Architecture and Building (31.7 per cent vs 47.8 per cent). Figure 9 compares the participation rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students across all disciplines.

Figure 9: Domestic student WIL participation rates, by Indigenous status and broad discipline areas



To promote Indigenous students' participation in WIL, in 2019 the University of Technology Sydney will begin its Droga Indigenous Architecture Scholarship program that supports up to ten Indigenous students a year in their studies. The scholarship not only supports tuition and accommodation expenses but provides Indigenous students with career development opportunities such as internships.

## LOW SES STUDENTS

In 2017 fewer than one in three students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds had a WIL experience, compared to one in two students from high SES backgrounds (27.8 per cent versus 48.6 per cent). As indicated in Figure 10, students from high SES backgrounds were overrepresented in WIL participation, in contrast to students from middle and low SES backgrounds, who were underrepresented.

Figure 10: Share of WIL participations compared to 2017 enrolments, by socioeconomic status

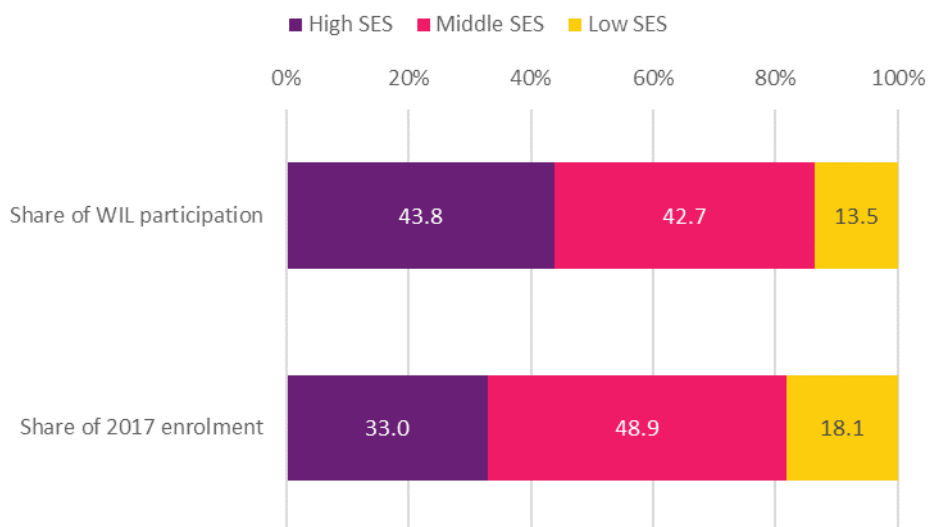
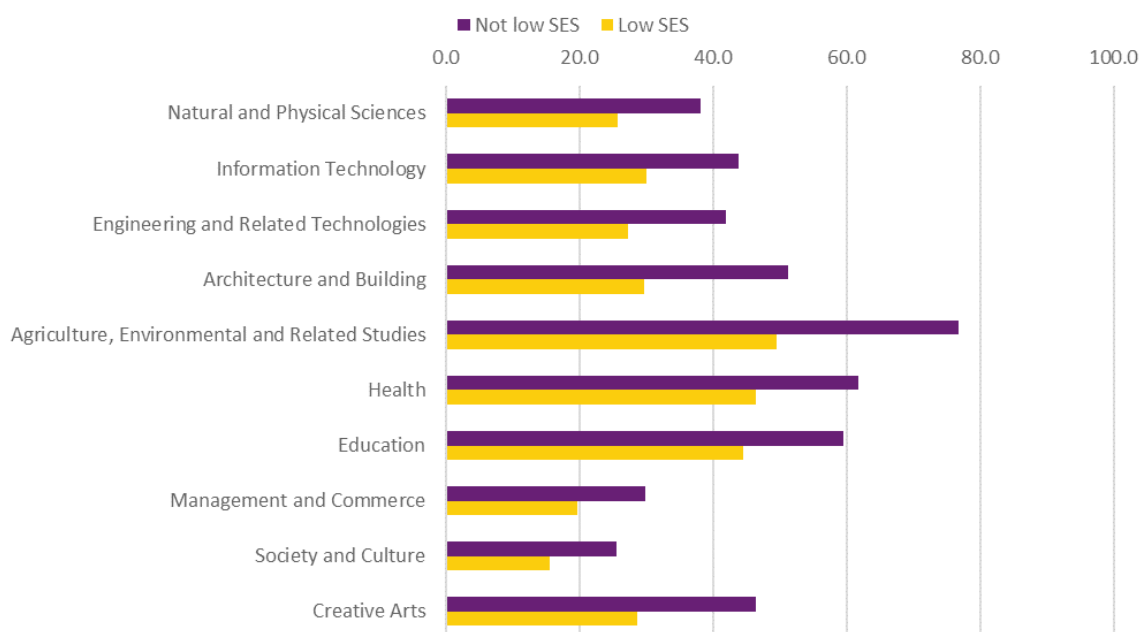


