Macquarie University Case Study

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Macquarie University (MQ) has campuses in Sydney, Melbourne and Asia. The university offers more than 150 degrees and is home to approximately 35,335 students from more than 100 countries. In 2014, just over one third of MQ’s students were International.

The Macquarie University Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) has a worldwide reputation as a leading business and economics school, Macquarie is ranked in the top two percent of universities due to the actuarial program. Areas of expertise extend to financial risk, working futures, ethics, corporate governance, applied finance, management, demographics, economics and marketing. Degree programs in the Faculty include:

- Bachelor of Commerce with majors in Accounting, Applied Econometrics, Economics, Finance, Human Resource Management, International Business and Marketing
- Bachelor of Commerce and Professional Accounting
- Bachelor of Actuarial Studies
- Bachelor of Applied Finance
- Bachelor of Economics
- Bachelor of Business Administration
- Bachelor of Marketing and Media.

All of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences undertaken in FBE are related to particular for-credit units/courses. Thus they fall under the umbrella of MQ’s Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program. PACE is a signature learning program at MQ, and focuses on taking student learning outside the lecture theatre to develop graduates who are both work and life ready. WIL experiences in FBE must comply with PACE requirements that govern curriculum design, governance, work health and safety issues etc. There are no exclusion criteria and thus each unit must cater for all students who enroll. By 2016 all students will have an opportunity to undertake a PACE unit as part of their undergraduate studies.

Two factors intensify the usual range of curriculum and resourcing issues which face WIL practitioners. Firstly, FBE has the largest student cohort in the university, and secondly, FBE has a proportionally larger group of International students, making classes generally larger in FBE units and with more International students in each class. These two factors bring unique challenges as staff find it challenging to find placements for all students. Therefore a variety of WIL models and modes of delivery are already offered which include: paid and unpaid internships; block placements for a single student or a group of students; projects which can be undertaken on campus, off campus, virtually or a combination of all three.

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1. Macquarie University North Ryde Campus; 2. Macquarie CBD Campus; 3-6: Macquarie Applied Finance Centre (MAFC) – located within Tsinghua University, Beijing; In Singapore; In Melbourne and Sydney CBD.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>WIL OPPORTUNITIES &amp; DURATION</th>
<th>ENROLMENTS 2015</th>
<th>RETENTION (only data 2014 available)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>-Accounting – yes</td>
<td>4089 students</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Actuarial – yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Economics – yes (first year required 2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Finance – yes (first year required 2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-HR Management – yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Int Business – yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Marketing – yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1944 students</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Accounting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bachelor of Actuarial Studies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96 students</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bachelor of Applied Finance</td>
<td>Not required in 2016</td>
<td>538 students</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Economics</td>
<td>Yes (first year required 2015)</td>
<td>321 students</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Business</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>591 students</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Marketing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>242 students</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Professional accreditation required
University wide retention rate for 2014 = 81.5%
MQ FBE retention rate for 2014 = 84.3%
ACCESSING EQUITY INFORMATION AT MQ

An interview with a senior FBE PACE academic revealed that it can be a time consuming process for any PACE unit convenor to gain access to student demographic data for their unit/program beyond the basic class list. Reports from the university’s central system provide minimum information e.g. student name; GPA, program, domestic or International student status, and a special request must be made to access other information identifying Indigenous and/or Torres Strait Islander students or those who come from a low socio-economic background. With respect to students with a disability, it is up to the student to allow their personal information to be passed onto relevant academic staff. This information does not appear on class lists, even if the student has disclosed their disability, and there can be time delays in advising a unit convenor. In some instances this occurs after the WIL project or placement has been organised. The academic interviewed suggested that even if unit convenors had access to student demographic data prior to the WIL experience commencing, they were unsure as the extent unit convenors would be able to respond to it given the large cohort size and the general lack of expertise in this area.

