

# Enhancing Courses for Employability

## Summary of report on research into authentic assessments funded by ACEN (2015)

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### Abstract

High graduate employment is an aspiration of Australian universities for their graduates and consequently Universities are adopting a number of strategies to increase the employability skills of students. Included in these strategies is the placement of students in host organisations to enable them to apply and practice their disciplinary learning in workplace contexts as part of study programs. Presently, this opportunity is not available to all students, however, what is generally available are opportunities to develop graduate capabilities such as communication, teamwork and problem solving in learning activities which are embedded in their courses to complement disciplinary knowledge and skills. More recently, these non-placement Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities, often referred to as authentic assessments, are being adopted to expand the employability development opportunities for students. These include applied and authentic learning activities and assessments, which authentically emulate workplace practice and/or enable students to interact directly with workplace personnel. Presented here is a summary of an ACEN-funded research-in-action project that investigated 1,500 assessments from 40 courses across four faculties at Deakin University to determine the nature and extent to which authentic work-related assessments were embedded in courses. The summary includes the findings of the research; the development of an authentic assessment framework and typology; a proposed model for scaffolding authentic assessments across a course and recommendations for further action.

**Keywords:** Work Integrated Learning, typology, authentic assessment, non-placement WIL

## 1. Introduction

High graduate employability is an aspiration of all Australian universities as well as their graduates. The *2014 Australian Graduate Survey* (Graduate Careers Australia, 2014) reported that 68% of Australian graduates were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees. A further 20% were working in part-time or casual positions while continuing to seek full-time employment, and the remaining 12% who were not working were still seeking full-time employment at the time of the survey. These full-time employment rates have dropped by 8% since 2010 and by nearly 13% since 2005. Nevertheless, the news is more encouraging on a mid- to long-term basis, where for example, the full-time employment rate increased to 90% for 2010 graduates, an increase of 14%, three years post-graduation. (Graduate Careers Australia, 2014).

The picture at Deakin University, as indicated in the *June 2014 University Reviews*, is that 58% of graduates were in full-time employment, 20% in further study, and 22% in neither. For a comparative perspective the recent figures for other universities in Victoria generally present a similar picture for students who are not in full-time employment, though there is some variance for those who are in full-time employment and full-time study. Respectively the figures show:

- Australian Catholic University 69% in full-time employment and 15% in full-time study;
- Federation University 68% and 15%;
- La Trobe University 59% and 23%;
- Melbourne University 49% and 37%;
- RMIT 60% and 18%;
- Swinburne University of Technology 66% and 12%; and
- Victoria University 61% and 17%.

These figures serve as a significant incentive for universities to increase the numbers for the full-time employment of graduates and reduce the numbers for those who are unemployed, underemployed or not pursuing further study.

Deakin University has responded to this situation with a renewed commitment to increasing the employability of its graduating students as expressed in Deakin's *LIVE the Future: Agenda 2020*. (2012). Deakin:

... promises to educate learners for the jobs and skills of the future (graduate employability) through courses enhanced for highly personal, engaging and relevant learning experiences (premium cloud and located learning).

Furthermore, Deakin aims to “empower learners for the jobs and skills of the future” by:

. ... providing students with the knowledge, skills and opportunities required to obtain meaningful employment in their chosen field, ensuring courses are enhanced to enable students to evidence Graduate Learning Outcomes and developing internships and employment opportunities for students at Deakin.

Among Deakin's approaches to achieving the goal of increased employment prospects for its students is to offer strong and engaging courses (undergraduate and graduate degree programs) on campus and off campus, that advance students' knowledge and skills in their disciplinary fields as well as developing their generic employability skills, Deakin's Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs). The key implementation strategies for preparing students for jobs and skills of the future, initiated in 2012 as part of the *LIVE Agenda* are:

- “1. *Course enhancements*: enhancing graduate employability through assessment, work-integrated and career development learning
  2. *Premium cloud and located learning*: personal, engaging and relevant experiences in the cloud, on campuses, at learning centres and industry sites; and
  3. *Staff capacity building*.”
- (Deakin University, 2012)

Course enhancement, initially known as ‘The Sandpit’ was designed as the process by which all courses at Deakin were to be reviewed and renewed to meet higher education standards such as those mandated by Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and professional accrediting bodies. The course enhancement process was comprised of four stages: 1) Scoping, 2) Assessment and Learning Design 3) Resourcing and 4) Evaluation. The guiding principles for the process were to specifically improve:

- Course engagement for students through the provision of intellectually challenging and engaging cloud and located assessment, resources and experiences;
  - Course effectiveness as measured by outcomes such as graduate satisfaction and employability;
  - Course efficiency which ensured sustainability and affordability.
- (Deakin University: 2014)

Designing and improving courses to be intellectually challenging, engaging and effective for students was seen as a critical for increasing graduate employability skills and graduate employment. Through the process of enhancement courses were to be reviewed to ensure constructive alignment between learning outcomes and assessments and to provide for the development of digital resources to support these. Considerable emphasis was to be given to embedding a greater number and variety of assessments that were authentic in relation to work-relatedness. These assessments were aimed at broadening the array of assessment experiences for students who sometimes only encountered essays, exams and quizzes in their studies, to include learning activities that they would likely experience in their professional lives such as industry-based projects, interviews with practitioners, and performances and exhibits in the community. Whilst it is recognised that assessments that measure and analyse disciplinary theories and concepts have a critical role in academic learning, it is equally important to offer students authentic assessment opportunities to apply and contextualise this knowledge in a range of scenarios, especially work environments.

Authenticity in assessment at Deakin is vested in the nature of the assessment task which has one or both of the following characteristics; 1) authenticity of the task performed in emulating tasks undertaken in professional practice; and/or, 2) proximity in which the task is performed proximal to the “workplaces or spaces, physical or digital, where professional work occurs” (Oliver, 2012). Authentic assessments are aimed at increasing the engagement of students in their learning; enabling them to apply disciplinary knowledge to contemporary professional practice; and providing a vehicle by which to advance, reflect and collect evidence of the development of Graduate Learning Outcomes. Examining the degree and types of authentic assessments that have been integrated into courses at Deakin as part of the course enhancement process was the focus of this project.

## 2. Literature review

A review of the literature on employability, graduate attributes, authentic assessments and WIL demonstrated that the key principle for preparing students for their prospective careers was to provide them with opportunities in which to apply their disciplinary learning in contexts which they are likely to encounter in their professional lives so that they can develop the requisite mix of applied disciplinary and employability skills.

The aim of increasing employment prospects for graduates has led universities to seek new and increased ways to equip students with the employability skills much sought after by employers. For the past decade-and-a-half employers have been calling for increased job-ready skills among new university graduates, their prospective employees, to better meet the changing needs of their /industry/sector/profession. Industry generally views graduates as being technically competent in their specialist field of study, but less so in workplace skills such as teamwork and interpersonal communication skills (Brimble & Freudenberg 2010; McLennan & Keating 2008; Patrick et al., 2008). In 2001, the former Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the National Skills Training Authority funded the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) to conduct research into the generic skills of recent graduates that were viewed as high priorities by employers and to assess if the seven Mayer Key Competencies developed in 1992 needed revision. The findings of the ACCI/BCA (2002) research recommended the adoption of the following graduate attributes: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning, and technological literacy. Guided by the DEST report most, if not all, universities began to formally adopt the integration of a customised group of generic and transferable skills into their curricula (although this has been the practice in vocational education since the early 1990s). Deakin focused on fostering the following Graduate Learning Outcomes in its students: disciplinary knowledge; communication; digital literacy; critical thinking; problem solving; teamwork; self-management and global citizenship.

In recent times, however, strong indications show that graduate capabilities like these will no longer be sufficient to prepare graduates for the rapidly and ever-changing labour market. Recent reports of market and workforce trends such as Committee for Economic Development of Australia's (2015) and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2014) indicated that jobs of the future are changing more rapidly and unpredictably than they have in the past due to technological changes and disruption. Oliver (2015) explores these new patterns of work and suggests what this might portend for universities. For instance, Oliver (2015) adapted Yorke's (2006) definition of employability by proposing that employability means:

that students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (p.63)

This further implies a pressing need for universities to do more and to therefore do WIL differently. Many universities already have a strong foundation in embedding graduate capabilities into the curriculum to enable students to become more work-ready or career-progressive, and some are poised to become even more innovative. A major approach for increasing students' employability capabilities has been through WIL, a pedagogy that essentially "integrate[s] theory with practice of work within a purposely designed curriculum" (Patrick, Peach, Pocknee et al, 2008, p.iv). The increasingly robust practice and scholarship in this field demonstrates the wide range of WIL approaches that have been adopted (Billett, 2000; Coll & Chapman, 2000; Boud, 2001; Yorke, 2006; Eraut & Hirsch, 2007; McLennan & Keating, 2008); and Orrell, J. 2011).