Figure 11: Domestic student WIL participation rates, by socioeconomic background and broad discipline area



Consistent with the data showing an under-representation of students from low SES backgrounds in WIL, Figure 11 shows WIL participation rates of low SES students are at least ten percentage points lower than students from high or middle SES backgrounds in all broad discipline areas.

WIL placements are often unpaid and require a significant time commitment from the participating student. Given that low SES students experience higher levels of financial stress than non-low SES students<sup>10</sup> they are less likely to be able to afford the costs of an unpaid non-compulsory placement. Anecdotal evidence from low-SES students suggests that they are less likely to participate in WIL if they must forgo paid employment.

To support low SES students to participate in WIL, universities and employers often offer scholarships or bursaries to alleviate financial pressure on the student. Queensland University of Technology, Deakin University, University of Canberra, Monash University and the University of Wollongong Australia, among other universities, offer financial support to low SES students ranging from \$750 to \$10,000 to enable their participation in WIL. Some employers are also putting students on their payroll for the duration of their experience.

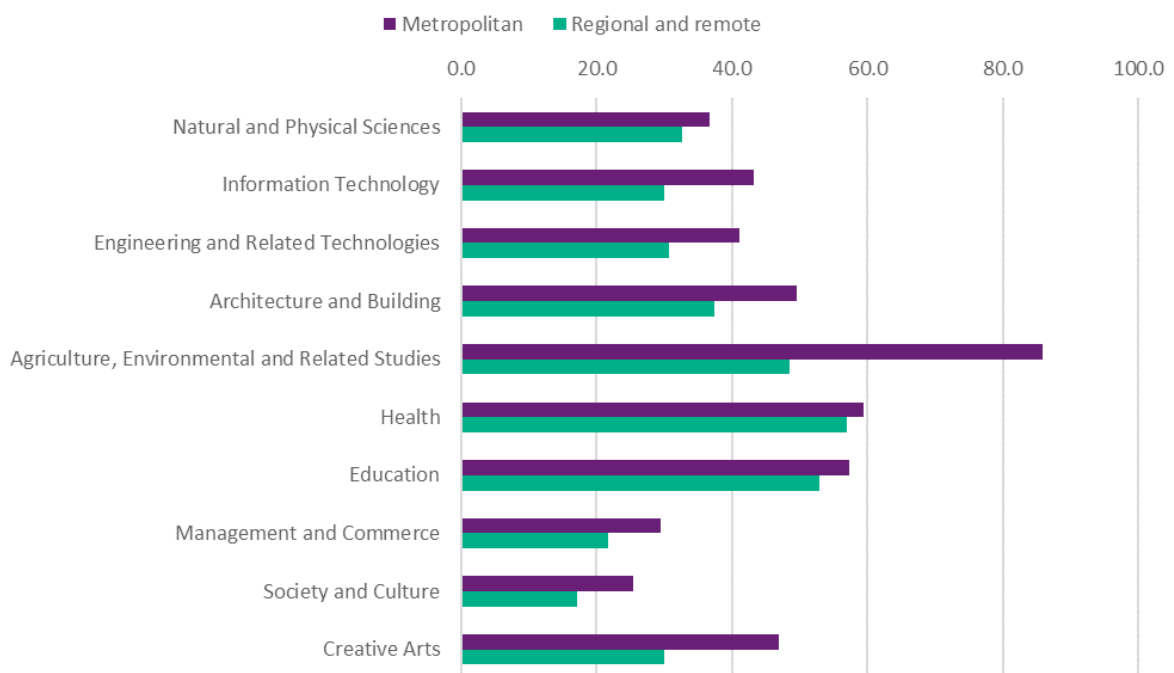
<sup>10</sup> Op. cit. 9

## REGIONAL AND RURAL STUDENTS

The participation rates of students from regional and remote areas are lower than students from metropolitan areas in all broad fields of study. However, there is greater parity between regional and rural students and metropolitan students in the fields of Health and Education (Figure 12), which is likely to reflect the high demand for health and education professionals in regional/rural areas of the country.

Anecdotal evidence from regional and rural students indicates they face particular challenges in accessing WIL due to lack of proximity to employers, with some forgoing a WIL experience because they can't afford the transport costs to the workplace.

Figure 10: Share of WIL participations compared to 2017 enrolments, by socioeconomic status



# UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY COLLABORATING FOR REGIONAL GROWTH

Boosting the economy of regional Australia brought Federation University Australia and American multinational IBM together almost 20 years ago. They partnered to design and deliver a Bachelor of Information Technology (Professional Practice), a game-changing collaboration between the higher education sector and industry. The three-year degree has been recognised as best practice by the Australian Computer Society because it includes a 1600-hour internship experience with IBM.

