

Developing graduate careers from workplace experiences

for students, industry, the professions, and the University



Career Development Learning (CDL)

Career development links students, industry, the professions and universities.

It 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 good¹

Key points

Career Development Learning:

- contextualises work related learning experiences (both inside and outside University)- assisting students to develop knowledge, attributes, understanding and awareness of the world of work;
- supports student satisfaction with their university experience, leading to improved student retention and academic persistence, transitions to further study, and graduate employment outcomes;
- links workplace experiences with students' career aspirations, benefiting industry and the professions by providing an avenue to promote themselves as employers of choice;
- assists students to integrate workplace experiences with university developed graduate attributes and the concept of graduate employability;
- benefits industry and the professions when it is embedded within their workplace programs –realising improved outcomes for students and staff of the host organisation;
- makes a significant contribution to workplace experiences when good practice underpins the embedding of CDL– before, during and after the experience; and
- assists students in planning for life after University.

“CDL puts students at the heart of the learning process”²

“The European Union has made career guidance the centrepiece of new skills for new jobs”³

² Professor Tony Watts, ALTC Symposium, Melbourne, June 2008

³ Director General Education and Culture, EU, Big Skills Conference, Sydney March 2009

¹ OECD, 2004; Patton & McMahon, 2006

The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council to undertake this scoping study which was titled “Career Development Learning: maximising the contribution of Work Integrated Learning to the student experience”

Project recommendations

In order to maximise the value from the research outcomes of this project, recommendations for government, universities and industry and the professions have been identified. These focus on:

- methods to validate student participation in wider modes of practice;
- curriculum reform;
- workplace reform;
- increasing inclusion and participation rates;
- measures to support leadership and communities of practice; and
- resourcing to support structural reform.

Further details are available in the Project Report's Executive Summary.

All Australian universities provide **work-integrated learning**¹ in many of their academic programs. Whether this is an internship, work experience, practicum, practical placement, industry based project, vacation work or mentoring; this **work related learning** involves students applying their discipline knowledge and reflecting upon the experience, learning about themselves and the world-of-work in order to empower them to enter and succeed in the world-of-work and their wider lives.

Work related learning can occur in activities inside and outside of the curriculum and outside of the University itself through students' own part time employment, vacation work, voluntary work, work experience and extra curricular activities. Students learn from their work related learning experiences – wherever they occur. (Moreland, 2005)

Career Development Learning and Work Related Learning

Career Development Learning integrates these work related learning experiences; further assisting students develop knowledge, attributes, understanding and awareness in relation to:

Self awareness

- Identify knowledge, abilities and transferable skills developed by one's degree;
- Identify personal skills and how these can be deployed;
- Identify one's interests, values and personality in the context of vocational and life planning;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, and areas requiring further development;
- Develop a self-reflective stance to academic work and other activities; and
- Synthesise one's key strengths, goals and motivations into a rounded personal profile.

Opportunity awareness

- Demonstrate knowledge of general trends in graduate employment and opportunities for graduates in one's discipline;
- Demonstrate understanding of the requirements of graduate employers; and
- Demonstrate research-based knowledge of typical degree-related career options and options in which one is interested

Decision making

- Identify the key elements of career decision-making, in the context of life planning;
- Relate self-awareness to knowledge of different opportunities;
- Evaluate how personal priorities may impact upon future career options;
- Devise a short/medium-term career development action plan;
- Identify tactics for addressing the role of chance in career development; and
- Review changing plans and ideas on an ongoing basis.

Transition learning

- Demonstrate understanding of effective opportunity-search strategies;
- Apply understanding of recruitment/selection methods to applications;
- Demonstrate ability to use relevant vacancy information, including ways of accessing unadvertised vacancies;
- Identify challenges and obstacles to success in obtaining suitable opportunities and strategies for addressing them;
- Demonstrate capacity to vary self-presentation to meet requirements of specific opportunities; and
- Demonstrate ability to present oneself effectively in selection interviews and other selection processes (adapted from Watts, 2006)

¹ Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum (Patrick, C-J. et al., 2009). It is important to note that whilst the term Work Integrated Learning is understood within Higher Education the term is not widely understood amongst students, professional associations and industry.

Bringing clarity and understanding to workplace experiences

Professor Tony Watts notes “Career Development Learning significantly enhances the quality of Work-integrated Learning in its various formats, placing the student more actively at the heart of such programs, and adding value to their quality, by helping students to be career ready (in terms of lifelong and life wide transitions), as well as work ready”.

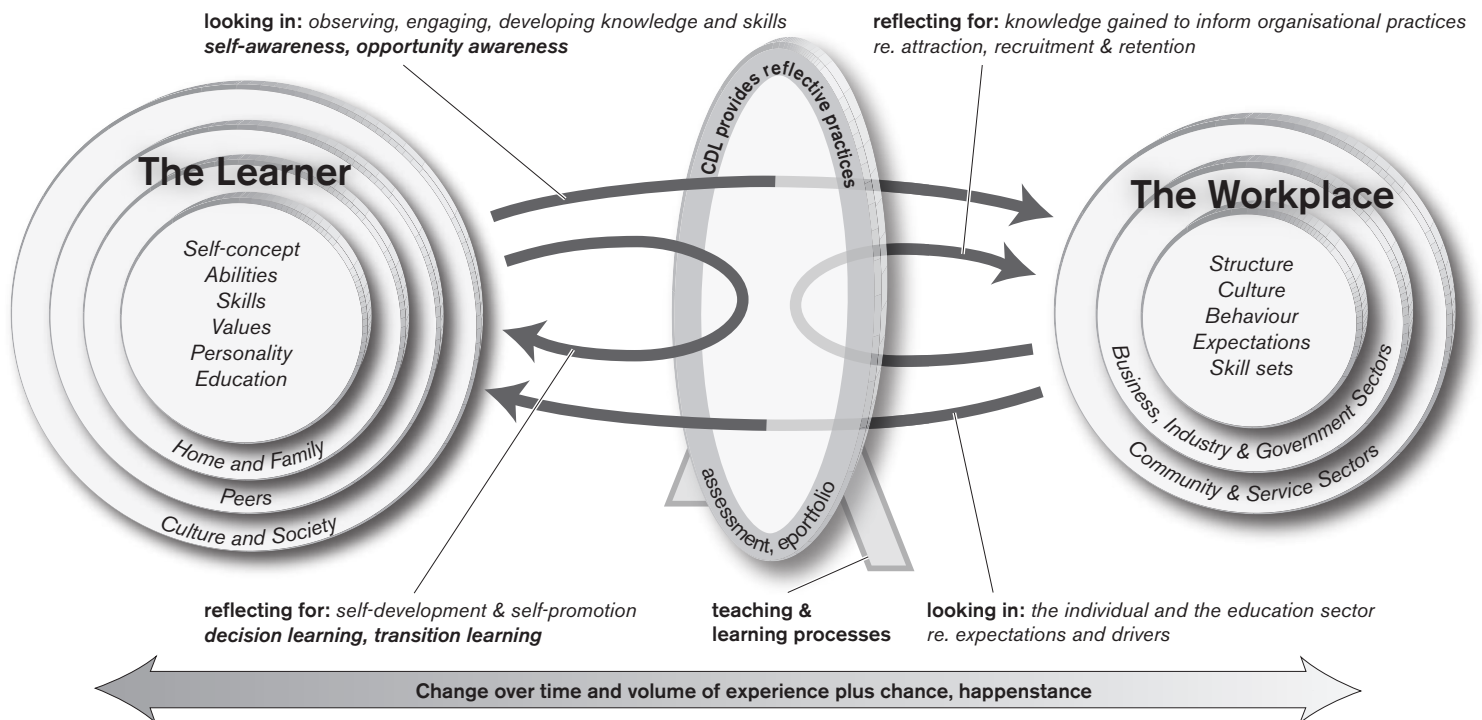
Career Development Learning connects students workplace experiences (both inside and outside University), brings clarity to an individual's career plans, can give greater insight to the curriculum and builds on students university academic experiences. This can increase student retention, student satisfaction with their course and overall university experience. In addition this can lead to improved graduate employment outcomes and contributes to graduates productivity when first entering the workforce.

