

Press Release

Universities and Industry Groups collaborate to develop a National Work Integrated Learning Strategy

ACEN, University Australia and peak industry associations today announced a detailed National Strategy to enhance work integrated learning in Australia. The strategy focuses on enhancing student learning, improving graduate employability and meeting the skills needs of employers across the nation.

The **Australian Collaborative Education Network, Universities Australia, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group** and the **Business Council of Australia** have collaborated to develop this comprehensive National Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Strategy.

While WIL is well established in many disciplines, with employers partnering with universities to provide placements and projects to students across Australia, there is scope for a significant increase in both student and employer participation. This strategy provides the comprehensive approach required to facilitate that major growth and to enhance the quality of WIL for all stakeholders nationally.

Student demand for practical experience provided through WIL is increasing, exceeding available opportunities. For students, WIL experiences contextualise education and make a real difference to the development of employability skills that they bring into the workplace upon graduation. Graduates often identify practical experience gained through WIL as crucial to attaining their first graduate job. Employers involved benefit through gaining fresh ideas, identifying new talent and developing links with universities.

The challenges impacting on WIL in Australia have been known for some time. However, findings from several recent national research projects have now confirmed the value of WIL in enhancing student work readiness, determined enablers that if implemented would result in greater engagement by employers, and identified strategies to enhance the quality of WIL experiences for both students and employers. It is therefore timely to take collaborative action through this comprehensive national strategy to implement the approaches that would significantly impact on WIL in Australia.

“This strategy is both aspirational and practical. It has been developed collaboratively utilising key findings from recent research and links many excellent current initiatives. It sets Australia apart from other countries as the first country to develop a coherent, coordinated approach to such an important issue” Judie Kay President ACEN said.

“The development of the WIL Strategy, which followed the joint Statement of Intent announced in February 2014”, Judie Kay said “demonstrates the collaboration and partnership required between universities and industry to make the impact on WIL that is required in Australia. Implementing this strategy will make a real difference to students but ultimately it will be a key factor in the development of skills required by the Australian economy moving forward”

The Strategy focuses on a number of key areas, including:

- Leadership – collaborative leadership to drive engagement nationally
- Partnerships to proactively support Industry University engagement in WIL
- Maximising impact – assessing what works and working together to get the most value
- Sustainable resourcing – ensuring our effort and investment is well targeted and sustainable
- Innovative and building entrepreneurship

The National WIL Strategy (<http://cdn1.acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/National-WIL-Strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf>) is being launched at the Universities Australia Higher Education Conference held in Canberra on Wednesday 11th March 2015

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