FBE requires students to complete an application form prior to their PACE unit commencing. The application includes questions about student preferences etc, which helps staff gain information that is important to the management of the WIL activity for both students and partners. This information, along with student demographic information, was seen as potentially valuable to unit convenors for making adjustments to assessment activities, organising student group work in WIL, and matching students to partners. No specific question is asked about disability disclosure however, there are several questions around the motivations, personal needs and other generic skills.

THE VOICE OF THE STUDENT AT MACQUARIE

Only eight students from MQ’s Faculty of Business (FBE) completed the survey. When asked what advice they would give other students who are about to undertake a work placement, the message was clear – plan ahead. Students pointed out that WIL experiences have ‘cost’ implications in terms of time and money, and prospective WIL students are advised to plan ahead so they can manage the additional time commitment required to undertake a placement and have savings to ‘cushion’ the financial costs associated with WIL. For one student, this meant working more hours in their part-time job prior to the internship to ensure enough funds to cover the fact they would not be able to work while undertaking their placement. Unfortunately the student also reported that it also meant they had less time to dedicate to their studies. Research in other disciplinary areas suggests travel, parking, childcare, dress/uniform, equipment and accommodation all present additional financial outlay for students and can add to the stress they experience when managing work, family and study responsibilities (Hamshire, Willgoss & Wibberley, 2012; Nash, 2011).

While WIL placements were described by the FBE students as time consuming and stressful, they were also seen to be useful in terms of learning and future career opportunities. The application of theory to practice and vice versa was highlighted, as well as the opportunity to
develop practical skills such as communication, management and people skills. One student summed up the experience by saying:

“Stick with it! You may not like it but it is an experience that is valuable to your future career and opportunities” (MQ student survey quote).

The survey also asked students what advice they would offer universities and host organisations in relation to improving WIL, with two common issues cited:

1. Placements need to be well planned so there is clarity around learning outcomes, the tasks required and the role of each person involved; and
2. Placements need to provide students with meaningful and authentic work/tasks.

Clearly these time poor FBE students resented having their time wasted with placements which were not well organised, authentic or helpful to learning:

“Less exploitation of young people and their skill sets. Either give them great experience, a potential job, a taste of the work-force or money!” (MQ FBE student survey quote).

When students were asked what changes they would like for WIL, they talked mainly about a more manageable workload during the placement and placements being paid. Previous research at Macquarie University into issues of access and equity in WIL also found some students need to work to support themselves, have carer responsibilities or other factors, which result in restricted availability in terms of time and/or money to access or fully participate in WIL (Mackaway, et al., 2013; Responding to student diversity – see resource at: http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum_assessment/pace/resources/effective_curriculum/)

Findings from previous interviews with students from FBE, suggest students can experience a range of structural and process barriers to the placement model of WIL (Mackaway, et al., 2014). The students also identify the role their own attitudes and attributes play in successfully engaging with WIL, with motivation, personal goals and confidence as critical to a successful experience (Mackaway et al., 2014).

THE VOICE OF ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF AT MACQUARIE

Four staff were interviewed specifically for this project – two were unit convenors from FBE and two from central student support services. These were supplemented by interviews with three members of staff undertaken two years ago for a similar project that focussed on WIL across Macquarie University (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto & Carter, 2014; Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto & Rowe, 2013). Common themes that emerged from the interviews are reported here.

Student experience from the academic and professional staff perspective

In the context of FBE WIL, it was expected that the primary challenges would relate to International students, predominantly those from parts of Asia and China. Interviewees
raised issues that echoed previous findings (Mackaway et al., 2014), particularly around communication issues arising from under-developed English skills. As these interviewees demonstrate however, not all agree with this view:

“English, certainly. Poor writing skills, that’s a big issue and that doesn’t have to be International students”

“I don’t see language as the most important barrier for students”

Two other concerns, however, were raised by the academic staff. Firstly, there are stories of International students not winning competitive placements because of perceived difficulties by the workplace supervisors in relation to residency status. More concerning perhaps is the reported reaction of domestic students, especially where they are undertaking group work, for example:

“Australians have a perception that, especially the Asian students, they don’t work. They’ll sit back and watch and they’ll use their language as a barrier, and because this is so important, they’ll let the Australians take the lead and do all the work”

Previous research has identified partner push-back in accepting International students as a small, but significant issue (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto & Rowe, 2013), but this is the first documentation of student push-back. Anecdotally, however, academics do report such behaviour in domestic students although it is not clear how widespread or significant this is.

