



How to Make the Most of Work Integrated Learning:

**A Guide for Students, Lecturers &
Supervisors**

Andy Martin & Helen Hughes



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AUTHORS

Andrew Martin, PhD is a senior lecturer in the Department of Management at Massey University, Palmerston North. He has been involved in a range of experiential learning projects in management education, physical education, and outdoor education. For the past 15 years he has lead the undergraduate professional preparation program in Sport Management for both internal and distance education students.

Helen Hughes specialises in consultancy and research projects that focus on high performing people. Helen brings experience in gathering qualitative data through the facilitation of focus groups. The nine competencies outlined in Part two of this document have been developed from focus groups interview findings involving students, graduates, academic and workplace supervisors.

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INTRODUCTION

There is increasing emphasis on work based learning, as it aims to integrate academic study and practical work experience providing a point of difference for graduates that employers value. This publication is aimed at Tertiary Training Organisations/Educators offering Work Place Learning opportunities to students. It focuses on theoretical content and **practical information for students, lecturers, and employers**. The publication is divided into two parts to reflect the integration of theory and practice:

- **Part One: Work Integrated Learning**
 1. Work Place Learning
 2. Experiential Learning
 3. Cooperative Education

- **Part Two: Practice**
 4. Benefits
 5. Assessment
 6. Competencies

PART ONE
WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Work integrated learning experiences provide a bridge for the student between the academic present, and their professional future - an opportunity to apply and merge theoretical knowledge gained in academic studies to “real world” work place practical experiences, and to prepare the student for a career by providing an opportunity to develop relevant professional skills. A three way partnership between the student, the work place organisation, and the university requires all parties in the relationship to assume definite responsibilities, perform specific functions, and achieve benefits as a result of the involvement.

1. WORK PLACE LEARNING

For a student's work place experience to be successful the organisation should offer the student the opportunity to work with various staff members in the workplace to provide the student access to a breadth and depth of experiences, although one experienced staff member should be designated as the supervisor. In the cases where remuneration is offered, it should not alter the supervised work place experience. It is important that the student negotiates a realistic schedule of experiences and responsibilities within the organisation prior to the placement and keeps to it, although students should be prepared to take on voluntary duties outside the boundaries of their project(s). If the student already works within the organisation, they should identify a clearly specified project as the focus of their placement. Students are expected to exercise their professional, ethical and technical skill judgment to the best of their ability.

Although some organisations will not be able to offer an extended work experience or an adequate work space in which to carry out the student project, such organisations may still offer valuable opportunities. In such cases it is important that the student honestly assesses their ability to work independently (without constant supervision), often away from the organisation. The supervisory commitment of the organisation should also be assessed and the student should maintain close contact with both the organisation, and academic supervisors during the placement.

Students should:

- be loyal to the placement agency and active in its work;
- recognise their responsibilities to their employer or client, the public, and fellow employees;
- disclose any financial or other interest that they may have which may impair their professional judgment when dealing with their employer or client;
- maintain high standards of professional behaviour during placements. This includes meeting the ethical expectations of the placement agency, especially with regard to confidentiality and discretion in comments to third parties;
- be punctual to the daily routines of the agencies in which they are placed. Professional practice requires that a framework of routine be set and maintained;
- meet the standard of dress required by the agency - if unsure of expectations, ask.

Students should NOT:

- conduct themselves in a manner as to prejudice the professional status or reputation of the placement agency;
- make comparison with, or statements about other members, that are not based on verifiable facts;
- disclose any confidential information or matter related to their work or the business of their client, without the expressed authority of their employer or client;
- entertain or accept any covert reward, profit, or use (for personal gain) any information obtained in their professional capacity;
- misrepresent their competence nor, without disclosing its limits, undertake work beyond it.

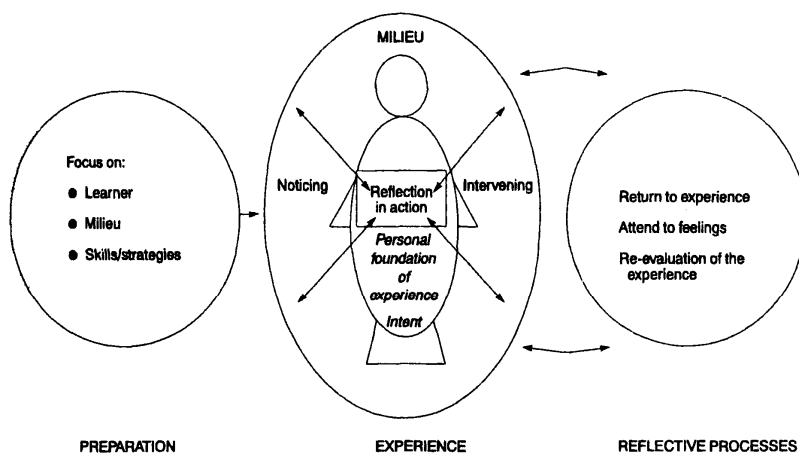
2. REFLECTION

“Reflection as a term is used in a number of different ways by different authors. We take our definition from Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) as ‘a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations’ (p. 19). [Boud et al. (1985)] developed a three stage model of the reflection process focusing on: returning to the experience, attending to feelings connected with the experience and re-evaluating the experience through recognizing implications and outcomes. This model has subsequently been extended into a model for facilitating learning from experience [Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993]. The essence of this model is that learning from experience can be enhanced through both reflection in action (reflection which occurs in the midst of experience), and through reflection after an event (reflection on action). Both forms of reflection can be introduced into courses, though in different ways.

The features of the model include the following: reflection is grounded in the personal foundation of experience of the learner, that is, those experiences which have shaped the person and have helped to create the person he or she is now, and their intent which gives a particular focus to their learning in any particular context. Learning occurs through the interaction of the person with his or her material and human environment – the learning milieu – and is assisted through the learner giving attention to noticing what is happening in their internal and

external environments, intervening in various ways to influence themselves and the milieu in which they are operating and reflecting in action continually to modify their noticing and interventions. The model suggests that there are an endless number of reflective strategies which might be adopted, but those which are chosen must be related to the needs and intent of the learner and the nature of the milieu. Although the model was originally developed in the context of non-accredited (though deliberate) learning, it has also been applied elsewhere. In the context of university courses, the curriculum and the teacher are strong elements in the learning milieu” (Boud & Knights, 1996, pp. 26-27; see Figure 1 - Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993, p.77).