A critical success factor in the workplace experience being transformational relates to the underpinning reflective practices being designed around Career Development Learning. Career Development Learning becomes the process which brings clarity and understanding to workplace experiences. The metaphor of the two-way mirror embodies the unique capacity which Career Development Learning brings to the experience and was derived from the national symposium, staged as part of the action research process.

In essence we are talking about...
 the right graduate...in the right role...
 in the right organisation...in the right industry...for the right reasons...
 leading to more satisfied and productive workers – the link to ‘private and public good’.
 (OECD, 2004)

“Career Development Learning significantly enhances the quality of Work-integrated Learning in its various formats, placing the student more actively at the heart of such programs, and adding value to their quality, by helping students to be career ready (in terms of lifelong and life wide transitions), as well as work ready”
 Professor Tony Watts

CDL & WiL: Looking from both sides of the two-way mirror



Benefits

Career Development Learning benefits all stakeholders.

For the University

- improved work integrated learning and workplace experiences for students and industry
- increased graduate satisfaction with their university experience
- greater retention and completion rates
- improved transition experience for students
- improved graduate employment outcomes

For students

- improved educational experience
- greater connections with the world of work
- greater understanding of themselves in relation to their career development, their academic studies and transition to employment
- building individuals workforce preparation and adaptability

For Industry and the Professions

- providing for the present needs for work ready graduates
- building relationships with Universities
- becoming an industry and employer of choice
- assisting in attraction/retention
- improving the learning experiences of students

For Government

- improved social inclusion and educational participation
- improved transitions from university to the labour market and help to strengthen links between university and the labour market
- enhanced workplace productivity
- improved workforce adaptability and sustainability

Good practice

Good practice is central to effective implementation.

For all participants to benefit from the implementation of Career Development Learning in the workplace experience – university staff, host employers and students should:

- 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 Career Development Learning and Work integrated learning, and the associated terminology.

Six Principles

1. Flexible partnerships support effective Career Development Learning.
2. Workplace experiences can provide genuine career development learning opportunities for all students. Multiple experiences and contexts enrich this learning.
3. Career Development Learning is student centred, and designed to actively engage students in the workplace experience.
4. Career development learning supports quality student centred learning opportunities across all aspects of students' lives.
5. Universities encourage students' career development and workplace learning by supporting their capacity to systematically reflect, record and articulate the acquired skills and experience.
6. Quality assurance across the experience contributes to better outcomes.

“Career Services in universities were increasingly contributing to the development of career-oriented curricula with students greatly benefiting from this broad-based support”

Professor Richard Johnstone,
ALTC Executive Director

“Most graduate employers see this as a no brainer...it has to be a win for the uni, the students and the employers”

Ben Reeves,
Chief Executive of the Australian
Association of Graduate Employers

“From a business perspective, encouraging partnerships with the business community will extend the resources available for learning in the higher education sector” Further, it will provide benefits to business through outcomes based on “quality constructed learning experiences for students”

Mary Hicks,
Australian Chamber of Commerce and
Industry

Some diverse examples of Career Development Learning and Work Related Learning

Science and Technology: Large multi campus University

A residential program prior to final application for the workplace experience. Students are exposed to:

- an inventory of career management tools such as MBTI/ personality type inventories,
- analysis of fit to occupations,
- sessions on presentation skills for interviews as well as overall preparation for the business environment.

Prior to commencement of their workplace learning experience students write career goal statements and undertake a skills analysis. They develop this with their industry supervisor through a series of performance appraisals and an attempt is made to provide opportunities to address areas where skill development is indicated.

Placement evaluation with their work place supervisor is preceded by a student self assessment of progress against their goals.