Academic supervisors also report that whilst the language skills of International students, especially in the third year of their degree, are usually perfectly adequate for placements and projects with partners, there is a problem with students having confidence in their own abilities. This challenge does not exclusively apply to International students:

“I mean, there’s a certain communication that they are lacking at, but more so their confidence in their ability, and especially if they were going out on site.”

Where students are expected to find their own placements or companies to work with, some students face some difficulties in gaining entrée into the right kind of company. This is particularly problematic for students who do not have networks or contacts in Australia, for example:

“The groups that were basically totally foreign students did have a substantial disadvantage there because they had no contacts with local companies.”

When asked about students with disabilities, the unit convenors that were interviewed were largely unaware of students with either physical or mental disabilities in their classrooms, or were unsure how they would actually find out without information from student central services.
Academic Staff Experience

The overwhelming issue for staff is coping with the normal issues related to the organising and teaching of WIL, complying with WHS requirements etc, and working with large class sizes. All interviewees talked of cohorts of 130-200 students, with minimal assistance from other staff, especially in working with partners.

Most of the academics stated a preference for providing placements for students, but the reality of organising large cohorts prohibit this. As a solution, each of the four unit convenors designed alternatives that required interaction of the students, usually in groups, with industry. Mostly this took place on campus. Examples included:

- Groups of students contact an organisation to do a forensic business analysis of that organisation. They submit a management consultant’s report and make a presentation.
- Some members of the senior management team from various companies make presentations about current company challenges to students. Students work towards solutions to those challenges and present them to the company.
- Industry representatives prescribe a project for the students. They make available a lot of information for the students and run an online consultancy for the students for a few weeks.
- Virtual teams of students interact with the industry supervisors via Skype or videoconferencing.

Most of these experiences were followed by students making a presentation to the industry representatives, although sometimes this was only for selected students. All unit convenors reported that this was a positive experience for the students with some wonderful outcomes for the company and the students.

One of the interviewees from the central support team reported that she had personally hosted students experiencing difficulties finding a suitable placement, including students with caring responsibilities as she could provide flexible placements, or instances where students had financial difficulties. Others were:

“...students with disabilities, students who've got ways of behaving that don't seem to fit into a conventional workplace, so they need more oversight and supervision, or students who haven't been able to maintain a placement.”

She was thus able to provide a place:

“...for the students so that they're getting that experience but in a more protected and transitional environment.”

Where students find difficulties with placements or group work or interacting with industry people, the academics and professional staff usually bear the brunt of the extra work. Some report using personal connections to secure the right kind of place for a student, or
“keeping a motherly eye” on the student. This assists the student and also minimises “reputational risks” for the university and means partners are fully supported. There is little recognition for this additional workload, although there is some acknowledgement in central support services:

“...there’s overwhelming good will [of academics] towards students with disability and an open heart or open arms. I’d like to think that’s true for other groups.”

The issue of disability disclosure was not raised by the unit convenors from FBE, but by the staff from central support services. According to policy and legislation the onus is on the student to inform the university and provide current evidence of their disability. Students can choose to keep that information confidential, or delay releasing it, which can be frustrating for the academics:

“My observation…. is that by the time I get notified of it, it’s too late. I’ve already worked that out, thank you very much”

The students, however, are between a rock and a hard place:

“Why don’t students disclose? - It would be ideal that they lived in a world where they could disclose and know that it’s not going to affect them professionally or reputationally.”

