A framework to support assurance of institution-wide quality in work integrated learning

Final Report

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This project has been a partnership between QUT, RMIT University and the University of Sydney.

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Executive Summary

This final report has been prepared as part of an ACEN funded research project exploring the development of a framework for the evaluation and quality assurance of work integrated learning (WIL) across Australian universities. This report provides the findings of the project, including the developed framework.

The project, *Developing a framework to support assurance of institution-wide quality in work integrated learning*, was delivered through a partnership between QUT, RMIT University (RMIT) and the University of Sydney (USyd). It was the aim of the project to:

- Develop an institutional, cross disciplinary framework of quality in WIL which can inform a national framework of practice and quality. This framework will articulate attributes of quality, indicators of evidence, and measures of success.
- Undertake benchmarking and testing of the utility and feasibility of the framework and quality instruments for application across faculties/disciplines and universities.

Both of these aims were achieved through the project, with the project delivering a quality assurance framework which tested for utility and feasibility of use through two benchmarking case studies.

The framework was developed utilising a model based on other quality assurance approaches, and has been shaped around domains of practice, within which are articulated standards of quality, examples of evidence, and illustrations of practice. Through a review of literature and interviews with WIL practitioners four domains of practice were identified - student experience, curriculum design, institutional requirements, stakeholder engagement - which were used as the basis of the framework.

The project undertook a series of workshops in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with over 100 participants to review the proposed standards and consider examples of evidence. The proposed framework has also been reviewed by an external reference group and fed back to workshop participants for further comment.

The final draft framework was employed in benchmarking institutional WIL practice at QUT, RMIT and USyd, and faculty/discipline practice within QUT’s Faculty of Health and USyd’s Faculty of Health Sciences. Both case studies validated the framework as a useful representation of complex WIL practice, but highlighted the need for guidance around the use of the framework with particular consideration to interpreting the quality (i.e. impact, quantity, breadth) of the evidence collected through benchmarking.

Emergent from this project were four key learnings, beyond the development of the framework itself.

1. The need for a shared and objective definition of WIL practice across the wider higher education sector. This is addressed by the framework.
2. The usefulness in utilising the framework to elevate considerations of quality in WIL practice outside general and broad discussions of teaching and learning in higher education.
3. A need to consider quality in WIL practice across multiple levels of an organisation and various stages of practice (e.g. before, during and after).
4. The need to further explore understandings of the quality of evidence of WIL practice beyond merely using the framework as a checklist.
Whilst the framework provides a comprehensive mapping of quality indicators and standards for WIL across four domains of practice, the following recommendations are made for future work that will ensure the ongoing engagement with and enhancement of the framework:

- Engagement with the vocational education sector to further validate and extend the framework to this setting
- Extending the relevance of the framework beyond Australian higher education and consideration of the global contexts of WIL practice
- The need for the ongoing promotion of and engagement with the framework as a benchmarking and reflective instrument for improving WIL practice across the higher education sector

Some preliminary conversations have been had with key stakeholders, including representatives of the ACEN Board, in advancing these recommendations.
Project overview

This project was designed to be completed across three phases: review, exploration, benchmarking. The first phase (review) aimed to undertake a review and analysis of existing quality measures, evaluation frameworks, and approaches across Australian universities. The later phases further developed this framework through the consideration of quality indicators and evidence, and benchmarking activities were undertaken to evaluate the usability of the framework in Australian universities.

Project team

The project team has been comprised of partners from QUT, RMIT University and the University of Sydney.

Matthew Campbell, Project lead, QUT
Matthew Campbell is currently Senior Lecturer in WIL at QUT where he supports WIL practice and policy across the university. He has an extensive background in WIL practice, policy and research including work around quality assurance of WIL, employability policy and ethical professional practice. He has served on a number of boards and committees, including previously as the Company Secretary and National Treasurer for ACEN, and an international delegate to the NZACE National Executive. Matthew is a current member of the ACEN Queensland Chapter Committee and has been a leader of the 2010, 2012 and 2018 ACEN National Conferences.

Leoni Russell, Project co-lead, RMIT University
Leoni is a Senior Educational Advisor within Careers and Employment at RMIT. Her multi-sector experience includes teaching, policy and curriculum development, governance, managing teaching and learning projects and resource development. She provides academic educational support to build staff capability across a range of educational strategies including WIL. Leoni facilitates a collaborative WIL Community of Practice and supports a range of professional development activities. Leoni has worked on multiple national Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) and Australian Technology Network (ATN) projects including ‘Assessing the impact of WIL on student work-readiness’, the ‘Innovative Models of WIL’ project and the WIL entrepreneurial ‘EDGE’ project. Leoni has served on the Vic/Tas ACEN committee for 5 years and is the current Chair.

Em. Prof. Lindy McAllister, Project co-lead, University of Sydney
Lindy McAllister [PhD] is Professor Emeritus of Work Integrated Learning in the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Unit of the Faculty of Health Sciences. Prof McAllister is recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in preparing graduates for professional practice in speech pathology. She was made a Life Member of speech Pathology Australia for services to higher education. She has undertaken research, and curriculum development and review work with a range of allied health disciplines and in medicine. Prof McAllister has five internationally published books, more than 70 peer reviewed journal articles, more than 30 book chapters, and 14 published peer-reviewed conference proceedings on topics related to preparation for practice and clinical education.
**Prof. Lorraine Smith**, The University of Sydney

Professor Lorraine Smith is a Registered Psychologist, has a PhD in student motivation and achievement. Her research interests centre around the motivational approaches students take to their learning and how this influences the quality of their learning and academic performance. Lorraine is Academic Lead for the Office of Clinical Education Support at the University of Sydney and was co-investigator on a project developing measures of student clinical placement quality to improve student learning experiences.

**Dr Ricky Tunny**, QUT

Dr. Tunny is a graduate from the University of Queensland, completing his PhD in 2007. He has more than 15 years' experience working in the higher education sector, with a number of years in management and leadership positions in the area of work-integrated learning, including Manager, Work Integrated Learning within the Faculty of Health and Senior Lecturer, Work Integrated Learning at QUT. Dr. Tunny has expertise in the area of policy and procedure development in work integrated learning. Dr. Tunny is also the President of the National Association of Field Experience Administrators (NAFEA) and Deputy Chair of the Queensland State Chapter of ACEN.

**Dr Kate Thomson**, The University of Sydney

Kate Thomson [PhD, GradCertEdStudies (HigherEd), MIH (Dist), BPsych (Hons)] is a Lecturer in Work Integrated Learning at the Faculty of Health Sciences, the University of Sydney. Her work has centred on the professional learning of university teachers (i.e., clinical educators and academics) and her emerging interest is in developing future professionals through enhancing students’ learning before, during, and after their work integrated learning placement experiences. She has made a significant contribution to the evidence-base for facilitating collaborative learning and is leading a new research area within her field, informal professional learning. She has experience developing indicators of teaching quality at the national level and managing student surveys systems at the institutional level. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

**Maria Barrett**, Research Assistant

Maria Barrett [MEnvEd, GradDipEd(Primary), BA] is currently a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at QUT. Her research focus is on university student professional identity and graduate skill development through involvement in school outreach programs. She has extensive administrative experience in the tertiary education sector, and most recently has been coordinator and education consultant for STEM school outreach programs at two Brisbane universities.