Figure 1: Model for promoting learning from experience



Permission: David Boud

Reflection before, in, and on action

The student, academic supervisors, and employers have collective responsibility for the integration through WIL, by drawing upon their training as educators, their personal experiences and research. WIL programs should formally state that they *require integration of knowledge*, as an explicit learning objective. In the early stage of WIL student need to be equipped with the basic content knowledge necessary for their discipline of study, ‘exposure’ to the profession (e.g. visits to the workplace, or employer presentations on-campus), and critical thinking skills. Development of students as reflective practitioners then requires progression in complexity and sophistication. Students need to see the relevance of on-campus learning and how it might apply to the workplace setting *before* they go on placement. Such activities are often already part of many WIL programs, but should be *directly linked* to the notion of integration.

Reflection-*on*-action requires reflection after the event. Reflection-*in*-action means to think about what one is doing whilst one is doing it. This is commonly associated with experienced practitioners (Schön, 1991). Reflection-*before*-action is preceded by reflection-*on*-action and reflection-*in*-action. Gibbs (1988) proposes a six stage model to develop student skills in reflection-*before*-action.

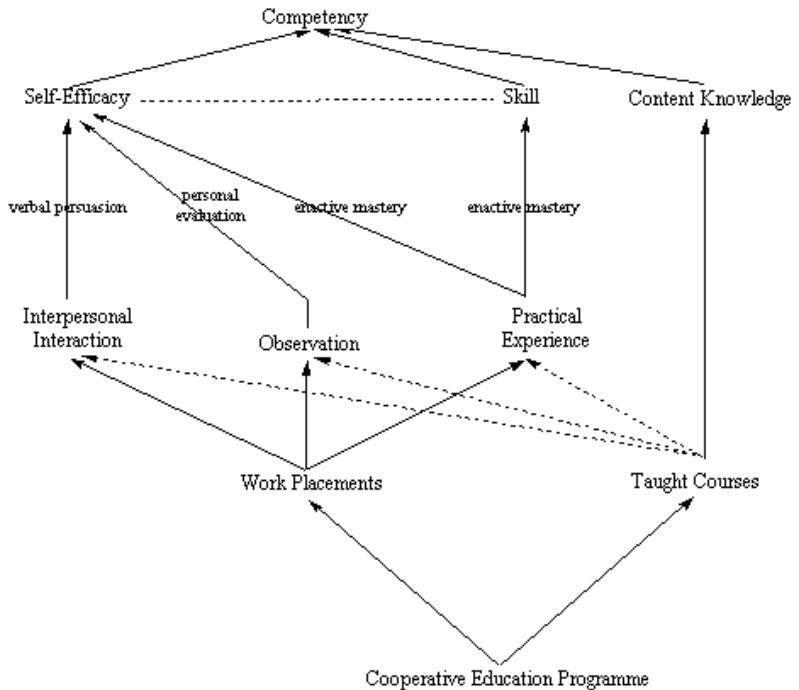
1. *Description* of the event, where a student describes in detail the event they are reflecting on - what they were doing; what were other people doing; what was the context of the event; what happened; what was their role; what parts did the other people play; what was the result.
2. *Feelings and thoughts*, the notion of self awareness. At this stage, the student tries to recall and explore those things that were going on inside their head: how they were feeling when the event started; what they were thinking about at the time; how did it make them feel; how did other people make them feel; how they felt about the outcome of the event; and what do they think about it now?
3. *Evaluation* in which the student tries to evaluate or make a judgement about what has happened, and considers what was good about the experience and what was bad about the experience or what did or didn't go so well.
4. *Analysis* in which the student tries to break the event down into its component parts so they can be explored separately. The student may need to ask more detailed questions about the answers to the last stage. Including: what went well; what did they do well; what did others do well; what went wrong or did not turn out how it should have done; and in what way did they or others contribute to this?

5. *Conclusion and synthesis*, which differs from the evaluation stage, in that now the student has explored the issue from different angles and has a substantial amount of information on which to base judgement.
6. *Formulation of an action plan* and during this stage the student should think forward into encountering the event (or similar event) again and to plan what they would do – would they act differently or would they be likely to do the same?

Gibbs model incorporates all the core skills of reflection and is similar to Moon's (2000) sequence of reflection stages that participants move through – 'noticing', 'making sense', 'making meaning', 'working with meaning' and in some cases 'transformative learning'. Arguably Gibb's model is focused more on reflection-on-action, but it also can be used to focus on reflection in, and before, action. With this forward focus it is consistent with Boud's notion of lifelong learning, and its focus on forward thinking (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Boud et al, 1985). Whilst it may be argued that students 'don't have time to reflect when in the workplace', modern technologies allow practitioners to foster such reflection via say on-line reflective journals/discussion.

Practitioners need to work with employers/workplace supervisors to develop more formal pedagogies for workplace learning. A framework for learning, based on enhancing student self-efficacy is proposed by Coll, Lay and Zegwaard (2002) (Figure 2, note WIL is referred to as 'cooperative education').

Figure 2: A framework for learning, based on enhancing student self-efficacy (after Coll, Lay & Zegwaard, 2002)



Permission: Richard Coll

Students learning can be mentored by a process of *enactive mastery* (i.e., scaffolding learning in the workplace increases confidence as tasks are ‘mastered’), *verbal persuasion* (i.e., positive verbal encouragement from their mentors), and *personal evaluation* of their own capabilities (leading to increased self-efficacy) (Coll et al, 2002).

3. COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

The World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) is an international organisation, based in the United States, devoted to promoting Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) by conducting research involving higher-education institutions, businesses, and governments. WACE has more than 1000 members from over 40 countries, including New Zealand through NZACE.

Cooperative education opportunities provide a structured educational strategy integrating classroom studies with learning through productive work experience in a field related to a student's academic or career goals. It provides progressive experiences in integrating theory and practice. These experiences involve a partnership among students, educational institutions and employers, with specified responsibilities for each party (Fleming & Martin, 2007). The term 'work integrated learning' emphasises the notion that it entails an *integration* of knowledge and skills gained in the Tertiary Education Institution and in the workplace (Coll et al., 2008).