Predominant among these approaches are placements of one type or other including internships, practicums, clinical rotations, industry-based learning (IBL), sandwich years and co-operative education (McLennan & Keating, 2008; Smith, Ferns & Russell, 2014; Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015). Despite the value to both employers and students, the percentage of students afforded the opportunity of a placement remains relatively low. Some disciplines have a strong tradition of student placements such as medicine, law, and education while others offer few or no such opportunities (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2009; Hains-Wesson & Campbell, 2014; Office of Chief Scientist, 2015). For this reason, as well as the increasing competitiveness amongst existing placement seekers, newer forms of WIL are gaining appeal. Non-placement WIL such as industry and community projects, problem-based learning, simulated and/or online workplace environments and a host of other authentic assessments, is at the forefront of this thinking and practice (Hains-Wesson, 2013; Hains-Wesson & Campbell, 2014).

Placements are a natural home for authentic assessments but these types of assessments can also take place in the classroom or in activities that are linked to but not located in workplaces. Herrington, Oliver and Reeves (2003) posit that offering students “complex tasks to complete over a period of time with opportunities for reflection and collaboration” (pp.62-63) create authentic real world relevance and can be offered outside of placements. The numerous types of non-placement WIL that are emerging for students are often referred to as authentic assessments because they meet the critical criteria of offering students the opportunity to apply their disciplinary learning to work-based scenarios. However, labelling an assessment as ‘authentic’ has not been without its critics. Some educators take the view that because the word authentic means ‘real’ any well-constructed assessment that assesses what it purports to assess is real. Others view authentic assessments as those that reflect real world tasks. Early proponents of authentic assessments, such as Wiggins (1990) held that traditional assessments such as standardised tests, often multiple choice, which relied on students recognising, recalling or “plugging in” what was learned out of context did not necessarily aid student learning. In contrast, he believed that authentic tasks that involved challenges and roles that help students rehearse for the complex ambiguities of the “game of adult and professional life” supported the needs of learners. Others such as Newmann and Wehlage (1993) Birnbaum (1996), Cumming & Maxwell (1999), and Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, (2004) have furthered the research on the value of authentic assessments. Gulikers et al (2004) viewed authentic assessments as distinguished by the following five dimensions: 1) the assessment task, 2) the physical context of the task, 3) the social context of the task, 4) the assessment outcome or form, and 5) the assessment criteria. They held that the tasks must appropriately reflect the competency that needs to be assessed; the content must represent real-life problems of the knowledge domain assessed; and the thinking processes used in real life to solve the problem are also required by the assessment task.

Also of this view, Rule (2006) in her broad review of authentic assessment in higher education, defined authentic learning and assessments as those “that engage students in real-world inquiry problems involving higher order thinking skills with an authentic audience beyond the classroom” (p6). The four characteristics that she found common to authentic activities: 1) involve real-world problems that mimic the work of professionals; 2) include open-ended inquiry, thinking skills, and metacognition; 3) engage students in discourse and social learning; and 4) empower students through choice to direct their own learning. This last aspect very much accords with David Boud’s (2009) view of assessment. He believes that students should be aided to develop proficiency in making complex judgements about their own work and that of others and in making decisions in the uncertain and unpredictable circumstances in which they will find themselves in the future. Boud asserts that assessment activities should not only address the immediate needs of certification or feedback to students on their current learning, but also contribute in some way to their prospective lifelong learning. Students are not passive learners, but rather active learners who play a generative role instead of responsive role in their learning. He maintains that graduates in the workforce will not, in general, be taking examinations or writing academic essays, rather they will be reflecting on what counts as good work and how they will be able to discern whether they are producing it or not. (Boud 1999; 2001). Other researchers such as Moon (1999; 2006), Ryan (2013) also advocate the use of reflective practice as integral to developing employability skills. In fact, reflective practice at university may be seen as the beginning of the practice of continuing professional development, which is a major part of work performance and development. Ash & Clayton (2004), Ryan (2013) and Rogers (2001) are proponents of teaching and assessing reflective learning on a whole-of-course approach. Similarly, the reflective practice studies of Bain et al. (2002); Mabry (1998); Power et al. (2002); and Stupans & Owen (2009) suggest that scaffolded reflection enables students to develop better thinking and action capabilities, both necessary skills for preparation for work.

It is important to note that authentic assessments, while viewed as an enormous contributor to student learning and preparation for their working life are not being proposed as the sole instrument for such learning. A degree in higher education ideally has a complement of both the more traditional conceptually-based assessments and the authentic work-related assessments. As argued by Pally (2001); and Durkin & Main (2002) exams and tests, especially in disciplines where mastery of terms and definitions is critical such as medicine and law, may be effective methods of learning and measurement, particularly in first year. Hocker & Brossell (1986) similarly defend the value of the essay. Facilitating students’ ability to think deeply, analyse critically and engage vigorously in the discourse of their disciplines is integral to higher education. One of the things that differentiates higher education from vocational education is the depth and breadth of disciplinary knowledge and concepts, and the intentional development of students’ analytical and research abilities. These differences are reflected in the Australian Qualifications Framework’s (AQF) taxonomy where the curricula standards of all levels of post-compulsory education are delineated (AQF, 2013). The standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees cover a deep and broad level of disciplinary knowledge; application of this knowledge to a range of scenarios; and development of skills and abilities commensurate with the level of study. AQF stipulates the need

for students to be able to develop and evidence a strong cognitive foundation in their disciplinary field as well as creative, technical, communication, interpersonal and generic skills.

### 3. Research aim and methodology

This study aimed at examining to what degree authentic assessments were offered in a sample of courses at Deakin University during 2014-2015. Ascertaining the type and range of authentic assessments offered to students would inform the University on the existence of good and exemplary practice as well as what changes and improvements might be needed to increase students' employability skills. An ideal situation would be where students in all disciplines could be offered opportunities to undertake multiple and varied authentic learning activities and assessments to expose them to an array of work environments and practices for job-readiness and career-progression. (Reeders, 2000, Orrell & Bowden, 2003; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick & Cragolini, 2004; Hains-Wesson & Campbell, 2014). The research which complied with University ethics processes had its origin in a major course review at the University which was aimed at increasing the number and type of authentic assessments offered to students in all courses. It was supported with funding from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN).

The methodology employed was an action-in-research framework, which was well suited to the evaluation of curriculum design (Stenhouse, 1975; Carr & Kemmus 1986; McAteer, 2013). The action-in-research was comprised of a mixed method (Walter, 2010) where the quantitative component of the study examined assessments in 40 courses (ten from each Faculty) via a desk top audit of Unit Study Guides. Fifteen hundred individual assessments were examined and grouped according to assessment type (n=1500). The qualitative component of the study then provided for the analyses of the types of authentic assessments more closely. In addition, a student focus group was conducted to elicit students' perceptions of their experiences with authentic assessments in their courses at Deakin University.

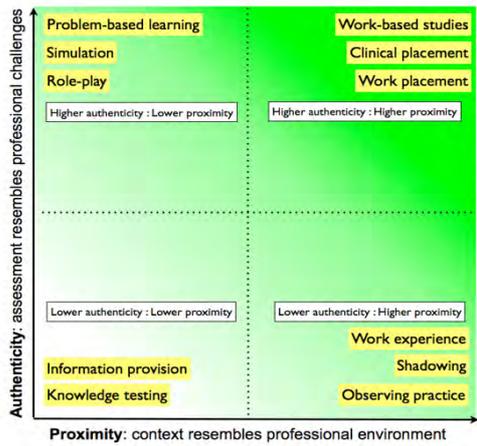
As the action-in-research process was in progress it was deemed beneficial to amend the university's existing WIL typology (Oliver, 2012, see Figure 1). The method of amending the typology included critically analysing WIL typologies from the literature (Bosco and Ferns, 2012; Rowe, Winchester-Seeto and Mackawa, 2012); testing the efficacy of the proposed typology against a sample of assessments; validating the proposed typology with assessments across disciplines; and reflecting on and reviewing the new typology during regular face-to-face meetings with critical friends. A table of assessment examples was also developed to augment the amended typology.

