

ENHANCING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA



Dr Denise Jackson
Professor Ken Greenwood

Edith Cowan University
Funded by the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN)

October 2015

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	2
List of Figures.....	2
Key Findings.....	3
Introduction.....	6
Background.....	9
International Students and the Demand for Work Experience.....	9
International Student Participation in WIL.....	11
Stakeholder Benefits of WIL for International Students	11
Barriers to Improving WIL Opportunities for International Students	12
Sourcing Placements.....	12
Managing Expectations.....	12
Employer Perceptions.....	13
Support	13
Strategies for Enhancing WIL Outcomes for International Students	13
Methodology.....	14
Desk Audit	15
Academic Focus Groups	15
Employer Survey.....	15
International Student Survey	16
International Student Participation in WIL – Western Australia.....	18
Engineering.....	18
Business.....	19
The Importance of WIL for International Students	19
Management of WIL for International Students.....	21
Benefits of WIL for International Students.....	23
Advantages of International Students to Industry	23
Advantages of WIL for International Students.....	24
Lack of Professional Networks	25
Student Expectations.....	26
Logistics and Administration	26
Perceptions of Weak Communication Skills and Cultural Differences	27
Challenges of the WIL Experience	29

Cultural Differences and Expectations	31
Assessment, Content, Structure and Delivery	33
Language	33
Support during Placement.....	34
Other Challenges	35
Expanding WIL Participation	36
Building Networks.....	36
Logistics and Arrangements.....	37
Expanding WIL Delivery Options.....	38
Managing Employer Preferences and Perceptions.....	39
Improving the WIL Experience	40
Managing Cultural Differences and Expectations.....	40
Time Spent on the Matching Process	41
Language Support	42
Assessment Processes	42
Structure, Design and Content of Placements.....	43
Workplace Support	43
Other.....	44
Conclusion	45
References.....	46
Appendix One - Employer survey instrument	48
Appendix Two - International student survey instrument	52

List of Tables

Table 1 Profile of employer survey respondents ($N=97$).....	17
Table 2 Profile of international student survey respondents ($N=56$).....	18
Table 3 Reasons for hosting domestic but not international students	28
Table 4 Concerns with hosting international students on placement.....	30

List of Figures

Figure 1 Perceived importance of work placements to international students.....	20
Figure 2 Organisation of international student work placements	22

Key Findings

This project canvassed employer, academic and student perspectives on current practice, challenges and barriers to managing Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) for international students in Western Australia (WA). It identifies strategies for stakeholders to enhance WIL offerings, thereby improving international students' employability and making Australia a preferred study destination. Key findings from the project are:

International Student Participation in WIL

- There was broad acknowledgement of the strategic importance of WIL across all four WA universities that participated in the project. However, enhancing WIL for international students was not a primary focus. Rather, it was identifying good practice in managing and coordinating WIL, and developing policies and resources to offer and sustain quality WIL delivery, particularly during periods of economic downturn.
- For optional WIL placement-based units, international students were underrepresented relative to domestic students.

Management of WIL for International Students

- There were no differences between the preparation offered to international and domestic students in business and engineering disciplines, largely due to a lack of resourcing.
- There was considerable variation among providers on where placements were permitted across a range of overseas, interstate and metro work placements.
- Most universities operated under faculty or school models for organising WIL, with support from centralised services for insurance, risk management and OSH. While a central WIL unit was considered beneficial for streamlining activities, processes and policies, and for sharing and capitalising on broad university networks, resourcing was a common barrier to implementation.

Benefits of International Student Placements

Academics and students noted a number of specific benefits to industry of hosting international students on work placements. However, this view was not shared by host employers, who nonetheless observed a strong work ethic among international students and recognised

enhanced opportunities for innovation and productivity due to their cultural and global influence. Academics and international students alike credited cultural insights for allowing a comparison with practices in their own country, and along with enhanced communication skills, viewed these as the key personal benefits of completing work placements in Australia.

Barriers to Expanding WIL Opportunities for International Students

International students experience greater difficulties with securing placements. Academics attributed this to a lack of networks, unrealistic expectations, logistical barriers, and employers' concerns about cultural differences and inadequate communication skills. These were not overtly apparent in employer responses, although there was more evidence of concern among those who had previously hosted international students than those who had not.

Challenges during the WIL Experience

Stakeholders identified a number of challenges related to the WIL experience. These included: cultural differences; the unrealistic expectations of international students; students' difficulties with assessment types most appropriate for WIL; relatively weak language skills; and an imbalance between the levels of support provided and those expected by international students.

Strategies to Enhance WIL Outcomes among International Students

A number of strategies for increasing international student participation in WIL were identified:

- Assisting students to build professional networks while at university through:
 - Collaborative efforts of student societies and support services such as Careers, Alumni and International Offices; and
 - Partnerships between universities and global employers operating in, for example, the Asia-Pacific rim.
- Managing international student expectations on available WIL opportunities through education on employer expectations and trends in the local economy and labour market.
- Broadening the scope of potential WIL opportunities for international students by:
 - allowing the completion of WIL abroad and in their home country;
 - encouraging WIL in regional areas; and
 - educating employers on post-study education rights and visa regulations.
- Encouraging more international students to participate in elective WIL programs by:

- reviewing the cost of elective WIL units; and
- more extensively advertising WIL opportunities on campus and through other means.
- Expanding WIL delivery options, including:
 - virtual or online delivery;
 - connecting with industry through on-campus industry-based projects, role-plays and simulations;
 - placing students in groups; and
 - introducing service learning options with a particular emphasis on developing communication skills and providing exposure to Australian culture.
- Managing employer preferences and perceptions through:
 - Close consideration of cultural differences when matching students to particular work settings; and
 - Educating employers on the strengths associated with international students, such as strong work ethic and drive.

A number of strategies for improving the international student WIL experience were identified:

- More effective management of cultural differences by:
 - better preparing international students on what to expect in the Australian workplace and how to respond when certain scenarios arise;
 - Providing international students with a broad insight into the different industry sectors; and
 - Ensuring hosts are aware of any cultural differences which require the implementation of certain arrangements during the WIL experience.
- Closer attention to matching students to appropriate placements with due consideration of their cultural needs and the expectations of employers, particularly in regard to language capabilities.
- Provision of language support prior to and during the WIL experience.
- Better clarification of and attention to assessment requirements prior to and during the WIL experience.
- Additional support from both academic and workplace supervisors through more rigorous mentoring and feedback processes and buddy schemes.

Introduction

This project explored current Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) offerings among universities in Western Australia and identified the benefits and challenges specific to the WIL experiences of international students. WIL encompasses “a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick et al., 2009, p. iv). In higher education, this includes a range of practices such as industry-based projects, placements, internships and service learning. The purpose of WIL is to provide students with an insight into the realities of professional practice and encourage them to practice their non-technical and technical skills in a work context. Its importance is globally recognised and it forms an important component of a suite of offerings, including career management provision, employability skills development, and the cultivation of life skills and civic responsibility designed to enhance graduate employability (Gribble, 2014). These complementary practices help to address the complexities of graduate work readiness and enhance employment prospects, productivity and performance. They will enable students to make connections between theory and practice (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency [AWPA], 2013); develop their understanding of professional conduct (McIlveen et al., 2011); assist informed career decision-making (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac & Lawton, 2012); and nurture non-technical skills (Wilton, 2012) such as communication, teamwork and self-management.

The importance of WIL for enhancing productivity and graduate work-readiness, and for strengthening partnerships between industry and universities, has been widely acknowledged, and was reinforced by the recent release of the National Strategy on WIL which aims “to develop a coherent approach to build workforce capability, skills and individual prospects” (Universities Australia et al., 2015, p. 1). The strategy is committed to identifying and supporting initiatives to overcome barriers to the WIL process and increasing participation. This project aligns with the national strategy’s objective to increase opportunities for international students to participate in WIL.

International education is Australia’s fourth largest export industry worth in excess of \$150 billion per annum (Universities Australia, 2014). Against a backdrop of global mobility, the international education market is fiercely competitive, with developed economies concentrating

their efforts on differentiating their offerings to attract students and preserve an important source of revenue. It is critical that Australia maintains its competitive advantage through innovative, high-quality offerings, particularly given endemic barriers, such as the nation's stringent visa regulations and high cost of living. The recently released Draft National Strategy on International Education (Department of Education and Training, 2015) also acknowledges Australia's need to "expand the potential, scale and breadth of relevant work-integrated learning opportunities for international students and graduates" (p. 42).

International students, Chinese students in particular (Sharma, 2014), seek to gain work experience in their host country as part of their foreign studies in order to enhance their employability upon graduation (International Education Association of Australia [IEAA], 2012). Unfortunately, evidence suggests that international student participation in WIL does not equate to their domestic counterparts (Gribble, 2014) and is a source of considerable angst for international students (see IEAA, 2012). While universities and employers are rightfully intent on placing diligent, capable WIL students, those from diverse backgrounds often fail to find a placement. Research suggests this may be attributed to employer perceptions of poor language capabilities, cultural issues and resource pressures, and the need for additional preparation and mentoring requirements (IEAA, 2012). Other barriers to international students successfully securing work experience in Australia include: limited access to networks; poor labour market awareness; visa restrictions; and relatively weak communication skills (Blackmore et al., 2014; IEAA, 2012). Locating suitable placements for international students is increasingly difficult for poorly resourced WIL coordinators in Australian universities (Blackmore et al., 2012).

In its 2012 report, IEAA argued: "there is currently a reality gap that needs to be bridged between the promise of work-related experiences of various kinds for international students" (p. 24). The report highlighted the need for increased opportunities for international students in the higher education sector to gain relevant work experience and establish local networks, and the authors concurred that "providing international students with exposure to the Australian workplace via internships and other work-integrated learning programs will not only improve the employability of graduates, but is likely to enhance the value of an Australian degree" (Gribble, Blackmore & Rahimi, 2014).