**Project aims**

This project responded to the identified gaps in current practice and policy in the evaluation of WIL quality. The scope was informed by quality measures of WIL placement experiences, which present as the highest level of risk for quality assurance, and reflects the focus of the TEQSA Guidance Note on WIL. The project also provided a foundation for the future extension of these to non-clinical / non-placement settings. This project aimed to:
• Develop an institutional-, cross-disciplinary framework of quality in WIL which can inform a national framework of practice and quality. This framework will articulate attributes of quality, indicators of evidence, and measures of success
• Undertake benchmarking and testing of the utility and feasibility of the framework and quality instruments for application across faculties/disciplines and universities

The framework considered both the inputs (e.g. curriculum, teaching, supervision) and outputs (e.g. student learning outcomes, capabilities), contextualised within institutional policy and practice, in developing a holistic understanding of the quality of WIL.

Deliverables
To achieve these aims, the project deliverables were:
• a review of existing quality measures across Australian universities, providing a comprehensive report for distribution through ACEN
• an analysis of existing measures to identify commonalities of approach and focus, and disciplinary differences, through a series of stakeholder focus groups, within different disciplines and universities, to explore the measures of quality, standards of success, and connections between these
• a mapping of identified standards and types of evidence which demonstrate quality in WIL according to a quality framework mapped across disciplines and institutions
• an approach to benchmarking the implementation of a quality framework and gathering of sources of evidence within specific disciplines and across institutions, with data from this benchmarking informing wider implementation and adoption of the framework
• a WIL quality framework for use across Australian universities and higher education institution.

Dissemination and impact

Project impact
This project has delivered a quality framework for WIL with potential for adoption as a national benchmark. It has responded to a gap in current approaches to quality assurance in WIL, which included quality measures for both curriculum (process) and outcomes (product) applied across a whole institution. Preliminary discussions have been held with representatives of the ACEN Board for the further extension of this framework as a tool for sector wide benchmarking and quality improvement.

The quality framework provides a significant foundation for future practice in understanding and assuring quality in WIL practices and experiences, extending existing frameworks to considerations of curriculum, outcomes, policies and practices across an institution.

The project design was built around developing a broad community of users across multiple Australian universities to ensure that the project has an impact across the wider university sector.

Dissemination
Materials and outcomes of the project will be made available via the website: https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/ with a proposal for this site to be linked to the ACEN site.
The design of the project has enabled ongoing dissemination of the project outcomes, including the formation of an external reference group (27 members) and community of interested users (more than 125 identified stakeholders to date). The following activities have provided dissemination opportunities for the project so far:

- ACEN Q Workshop, Brisbane, March 2019: 35 attendees
- ACEN Vic/Tas Workshop, April 2019: 40 attendees
- University of Sydney workshop, April 2019: 27 attendees

The following activities are currently planned:

- UQ WIL Symposium presentation, October 2019
- ACEN SA/NT forum and workshop, November 2019
- Presentation to Australian Council of Deans of Business, November 2019
- NAFEA National Conference, Toowoomba, November 2019
- IRU Australia webinar, November 2019
- WACE International Research Symposium, Ireland, June 2020
- ACEN Conference, Melbourne, October 2020

The following activities have been proposed:

- NZACE Conference, April 2020
- HERDSA Conference, Brisbane, July 2020
- Workshop with ACEN NSW/ACT and ACEN Vic/Tas, February 2020
- QUT WIL Community of Practice workshop, early 2020

The following journal articles are currently in preparation for publication from this project:

- Working title: A framework to assure the institutional quality of WIL, submitted for review to the Journal of Quality in Higher Education

Project context

Understanding quality in higher education

Much has been written and published elsewhere about quality in higher education. It is not the aim of this report to provide a comprehensive review of this literature. However, as a foundation to developing an understanding of quality and standards in work integrated learning, it is valuable to consider conceptualisations of quality in higher education more broadly.

What quality means and how it is measured within higher education is highly dependent upon the context of the systems, values and interpretations of the leaders, and interests of the various stakeholder groups (Steinhardt et al., 2017). There is no singular definition of what is considered to be ‘quality’ within higher education. Bertolin (2013) asserts that concepts of quality in higher education derive from particular worldviews of the purpose and function of higher education. He presents a dichotomy of worldviews of higher education: (1) economic view, and (2) social view. The economic view is grounded in neoliberal understandings of the connection between education and economic and employment outcomes. The social view places an emphasis on the contribution of education to the development of social, human and cultural capital.

Conceptualisations of higher education tend to shape understandings of quality. Stakeholders working from an economic worldview, according to Bertolin (2013), value employability, competitiveness, and the productivity of higher education. However, those concerned with a social model understand quality as framed as social responsibility, with their view of the contribution of higher education being aligned to the broader advancement of social and cultural development. When translated to understandings of work integrated learning (WIL) these conceptualisations can either place emphasis on employability and student outcomes (economic), or position within learning and contributions of personal transformation (social). Quality frameworks need to account for the variety of viewpoints in appreciating a more holistic understanding of excellence.

Quality measures in higher education have often been conceptualised as extensions of government policy frameworks which aim to ‘improve’ educational outcomes and/or evaluate investment in the sector (Alderman, 2016). The emergence of the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), replacing the previous Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), alongside the introduction of the Higher Education Standards Framework (2015), highlights the ongoing focus of the government in assuring the quality of universities and teaching and learning practices within. External quality assurance mechanisms can have an effect of confining or constraining the pedagogical approaches of a university (Brady & Bates, 2016) and consequently disempowering academic staff in being innovative with their teaching. Arguments have been made to better align the external quality assurance processes (e.g. national qualification frameworks, government audits) with internal processes (e.g. teaching and learning evaluation, continuous improvement programs) (see for example French et al., 2014) in order to achieve consistency across the broader sector.

Quality assurance in higher education presents as a meta-goal for the ‘good’ functioning of our institutions. However, under this umbrella are a range of foci and sub-goals, of which, particularly within the WIL context, the quality of teaching and learning within higher education is of particular interest (Steinhardt et al., 2017). French et al. (2014) argue that assuring quality of learning in higher education
should be based on the demonstration of predetermined sets of standards connected with the intended graduate skills or attributes for a particular course of study. That is, the underlying measure of quality in teaching and learning is the explicit realisation of learning goals and outcomes. Considerations of quality in WIL should, therefore, account for the impact and outcomes of an experience, not just the intentions of the design.

