

# WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING PROJECT

Working Group Committee Paper





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## PURPOSE

The University's Strategic Plan *Building Distinction 2007-2011* refers to work-integrated learning [WIL] as 'work-based experiential learning' though WIL is the most commonly used term in Australian universities and government policy. Integrating work and learning is an important component of the way in which we are *building distinction* through performance improvement, institutional capability and a better fit to local and regional community, industry, business and professions. The intention is to increase our provision to do WIL for undergraduate students so that participation in work-integrated learning is both desirable and easily available. In summation, the enhancement and extension of work-integrated learning is part of the strategy for enhancing the quality of teaching and corporate/community engagement.



*Students majoring in Communications have the opportunity to workshop and practice their skills.*

## BACKGROUND

The University of Newcastle's Strategic Plan lists five priorities, each of which is divided into goals and targets. The first goal of the first priority is to incorporate an *opportunity for work-based, experiential learning opportunities into all undergraduate programs so that our graduates are flexible and ready for the workplace*. Success towards this goal will be measured by the percentage of undergraduate programs including work-based experiential learning opportunities, with a target of 70% of undergraduate programs to include WIL by 2011.

*Building Distinction* strategic plan:

**<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/>**

To support this priority, the University convened a Work Integrated Learning Working Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor-Central Coast, Professor Stephen Crump, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Kevin McConkey. The WIL project was assisted by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Corporate Development and Community Partnerships) Professor Martin Fitzgerald as the 'terms of reference' for the working group included considering the implications of Priority 4 of the University's Strategic Plan on this initiative – *We will offer further opportunities for students to engage in community-based learning and leadership activities*.

Initial work to understand the extent and nature of work-based experiential learning within the University, as well as future opportunities, was undertaken in 2007 by the Family Action Centre for the DVC (Academic). The Report, "A Scoping Study of Service-Learning in Undergraduate Programs at the University of Newcastle: A Report on Preliminary Findings" informed the tasks for the WIL Working Group.



Our Arts students (above and opposite) have access to a fully equipped multi-media performance and exhibition venue.

The data on WIL captured by Corporate Information Services from the Program Tracking System at the end of Semester II 2008 show that across all UG programs (excluding honours) 35% (53/152 programs) had a work based activity. The CIS-determined percentage represents 55% of the total students and 58% of the total load. The CIS totals only count each program once even though programs may provide more than one type of work-based activity. Work based activities were defined by CIS as practical placements, internships, supervised practice, and other, but this definition may well have missed WIL activity that occurs

within a course that is not readily or directly reportable or identifiable through the PTS. An improved data collection process in 2009 (assisted by the outcomes of the Working Group as accepted by the Teaching and learning Committee, Academic Senate and the Executive Committee) should enable the CIS to report a more accurate, and most likely higher, percentage of student load for students participating in WIL.

## THE WIL WORKING GROUP

The WIL Working Group was given the following tasks and objectives:

1. Identify the formal and informal strategies already in place in the University to highlight significant successes and to determine improvement opportunities.
2. Establish a definition for what we have so-far called 'work-based experiential learning' at the University of Newcastle.
3. Consider the implications of Priority 4 – *community-based learning and leadership activities* – of the University's Strategic Plan.
4. Consider opportunities to increase work-integrated learning where it is not currently in operation and to enhance existing WBEL where it is.
5. Determine a set of principles/criteria to build consistency of practice.
6. Scope and determine resource implications (internal and external).
7. Draft strategies for further implementation including administrative support, development of teaching resources and community consultation.

## EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

While WIL is currently a major focus of national and international education policy, it has a very long history. A key element of traditional Chinese study under Confucian principles was lifelong learning (*Zhong Shen Xue Yi*), which provided a rationale for why and how an intellectual should approach a career and learning (Yip, 2006).

VET in the late C19 and early C20 included disciplines that were theoretical as well as practical: Architecture, Literature, Engineering and Commerce, as well as Printing and Industry. Thus what is taught (“validated knowledge”) in different eras - when, where and by which sector/level of education and training – is not a fixed feature of those sectors determined by some unchanging hierarchy of learning, but rather subject to shifting social, economic, cultural and political perspectives and the changing expectations of education systems and of young people themselves.



An educational enterprise and partnership culture has been around since the early 1990s (Skilbeck et al. 1994), as part of the massification and vocationalisation of higher education in Australia and elsewhere. Also in the 1990s, building school, TAFE, university, industry and community partnerships became an active policy arena (DET NSW, 1999 Annual Report) and work-readiness as a focus for post-compulsory education became integral to economic planning (Stanley, 2007).