The internship starts in second year, with students working in areas such as mainframe enterprise systems support and development, project management, web development, programming and help desk support. The students work with clients over the course of a full project lifecycle – from concept to implementation. They are embedded into the team culture and experience what it is like working as an IT professional. This includes receiving feedback on work performance and behaviours.

During their placement, students are also gradually given opportunities for more responsibility so that they are work-ready and can play an important part in a team when they graduate. The internship exposes students to a globally integrated enterprise, allowing them to obtain experience in the breadth and depth of real-world, large-scale and complex IT project delivery.

Students receive a scholarship of up to \$38,400 as they study and intern.

IT student Jimi Von Burg says the internship was a great complement to his classroom study.

“I feel that the work undertaken at IBM brings great industry value to my learning experiences,” Jimi says.

“The internship has helped me prepare for and obtain the necessary skills to gain a full-time job within the IT industry.”

What is unique about this WIL experience is that IT students don't need to leave the campus to undertake their internship. Regional students are

often less likely to take up WIL opportunities because of the distance they need to travel to access major organisations. Recognising this, IBM brought the workplace to the students, establishing a \$10.8 million centre at Federation University's Mt Helen Tech Park, the largest regional technology park in Australia.

Through the co-designed degree and internship, IBM gets the opportunity to mentor and develop students ready for full-time employment in the regional technical workplace. Ballarat also benefits from having one of the world's largest employers – and one at the cutting-edge of technology – situated in the town.

The internship program also addresses a major challenge in the IT sector – a shortage of skilled workers who understand enterprise mainframe computing platforms.

Federation University is one of the only universities in Australia to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs in mainframe computing. And with many IT employers faced with an ageing workforce, the internship's focus in this highly specialised area is ensuring there is no skills shortage in the future.

Client Innovation Centre Leader, Steve Davies, says IBM values its long-standing partnership with the university.

“The work integrated learning programs are a win-win-win for IBM, the university and, most importantly, the students,” Mr Davies says.

“IBM and its clients continue to benefit from student participation on projects adding to team diversity, fresh ideas and access to up-to-date skills.”

Since 2001, approximately 360 students have completed the program. Upon graduation, students then have priority access to IBM's graduate employment programs. The success of this unique partnership is reflected in IBM's employment figures: around 50 per cent of its staff at Mt Helen Tech Park are students or graduates of Federation University.