#### 3.1 Collection of data

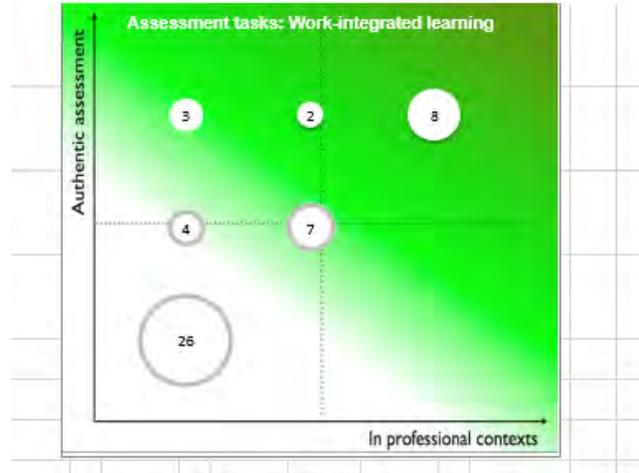
The data bank was comprised of ten courses of study from each of the four Faculties at Deakin, and selected from as many Schools as possible. The total of 40 courses consisted of both undergraduate and graduate courses and served as case study samples rather than a representative sample. Every assessment in all of the units in each course was then examined. This amounted to almost 1,500 assessments being interrogated in courses which had undergone the University's course enhancement process. The plan was then to examine and classify every assessment according to the authenticity-proximity criteria from Deakin's Authentic Assessment framework (see Figure 1). This typology was comprised of quadrants in which the vertical axis reflected the level of authenticity of a learning task in relation to real-world practice and the horizontal axis reflected proximity to the workplace. More specifically the typology defined the criteria as:

- *Authenticity*: more authentic learning and assessment tasks requiring students to work on problems closely associated with professional contexts, and
- *Proximity*: learning experiences that occur in or near real or simulated workplaces and professional contexts (Oliver, 2012)

This typology provided for the classification of learning activities and assessments into the following categories *Low Authenticity-Low Proximity*; *High Authenticity-Low Proximity*; *Low Authenticity-High Proximity*; and *High Authenticity-High Proximity*. Figure 2 has been drawn up as an illustrative example to show how these assessments might be plotted on the matrix.



**Figure 1: Deakin University's Authentic Assessment Framework**



**Figure 2: An Example of Tallies of Assessment Types in a Course**

The example in Figure 2 above illustrates that 26 assessments in the course were deemed to be *Low in Authenticity and Low in Proximity* (LA-LP); four *Medium-Authenticity and Low-Proximity* (MA-LP); three *High-Authenticity and Low-Proximity* (HA-LP); two *High-Authenticity and Medium-Proximity* (HA-MP); seven *Medium-Authenticity and Medium-Proximity* (MA-MP); and eight in the *High-Authenticity and High-Proximity* (HA-HP) category. This indicates that this course (for example) had a balance of theoretical learning with 26 assessments likely to be essays, quizzes and exams, and 24 cases of applied work-related learning assessments.

During the process of plotting assessments on this matrix, it was noted that a considerable number were categorised as *Medium* even though there was not an explicit category for this, Consequently, it was decided that if a *Medium* category for both the Authenticity and Proximity criteria were created this would assist in classifying assessments more accurately. The existing typology was thus amended to accommodate this. (See



Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Expanded Authenticity-Proximity Framework**

The amended typology allowed for a more nuanced approach to capturing the different assessments types. The inclusion of a *Medium* category for both the Authenticity and the Proximity criteria added the following categories: *Low Authenticity–Medium Proximity*, *Medium Authenticity–Medium Proximity*, *Medium Proximity–Low Authenticity* and *Medium-Authenticity- High Proximity*.

The definitions of the Authenticity and Proximity axes were also amended to read:

- *Authenticity*: learning activities and assessments requiring students to work on problems, processes and projects that they may encounter in their professions and produce artefacts reflecting professional practice.
- *Proximity*: learning experiences that occur in real workplaces and professional contexts; in online or live complex simulated workplace environments; and those that enable students to interact directly with industry practitioners or community members on work related activities  
(developed by Kaider, Hains-Wesson & Young, 2015)

These amended definitions of the Authenticity and Proximity criteria were seen to encompass a broader range of assessments. A table of learning activity examples was developed to accompany this framework which provided a little more detail on the assessment types. (See Table 1). Reviewing at the literature on other assessment typologies (Rowe, Winchester–Seeto & Mackawa, 2012), the discovery of Bosco and Ferns’ (2012) Authentic Assessment Framework was particularly pertinent. For one, it similarly classified assessments on a grid, with Authenticity on the Y axis and Proximity on the X. Second, the assessments were gradated on a continuum of activities occurring in the traditional classroom, those in taking place in virtual environments, and those occurring in the workplace. Although the amended typology presented here does not grade the activities in the same way it does grade them on a continuum of learning in regards to when they might be offered in a course. The activities at each year level are explained as follows and are illustrated in Table 1:

- *Introductory WIL* learning activities and assessments offered in the first year introduce students to the world of work and the beginning of their own professional identity and aspirations.
- *Year 2 and 3 WIL* learning activities and assessments afford students the opportunity to design and develop a range of artefacts that reflect practice in their professions; undertake processes characteristics of workplaces; and engage directly with industry/sector/community personnel. This may include learning in complex simulated workplace environments such as studios, moot courts and practice clinics in which students perform all or most of the functions that they would in a real work situation. Students may also be offered opportunities to interact directly with industry and/or community personnel in a client-consultant type relationship that is common in many professions. Additionally, direct interaction may also take the form of feedback from practitioners on student work; Q&As; panels; and discussion groups, the essence of which students ideally integrate into summative assessments.
- *Placements* reflect a long tradition of on-the-job learning especially valued when they complement academic learning and can be offered at different stages within a course. Different sorts of placements, varying in length, time offered, paid or unpaid, intensity and course-specific make up the placement landscape. Ideally, other forms of authentic learning activities would be scaffolded to these placements.

It is important to note that assessments which fall into the *Low-Authenticity* and *Low-Proximity* category are not WIL or authentic work-related assessments. They focus primarily on cognitively-based disciplinary knowledge, concepts, theories and critical analyses and assessments usually take the form of essays, theses and examinations. Although they form an integral and vital part of higher education and balance theory with practice, they are not WIL.