In a study of employer satisfaction with graduate skills, reported by Eunson (2000), it was claimed that 75% of university and TAFE graduates were not suited for the jobs for which they applied. Yet over half of Australian high school students, and approximately a third of VET and university students, have part-time jobs; that is, they are learners and earners (Vickers and Singh, 2008). Thus, in the context of broadening and improving WIL opportunities in our degree programs we need to ask what it is about the nature of the learning experience and skills we want for our students, and what they want and expect from us and future employment.

In a study by Agllias (2005) within the UoN, *From Student to Professional Practitioner: A two-part study of preparedness for beginning social work practice*, field education was cited by new graduates as an essential component of their education, some saying it was the most important part of their degree. Knowing an experienced world is one of the keys to understanding it and to re-arranging it in a way more useful to our students. This relationship between knowledge and action (human experience) can be the unifying feature of learning, whereby knowledge acts as a guide for action (see also Kolb, 1984). Work-integrated learning also provides scope for valuing community engagement (dispositions such as care and generosity as well as social responsibility) that strengthens a democratic society, (see, for example, Garrison, 2007). A summary of the benefits of WIL (adopted from Griffith University) includes:

- Working in a setting (internal or external) in which theory is put into practice; that is, it provides a context for assimilating underpinning knowledge and understanding (cognitive processes) as well as acquiring core skills.
- Providing a practical context for recognition of graduate attributes.
- Providing a 'reality-check' for student expectations about a course/career; that is, students develop reflective skills (on their own actions and to develop and refine their own conceptual models and career goals).

- Developing an awareness of workplace cultures, expectations and behaviours.
- An opportunity to develop a range of personal attributes, skills and values.
- Assistance in developing career readiness as well as work-readiness.
- Building up a network of contacts and employment prospects.

## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are a number of national developments around understanding and enhancing WIL that have helped to inform the Working Group, as well as developments that the UoN will have further input into, especially the IRUA project. These include:

- A National Internship Scheme (Universities Australia)
- Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement
- Graduate Employability Skills
- Employability Skills Framework in VET
- Innovative Research Universities Australia "WIL" Benchmarking Project
- NAGCAS – ALTC ("Carrick") Project on Career Development and WIL.

## WIL AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES

Various universities in Australia have a declared interest in work-integrated learning, many through their membership of the World Association for Cooperative Learning [WACE] and the Australian Collaborative Education Network [ACEN].

- Charles Sturt University
- Deakin University
- Flinders University
- Griffith University
- Macquarie University
- Melbourne University
- RMIT University
- Swinburne University
- University of South Australia
- University of New South Wales
- University of Technology, Sydney
- University of Western Sydney
- Victoria University

International WACE universities include (for example): Simon Fraser University (Canada), Hong Kong Polytechnic, Durban University of Technology (South Africa), University of Cincinnati (USA), NorthEastern University (Boston USA), Shanghai Normal University (China), University of Limerick (Ireland).

National organisations that support WIL and undertaking further development of WIL, include: the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, the Australian Association of Graduate Employers Ltd, the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association, the Career Development Association of Australia Inc, Graduate Careers Australia, the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education, and Professions Australia.



## THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AND “WIL”

The central feature of WIL at the UoN is a focus on good teaching and learning outcomes. As elsewhere, WIL at the UoN has many expressions. For example, the NAGCAS/Australian Learning and Teaching Council “Work-Integrated Learning” Project describes “WIL” as involving:

... real-world experiences providing opportunities for students to apply theoretical knowledge, develop and consolidate transferable skills, career development competencies, reflect on practice, and develop an understanding of the relevant professions or related sectors.

*(Adapted by NAGCAS from QUT).*

The breadth of possible activities in higher education referred to as ‘work-integrated learning’ is evident in the work of the ALTC project. The project suggested that WIL can be implemented in many different forms and may include or be known as:

Work-based learning, work experience, practice/practicum, clinical placement/practice, community-based learning/project, co-operative education, service-learning, professional skills program, work/job shadowing, work-experience, vacation work, internship, apprenticeship, sandwich course, industry project, cadetship, traineeship, enterprise project, experiential learning.

Other activities/terms include: employment-based training and education, whole of life learning, work-based education, cooperative education, practice-based learning, sandwich education, career transition and so on.