Fundamental to a quality assurance process should be the ongoing improvement of practice, process and outcomes based on meaningful reflection on the collected data and experiences (Taylor et al., 2009). It is therefore necessary that quality assurance is supported by processes, and culture, which engages staff in the mapping of curricula, collection of student achievement data, and analysis of this data with a view to implementing change and improvement (French et al., 2014). Making judgements of success within the evidence is based upon consideration of the underlying values associated with understandings of quality, as well as comparison to other like performers, or benchmarking of achievements. Benchmarking is a critical element to a quality assurance process in establishing the standards of practice, identifying good or better practice, and supporting ongoing practice improvement through learning from, and evaluating and reflecting on the practices of others (Fah Tee, 2016).

**Understanding work integrated learning (boundaries of the framework)**

Much has been written elsewhere about what constitutes or is understood as WIL. It is therefore not necessary to provide a comprehensive definitional argument about what WIL is and how it should be, or is, understood within the practices of higher education. However, it is important that a shared understanding of this term be developed to provide scope to the context of evaluation and quality assurance. As argued by McRae and Johnston (2016, p.338):

*A better understanding of WIL parameters and attributes is needed to inform discussions between and among key stakeholders including students, institutions, employers, and governments. Without such, the potential for developing and promoting appropriate offerings, conducting meaningful research, collecting data, developing quality standards, and assessing impact is limited.*

They go further to remark that “the lack of a shared framework also limits the extent to which best practices and effective tools can be shared” (p.338). It is therefore important to establish the parameters and attributes of the space in which conversations of quality are to occur.

Multiple definitions of WIL are persistent across the Australian higher education landscape, with further variation evident in the application of the construct within universities. RMIT University presents a definition of WIL as an umbrella term that describes a range of models and approaches to learning and assessment that integrates discipline theory, knowledge and skills with the practice of work as an integral part of program design. These assessed and integrated WIL activities may take place in the workplace, at the university, online, or in simulated workplace environments. As RMIT is a dual sector university, the recognition of WIL in simulated workplace environments reflects the requirements of the Vocational Education sector, Training Packages and ASQA requirements. This definition includes a wide range of authentic, industry-engaged learning activities. In comparison, QUT has adopted a definition of WIL which contains three essential elements:
• Learners engage with an industry and/or community partner
• Learners undertake authentic activities for industry and community
• Learners are assessed on these authentic activities

This definition excludes broader ideas of authentic learning, particularly simulations, often focusing activities under the definition to projects and placements undertaken with industry and community partners.

In comparison, Ferns, Campbell and Zegwaard (2014) claim that WIL is used to identify a myriad of experiences that engage students in the workplace. Further, whilst accepting the necessity to account for context, discipline and intent, they identify that WIL experiences are pedagogical approaches which are:

• Authentically engaged with practices and experiences of the workplace
• Located within an intentional discipline-centered curriculum, and
• Focused towards graduate learning outcomes and career pathways.

The spaces of WIL and what constitutes a WIL experience are highly contested. This contestation is shaped by political and strategic drivers, and not always an intellectual debate around the definition.

In practice, the variety of definitions presents as a challenge in developing consistent and shared understandings of elements of quality. However, it has been agreed that WIL is an educational process grounded in pedagogical theory and practice, often drawing from broader conceptions of experiential learning (Ferns et al., 2014; Mooreland, 2005). Therefore, as a basis for the shaping of a framework of quality, considerations must be given to the processes of WIL (e.g. curriculum design, risk management) as well as the products of WIL (e.g. learning outcomes, employability) (Rowe et al., 2018; Smith, 2012).

The framework has been developed around a definition of WIL, in which WIL is understood as student experiences of work within curriculum, undertaken in partnership, through engagement with authentic and genuine activities with and for industry, business or community partners, and which are assessed. However, through the presentation of the framework itself a broader, more complex, shared understanding of WIL practice is presented.
Project Methodology

This project was delivered across three phases of research: (1) Review, (2) Exploration, (3) Benchmarking. These phases, and the project timeline, is presented as Figure 1. The following sections provide further details of the methods used in each phase to support the research.

Phase One - Review

The first phase of the project aimed to undertake a review of existing practice and understandings of quality in work integrated learning.

Systematic review

The first part of this phase undertook a systematic review of relevant literature and documentation. Robinson and Lowe (2015) explain that a systematic review, rather than a broad literature review, employs a precise question and a defined ‘data extraction’ method. Normally a systematic review will engage with only a relatively small number of papers (e.g., less than 50). To guide the review of literature, the following questions were used as a focus:

1. How is quality in higher education and work integrated learning currently defined and understood?
2. How are constructs of quality used in shaping current measures and frameworks of practice?

Relevant documents were sourced from a desktop analysis and review of publicly available quality assurance approaches and work integrated learning frameworks. Documentation included key literature from relevant journals and publications, university policy documents and available practice materials, and available government reports.

Practitioner Interviews

During Phase One of the project, interviews were undertaken with a wide range of WIL practitioners across the Australian higher education sector. Interview participants included, for example, administrative and professional staff, academic teaching staff and university leaders, and were...
identified across a wide range of Australian universities. A matrix of possible interview participants was developed by the project team to ensure that the interviews were somewhat representative of a diversity of voices across the whole sector.

These interviews used a semi-structured approach (Fontana & Frey, 2005) with the following key questions guiding the interviews:

1. How does your university define ‘work integrated learning’?
2. How does your university currently assure the quality of curriculum design, content and student outcomes?
3. How does your university currently support, or manage, curriculum change and transformation?
4. If you were to design an institutional framework of quality for WIL experiences, what elements should be considered?
5. How does your university currently assure the quality of a WIL experience?
6. What barriers do you think exist in your university to the adoption of an institutional-wide framework for the quality assurance of WIL?

All interviews were transcribed and analysed for common emergent themes about good practices in quality assurance of curriculum and WIL and to identify key elements for a guiding framework.

To support the interviews, and ensure a breadth of voice in shaping understandings of quality, a short questionnaire was also distributed to approximately 90 identified leading WIL practitioners across the sector. The survey reflected the thematic interest of the interviews with four short response questions:

1. In a few sentences, how does your institution define work integrated learning (WIL)?
2. How do you (or your university) currently assure the quality of a WIL experience?
3. In your experience, what are the elements that should inform a quality WIL experience?
4. What barriers do you think exist in your university to the adoption of an institutional wide framework for the quality assurance of WIL?

An additional 11 written responses were received with the responses incorporated into the data corpus for this phase of the project.

The project team met face-to-face to review the transcripts of the interviews and responses to the questionnaire, and undertook a thematic analysis of emerging ideas of quality. Emerging from this phase were four thematic domains of practice which were used to inform the shape of the framework: (1) student experience, (2) curriculum design, (3) institutional requirements, and (4) stakeholder engagement. Within each domain, standards and principles of practice were developed based on the literature and interviews. This draft framework, and associated interim report, was distributed for feedback and input to an external reference group, comprised of 26 well-regarded WIL researchers and practitioners across the Australian higher education sector.