Purpose

A key purpose of WIL is the notion of providing graduates with a comprehensive skill-set desired by potential employers (Coll et al. 2008). Work integrated learning experiences within the curriculum have been shown to support the development of behavioural competencies (Dressler & Keeling, 2004). This is of key benefit because it has seen to be problematic for tertiary education providers to provide students with such skills, especially behavioural skills. It has been frequently reported that universities do not sufficiently emphasise the development of behavioural skills to prepare graduates for professional life (Coll & Zegward, 2006). A report on graduate recruitment in the leisure industry in Australia highlighted that a strong knowledge base alone does not guarantee a new graduate employment and that personal attributes and capabilities of the graduate are considered to have a greater influence on success in the workplace (Bell, Crebert, Patrick, Bates & Cragolini, 2003).

Bell et al. (2003) asked to what degree the work placement as part of a degree program contributed to the development of generic skills and abilities. Results of this investigation acknowledge that there was strong support for university work placements as an important contributor to graduate skills development for employment. Among graduates of the leisure management program at Griffith University, 82% of respondents agreed that university work placements provided sufficient opportunity to develop generic skills and abilities (Bell et al., 2007).

There have been numerous studies across the world to define the most important non-technical competencies needed by a graduate (Fleming, Zinn & Ferkins, 2008; Bell et al. 2007). Commonly desirable attributes include:

- The ability and willingness to learn;
- The ability to prioritise tasks and organise effectively;
- The ability to take responsibility and make decisions;
- The ability to solve problems;
- The ability to communicate interpersonally;
- The ability to work as a team.

Competencies

Coll et al (2008) observe that, while WIL has been deemed as beneficial in the development of non-technical competencies, little is known about how it might better be facilitated or supported. This literature review has identified four key groups of people positioned to help the learner maximise their WIL experience: (a) program administrators; (b) the learners themselves; (c) academic supervisors; (d) workplace supervisors.

a) Program administrator

Martin and Leberman (2005) argue that WIL should be developed as part of the whole course of study, rather than as a stand-alone component. This is because students need a certain level of behavioural competencies *prior* to starting their cooperative experience and that it cannot be assumed that the development of such competencies can be

left entirely for the WIL component of a degree (Fleming et al. 2007). Consequently, many universities have begun to identify the generic skills and attributes their graduates should possess on graduation (Bell et al. 2007).

Nevertheless, more may need to be done by program administrators to ensure that non-technical competencies are supported and reinforced throughout the student's undergraduate program in addition to being emphasised during the WIL experience.

b) Learners themselves

Before the WIL experience, students need from the outset to take responsibility when selecting their internship and clearly establishing their roles and learning outcomes. Martin and Leberman (2005) argue that the development of the learning contract is an important way to formalises student and organisation expectations by establishing initial project objectives.

Suggestions for students from graduates prior to the WIL experience include:

- Talk to previous students about their project experiences;
- Choose organisations that are known to value student contributions;
- Talk to more than one organization about what they have to offer;

- Sit down with the workplace supervisor to discuss both sets of expectations from the experience;
- Clarify the role you are fulfilling before you start;
- Be clear with your workplace supervisor about your background and existing experience (Martin & Leberman, 2005).

During the WIL experience, research undertaken by Martin and Leberman (2005) indicates that the key employer expectations of student learners is to be enthusiastic, organised, show initiative, and make the most of the work placement opportunity. Specific suggestions from workplace supervisors for enhancing the WIL experience include:

- Be prepared to experiment with new and old ideas to see what combination suits the situation best;
- Think about how you can add benefit to the organisation – leave a mark / make an impression.

Specific suggestions from graduates for enhancing the WIL experience include:

- Choose something you are interested in;
- Enjoy yourself; do as much as you can and take on as many roles as possible so you get more insight into the organisation;
- Prepare so that you can undertake tasks with ease; plan, plan, plan – then do it and do it well (Martin & Leberman, 2005).

Of course, suggestions to help the learner maximise their own WIL experience assume a certain level of engagement in the event. In reality, there is often indifference among students to the value of work-related learning because they do not want to jeopardise their academic performance and are unsure about the value placed on work experience by employers.

c) Workplace supervisors

Among graduates of the leisure management program at Griffith University, respondents prioritized two main activities for developing generic skills in a work placement context: (a) being given specific work responsibilities in the placement; and (b) having regular debriefing / feedback sessions with supervisors (Bell et al. 2007).

More may need to be done to help supervisors understand how to reinforce the application of generic skills by having students build specific skills development into placement learning objectives – and then how to help the students reflect upon and evaluate their learning. Fleming and Martin (2007) observe that one limitation may be that it takes time for some students to establish an effective relationship with their supervisors and to gain confidence to share their experiences so that the benefits can be achieved.

d) University supervisors

Student satisfaction with work placement is closely linked to the mutual support provided by both academic and workplace supervisors (Fleming

& Martin, 2007). This is because, working together in the design of WIL, the academic and workplace supervisors are able to plan and facilitate appropriate learning experiences that link the workplace and university contexts (Bell et al. 2007) – making WIL an *integrated* experience. In this context, the academic supervisor assumes an important role as co-ordinator.

During the WIL experience, students need appropriate supervision and support to understand the purpose of WIL and are able to develop the capabilities necessary to be a reflective practitioner (Fleming & Martin, 2007). Rather than leaving the student unclear about what to learn during a work placement, institutions need to specify learning outcomes that focus the student's learning and encourage reflection about what they have learned (Moon, 2004)

Although reflective journals/reports/essays have been highlighted by many graduates as beneficial (Fleming & Martin, 2007), nevertheless, students report that it is initially difficult to understand the value or purpose of the reflective process or the strategies used to facilitate reflection – which are not easy. Students therefore believe that effective academic supervision is critical in assisting the learner to engage in the reflective process. One example is that students often do not acknowledge on their own that the most disastrous experience provides the best learning opportunity and it is an important role of the [academic] supervisor to help them with this reflective process (Fleming & Martin, 2007).

There are limitations of academic supervisors assuming an integral role in WIL. Firstly, the transfer of learning between university and work placement contexts would require the university and the host organisation to make a commitment that can be both time consuming and resource intensive for both parties (Bell et al. 2007). Secondly, academics are often not motivated or able to develop employability skills among students since most lecturers have been concerned with academic content during their careers and not with vocational matters (Department for Education Employability & Higher Education Quality Employability, DfEE & HEQE, 2002). Thirdly, there is a debate among some academics as to whether their role is to further academic knowledge or to prepare students for employment (Sleap & Reed, 2007).