PACE has worked very closely with central support services to develop policy and guidelines. Where students disclose and require reasonable adjustments, this cost is borne by the Disability Services. The difficulty arises when the disability is not obvious or is invisible (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto & Rowe, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

As identified in previous research at Macquarie, and in this case study, there are some clear barriers for students in undertaking WIL experiences. Many relate to the large segment of the cohort that is made up of International students, and the attendant problems related to communication skills and lack of local networks and contacts. What is surprising is that other barriers such as financial difficulties, caring responsibilities, competition for precious time and disabilities are not often discussed by the unit convenors, despite prompting by the interviewer. When mental health issues beset significant numbers in the student population, some of these students are certainly present in each unit. It is not clear whether the unit convenors are unaware of these difficulties and/or the students do not bring them to the attention of the academic staff, or this just does not significantly impact the way student’s function and perform in the WIL experience. Further research is needed to determine whether this is peculiar to Business faculties or is a wider phenomenon.

As demonstrated in this case study, academic and professional staff use a variety of approaches to manage the large class sizes they must contend with, and to assist students who may face barriers in accessing and benefitting from WIL experiences. These include
program restructuring and devising alternatives to singleton placements i.e. increasing use of non-placement WIL, using personal connections, placing students on campus and using the central services such as Campus Wellbeing and Disability Services. As the numbers undertaking WIL increase, there is likely to be further pressure on the academic and professional staff. However, as pointed out by staff from central support services, this is unlikely to continue forever.

“We will then see this enormous tipping point and then we'll see real change. That tipping point will come and we saw it with disability where we jumped from 400 to suddenly 800 and now 1,600. That's when we'll see really significant change.”

REFERENCES


Responding to student diversity – see resource at:
http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum_assessment/pace/resources/effective_curriculum.m/
Introduction/Background

Griffith University is located across 5 campuses within the Brisbane to Gold Coast corridor. It offers more than 300 degrees across five campuses and is home to more than 43,000 students from 131 countries. Griffith is Australia’s ninth largest higher education provider.

Among the values espoused by the university are commitments to:

- Promoting the respect of individual rights and ethical standards
- Participatory decision making and problem solving
- Contributing to a robust, equitable and environmentally sustainable society
- Recognising and valuing diversity

The goals of the 2013-2017 Griffith University Strategic Plan and Griffith 2020 strategy are led by a desire to place students at the centre of all educational activities, and to be responsive to student needs. It states that:

Griffith has a long-standing tradition of providing access to students who did not previously have an open path to a university education. This includes students who are first in their family to study at a university, students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and mature age students. Griffith has been a national leader in outreach programs, such as Uni-Reach, that encourages students from low-SES backgrounds to aspire to university study. It has a national reputation in its support programs for students with a disability.

Within these goals Griffith University also aspires to “prepare work-ready graduates with the capacity to play an influential role in the world”.

Context

The focus of this case study is within the Griffith Business School (GBS) located within Griffith University. Griffith Business School offers an extensive range of business degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate level. GBS has a profile of nearly 8,000 full-time equivalent enrolments across 15 identified discipline areas, including Asian and international business, management, marketing, human resources, tourism and hotel management, and economics. The GBS offers work-integrated learning opportunities across all its programs, with a dedicated Work-Integrated Learning director employed by the GBS to lead WIL courses that service a range of discipline areas. Particular focus has been provided in this case to the experience of WIL within the following undergraduate degree programs:

- Bachelor of Business
- Bachelor of International Business
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of International Tourism and Hotel Management
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Area of study</th>
<th>WIL Component</th>
<th>WIL Entry Hurdles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Business</td>
<td>Comprehensive business degree program with 10 majors available to students</td>
<td>Work Integrated Learning Internship Program (domestic placements) And</td>
<td>Restricted to students with a GPA higher than 5.5 on a 7-point scale, and following a successful interview with the WIL Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Global Mobility Internship (international placements)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 credit point (one course equivalent) And 20 credit point (two course equivalent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>Accounting, finance, financial planning and economics.</td>
<td>10 credit point internships available in the areas of accounting, finance and economics (AFE)</td>
<td>GPA entry hurdle of 5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of International Business</td>
<td>Critical business skills and knowledge with an international perspective, and develop an understanding of the social, cultural and political dimensions of global business</td>
<td>Work Integrated Learning Internship Program (domestic placements) And</td>
<td>Restricted to students with a GPA higher than 5.5 on a 7-point scale, and following a successful interview with the WIL Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Global Mobility Internship (international placements)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 credit point (one course equivalent) And 20 credit point (two course equivalent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of International Tourism and Hotel Management</td>
<td>Hospitality and tourism management (NB: this is a new program emerging from the former Bachelor of Hotel Management)</td>
<td>10 credit point, capstone course which uses simulation software to support students in applying their knowledge to the management of a simulated tourism environment + opportunity to participate in GBS WIL Internship Program (NB: in the former degree students were able to engage in a 10 credit course consisting of 150 hours of work placement, or non-credit bearing enrolment in 250 hours of industry experience)</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Enrolments

The following presents a summary of enrolment data for students within the above identified programs, with percentage enrolments presented for various identifiable diversity groupings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=</th>
<th>FEMA</th>
<th>LE</th>
<th>&lt; 20</th>
<th>&gt; 30</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>NESB</th>
<th>SES Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBS Undergraduate Total</td>
<td>7428</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Business</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of International Business</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of International Tourism and Hotel Management</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evident in the table above is a high representation of non-English speaking background (NESB) students, which is reflective of the high rates of international students in these programs. International students are largely drawn to the three programs of Commerce, International business, and Tourism and Hotel Management. Within these programs there are also only small representations of older students, with Commerce (9%) being the only program close to the average (11%) across the GBS. The majority of students were aged in the bracket of 20 – 30, and as this was a measure of the entire cohort this is reflective of the majority of students enrolling from school, or shortly afterwards (therefore being 20 or 21 in the final years), and with few mature-aged students in these cohorts. Within the Bachelor of Business there are high levels of students from middle-SES measures, which is indicative of the representation of students in the local area around the university. Within Commerce and International Business there are higher representations of high-SES students which tends to reflect the nature of the programs which are more attractive to students from high-SES backgrounds due to family backgrounds and parent professional experiences, as well as desires to work internationally.
The student voice

Within the survey of students a total of 23 responses were provided by students who identified as being from Griffith University. All students studied within the Griffith Business School with the following graph showing the spread of responses from the three discipline areas of accounting, finance and economics (AFE); business; and hotel management. [These discipline areas related generally to Commerce, Business and Tourism and Hotel Management programs, but are used as generic representations of the general business study areas.] These results represent only a very small sample of students enrolled in these programs. Therefore, the data here is presented as a description of the survey results, and not as a representation of the overall experience of the GBS.

Across the respondents there were 13 students who identified as coming from an AFE discipline, 2 from business, and 8 from hotel management. Of these respondents, 10 students identified as male, 11 students identified as female and 2 students did not respond. Of this group 14 students stated they were international, and 9 students were domestic. Within the group the majority (n=19) could be identified as being school-leavers (i.e. under the age of 24 at the time of the survey), and the breakdown across various identified equity groups is represented in the graph below.

