Principles, Guidelines and Strategies for Inclusive WIL

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A resource for academics, practitioners and higher education institutions involved in the delivery of work integrated learning

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Introduction and Background

Based on wide consultation and research across the Higher Education (HE) sector in Australia, it is clear that there are many concerns about issues of inclusive practice in the design and delivery of work-integrated learning (WIL). Some students, for a variety of reasons, face barriers in gaining access to and achieving full participation in WIL. This issue is becoming increasingly prominent and there has been a call for action in the National Strategy on WIL in Higher Education (2015), with a key area of importance identified as addressing equity and access issues in student participation in WIL. While many examples of effective practice in universities exist, there is currently no systematic approach nor agreed set of principles about how to develop genuinely inclusive WIL.

The Principles, Guidelines and Strategies for Inclusive WIL presented here are intended to assist universities to address equity and access issues by developing more inclusive approaches to the way WIL is conceived and practiced. This resource is designed to inform university policies and practices, and the design and delivery of WIL curriculum. The target audience is university leadership and those determining policies and practices, as well as professional and academic staff who work directly with students. WIL inherently involves working with a range of partners which includes students. The Principles, Guidelines and Strategies are designed to support, not direct partner behaviour and attitudes.

The resource is informed by relevant national and international WIL literature, and scholarship about inclusive teaching practices related to specific target groups. Through webinars, focus groups and state-wide forums, the resource has also drawn on the collective wisdom of over 70 WIL practitioners from a range of institutions and disciplinary areas. The principles and guidelines reflect and incorporate the advice, feedback and ideas so generously provided by these practitioners. In addition, examples of practical strategies have been gathered and are also presented.

The resource is presented as a hierarchy, that is:

- *principles*: high level statements intended to guide the conceptualisation of inclusive WIL;

- *guidelines:* intended to assist in determining how to enact the principles; and

- *strategies:* examples of effective practice which demonstrate practical application of these concepts.

This resource acknowledges that different contexts, priorities and approaches, as well as particular disciplinary requirements and student cohorts, will impact on how this resource is adopted. It is important to note that many parameters influence how WIL operates and how inclusive it will be in practice. These include government, institutional, departmental and/or organisational policies, professional accreditation requirements, and formal and informal practices. Curriculum design and administrative approaches and the WIL models themselves can also vary greatly across disciplines and institutions, in the workplace or community setting. All of these aspects need to be considered in relation to the Principles, Guidelines and Strategies for Inclusive WIL.

The definition of WIL used here is that provided by Patrick, Peach & Pocknee (2008): *an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum*. It is acknowledged that WIL can involve both placement and non-placement options and that each approach has a role to play. It is also recognised that WIL is more than placements alone and universities support learning in a number of different ways. This resource concentrates on models of WIL that use placements.

Principles of Inclusive WIL

Inclusive WIL ……

1) enables all students to have **access** to quality WIL
2) encourages awareness, respect and valuing of **diversity**
3) is practicable, workable and **sustainable in different** stakeholder contexts
4) takes a **holistic** view of students' lives including their WIL experiences
5) is **proactive and collaborative**

Explanation of the Principles

1. *enables all students to have **access** to quality WIL*

   It is imperative that all students have the opportunity to participate in WIL irrespective of their personal circumstances, background, financial or other situations. Students must be able to fully participate and gain benefit from WIL experiences. These experiences will not be the same for all students but they must be afforded equal opportunity to learn, develop skills and meet course requirements and pursue and fulfil their aspirations. All aspects of WIL including institutional policies, practices, design and delivery of WIL must enable and enhance access, participation and progression of all students.

2. *encourages awareness, respect and valuing of **diversity***

   Awareness, respect and valuing of diversity must underpin inclusive WIL, and be reflected in policies, practices, design and delivery. It is important that students and all other partners value and engage with diversity. Inclusive WIL recognizes and respects students' individuality, unique knowledge, experiences, capabilities and expectations.