Table 1: Table of Authentic Learning Activities and Assessment Examples

INTRODUCTORY WIL	2nd & 3rd YEAR WIL	WIL PLACEMENTS
<p> <b>High Authenticity Low Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simple simulations</b> (online or live) without industry involvement</li> <li>• <b>Case studies</b> without industry involvement</li> <li>• <b>Studios</b> without industry involvement</li> <li>• Authentic <b>simulation</b> such as full lab/prac/design work with multiple responsibilities and contingencies but without industry involvement</li> </ul> <p> <b>Medium Authenticity Low Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Role plays</b> without industry involvement</li> <li>• <b>Career Development Learning</b> activities such as composing resumes, job search activities, interview practice</li> </ul> <p> <b>Low Authenticity Medium Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workplace checklist</b> without analysis</li> <li>• <b>Film or video</b> of workplace or work practices (with permission)</li> </ul> <p> <b>Lower Authenticity High Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Job shadowing</b> with minimal or no tasks</li> <li>• <b>Observation</b> of workplaces or work practices without detailed reporting</li> </ul>	<p> <b>High Authenticity Medium Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Complex simulated face-to-face workplace environments with industry involvement</b> such as moot courts; extensive role play simulations</li> <li>• <b>Comprehensive simulated online workplace environments with industry involvement</b></li> <li>• <b>Studios or practice clinics with industry involvement</b> e.g. design studio or performing arts studio working with the industry and community; or allied health clinics staffed by students with industry supervision</li> <li>• <b>Laboratory days</b> in which students plan, design, set-up and conduct experiments alongside multiple responsibilities and contingencies and which involves industry</li> <li>• <b>Projects for organisations</b> e.g. individual or student teams undertake consulting projects for industry personnel</li> <li>• <b>Problem-based learning with/in organisations</b> e.g. students work on solutions for real problems for real clients, similar to above</li> <li>• <b>Community-based projects</b> similar to industry projects, but with the involvement of not-for-profit/community sector</li> <li>• <b>Capstone units</b> in which students undertake a significant work-applied project for an organisation, similar to problem-based or project-based learning but integrating key learnings of whole course in analysis and reporting</li> </ul> <p> <b>Medium Authenticity High Proximity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workplace audits</b> with involvement by industry</li> <li>• <b>Job shadowing</b> and undertaking of selected tasks with input from industry/sector</li> <li>• <b>Field trips</b> and work observations with direct interaction with industry resulting in analysis and reporting</li> </ul> <p> <b>Medium Proximity Medium Authenticity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q and A with industry</b> in which</li> </ul>	<p> <b>High Authenticity High Proximity</b></p> <p>Work placements of various types, which can take place in any year, or at times, all years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Internships</b>, practicums, co-op years, clinical placements, Industry Based Learning (IBL)</li> <li>• <b>Industry-based (or community-based) projects</b> undertaken in the workplace for a nominal period of time but not a formal placement. Includes industry supervision or feedback</li> <li>• <b>Work Based Learning (WBL)</b> where students are employed in an organisation and specifically fashion their studies around their work with University authorisation and guidance</li> <li>• <b>Service learning</b> where students undertake voluntary work in the not-for-profit sector and which is formally integrated with their studies</li> </ul>

	<p>students prepare, fully participate and integrate responses into assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Industry feedback</b> on student work/presentations which students integrate into assessment</li> <li>• <b>Input or feedback</b> from industry on real case studies or industry projects</li> <li>• <b>Mentoring by industry</b> of student groups/individual students with ensuing student reflection.</li> </ul>	
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This table served as a useful tool for the data collection and analysis stages by expanding on the assessment types. It was also used in discussing types of authentic assessments with students.

### 3.3 Student Focus Group

The researchers conducted a student focus group discussion to elicit student views on authentic assessments. Ethics approval was secured and the session was recorded with written student consent. Student participants were thanked for their involvement with two movie ticket vouchers. At the beginning of the session, each student introduced themselves to the group and identified their discipline area and level of study (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Deakin University Student Focus Group Demographic Information**

Student	Discipline	Female	Male	International/ Domestic	Level of study
1	Education	X		International	International Masters student
2	Sport Science	X		Domestic	Second year
3	Creative Industries		X	Domestic	Second year
4	Health Science	X		Domestic	Third year
5	Arts/Psychology	X		Domestic	First year
6	Information Technology	X		Domestic	Honours graduate
7	Arts/Law		X	Domestic	First year
8	Arts/Communication			Domestic	Masters
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1 International, 7 Domestic</b>	

4.3.3. On completion of the focus group session a research assistant transcribed the recorded information. The participants' identities were removed from the transcript to ensure privacy and minimise bias when reviewing the data. The research team reviewed and analysed the data via a thematic analysis (Walter, 2011). This was undertaken by reviewing the data line by line and grouping students' perceptions into codes. The initial thematic codes were: 1) students' expectations, 2) authenticity of assessments, and 3) learning requirements. The codes were then re-analysed with three themes emerging which were: 1) students' expectations of authenticity, 2) experience with authentic assessments, and 3) requirements for their learning.

## 4. Analysis of Data

In accord with a stringent ethics process at Deakin University, the 40 courses in which the assessments were examined have been de-identified for public reporting. The aggregate tally is reported in Table 3 below and the numbers for each Faculty are shown in Figures 4-7.

Course types and sizes varied and in some Faculties discipline majors were included because of the way in which course disciplines were offered. The courses were examined at different points in time by different researchers and although the amended Authentic Assessment Typology was used in an endeavour to promote consistency in classifications, interpretations on assessment types by the researchers may have varied. Close

moderation of the classifications of assessment types was not included in this study but efforts were made to minimise interrater variability. Only the description of the assessments as they appear in the Unit Guides were examined and it is recognised that these descriptions may not reflect the full nature of the assessment. Assessment descriptions were often comprised of short summaries that did not always include details that necessarily reflected the authenticity-proximity dimensions of the assessment. There was not scope in this project to examine the assessment guidelines provided to students which would have served as a much more accurate source by which to examine assessment details. Therefore, the findings on assessment types can only best be regarded as a very broad indication of what is occurring in a sample of courses in the Faculties. The encouraging news is that all examined courses in all the Faculties contain some authentic assessments with the minimum of 28% reported in one Faculty. When percentages were averaged across all Faculties, authentic assessments represented a ratio of 43% of all assessments though the range spanned from 28% to 63%. One reason for these differences may be because of the nature of course disciplines within Faculties. The study showed that in some Faculties there is a reasonable spread of assessment type it also suggests that there is scope to generally broaden the assessment range in all Faculties. However, the indicative findings of the 40 courses studied showed that generally students are offered an array of authentic learning to assist them in developing employability capabilities. Table 3 provides the aggregate tallies of assessment types for each Faculty and Figures 4-7 demonstrate the breakdown for each Faculty.

**Table 3: Aggregate Numbers of Assessment-Types in Sample of 40 Courses at Deakin**

Faculty	LA-LP	LA-MP	LA-HP	MA-LP	MA-MP	MA-HP	HA-LP	HA-MP	HA-HP	Ratio	% of AuthAssmt
One	111			66			86	22	17	191/111	63%
Two	233			82	9					91/233	28%
Three	237			75			73	9	39	196/237	45%
Four	262	142		4	10	4		1	1	162/262	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>142</b>		<b>227</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>640/843</b>	<b>43%</b>

Key: **H** = High **L** = Low **M** = Medium **A** = Authenticity **P** = Proximity

The purpose of this study was not to present a Faculty comparison on the number or range of authentic assessments, but rather to assemble a suggestive picture of what a sample of courses at Deakin, post-enhancement is showing in regards to these. The ratio of authentic assessments to non-authentic assessments does not necessarily reflect the situation in the whole of each Faculty as the courses are not necessarily representative of the Faculty nor do they correspond with courses from other Faculties, though efforts were made to collect as good a spread across the Faculties as possible. A mix of undergraduate and graduate courses ranging in size and complexity, with majors being counted as course offerings, were selected from each Faculty. A much more rigorous approach in course sampling, investigation and moderation would be recommended if a university-wide audit were to be undertaken.

#### 4.1 Assessment-type distribution in Faculties

In Faculty 1, as illustrated by Figure 4 below, three masters and seven undergraduate courses, selected from all Schools were examined. In three of the undergraduate courses only the major study areas were scanned. As can be seen from the Figure 191 authentic assessments and 111 theoretical assessments were offered in this cohort. The large number of authentic assessments, which exceeds the number of knowledge-based assessments, is likely to have been influenced by the nature of the disciplines within this Faculty. Although the balance of authentic to theoretical assessments differed within each course, on the whole the significant offerings of work-related learning suggests very positive opportunities for students. Most authentic assessments fell into the *Medium* or *High Authenticity* of task category in which they replicated processes or products performed in the workplace or the professions. Although some authentic assessments were positioned in the proximity category there is scope to increase assessments of the type where students are engaged in the workplace or with practitioners.