PART TWO
PRACTICE:
FOR STUDENTS, LECTURERS, & EMPLOYERS

For students to make the most from their work place experience they need to:

- take responsibility for their learning, which will be primarily self-directed;
- work on their own initiative and develop their decision making and self management skills;
- arrange a placement through the university supervisor or contacts;
- complete a learning contract (see assessment item) in conjunction with the academic and work place supervisor prior to commencing the placement;
- strive to meet the objectives and conditions agreed to in the learning contract;
- maintain a reflective journal of activities throughout the placement (see assessment item);
- follow the policies and duties outlined by the organisation, fulfilling all scheduled commitments and arrangements agreed upon with the organisation, in regard to the project;
- perform/submit all work assignments/reports to the best of their abilities, maintaining a high standard of professional excellence;

- maintain regular contact with the organisation and university supervisors;
- consult with the work place supervisor when confronted with problems that cannot be solved independently;
- conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times during the work place experience.

University staff responsibilities are to:

- find work placements, and liaise with students during placements;
- liaise with current and potential employers;
- maintain close contact with organisation supervisors and students in the field.
- ensure that cordial and satisfying relations are had for employers and students undertaking the project;
- determine if the work place supervisor is qualified to help the student, based on considerations including length of employment, experience with students, matched with the student's area of interest, etc.;
- offer assistance, encouragement, support and professional direction to the student during this experience, particularly in helping to select an organisation which meets the student's needs and professional goals, as well as meets the criteria for participation in the course.

Employer supervisor responsibilities are to:

- meet with the student prior to the placement to define their learning objectives;
- schedule the student's work responsibilities and to oversee all activities;
- orientate the student to the organisation and its clients;
- expose the student to a variety of learning experiences - constructive rather than menial tasks;
- allow the student the opportunity to grow professionally and to accept appropriate responsibilities in the work place;
- provide the student with constructive criticism, ongoing feedback, guidance and instruction – discuss with the student their performance on a regular basis including regularly scheduled meetings;
- thoroughly review the student's performance (based on objectives agreed in the placement proposal) with the student at the halfway point of the placement and again at the end of the placement;
- complete and submit assessment forms as required;
- to contact the university supervisor about the students' performance in the organisation, particularly if any issues or concerns cannot be resolved with the student.

Choosing a placement

Each student has differing needs and interests, so each work place experience is unique. The following criteria provide a guideline for selecting placements objectives:

- Is the workplace supervisor experienced or qualified enough to offer useful guidance and support?
- Does the prospective workplace supervisor appear interested in your project and learning?
- Can the organisation offer a suitable project?
- Will you be given responsibility in the proposed project?

Approaching an organisation

Remember:

- Professionals are busy people. Don't Waste Their Time!
- No organisation is under any obligations to provide students with a placement;
- Don't expect to be placed!

The student should:

- Phone first to find out the name and position of the appropriate person to approach before they phone, write, or visit a prospective supervisor;
- Research the functions and operations of the organisation to ascertain its suitability;
- Be well prepared before meeting with the staff member;
- Be familiar with the learning contract requirements;
- Know where their project interests lie;

- Be aware of relevant dates pertaining to their availability and project deadlines;
- Send or take a copy of their Curriculum Vitae (CV);
- Be courteous and professional at all times - future relations between organisations and the University may depend upon the impression the student makes.

4. BENEFITS

For the Students the workplace opportunity should provide opportunities to:

- gain knowledge and understanding of the organisational and operational aspects of an organisation or group of individuals;
- integrate and apply knowledge, theory, and understanding from academic courses to other life experiences;
- experience contacts with professional workers on the job;
- discover strengths which may be developed and weaknesses which can be improved;
- develop the following skills and techniques, which are common practice within an organisation: communication skills, motivation of others, marketing skills, and related organisational skills;
- analyse the organisation or group of individuals;
- identify, plan, implement, and evaluate practices that benefit the organisation;
- formulate goals and measurable objectives to be accomplished during the work place experience;
- gain an appreciation of some of the organisations environmental factors (physical, economic, social, and technological).

For the University staff, the program should provide the following opportunity:

- improve the educational process and enlarge the scope of the professional curriculum;
- provide a laboratory for application of theoretical knowledge;
- provide college contact with professionals in the field;
- inform organisations about the University curriculum, new ideas that are being generated, and the latest research development in the field.

For the Employer participation should provide the following opportunity:

- establish a cooperative working relationship with the University;
- increase knowledge of current academic preparation;
- provide the opportunity to survey and evaluate potential employees;
- participate in the preparation of future industry professionals;
- increase awareness of new and innovative ideas in the fields;
- gain assistance and expertise in related projects;
- develop and/or create new programs or projects.

5. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

The following methods of assessment provide opportunities to help the student structure their work, provide clear learning objectives and methods of reflection demonstrating comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Learning Contract

A learning contract is an agreement between the student, the organisation, and the university supervisor. Students should describe:

- their job description (include a detailed time line or critical path);
- the supervision to be provided;
- their overall expectation of the experience;
- learning objectives;
- tasks to achieve objectives;
- evaluation methods to demonstrate achievement of objectives.

The following self-evaluation steps should help in developing the Learning Contract (Knowles, 1975; Dickinson, 1987)

The student should assess their strengths and weaknesses.

- What knowledge and skills do they already have?
- What knowledge and skills do they need?
- What knowledge and skills would they like to learn?

Objectives

- What knowledge or skills do they intend to gain?
- Are the objectives clearly stated and attainable?
- Are objectives realistic and feasible?
- Are they appropriate and at the level required?
- Will it be possible to measure the objectives?
- Do the objectives describe what the student proposes to learn?
- Are there other objectives the student might consider?

Activities

- How will the student achieve objectives?
- What tasks, projects, experiences, and/or exercises will be undertaken?
- Is each objective accounted for with satisfactory activities?
- Are sufficient resources available to complete the contract?
- How will resources be acquired?
- Are they current?
- Are there other resources to consider?

Method for Evaluation

- Why select this method?
- What knowledge/skill will it help demonstrate?
- How and when will this be evaluated?
- What alternative methods have been considered?
- Does the method demonstrate variety and creativity?

