SCALING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR: ENTERPRISE WIL FOR ENDURING INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Daniel Czech[a], Thomas Gan[a]

Presenting Author: Daniel Czech (daniel.czech@unimelb.edu.au)
[a]School of BioSciences, University of Melbourne, Parkville Victoria 3052, Australia

KEYWORDS: Work-integrated learning, science, employability

ABSTRACT

Work-integrated learning (WIL) provides unparalleled opportunities for students to implement university learning in real-world employment settings. The benefits of WIL for improving graduate employability are now well established (Jackson & Li, 2022), however only one third of Australian students experience WIL while at university (Universities Australia, 2017). There remains far more demand for WIL than there is supply, as well as inequity in WIL access between disciplines. While in some degrees such as teaching and nursing, all students must undertake a WIL program, other disciplines, particularly in science, have much lower WIL participation rates. This inequity exists despite the corporate sector comprising more than 85% of Australian jobs (ABS, 2023) and being a significant employer of science graduates. To address this inequity and to increase the number of WIL placements available to science students, this study explores a business-centric approach for scaling WIL in the corporate sector. Our 'enterprise WIL' model sees executive-level decision makers within both universities and businesses negotiating long-term WIL placement agreements, as currently occurs for many public sector WIL activities. This study explored the perspectives of four key enterprise WIL stakeholder groups: industry decision makers (*n*=4), university decision makers (*n*=4), WIL academics (*n*=13), and WIL administrators (*n*=9). Stakeholder groups were canvassed through interviews and surveys across five topics: barriers, enablers, opportunities, risks, and feasibility of enterprise WIL. The study found that stakeholder groups were broadly in positive alignment on views toward enterprise WIL, however WIL academics and administrators perceived significantly greater challenges associated with implementing enterprise WIL (mean 7.5) compared to industry and university decision makers (mean 4.2; Mann-Whitney U Test; *z*-score 2.5). Findings from this study may inform higher education policy and strategies aiming to scale WIL placements and projects with corporate sector partners. Ultimately, the implementation of an enterprise WIL model may improve rates of WIL participation in higher education and subsequently enhance science graduate employability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by in-kind support from the School of BioSciences at The University of Melbourne.

REFERENCES

ABS (2023). *Labour Account Australia, Quarterly*. Australian Bureau of Statistics.
Jackson, D., & Li, I. (2022) Transition to work, mismatch and underemployment among graduates: an Australian longitudinal study. *International Journal of Manpower 43*(7), 1516-1539.
Universities Australia (2017). *Work integrated learning in universities: Final Report*. Deakin, ACT.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Melbourne, 30 September - 2 October 2025, page 27, ISSN Number 2653-0481.