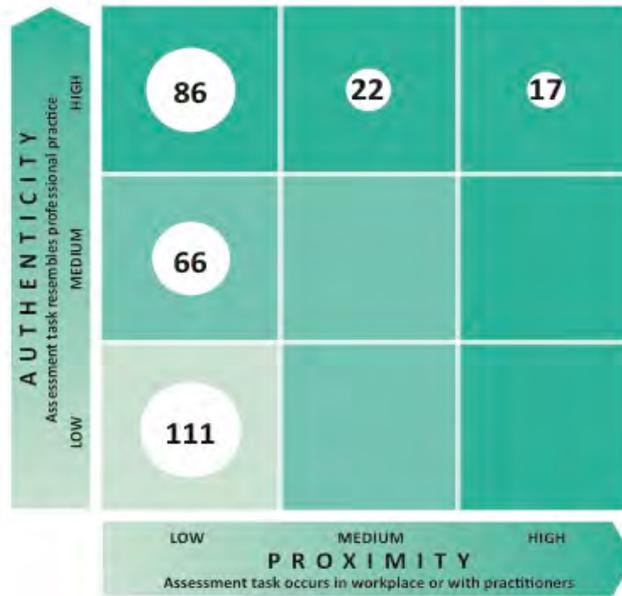


Figure 4: Faculty One: Assessment-Type Distribution



Figure 5: Faculty Two

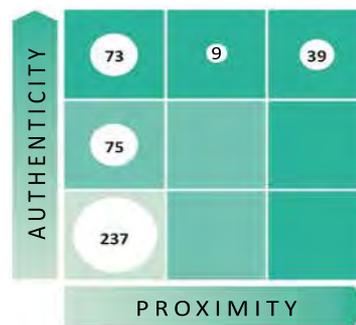


Figure 6: Faculty Three

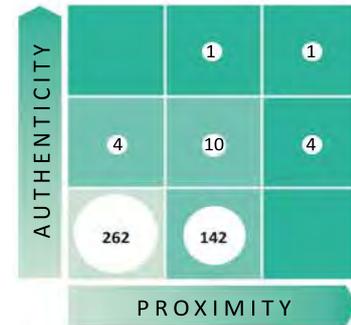


Figure 7: Faculty Four

The figures for Faculties Two, Three, and Four illustrated in Figures 5, 6 and 7 respectively show the distribution of authentic assessments in ten courses for each of these Faculties. Faculty Two in which six undergraduate courses and four majors were examined, offered 91 authentic assessments and 233 theoretical assessments to students. The authentic assessments appeared to fall into a narrow band of *Medium-Authenticity* and *Low-Proximity* dimensions. In Faculty Three seven undergraduate courses and three graduate courses were examined, including several major fields of studies among the undergraduate courses. The number of authentic assessments (196) in this Faculty comes very close to equalling the number of knowledge-based assessments (237). The assessments for Faculty Four in which three masters and seven undergraduate courses from all four Schools were sampled and examined, aggregated 162 authentic assessments and 262 theoretical assessments. This Faculty exhibited the widest spread of authentic assessment types among the Faculties, with assessments falling into all but one category. The category with the highest number of authentic assessments was the *Medium-Authenticity* and *Low-Proximity* group, as was found to be the case in all the other Faculties.

There were a number of reasons for the differences in the spread and number of authentic assessments amongst the Faculties. Looking at these differences in a contextual rather than a comparative sense, the types and tradition of learning among Faculties varies significantly. Experiential learning is very much par for the course in some disciplines, such as the creative arts, education and health and augmenting practice-based learning with work-related contexts is relatively easy. Disciplines too which have a long and strong tradition of offering students placements and work-based projects, such as education, engineering, law and health, also make it relatively easy to integrate additional work-related learning into their courses. On the other hand, there are many

disciplines where placements, project-based learning or other types of authentic assessments are far less common, and at times more challenging to design and deliver.

Another reason for the differences of reported authentic assessment amongst Faculties may have been the timing of when courses were examined. Not all were investigated at the same stage of the university-wide three-year course enhancement cycle, with some being looked at very early in the enhancement process and others much later. The implication of this was that the courses enhanced at a later stage and examined at later stage, may have benefitted from a maturation process that occurred during the cycle.

#### 4.1.1 Discussion

Overall a good representation of authentic assessments was found in the 40 courses sampled at Deakin. Most popular were assessments that were authentic in emulating tasks performed in the workplace or professional practice such as workplace plans, reports on industry issues, briefings, performances, exhibitions, and presentations. Less frequent in all Faculties were assessments high in proximity, and of those that were, placements of one type or other were prominent. Increasing the number of activities proximal to workplaces and workforces would offer students a greater variety of work-related experiences.

However, there are considerable challenges, in some disciplines in particular, for offering learning tasks in which students can interact directly with professional practitioners or undertake tasks in work environments. Usually they are more difficult and time consuming to organise. Considerable time may be required to source an organisation and/or practitioner with whom to collaborate and then design and develop teaching and learning activities that suit both parties. Contractual and legal arrangements may also have to be made between the organisation, student and university. However, the literature is compelling for this type of learning and a number of ways in which authentic assessments may be augmented to afford students increased proximity to the workplace or personnel include:

- conducting interviews with organisational or professional representatives to augment the online simulations or other projects e.g. asking students to interview managers about their leadership styles;
- conducting surveys and interviews with community members e.g. students conducting a survey with a community group about exercise behaviours;
- receiving feedback from organisational representatives on student work e.g. single or multiple representatives from organisations providing feedback to individual students or groups on:
  - reports (perhaps a representative sample);
  - projects;
  - oral presentations;
  - performances or demonstration such as giving injections, teaching practice or arguing a case;
- participating in Q&As with individual or panel organisational personnel (e.g. requiring all students to prepare questions with representative sample asked of guests, and students then being required to reflect upon responses and integrate into summative assessment);
- participating in other types of discussion forums either synchronous or asynchronous between organisational representatives and students (e.g. blogs, wikis, discussion boards, eLive, Google Hangout moderated and assessed by the lecturer);
- engaging with a community of practice comprised of a mix of students and external practitioners in which elements are formally assessed;
- undertaking capstone units in the final year of study in which students have the opportunity to apply and integrate the key learnings of their course in a major project. Ideally this would be a project sourced from industry or community and involve professional practitioners;
- networking with alumni, placement host organisations, research partners and prospective employers (a request identified by the student focus group), offering students formal opportunities to connect.

Another area which has scope for improvement in terms of authentic assessment offerings is to increase reflective practice opportunities for students as it appears not to be widely practised in some disciplines. Boud (2010) and others have indicated that reflective practice is integral to capability development in students, especially for authentic learning tasks. It is also imperative for Career Development Learning (CDL) and developing a professional identity, which accords directly with Deakin Graduate Learning Outcome, Self-Management, because it begins the notion and practice of Continuing Professional Development and lifelong learning while students are still at university.

It is important to offer students an array of authentic and proximal learning activities and assessments but what would be of greater value is if these were to be horizontally and vertically scaffolded over a course of study. The

value of instructional scaffolding (Coulson & Harvey, 2013; Deveraux & Wilson, 2008 and Hughes, 2015) has been recognized at all educational levels, both within units of study and across courses. Scaffolding a variety of assessment types, incremental in depth and complexity, and in authenticity and proximity would offer a progressive learning model for students. In particular, an intended and integrated collection of work-related experiences would avail students with:

- a wide range of tasks in which they learn to design, develop and deliver the types of work and artefacts which they are likely to produce in their professions;
- opportunities to gain experiences in processes which they are likely to undertake in their professions;
- direct engagement with employers, professional representatives, and community;
- opportunities to specifically develop GLOs in multiple academic and work-related contexts.
- progressive and developmental learning through the intentional scaffolding of work-related tasks;
- a rich array of learning experiences which they can collect and curate as evidence of their skills (including discipline-specific knowledge and skills, work-related skills and contextualized GLOs for prospective employers);
- greater opportunities for reflective practice especially because it is integral to CDL and ongoing professional development;
- a cohesive and interrelated package of work-related learning experiences, that has some parity in preparing them for work and would be particularly valuable for those who do not have access to a placement;
- courses that meet the AQF standards of providing students with a balance of theoretical and knowledge-based learning; applied learning; and skills development.

A demonstration model of how discipline-specific authentic learning tasks and complementary authentic CDL tasks might be scaffolded across a course, both horizontally and vertically, to provide students with a comprehensive work-related learning is demonstrated in Table 4 below. This WIL Learning Package demonstrates:

- what type of discipline-specific and CDL-specific authentic assessments might be offered at each year level;
- to which GLOs these authentic assessments might be aligned for development and assessments; and
- how a folio or blog might be used by students to collect and curate evidence of their learning across the duration of their course.