The “preparation of international students for the world of work and particularly for working in Australia” was highlighted to Australian universities as an area requiring attention (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales et al., 2008, p. 103). The lack of WIL opportunities for international students is detrimental for a number of reasons. Equity, inclusivity and widening participation are critical to WIL initiatives, policies and practices, making the recent drive for increased WIL offerings important to all students, not just the domestic market. Second, maintaining and strengthening current links with international markets, particularly China and other South East Asian countries, are critical to the wellbeing and future of the economy. Engaging international students in WIL may assist employers who are conducting, or intend to conduct, business in foreign markets, since it provides access to a valuable resource in the form of linguistic expertise, knowledge of local culture and working practices. Leveraging these often unique skills and knowledge allows industry to overcome communication and cultural barriers and to strengthen partnerships, which contribute to a national competitive advantage. Failure to capitalise on the potential strengths of a multi-cultural and diverse labour force may impact not only on productivity, innovation and enterprise, but also on international competitiveness due to the absence of cultural insights and global connections.

Aims and Objectives

The project was aimed at developing our understanding of how international students are participating in WIL, examining current practice in managing WIL for international cohorts, and identifying the barriers hindering their participation. It was also intended to identify stakeholder strategies to enhance WIL offerings, thereby improving international student employability and making Australia a preferred study destination. The research objectives were:

- To summarise current WIL offerings for international students in WA universities in the disciplines of engineering and business;
- To gauge international student participation rates in WIL activities in WA universities in the disciplines of engineering and business;
- To document any institutional support in WA universities dedicated specifically to international students seeking to participate in WIL;

- To capture stakeholder perceptions of the barriers and problems experienced with engaging international students in WIL activities; and
- To identify stakeholder strategies for enhancing WIL outcomes among international students.

The research objectives were achieved by canvassing employer, academic and student perspectives on the challenges, barriers and current practices in managing WIL for international students in Western Australia. There is much research on best-practice principles and benefits achieved from WIL, yet relatively little on how best to manage WIL for increasing numbers of international students in Australia. As noted by Blackmore et al. (2014), “research into participation rates of international students in a range of disciplines, the barriers to participation, and strategies for enhancing overall participation rates among the international student cohort is required” (p. 31). This project extends our understanding of these areas within a Western Australian context.

Background

International Students and the Demand for Work Experience

The picture remains bleak for the graduate labour market with the unemployment rate of new graduates reaching record highs (Graduate Careers Australia [GCA], 2014) and a not much brighter outlook for the immediate future (see Jander, 2014). Despite some evidence that graduate employment has returned to pre-Global Financial Crisis (GFC) levels, widening participation policies has meant an oversupply of talent and a soft graduate labour market (Australian Universities International Directors’ Forum [AUIDF], 2013). The employment rates of international students in full-time graduate-level positions in Australia are low (AUIDF, 2013). With underemployment also a problem among new graduates (GCA, 2012), students are seeking ways to enhance their portfolio of skills and experiences during their university years. An attractive asset for prospective employers is work experience in their relevant discipline, so integrating WIL opportunities into undergraduate education will give students the opportunity to use disciplinary and non-technical skills and knowledge, and make for a smoother transition from university to a professional environment.

Work experience is considered by international students in Australia as critical to enhancing their employment prospects in both their host country and country of origin (see Blackmore et al., 2014). International students appear to be poorly prepared for the recruitment and selection processes associated with graduate employment, and are less prepared than their domestic counterparts for transitioning from university to the labour market (see Blackmore et al., 2014). They are eager to gain relevant work experience during their studies, particularly evident outside the traditional areas of nursing and education for example, where WIL is already embedded in the study programs. More recently, accounting and engineering have been cited as areas where international students are particularly keen to gain exposure to a professional environment (Blackmore et al., 2014).

Given their preference for international work experience, increasing WIL opportunities for international students will enable Australian universities to better position themselves in the global education market. Evidence suggests that post-graduation work opportunities are critical for international students in deciding where to study, and greater access to work experience and employer networks would make Australia a more attractive option (International Education Association of Australia [IEEA], 2012). Australia's strong reputation for WIL (Gamble, 2010) should be leveraged to attract international students who choose their courses for the work experience and strong employment prospects.

This strategy may, however, be problematic. International students have high expectations of postgraduate employment (Lawrence, 2014) and aim for large multinationals with reputable graduate programs (Blackmore et al., 2014). They are often less accepting of lower pay scales due to the financial commitment of their studies, and less willing to "start low" and build their careers (AUIDF, 2013). Employers tend to favour domestic graduates "who will integrate easily into the workplace" (Blackmore et al., 2014, p. 5). The high expectations of international students create a demand for a particular type of host organisation, and present challenges in a market where demand for WIL outstrips supply (Department of Industry, 2014). For the most part, international students are over-optimistic about securing an internship/industry placement and obtaining useful work experience (Lawrence, 2014).

International Student Participation in WIL

International students are often disadvantaged because employers prefer to host domestic students, who are potential recruits post-graduation without concerns for visa regulations (IEAA, 2012). Research shows lower participation rates in WIL among the international cohort (AUIDF, 2013; Murray, Blackmore, Gribble & Hall, 2012) and frustration among international students caused by this anomaly (Lawson, 2012). International students need WIL to enhance their employability and, as Blackmore et al. (2014) argued, this can increase “the value of the Australian degree” (p. 5). These authors commented on the high expectations of employers today, particularly in relation to communication skills. WIL not only provides a valuable opportunity for networking with local employers, but also for developing English language proficiency in a workplace context. Gribble (2014) attributed lower levels of participation by international students to additional costs for extending their degree program and for not meeting the prerequisites of WIL programs. To exacerbate the issue, international students often do not pursue WIL opportunities because they struggle to balance part-time work commitments, study, and daily life (Ong & Ramia, 2009), and are inclined to prioritise disciplinary studies over developing work readiness (AUIDF, 2013).

Stakeholder Benefits of WIL for International Students

Those employers who had hosted international graduates saw evidence of a strong work ethic, persistence, and high levels of intelligence among the recruits (AUIDF, 2013; Blackmore et al., 2014). These advantages are likely to transfer to the workplace. Furthermore, international students contribute language expertise and an innate understanding of their culture, which may facilitate developing and conducting business with international partners. In this way, international students “act as cultural bridges for global communication and foster transnational business networks” (IEEA, 2012, p. 12), and encourage innovation by bringing different perspectives and new ways of thinking. For students, the lack of relevant work experience is considered a major shortcoming in their repertoire of skills and a severe disadvantage in their bid to secure graduate employment (Arthur & Nunes, 2014). For universities, engaging in WIL strengthens relationships with local industry and provides students with a variety of linguistic capabilities and exposure to a range of cultures, particularly those relevant to our “Asian-connected” communities (IEAA, 2012). Today, fewer staff are dedicated to specifically managing

employment outcomes for international students, and this makes WIL an even more valuable opportunity for networking and better understanding the different pathways to achieving career success (AUIDF, 2013).

Barriers to Improving WIL Opportunities for International Students

Sourcing Placements

International students often experience more difficulty than domestic students in sourcing local placements due to their lack of professional networks. This leads to students undertaking core placements in their home country, such as in engineering, which fails to provide valuable exposure to the Australian work context (Blackmore et al., 2014). The situation may be amplified by a lack of resources allocated to managing international students and their career management needs in Australia, relative to other countries such as the UK (AUIDF, 2013). Although there appears to be some collaboration between international offices and career services in Australian universities, this is less apparent here than in the UK, which also has a strong tripartite relationship with the alumni function (AUIDF, 2013). Along with relatively poor resourcing in these service areas (AUIDF, 2013), these factors are likely to impact on networking opportunities and employment outcomes for international students.

Managing Expectations

International students have a significant preference for gaining graduate employment in large-tier, high-profile organisations (Blackmore et al., 2014). They also have higher earnings expectations (AUIDF, 2013), considered to negatively impact on their success in the graduate labour market (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2012) and damage their opportunities for participation in WIL. Larger firms commonly operate their own WIL programs, so greater opportunities may well lie with small and medium enterprises and not-for-profit organisations, who are more inclined to consider bespoke university programs and less concerned with visa regulations associated with the employment and work experience arrangements of international students (Blackmore et al., 2014).

Employer Perceptions

It is apparent from the graduate employment market that industry favours recruiting people with a similar background to the existing workforce (Blackmore et al., 2014). Proclamations about the benefits of a diverse workforce appear to be “lip service” in Australian workplaces, which fail to leverage diversity to better engage with foreign clients (Diversity Council Australia [DCA], 2014). Relatively poor graduate employment outcomes among international students have been attributed to employers’ concerns about language and perceived lack of work experience (Lane, 2014), cultural fit, increased administrative load, attrition, and poor non-technical skills due to a lack of extra-curricular activities (AUIDF, 2013). English language proficiency, or what Gribble (2014) described as “professional workplace English” (p. 5), is critical to success in both WIL experiences and graduate-level employment. Employers argue that the relatively low participation rate of international students is indicative of a saturated market; one with an overwhelming number of domestic students seeking such opportunities (AUIDF, 2013). The reluctance of employers to host international students has also been attributed to language deficiencies and a lack of understanding of the culture and practices of the Australian work context (IEAA, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). For international students, the widely-held belief that WIL provides a valuable try-before-you-buy opportunity to identify talent prior to graduation (Isherwood, 2014; Wilson, 2012) does not apply, amid concerns for their eligibility and desire to remain in the country after their studies (Patrick et al., 2009).

Support

International students are far less likely to receive assistance and support from their families while on placements, which may impact their performance, given the added pressure WIL can create when juggling work, study and social commitments (Jackson, 2014). For many international students the need to undertake part-time work conflicts with significant pressure from their families to succeed in their studies.

Strategies for Enhancing WIL Outcomes for International Students

There has been limited discussion about strategies to enhance the participation and outcomes for international students in WIL. Managing their expectations and ensuring they are prepared are critical to the success of their WIL experience (Blackmore et al., 2012). Preparation may

include developing an understanding of Australian workplace culture, gaining insights into professional ideology, and providing information on the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in WIL. This could be provided in a variety of ways such as: pre-packaged modules; seminars with tips from employers and students recounting their own experiences (IEAA, 2012); YouTube videos; and/or in handbook format (Blackmore et al., 2012). Unpacking the process of WIL, particularly the legalities and visa regulations for international students, and ensuring they understand the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholder groups may increase the success of WIL programs and employer willingness to participate (see IEAA, 2012). Marketing the specific advantages of hosting international students to potential hosts, by using case studies and testimonials, may also be beneficial (Blackmore et al., 2012). Formalising options for global WIL programs, whereby international students can complete WIL in their home countries, could also be advantageous (IEAA, 2012), as would encouraging the accreditation of offshore WIL experiences, also an action point in the national WIL strategy (Universities Australia et al., 2015) albeit for domestic students. Advocating WIL for international students to local employers through trade and professional associations, local and national government is also important (IEAA, 2012). In addition, university campuses can be used to gain the commitment of local government to host students on placements as an effective means of increasing participation (IEAA, 2012).

Methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research tools were used to gather data to address the research objectives. This provided a rich picture of international students' perceptions of WIL. The project comprised four stages: desk audits of WIL offerings among WA universities; focus groups for academics involved in WIL for international students; surveys of international students participating in WIL; and surveys of potential and active hosts of international students. While WIL comes in many forms, the focus of this project was confined to work placements for manageability purposes.

Desk Audit

A desk audit of the WIL offerings in the disciplines of business and engineering was undertaken to summarise current WIL offerings in WA universities, and gauge international student participation rates in comparison to their domestic counterparts. It soon became evident that data on work placements were not held centrally and required collation at course level. This was also the case in a similar audit conducted in Victoria (IEAA, 2012). Data were provided by the four publicly-funded WA universities with relevant academic and/or professional coordinators identified by Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) representatives. They were contacted by email or telephone to provide data on the participation of both domestic and international students in work placements. Business and engineering were selected due to their similarity in relation to exposure to the corporate arena, as well as their differences, in that business is often an elective in a degree program while engineering is a prerequisite. The audit demonstrated the difficulties of gathering accurate data on student participation in WIL, as also found in previous studies (IEAA, 2012). The data are presented in aggregate form in this report.

Academic Focus Groups

All the academics who participated in the focus group sessions were directly involved with WIL and came from a range of local universities in metropolitan Perth. The two focus group sessions were designed to capture academics' perceptions of the barriers and problems experienced with engaging international students in WIL activities, and to identify best practice in the management of the WIL process for international students. They were also aimed at developing stakeholder strategies to enhance WIL outcomes for international students. The focus groups took place on two different WA university campuses. The first comprised five academics and university ACEN representatives from the careers service and a range of disciplines from four out of the five WA universities. The second group comprised ten WIL academics and a WIL administrator from different faculties and schools within Edith Cowan University.

Employer Survey

A survey was conducted with employers in Western Australia to gather data from potential hosts of international WIL students in the areas of business, engineering and IT. For those currently

hosting international students, the survey provided a baseline for their own experiences, while for others it provided an opportunity to discuss their lack of engagement with international students seeking placements in their organisations. Respondents were invited to complete an online survey between May and June 2015. Organisations that had hosted WIL participants or had expressed an interest in WIL were contacted via email by academic coordinators in the areas of business, IT and engineering at Edith Cowan University. A copy of the survey instrument is attached in Appendix One.

Table 1 summarises the background work characteristics of those who participated in the survey. To ensure the research objectives were met, organisations that were known to participate in WIL were deliberately targeted for the employer survey. Data may therefore not represent a true cross-section of local employers. Of those responding ($N=97$), 64% had hosted a business, engineering or IT student before, 6% were unsure, and 30% had never hosted before. Of the 62 who had hosted students in the abovementioned disciplines, 34% had hosted an international student, 53% had not and 13% were unsure.

International Student Survey

A survey was conducted with international students undertaking WIL as part of their business, engineering or IT studies at Edith Cowan University. The purpose was to gather data on their placement experiences and better understand students' perceptions of the barriers to, and enablers of, positive WIL experiences. International students who were completing dedicated WIL units between July 2014 and May 2015 were invited via email to complete the survey. The email was sent to 94 students and data were gathered from 78, giving a response rate of 83%. Of these 78, there were 56 complete surveys. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix Two. Table 2 summarises the background and placement characteristics of the students who participated in the survey.

Table 1 Profile of employer survey respondents (N=97)

Variable	Sub-groups	Frequency	%
Organisation Type	Public sector	18	18.6
	Private sector	58	59.8
	Not-for-profit	21	21.6
Organisation Size	1-49 (small)	44	45.4
	50-149 (medium)	16	16.5
	150+ (large)	37	38.1
Sector	Accommodation, Cafes, Restaurants and Retail	5	5.3
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	2	2.2
	Communications	5	5.4
	Cultural and Recreational Services	7	7.5
	Education	8	8.6
	Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	7	7.5
	Finance and Insurance	16	17.2
	Health and Community Services	22	23.7
	Manufacturing, Construction, transport, storage and Mining	8	8.6
	Personal Services, Property, Business and Other Services	13	14.0
Location	Perth metropolitan	95	98.0
	Regional city	1	1.0
	Rural town	1	1.0
Company Position	Owner	20	20.6
	Director	17	17.5
	Line Manager	29	29.9
	HR, Manager/Officer	30	32.0
Role in WIL	Liaising with academic coordinators	53	55.2
	Deciding on placement opportunities	40	41.7
	Recruitment/selection of students	47	49.0
	Administrative related tasks (OHS, Risk, MOUs)	29	30.2
	Mentoring	49	50.5
	Supervising	57	59.4

Table 2 Profile of international student survey respondents (N=56)

Variable	Sub-groups	Frequency	%
Age	Less than 20	0	0.0
	20 to 24	29	51.8
	25 to 29	28	32.1
	More than 30	9	16.1
Gender	Male	37	66.1
	Female	19	33.9
Continent of Origin	Asia	41	73.2
	Africa	10	17.9
	Europe	3	5.4
	North America	0	0.0
	South America	2	3.5
Subject area of placement	Business/Commerce	27	50.0
	Engineering	23	42.6
	IT	4	7.4
Stage of Study	Undergraduate	44	78.6
	Postgraduate	12	21.4
Placement Duration	0 to 150 hours	25	44.6
	150 to 300 hours	4	7.2
	More than 300 hours	27	48.2

International Student Participation in WIL – Western Australia

Engineering

In engineering, twelve weeks of practical experience is required for accreditation of the students by Engineers Australia. One half of the WA universities had structured this as an academic program, while the other half had not. In all universities, students were responsible for securing their own work experience, with support available from academics, careers offices, faculty coordinators and student societies. There was also flexibility in terms of the timing, recognising that most students complete their work experience during inter-semester breaks. Anecdotally,

the majority of students appeared not to be paid other than for organised, structured vacation programs which are highly competitive and only offer limited places. In three of the universities, students were able to complete their work experience either abroad or in Australia, and it was acknowledged that a sizeable proportion of international students returned home to accrue the required hours. The remaining universities required the completion of work experience (assigned to an academic unit) in Australia, with WA the preferred option.

Business

Variations in WIL models among the four WA universities were considerable, largely due to their optionality, as compared with engineering, where practical experience is a requirement of the degree. WA Business Schools were actively promoting the WIL agenda and offering placement/internship opportunities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. With the exception of units designed to meet the accreditation requirements of the Public Relations Institute of Australia, these were elective academic units. Participant numbers varied significantly across schools. For example, one university sent a handful of students on placement each year, while another placed in excess of 200 students annually. The numbers provided by the individual institutions indicate that, for the optional WIL placement-based units, international students are underrepresented. Indeed, the proportion of international students participating in WIL placements in comparison to domestic students was significantly lower than the proportion of international students to domestic students completing their degree.

The Importance of WIL for International Students

There was broad acknowledgement of the strategic importance of WIL across all four WA universities. One university had funded a team to drive and implement WIL, including an initiative to prepare and launch two new units dedicated to WIL for international students. Another was in the process of developing centralised resources, policies and processes through a newly formed WIL Working Group. However, the overall primary focus was not on enhancing WIL for international students. Rather, it was identifying good practice in managing and coordinating WIL, and developing policy and resources to increase quality WIL delivery, particularly during periods of economic downturn.

Academics, most notably in the area of business, agreed that international students wish to engage in work experience in Australia and that this greatly influences their choice of study destination. This was not as readily apparent in engineering, perhaps due to the relative lack of coordination of WIL activities and placements compared to other areas, and, therefore, less exposure to the strength of student opinion. Instead, engineering students appeared to concentrate more on part-time employment and simply completing the relevant work experience for accreditation purposes in their home country, if needed. There was not the same urgency, certainly at this particular institution, among engineering students to gain local discipline-related work experience during the course of their studies.

The importance of work placements was confirmed by the students, as depicted in Figure 1, with 70% of the sample strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing that they are an important part of the overseas study experience.

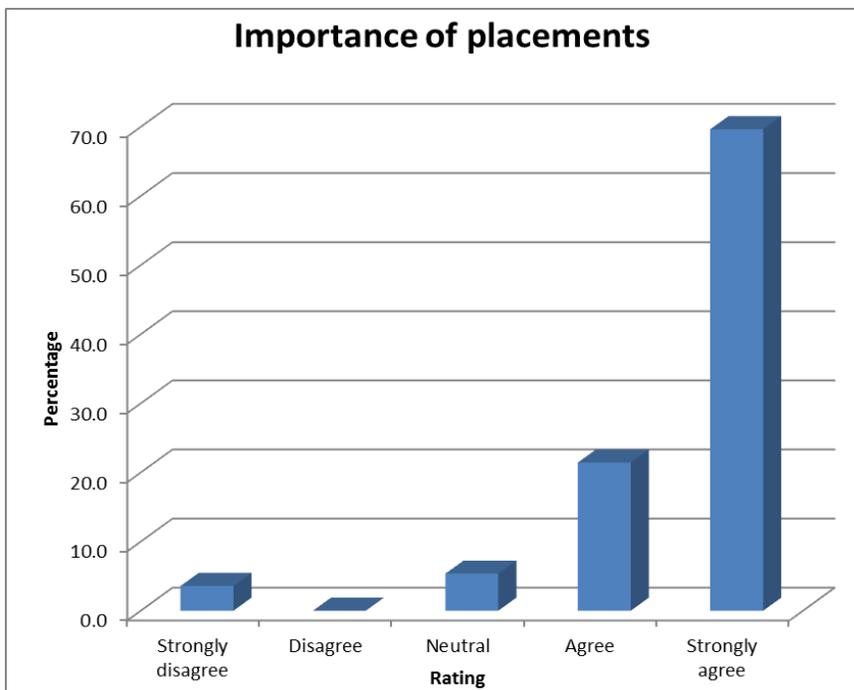


Figure 1 Perceived importance of work placements to international students

The availability of work placements appeared to influence students' choice of study destination, with 32% strongly agreeing this helped to determine where to study, and another 34% agreeing it impacted upon their decision. Only 18% felt this did not influence their study location decision in any way. Almost 90% of the sample agreed they were very excited and keen to participate in a work placement. There were no variations, using Kruskal-Wallis tests ($\alpha=.05$,) in student agreement ratings of the influence of placements on study destination, the importance of placements by continent, or feelings of excitement about their placement.

Management of WIL for International Students

A desk audit indicated that none of the four publicly-funded universities in Western Australia had different or specific arrangements in place for coordinating placements for international business or engineering students. There was also very little or no involvement by the International Office, Careers or Alumni in the organisation/coordination of placements for international students. Half the universities commented that the number of occasions the careers service or Alumni had provided leads to host organisations were few and far between. One university acknowledged that students may seek support from the abovementioned departments on an individual basis if they wished to.

There were varying levels of pre-placement preparation among the four universities and between disciplines. In business, it ranged from ad-hoc support for interview preparation with potential host organisations to a series of workshops prior to the commencement of placements. Some students attended on-campus sessions and others worked through online pre-placement modules. Handbooks and sets of frequently asked questions were also utilised. In engineering there was less formal provision of resources for students seeking placements. This may be due to the placements running externally to academic study units. In half the universities, no specific preparation was provided. The remainder focused on students being issued with a handbook outlining roles and responsibilities, pre-briefings and online preparatory modules combined with one-to-one briefings on a needs basis. Notably, there were no differences in the preparation offered to international and domestic students across both disciplines. Despite being acknowledged as beneficial, this was attributed to a lack of resourcing at the delivery level.

There was considerable variation among providers in both disciplines on where placements are permitted to take place. In business, two of the four universities allowed placements anywhere in Australia or abroad, as long as contact was maintained with academic coordinators. The other two were stricter, with one allowing placements only in the Perth metro area, and the other insisting on Australian-based placements. Engineering was marginally more relaxed with three of the four universities allowing placements anywhere, and one university restricting location to the Perth metro area. It was interesting to note that this was the only university where a WIL placement formed part of a core academic unit. In terms of differences in overseas placement arrangements, one university required students to attend an induction prior to departure, during which academic coordinators emphasised the difficulties with students receiving face-to-face support/consultation during their experience.

Results from the survey of international students participating in work placements indicated that 77% (of 56 students) completed their placements in Australia, 21% in their home country, and one student completed elsewhere. The majority (59%) of their placements were organised by the university.

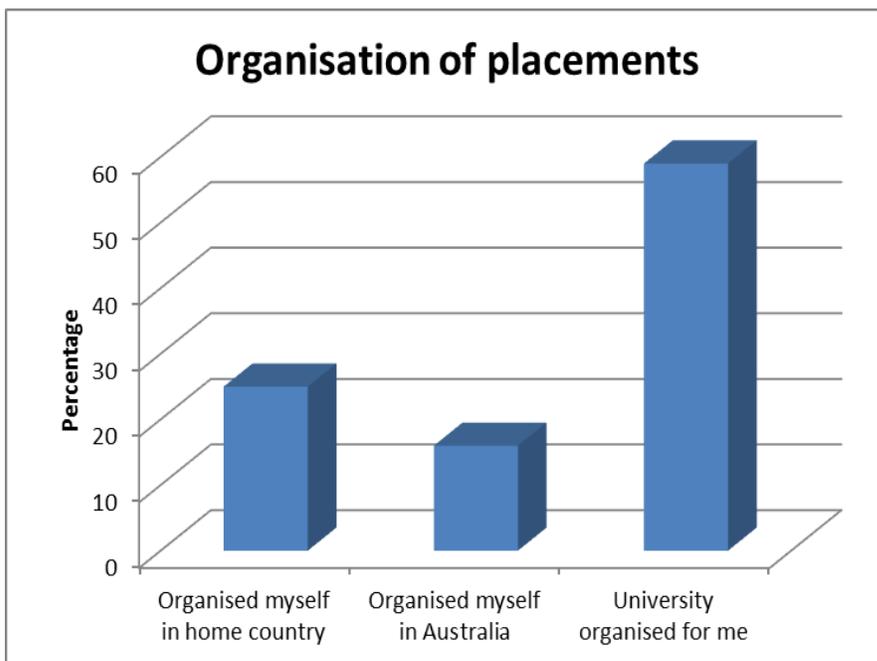


Figure 2 Organisation of international student work placements

There was broad agreement among the WIL coordinators in business and engineering that a centralised arm, overseeing WIL at university level, would be highly beneficial to ensure the streamlining of WIL activities, processes and policies, and for sharing and capitalising on broader university networks. One university provided centralised support through faculty-level WIL coordinators reporting to a central body and funded by a strategic project. There was, however, no WIL coordination across faculties, leading to inconsistent and isolated pockets of good practice at course level. In another university, an individual with responsibility for overseeing WIL had been appointed centrally. The remaining two universities did not have centralised functions; coordination happened at a mix of course and school levels, yet there was broad acknowledgement of the need for centralised resourcing and operations in their institutions. Every university offered centralised support for legal, OSH and risk considerations relating to WIL.

Benefits of WIL for International Students

Academics, employers and students were asked to consider the specific advantages to be gained by industry from hosting an international student.

Advantages of International Students to Industry

Academics expressed the view that certain attributes were more apparent in international than domestic students, noting fewer behavioural issues with international students. These included: dressing appropriately and behaving in a professional manner; time management; diligence; commitment and enthusiasm; multicultural awareness beyond that of Australian customs and norms; and global mobility. It was proposed that in some disciplines, such as IT and business, where these attributes have the potential to influence positive outcomes, students should actively market these strengths to potential host employers. Academics from all the universities agreed that international students bring certain benefits to host employers. In particular, cultural understanding of their home regions has the potential to open up market opportunities for host employers; language expertise can facilitate interaction with clients in their own tongue; and high levels of motivation amongst this cohort brings a positive influence to the workplace. The considerable expense of studying in Australia was deemed a factor in the low levels of engagement with non-compulsory events and activities.

In response to whether they offered specific attributes or skills above those offered by domestic students on placement, several international students commented on the advantage of their linguistic capabilities, which allowed them to interact directly with international clients and staff. In addition, multi-cultural awareness was considered a significant advantage, as they were more experienced at dealing with situations in different cultural contexts. Many also felt they could draw on their own disciplinary expertise and practical knowledge from work experience gained at home, and contribute to new and innovative ways of working and finding solutions to workplace issues. Some commented on their enhanced work ethic and diligence which helped to prove themselves in the competitive Australian workplace. Another student noted the greater willingness of international students to work antisocial hours, and their ability to multi-task, as compared with domestic students.

Employers who had some experience with hosting international business, engineering and/or IT students (N=62) were invited to comment on the specific benefits to industry. Interestingly, when asked about linguistic expertise, almost half the employers stated this was of limited or no benefit, and only 28% felt it provided some benefit to their organisation. These figures were almost mirrored for knowledge of local culture in areas where their business was or could potentially be operating in. The view of limited or no benefit also extended to the benefits of establishing strategic business partnerships through overcoming cultural and/or communication barriers and improved competitiveness due to enhanced global connections. When asked to rate the benefit of enhanced innovation and/or productivity due to cultural and global insights, 33% of employers felt this was of limited or no benefit, while 43% felt this would benefit their organisation to some or a significant degree. Of more benefit to the organisation was access to international students with high levels of drive, determination and work ethic. Sixty-seven per cent felt this was of some or significant benefit to their firm, while only 17% perceived this to be of little benefit.

Advantages of WIL for International Students

Academics acknowledged that work placements provide international students with not just discipline-based, but rich learning experiences, a multicultural focus, and enhanced understanding of the Australian work setting. They provide a vehicle for improving verbal and

written communication skills through exposure to professional English, and promote understanding of the different roles and responsibilities as part of the reality of working with others. Academics noted that international students can be highly aware individuals and may gain more in this area than their domestic counterparts. Work placements may also provide a rich comparison with their home country's work setting and broaden their knowledge base and experience through introducing them to different work processes and practices.

Students themselves noted a number of benefits from participating in work placements. The most common was gaining insights into the practices, norms and expectations of the Australian workplace. Another frequently mentioned benefit was enhancing technical knowledge and expertise and applying theoretical learning in a practical environment. Developing written and verbal communication skills was noted by many, as was enhancing confidence and broadening professional networks. Several students felt the placement experience had enhanced their employment prospects and provided them with an invaluable opportunity to gain relevant work experience beyond that of their part-time employment. Many felt the placement had improved their non-technical skills such as time management, self-management and teamwork. Others felt the placement and its associated assessments had made them more self-aware.

Barriers to Expanding WIL Opportunities for International Students

It is widely acknowledged that international students experience more difficulties than their domestic counterparts in sourcing suitable work placements. Academics, students and employers were invited to comment on the difficulties and barriers around the organisation of placements for international students.

Lack of Professional Networks

Academics concurred that a lack of established networks contributed to the difficulties associated with sourcing appropriate placements for international students. This was supported by several students who noted the lack of opportunities for work placements in comparison with domestic students. They felt it was difficult to compete with local students who were preferred by potential host employers. Many felt the real problem with the lack of opportunities for

international students was due to the limited number of placements available. They expressed the view that if international students were as well connected as their domestic counterparts, they would be able to secure relatively more positions.

Student Expectations

Some academics, particularly in business, felt that international students' expectations were often unrealistically high. For example, accounting students expected to be placed in one of the Big Four firms. Some agreed that students became fussier as they became more aware of the different placement options available. Three-quarters of the students participating in the project indicated they wanted to undertake work placements in large or mid-tier organisations, and assigning them to larger organisations was cited as an area where universities could be providing more support. Fussiness among international students in relation to using public transport, travelling too far for placements, and undertaking work only in their chosen area, were also noted by academic coordinators as indicative of these students' inclination to expect more because they were paying more.

Logistics and Administration

In regard to logistics, academics found the lack of a local driving license and/or access to a car sometimes limited placement opportunities, particularly with firms based in industrial parks/areas not easily accessible by public transport. One student mentioned the difficulties of securing a placement during the inter-semester break when she returned home to visit family and had to undertake interviews by telephone or Skype. Another commented on the difficulties of gaining a place in a formal internship program because the host employer specified applicants had to be Australian residents or citizens. In engineering, where it was uncommon for companies to employ people without permanent residency, academics felt this also extended to work placements. More broadly, academics noted that many employers used work placements as a means of identifying future talent, yet - due to limitations on post-graduation working visas and residency restrictions - this was often not extended to international students. Some students from engineering, where placements are not organised by an academic coordinator, commented on the lack of support provided by the university.

Perceptions of Weak Communication Skills and Cultural Differences

Academics encountered reluctance among employers to host international students, with some categorically stating they did not wish to host them. Their concerns were mainly related to perceptions of weak oral and/or written communication skills, which they feared may negatively affect interactions with clients. This sentiment was also commented on by a small number of students who felt that their English language skills disadvantaged them when securing work placements. Some employers anticipated there would be more work involved in hosting international students, due to the need for additional preparation and explanation. Academics also noted employer bias due to concerns about cultural differences and stereotypes, perceived as posing problems for clients, customers and existing employees.

Employers who had previously hosted domestic, but not international students ($N=36$), were asked to assign importance ratings to a range of reasons for this. Table 3 suggests that most employers were typically offered domestic students for work placement opportunities, and that international students were not intentionally declined because of relatively weak communication skills or concerns for their status or visa regulations. In fact, there was a very high percentage of “strongly disagree” responses to such questions and no clear reason/s for the lack of placements for international students. Only around 10% to 20% of the sample agreed that reasons for the low uptake of international students in work placements related to individual peculiarities, international status and citizenship, communication skills, and prior experience. The underrepresentation of international students in WIL, and their feelings of disillusionment and despair, could actually be due to a combination of all these factors.

Table 3 Reasons for hosting domestic but not international students

Reason	Rating	Count	%
Unaware they were available for work placement	Strongly disagree	8	22.2
	Disagree	4	11.1
	Neutral	9	25.0
	Agree	5	13.9
	Strongly agree	10	27.8
Opportunity did not arise; offered to domestic students only	Strongly agree	7	19.4
	Disagree	2	5.6
	Neutral	3	8.3
	Agree	4	11.1
	Strongly agree	20	55.6
Offered but declined due to concerns about particular student	Strongly disagree	25	71.4
	Disagree	2	5.7
	Neutral	2	5.7
	Agree	3	8.6
	Strongly agree	3	8.6
Offered but declined due to international status	Strongly disagree	26	74.3
	Disagree	4	11.4
	Neutral	1	2.9
	Agree	1	2.9
	Strongly agree	3	8.6
Only offered to domestic students (i.e. Australian citizens)	Strongly disagree	22	61.1
	Disagree	3	8.3
	Neutral	5	13.9
	Agree	2	5.6
	Strongly agree	4	11.1
Previous bad experiences with hosting international students	Strongly disagree	29	80.6
	Disagree	0	0.0
	Neutral	2	5.6
	Agree	2	5.6
	Strongly agree	3	8.3

Reason	Rating	Count	%
Relatively weak communication skills	Strongly disagree	25	69.4
	Disagree	1	2.8
	Neutral	4	11.1
	Agree	3	8.3
	Strongly agree	3	8.3

Employers who actively hosted domestic and international students in business, IT and engineering were asked to rate a range of potential concerns (see Table 4). Relatively weak English language skills emerged as a key issue, with over half the employers flagging this as an area of concern. There was a strong indication that cultural fit, quality of work, and understanding of local business markets were not areas of concern when considering whether to host an international student. Slightly less so was increased mentoring and supervision, with over half the sample stating this was not of concern and approximately one-quarter stating that it was. Availability post-graduation was an issue for one-fifth of the sample, but not for around one-half. Finally, student availability for placement interviews and the recruitment process appeared to be an issue, with around a third stating it was of concern and slightly more than 40% claiming it was not so. When prompted for any other concerns, one employer named computer literacy and transport issues, as international students were less likely to have access to a car. There appears, therefore, to be more evidence of particular concerns with international students among host employers who have had previous experience in this area. The project sample also highlighted discrepancies between the views of academics and students and those of host employers.

Challenges of the WIL Experience

International students may be perceived as under-performing while in the workplace. Academics, students and host employers all commented on the challenges which can impact student performance during their placement experience.

Table 4 Concerns with hosting international students on placement

Reason	Level of Concern	Frequency	%
Student availability for interview/recruitment process	Of no concern at all	14	25.0
	Of little concern	9	16.1
	Neutral	15	26.8
	Of some concern	10	17.9
	Of significant concern	8	14.3
Increased paperwork	Of no concern at all	23	41.1
	Of little concern	14	25.0
	Neutral	10	17.9
	Of some concern	8	14.3
	Of significant concern	1	1.8
Less likely to be available post-graduation	Of no concern at all	19	33.9
	Of little concern	11	19.6
	Neutral	15	26.8
	Of some concern	6	10.7
	Of significant concern	5	8.9
Weaker English capabilities	Of no concern at all	6	10.7
	Of little concern	7	12.5
	Neutral	13	23.2
	Of some concern	15	26.8
	Of significant concern	15	26.8
Poor cultural fit with the organisation	Of no concern at all	29	51.8
	Of little concern	10	17.9
	Neutral	10	17.9
	Of some concern	4	7.1
	Of significant concern	3	5.4
Poor quality of work	Of no concern at all	24	42.9
	Of little concern	11	19.6
	Neutral	10	17.9
	Of some concern	7	12.5
	Of significant concern	4	7.1

Reason	Level of Concern	Frequency	%
Increased mentoring and supervision	Of no concern at all	18	32.1
	Of little concern	14	25.0
	Neutral	10	17.9
	Of some concern	12	21.4
	Of significant concern	2	3.6
Lack of understanding of local business market	Of no concern at all	19	33.9
	Of little concern	16	28.6
	Neutral	11	19.6
	Of some concern	7	12.5
	Of significant concern	3	5.4

Cultural Differences and Expectations

Cultural differences were noted by several academics across disciplines as being potentially problematic, with previous work placements creating confusion and angst for students, clients and hosts. This was often related to: international students' lack of familiarity with local jargon and terminology; particular activities and tasks that are taboo in their own culture; and a lack of understanding management hierarchy and organisational structures. In some cases international students were perceived by their workplace supervisors as not engaging with their placement when they did not speak up or ask questions. This was sometimes interpreted as disinterest rather than a cultural norm, since asking questions is considered by Asian students as challenging supervisors and now showing appropriate deference to authority (Elliott & Reynolds, 2014).

Some academics found students had difficulty comprehending the hierarchy of their respective disciplines/practices when it differed from those in their home country. Physiotherapy for example, sits in a different position within the Australian medical/hospital system to some other countries, and can cause confusion for students. Academics in most universities noted that students are often less immersed in Australian culture due to the lack of "campus-based universities" such as in the UK or USA, where more interaction exists between domestic and international students. While racism towards students was considered very unusual by academics, it had been encountered in certain disciplines.

Many students noted that adjusting to the Australian work setting was a challenge, especially in the early stages of their placement. This included: difficulties with grasping the code of conduct; expectations of employers; and lack of understanding of established workplace practices and hierarchical structures, i.e. who they should ask about what. This was by far the most frequently noted challenge among responding students, and was reinforced when they were asked to identify areas they most needed preparation in prior to placement. More than 50% cited developing their understanding of professional codes of conduct, workplace ethics, and business etiquette within the Australian workplace. This lack of understanding also extended to workplace safety and risk management. Some students complained of a lack of appreciation for the funding, logistics and characteristics of the sector in which they were based, particularly in the not-for-profit sector. This sent a strong message about the inadequate understanding of Australian workplace culture, practices and expectations of professionalism among international students. Some even said this caused them to be withdrawn at times, particularly in the initial stages of their placements, as they struggled to comprehend their work environment.

One employer found managing the bias of senior management a challenge when it came to hosting international students, due to preconceptions about their workplace performance. Cultural differences were deemed problematic by some who felt they should be better prepared in relation to their expectations, behaviours, and understanding of customs in the Australian workplace and the broader society. An example of this was a male student's reluctance to be respectful and accepting of a female manager in the workplace. A lack of understanding of Australian legislation pertaining to the local business market was also noted.

Some academics commented on the varying definitions of employability in different countries. For example, some countries focus on discipline content, whereas others place more emphasis on non-technical skills development and relevant work experience. This too impacts on students' perceptions of WIL and the relative importance of aspects such as alignment with students' disciplines and the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills like communication and teamwork.

Assessment, Content, Structure and Delivery

Academics in both engineering and business noted that many international students have weak report-writing skills. This is a frequent requirement of host organisations and is likely to form part of the students' formal assessment. Weak report-writing skills are particularly prevalent among engineering students, since their degree focuses predominantly on numbers and analysis, and report writing/construction forms a much smaller component of their curriculum. As a result, these students are less exposed to opportunities for preparation prior to placement. In alignment with good practice principles (Billet, 2011), reflection forms a major part of assessment in WIL units. Academics noted that international students struggled to be self-critical because of concerns they would be marked down if they recorded negative things about themselves and their performance. Other essential requirements for WIL are critical thinking and negotiating skills, which may not come naturally to international students who are used to rote learning. In some disciplines such as psychology, a talking-centred counselling approach is pivotal to effective performance in practice, and it is vital for international students to embrace and master this technique. Interestingly, students did not raise any of these issues while on placement, or as areas in which they required further preparation.

A small number of students identified project management as an area in which they needed improved preparation, and suggested this skill be developed in classroom-based units prior to placement. Some felt they lacked the technical skills to complete the assigned tasks, frequently assessments, while on placements, and felt they should have been better prepared through academic units prior to placement. Other students commented on a lack of connection between hosts and academic coordinators and, consequently, a lack of understanding among workplace supervisors of the academic requirements associated with placements.

Language

Academics noted inadequate English-language proficiency as a common cause for confusion in the workplace, where students were unable to follow the instructions of their supervisors or communicate with their peers. Heavy accents also made communication difficult. Many students regarded communication while on placement as challenging and acknowledged they should have been better prepared. One student talked about the need to adjust their writing style to suit the

workplace as being more difficult for international students to master. A significant majority of employers noted language as a particular challenge for international students during their placements. This included conversational English, 'office' English, written communication, and understanding technical terminology. Several noted the tendency for international students to aggregate around others from their home countries rather than immersing themselves in the Australian culture and language. This hampered their ability to improve their English fluency and reduced opportunities to assume more responsibility, such as interacting with clients. Several hosts identified this as an area in which international students should be better prepared.

Support during Placement

Academics in business acknowledged that international students favour structure, require more details about events and activities than domestic students, and are more "needy" than their domestic counterparts. This propensity for detailed information and double-checking was attributed to a strong desire to achieve success and was particularly apparent in the early stages of placements when it placed increased pressure on both academics and workplace supervisors. Apprehension about the placement experience emerged from the survey, with over 50% of students admitting to feeling nervous about going out on a work placement. Several also commented on the challenges of balancing paid work, study, and placement commitments. One employer noted that international students lacked a clear understanding of business pressures, needed constant reassurance and wanted to be 'looked after', which did not work well during busy periods.

Of the 20 employers who responded, 35% felt there were differences between the levels and scope of work completed by international and domestic students on placement, 40% stated there were no differences, and 25% were unsure. Lower productivity among international students was attributed to differences in language skills, confidence, and the need for closer monitoring and supervision to achieve the same outcomes. Only 30% of responding employers felt international students required additional support on placement, particularly related to understanding what was required of them, and needed more supervision while carrying out tasks.

Other Challenges

In their assessment of the challenges they faced on placement, many students commented on the difficulties of connecting theory with practice, and a lack of technical expertise in certain areas. This was of great concern to those who felt their inexperience and lack of disciplinary knowledge inhibited their performance. Some noted their lack of networks as disadvantageous, while others claimed this negatively impacted their ability to complete assigned tasks. The problem was corroborated by employers who agreed that relatively weak professional networks among international students was a hindrance, and that efforts should be made to develop this prior to placement. Confidence was an issue for many students who believed they were inadequately equipped to contribute effectively in the workplace, and overwhelmed by having to interact with established professionals in the field. Others commented on their concerns about 'getting along with others' which may or may not have been related to cultural differences. Other challenges included: lack of supervision and changes in supervisory arrangements; lack of engagement with the placement process among workplace peers and/or supervisors; inadequate levels of challenge; and an inability to multi-task and self-manage.

Onerous paperwork was noted by one employer as problematic, particularly where a desire to extend placements is hampered by difficulties associated with obtaining tax file numbers and working within visa restrictions. The issue of computer literacy was raised by a small number of employers who claimed international students lacked familiarity with the Microsoft Office suite.

Strategies to Enhance WIL Outcomes for International Students

Academics, employers and students were invited to identify strategies to improve international students' access to work placements and ways of enhancing their learning experience. Notably, several students felt they were adequately prepared for their placements and additional support was not required.

Expanding WIL Participation

Building Networks

Student responses indicated there was a definite need for universities to intervene and raise their participation in WIL to improve students' employment prospects after graduation. Unsurprisingly, this was largely expressed by students who organised their own placements. It was interesting to note from the survey that it was predominantly engineering students who experienced problems sourcing placements, because unlike IT and business students, they have no access to formal support. The need for long-term, collaborative partnerships between local employers and the university was recommended by a small number of international students who expressed disappointment in the lack of networks available to them.

There are a number of ways to build networks to assist international students in sourcing placements more easily, such as:

- Enhancing the role of support services, such as Careers, Alumni and International Offices, and increasing collaboration among these various functions to assist international students in sourcing placements.
- Establishing partnerships at university and faculty levels with prospective employers who have global operations and may benefit from the cultural insights and linguistic abilities of international students. These could be identified and targeted via local business and professional associations serving members from different global regions. Establishing formal or informal commitments with firms to host a certain number of international students each year would be ideal.
- Introducing and/or enhancing the role of student societies for introducing international students to local community groups, professional associations, businesses, and charitable organisations.
- Approaching a broader range of potential host organisations. Several employers had not been offered international students and indicated a willingness to host them if the opportunity presented itself. Others, who had not previously hosted, suggested bypassing Human Resource (HR) departments to organise placements, since they claimed that HR is not usually receptive to such initiatives.

Realigning Expectations

Students should be introduced to current labour market trends and encouraged to gain insights into the types of organisations, industries and sectors that are employing new graduates. This will broaden their understanding of market trends and where the available jobs are, particularly in a soft graduate labour market and one where not-for-profits, local government, and small- and medium-sized organisations play an important role in employing graduates. International students also need to re-align their expectations and consider options other than high-profile, multinational organisations. They also need to be more flexible regarding the need for extended travel and “thinking outside the box” to secure placements in a competitive environment.

Logistics and Arrangements

Academics in engineering suggested introducing the option of completing placements abroad as a potential solution. This may ease the high demand for local placements, and make it easier for international students to use established networks, fit into their local workplaces, and combine their working placement with a family visit. It does not, however, address the need for relevant work experience in the student’s host country. Neither is there an assurance of duty of care, risk management and quality learning – all critical elements of a successful WIL program. A small number of employers suggested that international students were better off completing their work placements in their home countries where they would feel more comfortable being in a familiar environment. This could serve as an initial introduction for applying their theoretical knowledge in a practical environment, and give them the confidence and skills to undertake working experience in a new cultural context. One local government employer suggested placing students in “sister” cities in their countries of origin to acclimate students to work experience before introducing them to a new cultural environment.

Another employer suggested extending WIL programs to regional areas where it may be easier to accommodate international students. This however, raises issues for students who are completing other units at the same time and relying on part-time employment to fund their studies. Further, additional cultural disparity and difficulties may be introduced. The proposal may have more potential in full-time placement programs. A further employer noted there

should be education around post-study education rights and visa regulations, as this is currently a poorly understood area for employers.

A small number of students commented on the cost of the placement units being equal to the cost of other academic units and viewed this as a barrier to completing elective WIL units. The additional costs associated with WIL, such as reduced paid employment and the cost of appropriate clothing and travel, may prevent some international students from participating. Some students also noted that many were not aware of the placement opportunities available within their disciplines, and proposed advertising information on WIL programs more broadly within universities.

Expanding WIL Delivery Options

“Non-placement” WIL is a means of combatting high levels of competition for limited placements and for providing less competitive candidates with an opportunity to engage with industry in an authentic learning experience. Delivery is often innovative and can extend to virtual WIL. Options may include:

- Connecting students with industry through industry-based projects, role-plays and simulations without being assigned to a particular organisation for work placement;
- Introducing options for service learning where students are based in the community to develop civic responsibility and a broader understanding of societal values. This allows students to develop an understanding of Australian society and customs, and builds communication and teamwork skills. It may be considered a logical stepping stone for some to gain initial exposure to a new cultural environment and a platform for nurturing their confidence, communication and cultural insights, followed by a placement in a professional environment later in their studies; and
- Placing students in groups to give a greater number exposure to industry with the same number of hosts committing to the arrangement. This may, however, have implications for improving communication and cultural insights, since students may rely on each other and interact less with others in the workplace.

Managing Employer Preferences and Perceptions

Some academics felt that, rather than trying to change employer perceptions, the placement of students should cater for diversity and the different needs of both students and employers. Academics noted that people cope differently in similar situations, and placing a student where issues may arise due to potential bias or a need for strong communication skills, usually lacking in international candidates, could cause more problems during the semester. There was also some debate over whether matching a student to a supervisor with a similar cultural background could limit their learning. One employer suggested that students are only in the workplace for a limited time and it was therefore expedient to match them to a setting where they felt comfortable with the culture, tasks, responsibilities, and language, in order to ensure the best outcome for all parties.

For most academics the overarching goal was changing employer misconceptions and focusing on the positive aspects of hosting international students. One student, who was highly frustrated with employers' reluctance to host international students, understood the preference for domestic students in paid employment, but viewed the bias as inexcusable when applied to placements for providing a quality learning experience. When international students were asked to recommend ways in which organisations could better support international students, several commented on the bias of host employers and called for acceptance of international students. The clear underlying message was that universities should examine and address the bias that exists in this space.

One employer also recommended putting specific strategies in place to better understand and eliminate bias among organisations and their management. Those organisations who had previously hosted international students commented on their superior work ethic and drive. They felt the best way to overcome bias and change poor perceptions were to showcase international students as much as possible.

Improving the WIL Experience

Managing Cultural Differences and Expectations

Preparing international students to identify and manage cultural differences and educating them on what to expect in the Australian workplace appear to be critical. This is vital for informing students and dispelling misconceptions, and will alleviate anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed when they start their placements. Preparation should address culture, norms, codes of conduct, organisational hierarchy, language protocols, governing legislation, and the values of the Australian workplace. Students should be guided on how to behave in a general sense, and how to manage specific scenarios which may arise during their placement. Providing them with broad insights into the sectors in which they may be based, and the differences among them in terms of funding, culture, and work practices (including Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) protocols) may also be helpful. Preparation could take the form of:

- Pre-placement modules, videos, one-on-one discussions and/or talks by previous international students about their personal experiences. A broad-based preparation module for placements could be contextualised by Careers and International Offices to manage specific cultural issues since they may have better insights;
- Signing a code of conduct and discussing prior case studies and examples may assist students to understand what is required of them. This may include, for example, responding appropriately to feedback and utilising it as a learning tool to inform and improve future practice; and
- Ensuring hosts are aware of cultural differences and implementing processes to manage these differences. An example could be a student's unwillingness to drink or serve alcohol due to cultural traditions and norms, and amending work arrangements to manage this.