![Graph showing respondent demographic groups]

**Figure 1. Griffith University respondent demographic groups**

All respondents from Griffith University were currently undertaking, or had recently undertaken, a WIL placement. In response to rating particular factors as contributing to their success on a 5-point Likert scale (with ‘5’ being very significant), these respondents identified that the following factors significantly contributed to their success in their participation in their WIL placement:

- The suitability of the placement to future career paths (3.65)
- Level of acceptance of diversity in the workplace (3.61)
- The length of the placement (3.52)
- Flexibility of work placement commitments (3.52)
- Amount of time required per week (3.39)
These factors, and the level of importance of each, are typical of what was expected from a young cohort with high representation of international students. For these cohorts it is expected that their focus is future-orientated towards career aspirations, and they do not face the same demands with regards to time commitments as older students with other commitments would. However, it is interesting to note that this sample did still seek out greater flexibility around commitments, which some have suggested is reflective of the demands of the wider generation.

Factors of costs associated with the placement, and not unexpectedly access to childcare, and accessibility of the workplace were not rated as highly with regards to significance on successful outcomes. These outcomes were highly gendered with the female student with children identifying that the factors of flexibility, location and childcare were highly significant, whilst the male student with children rated these as either neutral or not significant.

Whilst this sample is very small, there is a suggestion that the experience of different factors for success may be dependent on the gender and personal circumstances of students. These results are indicative of what is expected across the cohort with a large representation of younger students without children being evident in the GBS.

**The voice of academic and professional staff**

The WIL environment, from a student perspective, is managed from several positions within the university. Firstly students identify with the course coordinator, which for most students within the GBS is the WIL Director. Supporting the role of WIL Director are two support and administrative WIL Coordinators, who have a more direct role in sourcing and organising placements, as well as in supplementing the ongoing support for students’ welfare across the semester. A student is also supported by the University Equity and Access Services, and also by the Careers and Employment Service. Interviews were undertaken across these different roles and functions to understand the perspective of staff across the University.

With the large proportion of international students within the business program it was anticipated that interviewees would report challenges that primarily related to the experiences of these students. Of those interviewed from within the School this was the case; however, interviews with staff with a university-wide focus presented a broader perspective on the challenges of diversity and inclusion.

The challenges identified within the experience of academics and support staff from the GBS focused on the balance between maintaining university reputation / risk management and the support for students within the University’s ethos. For a number of years the university has undertaken a concerted effort to increase student participation in WIL experiences, and the GBS has not been an exception. With the revised course structures being implemented recently and a new campaign to attract students there are increased levels of participation. However, participation is restricted to those students who have demonstrated academic success; i.e. have a GPA greater than 5.5.
What seems to be happening is that the word is getting out that, for the better students, if they get their GPA, there really is a good opportunity for them to get in, and there's a much better chance of them getting a job, and there is. The GPA hurdle for entry is creating a barrier to full participation in the GBS courses. However, this is not seen as problematic within the School, as this competitive process is reflective of the experience of students in the workplace (or the ‘real world’), and also supports the other objective of reputation management. This selection process is also justified by there being other opportunities, such as a university-wide community internship course, with lower entry requirements, but also poorer employment outcomes.

[The GPA hurdle] does exclude a number of students, but I don't think it necessarily excludes them because of disability. It might, but there are other options. So we're not saying you can't do an internship it's just that these courses are geared at the higher levels. To get into university is a selective process.

However, there is acknowledgement that these “selective processes” are biased and may prevent some students from succeeding, but support others. In a crude manner one interviewee noted, acknowledging the sexist nature of business culture:

*If you’re blonde, good looking and female, you’re much more likely to get a placement with some organisations than others.*

This quote, while acknowledged by the interviewee as inherently offensive, highlighted the dominant attitude in many workplaces which are led by white middle-class males, who perpetuate sexist and racist attitudes, whether consciously or sub-consciously, in the selection of colleagues, and therefore students for internships. This insight affirms the challenge of the university in responding to the demands of businesses which perpetuate these inequalities, where there is competing pressure between finding ‘suitable’ placements and maintaining an ethical position.