Phase Two - Exploration

Phase Two of the project utilised workshops and questionnaires to explore understandings of quality of WIL across different disciplines and institutions and verify findings from Phase One. The use of workshops as a methodology was informed by the work of Ørngreen & Levinsen (2017) who argued for the utility of this approach as a way to clarify and test emergent ideas. This phase allowed for the
testing of analysis and conclusions emerging from Phase One, in conjunction with the development of deeper understandings of underlying assumptions through the use of a series of workshops and feedback processes. Across this phase three workshops were held, with one each in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney to explore and establish a foundation of understanding around quality. Approximately 30 - 40 people from a wide range of universities and practice attended each of these workshops, with the first two workshops held in conjunction with the local ACEN chapter, whilst the third workshop contained only staff from the University of Sydney, but drawn from a wide range of areas across the university.

The workshops were structured to provide opportunities for participants to work in small groups to interrogate the proposed framework and consider how the suggested standards and principles may be realised in practice. The structure broadly followed an arrangement of introducing the project and framework followed by a series of small and large group discussions employing the following questions, arranged under three focussed themes, to frame discussions:

1. **Validating the draft framework**
   a. What are the strengths of the framework as presented?
   b. What are the gaps, or additions, with the framework that need consideration?

2. **Mapping quality indicators**
   a. Considering each component / standard, what would successful practice / activity look like for this component?
   b. How would you measure / evidence success in this practice?

3. **Barriers, enablers and benchmarking**
   a. Where across the university would the various points of evidence be located? How accessible are these points of evidence?
   b. What time would be required to map against the framework, and how much is this part of common practice?
   c. How mature are the evidence and data processes at your university to support benchmarking against such a framework?

After each workshop the framework was adjusted by the project team based on feedback and comments from participants. Following completion of the third workshop the project team met to review all feedback and shape a final draft framework. This final draft framework was distributed to the external reference group and workshop participants with a survey which focussed on the success measures of clarity, thoroughness, usability and quality.

The emerging framework modelled a structure which identified key goals, principles and elements of WIL, quality standards, success measures, and provided a range of examples of evidence which demonstrated success. Such a model reflects similar quality frameworks, such as the National Teaching Standards as developed by AITSL (see: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards).

Phase Three - Benchmarking

Phase Three employed a peer-review process of benchmarking to consider the consistency of understanding the quality framework and to further explore usability, utility and implementability of the framework. Within this phase, two benchmarking case studies were used: (1) institutional benchmarking involving QUT, RMIT and USyd, and (2) faculty/discipline benchmarking involving the Faculty of Health, QUT, and Faculty of Health Sciences, USyd.
The benchmarking was supported by a spreadsheet which was developed to provide guidance to participants around the collection and noting of evidence. The benchmarking spreadsheet allowed for the gathering of the following information against each standard:

- Appropriate examples of evidence
- Identification of the responsible person for such evidence
- Explanation of the level of quality for the evidence
- Accessibility of and ease to locate evidence
- Opportunities for improvement to the standards / framework and challenges to be addressed

The benchmarking activity also facilitated the ongoing collection of illustrations of practice for each of the standards, alongside general calls to the WIL community for contribution of relevant examples of good practice.

It was not the aim of this phase for the benchmarking reports to be collected as part of this project; instead the purpose was to test the usability and utility of the framework. Therefore, data for this phase was collected through recorded reflections captured as part of regular project team meetings, with key ideas and emergent themes identified within these reflections.
Project Outcomes

Phase One - Review

Key literature and existing frameworks

WIL experiences, unlike most other teaching and learning within higher education, exist in complex spaces of relationships across multiple stakeholders. As highlighted by TEQSA in their recently published *WIL Guidance Note*, the same standards and expectations of teaching within other areas of higher education shall apply to WIL; however, higher education providers have the additional challenge of also assuring this quality amongst business and industry partners supervising students in the workplace. Further, support for students includes appropriate guidance and support in acquiring and accessing the required WIL experiences. This therefore means that a higher education provider needs to assure the quality of the learning which occurs in and through the WIL experience, as well as ensuring that the experience is supported by high-quality processes and student support. Sachs, Rowe and Wilson (2016), in the *WIL Good Practice Guide*, highlight the complex interconnected elements of WIL experiences. They propose a model which frames WIL as connections across four spaces of outcomes, relationships, resources and context, as presented in Figure 2. Quality assurance of WIL therefore needs to account for these spaces and both the process of WIL as well as the end outcomes.

![Figure 2: The interconnected elements of WIL (Sachs, Rowe and Wilson, 2016)](image-url)

There has been a growing focus on quality in WIL over the last decade, which has coincided with a broader focus on WIL following the publication of the *WIL Report* (Patrick et al. 2008), the implementation of the recommendations of the Bradley Review into Higher Education, and the
formation of the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN). Most studies to this point have attempted to describe key characteristics, attributes or elements of quality in WIL, with very limited work undertaken to translate these into standards and indicators of quality, as done by this project. The following provides a summary of the key findings of some recent studies that have considered conceptualisations of quality in WIL.

Orrell (2011), following an extensive review of previously ALTC/OLT funded projects in WIL, concluded that the following elements should be evident within successful WIL activities. Orrell presented these elements across three areas of practice (institutional, educational, and partnerships).

**Institutional**
- a clearly articulated, shared vision of WIL within the university, including a shared understanding of its purposes and expectations;
- a realistic recognition of WIL in institutional systems and infrastructure together with the provision of adequate resources;
- recognition and legitimation within disciplinary communities of practice generated knowledge, and the distinctive and complementary roles the university and workplace have in shaping and supporting the learning; and
- engaging and utilising existing institutionally provided enabling services such as careers services in the WIL process.

**Educational**
- adequate induction and preparation of students prior to their practice-based experiences;
- providing structured, critically reflective, self and peer learning processes during and after WIL experiences;
- presence of an element of risk to contribute to profound learning for students (the corollary is the futility of unchallenging placements); and
- investing in the development, trialling and up-scaling of technology-based tools to provide alternative or supplementary WIL experiences, and their integration in curriculum development and institutional strategic plans.

**Partnerships**
- ensuring supervisory staff familiarity with students’ prior university learning;
- identifying and including all stakeholders in development, innovation and communication regarding WIL;
- induction/professional development for university and host-organisation supervisory staff and development of their leadership capabilities; and
- robust and mature relationships with placement providers (host organisations) underpinned by a commitment to mutual benefit.

Higgs (2012) presents a set of standards for practice-based education, used by Charles Sturt University, in which staff support and systems, student support systems, and risk management are identified dimensions. In these outlines she presents a focus on the activities which support a quality student experience such as design, assessment and risk management; and, structures such as ICT and student support systems which facilitate a successful experience. Higgs’ framing of quality of WIL was divided across two main areas of focus (course goals and learning outcomes, and learning and
teaching activities and processes), under which were a number of dimensions (as mapped below) and 43 standards. The following provides a map of the dimensions described by Higgs:

**Course goals and learning outcomes**
- Professionalism and citizenship
- Professional judgement
- Communication and interactions
- Information literacy
- Professional competence and work readiness

**Learning and teaching activities and processes**
- Curriculum design
- Curriculum review
- Risk management of the curriculum
- (Actual) Practice Based Education teaching and learning activities
- Inclusion of WIL or work based learning activities
- Staffing
- Staff support and development systems
- Student support systems
- On-campus workplace learning environments
- Learning resources

Sachs et al. (2016) conclude, from a review of case studies of WIL practice in Australian universities, that good practice in WIL has the following characteristics:

- It occurs in and over physical and virtual spaces, online and offline environments, on-campus or off-campus. This inbuilt flexibility meets the contemporary challenges and opportunities of changing workplaces, workspaces, resources and schedules.
- The engine of this kind of experience is relationships. Relationships in the workplace context are formed and solidified through initial and ongoing productive dialogical engagements.
- Learning in the workplace is not just for the academically gifted; it is for all students. It is a philosophy that rewards achievement without disadvantaging difference.
- Organisational, it is:
  - well-governed, resourced and supervised
  - prioritised by the institution and has institutional/faculty/departmental buy-in/investment
  - supported by institutional and industry-based champions
  - meaningful and accessible to all stakeholders
  - intentionally linked to and supports learning outcomes, especially around employability.

McRae, Pretti and Church (2018) conclude that across all the experiences of WIL there are four common characteristics: (1) meaningful experience in a workplace setting, (2) integration of academic and workplace learning, (3) student outcomes that lead to employability, and (4) reflection. They reshape these common characteristics to be pedagogy, experience, assessment and reflection, or P.E.A.R.

**Pedagogy** - the integration of activity into the pedagogic practices of higher education, integration of WIL into the wider curriculum.
Experience - focused on the logistics and environment of the WIL experience; including, for example, elements of university policy, practice and procedure which support and inform the WIL experience.

Assessment - the measuring of student learning outcomes with their use being more synonymous with the concept of evaluation, but with a defined measurability against intended outcomes.

Reflection - continual improvement based on feedback and reflection with the role of reflection supporting the learning of students in WIL placements.

Winchester-Seeto (2019) provides a useful summary of recent studies and research which has explored concepts of quality in WIL. Emerging from her review of these studies, Winchester-Seeto suggested that there were nine quality dimensions of WIL practice, alongside key studies which have identified this dimension. Winchester-Seeto’s quality dimensions of WIL are:

- Authenticity of experience - Sachs et al. (2017); Higgs (2014); Smith et al. (2016); McRae & Johnston (2016); Stirling et al. (2016)
- Being embedded in curriculum – Orrell (2011); Sachs et al. (2017); Higgs (2014); McRae & Johnston (2016); Stirling et al. (2016); Brightwell (2015)
- Student Preparation – Orrell (2011); Smith et al. (2016)
- Supporting learning activities – Edwards et al. (2015); Orrell (2011); Sachs et al. (2017); Higgs (2014); Smith et al. (2016)
- Supervision, including feedback – Smith et al. (2016); Stirling et al. (2016); Brightwell (2015); Shardlow (2015);
- Reflection – Edwards et al. (2015); McRae & Johnston (2016); Stirling et al. (2016)
- Debriefing – Smith et al. (2016); Orrell (2011); Billett (2011)
- Assessment – Higgs (2014); Smith et al. (2016); McRae & Johnston (2016); Brightwell (2015)
- Inclusive approach to WIL – Orrell (2011); Sachs et al. (2017)

Winchester-Seeto, in identifying these dimensions, also highlights that few have quality indicators and standards already developed. Whilst this project has adopted a different model to that which was proposed by Winchester-Seeto, it is still possible to identify these dimensions within the framework. Further, this project has aimed to develop associated standards and indicators of quality with respect to the various dimensions of quality in WIL.

Presage, process and product

In his exploration of quality in higher education, Gibbs (2010) adapted the ‘3P model’ of Biggs (1993) of presage, process and product, to suggest that conceptions of quality should consider the context before students learn (presage), what goes on while they learn (process) and the outcomes of that learning (product). Similarly, Billett (2011) suggests that WIL practices can be conceptualised as occurring before, during and after the WIL experience. As a basis for the shaping of a framework of quality, considerations must be given to the processes of WIL (e.g. curriculum design, risk management) as well as the products of WIL (e.g. learning outcomes, employability) (Rowe, Nay, Lloyd, Myton, & Kraushaar, 2018; Smith, 2012). A higher education provider needs to assure the quality of the learning which occurs in, and through, the WIL experience, as well as ensuring that the experience is supported by high-quality processes and student support (Winchester-Seeto, 2019). That is,
consideration must be given to preparation for WIL (the prior learning and experiences), the product of WIL (what the student gets out of it) and the processes which support these outcomes (what the institution does).

A model of quality dimensions for WIL

Early formation of the framework was informed by a three dimensional model of quality in WIL which drew upon the emergent dimensions of WIL practice, informed by Sachs et al. (2016) and emergent interview themes, the temporal phases of WIL curriculum as described by Billett (2011), and the four characteristics of WIL as outlined by McRae, Pretti and Church (2018). This model is represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Three dimensional model of quality dimensions in WIL

Overview of interview data and feedback (shaping the domains of practice)

When considering an institutional-wide approach to WIL, there were four domains of practice that emerged from the interviews: namely student experience, curriculum design, institutional requirements, and stakeholder engagement. These domains are connected and combined together to shape the complex activity that is WIL. As one participant reflected:

*Quality, in WIL, has got everything to do with ... yes, it’s the design of the learning experiences, the assessments involved. It’s also got to do with the interactions between the staff, the student and the industry partner. It’s got to do with overarching evaluation. It’s got to do with ... right up*
to the university’s overall vision, and strategy with respect to work-integrated learning, so, how it fits into the institutional ethos, its learning and teaching perspectives, and so on.

This section presents some of the interview data and an explanation of these four domains of practice and how they have informed the foundation of the framework.

Student experience

Student experience in WIL is strongly related to valued learning design that supports student achievement of defined outcomes of success. That is, reflecting on Billett’s (2011) concept of the intended, enacted and experienced curriculum, there is a relationship between the manner in which the learning is designed and the success of the experience of the students. The underpinning learning design informs and shapes the experience of the student which should be a focus of any pedagogic practice. Using the words of an interviewee:

... it’s got to be focussed on a quality-curriculum design with aligned assessments and learning outcomes. You can only call it work integrated learning when it’s assessed as well, so there’s evidence of the capabilities that arise through the experience.

The quality of WIL as experienced by students is shaped by pedagogic practices before, during and after the experience. Critical to supporting learning through the WIL experience is connection between the learning which has occurred before, and that which will happen after; that is, learning should be scaffolded around the WIL experience so it is not isolated from broader knowledges. This sentiment was captured in the comments of an interviewee who stated, in relation to quality of the WIL experience:

It’s about connection, their theory and practice of learning where reflection is in the centre of that practice. It’s about learning about and through that authentic experience about themselves and then building identity of themselves ...

This comment introduces the idea that the WIL experience is more than just an opportunity to connect the learning within the university with the practice of the workplace, but it is also an opportunity to shape professional identity and develop a deeper understanding of the self. In this way, the WIL experience supports broad constructs of employability, where outcomes of the WIL experience are considered to be improved skills and capabilities, employability (not employment) and career understanding, an increased capacity to contribute to society at large, and a measurable learning gain that was supportive of the overall objectives of the degree.

Curriculum design

Evident across most of the interview responses was the importance of coherent and scaffolded curriculum and learning design, which supports WIL as part of a larger framework of learning. WIL was often considered not a ‘one off’ experience, but connected and integrated in the wider course curriculum. As one interviewee commented:

So it’s about the journey of the students through that WIL experience, but not just the WIL experience but how that WIL experience fits within the whole-of-course experience. So, how prepared they are before, and how we’re linking that experience to their future experiences.
Critical to the design of curriculum for WIL is the integration between the learning of, and through, the WIL experience and the wider curriculum. Further, WIL must be a generative curriculum that is responsive to the learning needs of students and realities of industry partners. Given its connection to workplace practice, which is constantly evolving and innovating, innovation is a necessary element of WIL curriculum design to ensure it is responsive to this dynamic space. Central to being able to capitalise on this dynamic space is the engagement of students and industry partners, not as clients of the learning, but as partners in the co-design of curriculum and realisation of learning. The following comment highlights the breadth of possibility of partnership:

… it gets up to a position where we move away from work integrated learning being something that is added onto or is different to other parts of the curriculum, to where we talk about our curriculum being co-created with our partners. We talk about partners across a diversity of types of partners. We talk about industry partners. We talk about community partners. We talk about student partners, talk about educational enterprise partners, and research partners.

Beyond the student and industry as partners in the design of WIL curriculum, there is a need for connection across the wider university. Success in WIL reflects much about success in broader constructs of career readiness; therefore, there should be a natural connection between the design of WIL curriculum and career development learning frameworks. Curriculum design in the WIL space is not just the domain of the unit coordinator but is a shared process which includes career educators, learning designers, academic developers, students and industry partners. As the following comment highlights:

… partnership with career educators alongside people who understand good curriculum design, alongside people who have got deep knowledge of WIL form an important support network for people designing good curriculum in work-integrated learning.

Enactment (both of curriculum and policy) is messy, complex and interpretive by the individual actors. This further reinforces the importance of partnership in design to ensure a shared understanding of the learning aims and connections. Quality in curriculum design is very much reflected through partnerships in shaping learning and connections of learning across scaffolded experiences.

Institutional requirements

In working towards a quality WIL experience, it is not possible to divorce the student experience from the institutional context and practices. WIL is a complex pedagogic practice because of its interconnectedness to broader university requirements, necessity for a foundation in institutional policy and procedure, and the inherent nature of partnering and partnerships that requires good stakeholder management. Consistently across the interviews was a reflection about the necessity of alignment between the goals of the university and practice in the delivery of WIL. As one interviewee contributed:

… it [WIL practice] needs to connect in with a broader set of strategy and policy. Strategy around where we want to go as an institution.

These practices included support for the professional learning of key staff, consistent and informed risk management frameworks, communication and information sharing, supportive IT systems, and research-informed decision-making processes. Different universities, unsurprisingly, were described to
be at different stages in the evolution of institutional-wide practices and policies, including risk management frameworks.

According to interviewees, systemic and shared policies and practices was considered to be a key consideration for the assurance of quality across an institution. It was this key consideration which has informed this element of the framework.

**Stakeholder engagement**

Stakeholders of WIL need to be considered more broadly than just the industry partners with whom students are placed or undertake projects. Whilst this group of stakeholders form the main focus for assuring quality WIL, consideration must also be given, particularly at an institutional level, to other key stakeholders, such as governments, accreditation bodies, and the broader higher education sector. The positioning of stakeholders, particularly industry partners, was a recurring theme across interviews. WIL is often conceptualised as a tripartite arrangement between the university, student and industry; therefore, it is not unexpected that industry partnerships were a focus of many interviewees’ unpacking of quality in WIL. Many interviewees saw a direct connection between the strength, and quality, of the partnership, and successful learning outcomes for students. As one interviewee commented:

> … our partnerships and building partnerships and quality partnerships which lead to quality learning outcomes for our students need to be included in there …

In considering the maintenance of the quality of partnerships, there were repeated ideas of recognising the contribution that stakeholders, particularly industry partners, make to the delivery of quality WIL. This was considered to be demonstrated through engagement with stakeholders as part of the design process for WIL, as well as, and complementary to the design, ongoing evaluation and review of the stakeholder experience and the reflexive practices that have developed about how to manage WIL better. Recognition was seen as a critical element to assuring quality WIL in that this reinforced stable and successful partnerships. As one interviewee commented:

> … we’re trying to build in much more support from industry stakeholders in regard that notion of reciprocity … we’re trying to build in things where we recognise industry.

By considering a broad construct of stakeholders and contexts, which includes governments and regional considerations, quality in WIL can be seen to be shaped by government and accreditation requirements, which vary between geographic areas and countries, as well as the nature and expectations of industries and disciplines. The way a school of nursing engages with a large government provider, such as Queensland Health, for the provision of large-scale standardised nursing placements is different to the niche engagement of a business school with start-up companies and small businesses. Whilst these contexts are different, often driving different practice, the underlying principles of quality should translate across contexts.

**Phase Two - Exploration**

Based on the outcomes of Phase One, a draft framework of standards was generated using the three-dimensional model as a foundation for shaping these standards. A series of workshops were undertaken to gather feedback on the standards themselves, as well as consider how the standards may be evidenced in practice; the aim being that workshop participants would be able to contribute
their expertise in mapping the types of evidence which may be available within universities to demonstrate attainment of the proposed standards.