Federation University and IBM are expanding their long-term partnership with the introduction of scholarships for Bachelor of Business students in 2019. Federation's Business School will also introduce a Professional Experience major in the Bachelor of Business, where students will undertake a minimum of 1600 hours of hands-on experience in areas like financial forecasting, resourcing, status reporting, data security and privacy processes.



Jessica O'Brien and Phoebe Allen (pictured), students at Federation University Australia are participating in the new IBM-Federation Business School Scholarship which includes a weekly internship with IBM.

## CHALLENGES IN WIL

To deepen our understanding of specific challenges in WIL, UA consulted with Board members of the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN). ACEN is the professional association for practitioners and researchers from the tertiary education sector, industry, community and government representatives who are involved in WIL. ACEN provides strategic leadership on WIL for its members and other stakeholders through research, scholarship and practice.

In addition to issues UA prosecutes in other policy areas, ACEN Board members identified a range of issues that affect the number, and type, of WIL opportunities for university students.

### Supply and demand

The continued shortage of placement opportunities for clinical and allied health students is a long-term policy concern of the higher education sector. This shortage is the result of the interplay of several complex issues: costs (daily or other placement fees); supervision capacity; coordination and scheduling of health service timetables; increased privatisation of parts of the health sector; types of supervision models that limit how many students can be placed; and decreasing numbers of rural nursing and allied health scholarships, among many other issues. A discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this report; more information on the challenges facing Australia's health workforce is available from the Universities Australia website.

ACEN noted that placements for students in non-health disciplines where a placement is necessary for professional accreditation – such as education and engineering – are limited. To help address this, universities are trying to attract more employers to participate in WIL.

ACEN also noted that there is a shortage of WIL opportunities in the 'hard' sciences, such as biochemistry, biomedicine and chemistry. A 2015 report commissioned by the Office of the Chief Scientist – known as the WIL in STEM report – found that the WIL participation rate of science students was lower than that of students in some other disciplines.<sup>11</sup> This report noted that the lack of existing processes and infrastructure for developing WIL activities in science impeded the expansion of employers willing to partner on WIL activities.

In the companion report to WIL in STEM, STEM employers identified that there were several barriers and constraints to them taking up WIL. They included lack of time to invest in the student; lack of resources to fund WIL activities, including a budget to cover student wages (where appropriate) and for staff to be involved in supervision; and the availability of suitable projects or work experience activities for the students.<sup>12</sup> These barriers were particularly acute for Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

AiGroup is a peak employer organisation representing over 60,000 businesses in Australia, from SMEs to large multinationals. A partner on the National WIL Strategy, in late 2018 AiGroup published its guide for companies on providing work experience for graduate research students. In partnership with the Australian Council of Graduate Studies, AiGroup provides a set of principles for university-industry collaboration. To support greater collaboration, AiGroup has also lobbied for tax incentives for businesses to offer work experience and employment to university students.

To improve participation of science students in WIL, in 2015 the Australian Council of Deans of Science and the Chief Scientist established the Lighthouse projects. These projects establish visible organisation and leadership for WIL in science-based faculties, helping to build a comprehensive and sustainable approach to WIL from the initial steps of developing a faculty-wide approach to leading institutional change. Projects range from embedding WIL in the curriculum of an entire suite of science courses to developing a model of WIL that builds on students' paid employment outside study.

<sup>11</sup> Edwards, D, Perkins, K, Pearce, J & Hong, J 2015, *Work Integrated Learning in STEM in Australian Universities: Final report: Submitted to the Office of the Chief Scientist*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne. Available from [https://research.acer.edu.au/higher\\_education/44](https://research.acer.edu.au/higher_education/44).

<sup>12</sup> Atkinson, G, Misko, J & Stanwick, J 2015, *Work integrated learning in STEM disciplines: the employer perspective*, NCVET consultancy report, Office of the Chief Scientist, Canberra. Available from <http://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/2015/08/report-work-integrated-learning-in-stem-disciplines-employer-perspectives>.



