

Providing feedback to students undertaking Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

Employers gain many benefits from engaging with students for WIL placements or projects during their studies including access to fresh ideas, current knowledge and a talent pool for recruitment. Students also benefit in numerous ways from these real world experiences and from their engagement with you. Informal and formal feedback, review meetings and coaching activities provide opportunities for students to reflect with you on their performance, professionalism and career goals, which is valuable to their ongoing learning and development.

Employing coaching strategies can assist students to consider and reflect on their own emerging knowledge and skills. Useful strategies for coaching¹ you might employ include:

- Asking open and closed questions to support students to reflect on their performance. Good open questions start with 'how' or 'what' (e.g. How could you ..., What other options)
- Using active listening skills to assist creative and positive thinking (e.g. maintaining eye contact and open body language, waiting until others have finished speaking before contributing)
- Summarising and paraphrasing to help reflect back on what has been said in order to check for understanding. This is particularly useful when students are reflecting on a situation, task or challenge.

Constructive informal and formal feedback

When providing specific feedback consider how you might:

- Describe the student's performance with specific examples, which assists to highlight strengths and clearly communicate areas for improvement
- Be developmental in providing an amount of information that can be listened to and acted upon in a reasonable manner
- Focus on aspects of their work or behaviour that can be changed
- Be timely in that the student has an opportunity to act upon feedback during the placement or project.

Interim and Final Review meetings

Conducting more formal interim and final review meetings are also valuable. It is good to plan the date and time of these meetings with your student as part of the WIL planning process. Below are some tips for conducting successful interim review meetings.

- Advise the student about the intention and length of the meeting and request them to bring examples of their work with them
- Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the student's work in advance
- Ask the student to self assess their own performance or progress on their project prior to meeting
- Early in the meeting encourage the student to share their self-evaluation and add your own comments where relevant
- Work with the student to develop concrete strategies for the student to improve specific areas and ask them to document this and provide to you.

As the placement or project draws to a close, it is good practice to arrange a final review meeting with the student. During the review, you can use questions similar to those below together with your student to reflect back on their experience and learning.

- What projects/activities have they completed or contributed to?
- What have they learnt and how have they developed over this placement or project?
- What have been their biggest/proudest achievements?
- How well they have met objectives set at the beginning of or during the activity?
- What are their areas of strengths and weaknesses?
- What areas of development they might focus on in future?

¹ Van Niewerburgh, C. (2014). *An introduction to Coaching Skills: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage