Work experience and internships: challenges, opportunities and best practice in the field

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Issues and challenges across sectors

► Visa status
► English language skills
► Soft skills
► Requirement that students find own placement

“We’re not looking for who’s the best engineer. The degrees have sorted that out to some extent. It’s how do they cope in that communication area, the soft skills. How you can be an effective team member with your technical toolbox under your arm”. Human Resources, large engineering firm
Issues and challenges across sectors (cont)

**Student**: That’s a very hard thing, it’s really hard, because I applied for some companies, and I looked at a lot of companies through the internet, and the first thing they tell you is they offer jobs for residents. It’s hard to find a place where they offer a job for international students, like an internship.

**Interviewer**: And has the university given you any support in finding work experience?

**Student**: No, they said job shop and they just show a couple of companies. But no, you’ve got to go and apply for it, and in the end they give priority to the local students.

*Indian Engineering student*

Deakin university’s approach to enhancing employment outcomes of international graduates

Increase in numbers of Chinese students returning home. Why?

- Tighter visa conditions and lack of understanding of post-study work rights
- Competitive graduate labour market in Australia.
- Family pressure

*Deakin Careers and Employment approach focusses on giving international students a ‘leg up’ in both home and host country*
Employers in China

In China, focus is on building ‘guanxi’ for returning graduates - mainly via relationship building with multinationals and Australian firms.

Employers in China value:

- English language skills
- Australian work experience
- Extra-curricula activities

Deakin Careers and Employment has done extensive work on identifying opportunities in China for returning international graduates.

Expanding opportunities for international graduates in Australia

Focus on developing networks with small-medium sized employers

Creation of the Deakin Internship Scheme for International Students (DISIS).

60 placements for IT and Business students.

Competitive process designed to mimic job application

- Preparation via workshops
- Students apply for placements
- Short listing followed by group interviews
- Final interview with employer

Training and support is provided before, during and after placement.
Victorian TAFE International Incorporated

An association of 13 TAFEs and 3 dual sector universities in Victoria. VTI is a professional development body, which also conducts collaborative research
WIL in VET

• Talks by alumni, visits, tours
• Field trips
• Internships
• Work-based learning projects
• Work placements
William Angliss Institute

• WIL
• Mentoring
• Industry Partnerships

• Careers & Employment Service
• Student Mobility
Top Tips for WIL

• Start small and build experience
• Institute wide commitment
• Educate employers on work conditions for international students
• Supervise students well
• Offer special assistance to international students
• Bring employers into the institute
• Teachers demonstrate their experience

Taken to the Cleaners:
Employment experiences of international students cleaning Melbourne’s shopping centres

• More than 1/3 worked extra for no pay
• 40% experienced rude/abusive behaviour from supervisors
• Surviving on $325 per week
• 3/4 found bills difficult to pay
Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
Best Practice

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Experience in WIL for International students

- Over 3,000 international students placed in 3 years
- More than 1,000 host companies
- 18 people in our dedicated internships team
- 55% of 2013 interns got paid jobs with Host Company
- 90% of our interns rated WIL Outstanding/Very Good/Good
Best Practice in WIL Principles

1. Clear written WIL agreement
2. Agreed learning outcomes
3. Relevant to area of study
4. No longer than 3 months
5. Assess Host & environment (WHS & Insurance)
6. Align Intern goals & fit
7. Interview & workplace prep
8. Checkpoints & coaching
9. Issue resolution process

Performance Careers Internships Process

- Career Fair
- Student Referral
- Walk in
- Partnerships
  - Student referred to PE
  - Meet with Consultant
    - Assess skills
    - Discuss Opportunities
  - One on One resume coaching
  - Interview/ Resume Advice
  - Workshops
    - 700 host companies
    - Consultants to coordinate
    - Present to Host Companies
    - Interview Preparation
    - LinkedIn
    - Career Networking
- Interview Process
  - Students to interview for selected opportunities
- Selection
  - Student selected based on performance
- Alumni
  - Ability to track employment outcomes within their chosen field of study
- Completion
  - Mid & Exit Evaluation
    - To be issued at the end of 6 weeks and 12 weeks respectively
  - Internship Confirmed
  - Host Company & Student issued 3 way Training Agreement
  - Training Agreement
Best Practice in WIL
Is it exploitation if unpaid?

• You do not get paid a wage to go to a training course, a diploma or a degree

• **Best practice WIL is a training program**

• An investment by the intern (their time, skill/knowledge)

• An investment by the Host Company (time, supervision, access, suitable practical work, technology, facilities, feedback, coaching, references)

Best Practice in WIL
Host Companies

Why do they engage?
• Developing future talent pool
• Diversity initiatives
• CSR initiatives
• Supervisory training
• “Easy” decision

Barriers?
• Awareness, time, structure/process
• Fair Work guidelines unclear
Best Practice in WIL
Host Companies

Best Practice Examples

- **CCA** – developed a rotational program through finance function
- **Grand Hyatt** – full induction & rotational program
- **IT startup** – intern idea led to employment to set up China division
- **Top100** – revised existing programs with learning outcomes & policies

Best Practice in WIL
Outcomes

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Technical skills & knowledge applied
- Workplace expectations
- Australian business culture
- Relationship building
- Office tools & technology
- Work routine
Best Practice in WIL Outcomes

Job Search Differentiators:

- Interview practice
- Relevant experience = comfort for employers
- Examples for CV and Interview
- Reference
- Referrals & network
- Bypass flawed recruitment process

55% of our Interns from 2013 offered paid job by Host Company
(McCrindle Research Survey 2013)

Best Practice in Work Integrated Learning
Win-Win-Win-Win

- **WIN for Interns:** Employability skills & relevant employment outcomes
- **WIN for Organisations:** Developing talent pool, diversity & CSR programs
- **WIN for Educators:** Avenue to apply technical training & student employability
- **WIN for Government:** Relevant employment outcomes & international student experience

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