WIL is seen as occurring in a workplace, in the community, within the university, and real or simulated, as long as the experience is authentic, relevant and meaningfully assessed /evaluated.

‘Curriculum-aligned’ means that the practice of WIL is considered to be an integral part of an academic program and a valued and rewarding experience for students as it helps them make links between what they learn and what they can do. Assessment supervision can be undertaken by academic or administration staff, or by trained workplace staff.

*Our students completing an Early Childhood program use the Yerra Early Childhood Studies Centre. Yerra is shared by students and staff from the University and TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute.*

Some issues for the University to consider in the process of enhancing WIL include:

- UoN students being "work-ready" is as much about student dispositions and attitudes to work / workplaces as skill sets and knowledge. Some WIL at the UoN prepares students for a specific placement context; other areas are more generalist in expectations about outcomes.
- Skills shortages in Australia mean that education policy is likely to favour WIL for VET students over university students given the pressure for placements, especially in the contracting economy of the 2008 – 2009.
- We need to consider how to do more WIL "in-house" given the costs, difficulties and limitations on finding external placements, especially as the University pushes past the 70% target and external placements become even harder to locate, resource and maintain. Exemplars of internal WIL at the UoN include: Psychology, Podiatry, Oral Health (Colgate Oral Health Clinic), B. Soc. Science and the B.Sc (Marine Science).

For the University of Newcastle:

- WIL means real experience as part of a student's program of study, and actual developmental learning related to that field of study.
- WIL is perceived by students to be useful to their purposes and is perceived by staff as one way to help develop a creative intelligence.
- Students want to meet 'real people' as part of studying for their discipline, but this does not have to occur off campus.
- WIL provides opportunity for reflection on course content and career aspirations.
- WIL assists students identify career options and pathways and inform decisions about electives and majors.

Professional 'work-ready' graduates means students gain informed views about workplaces and the value of work, opportunities to put into practice and develop generic skills, especially soft skills such as communication, team work and negotiation; as well as attitudes to civic responsibility and community service.

## NEW AREAS FOR WIL AT THE UoN in 2008–2010

Opportunities to extend or introduce WIL into new discipline areas include but are not limited to:

- B. Food Science and Human Nutrition
- B. Maths (Applied Mathematics and Statistics elective)
- B. Business
- B. Music/B Fine Art (creative arts major)/drama major
- B. Arts (politics/linguistics)
- B. Arts (creative and performing arts)
- B. Social Science
- B. Education (Service Learning)
- B. Science majors (possibly Geology)

## COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES AT THE UoN

There are a number of existing activities, and concurrent and planned projects underway alongside the enhancement of WIL being steered by the Working Group. It is important that in taking WIL forward at the UoN the opportunity is taken to reduce any apparent confusion about the inter-relationship between WIL and other activities.

- Careers Service programs
- Cross-Faculty Courses
- Engaged Research
- International Leadership Certificate
- International Post-graduate Employment Pilot Project
- Leadership Program
- Service and Community Learning
- Student, Community and Leadership Program
- Students in Free Enterprise
- Student Mentor Program
- Student Ambassador Program
- Volunteer Program



*Nursing students can undertake clinical work placements in hospitals and private practice after learning skills in this campus "ward".*

## POLICIES/GOVERNANCE

A definition of "placement" exists within the Student Placement policy, amended in February 2008. This policy relates to all clinical, professional, industrial or other placements that form part of a course or program coordinated by the University.

**<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000768.html>**

The Student Placement policy for the University of Newcastle in the policy library (# 000768) is supported by policies on Essential Criteria in Course Assessment (#000648), Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards (Rule 000311), and Graduate Attributes (#000836).

## COMMONWEALTH SUPPORTED PLACES AND WIL

The University is paid for Commonwealth places when students are engaged in WIL so long as the placement is curriculum based, arranged, assessed and fully supervised by our staff. The legislation refers to 'Work Experience in Industry' where the students do a block of work in an industry where they wish to have a career without supervision by University staff. This is not supported by DEEWR funding as the UoN must be directing learning in the workplace.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has a strategic goal in its Implementation Plan 2007-2009 to develop policy and procedure for integrating WIL into undergraduate programs. The Centre for Teaching and Learning provides development opportunities to assist academic staff towards this goal.

[http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/IP\\_TeachingLearning\\_aug07.pdf](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/IP_TeachingLearning_aug07.pdf)

The Centre for Teaching and Learning provides University wide workshops to assist academic staff in evaluating and documenting the aspects of their courses and programs that relate to graduate attributes. The focus is on promoting work-readiness in our graduates.

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000836.html>

## CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

Sessions were held with student groups at both Callaghan and Ourimbah to discuss the WIL initiative. In general, students are supportive of placement models, where their current work and family commitments allow, and see 'work readiness' as a high priority in the completion of their studies. In response to a snapshot survey at Ourimbah, students in one program where there is currently no option for WIL noted that they would welcome this to provide a practical framework to their studies. Others in a large teaching program highlighted difficulties in the administration of WIL, but satisfaction with the experience. Obtaining credit for WIL is of high importance for these students.

*Our oral health students provide free dental check-ups under qualified supervision for other students and campus staff, and for \$40 to members of the public.*



## CONSULTATION WITH INDUSTRY

The Working Group had representation from the business sector in the Hunter and Central Coast regions and from community groups. These representatives provided detailed responses to the Working Group discussion paper and draft criteria as well as contributing to a mini-forum on WIL held as a precursor to the IRUA forum on WIL, in Brisbane at the end of October, 2008.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

The University's Risk and Commercial Services unit assisted the Working Group with the identification of the following risks and strategies to minimise them:

RISK	STRATEGY
Availability of placement venues may not match the student numbers.	Ensure there is an option for students to work in groups either on site or on campus;  Liaise with industry groups before implementation and maintain good relationships.
Negative impact on community from poor performance of students.	Ensure competency level of student matches expectation of workplace.
Disaffection from workplace due to unclear expectations from University and provider.	Clear placements agreements – template provided to all course coordinators.
Students in paid WIL not covered by the usual student insurance.	Ensure clarity in course outlines as to coverage.
Students resistant to WIL due to distance of workplace or limited time availability.	Ensure course outlines contain clear detail of expectations of students to complete the program (mandatory/optional).

The University will undertake a process of review to regularly monitor and reduce these risks.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

The WIL Working Group drafted the following definition and criteria with the intention that all students at the UoN should have the opportunity to participate in WIL, with the aspiration that the description below apply to WIL at the UoN by 2011.

Work-integrated learning is the term used to describe educational activities that integrate theoretical learning with its application in a workplace, profession, career or future employment. WIL should be available for all undergraduate students, should provide a meaningful and relevant experience, and should be recognised through assessment and credit. The WIL experience can be off or on campus, real or simulated, depending on the discipline area, but must involve clearly stated outcomes, assessment and be consistent with quality teaching and learning.

The Criteria for WIL at the UoN will necessarily vary for different disciplines/experiences/contexts, and thus need to be flexible within the overarching definition.

1. At the University of Newcastle, we aim to make work-integrated learning opportunities available to as many undergraduate students as possible, in ways that are integral or complementary to the degree being studied, assessable and credit bearing.

- 2.** The UoN follows DEEWR guidelines that define WIL (compared to 'work experience in industry') as occurring if all of the following are performed by staff of the University, or by persons engaged by the University:
  - Organisation of student placements;
  - Interaction between the supervisor and student, which may include site visits;
  - Ongoing monitoring of student work and progress; and
  - Assessment of student learning and performance during placement.
- 3.** The UoN envisages WIL as a key component of the strategic plan to build distinction by educating professionals through industry and community engagement, linkages and two-way knowledge transfer.
- 4.** The UoN focus is teaching and learning that links theory and practice by setting formal study into context, thus enhancing student engagement through experiential learning. Students learn through university, workplace, professional and/or possible employment contexts.
- 5.** WIL is intended to be curriculum-integrated though how curriculum is integrated can vary depending on the discipline, accreditation requirements and scope for external placements. UoN graduate attributes provide a strong reference point for WIL.
- 6.** Work-integrated learning does not necessarily entail learning in an external workplace: it can occur in the University. It can also be simulated or occur in a virtual environment.
- 7.** For UoN, WIL is a two-way knowledge exchange in which students and staff engage actively with business and the community and the expertise and experience of the local and regional community is brought into the University in a variety of ways.
- 8.** WIL assists the integration of academic and career development. Service learning, leadership and volunteer programs complement the student experience and provide shared opportunities for making students 'work/career ready'.

## Rookie reporter a Beijing Olympics winner

By BROOKE NEWSTEAD

REPORTING from the Beijing Olympic Games is a dream any journalist aspires to, but one Central Coast student will fulfil that dream before he even finishes his studies.