**Table 4: WIL Learning Package: Authentic Assessments Scaffolded Across a Course**

	TRIMESTER 1	TRIMESTER 2	TRIMESTER 3
YEAR 1	<p><b>Students set up Folio, ePortfolio, Blog</b></p> <p><b>Guest speaker</b> from industry/sector. Students prepare questions and analyse guest responses in relation to discipline topic/ project.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>   1 Knowledge   4 Critical Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-Profile</b></li> <li>• <b>Goal setting</b> to identify career and personal goals.</li> <li>• <b>Knowledge, Skills and Abilities audit</b> identifying experience and skills relevant to chosen field.</li> <li>• <b>Inventory of GLOs</b> to identify skill level at beginning of course.</li> </ul> <p><b>GLO</b>   3 Digital Literacy   6 Self-Management</p>	<p><b>Students document learning journey and evidence of skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p><b>Fieldtrip for observation.</b> Students note and analyse observations.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>   1 Knowledge   4 Critical Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of preferred <b>learning style</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Reflective exercise</b> to match learning style with strategies to maximize studies.</li> <li>• <b>Market survey</b> of career options from reputable employment sites.</li> <li>• Examination of <b>jobs ads</b> in sector/industry.</li> <li>• Identification of <b>gaps</b> in Knowledge, Skills and Abilities and development of an action plan to address these.</li> </ul> <p><b>GLO</b>   3 Digital Literacy   6 Self-Management   8 Global Citizenship</p>	<p><b>Students document learning journey and evidence of skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students analyse <b>industry/sector case study</b> and <b>present</b> summary face-to-face or online.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>   1 Knowledge   2 Communication   3 Digital Literacy   4 Critical Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of <b>strengths and limitations</b> of communication in oral presentations.</li> <li>• <b>Reflection</b> on feedback from peers and teacher and development of <b>strategy</b> to improve presentation technique.</li> </ul> <p><b>GLO</b>   6 Self-Management</p>

	TRIMESTER 1	TRIMESTER 2	TRIMESTER 3
YEAR 2	<p><b>Students document learning journey and evidence of skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students <b>interview industry/sector personnel</b> as part of discipline topic/ project.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 1 Knowledge</li> <li> 2 Communication</li> <li> 4 Critical Thinking</li> </ul> <p>• Reflection on changes in past year to <b>knowledge, skills and abilities.</b> Plan for further improvement.</p> <p>• The <b>interview with the practitioner</b> could also be part of CDL with students reflecting on interviewee's responses. Students could assess their interest and match to position or organization.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 6 Self-Management</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students document learning journey and evidence of skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students participate in an <b>online simulated industry/sector scenario.</b> <b>Feedback</b> provided by industry representative.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 1 Knowledge</li> <li> 4 Critical Thinking</li> <li> 5 Problem Solving</li> </ul> <p>• Students assess their performance in a <b>virtual team.</b> They can also critique the team's use of technology for collaboration.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 2 Communication</li> <li> 3 Digital Literacy</li> <li> 7 Teamwork</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students document learning journey and evidence of skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students work in a <b>team</b> on <b>problem-based project</b> based on industry/sector situation.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 1 Knowledge</li> <li> 4 Critical Thinking</li> <li> 5 Problem Solving</li> <li> 7 Teamwork</li> </ul> <p>• Students evaluate self and peers' performance in <b>team</b>, assessing process as well as product/outcome. Reflection on self and peer feedback.</p> <p><b>GLO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> 6 Self-Management</li> <li> 7 Teamwork</li> </ul>

	TRIMESTER 1	TRIMESTER 2	TRIMESTER 3
<b>YEAR 3</b>	<p><b>Curation of evidence of GLO development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students conduct a <b>comprehensive workplace audit</b>, including interaction with personnel, and analyse in terms of discipline principles.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>   1 Knowledge   4 Critical Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students <b>review</b> how they are tracking on advancing their <b>GLOs</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Curation</b> of evidence of GLO development in preparation for placement and job search.</li> <li>• Reflection on how to effectively <b>communicate</b> across different organizational and ethnic cultures and with different stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>GLO</b>   2 Communication   6 Self-Management   8 Global Citizenship</p>	<p><b>Curation of evidence of GLO and disciplinary skills development in Folio.</b></p> <p>Students develop a <b>strategic or implementation plan</b> in response to an organisational scenario for organisational representatives.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>   1 Knowledge   2 Communication   4 Critical Thinking   5 Problem Solving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students assess own and peer performance on <b>presentation</b> with emphasis on technique, communication and professionalism.</li> <li>• <b>Behavioural interviewing</b> practice.</li> </ul> <p><i>Deakinopolis interview techniques and group work resource:</i>  <a href="http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/creative/writing/deakinopolis/Deakinopolis.html">http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/creative/writing/deakinopolis/Deakinopolis.html</a></p> <p><b>GLO</b>   2 Communication   6 Self-Management</p>	<p><b>Folio to include job-ready package of resume, cover letter, evidence of GLO, disciplinary and other skills development.</b></p> <p><b>Capstone Unit</b> comprised of significant project to address real organisational problem, involving industry/community for briefing and/or feedback.</p> <p><b>GLO</b>  All   1     2     3   4     5     6   7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Graduate Career Preparation</b></li> <li>• Employment of job search skills to identify placement/internship or future job opportunities</li> <li>• Update of resume in light of knowledge and skills developed throughout course and as evidenced in Folio. Preparation of cover letter for the position, including evidence of skills from folio</li> </ul> <p><i>JobShop's Online Career Preparation Modules and other support.</i></p> <p><b>GLO</b>   2 Communication   3 Digital Literacy   6 Self-Management   8 Global Citizenship</p>

This package of scaffolded authentic assessments could be accessed by all students. It would complement the learning of those fortunate enough to secure placements but could also be available to those who don't. It would provide all students with a parcel of rich work-related learning experiences that could serve as a very valuable alternative to placements as preparation for entry or progression in their careers. Offering students a range of different authentic learning is highly desirable.

#### 4.2 Assessment-type details

This study bore out the premise that offering students a variety and complexity of authentic work-related learning was considered valuable as indicated by the considerable variety of authentic assessments types offered in the sampled courses. They ranged from interviewing practitioners; to developing plans of one type or other; to conducting audits; and to reflective practice exercises. A sample of two assessments has been drawn from each Faculty to showcase examples of discipline-specific authentic assessments as well as Career Development Learning authentic assessments. Tables 5-8 provide a brief description of the assessment task; how it is categorised on the authenticity-proximity spectrum; why it fits into this categories and which GLOs it develops and assesses.

**Table 5: Faculty of Arts and Education Sample of Authentic Assessments**

Assessment Task Description	Authenticity — Proximity Classification	Authenticity of Task	Proximity to Workplace/ Practitioner	Aligned and Assessed GLOs
<b>Grant Application</b> Teams develop a grant application (modelled on City of Melbourne arts grants) covering concept development, team capability, marketing, project planning and simple budget. Application to include use of visual aids, computer graphics, models, plans, website, or PowerPoint. Also individual reflection on team process.	High Authenticity — Low Proximity	Task is highly authentic because it reflects industry process and practice.	No interaction with the workforce or workplace.	1.Knowledge 2.Communication 3.Digital Literacy 4.Critical Thinking 5.Problem Solving 6.Self-Management 7.Teamwork 8.Global Citizenship
<b>Performance Design and Delivery</b> Students undertake the performance-making process including dramaturgical research, script development, scene-building activities, improvisation, design and technical management, and performance in collaboration with others to deliver a public performance.	High Authenticity — High Proximity	Undertaking all aspects of performance preparation as well as the delivery of a public performance mirrors real practice.	Performing to the public positions the task in close proximity to the work environment in that sector.	1.Knowledge 2.Communication 3.Digital Literacy 4.Critical Thinking 5.Problem Solving 6.Self-Management 7.Teamwork 8.Global Citizenship

**Table 6: Faculty of Business and Law Sample of Authentic Assessments**

Assessment Description	Authenticity-Proximity Classification	Authenticity of Task	Proximity to Workplace/ Professional Personnel	Alignment with GLOs
<b>Business Plan Development</b> Students develop a Business Plan proposing an online business solution. The report will contain a problem context analysis (company profile), a market analysis, the proposed online business solution and a justification for it. The project is a team based.	High Authenticity-High Proximity	Task is authentic as students are required to interview a small business owner to gather data for their own business plan. Task also requires students to	Proximity to workplace is high because students have direct interaction with a professional practitioner.	1.Discipline Specific Knowledge 3.Digital Literacy 7.Teamwork

		work in a team which is reflective of professional practice in this scenario.		
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<b>Development of IS Product for Client</b> Students develop an Information Systems product, using an Agile project management methodology.	High Authenticity — High Proximity	Task is authentic because students develop an IS product used in the workplace.	Proximity to workplace is high because students work with a professional client even though it is within a classroom environment. Students are required to interview the client, and then work through the development of the product using a project management tool.	2.Communication 5.Problem Solving 7 Teamwork
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**Table 7: Faculty of Health Sample of Authentic Assessment**