3. *is practicable, workable and **sustainable** in different stakeholder contexts*

   Inclusive WIL is underpinned by policies, practices, design and delivery that ensure these experiences accommodate the requirements of all partners in practical and workable ways. Inclusive WIL must actively enhance the experience of partners and look to long-term sustainability by taking into account aspects such as context and disciplinary/professional requirements, time, workload, costs, resourcing, needs and preferences of partners.

4. *takes a **holistic** view of students' lives including their WIL experiences*

   Policies, practices, design and delivery of WIL needs to take into account all aspects of students' lives and circumstances, and the implications for WIL activities. Taking a holistic view of students and their lives will ensure enablers for success are identified and maximised, and barriers minimised. Inclusive WIL ensures that activities 'work with' students, their circumstances and needs.

5. *is **proactive and collaborative***

   This involves planning ahead and putting in place processes and practices to identify the needs and potential difficulties for partners (physical, emotional, financial, reputational etc) and seeks solutions to ensure positive outcomes. Collaborative relationships between universities and partners are essential for ensuring a supportive learning environment for students and a quality, mutually beneficial WIL experience.

Guidelines for Inclusive WIL

Introduction

The guidelines assist universities to put the principles of inclusive WIL into practice. They relate to WIL policies, practices design and delivery. The guidelines are recommendations, intended to assist in determining the best course of action and are aimed primarily at building university capacity to provide inclusive WIL. To maximise utility these guidelines should be read in conjunction with the principles of inclusive WIL and the examples of practice.

Guidelines

a) adopt a flexible approach for policies, practices, design and delivery of WIL
b) provide support for students that takes a holistic and inclusive view of students' lives
c) provide support for staff to implement inclusive principles and guidelines
d) provide support for partner organisations to implement inclusive principles and guidelines
e) incorporate inclusive curriculum design and teaching practices
f) form collaborative relationships and partnerships
g) cultivate an institutional culture that promotes inclusive WIL
h) ensure adequate resources are available
i) manage expectations
j) undertake ongoing review and evaluation
k) develop sustainable approaches and practices

a. **adopt a flexible approach** for policies, practices, design and delivery of WIL

Flexible and adaptive approaches in terms of modes of participation and institutional policy and processes are fundamental to inclusive WIL. The concept of flexibility in approach and design underpins several other guidelines and examples. This could involve affording student's choice about how, when and where they engage in WIL and how this experience is assessed. Inclusive WIL is responsive to student needs and, where possible offers flexibility in policy, administrative processes, curriculum design and teaching practices.

b. **provide support for students** that takes a holistic and inclusive view of students' lives

Student diversity incorporates targeted equity groups and extends to include students' backgrounds, skills and capabilities, life experiences, values, beliefs, perspectives, personality, responsibilities etc. A holistic view of students and their lives highlights that learning opportunities and support provided must be all-encompassing. The provision of clear, timely advice on the requirements of WIL, and the potential impact of WIL on personal circumstances, can help students make informed decisions about their studies and other commitments, e.g. family and cultural responsibilities, personal finances, work commitments.

 To be successful students need to be well prepared for WIL, taking into account what happens before, during and after their WIL experience. The support provided during these phases will depend on the context and cohort, but may involve developing communication and language proficiency, guiding expectations, cultivating reflective skills, mediating learning during and after placement. The aim is to ensure all students have opportunities to build the capabilities they need and the resilience required to maximise their WIL experience.

c. **provide support for staff** to implement inclusive principles and guidelines

Academic and professional staff play a key role in designing and delivering effective and inclusive WIL. It is essential that staff not only understand what is needed, but are given the resources required as well as policy and other leadership support. Support may involve systems to manage relationships and streamline processes that are common across one institution, or multiple institutions. Effective and efficient systems will allow more time for staff to explore options for placements in non-traditional settings e.g. community-based organisations or to develop different types of activities that may be more responsive to student needs. Training may also be necessary to raise awareness and manage risks in this area. In addition to placement related concerns, additional resources and education around changes to curriculum, teaching and assessment practices may also be required.

d. **provide support for partner organisations** to implement inclusive principles and guidelines

