WEBINAR # 4
Enhancing Inclusive WIL: Implications for Stakeholders
28 October, 2015
Chaired by Sonia Ferns, Curtin University

SUMMARY NOTES

Webinar #4 was digitally recorded with the slide presentation publically available from the project website (http://acen.edu.au/access-participation-progression/).

A total of 91 registrations were received for Webinar #4. Representation included the following:

- 27 Australian universities
- 2 international institutions
- Every state and territory was represented, except Northern Territory

59 participants were in attendance at the webinar.

Keynote Presentations:
Guest speakers included:

Professor Karen Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Students), University of the Sunshine Coast
Professor Karen Nelson, an experienced leader in higher education, provided an institutional perspective on ensuring inclusive practices in WIL and the impact on staff, students and institutional leaders.

Jenny Watts-Sampson, Relationship Manager and Stepping Into..... Program Manager, Australian Network on Disability
Jenny works with host organisations to provide WIL placements for students from equity groups. Jenny highlighted the impact on host organisations in supporting students to facilitate quality WIL experiences and outcomes.

Wilbur Li, Student Representative
Wilbur is currently studying a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne. Wilbur presented his perspective on the impact of WIL experiences on personal skill development and employability outcomes.
Key themes/issues to arise in relation to Karen Nelson’s presentation:

- A university’s capacity for Inclusive WIL begins with their strategic plan and a framework for WIL.
- SCU has sought to align their recently reformulated WIL framework with the Inclusive WIL Principles and Guidelines. The Principles have been interpreted to meet the university’s regional setting, programs and focus on producing employable graduates.
- There is value in WIL for all students, and the goal is for universities to therefore find ways to make it accessible. This may include a “rethink” of what constitutes WIL, which may involve providing different models or modes of delivery (i.e., SCU has 3 categories of WIL – refer to presentation slides).
- Improving access and equity in WIL involves university’s confronting the challenges and issues unique to their context i.e., accreditation requirements; regional location; time poor students; managing risks; building sustainable partnerships with regional employers; improving student preparation for WIL – including scaffolding WIL; record keeping and monitoring the student experience.

Key themes/issues to arise in relation to Jenny Watts-Sampson’s presentation:

- Capacity for Inclusive WIL can be enhanced when employers, universities and students work with external experts such as the Australian Network on Disability.
- Preparation and support for employers and students is an important aspect of making an internship involving a student with a disability work effectively. This support needs to occur before, during and after the internship.
- AND presents employers with a business case regarding the value of engaging with their internship programs.
- Building employer capacity for Inclusive WIL involves addressing their concerns about asking the wrong questions or “putting their foot in it” with students who have a disability. To address this concern, AND advocates that both employers and students focus on the job requirements and what adjustments might be necessary to enable someone to meet these requirements.
- Student preparation for an internship involves the student being made aware that they may need to have adjustments made in the workplace to meet the job requirements. The emphasis is on job requirements and adjustments, and not on disclosure or the disability as such.
- Employers use the Stepping In program as a “try before you buy” opportunity i.e., seeing if the student is a potential future employee. The program can be used as a talent pipeline for employers.
- Stepping In can be used as part of a WIL program. It is negotiated between the student, employer and university.
Key themes/issues to arise in relation to Wilbur Li’s presentation:

- The internship provided valuable personal, career and academic learning. Self-awareness about personal strengths and career preferences was an important aspect of this learning.

- Important to the success of the internship was the following:
  - Having a workplace buddy to help familiarise the student with the workplace and to adjust to the new environment. The intern was also located with the graduates, so this provided another network of support.
  - A supportive workplace culture that was “open” to questions being asked, help given etc.
  - Being given autonomy to do the job the way that suited the student.

- Disability was not an issue, as the focus was on adjustments to maximise engagement with the job requirements, job outputs and productivity.

- Advice to students contemplating a WIL experience:
  - think about the value they will bring to an organisation
  - be highly proactive in seeking out opportunities, because it’s competitive out there!
  - to sell yourself to an employer you need to have good grades, passion and an ability to demonstrate the other skills, capabilities and interests you have that show you are a well-rounded person.

Key points raised from online discussion:

- Peer or buddy program may be a good strategy for students in WIL, particularly if they require additional support.

- Students need to know how to “sell” themselves, their “whole self” to partner organisations.

- There can be tensions between assessment, standards and “adjustments” for students. Do people have examples of how to do this effectively without compromising learning outcomes etc?