Several students from different cultural backgrounds felt host organisations could provide more support and assist with a smoother transition into the workplace. Strategies in the workplace could include:

- Giving students more time to adjust to a new cultural setting at the commencement of their placement;

- Issuing students with relevant information and reading material about their new organisation, its mission, code of conduct, and values;
- Assigning a mentor with insights into the student's home culture to answer questions and pre-empt any issues which may arise;
- Introducing students to a network of peers to enhance their confidence, cross-cultural outlook, communication and teamwork skills;
- Implementing a buddy scheme whereby international students are assigned to a workplace peer or more senior staff member with a similar cultural background to initially spend some time with the student. This could be useful for translating, explaining relevant codes of conduct, customs, and specific jargon;
- Realigning students' expectations with the realities of the workplace. This includes understanding that administrative and menial tasks form part of work, and that the scope for 'exciting' work is limited;
- Overall, academics felt it was important for international students to accept that cultural differences exist and to be mindful of what is expected from them and entry-level graduates in order to succeed. While it was considered important for students to align with a professional identity, it was acknowledged there would be some misalignment and grappling with their own personal beliefs and values, common among students as they learn to become entry-level professionals (Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012).

Time Spent on the Matching Process

Some employers advocated a better matching service by universities of students and placement opportunities. For example, where verbal and written communication skills are critical, these placements may not be suited to certain international students. Unfortunately, communication is one of the most commonly cited skills for new graduates (GCA, 2014) and, anecdotally, highly in demand for placement recruits. One employer said that universities should simply not present international students to employers if they had poor communication skills because this would simply reinforce their bias. Another employer felt that university time and resources would be well spent developing students' career-management skills so they had a better understanding of the pathways and short-term job opportunities available to them. This would give students an appreciation of the type of placement they are seeking and ensure a smoother matching

process. On the flipside, several students indicated a preference for being presented with a number of different placement opportunities from which to choose, according to their skill set.

Language Support

Many employers commented on the language deficiency of international students and the difficulty of managing this, particularly for smaller organisations that lacked the capacity to remediate this problem. Strong communication skills were regarded by some as imperative, and weak language skills made meaningful placements difficult. Improvements in language were therefore considered critical to increase the uptake of international students and improve their chances of success. Better preparation of communication skills, emphasising report-writing and business language, common jargon, email etiquette, oral presentations, telephone etiquette and conversational English, with a focus on expectations within the Australian workplace rather than “academic speak”, are clearly required. This support could be provided in a variety of ways and should precede the placement. Some students felt additional language support should be available from academics during their placement.

Assessment Processes

Some students felt isolated because they were not able to meet on campus to discuss assessment requirements with others. They expressed a need for more support in deconstructing and compiling assessment requirements. Academics suggested a number of strategies to help students better manage assessment processes and placement content, such as:

- Increasing the number of on-campus sessions for discussing and deconstructing assessment requirements;
- Facilitating peer engagement through discussion boards, blogs, wikis and other tools to enable students completing the same assessment tasks to discuss assessment requirements with others;
- Developing report-writing and reflective writing skills by embedding them into curricula prior to going on placement;

- Clearly articulating to students the importance of being a critical practitioner and the reliance of the profession on new graduates to engage with this process in order to improve practices and outcomes;
- Reframing “negative identification and discussions of personal weaknesses” in a positive way in marking rubrics and grading schema;
- Developing project management skills prior to placements; and
- Ensuring computer literacy and a mastery of relevant software prior to placement, particularly the Microsoft Office suite.

Structure, Design and Content of Placements

Students identified several strategies which they believed would enhance their experiences and performance on placements:

- Rotating through different work areas to gain broader exposure and understanding of different organisational functions. Some found working on one specific project very limiting and proposed a selection of tasks, or at least a minor project in a different area, to assist learning;
- Facilitating additional responsibilities and challenges although several students felt out of their depth in relation to technical abilities. Creating a balance between challenge and capability appears to be difficult;
- Organisations need to be more receptive to what students have to offer, their strengths and weaknesses, and shape the program of work around strengths to produce better outcomes; and
- Tailoring induction and orientation processes within the placement program relevant to the sector and organisation type. While this may be effective in theory, resourcing this for large numbers of students assigned to a range of different settings may be difficult to manage.

Workplace Support

Many academics felt that international students required more feedback and guidance during their placements. Industry support is particularly problematic considering that workplace supervisors and colleagues are often time-poor, even though students represent a considerable resource. Several students supported this notion and felt they lacked supervision and mentoring

in regard to the technical aspects of their placements. Students also felt they lacked direction in applying their discipline knowledge in the workplace. This criticism was directed at both university and workplace coordinators, with one student commenting on a detrimental lack of connection between supervisors in the university and the workplace. Strategies to improve workplace support include:

- Establishing a dedicated workplace supervisor and mentor, as well as a secondary person assigned as a back-up. Responsibilities may include a structured induction, incorporating students in day-to-day activities and on-the-job training. New graduates within the organisation potentially have a role to play here;
- Employers advocated better tracking of international student progress by academic coordinators to enable earlier identification and management of potential issues;
- Establishing an academic mentor who can advise students on technical content while they are on placement. This may involve regular meetings with technical experts or more of a counselling approach, and will allow students to raise questions and discuss issues regarding their workplace tasks and projects. Several employers believed this would relieve pressure on the host organisation because students could then refer technical questions to their assigned academic mentor;
- Implementing an international student buddy scheme, where students who have completed the work placement program provide support to those currently in the workplace. This was advocated by both academics and students; and
- Host organisations should encourage staff to take an interest in the students' culture to make them feel more comfortable and at home. The importance of calm and patience in coaching students effectively should also be highlighted.

Other

Other strategies for preparing international students are:

- Managing international students' expectations of the work-load associated with work placements and increasing awareness of how this can impact on study and paid work commitments. Students should be advised to reduce their academic load for the relevant semester and limit paid employment; and

- Hosts should be briefed on areas that may impact on international students during their placements and be made aware of the support they can provide to enhance outcomes for all involved. Some proposed this preparation be extended to include interview techniques, given that students are often not ready for interviews with potential hosts. International students should also familiarise themselves with the host company’s website, products and services.

Conclusion

Enhancing WIL outcomes for international students in Australia can: assist industry to strengthen global partnerships and national competitiveness; improve the profile of Australian universities as a destination of choice; and improve the employability of international students and their chances of employment in the international market. Despite Blackmore et al.’s (2014) claim that “overcoming barriers to international student engagement in Work-Integrated Learning is now high on the agenda of many Australian universities”, WIL still appears to be under-resourced in the higher education sector, particularly in regard to preparing international students adequately and locating suitable placements for them.

This project highlights the challenges and barriers affecting international students’ participation in work placements. It identifies a number of strategies for increasing participation levels and also for improving the quality of their WIL experience. Implementing strategies to overcome these inhibitors will enhance the quality of international student education through greater access to quality WIL offerings, and improve Australia’s standing in the global education market. These strategies will assist individual students by improving their employability and their likelihood of attaining employment after graduation. As a result, global engagement between Australia and other countries is likely to expand. This project considers the broad cohort of international students participating in WIL, and recommends further exploration of the differences between the barriers and challenges facing international students from different disciplines and countries of origin to further our understanding of the key issues. It may also assist in developing more tailored solutions and approaches at faculty, school and course levels, for cohorts of students according to their cultural heritage.

References

- Australian Universities International Directors' Forum (2013). *Improving the employment outcomes of international students*. Melbourne: AUIDF.
- Arthur, N., & Nunes, S. (2014). Should I stay or should I go home? Career guidance with international students. In Rulmani, G., Bakshi, A., Leong, F. & Watts, T. (Eds.), *Handbook of Career Development* (pp. 587-606). New York: Springer.
- Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (2013). *Information and communications technology workforce study*. Canberra: AWPA.
- Billet, S. (2011). *Curriculum and pedagogical bases for effectively integrating practice-based experiences*. Strawberry Hills, NSW: Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).
- Blackmore, J., Farrell, L. Devlin, M., Arber, R., Gribble, C. & Rahimi, M. (2012). *Investigating stakeholder responses to changing skilled migration policies for Australian international graduates*. Deakin University, Melbourne: Australian Research Council.
- Blackmore, J., Gribble, C., Farrell, L., Rahimi, M., Arber, R., & Devlin, M. (2014). *Australian International Graduates and the transition to employment: Final report*. Deakin University, Melbourne: ARC.
- Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian higher education: Final report*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Diversity Council Australia (2014). *Cracking the cultural ceiling: future proofing your business in the Asian century*. Sydney: DCA.
- Department of Education and Training (2015). *Draft Strategy for International Education*. Canberra: DET.
- Department of Industry (2014). *Engaging employers in Work Integrated Learning: Current state and future priorities*. Richmond, Vic, Australia: PhillipsKPA.
- Elliott, C. & Reynolds, M. (2014). Participative pedagogies, group work and the international classroom: an account of students' and tutors' experiences. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(2), 307-320.
- Graduate Careers Australia. (2014). *Employment for new graduates: slow but steady*. Melbourne: GCA.
- Gribble, C (2014). Employment, work placements and work integrated learning of international students in Australia. *Research Digest Series*. Melbourne: International Education Association of Australia.
- Gribble, C., Blackmore, J. & Rahimi, M. (2014, February 25). *The Australian*, February 25. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au>
- International Education Association of Australia (2012). *Internships and work placement opportunities for international students in Victoria*. Melbourne: IEAA.
- Isherwood, S. (2014). *The Graduate Labour Market in 2014*, presentation at the Employability Summit (4), University of Leicester, December 18th 2013.
- Jackson, D. (2014). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2), 350-367.