This guideline highlights the importance of working collaboratively with partner organisations at all levels, and across a range of different areas, to help build inclusive WIL capacity. Clarity around expectations, roles and responsibilities in relation to inclusive WIL should be made clear to partners at both the organisational and individual workplace supervisor level. Universities can assist where necessary by providing practical support including advice (e.g. guidelines) on how partners can offer WIL opportunities to diverse students as well as professional development and advice on how to deal with specific issues.

e. incorporate inclusive curriculum design and teaching practices

Curriculum design and teaching practices must enable students to fully participate and access opportunities for success. WIL can provide students with access to environments and opportunities otherwise not readily accessible. Through well designed WIL curriculum students can extend their personal, social and cultural capital by leveraging the capital of the university and the workplace. However, simply gaining access will not necessarily result in success for students. Inclusive WIL curriculum should:

- be integrated into the curriculum rather than a "bolt on" approach;
- be scaffolded across the student lifecycle to build student capacity to fully participate;
- provide support for students in choosing (where WIL is optional) to participate in a WIL experience;
- support students in field based settings to understand expectations and to negotiate suitable learning experiences;
- connect students, employers and university staff (especially equity and student/academic support staff) in sharing challenges and experiences to aim for continual improvement;
- support the development of student self-efficacy through structured goal setting and mentoring; before, during and after a WIL experience;
- account for diversity of student backgrounds and experiences, supporting students to better understand the workplace culture of their professional setting;
- ensure that inherent requirements are understood by, and communicated to, all partners;
- ensure there are no barriers for students in the design of assessment and provide suitable alternatives where possible;
- utilise Universal Design principles.

f. form collaborative relationships and partnerships

Collaborative relationships and partnerships are essential for ensuring a supportive learning environment for students and a quality WIL experience. Linked up relationships within the university enable a cohesive and connected experience and provide a continuum of support for students. External relationships and partnerships with clear communication channels are pivotal to ensuring the supportive and inclusive learning environment extends to the practice-based setting.

Building resilient relationships and partnerships requires investment in staff professional learning on engagement strategies; resourcing for appropriate staff to focus on building and sustaining internal and external relationships; and developing user-friendly resources to support partners in WIL. It is essential to instil a culture of collaboration, consultation and co-operation.

g. cultivate an institutional culture that promotes inclusive WIL

Principles of inclusive WIL must be valued by institutional leaders if they are to be translated into successful and sustainable practices. Leadership support can aid inclusive WIL through the provision of:

- sponsorship within the executive team;
- appropriate policies and procedures;
- adequate resourcing; and
- appropriate organisational structures and services.

Institutional commitment to inclusive WIL might also involve finance for relevant research plus reward and recognition of good practice. These types of strategies can foster an inclusive WIL culture within an institution, with "champions" at all levels, to help embed inclusive WIL principles.

h. ensure adequate resources are available

Inclusive WIL requires sufficient institutional resourcing, which for some universities may involve an increase in current practices and decisions around resource allocation. Adequate resourcing for inclusive WIL often centres on the provision of sufficient staff and staff time to develop quality and satisfying WIL experiences for students, university staff and partners.

i. manage expectations

Managing expectations of both students and partners involves both parties having a realistic understanding about the purpose of WIL as well as respective roles and responsibilities. In terms of inclusive WIL, managing expectations requires clear, explicit and accessible information be provided to students which is then delivered at multiple "touch points" (i.e., university website; university handbook; course/unit outlines; student services; staff etc). The management of student expectations is an important component of preparing students for WIL. Managing partner expectations might include informing partners about the university's commitment to inclusive WIL. It also involves ensuring clear and explicit communication between university staff and partners about the diverse range of students they might host (e.g. from different backgrounds; varying abilities and skills; levels of maturity or self-confidence).

j.   undertake ongoing review and evaluation

Continuous review of policy, practices, design and delivery of programs from an inclusive WIL perspective is needed to ensure alignment of intent and processes. This should involve both quality assurance processes that measure and evaluate performance in relation to provision of inclusive WIL, as well as encouraging quality enhancement and risk management. Time to reflect on the success of current systems and procedures by all staff involved will assist in developing a pro-active approach, whilst still allowing for tailored solutions where necessary. Opportunities for exchange of information both within, and across institutions should be encouraged as a way of improving current approaches. Review and evaluation should also consider and involve partners in reviewing their own operations.