Criteria for Evaluation

- What evidence will demonstrate the learning?
- What criteria will ensure that this evidence is satisfactory?
- What appropriate method of assessment has demonstrated the achievement of each objective?
- Are the criteria clear, relevant and able to be applied?
- Do the criteria relate to the objectives?
- Are the criteria appropriate for the student's level/time frame?
- What alternative criteria have you considered?

Example A:

Objective:

- Develop my leadership skills.

Activities:

- Read appropriate texts/articles to identify and analyse factors that contribute to effective leadership;
- Develop criteria to determine my individual strengths and weaknesses as a leader;
- Identify a personal leadership weakness and develop an action plan to improve the weakness.

Evaluation:

- A criteria based form to assess the relevant activities;
- The feedback from the evaluation form will be used to grade the success of the action plan;
- Recommend and implement any further action that may be required to develop further the leadership weakness.

Reflective Journal

The reflective journal entails more than just listing your experiences. Students should compose a brief synopsis (diary type format) for each day, outlining hours worked, duties performed, work behaviour, and reflections on all activities that take place and links to theory throughout the work place experience. Use the following questions to reflect upon and analyse these daily experiences.

- What kinds of things were done?
- Were they easy? Were they hard?
- Were they enjoyable? Were they boring?
- What activities were completed?
- What activities were started?
- What activities are ongoing?
- What could have been done differently?
- In what activities was the student involved?
- What important decisions were made by the student?
- In what ways did the student show initiative today?
- In what ways has the experience changed the student?
 - General office work (planning, researching, etc)
 - Observation of events
 - Major responsibility of events
- Other items that assisted the student's learning and development;
- How did this experience link to current or previous workplace experiences?
- Use theory to support this reflection.

Consider Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) when undertaking reflection.

- Knowledge: Recall of factual information;
- Comprehension: Show an understanding of information;
- Application: Use some previously learned knowledge, rule or method in a new situation;
- Analysis: Break information into parts to explore understandings and relationships;
- Synthesis: Put together ideas in a new or unique product;
- Evaluation: Judge the value of materials or ideas on the basis of criteria set.

6. COMPETENCIES

The following 9 key themes have been developed from graduate feedback. This section provides hints and tips for students, academic and workplace supervisors, which aim to help the student develop each of these competencies. Quotes from graduates are used to highlight each of the key points.

Key themes

1. Communication Skills
2. Self Confidence
3. Customer Relationship Management
4. Enthusiastic Participation
5. Industry & Business Knowledge
6. Self Sufficiency
7. Personal Organisation
8. Professional Networks
9. Professional Ethics

1. Communication Skills

Communication can be in many forms. Initial individual face-to-face contact may be at times oral/verbal - using words (7%), perceived tone (38%); visual - associated gestures, e.g. eye contact (55% of the time) or kinaesthetic, e.g. handshake. Listening carefully, empathising with others, and asking questions are also essential elements of good communication. Group communication may be in the form of public speaking, in a meeting or forum. Written communication in the work place often involves email, letter or report writing. Consider ongoing training to develop these skills, e.g. a communications paper or Toastmasters

Hints & Tips for Students

“Learn how to ‘talk’ to different people and realise that people need to be communicated to in different ways.”

Visual/Kinaesthetic

- *First impression* - make eye contact, dress appropriately, firm handshake;

Oral

- *Think* about your audience - different people respond to different styles of communication;
- *In person*, either face-to-face or via phone, rather than rely on email;
- *Language*, both written and oral communication, use the English language correctly;
- *Etiquette*, e.g. always begin a phone call by asking the respondent if they have a moment to talk;
- *Challenge* yourself and seek opportunities to talk in front of people and make formal presentations;
- *Practice* before making a formal presentation;
- *Ask* if you require assistance or don't understand;

Written

- *Formalise* documents - letters and reports;
- *Proof read* documents - for spelling, grammar and format.

Hints & Tips for University supervisors

“Give the students opportunities to practise their communication skills... have an induction where they learn the basics.”

Before

- *Organise* a ‘Communications Workshop’ for students to learn and practise communication skills;
- *Require* students to make a formal presentation;
- *Discuss* the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of communication;
- *Provide* guidelines for writing a professional email, formal letter or report;
- *Encourage* students to enrol in a Communications paper.

Hints & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Challenge students to demonstrate good communication in class with as many interaction opportunities as possible.”

- *Assess* communication skills (e.g. spelling, grammar & format) as an integral part of assignments;
- *Plan* assignments that promote verbal communication, e.g. presentations to class or for extramural students – in video format.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Give the students some form of overview of the types of communication that will be involved with the [project(s)] and ask them about their confidence levels in each. This way you will have some understanding of their capabilities and where you can help them develop”.

- *Discuss* your expectations and preferences of how and when the student should communicate with you;
- *Talk* to the student about their comfort level with different methods of communication;
- *Challenge* the student to stretch their capabilities by providing a variety of communication opportunities;
- *Lead by example* by communicating with students in the manner that you would expect them to communicate;
- *Explain the culture* in your workplace, e.g. typically contact is via email, via telephone or in person;
- *Help* the student understand the tone of communication required by different stakeholders;
- *Highlight* to the student which styles of communication are effective in different situations;
- *Review* important written documents so that the student knows where improvement is required;
- *Demand* high standards from the student, particularly around external communication to customers;
- *Provide* regular feedback to students on the progress they are making with communication skills.

2. Self Confidence

Compared to the academic environment where performance is quantified by grades, performance in the workplace is often nebulous, intangible, and based on the perception of others. This requires newcomers to the workplace to be patient, because it is impossible for them to know everything about the organisation from the outset. For this reason, students need to adopt learning styles that quickly build their confidence. To do this students should observe, listen, be open minded, ask questions, reflect and request feedback. Supervisors can help this process by providing support, encouragement, reinforcement, guidance, positive criticism and feedback.

Hints & Tips for Students

“Relax and enjoy the experience rather than becoming overawed... and understand that asking questions is not a weakness”.

Before

- *Establish a vision* of what is expected from you / what you are aiming for;

During

- *Watch* others, listen carefully and ask questions;
- *Absorb* carefully how your supervisor and those around you conduct themselves professionally;
- *Focus* on what you do know and how much you are improving every day, rather than what you don't know;
- *Ask* questions, this is not a weakness; asking for help shows a willingness to learn;
- *Request feedback* and be prepared to take on constructive criticism without being defensive;
- *Be open-minded* because too much pride will inhibit you from trying new ideas;
- *Reflect* - you will only improve by understanding your mistakes and thinking about better ways of doing things;
- *Be professional* - attempt everything to the best of your ability, but don't forget to enjoy the experience.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Provide a positive critical reflective environment in which the student is able to learn from their experiences.”