University of Newcastle communications student Tom Stott, 23, of East Gosford, will fly to Beijing today after being chosen as part of a delegation of 40 students from the university to do work experience at the Games.

The students have been chosen to work as "flash quote" reporters, speaking to athletes and relaying information to the international media.

Stott will then stay in Beijing for a month after the Games after being chosen as one of 10 students to then report from the Paralympics.

"It's so great to be recognised for the work we've been doing as part of our degree," Mr Stott said yesterday.

He will have two weeks' training before being put to work during the Olympics.

"We each get assigned an event. Fingers crossed it will be swimming, but I think any sport is going to be good," he said. "It's such a good opportunity, although I know it's also going to be hard work."

Mr Stott will then participate in a further two weeks' training and will then work throughout the Paralympics, before returning to Australia in late September.

He said he is still unsure what path he would like to pursue after completing his studies.

"I would hopefully want to do anything that involves international travel — maybe international media relations or something similar."

University of Newcastle's journalism lecturer Paul Scott said the Beijing experience would provide students with a period of intense learning further employment.

The Beijing Olympics will be held from August 8 to 21 and the Paralympics from September 8 to 17.



Golden opportunity... student Tom Stott is off to Beijing. *Picture: GUY CARROLL*

## Practice makes better nurses



Almost real... students Sharon Kamphvis and Vanessa Chigwededza with Prof Mike Hazelton. *Picture: JEFF HERBERT*

IT looks like a hospital and sounds like a hospital — but in this case it isn't really one.

The University of Newcastle's Ourimbah campus has launched two, five-bed simulated hospital wards, meaning nursing and health sciences students can now do their clinical training on-campus rather than travelling to Gosford Hospital.

The fully functional wards feature electronic beds, oxygen

outlets and emergency call buttons, giving students the feeling they are walking into a real working hospital.

But it is not just the students who will benefit from the \$320,000 facility, which was funded as part of the university's annual capital expenditure program.

The new wards will eventually be registered with the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service to become part of

the region's disaster action plan, meaning they can become working wards in an emergency.

Health Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Mike Calford said the new sites would provide a "huge boost" to student training.

"Previously our students had to travel to Gosford Hospital. Now they have their own dedicated clinical teaching space on campus, which is a real boost to their study experience."

## Students put best feet forward

# New clinic



HANDS THAT HEEL: Second-year podiatry student Jaimee Brent at the university's podiatry clinic at Kanwal Medical Centre this week. *Picture by Philip Hearne*

THE Central Coast campus of the University of Newcastle has opened a clinic that gives Bachelor of Podiatry students hands-on experience and locals with sore tootsies some welcome relief.

The University Podiatry Clinic at Kanwal Medical

Centre gives patients access to high quality care from students under the guidance of a fully qualified podiatrist.

Dr Vivienne Chuter from the university's School of Health Sciences said the clinic was a great new resource for the Coast.

"The podiatry clinic is a great opportunity for members of the local community to access low cost, quality health care at the same time providing a fantastic learning experience for our future podiatrists," Dr Chuter said.

## CENTRAL COAST NEWS

# Open wide, this won't hurt a bit

ALISON BUCKLAND

BACHELOR of Oral Health students sunk their teeth into helping residents from UnitingCare Ageing on Monday.

More than 100 nursing home residents took advantage of the on-campus services of Newcastle University's Colgate oral health clinic at Central Coast Campus, Ourimbah.

As part of Colgate oral health month, the residents from UnitingCare Ageing were provided free oral health education and clinical advice from about 50 students.

Associate professor Deborah Cockrell, of the university's school of health sciences, said the initiative had several benefits.

"Clinical work is an important way for the students studying a Bachelor of Oral Health to put what they learn in the classroom into practice using real clients with a range of oral health needs," she said.

"Clients contribute to the training of students, at the same time receiving



Oral health students Jenny Marsh and Grace Howarth assess Irene Hilder, of Nareen Gardens. *Picture: TROY SNOOK*

professional advice and treatment under the supervision of fully trained dental hygienists."

Monday's activities were the start of a program to be launched next year in which students will have formal clinical placements in nursing homes, providing preventive oral hygiene care for residents.

"Demand for dental hygienists is strong. In fact all students who recently

graduated from our program secured employment in either private practice or public dental clinics across the Central Coast and throughout NSW," Prof Cockrell said.

Students studying a Bachelor of Oral Health undertake three years of training. The clinic is also regularly open to the public and treatment costs are minimal.

Inquiries: 4348 4164.

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