WEBINAR # 3
Building Institutional Capacity for Student Diversity
29 April 2015

SUMMARY NOTES

Webinar #3 formed part of the project data collection and was digitally recorded for research purposes with the slide presentation publically available from the project website (http://acen.edu.au/access-participation-progression/).

A total of 94 registrations were received for Webinar #3. Representation included the following:

- The Office for Learning and Teaching
- 30 Australian universities
- 1 International university (University of Lisbon, Portugal)
- 2 Australian private education providers
- 1 international private education provider

61 participants were in attendance at the webinar. 48% of Webinar #3 registrants had registered for a previous project webinar (webinar #1 or webinar #2).

Launch of Inclusive WIL Principles and Guidelines:

Project team member, Theresa Winchester-Seeto presented the recently developed Inclusive WIL Principles and Guidelines. Registrants received a pdf copy of the Principles and Guidelines. A copy of the Principles and Guidelines is also available for download from the project website.

Keynote Presentations:

Guest speakers included:

Leoni Russell, Senior Advisor, Learning and Teaching, RMIT, and
Judith Smith, Associate Director, Academic, Real World Learning, Learning and Teaching Unit, QUT

Leoni presented the challenges and highlights of promoting and building institutional infrastructure to actualize an approach to WIL that is inclusive to all students.

Judith presented the way in which a range of inclusive strategies and resources have been developed and implemented at institutional level to support students’ access and participation in WIL.
Key themes/issues to arise in relation to Leoni Russell’s presentation:

- Building an institutional framework for WIL requires a holistic review of your institution, which involves understanding the following: what do we do?/what already exists?/current practices and good practices which can be leveraged off/identifying risks/clear view of organisational priorities in this area.
- Building a framework may involve identifying a range of projects to which people will need to assigned i.e., working parties, committees, etc.
- Areas to be considered when building a framework include: workable policies and procedures; curriculum design protocols; risk management and quality assurance protocols across all levels of the university; inclusive approach to learning and teaching; workload implications for staff and students.
- Building an institutional framework relies on: leadership support and commitment (i.e., built into strategic plans; executive sponsorship; resources; commitment to offer quality WIL to all students); scholarly approach to advance WIL; reward and recognition of good practice; learning and teaching grants; investment in staff development.
- Key to RMIT’s experience in developing an inclusive approach to WIL has been to embrace a broad definition of WIL i.e. on and off campus WIL as well as virtual placements. Shift away from a single student in a single workplace model.
- Challenges faced relate to:
  - Time and effort is required to bring about culture shift. People may be reluctant to review their practices. The inclusive principles can help here.
  - Resources are always needed.
- Approaches to help:
  a) Find champions across the institution to work with.
  b) Gather stories and share examples of good practice.
  c) Value and use the networks you have access to (i.e. community of practices).
  d) Use a variety of WIL types and approaches, scaffolded throughout degree programs to improve access and see positive impact of WIL.

Discussion prompts from Leoni’s presentation

- Barriers specific to your institution
- Immovable/movable barriers
- Institutional approach and impact on policy
- Strategies for engaging institutional leaders

Leoni was asked to define “quality WIL”. Referring to the OLT project Assessing the impact of WIL, Leoni identified 5 key features of quality WIL:

1. Build into the design of WIL curriculum: student preparation; supervision; monitoring of student progress and debriefing.
2. Quality WIL is assessed.
3. Quality WIL does not create hardship for any of the stakeholders.
4. A variety of WIL types is offered.
5. WIL is scaffolded throughout a program.
Key themes/issues to arise in relation to Judith Smith’s presentation:

- A collegial and collaborative approach to building an institutional WIL framework has been useful for QUT, involving staff from across all areas of the university as well as students and industry partners.
- Collaboration can occur in a variety of ways including the use of communities of practice, working groups, research. The *Community Engaged Learning Lab* was discussed as an example of a collaborative approach to building quality WIL curriculum.
- Flexibility underpins much of the university’s inclusive approach to WIL. Examples of this come from the Creative Industries programs where WIL can occur on or off campus; Law where a variety of types of WIL are available. The idea is that students can opt for a WIL experience that suits their needs and preferences.
- Attention was drawn to initiatives used to build staff and partner capacity ie. an active community of practice; induction packs for workplace supervisors; professional development workshops for both.
- Jude highlighted a number of tools and strategies QUT employ to support an inclusive approach to a quality WIL. For example: the use of In Place (placement software) across the university which helps with matching students to projects along with the management of partners, issues and projects. Access to In Place has been given to equity officers to assist with matching of students to projects in real time. Students can also see the names/emails details of other students attending the same placement as themselves. This step came in response to meeting the call from students from low socio-economic backgrounds to develop peer connections and it may also help students share WIL costs if they are travelling to the same placement (important if going to a regional placement).
- WIL is now included in the university’s strategic learning plan. This raises the profile of WIL and will also mean an increase in the number of diverse students engaging with this strategy.
- QUT adopts a strength’s based approach to curriculum and pedagogy design – focused on understanding what students bring to their WIL experience and how to engage in a meaningful way with them.
- Lessons learnt to date:
  a) Collaborate
  b) Listen to all
  c) Ask questions – need to know that practice meets needs
  d) Encourage making space for stories to be shared – unpack these stories to make sense of them so they can inform practice.

Discussion prompts from Jude’s presentation

- The challenges of supporting students with mental health issues
- Workable solutions across professional interest areas
- Models of student and industry partnerships in curriculum design
- InPlace across the institution
SUMMARY OF ONLINE CHAT

- Workload implications need to be considered in relation to students, staff and partners.

- Development of the principles and guidelines highlight the value of networks and collaboration across the sector.

- Flexibility, or a flexible approach, is important to achieving inclusive WIL. This can apply to models of WIL, teaching practices, assessment etc. It was noted that flexibility is influenced by systemic expectations. The principles and guidelines may indeed help open up institutional conversations about existing system/structural barriers including those related to assessment.

- Flexibility in WIL may help overcome a number of barriers students experience. Deb highlighted this with quotes from the project – themes covered: demand on student time because they need to work while studying; employer expectations can over-ride student needs; unpaid placements can create financial hardship for some students. International students also reported on the workplace communication challenges they face as a result of being non-native speakers.

- Project data highlighted the need for students to have a positive attitude to cope with the challenges of WIL and that students need to have a healthy work/life/study balance to be productive.

- The need for student support was raised, particularly in relation to financial support. A range of approaches were discussed including ACEN scholarships, university scholarships, bursaries, targeted initiatives like those funded by HEPPP.