## k.   develop sustainable approaches and practices

Sustainable approaches to inclusive WIL will involve time and cost efficiencies for the institution, university staff and partners, while also ensuring inclusive experiences for students. Care must be taken to put into place approaches and strategies that are viable and can be scaled up to meet future needs. As student numbers increase it will be necessary to review current practices to ensure feasibility going forward.

Sustainable approaches to inclusive WIL might include the provision of procedures for both university and partners to assist organisations to respond to the needs of students. The use of expert advice from within institutions and from external partners, may also help inform the design and delivery of realistic and effective practices.

Introduction

Effective WIL curriculum involves strategies that build student, staff and partner capacity for inclusive WIL. The strategies and good ideas below have been contributed from across the sector and provide just some examples of the different ways in which the inclusive principles and guidelines of WIL can be put into practice. These ideas, along with the *stories from the field,* are intended to stimulate thinking about what inclusive WIL can look like and the ways in which it can be enacted.
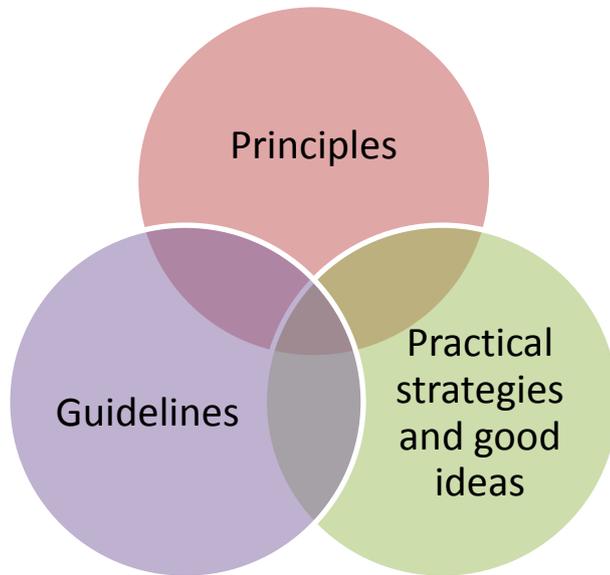
Build Curriculum

WIL curriculum should be delivered to develop qualities and capabilities such as interpersonal and reflective skills, resilience, confidence and persistence. Good ideas and strategies include:

1. gather feedback from students and partners
2. review and evaluate WIL programs and/or curriculum
3. engage in peer review and benchmarking
4. work with advisory committees
5. seek external expert advice
6. set clear educational expectations – use Learning Plans
7. scaffold learning
8. provide feedback
9. employ a range of assessment strategies
10. consider alternative models to placement (including virtual WIL)
11. explore online resources that provide industry engagement opportunities for students
12. encourage staff and students to network and engage with industry and community through rewarding and recognising initiatives
13. allocate resources to facilitate engagement with partners
14. be flexible with timing and arrangements for placements

Stories from the field...

1. **Information Systems and Information Technology Project – Macquarie University**
   This capstone unit organises students into teams to complete an industry project. This approach has been used as a way to ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully participate in this compulsory program. Each team negotiates how the project will be completed, allowing individual needs and preferences to be accommodated. The unit gathers feedback from students and partners as part of its regular review process. Click here for full story.

2. **Legal Clinic – QUT**
   The Legal Clinic program makes use of the less resource intensive community lawyering clinic model as a way to provide WIL opportunities to more students. Students undertake legal, research and community education tasks covering a range of community and social justice issues, which helps students from diverse backgrounds find an issue/project which appeals to them. Accessibility is further enhanced as students are able to negotiate the hours of their community lawyering experience, thereby helping them balance their WIL and other commitments. Click here for full story.

3. **Community Internship Course – Griffith (also builds student capacity)**
   This community service internship program has been purposely designed with minimal entrance requirements, thereby making it available to the widest possible number of students. Accessibility is further enhanced as students may use their existing volunteering jobs for placements or select one organised by the university. Financial support is made available to students, along with pastoral care and advice before and during the placement. Click here for full story. Click here to view full video story.