Feedback from workshops

An early draft of the framework was presented to a workshop held in Brisbane in March 2019. This early draft presented the framework as a three-dimensional model which explicitly separated the four domains of practice and attempted to map a standard of practice to each of the combinations of time and characteristic across all four domains. An example of this approach is presented in the following table, focused on ‘student experience’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student experience</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Preparation for learning in the workplace</td>
<td>□ Scaffolded learning opportunities across a whole-of-degree design</td>
<td>□ Integration to future learning and work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Connection to previous learning and experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Recruitment and selection to ensure appropriateness of experience to the learning of the student</td>
<td>□ Support and guidance in both managing the WIL experience and working towards learning goals</td>
<td>□ Employment outcomes, career development and employability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Assessment of student readiness, mapping of learning goals, and identification and management of risk</td>
<td>□ Review of experience (e.g. academic visit) and feedback to ensure focus on learning goals</td>
<td>□ Measurable learning gain based on the intended outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Career development learning and connection to previous experiences</td>
<td>□ Clear learning goals and related activities</td>
<td>□ Applicable and significant learning that is transferable beyond the WIL experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop respondents feedback generally agreed that the mapped standards were thorough and covered all the main aspects of WIL practice. However, they found the presentation of the model of the framework confusing and unnecessarily complex. There was significant repetition across the different standards and conjecture as to whether particular standards were better mapped as ‘before’, ‘during’, or ‘after’.

The framework was revised based on this feedback through combining the four domains into one comprehensive framework, mapping standards to each of the temporal periods, and presenting the framework as a layered model of standards of practice, quality indicators and points of evidence. An extract of this framework is presented in the following table highlighting the two domains of ‘student experience’ and ‘curriculum design’. Within each domain, examples can be seen of what was understood as a quality indicator and point of evidence in the below table.
This revised framework was presented to participants in the Melbourne workshop. Workshop participants were encouraged to contribute to the development of the framework by first reviewing the proposed standards of practice, and then identifying how they would evidence these standards in their practice. Feedback from participants was that there was a poor understanding as to how a ‘quality indicator’ and ‘point of evidence’ were different. There was also significant feedback around language and precision of terms used in describing the standards. Evident from this workshop was a challenge...
in using language in a framework which was appropriate and acceptable across all contexts. Based on this feedback the proposed standards were interrogated further to consider the various interpretations of language used.

A similar framework model that was used in Melbourne was presented to participants at the Sydney workshop, but with the inclusion of refined language and standards. Similar feedback around the issues in differentiating ‘quality indicators’ and ‘points of evidence’ were also highlighted in this workshop, alongside challenges in identifying how some standards may be realised in practice. This difficulty varied across the group based on experience, but also identified a number of standards which were not practicable and able to be understood in real-life practice. This workshop also provided further feedback around simplifying the proposed standards and framework, with a greater emphasis on usability.

Following completion of three workshops, the project team met for a full-day to review the total feedback and incorporate that into a revised framework. Whilst the original intent was to create a framework which represented the complex nature of WIL (hence the three dimensional model), there was a need to translate these ideas into a more usable format for practitioners. Therefore, it was decided to move towards a simpler framework model, but ensuring that the various dimensions were captured in language used in the standards and in the types of evidence suggested. A review of other quality frameworks was also undertaken at this time (such as the AITSL National Teaching Standards, National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards, and ACECQA National Standards) to consider possible models of presentation and language.

The final draft framework condensed the standards, simplified the language and combined quality indicators and evidence within each domain, whilst attempting to be more inclusive of diverse settings. The presented model was largely informed by the AITSL Teaching Standards as this model spoke directly to teaching and learning practice and was being employed across all states and territories, and all schools, as a way to describe complex practice. Therefore, the final draft framework was shaped around four domains of practice, under which a set of standards was developed, with these standards being described using possible evidence and illustrations of practice, which provided a real-life lived example of how the standard would be evident in practice. Illustrations of practice were collected from open invitations to WIL practitioners across the Australian higher education sector and also identified as part of the benchmarking activity.

**Phase Three - Benchmarking**

Two benchmarking case studies were undertaken as part of the third phase of the project: (1) institutional benchmarking involving QUT, RMIT and USyd, and (2) faculty / discipline benchmarking involving the Faculty of Health, QUT, and Faculty of Health Sciences, USyd. The aim of this benchmarking activity was to better understand the usability of the framework for self-evaluation and benchmarking comparisons.

Emerging from this benchmarking exercise was the realisation that the framework did provide a comprehensive overview of the quality standards for WIL. The original intent of the design of the framework was for it to be able to be modularised allowing focus on one domain, or area of interest, the benchmarking identified that whilst this may be possible the underlying WIL practice is complex and often, for the greatest impact, the framework should be utilised more holistically. Each of the domains
and standards interact with others. This reflects the multi-dimensional and complex nature of WIL practice, as well as understandings of quality.

The benchmarking activity further highlighted, due to this complexity, that in being able to fully use the framework it was necessary to engage with a wide range of staff. As one reflection noted:

> My attempts [at benchmarking] were a bit of dismal failure. I was looking at the institutional level of evidence … and I am not aware of any overall institutional level policy or practice. It is all in pockets; health science has a WIL; business school has a WIL.

The ability to identify and use evidence as part of the benchmarking process was a consistent challenge with much WIL activity hidden and not readily documented. There was evidence from benchmarking of fragmentation of knowledge and practice of WIL within disciplines and the necessity to engage with a wider group of practitioners. As was reflected upon within the faculty/discipline case:

> One of the big things I am taking away is the way [the framework] helps you to think about your WIL practice. The huge document, the huge framework means that you think about it [your WIL practice] in a different way rather than in the typical fragmented view of within your unit or within your degree. … The ‘people knowledge’, and the people connection makes a big difference. The tool and the framework needs that kind of element as well.

The benefit of the framework in supporting access to the ‘people knowledge’ was that it provided a shared language which enabled communication across the many stakeholders and staff which were engaged in undertaking the benchmarking activity.

The framework was valued as providing a way in which to identify gaps in current practice and opportunities for future change, but more so as a way in which there was a consideration of these gaps as being out of step with the expectations of the wider sector. Thereby, the framework was able to empower users in talking about what good WIL practice should look like, and enable common discussions about what can be changed. However, it was noted that the framework does not sit on its own, but needs to be part of a wider conversation of quality assurance and improvement across WIL practice.

### Overview of the framework

The following section presents the final framework and explains the different aspects of the framework.

### Understanding the framework

This framework has been developed based on a definition of WIL as student experiences of work within curriculum, undertaken in partnership, through engagement with authentic and genuine activities for the industry, business or community partner, which are assessed.

Drawing on previous work which has developed an understanding of WIL practice, this evidence-based framework has been developed to reflect the intersections of four **domains of practice** (student experience, curriculum design, institutional requirements, stakeholder engagement) experienced across the three **temporal phases** (before, during and after) of a WIL experience.
The framework has been informed by a matrix of elements of work integrated learning which highlight the value of pedagogy, experience, assessment and evaluation, and reflection in shaping the WIL opportunity (McRae, Pretti and Church, 2018).

Through the combination of domains of practice, the temporal phases of WIL, and the matrix of elements, the framework aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key principles and standards of practice that should be evident in a high quality WIL opportunity.

