SYMPOSIA # 1
What stops students accessing, participating and progressing in WIL?

SUMMARY NOTES

The Project Team in collaboration with ACENQ hosted a half day Symposium on the Griffith University Southbank campus on 16 April 2014. The Symposium was entitled “What stops students accessing, participating and progressing in WIL?”

52 registrations were received for this event with approximately 45 participants in attendance on the day.

The symposium keynote speaker – Dr Alan McAlpine, Manager QUT Careers and Employment described the QUT Real World Placement Program. The keynote presentation was entitled “What is a Real World Placement?”

A 1.5 hour Project focus group was facilitated by Matthew Campbell, Griffith University/QIBT in conjunction with the Project Team. 24 registrations were received with approximately 17 participants in attendance on the day. The focus group formed part of the project data collection and written notes were taken for research purposes.

The discussion started with an overview of the project and the literature review. Participants then moved into groups to share experiences of student diversity in WIL; identify barriers and enablers that impact on inclusive WIL in relation to principles, policies, guidelines and procedures; and identify implications for principles and guidelines that inform inclusive WIL practices. A summary of key themes and issues that emerged from group discussions is provided below – facilitator slides are also available on the OLT WIL Project website.
Group discussion on framing diversity

Student Diversity:
- Previous experience
- Academic achievements
- Indigenous
- WIL
- mental health (mental)
- gender
- Disability (physical)
- Elite Sportspeople
- Undergraduate/Postgraduate
- Nationality
- International Students
- Responsibilities
- International

WIL:
- Good facilitation
- Don’t understand Australian work cultures
- Individual vs team-based group WIL – conflict
- Flexibility of industry partner
- Communications skills/support
- Student attitude for success
- Expectations

Group discussion on current experience of student diversity in WIL – barriers and enablers

Table 1

Career Development
- diverse campus with 50% mature age students
- international students
- low achievers
- Organisations want to choose the better students for their organisations

Tourism and Hospitality
- design different streams
- 50% domestic – high achievers and have experience working part-time
- 50% international – often no work experience – employers are selective
- early 20’s age average
- international issue is a real challenge
Engineering

- Student responsibility to find placement in Engineering
- International – is an issue

Barriers:

- University resources
- Online resources
- Funding
- Academic buy-in – principle

Enablers:

- create community of practice
- building stronger relationships with the faculties
- Clarifying the expectations
- Central support coordination
  - central policies on WIL
  - central coordination of procedures about how they interact with employers
- Curriculum Design – can design programs that fit with particular profile
- Preparedness for students prior to going on WIL
- Empowering the individual to make their decisions.
- Student led but guided vs student focussed
- Holistic approach that is much more universal.

Table 2:

What is your current experience of student diversity in WIL?

- interactions with different cultural teams
- use disability advisors
- Admin of WIL, placement coordinators not told of disabilities, students need to disclose.
- International students – language barriers, terminology, impacts on how received and success
- students not disclosing
- knowledge of equity issue
- communication between support services
- Rural placements
- Disclosure statement – helps adapt WIL experience to accommodate specific needs

Barriers:

- WIL – new, not new, just more diverse student cohort
- Didn’t explain to students the concept of learn and reflect
Up against:
- Concept like David and Goliath
- Elephant in the room – not discussed
- everyone knows not working
- why, time, resource to deal with problems
- Going around in circles – doesn’t change
- Grass roots – getting bigger.
- Not conceptual to implementation
- Problem to be solved rather than opportunities to be taken
- Need Principles inclusive WILI at institution level.
- Maybe institutional framework
- Standards Framework
- Not working with people doing WIL
- Run it like a business to ensure sustainability and quality
- Institution working at loggerheads with WIL
- Driven from grass roots level up to institution
- More of an understanding at institutional level.
- Conversation rather than a flea
- Built into policy.
- Team work issues
  - multicultural
  - students turning up week three of semester
- Shouldn’t be too student centric
- Who are they for
- Stakeholders – barriers from
- Student led versus student centred
- Employability – need to be in drivers seat
- Deficit model – needs to be the statements
- Holistic approach to whole of design approach.

Table 3

Disabilities; CALD – partners wont take – try NGOs i.e. Oxfam, etc.
Some partners are looking for language (Chinese) so will take students
Support from academics
Indigenous:
- specific program
- industries have already have cultural ethos of inclusivity
- family/community responsibilities
- need flexible hours
- cultural max with partner organisation
- training for sponsor organisation about cultural inclusivity
Barriers:

- Mental Health – big issue
- range – range also of treatment
- reluctance to discuss
- Some disciplines actively encourage disclosure. If don’t disclose, then it’s difficult.
- Packs going to all stakeholders including onsite supervisor
- Some disciplines do these things well and we should adopt what’s working.
- National Guidelines which we can use across the sector
- Lack of clarity sometimes
- Workers Compensation – loads challenges in WHS space – students exposed to loads of risk
- Cracks
- Gaps
- How do we deal with these?

Barrier can be centred around relationships both within university and uni-industry.

Therefore, the **enabler is the relationship.**

Table 4

Diversity Issues

- Student attitudes for success can be THE critical factor
- To what extent is ageism an issue when students are selected for internships?
- Some students don’t understand Australian work culture
- Elite sports students are another category that can be disadvantaged
- Refugees are another category
- To what extent do students see the value in WIL? Are we really sure they do?

Much depends on the flexibility of the industry partner to manage the following:

- students with mental health issues
- students with physical disabilities prevent their achieving competence. This is related to inherent requirements of the course.
GROUP DISCUSSION RECORDED ON POST-IT-NOTES

Barriers and Enablers for:

- Principles
- Policies
- Guidelines
- Procedures

Table 1

- Relationship with institution
- Buy in
- Need some values
- Build stronger relationships
- Resources
- Preparation – students, staff, employers
- Technology
- Partnerships
- COPs
- Shared values
- Built into policy

Table 2

- WIL inter-related
- PPP&G inter-related
- Students fall through cracks

Table 3

- WIL – institution opposing forces for resources etc.
- WIL rapidly expanding – we are trying to make our offerings better BUT it is getting better
- Need understanding of WIL at institution level so conversation not a plea

Table 4

- Soft filter over everything
- Lack of clarity in policy and guidelines
- Starting point – shared value of openness and ‘good-will’
- Workplaces don’t realise they are making accommodations but students have to disclose if they require accommodation
- Risk Management – Good communication, so students don’t feel that universities are gate keeping
- GU on disclosure – recent changes – disclosure process – all students can ask for adjustments.
Other comments

- Institutional buy in
- Need to embed
- WIL and inclusivity
- Who are the principles for?
- Stakeholders lack of understanding
- We can do all we want but if we don’t include partners
- Student led with guidance on how to ……
- With support – hovering over top
- University design
- Flip third Principle – not trying to integrated issues but be inclusive from beginning
- Still deficit – more holistic in design - universal