4. **Virtual Legal Placements (VLP) – Queensland University of Technology (also builds partner capacity)**
   The VLP is an on-line model of WIL which provides the university with a cost effective way to offer large numbers of students access to WIL. The VLP involves employers from across the spectrum of law firms, government, industry, and community organisations, which helps meet the diverse needs and interests of students. VLP also supports the flexibility required by external and part time students. This model has been developed in close collaboration with industry partners, who also have on-line access to a suite of resources to support their role in VLP. See - http://acen.edu.au/virtual-placement-project-vpp/

5. **Supply Chain Management students – Curtin University**
   This WIL unit has been purposively designed to occur in the second year of a business degree so that students can experience an authentic supply chain management placement early on in their course, providing a real work reference point to build on classroom learning and potential future WIL experiences. Students work with a real client on a discrete supply chain management project. Students enjoy the work experience, and this was enhanced because it was a) early in their course, and b) limited to an assignment, which allowed them to feel less pressured by the placement. Click here for full story.

Build staff capacity

Institutional capacity for inclusive WIL relies heavily on the ability of university staff to meet the diverse needs of students. Good ideas and strategies include:

1. cultural awareness training
2. risk management training
3. encourage and support scholarship of WIL (including grant , conference and publication opportunities)
4. reward and recognition of effective practice
5. workload recognition
6. build communities of practice
7. showcase personal stories and vignettes

Stories from the field…

6. **WIL Community of Practice – RMIT**
   The purpose of the WIL CoP at RMIT is to provide staff involved with WIL an opportunity to share and learn from one another. The WIL CoP focuses on a range of both operational and learning and teaching WIL issues to help build the professional capacity of staff, particularly in relation to matters which are challenging or difficult. The group also helps those who may be "working alone" to grow a network they can call on for support and advice. Click here for full story.

7. **Research Workshops – Macquarie University**
   Macquarie University's Pedagogy Research Workshops have been running since 2013. The workshop series aims to bring together people who are interested in learning and teaching research related to PACE (a form of work-integrated learning). Workshops have a key theme and often involve subject matter experts from across the University. Every session has a practical component where participants have an opportunity to undertake hands-on activities, usually in the form of group work. Time for questions and answers is also built into the workshop. Click here for full story.

8. **Go Global – Curtin University**
   Go Global is a nationally awarded international and inter-professional service learning program. The cross cultural clinical placements create an opportunity to learn through a country orientation process, an in country placement experience and a debrief centred around service through partnership to build health care capacity in other countries. Go Global builds staff capacity through training and development of staff prior to departure. A focus on developing the ability to supervise and facilitate inter-professional student teams at the host site ensures an excellent experience for the students, and provides a different supervisory experience for staff who may have only supervised discipline specific students in the past. Click here for full story.

9. **Journalism Placements – Griffith**
   Through this unit students gain hands-on journalism experience via their on-campus placements. The provision of the placements on-campus often means it can be easier for time poor students to balance work, study and their WIL commitments. Click here to view full video story.

Build student capacity

Successful WIL experiences rely on providing students with timely and appropriate information about WIL requirements and making reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs. Good ideas and strategies include providing:

1. clear learning outcomes and support
2. career advice including training in preparing CV's and job applications
3. scholarships and financial support
4. clear procedures for disclosure of issues that may impact on learning
5. flexible models of WIL
6. access to counselling and support
7. institutional awards
8. personal stories and vignettes

Stories from the field…

1. **Media Public Relations – Macquarie University**

   This unit provides industry placements which occur mostly on-campus. This approach provides students some flexibility in terms of where, when and how their project is completed. Students are encouraged to disclose any specific needs early on so the program convenor can accommodate these when project teams are formed and projects allocated. Additional advice and support is provided in areas such as writing, critical thinking and time management. Click here for full story.