- Jander, M (2014, Aug 6). Unemployment surges to 12-year high at 6.4 per cent; youth jobless figure hits 14 pc. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au>.
- Lane, B (2014, February 25). Work experience for overseas students challenges uni sector. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au>.
- Lawrence, R. (2014). *Understanding Generation G: An Australian perspective and the impact upon future international education demand*. Melbourne: Prospect Research and Marketing.
- Lawson, C. (2012). *Student voices: Enhancing the experience of international students in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Education International.
- McIlveen, P., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., Smith, M., Torjul, P. & Tyler, J. (2011). Perceptions of career development learning and work-integrated learning in Australian higher education. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 20(1), 32-41.
- Murray, D., Blackmore, J., Gribble, C., & Hall, R. (2012). *Internships and work placement opportunities for international students in Victoria*. Melbourne: IEAA.
- Ong, D., & Ramia, G. (2009). Study-work-life balance and the welfare of international students. *Labour & Industry: A journal of the social and economic relations of work*, 20(2), 181-206.
- Patrick, C., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M. & Pretto, G. (2009). *The WIL (Work Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study, final report*. Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology.
- Pegg, A., Waldock, J., Hendy-Isaac, S. & Lawton, R. (2012). *Pedagogy for employability*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.
- Sharma, Y (2014, July 1). What do you do with millions of extra graduates? *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-28062071>
- Smith, M., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., McIlveen, P., Torjul, P. & Tyler, J. (2009). *Career development learning: maximising the contribution of work-integrated learning to the student experience*. University of Wollongong, NSW: ALTC.
- Trede, F., Macklin, R. & Bridges, D. (2012). Professional identity development: A review of the HE literature. *Studies in HE*, 37(3), 365-384.
- Universities Australia (2014). *Statement of Intent: Work-Integrated Learning – strengthening university and business partnerships*. Retrieved from <http://acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WIL-statement-of-intent.pdf>
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2012). *Graduate employability in Asia*. Bangkok: UNESCO
- Universities Australia, BCA, ACCI, AIG & ACEN (2015). *National strategy on Work Integrated Learning in university education*. Retrieved from <http://cdn1.acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/National-WIL-Strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf>
- Wilson, T. (2012). *A review of business–university collaboration*. London, UK: Department for Innovation and Skills.
- Wilton, N. (2012). The impact of work placements on skill development and career outcomes for business and management graduates. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(5), 603-620.

Appendix One - Employer survey instrument

1. *What best describes your organisation type?*

- Public sector
- Private sector
- Not-for-profit

2. *How many staff does your organisation employ?*

- 1-49 (small)
- 50-149 (medium)
- 150+ (large)

3. *What industry sector does your organisation operate in?*

- Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants
- Communications
- Cultural and Recreational Services
- Electricity, Gas and Water Supply
- Health and Community Services
- Mining
- Property and Business Services
- Transport and Storage
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing
- Construction
- Education
- Finance and Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Personal Services and Other Services
- Retail Trade
- Wholesale Trade

4. *What is the primary location of your business?*

- Metropolitan centre (i.e. Perth)
- Regional city (i.e. Bunbury)
- Rural town (i.e. Waroona)

5. *Which of the following best describes your position within the organisation?*

- Owner
- Director
- Line Manager
- HR, Manager/Officer
- Other (please state...)

6. *Please indicate your role in relation to university student work placements in your organisation?*

- Liaising with academic WIL coordinators
- Deciding on placement opportunities for local universities
- Recruitment/selection of students (interviewing, review of resume)
- Administration related tasks (OHS, risk management, MOUs etc)
- Mentoring
- Supervising
- Other

7. *Has your organisation hosted a university Business/Commerce/Engineering student on a work placement before?*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Filter those answering 'no' or 'not sure' to Question 19.

8. *Of the university Business/Commerce/Engineering students you have hosted on work placements before, have any been international students?*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Filter those answering 'yes' or 'not sure' to Question 10.

9. *To what extent do you agree with the following reasons for your organisation not hosting an international university student on work placement in your organisation? Rating is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree'.*

- Unaware they were available for work placements
- The opportunity has not yet arisen, offered domestic students only.
- We have been offered international students but have declined due to concerns relating to the particular student under consideration.
- We have been offered international students but have declined due to concerns relating specifically to their international status.
- Our organisation only offers work placement opportunities to domestic students (i.e. Australian citizens)
- Previous bad experiences with hosting international student(s)
- Potential students have failed the recruitment process due to weak communication skills
- Other (please specify).....

Filter in from Question 8.

10. *Which of the following, if any, concern your organisation when considering whether to host an international student? Rating is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'of no concern at all' and 5 indicating 'a significant concern'.*

- Student availability for interview/recruitment process for placement
- Increased levels of paperwork in comparison with domestic students
- Less likely to be available post-graduation (due to returning to their host country) than domestic students so the 'try before you buy' benefits of placements are not realised
- Weaker English language capabilities than domestic students
- Poor cultural fit with organisation due to different cultural background
- Poor quality of work produced in comparison with domestic students
- Increased levels of mentoring and supervision required in comparison to domestic students
- Lack of understanding of local business markets
- Other (please specify)

Filter those who have not hosted international students to Question 15

11. *In your experience, are there differences in the level of difficulty and/or scope of works completed by international and domestic students while on placement?*

- Not sure
- No
- Yes. If yes, please explain

12. *In your experience, are there differences in the level of support needed from the employer for international and domestic students while on placement?*

- Not sure
- No
- Yes. If yes, please explain

13. *Please describe any areas, if any, you believe international students require better preparation in before going out on placements, in comparison with domestic students?*

14. *In your experience, are there any specific challenges which international students experience while on placement, in comparison to domestic students?*

Filter in from Question 10

15. *To what extent do you agree that your organisation may benefit in the following areas from hosting specifically international students on work placement? Rating is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'Strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree'.*

- Enhanced linguistic expertise
- Knowledge of local culture in areas in which your business is currently operating or expanding into in the future
- Establishing strategic business partnerships through overcoming cultural and/or communication barriers
- Enhanced innovation and/or productivity due to cultural and global insights
- Improved competitiveness due to enhanced global connections
- Access to students with relatively high levels of drive, determination and work ethic
- Other (please specify)....

16. *Can you suggest ways in which host organisations can better support international students to improve their WIL outcomes?*

17. *Can you suggest ways in which universities can support international students better to improve their WIL outcomes?*

18. *Can you think of any good practice examples which increase the number of international students undertaking work placements?*

Skip to Question 20

Filter in for those who have never hosted from Question 7

19. *To what extent do you agree the following act as a barrier to your organisation hosting international Business/Commerce or Engineering students on work placements? Rating is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree'.*

- Not approached by universities to host an international student and would not know who to contact
- Have registered interest with a university but have not been provided with an international student
- Concerns with the quality of student performance/output in comparison with domestic students
- Our organisation has been advised we are not suited to host international students or we believe we are unsuitable
- Previous negative experiences with hosting international students
- Our organisation only offers work placement opportunities to domestic students (i.e. Australian citizens)

- Students unavailable for placement recruitment/selection processes due to visiting home country in inter-semester break
- Increased levels of paperwork in comparison with domestic students
- International students are likely to be available post-graduation (due to returning to their host country) so the 'try before you buy' benefits of placements are not realised
- Poor quality of work produced in comparison with domestic students
- Weaker English language capabilities than domestic students
- Poor cultural fit with organisation due to cultural differences
- Increased levels of mentoring and supervision required in comparison to domestic students
- Lack of understanding of local business markets
- Other (please specify)

Appendix Two - International student survey instrument

1. *Please state your age (in years).*
2. *What is your gender?*
 - Male
 - Female
3. *In which continent were you born?*
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - Europe
 - North America
 - South America
 - Australasia
4. *Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your feelings prior to completing your work placement? Rating is on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating of 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree'.*
 - I believed that work placements are an important part of the overseas study experience
 - The availability of a work placement helped me decide where to complete my overseas studies
 - I was apprehensive and nervous about going out on placement
 - I was excited and very keen to participate in a work placement
 - I wanted to complete my work placement in a large or mid-tier organisation
5. *What was the duration of your work placement?*
 - 0 to 150 hours
 - 150 to 300 hours
 - More than 300 hours
6. *Which subject area was your work placement related to?*
 - Business/Commerce
 - Engineering
7. *Was the placement part of your undergraduate or postgraduate studies?*
 - Undergraduate
 - Postgraduate
8. *How was the placement organised?*
 - I organised the placement myself through forming a new contact in my home country
 - I organised the placement myself through an existing contact in my home country
 - I organised the placement myself through forming a new contact in Australia
 - I organised the placement myself through an existing contact in Australia
 - The placement was organised for me by the university.
9. *Did you experience any problems or challenges during the placement organisation process (i.e. during the application process, recruitment process, finding an employ etc).*

10. *Did you complete your work placement in Australia?*
- Yes
 - No, in my country of birth
 - No, elsewhere (please specify)
11. *What best describes the type of organisation in which you were based?* Please select one option from the drop down box.
- Public sector
 - Private sector
 - Not-for-profit
12. *How many staff did your host organisation employ?* Please select one option from the drop down box.
- 1-49 (small)
 - 50-149 (medium)
 - 150+ (large)
13. *In which industry sector did your organisation operate in?* Please select one option from the drop down box.
- | | |
|--|--|
| • Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants | • Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing |
| • Communications | • Construction |
| • Cultural and Recreational Services | • Education |
| • Electricity, Gas and Water Supply | • Finance and Insurance |
| • Health and Community Services | • Manufacturing |
| • Mining | • Personal Services and Other Services |
| • Property and Business Services | • Retail Trade |
| • Transport and Storage | • Wholesale Trade |
14. *Were there any specific challenges which you experienced while on your work placement?*
15. *What were the benefits that you gained from completing a work placement?*
16. *Please describe any areas, if any, you felt you needed more preparation in before going out on your work placement, in comparison with domestic students?*
17. *Please describe any areas, if any, you felt you needed more support in while completing your work placement, in comparison with domestic students?* These areas may relate to support from your academic coordinator (assessments etc) or within the workplace.
18. *Do you feel you can offer your host organisations any specific skills or attributes above and beyond those of domestic students while you are on placement?*
19. *Can you suggest ways in which host organisations can better support international students to improve their WIL outcomes?*
20. *Can you suggest ways in which universities can support international students better to improve their WIL outcomes?*