It is acknowledged that a WIL opportunity may be experienced quite differently in varying contexts. However, there exists common underlying principles and standards which can define whether a particular opportunity is high quality. To further contextualise the framework, direct reference has been made to the expectations of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Guidance Note: Work Integrated Learning.

Principles, standards of practice, and points of evidence will vary across institutions, disciplines, cohorts, and WIL experiences, and so this framework aims to provide a way to assure quality within each context.

Overview of the framework

A summary of the framework which presents the four domains of practice and the identified standards is available HERE.

Across the project the four domains of practice: (1) student experience, (2) curriculum design, (3) institutional requirements, and (4) stakeholder engagement, have consistently been validated and supported by all feedback and input. Whilst some debate was had about the exact naming of each domain, it was accepted that the use of these identifiers captured the key areas of interest for WIL practice. Therefore, each of these domains are still evident in the final framework. Within each domain an overarching principle was developed to capture the main intent and focus of the domain. This has, therefore, created the following four principles of quality in WIL:

1. A quality WIL experience should provide students with a scaffolded, connected and supported pedagogical experience.
2. A quality WIL curriculum should contain embedded, accessible and transformative learning and assessment within an intended and enacted curriculum.
3. Quality WIL activity across institutions should be evidenced by the proper management of staff, risk management and reporting around WIL experiences supporting continual improvement.
4. Quality WIL experiences are supported by engagement, connection and responsiveness to the dynamic expectations of diverse stakeholders (industry, community, government, higher education sector, professional bodies, students).

Within each domain a set of standards of practice have been developed, which are captured within the overview. These standards present a comprehensive map of desirable practice across each of the domains of WIL practice. Feedback has suggested that these standards tend towards a dominant view of WIL as placement opportunities. Such feedback is fair and reasonable, and reflects the adopted definition which underpins the framework. The framework is largely focussed on real engagements with real businesses, whether these take the form of a project or placement. It does not account for loose definitions of WIL which include simulations, field work, case studies or what may be considered ‘authentic learning’. As Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden (2010) put it;
work experiences that are not integrated with the academic curriculum, do not promote learning through a process of reflection and analysis, do not provide student support, and in which the learning is not situated, constructed and experiential, are not work integrated learning.

Whilst the overview presents the standards within temporal spaces of before, during and after WIL, this arrangement is only a loose arrangement and is aimed at directing the user to consider these phases of practice.

The more comprehensive framework also presents possible sources of evidence of standards, and where possible and appropriate, an illustration of practice to make explicit the lived quality practice of WIL.

The following table provides an example of how this model is presented within the framework using Standard 1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>1. Student experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPLE</td>
<td>A quality WIL experience provides students with a scaffolded, connected and supported pedagogical experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD</td>
<td>Standard 1.1 Ensure student readiness and preparation for learning in the workplace context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVIDENCE</td>
<td>Achievement of this standard may be evidenced by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Effective student orientation and preparation activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Auditable student induction reports, checklists and preparation for managing risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Accessible student resources and support for the development of skills in risk identification and management, industry induction and WIL preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Where students are required to be proactive in the acquisition of a WIL placement, the tertiary institution must provide adequate guidance and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATION</td>
<td>The University of Sydney holds a barrier exam - Readiness For Practice Quiz - in first year of the MPharm program to ensure students have the necessary communication and technical skills prior to undertaking their first placement. An online component of the exam requires students to “navigate” various aspects of a prescription, select appropriate resources (AMH, APF, MIMS, legislation, professional and ethical standards) to address typical scenarios encountered in pharmacy - therapeutic (AMH, APF, MIMS), legal (Poisons and Therapeutic Good Act 1966) and professional/ethical (PSA Professional Practice Standards). Students are required to demonstrate their medical information gathering and communication skills (verbal and non-verbal) in an oral role-play. Students are required to demonstrate their ability to dispense prescription medicines through a computer-simulated patient and pharmacy dispensary (MyDispense).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full framework will be available via: [https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/](https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/)
Key learnings and recommendations

This project has delivered a quality assurance framework for work integrated learning. In developing this framework, the following key learnings were identified:

- The framework provides an objective definition of quality practice in WIL which challenges some assumptions and complacency around local practice. Through the benchmarking activity it became evident that the framework provided a language which could better describe WIL practice, and therefore it ‘shone a light’ on practices which had never previously been examined.

- The use of the framework has the ability to elevate the recognition of WIL as a unique pedagogical approach in higher education, but there are challenges in simply translating broad conceptions of quality of teaching and learning in higher education into the WIL space. There is a need for a WIL framework which describes quality WIL practice and highlights the additional complexities of WIL beyond general teaching and learning in higher education.

- Much of the previous scholarship and research in shaping the quality of WIL has focussed on the design elements of practice. The framework challenges this way of thinking to explore broader spaces of practice and consider the temporal nature of WIL. In doing so, the framework provides a good overview of the multi-level nature of WIL highlighting how practice, and focus, varies at different organisational levels within an institution, and across different organisational units.

- Implementing the framework as a quality assurance process presents a range of challenges in gathering, categorising and reviewing evidence. These challenges emerge usually as a consequence of WIL practice being dispersed across an institution (university or faculty) and a previous lack of detailed review of WIL practice. In reviewing evidence, consideration must be given to the relative quality of the evidence (e.g. is it sustained and broadly evident, or is it isolated and ad hoc), and that such evidence may be highly inconsistent across an institution (or between institutions). The framework lacks some detail around the quality of evidence and this is an opportunity for further future work.

Whilst this framework provides a comprehensive mapping of quality indicators and standards for WIL across four domains of practice, the following recommendations are made for future work that will ensure the ongoing engagement and enhancement of the framework:

- **Engagement with the vocational education sector:** the framework has largely been developed with a focus on the university/higher education sector. Whilst there was some engagement with dual-sector institutions and attempts have been made to make the language inclusive, there is a likely bias in the framework towards higher education. It is recommended that future work be undertaken to test and extend this framework for use in the vocational education sector.

- **Extending the relevance of the framework beyond Australian higher education:** similar to the previous recommendation, the framework has been developed within, and in reference to, the Australian higher education sector. There is opportunity for the framework to be explored within global contexts with consideration of different policy, practice and educational contexts.
To this extent, it is the intent of the project team to present this research at the upcoming WACE International Research Symposium, where this recommendation will be explored. It is therefore recommended that future work on the framework consider its translation to global contexts.

- **Need to promote framework in action**: emergent through the benchmarking phase of the project was an opportunity for the framework to be shared more broadly as a way to understand WIL practice, but that in sharing it was important that thorough practice guides and tools be developed to support the use of the framework in action. Efforts are being undertaken to develop a short user guide for the framework, but there remains opportunity for the promotion of the framework through face-to-face workshops as well as through the development of an interactive web presence. It is recommended that further funding be considered to enable the extension of the framework into a format that supports the translation to practice and encourages broad engagement with the framework.
References