2. **Advertising, Marketing and Public Relation – Queensland University of Technology**

   Students are responsible for selecting and securing their own industry internship in this program. Staff help students achieve this through the provision of industry contacts, reviewing applications and support through the application process. An interview workshop is also run which provides students with the opportunity to practice interview skills and techniques and gain feedback from industry professionals, teaching staff and peers. See http://acen.edu.au/757-2/

3. **Professional and Community Engagement in Science – Macquarie University** (also builds curriculum)

   This unit has been designed to provide science students who do not have WIL as a compulsory element of their degree program an opportunity to engage in WIL. Student choice and flexibility underpin the design of the unit to ensure student needs and preferences can be accommodated, for example: students can organise their own activity or faculty staff can help locate one; activities can be group-based or individual; activities can occur locally, regionally or internationally as well as on or off campus. Click here for full story.

4. **Learning Circles of Change – Griffith** (also build partner capacity)

   Circles of Change Revisited (COCR) is a method used to engage professionals from a variety of disciplines in critical reflection and conversation. The process consists of four steps and involves groups of students and professionals, in deconstructing, confronting, theorising and thinking otherwise about a phenomena or issue within the field of practice. The COCR can be described as intense guided reflective conversation. The over-riding approach is "democracy in action", where the learning circles encourage all views to be expressed and explored, irrespective of whether you are a student, professional or university staff. The process of discussion and reflection generates new knowledge for the student and the experience empowers them to act on the basis of this new knowledge. Click here for full story.

5. WIL in a Master of Physiotherapy program – Griffith

This Masters level program acknowledges that some students may take extra time to reach an acceptable level of competent practice. If a student fails to reach this level, they will not be permitted to continue in the program until they can demonstrate safe, competent performance in a supplementary placement. Where students may have failed a placement, significant guidance and support is provided around that individual to identify their weaknesses and to assist the student succeed. Click here for full story.

6. Wine-making WIL opportunities in Margaret River – Curtin University

This program is designed for international students undertaking a chemical engineering degree. For a variety of reasons placements can be challenging to source for international students. Working in collaboration with the Centre for Wine Excellence, this program secures WIL opportunities for international students in Margaret River area. Students identified their own project topics, centred on wine production in Australia, which allowed each student to incorporate their own interests and experience into their project.   Group sessions prior to the placement helped prepare students for the experience. This program allows students to learn about both their discipline and local workplace culture. Click here for full story.

Build partner capacity

Key to any successful WIL program is the university and partner mutually beneficial relationship. Adopting a flexible, creative and innovative mindset to arrangements and models is the best approach. Good ideas and strategies include:

1. models of WIL that benefit host organisations and students
2. policies, processes and protocols that account for the risks associated with WIL but allow for diversity in approaches
3. consider industry-based projects where groups of students work together
4. consider diverse needs and capabilities when matching student and host
5. provide advice and resources to support student learning
6. provide feedback on performance
7. provide hosts with information and training opportunities in :
   a. roles and responsibilities in supervision, teaching and assessment in workplace settings
   b. adapting tasks for students with diverse learning needs
   c. relevant policies and guidelines (university, government and industry) and accreditation frameworks that govern student learning
   d. communication for reporting back to the university during and after WIL
      contributing to subsequent evaluations of the WIL program to strengthen support procedures and processes.

   e. contributing to subsequent evaluations of the WIL program to strengthen support procedures and processes.

Stories from the field…

Work-integrated learning in Health – QUT

Queensland University of Technology has multiple health programs which see hundreds of students involved in clinical placements at any given time. A special feature of QUT's WIL in Health is the Workplace into the Uni and *Uni into the Workplace initiative*. This initiative utilizes a coherent set of web-based programs that assist both students and workplace supervisors. These programs are just one part of the WIL website which provides 24/7 access for students *and* workplace supervisors to a variety of purpose-built, online programs that are designed both to support students learning in the clinical setting and to maintain a connectedness between their on-campus and off-campus experiences. The basic objectives of the WIL site are to assist students and workplace supervisors with understanding the requirements of students learning in the workplace and to promote the achievement of quality learning outcomes within the practice environment. Regardless of where their placement is located students and their workplace supervisors are able to access up-to-the-minute information for students and supervisors. See http://acen.edu.au/951-2/