Assessment Task Description	Authenticity - Proximity Classification	Authenticity of Task	Proximity to Workplace/ Practitioner	Aligned and Assessed GLOs
<b>Fieldwork Assignment</b> Using The Fieldwork Learning Framework students make three reflective journal entries that: 1. Describe the personal and professional resources that they bring to fieldwork experience. 2. Describe a specific fieldwork incident where these resources influenced their learning experience. 3. Discuss how the personal and professional resources that they brought to their placement influenced their management of the specified incident.	High Authenticity — High Proximity	The task demonstrates the application of a theoretical construct to reflective practice about workplace performance.	The task draws upon workplace experiences undertaken in another unit of study.	1.Knowledge 2.Communication y 4.Critical Thinking 5.Problem Solving 6.Self-Management 7.Teamwork
<b>Client Interview and Report</b> Students interview an individual (18 years+) who has had a significant life	High Authenticity — High Proximity	The conduct of a client interviews is part of professional	Interviewing a person places the students in direct contact with members	1.Discipline Specific Knowledge 2.Communication 3.Digital Literacy

event which has caused a change in their occupational roles and write a report analysing the situation.		practice in this discipline.	of the community with whom they will be working in professional practice.	4.Critical Thinking 6.Self-Management
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**Table 8: Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment Sample of Authentic Assessment**

Assessment Task Description	Authenticity — Proximity Classification	Authenticity of Task	Proximity to Workplace/ Practitioner	Aligned and Assessed GLOs
<b>Development of Design Product</b> Students develop a full structural design for a composite slab on beams in a study-related composite building, complying with Australian design codes. Students will demonstrate understanding of specific design problems and adopt creative solutions for various design applications. The design project will be presented in groups.	High Authenticity – Low Proximity	The activity replicates that conducted in the workplace, addressing problems, complying with Australian design codes and working in groups.	No interaction with the workforce or workplace.	1: Discipline Specific Knowledge, 2: Communication 7: Teamwork
<b>Work Environment Survey</b> Students undertake a detailed survey of the physical, chemical and biological conditions of one of Melbourne’s major waterways. They also assess current water resources management practices.	High Authenticity – High Proximity	Conducting a survey and assessing current practices are activities which students would perform in their professional roles.	Fieldwork at Melbourne’s waterways places the students in a work environment, even though in this instance, they do not interact with personnel.	1: Knowledge, 2: Communication

The sample of authentic assessments above are an illustration of some of the types of assessments offered to students across the disciplines. They offer interesting and engaging range of learning activities in which students have opportunities to develop their employability skills as well as apply their theoretical learning. All of the assessments fall into the *Medium-* or *High-* category of Authenticity of tasks but there are fewer that offer students proximity to the workplace or workforce. As noted earlier, designing assessments that are proximal to the workplace is much more of a challenge for teaching academics than designing authentic work-related tasks. Arranging visits or projects in workplaces can be very time intensive as can be organising students to interact directly with professional personnel. Academics may also not have existing links with industry that can readily translate into projects or interactions with students. Additionally, some disciplines lend themselves much more easily to collaborations with industry or community, especially those that have had a long tradition of close relationships and industry-facilitated placements or projects.

The assessments chosen for this showcase do not show the full depth and breadth of authentic assessment offered in the Faculties (or of the full report) but they do illustrate a good range of different types of learning experiences aimed at increasing students’ employability skills. As can be seen from the student focus group, students greatly value these types of experiences.

### 4.3 Student focus group

The evidence of this study reveals that academics are putting a lot of effort into designing and offering authentic assessments to students in their courses. This is likely to have a bearing on the generally high student satisfaction rates at Deakin. The following responses from a small sample of students from all Faculties provides a glimpse of their views about authentic assessments. The findings, grouped into the themes that emerged, revealed the following perspectives.

#### 4.3.1 Students' expectations of authentic learning

A majority of students anticipated that their degree experience would be related and linked to what occurs in industry or their professions. A few students thought that the main assessments would be essays, but when they discovered that they would be experiencing industry-like assessments they felt relieved and motivated. For example, a first year law student said:

*"I thought law would be a lot of essay writing but one of the first things that we did was there's this thing called League of principles and skills where you have to write a memo of advice and I think that really reflects what people do in the industry. Because a lot of the times, when you're not actually practising as a barrister you're usually someone like an adviser or an in house counsel where they actually come to you and you have to give them like a particular bit of advice. So I guess that's a really good thing which really helps to develop and - it adds a lot of breadth and makes it not just like, here's the essay, write it."*

A majority of the participants explained that they realised that they needed to be particularly focused and motivated in order to secure a job upon graduation. They felt that they were realistic about what they themselves needed to contribute to their studies in order to become job-ready. For instance, several students said that they had "an exact path" and that the industry was "extremely competitive and it's more like networking and who you know." A few stated that they knew what occurred in the industry because they had already taken part in a placement and/or volunteering opportunity: "I'm only starting to know where I want to go but that's only because I started to do my own volunteering."

Another student confirmed this approach and suggested that the only reason they understood what occurred in industry was due to organising their own volunteering opportunity:

*"The only reason why I know where I want to go is because I volunteered on my own accord and I got into a placement on my own because I knew that if I didn't do that, just learning in the classroom wasn't going to make me be like yep, I'm going to apply for this job. Because I wouldn't have any idea what they do."*

A few of the students felt frustrated with their peers who did not have the same expectations or motivation as they did regarding self-contribution for job-readiness. As one student explained:

*"they [other students] often thought that everything they had learnt in University was just exactly what it's going to be. But when they actually came into the profession they found it was so much more, like it was a completely different world."*

Students in the focus group generally felt that if they did not individually seek additional opportunities to develop their employability skills to complement or augment their degree studies that their expectations were unrealistic:

*"I did heaps of research and found psychologists to talk to find out what exactly the job entails and sort of like the difference, categories of clinical versus forensic, that sort of stuff. Did all of that so to sort of come here and find out that the people had actually no idea. It was just sort of like 'oh yeah I've you know, I've always been interested in the mind'. But that's sort of the extent of it. It's kind of shocking to me [that other students don't do this] in a way I guess."*

#### 4.3.2 Authentic assessments

Many of the students gave examples of what they perceived to be authentic non-placement WIL learning activities. They expressed the assessment examples in great detail. For example, one first year law student explained:

*“They asked us to short list a number of jobs that we were interested in to do as a career. And I guess that one of the ways that I really decided to get into law and really just be a profession because I tried the other places and it just really didn’t seem right.”*

Whereas, a film student said:

*“We had to get into a group of six and make a short film. I did not enjoy that day at all because even though I enjoy film, the environment, the stress, the people I was working with. I just didn’t enjoy it at all. But when it got to the post production stage, where it was all shot I was in heaven. I got to use the big computers, I got to fix all the mistakes that they made on the day and then it all got tied together in a neat bow. And that’s where I found out that’s where I want to be.”*

Other students valued CDL as part of an authentic assessment strategy to assist them in finding jobs that suited their passion, skill set and career aspirations. For example, a post-graduate design student explained:

*“One of our assignments we had to look up jobs in the industry. The problem was, we didn’t know what to look for! So when we got onto the Seek website, and a few of us typed in designer or something, we didn’t know the position names to go for because none of us had really- the reason I chose the degree was because I knew I wanted to do something with IT...So, the assessment was to write a report on 4 jobs that you found in the industry and what skills each job needed and to see and reflect on ‘have you met those skills yet’ so that you could later on say ‘yes I’ve done all these, I can show an example in my resume that I have done all these skills and that I’m qualified’. But we still struggled.”*

The majority of students discussed the importance of teamwork assessments in becoming job-ready and argued that these were an excellent feature of many of the courses examined. One stated:

*“Many, many, many. Pretty much every unit has a team assignment. Generally, you have to present to the whole group, whether it’s just a 10-minute presentation where you present with the team members.”*

And another said:

*“It’s kind of thinking industry, you have 30 people to take through this drill, how are you going to work it? You have to work together. You had to pretend you were the client and the other person so it was kind of a simulation. And it was it was like body language, how do you talk to them?”*

#### **4.3.4. Learning requirements**

Some of the learning requirements students discussed concerned how non-placement WIL assessments helped them realise early if they wanted to pursue a career in the discipline they were studying. For instance, a film student said:

*“...on a film shoot day it’s high intensity, so it was interesting to see how people managed that situation and who they became after a while. So, in the end we made a short film and it was a huge team work related-understanding.”*

A post-graduate IT student suggested that in one of the assessments;

*“...no one wanted to talk to each other — it was just that common personality that you find in the IT area. People are very inward and they don’t want to do any group work. So that became hard. Whereas me, I found it very easy to do group work and I ended up doing all the work because no one wanted to contribute or were too scared to.”*

Another student did not necessarily agree with what the majority of the group were suggesting:

*“I just wish there was some direction because right now it feels like they’re just throwing you in the deep end. Find the stuff, do the work, that’s it”. Again, one student mentioned that the learning requirements when completing a non-placement WIL assessment was never going to be the same as “the real thing anyway.”*

*“I think because it’s just you can try and simulate it as much as you want at university but they’ll never be able to fully replicate what it’s like to work in the field. And when you do there will be new things that you will have to adapt to, there will be procedures and*

*it's like taking what you learnt in class and going in there and finding where it fits. They can tell you but until you actually go out and do it yourself. You can study all you want but it's no way near the real thing."*

Another area of interest for students was networking and how this process could be embedded in courses for helping students become job-ready. First, students acknowledged that it was difficult to secure a job after graduation because "most of the jobs aren't even advertised", and second "it's just who you know first, you have to talk to the right person, because there are a lot of jobs that never actually make it up. People get hired without advertisements."

#### **4.3.5. Discussion**

Students readily engaged in the focus group discussion around authentic assessments and offered interesting and valuable perspectives on their learning experiences. Many students suggested that starting placements in second year is a good idea, but with the added notion that curriculum developers and lecturers should "focus more on giving you the industry projects ... to get exposure slowly and early so that you have the time to go 'oh I don't want to do this' and move on and change your major or change your degree." Additionally, students desired clear explanations about authentic assessments for job-readiness and how this can augment a placement but not replace 'the real thing.' Students also suggested that the teaching and assessing of teamwork, networking skills and career development for all students as part of a non-placement WIL suite of learning activities that are linked to industry would be highly beneficial. As one student said, "I think career development is really important". These views fit in with the premise of offering students both discipline-specific authentic assessments and Career Development Learning authentic assessments in their courses of study.

## **5. Key Research Findings**

The student voice confirmed the value of authentic assessments in their courses. Placements continue to be highly valued, but students appreciated other learning opportunities to prepare them for work. They also realised the importance of their own efforts and initiative in this preparation. Although the sample was small, the students' perspectives confirmed the value that they are receiving from courses that offer discipline-specific authentic assessments as well as CDL authentic assessments. The analysis of courses in this research attests to offering students an array of these assessments. This was the goal of course enhancement in the first place and it can be said that significant inroads have been made to achieving this goal. The literature highlights the value of authentic assessments, work integrated learning and the development of graduate capabilities for students in their preparation and progression in the workforce and courses at Deakin are demonstrating sound practice in this regard.

In summary, the findings and outcomes of the project hold that:

- The sample of 40 courses examined had at minimum 28% of assessments in the authentic category indicating that courses had made significant progress in meeting the major goal of course enhancement. The average for the sample was 43%;
- Students are offered both work-related authentic assessments and knowledge-based theoretical assessments in their courses, although the respective proportions differ in disciplines and there is scope for improvement in many;
- Students are offered both work-related authentic assessments and knowledge-based theoretical assessments in their courses, although the respective proportions differ in disciplines;
- All authentic assessments are aligned with GLOs, particularly communication, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- Most of the authentic assessments offer students opportunities to undertake tasks that emulate practice in the professions and industry;
- Fewer of the authentic assessments currently offer students proximal opportunities to the workplace or professional personnel. There is considerable scope to increase opportunities for students to interact directly with industry, professions or community in a range of locations and scenarios;
- There is scope to develop students' own capabilities for self-determination and initiative in helping them realise their career aspirations. The development of the Graduate Learning Outcome, Self-Management, which includes critical reflective practice provides an avenue for this and is showcased in some of the assessment examples;
- The quality of the authentic assessments overall, as evidenced in the assessment examples, demonstrates interesting and engaging offerings for students;

- There are opportunities to better portray the authentic nature of assessments that are on offer to students in their courses and units through the language used in unit narratives, assessment descriptions and course maps;
- The provision of a typology of authentic assessments is useful to be able to classify assessments for curriculum design and development purposes;
- There is scope to provide students with progressive and developmental work-related learning experiences comprised of both disciplinary work-related authentic assessments and CDL over the duration of their courses if this learning is intentionally scaffolded;
- Provision of a scaffolded approach to WIL learning (comprised of authentic assessments including projects, placements and simulated workplace environments) would mean that all students would have access to a developmentally rich range of opportunities to develop their GLOs and other employability skills;
- A comprehensive and integrated scaffolded approach to WIL learning, as illustrated in the WIL Learning Package, would provide all students at Deakin with job-readiness preparation that might be considered to be on par with that offered by placements;
- Employers want students to demonstrate their employability skills so it is important for students to have a portable tool, such as a folio, to be able collect, curate and express these; and
- Capacity building for staff is vital for continuous improvement to units of study and courses.

To translate these findings into prospective actions the following key recommendations are offered:

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

That course teams design and offer a greater variety of authentic assessment types in their courses, especially those which are proximal to the work environment and practitioners.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**

That a typology of authentic assessments be made available as an aid for academics to design, develop and enhance their units of study and courses.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

That a comprehensive and integrated course-wide scaffolded approach for work-related and career development learning be encouraged.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**

That students be provided with an opportunity to collect, curate and express evidence of the attainment and development of employability and other skills in a course folio or blog.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

That assessment descriptions, and unit and course narratives explicitly express the authenticity of the work-related learning offered to students.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

That capacity building opportunities for continued course enhancement be available for staff.

## 6. Conclusion

Deakin's goal of increasing the employment rates of graduates through improving opportunities for students to increase their employability skills in their courses of study has been demonstrated by this research to be progressing well. The sample of 40 courses, ten from each Faculty that were examined in this research have demonstrated steady progress towards the goals of the University's course enhancement process of ensuring that all students have opportunities for work-related learning experiences, in addition to the acquisition of theoretical and disciplinary knowledge and skills in their courses.

However, there is scope for improvement in all the Faculties, particularly the universal opportunity to increase the variety of assessments offered to students, particularly in relation to workplace proximity. As the student focus group revealed, students highly value placement opportunities but they also value direct interaction with personnel in the industry and the professions.

The amended Authentic Assessment Typology that arose from this action-in-research project provides a taxonomy of learning activities and assessments for academics to use as ideas in designing and developing their units and courses. The WIL Learning Package based on the typology would allow for the horizontal and vertical scaffolding of learning activities and assessments across a course that would offer students intentionally progressive and developmental learning. Students could undertake a range of WIL learning activities from first year to the final year of their studies, where they would undertake multiple learning activities which authentically emulate work-related tasks and processes as well interact directly with professionals, be it in the workplace or outside. This package of experiences would provide all students with rich and varied opportunities in which to apply their disciplinary knowledge and skills to workplace contexts; advance their graduate capabilities in work-related contexts; and interact directly with professional personnel, all of which contribute to the development of employability skills. For students fortunate enough to avail themselves of placements, these activities would prepare them for and complement their placement experience, and for the majority of students who do not have access to placements, such a comprehensive and integrated WIL learning structure could potentially be a transformative learning experience that readies them for an increasingly competitive job market. A positive outcome of this study to-date has been that the University has adopted the amended framework and typology and the principles of scaffolding as part as part of its WIL strategy.

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