



Authenticity

Definition

Authenticity means more than just the idea that the student is in the real workplace. There are dimensions to authentic practice being emulated which go way beyond the reality of the workplace situation. These dimensions include appropriate autonomy of practice, associated with appropriate responsibility being taken and assigned, consequentiality of the work done, and the relevance of work tasks to the learning objectives and to the organisation. WIL activities should be designed to be as genuine and realistic in function and purpose as possible.

Purpose

Authenticity of the WIL activity is integral to the acquisition of employability skills and connecting theory and practice in workplace contexts. Highly authentic WIL experiences enhance the relevance of the student experience and the application of their studies to employment readiness. Students also feel more engaged if their WIL activity is authentic.

Good practice

Autonomy

Students should be afforded a level of autonomy appropriate to the situation and circumstances. Although there maybe risks associated with giving students inappropriate levels of autonomy in their WIL practice, some areas of practice can afford to expose students to quite high levels of autonomy without incurring undue risks to the students, enterprise or clients. In some disciplines it is not appropriate, nor legal, for students to assume certain levels of autonomy during their WIL activity. The level of autonomy given and assumed should be clearly pre-planned and communicated with students.

Responsibility

As with autonomy, the level of responsibility must be appropriate to the situation. Allowing the student an appropriate degree of responsibility that aligns to their skill development and facilitates further growth and development in relation to employability is challenging. Too little responsibility inhibits the evolution of employability capabilities while too much may be considered a risk to the enterprise. Pre-planning and establishing a shared understanding of the appropriate levels of responsibility are important in getting the level right.

Consequentiality

It is preferential that the work students do during their WIL activities has meaning in the wider organisation or community. There is benefit in thinking about the return-on-investment for an organisation or community resulting from a student's WIL experience and ensuring that there is some worthwhile outcome arising from their activities. Where possible, those activities should make a significant contribution, create a substantial artifact or practice change, or make some other useful contribution to the enterprise or to the clients it serves.

Relevance

The WIL activities in which students engage should have relevance both to the organisation and to the student's learning and acquisition of graduate capabilities. When deciding what should count towards high-quality authenticity, engagement with industry and the community is recommended at the design phase to ensure appropriate breadth, depth and relevance is given to the design of the WIL activity.

Role of stakeholders

Universities WIL practitioners should:

- Engage and negotiate collaboratively with industry and community partners to ensure that the experience had by students is relevant and authentic and ultimately enhances student work-readiness.
- Devise strategies for monitoring the experience and evaluating stakeholder satisfaction and feedback.
- Ensure curriculum design incorporates opportunities to give feedback to the students on their learning and skill development.
- Review the arrangements with industry and community partners and students so that partnerships are current and relevant to work-readiness and professional-readiness.

Industry partners should:

- Play a key role in co-designing and collaboratively establishing some of the parameters around WIL activities.
- Ensure on-going supervision of students during WIL activities to ensure that they stay on-track to achieve the agreed outcomes and experience the agreed aspects of authenticity.

Students should:

- Be diligent in the reflective appraisal of how the WIL activity is meeting the design and agreed learning outcomes.
- Monitor the degree to which authenticity of the experience and the consequentiality of its outcomes are achieved.