Opportunity is provided at the conclusion of the program to reflect upon the Career Development Learning that has occurred. Students are required to write a final report on the project and their learning outcomes. In particular they are required to reflect upon the impact of the placement on their future career and career goals. Students also are required to present to their peers about their experience

Creative Arts program: Regional University

Students are introduced to the analysis and understanding of core career theory concepts and interpretations (Holland, Super, Krumboltz and Constructivist); with an explication of how the student relates to or engages with one or more theories and relevance to the creative industries

Students undertake an “industry research report” which includes:

- an overview and understanding of the student’s explicit industry area/niche at international, national and local perspectives;
- case studies of 10 practitioners in their field(s); and a final reflective statement which places their new knowledge and understandings within their career framework and plan, including a process of identifying any aspects of “positive” compromise and adjustment.

Reflection is via:

- a structured “community of reflective practitioners” where students present a seminar that overviews their findings and directions towards an industry placement;
- a detailed process of the strategies and skills required to pursue an engagement (WIL) with industry, including a number of in-class workshop and practice activities;
- a final reflective summary which includes an employer/supervisor report on the placement and that is designed to require the students to tie all learning activities and procedures together.

Vacation Work program: New University

Approximately 150 students complete a placement in the program each year, where the start time is flexible but often across Winter and Summer vacation periods.

Individual projects are identified by host employers.

A competitive selection process takes place at the conclusion of a Professional Development Day, where topics covered include workplace communication, ethics, behaviour, dress, business report writing and project planning and career development processes.

Career Development Learning elements (such as self awareness and career decision making and job seeking) are incorporated within the Professional Development Day. The reporting/reflective Business Report facilitates self awareness post project. The Co-op Alumni Network stages events which promote knowledge of the world of work and enhanced employment seeking activities.

Nursing and Midwifery: Leading Australian University

The program integrates the clinical experiences throughout the whole of the degree program and students are present in clinical settings more than they are on campus doing coursework. The clinical experiences prepare students for professional practice in a range of community and hospital settings. Students have early and regular exposure to the clinical setting. In the first two years of the program, students undertake 15 mentored clinical shifts each semester at their designated clinical site. The clinical lecturer is present with the students as they carry out their clinical experiences and students will do problem-based learning, participate in tutorials, and work in clinical laboratory settings.

Key elements of Career Development Learning addressed:

- Self-awareness – reflective processes in e-portfolio, problem-based learning, and debriefing after clinical. Students look at their values, what they need to work on further. Early exposure to clinical settings helps them to determine whether the job is in line with their interests, values, personality etc.
- Work and opportunity awareness – Students see a wide variety of practice during their placements.
- Decision making – e-portfolio reflection and early exposure to workplaces provides opportunities for decision-making.
- Transition – The whole program is aimed at transition. The portfolio is used as evidence for job selection criteria; Students’ placements help them to understand the recruitment and selection process, and “test” where they may want to work in the future.

Final comment

Career Development Learning assists students to prepare for their life after University. By utilising Career Development Learning to connect workplace and academic experiences, we assist students to:

- develop a greater understanding of themselves;
- understand the employment opportunities available; and
- prepare their transition strategies to employment or further study.

This also provides insights for industry and the professions into the university and its students, thereby enriching processes related to attraction, recruitment, retention and workplace productivity.

More information and tools to help you

The project website is the focal point for further information nagcas.org.au/ALTC

Outcomes from this project include:

- an eManual where case studies, tools and resources and further information can be sourced from the project website. This includes resources and tools for universities and business and industry.
- a Full Report on the Scoping Study includes an Executive Summary, the academic literature, the research methods and outcomes. The Report is located at the project website (downloadable PDF)
- the Project Website also includes background papers for the National Symposium as well as the presentations from Symposium Leaders.

Next steps

1. Visit the eManual website for case studies, tools and resources
2. Read the background papers – from nagcas.org.au/ALTC
3. Speak to colleagues across industry, academic staff, teaching and learning staff and careers service staff, to investigate the integration of Career Development Learning into WIL activities at your local university.
4. Speak to staff in your campus Careers Service for links, facilitation, advice, assistance and additional resources.

Who supported this project

The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council to undertake this scoping study which was titled “Career Development Learning: maximising the contribution of Work Integrated Learning to the student experience”. The Project Team represented 5 Australian universities – led by the University of Wollongong – with Flinders University, Monash University, RMIT, and the University of Southern Queensland.



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