

NAGCAS ALTC Project – STUDENT EMPLOYER FORUM COMMUNICATION, October 2008

Project and Symposium papers available at: <http://www.usq.edu.au/nagcascarrickproject/>

The NAGCAS ALTC Forum outcomes

"To retain a focus on the challenges of forming sustainable partnerships with a variety of participants. This requires particular skills and resources. Frequently relationship building and maintaining is discussed as though it is a given, rather than a challenge."

"There are thousands of students who take on WIL placements each year.... The debate needs to be about how we can create more placements so that every student undertakes WIL at some stage of their degree. To do this we need to involve all stakeholders."

The CDL-WiL Forum was presented in October as a result of these powerful Symposium messages, urging continuing communication and dialogue between the main stakeholders (university academics, administration & students and organizations/employers)

Forum evaluation summary

Thirty evaluation forms were collected and data collated. A short summary of the main points gathered have been presented below.

1. Information provided at the forum Participants made the following comments. *Discussions were found to be very useful and some also found the information thought provoking, many found the introductory overview presentation and the group discussions/activities most helpful. International students found the interactions and exposure to employer perspectives valuable.*

2. Forum discussion/activity papers were thought provoking. Participants indicated that the second group activity (i.e. identification of a resource that would be helpful in the provision of CDL-WiL) was considered most thought provoking and useful. Some participants felt that a set of simple questions would have been more helpful than the diagrams and prepared activity sheets. *"It was interesting to have the two opposing sides and focus group sessions"*

3. A number of participants intend to share information from this forum with peers and colleagues — *"I will think about how to implement some of this in student bodies at Monash"; "I can say I shared ideas from my colleagues but I can't be confident they've been heard and considered"; "This was a good opportunity to speak about various issues in work and learning"; "Vacation programs are a big topic at uni and my social circle and I will continue discussions"; "... However wish as international student we were exposed to work experience.*

Many suggested actions were noted for ways to improve the CDL — WiL experience. Recurring comments included: *Database online with input from stakeholders can be recorded" & "Central database of information" & "Central website with vacation programs and application data."; Comprehensive preparation and orientation programs; More employer student communications; Better support for international students; opportunities for international students; Better feedback from employers during work placements; Liaison between employers and university staff.*

Participants presented many suggestions for what needs to be included in a CDL WiL Resource Manual. Some suggestions included: *Relevant examples that students and employers can relate to; Expectations of students and employers; Best practice models — how to make them real; Information about emotional maturity as well as academic ability Info for employers about student life and what it is like; Pro forma for self reflection; Learning agreements; Expectations, what students should expect what employers should expect make a move towards a standard; Reflective journals /Information needed pre and post placement.*

Some responses in relation to actions participants would like the project team to take included: *Online database — platform for discussion/forum; Highlight the importance of gaining SODT skills early; Market a centralised website for students for all Victorian universities/institutions. Promote intake of international students in placement offering institutions; Explore ways to enhance communication between employers and universities and tertiary educators; Devising a website to ensure that there is a central site where students and employers can communicate website would ensure information is provided; Provide better communication between employers and students/ Provide better communication between employers and universities.*

The CDL — WiL Principles have been extensively revised as a result of feedback received from Forum participants. The revised Principles are provided below.

Career Development is a lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving future for both private and public good.[1] <#_ftn1>

In relation to the Career Development Learning (CDL) & WiL (Work Integrated Learning) experience, all participants – university staff, WiL providers and students:

- can expect mutual benefit;
- understand the key objectives for both stakeholders and participants;
- understand their respective roles and responsibilities;
- have clearly articulated expectations; and
- have a shared understanding of CDL and WiL, and the associated terminology;

Principles

1. Collaborative and flexible partnerships are essential to effective implementation of CDL.
2. WiL has the potential to provide genuine career development learning opportunities for all students.
3. CDL is student centred, and designed to actively engage students in the WiL experience .
4. The impact of CDL extends beyond the curriculum to supporting quality learning opportunities across all aspects of students' work and life.
5. Structured opportunities for reflection are key to CDL in WiL.
6. Multiple experiences and contexts can enrich CDL.
7. The University supports students' CDL & WiL participation by supporting student capacity to record and articulate the skills acquired.
8. Quality assurance before, during and after the experience contributes to better outcomes for all participants.

13th November 2008

[1] From both Patton & McMahon, 2006; OECD, 2004

Special appreciation is extended to Carol Locke and Robyn Bergin who provided valuable information and suggestions in the revised.

A Resource Booklet for university and WiL providers

The development of a CDL — WiL Resource is the final stage of the project. The resource, that is currently being developed, will compile and present information gathered from all stakeholders using action research strategies over the past year. Action research strategies included: presentations and discussions; online questionnaires (SurveyMonkey); targeted face-to-face and telephone interviews and case study preparation; Symposium (June 2008) discussions with 170 invited delegates with accompanying documentation; and, Student — Employer Forum, with participation of 55 delegates (in Melbourne, 17th October).

The CDL — WiL resource booklet will incorporate:

- i) CDL — WiL language (definitions & terminology) — of importance when communicating across sectors.
- ii) Principles — enhancing the value of CDL-WiL experiences for students
- iii) Visual Model/s
- iv) Exemplars of programs and practice at each of the important stages of work placement — (before, during and after) and within a DOTS or SODT framework (SODT — self, opportunities, decisions & transition)
- v) Templates and pro forma — encouraging reflection and effective strategies at all stages of WiL.

For additional project information visit the website at: <http://www.usq.edu.au/nagcascarrickproject/>