Before

- *Explain* to students that they need to be patient in a new environment;
- *Encourage* students to discuss when they have previously overcome feeling out of their depth;
- *Discuss* workplace performance reviews and how employers typically measure staff performance;
- *Recommend* ways of creating a positive, critical, and reflective environment with the Workplace Supervisor;
- *Invite graduates* to talk about their experiences and the confidence gained during their work placement;
- *Provide* guidelines on the art of reflection and be explicit about what the student will gain from effective reflection;

During

- *Listen* to student concerns and try to understand what is jeopardising their confidence;
- *Reinforce* to students to remember the positive feedback;
- *Promote* shared constructive criticism rather than allowing students to feel embarrassed about it;
- *Ensure* that reflection assignments are undertaken.

Hints & Tips for Theoretical Paper Coordinators

“Encourage openness so that students understand it is better to ask for help than to get things wrong when it matters.”

- *Reinforce* the message that asking questions is constructive and insist the students ask questions in class;
- *Provide* constructive criticism so that students learn early that mistakes are natural and this is how they will learn.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Regularly discuss expectations, responsibilities and tasks with the student. Then, follow up with the student and provide feedback on what was good, not so good, what could be changed or improved.”

Before

- *Request guidance* from the university supervisor on techniques to create a reflective learning environment;
- *Recognise* that you are the student’s mentor and role-model;
- *Listen* to what the student feels confident about in the beginning and how they want to develop their capabilities;
- *Provide* a clear role description and user-friendly instructions about what the job entails;
- *Motivate* the student by giving them responsibility for a sizable task or project;

During

- *Organise* a thorough induction to the workplace;
- *Help* the student to feel part of the team;

- *Ensure* that the student is empowered with the information and resources necessary to do their job;
- *Discuss* key performance indicators (KPIs) with the student and schedule a formal performance review;
- *Judge* the student on their ability to improve over their ability to produce flawless results;
- *Allow* the student some freedom to learn from their mistakes;
- *Provide* feedback on a regular basis and relevant guidance;
- *Criticise constructively* remembering that the students may already lack confidence;
- *Empower* students to work out for themselves what can be improved, e.g. what would you stop, start, continue;
- *Reinforce* whenever possible for everyday work done well;
- *Encourage* the student to provide constructive 360 degree feedback;
- *Ask* the student to summarise your instructions if you are unsure if the student has understood;
- *Create* opportunities for the student to learn from others, e.g. work shadowing various roles.

3. Customer Relationship Management

Success for all organisations is about pleasing the customer – either through service or products. It is therefore paramount to understand customer needs and how to deal with stakeholders. These needs require investigation, engagement, discussion, planning, attention to detail, review and evaluation.

Hints & Tips for Students

“Try to look through a different lens and put yourself in the shoes of the customer”

- *Investigate* as many sources as possible to understand what makes great customer service;
- *Research* your customers so that you are able to think about your role through their eyes;
- *Respect* all customers and realise that your role only exists because you have them;
- *Remember* that the better you know your customers, the more informed you will be to do your job;
- *Attend* as many events as possible to interact with your customers.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Teach students that to be successful they need to be able to orientate their products to what the customer wants”

Before

- *Challenge* students about the importance of customer service;
- *Discuss* organisations thriving on great customer service;
- *Encourage* students to think about a day in the life of their customers and what really makes them tick;
- *Provide* evidence from customer satisfaction surveys about customer needs and desires;
- *Role-play* different scenarios with different types of customers.

Hints & Tips for Theoretical Paper Coordinators

- *Include* customer-oriented assignments, e.g. sponsorship proposals.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Get the student to put themselves in the customer's shoes and understand what it is that they want of the service that you provide.”

- *Provide* evidence from customer satisfaction surveys about what customers want;
- *Discuss* the Customer Service Plan with the student and explain how to achieve the standards expected;
- *Present* students to customers as much as possible;
- *Allow* students to shadow staff during interactions with customers; then debrief about what they have learnt.

4. Enthusiastic Participation

Employers value team members that approach their work with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can be characterised by someone who shows passion; a willingness to be involved; a positive ‘can do’ attitude; and enjoyment of the task in hand. Being proactive, volunteering, supporting the team, asking questions, being creative and demonstrating initiative are all ways to add value to the work place. Supervisors can assist this process by managing expectations, challenging, empowering, and providing feedback, praise and encouragement.

Hints & Tips for Students

“Immerse yourself... don’t go into a [workplace] situation trying to be an observer, but to utterly embrace the experience”

Before

- *Be selective* about choosing a project(s) that interests you and that you can be excited about;
- *Choose* a project(s) that will provide you with work experience that will benefit you after graduation;
- *Secure* a meaningful project that will add value to the organisation and provide you with a greater sense of satisfaction;
- *Ask* to be involved in projects that challenge you and push you out of your comfort zone;

During

- *Push your boundaries* - Never be narrow minded about the type of tasks you get involved with;
- *Support* your team by finding ways to help;
- *Get involved* in as many activities as possible from daily organisation to big events;
- *Undertake* some voluntary work beyond the scope of your project(s) expectations;
- *Add value, be proactive* - go the extra mile to show dedication;
- *Remain positive* even in challenging situations.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Encourage students to be positive and roll their sleeves up!”

Before

- *Understand* the student’s interest and experience; then guide them towards a project(s) that will inspire them;
- *Manage* student’s expectations and what will be expected of them throughout the project(s);
- *Ask* students how will they cope with aspects of the project(s) that they are not looking forward to;
- *Challenge* students to write and discuss their own individual goals for the project(s).

Hints & Tips for Theoretical Paper Coordinators

“Reward students who do go beyond the call of duty in their assignments and praise them for it”

- *Praise* students that demonstrate extra effort in their assignments;
- *Encourage* students to add value to lectures and tutorials; then reward them;
- *Share* personal experience – make students eager to get involved, generate passion for your industry.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Encourage the student to look to gain as much as possible out of the experience”

- *Help* the student enjoy the experience by understanding what interests and motivates them;
- *Empower* the student to add value by assigning them a worthwhile project;
- *Reinforce* to the student that their effort is making a difference
- *Invite* the student to participate in a variety of opportunities;
- *Balance tasks* – do not under-utilise the student by assigning menial tasks;
- *Praise* enthusiasm and positive actions.

5. Industry & Business Knowledge

The placement is an opportunity to apply theory to practice and develop real life knowledge of the industry. It also encourages the development of specific skills such as IT & Project Management. Take this opportunity to research, enquire, and familiarise yourself with the organisation and its industry networks.

Hints & Tips for Students

“Be familiar with Microsoft documents, including MS Word and MS Excel as well as other computer programs and computers in general.”

Before

- *Familiarise* yourself in advance with Microsoft programs, inc. MS Word, MS Excel etc. ;
- *Ask* about computer keyboard shortcuts and workplace related functions, e.g. out of office replies;
- *Seek opportunities* to develop generic business skills, e.g. marketing, project planning;
- *Enquire* about the organisation to gain an overall perspective on the ‘bigger picture’;
- *Research* the organisation and the people within the organisation.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Give warning to students about the computer programs they are likely to need to use and offer them places to look for information on how to use them if they don't know.”

- *Provide* support in association with to IT department that can expose students to Microsoft and other packages;
- *Encourage* students to maximise a wide variety of courses
- *Organise* a workshop on generic skills, e.g. marketing, project management.

Hints & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Always consider how the theories that are covered in a paper/course relate to practical situations/contexts.”

- *Involve* more practical examples/ applied opportunities into paper design
- *Keep up-to-date* by reviewing and refreshing course material;
- *Link theory to practice* by using real life case studies – especially from personal experience;
- *Use practical examples* from organisations where the work place projects are taking place;
- *Teach generic business skills*, e.g. budgeting, project plans, relationship management, time management;
- *Assess generic business skills* via presentations or critical thinking groups, not just essays and reports;
- *Make assignments relevant to real life*, e.g. require students to use local case studies or research NZ issues;

- *Encourage* the student to apply their industry knowledge in the classroom post-work placement.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Be willing to teach the students how to use computer programs if they don't know and mentor them while working on it until they feel confident to do it by themselves.”

- *Guide* students through computer software;
- *Provide* the student an overview of the whole business and provide the business plan;
- *Expose* students to generic business skills, e.g. marketing, project management;
- *Encourage* the student to make a connection between theory and its application in industry.

6. Self Sufficiency

Asking for help is a positive reaction, but becoming dependent on other people's instructions is not. It is important to remain pro-active not re-active because employers value people who use their initiative to overcome problems and who think creatively (outside the box) to add value. Time management is a key issue here. Plan ahead, set goals and specific targets both personally and professionally, and take ownership and responsibility for your project(s).

Hints & Tips for Students

“Always think what else you can do in a situation, how can you make it better, or what more can you do when you have 'nothing' to do.”

Before

- *Set* some personal development goals;
- *Think ahead* so that you have some ideas about what to do next; rather than waiting for instruction;

During

- *Provide suggestions* to your supervisor or think through some possible solutions if you think you have a problem;
- *Ask* questions and make suggestions - this shows you are trying to think for yourself;
- *Challenge yourself* to think creatively by drawing inspiration from a variety of sources, including your intuition;

- *Remember* - future employees are often interested in examples of when you have used your initiative;
- *Take ownership* of your work and use your initiative to develop your role.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Keep reinforcing the importance of showing initiative and being proactive.”

Before

- *Help* the student set some personal development goals to attain during their work placement;
- *Highlight* the difference between constructively asking for help and approval seeking / dependent behaviour;

During

- *Ask* students to analyse then report on a successful and an unsuccessful initiative;
- *Present* students with flawed systems and challenge them to suggest improvements;
- *Create* scenarios that develop student decision making and problem solving ability.

Hints & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Ensure that students have the opportunity to practice becoming decisive decision makers - whether this is problem solving in groups on particular topics or having project teams”

- *Teach* about innovation and different projects that have been built out of innovation;
- *Examine* real life case studies and discuss what contributes to success and failure;
- *Design* assignments that challenge students to be decisive decision makers and problem solvers;
- *Assess* in assignments a current situation in industry and suggest improvements;
- *Encourage* students to be forthcoming with ideas in lectures;
- *Be aware* - ‘spoon-feeding’ students inhibits their self-sufficiency.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Ask the student lots of questions, e.g. what they think, how it will work, why it might not work, and how they are going to go about it. This encourages them to think for themselves and trains them to start making suggestions on their own accord.”

Before

- *Indicate* you will be asking them for their opinions;
- *Brief* your team to encourage the student to share thoughts and ideas at every possible opportunity;

During

- *Challenge* the student to think about how they could go one step further;
- *Expose* the student to brainstorming and decision making processes;
- *Provide feedback* on the strengths and limitations of the student's ideas but try not to dismiss them completely;
- *Encourage* the student to look for answers before relying on you;
- *Clarify* when you want the student to review things with you / seek your approval;
- *Empower* the student to make their own decisions about certain things;
- *Allow* the student, where appropriate, to have some leeway to learn from their mistakes;
- *Ask* the student what they think they should do first, if the student comes to you with a question or a problem.

7. Personal Organisation

Employers demand efficiency from their staff. To be efficient and effective, it is important to be able to set and prioritise goals and plan how to achieve them in the time available. Given that situations change, it is also important to be flexible – which means being able to re-prioritise and re-schedule. Personal organisation is the key to surviving challenging situations under pressure.

Hints & Tips for Students

“Learn to prioritise deadlines, work ahead of time and have a plan of action (as if the work is planning for an event)”

Before

- *Clarify* with your Workplace Supervisor the project(s) objectives;
- *Discuss* with your Workplace Supervisor exactly what needs to happen to achieve each objective;
- *Create* an action plan/critical path by breaking down big tasks into smaller tasks;

During

- *Think* about contingency planning, i.e. what is your backup plan if something goes wrong?
- *Schedule* a recurring meeting with your Supervisor to report task status;
- *Alert* your Supervisor if you feel overwhelmed and ask them to help you prioritise your tasks;

- *Work smart*, i.e. if you are working long hours ask yourself how can you work more efficiently;
- *Ask* your Supervisor to recommend personal organisation tools, e.g. Microsoft Outlook;
- *Diarise* meetings and important deadlines;
- *Be thorough* but don't punish yourself with perfectionism.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Make sure the students know the importance of getting things done on time. Help the students by following up with them on where they are at with completing their assignments and their [project] tasks”.