## Flexibility and responsiveness

Regarding broad challenges to engagement in WIL, ACEN noted that a key issue for both universities and employers is flexibility. Employers value relationships with universities that are not administratively burdensome, can be established quickly, and that recognise the time and resource constraints businesses face. From the perspective of universities, some degree of structure is required in their relationships with employers when a WIL experience is going to be recognised as a credit-bearing activity. Flexibility within these relationships must suit both parties.

Recognising the need for increased flexibility from both universities and employers, some WIL experiences offered to students are not-for-credit. These experiences enable employers to engage university students at a time that suits them in their business cycle, and universities have the opportunity to establish relationships with employers rapidly, which can lead to long-term collaboration in other areas. In most cases of not-for-credit WIL, the student's experience is recorded on their transcript.

## Coordination of WIL within universities

There are several ways in which WIL is administered and coordinated within a university. It can be organised centrally, by a specific faculty, or by an academic. While it's important to have several models of WIL administration to meet the needs of the institution, it can be difficult for employers to identify the most appropriate university contact for discussing WIL opportunities. For this reason, ACEN provides a contact list on its website for employers interested in working with universities on WIL. Universities Australia also facilitates contact between universities and employers as part of its role as a National WIL Strategy partner.

## Understanding regulations

ACEN advised that some staff within universities may be unfamiliar with regulations and compliance regarding WIL, such as vocational placement criteria set by the Fair Work Act 2009. Lack of understanding of such regulations may discourage some staff from developing WIL activities for their students. There are also legal complexities when a third-party provider offers WIL opportunities to students in the absence of a formal relationship with the university. ACEN and The University of Queensland have developed a guide for universities when engaging with third-party providers, but more education across the sector would be helpful.

# FINDINGS

There are several key findings from this survey.

## **Finding 1: Understandings of the concept of WIL are varied**

Collecting the data for the survey revealed there is considerable variation across the sector in how WIL is conceptualised. Consistent with international approaches, there must be a clear link to an employer or workplace for an activity to be considered WIL. This could be an employer providing students with a real-world problem to solve through project work, an internship, or co-design of a unit of study. It is also important that there is consistency within an institution on what is considered WIL.

## **Finding 2: Categorisation of WIL activities requires further development**

The four defined categories of WIL in this survey – placements, projects, fieldwork and simulation – could be used by universities as a basis for future classification in recording WIL activities. However, there needs to be further work on clearly delineating between categories. Furthermore, gaining insight into the non-traditional types of WIL being offered by universities (classified as 'other' in this study) and their appeal to particular student groups would be instructive.

## **Finding 3: Students value WIL experiences for a range of reasons**

It is clear from the survey that there are many WIL activities offered or endorsed by universities that are not-for-credit. This demonstrates that universities are being flexible and innovative in their approaches to delivering WIL. This also suggests that students have a range of motivations for engaging in WIL, gaining credit appearing to be only one reason to take part in WIL.

## **Finding 4: WIL for equity groups requires careful consideration**

There are a range of issues that universities need to consider in developing WIL opportunities for particular equity groups. In developing these opportunities, universities need to consider the breadth of needs of students and the support required to facilitate maximum engagement. There also needs to be consideration of the potential negative effects of an out-of-session WIL experience on students' financial situation.

## **Finding 5: International students face particular challenges in accessing WIL**

Last, further work can be undertaken by universities to support international students to engage in WIL experiences. This can include developing a range of platforms to effectively communicate with international students, taking into account new and emerging technologies, their country of origin and area of study. Universities can also continue to work with international students to identify pathways to build confidence in workplace interactions including career counselling and resume development.

Assisting employers to better understand the benefits international students bring to the workplace, and the potential long-term arrangements available to employers with regard to recruiting international students post-graduation, is important. There is also a need for all stakeholders involved in the broader international education system to provide clarity to international students and employers about the relationship between WIL and work restrictions and the ability of students to engage in WIL activities without affecting their visa conditions.





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