Within the experience of hotel management, where there is no GPA hurdle, but still a selection process, this issue is conceptualised more around the management of student expectations. As one interviewee stated:

*A number of our students positioned themselves at the high-end five-star hotels. They wanted to get experience in these properties. Of course, when you start setting your expectations at that level, they've got to also understand that the expectations that the industry has at those five-star hotels are going to be higher than a lower level hotel as well.*

For this interviewee the issue was not so much to do with GPA and academic outcomes, particularly in the hospitality industry, but was to do with “how the student presents themselves, so whether that be verbally, through their written communication skills, through their presentation, their general eagerness, willingness to learn”.

For international students discrimination was identified by all staff, with push back from a range of organisations occurring in the selection of interns.
There is an inherent racism in Australia, and there's no doubt about that. I think that's probably played a bit of a part in some cases. There's also some reticence to take on - and this is not a racial thing, it's just a communication thing - a reticence to take on people who don't speak fluently, who can't communicate.

One interviewee captured this sentiment, with the proposal of trying to locate in sympathetic organisations.

If their English is poor, then they probably won't get into the program unless we can find a placement for them with a Chinese company or an Indian company or whatever it might be. ... I don't want to put them into a position where they're just not going to cope. ... if we take them and put them into an organisation and it's a complete disaster for them, that's a lot worse than not doing the program.

The primary concern, as expressed by staff who were interviewed, was for the success and welfare of the students in their WIL experience. Within this framing there was a general acceptance of the barriers and hurdles of accessing WIL placements, and acknowledgment that these prevented students from accessing particular opportunities. However, the staff were also thinking of ways around these barriers to still allow the student to engage with a WIL experience. There was, though, not a lot of desire to change or challenge these barriers. Instead there is a general acceptance of their existence as being a given fact to deal with.

Further there was a dominant view of a need to ensure consistency and quality that created inherent internal barriers to student access and achievement. As one interviewee stated in response to consideration of accommodation students with disabilities:

I don't think it's something you could just roll into the existing courses and say, here it is. I don't think that would work. But I think you could put together some specific opportunities for students who fell into that affected group and find places for them.

This insight highlights the somewhat unspoken desire, and necessity, to avoid flexibility in courses, which creates new demands on staff to be able to properly manage the experiences. As this interviewee went on to say: “[managing disability] is a complex area, and an area that requires very specific time allocations and skills”. At the core of the issues identified by the interviewees was a feeling of not having the necessary skills and capacities to be able to manage properly issues of diversity and inclusion within a WIL experience. Other interviewees also acknowledged that more support could be provided, especially with international students, to develop resumes, prepare for interviews, and actively seek opportunities in the workplace. The complexity of this context is founded in the accessibility and integration of key services to support students. Evident across the University are many quality examples of support and engagement with students, but the persistent challenge is communicating these opportunities and connecting staff and students into these.
Improving practice

As one student commented, as advice to the university:

*University is made for the single adult living at home. It is expected that your first year out of high school you immediately have the ability to self-manage and self-study. I found letting my lecturers know that I was a single parent and at work full time helpful for when I needed extra time or help.*

And as an international student commented:

*I am an international student from South Korea. I think one of the difficulty of work placement is communication skills with native speaker as well as veteran in workplace. But, as long as you have a positive attitude towards your internship commitment. People will help you go through such program without many difficulties.*

In these two quotes it can be seen the desire for a respect for diversity amongst students, and for the flexibility of the university (and workplace) to account for the competing challenges of the students, but also the importance of students taking the lead in managing this flexibility through positivity and motivation. Such constructs also emerged in the interviews undertaken with university staff.

There is a pressing need within the approaches to WIL within business to account for this increasing diversity. It could be contested that the required GPA hurdle entry requirements may have an effect on reducing representation from diverse cohorts, and this was acknowledged within some interviews. However, it was also acknowledged that it was important to ensure that only quality students were eligible for placement so as to avoid reputational risk to the university.

It is these competing priorities (respect for student diversity verse fear of reputational risk), within a context dominated by business frameworks of thinking around competition and selection, that creates the complex challenges evident in responding to diverse students within the GBS WIL programs.