Before

- *Organise* a workshop on planning skills, which explains what ‘planning’ really involves, e.g. upwards and downwards planning;
- *Discuss* assessing risk, dependencies, contingency planning and status reporting;
- *Guide* students to Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Project / Gantt Charts;
- *Require* students to write a formal plan for the initial organisation of their project(s);
- *Reinforce* the importance of keeping to deadlines - do not tolerate missed deadlines and bad excuses for late academic assignments;

During

- *Schedule appointments* with students to review their Project Plan.

Hints & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Make sure students hand things in on time and that students arrive in class on time.”

- *Reinforce* the importance of keeping to deadlines - do not tolerate missed deadlines and bad excuses for late academic assignments;
- *Lead by example* where good personal organisation is concerned, e.g. start and finish class on time;
- *Discuss* with students how to plan for their workload ahead;
- *Revisit* workload plans when students are under pressure – illustrate how careful planning can alleviate stress.

Hints & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Have action plan type documents and make sure the students are involved in completing these. This may help them see the bigger picture and how things are broken down into smaller tasks. It will also help them to see how if one thing is late, other things are affected.”

- *Ensure* goals and expectations are understood correctly from the start;
- *Provide* user-friendly action planning templates;
- *Demonstrate* to the student how you personally organise your time;

- *Help* the student think through the smaller components of big tasks;
- *Review* the student's plan and help them think through what might be missing;
- *Guard against* the student becoming overwhelmed by agreeing which tasks should be given priority;
- *Ask* the student to review their work plan at times when they are under pressure with university assignments;
- *Agree* on realistic deadlines with the student;
- *Build* small milestones into their plan to ensure they are progressing;
- *Include* the student in any formal status reporting meetings;
- *Set high expectations* for the student who should be aiming to perform at a professional level.

8. Professional Networks

Relationship building is important in most workplaces. There are clear advantages to being well known for the right reasons. Building a network of contacts is the best way to maximise your job opportunities in any career.

Hints & Tips for Students

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. Ask the contact to consider their current networks and how they could extend and develop these.”

- *Introduce* yourself to as many people as possible;
- *Research* as much information as possible about new contacts;
- *Sell* your capabilities modestly using as many opportunities as possible;
- *Keep a list* of contacts and their profile, e.g. role, organisation, priorities;
- *Ask* existing contacts if they are able to help you extend your network;
- *Identify* like-minded people that you might want to work with in the future.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Give the students opportunities to develop and extend their networks via ex-students, visits to organisations, guest lectures, exposure to a range of networks in the community...”

- *Organise* functions that give students exposure to industry;
- *Create* opportunities for employers from the community to network with students;
- *Encourage* students to visit peers undertaking projects in other organisations.

Hint & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Give the students good old encouragement to get your name out there and meet people”

- *Talk* about your professional network and how it has helped you;
- *Organise* an assignment for which the presentation is not just to the class, but to industry people.

Hint & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Ask students what their job prospects are and then expose them to networks which may help”

- *Recognise* that this workplace experience is probably the beginning of the student’s career;

- *Provide* the student every possible opportunity to build networks;
- *Ask* the student about their career ambitions and then expose them to networks which may help.

9. Professional Ethics

Professional ethics is about respecting the culture of an organisation while maintaining your own personal integrity. At the very minimum, organisations expect employees to be honest, trustworthy, courteous and conscientious.

Hints & Tips for Students

“When in [the workplace] organisation leave the student persona at the door and imagine yourself as a member of staff and what the required conduct would be for actions, dress, etc”

- *Be professional* - Treat the work placement like a job –in everything you do because everything counts;
- *Remember* that bad impressions reflect badly on yourself, your university / program and the organisation;
- *Enquire* about the values and codes of conduct of the organisation at your induction;
- *Observe* the conduct of other members of staff for guidance;
- *Be polite and respectful* of others because people always remember the way you made them feel;
- *Use professional language* because colloquial language may offend some people;
- *Be reliable* - say what you’re going to do and do what you say;

- *Take responsibility* for your actions and be honest about your mistakes – employers will not appreciate excuses;
- *Dress appropriately* - it is better to be over-dressed than under-dressed until you have worked out what level of formality is appropriate.

Hints & Tips for University Supervisors

“Ensure the students know clear expectations on their behaviour before they undertake their [project(s)]. Maybe they need to have practice meetings, or an induction to being in the workplace.”

- *Reiterate* that students on work placement are ambassadors of the university and the program;
- *Discuss* with students what it means to be professional;
- *Provide* examples of organisational values and discuss what they mean;
- *Require* students to attend a meeting dressed professionally;
- *Challenge* the students to set a dress code amongst themselves.

Hint & Tips for Paper Coordinators

“Ask students to be professional at all times”

- *Help* students understand that university is about practising for professional life;
- *Set high expectations* for students, i.e. meeting deadlines and expected contribution.

Hint & Tips for Workplace Supervisors

“Have clear expectations for the students about professionalism, and how the organisation operates. Ensure there is a good process in place to induct students into the organisation.”

- *Role model* by presenting yourself as you would expect the student to do;
- *Provide* information about the workplace culture / values / codes of conduct at the induction;
- *Explain* what professionalism means to your organisation;
- *Discuss* the typical dress code and the advantages of following the dress code;
- *Observe* and feedback on the student’s professionalism from the outset;
- *Acknowledge* student efforts to earn your trust and respect.

CONCLUSIONS

The Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experience provides a point of difference that employers value. However, to maximize the learning opportunities for students, practitioners and employers integration, needs to be an objective. Reflection before, in and on action can help to facilitate this process and the development of the student as a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1991). Focus needs to be on developing the following nine graduate competencies.

1. Communication Skills
2. Self Confidence
3. Customer Relationship Management
4. Enthusiastic Participation
5. Industry & Business Knowledge
6. Self Sufficiency
7. Personal Organisation
8. Professional Networks
9. Professional Ethics

This guide provides hints and tips for students, practitioners and employers to make the most of the WIL experience through developing the above graduate competencies. Their challenge is to capture the essence of some of these approaches, to start experimenting, and discover new possibilities offered by work integrated learning.

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