

Work integrated Learning (WIL) in generalist degrees: At what cost? And what should it look like?

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The increased recognition that Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences are an important and beneficial part of the student experience is embodied in the overarching WIL strategies being disseminated by interest groups and government bodies, alike. Within these policy developments there is acknowledgement of the need for WIL to be made explicit in generalist degrees. Research suggests that quality work integrated learning experiences value-add to the student experience immeasurably. However, including these experiences in the generalist degree can be problematic and one size does not fit all. Some models with a focus on student agency are emerging where students are encouraged to engage in design-based thinking, whereby their career and professional identity are seen as something that they actively develop, while others see reflective learning as the key. More often, however, WIL in a generalist degree is seen as the responsibility of the institution, where employable graduates are produced as an outcome of the curriculum and in response to the demands of industry and the community. What then does a work-ready music, physics or history major graduate look like? How is it possible to expand WIL activities to provide opportunities for all students and will all students participate in these activities? What does best practice WIL look like in a generalist degree? Where does it fit? Should it be transactional? The student develops work place skills. Or should it be transformational? The student is able to reflect on workplace experiences and bring clarity and understanding to the experience. Perhaps it should be both? Who gets to WIL? Who is responsible for WIL? And is everybody WIL-ing?