

Building the capacity of industry and community partners to enhance student employability outcomes

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Partnerships between higher education institutions and industry groups are gaining prominence as a mechanism for improving the work-readiness of graduates and ultimately a sustainable and globally competitive Australian economy. Contemporary publications have highlighted the need for partnerships which inform curriculum, thereby ensuring an authentic learning experience for students. Industry stakeholders require targeted resources and support to facilitate the development of students' professional capabilities through more robust industry feedback on performance. This Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) funded research aimed to enhance the capacity of industry to play a pivotal role in the student experience through the development of industry-specific resources to inform the preparation and support of students during Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Feedback on the topics and design of resources was sought from employers and WIL practitioners to inform research findings and develop user-friendly resources that meet the needs of industry partners. The availability of resources for industry will strengthen partnerships between universities and industry ultimately improving the WIL experience for students which in turn benefits employers, and the Australian economy. Highlighting findings from recent national research compiled by both industry organisations and the OLT, key barriers and enablers of brokering partnerships have been identified. An overview of resources that promote quality workplace learning for students, provide constructive feedback to assist students' growth and development, and clarify the role of industry partners will be presented. In addition, a WIL curriculum framework underpinned by industry engagement will be discussed.

The project adopted an action research methodology. Qualitative data was supplemented by administering a survey to employers which explored employers' perspectives on the preferred nature and topics of resources. Improved support mechanisms and resources for industry will strengthen partnerships and facilitate the development of students' professional capabilities through more robust industry feedback on performance. The project outcomes align to priorities in the National WIL Strategy and are supported by peak industry bodies.