

Co-operative and Experiential Education

# ANNUAL 2021 REPORT



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

Co-operative and  
Experiential Education



# OUR VISION

Connecting imagination with impact for a better world through global leadership in co-operative and career education, experiential and work-integrated learning (WIL).

# OUR MISSION

By developing talent for a complex future, advancing research and strengthening Waterloo's sustainable and diverse communities, we will equip and empower learners for the future of work and lifelong learning.

## We will do so through the work of our many portfolios, including:

- › Office of the Associate Provost
- › CEE Business Services
- › Centre for Career Action
- › Co-operative Education
- › International Strategic Initiatives
- › WIL Programs
- › Work-Learn Institute (WxL)

## Our work is guided by five strategic priorities:



**Demonstrate global leadership**

PAGE 4



**Advance research for global impact**

PAGE 6



**Future proof students**

PAGE 8



**Future proof employers**

PAGE 14



**Future proof ourselves**

PAGE 16

# FROM THE ASSOCIATE PROVOST

[uwaterloo.ca/associate-provost-co-operative-and-experiential-education](https://uwaterloo.ca/associate-provost-co-operative-and-experiential-education)

The last two years have tested and challenged our community here at the University of Waterloo and around the globe. Despite these obstacles, our staff at Co-operative and Experiential Education (CEE) rallied to support our students and employers in their success.

I am incredibly proud of the work completed within CEE to facilitate quality work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for our students. From spring 2021 to winter 2022, we witnessed a cohort of more than 23,000 students hired for jobs at organizations across the globe – the most students ever hired. Achieving this significant milestone despite many ongoing economic and global challenges is a testament to the strong foundation and reputational excellence we have established for CEE and the University of Waterloo both in Canada and around the world.

The workforce we recognize today will continue to change drastically in the next decade. In fact, by 2028, 58 per cent of the workforce will consist of Millennials and Gen Z. Many will hold jobs that do not yet exist. The value of WIL in preparing students with the skills to navigate developing industries is a proven way to help students feel more prepared to enter the workforce. In the coming years, we will continue to expand our portfolio of work to ensure that all Waterloo students have opportunities to participate in WIL.



With global challenges including recessions, political division and global warming, the future remains uncertain. Organizations must recruit and engage talent with the skills to innovate and adapt to navigate these challenges. Our Future Ready Talent Framework continues to assist students and organizations in understanding the value of skill transferability and of building key competencies that will be critical in the future. Instilling students with a sense of purpose in their career choices will also be essential in maintaining their motivation in a volatile and uncertain world.

The CEE strategic plan, established in 2020, will continue to act as our critical roadmap as we recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also continue to inform the expansion of our portfolio, especially as we look to increase partnerships with organizations and institutions from around the world, increase value to our employers and work to further future-proof ourselves.

Our foundation is strong and I look forward to working to further build upon the legacy established by more than 64 years of co-operative and experiential education here at Waterloo.

DR. NORAH MCRAE

ASSOCIATE PROVOST

CO-OPERATIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION



# DEMONSTRATE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

CEE is committed to mobilizing our unique resources, knowledge and leadership within our associations and collaborations with government and industry to grow and strengthen a robust global experiential learning ecosystem. This includes a focus on developing a deeper understanding of diversity, accessibility, sustainability and intercultural effectiveness within ourselves and our stakeholders.

## CEE's employability rankings and innovation in WIL make headlines

[uwat.ca/ZUN](http://uwat.ca/ZUN)

CEE's efforts to employ students as the economy recovers has had tangible results:

- › **Waterloo rises in employability rankings:** 24th in the world and top five per cent among participating institutions in the 2022 QS Graduate Employability Rankings.
- › **Giving students an EDGE:** From inception to doubling enrollment since the program's start, students who are not in co-op programs speak to the success of this experiential education certificate program.
- › **Waterloo co-op program sets record-highs in post-pandemic workforce:** In 2021, more than 23,000 students were hired on co-op work terms.
- › **WIL is changing with the times:** CEE launched the WE Accelerate program – a new style of WIL specifically designed to provide an alternative for students without a co-op job on their first work term.

[uwat.ca/ZUK](http://uwat.ca/ZUK)

## Beyond digital: Accelerate with the skills you need

[youtu.be/gRUPHvLxpzc](https://youtu.be/gRUPHvLxpzc)

The world is experiencing a significant digital shift as technology evolves the way we work – it is more important than ever to develop future-relevant skills and be able to use them across industries. Our expert panel of leaders from Microsoft, RBC and University of Waterloo explored the digital acceleration, what students and young professionals can do to thrive in the future of work, and what industry and universities can do to help.

## HOSTED THE FIRST VIRTUAL GLOBAL CONFERENCE

of the World Association for  
Co-operative Education (WACE)





**AWARDED  
\$500K**

from the Global Skills  
Opportunity Fund  
for the Powering  
Change Project

**26 GLOBAL  
SPEAKING  
ENGAGEMENTS**

**TOP  
25**

in the world

QS GRADUATE  
EMPLOYABILITY  
RANKINGS

**ASSOCIATION  
MEMBERSHIPS**

- › World Association for Co-operative Education (WACE)
- › Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada
- › Co-operative Education & Internship Association (CEIA)
- › Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning Ontario (EWO)
- › Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE)

**#1 IN EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING**

MACLEAN'S UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

**CEE RESEARCH  
AND EXPERTISE  
FEATURED IN 110  
LOCAL AND GLOBAL  
MEDIA STORIES**



# ADVANCE RESEARCH FOR GLOBAL IMPACT

The Work-Learn Institute (WxL) is the only research unit of its kind investigating the development of talent through quality WIL programs. Drawing on the world's largest database of student and employer data (WaterlooWorks), WxL supports a research-based evolution of co-op and WIL to meet the changing demands of the labour market.

This research led to the development of the Future Ready Talent Framework (FRTF) – a tool to help students, employers and educators understand the competencies we all need to navigate the future of work and learning.

[uwaterloo.ca/future-ready-talent-framework](http://uwaterloo.ca/future-ready-talent-framework)



## Co-op students can play a bigger role in advancing United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

[uwat.ca/ZUf](http://uwat.ca/ZUf)

Higher education institutions are looking to be allies for change and to help achieve the [SDGs](http://un.org/sustainabledevelopment) (un.org/sustainabledevelopment) through teaching, WIL, research and partnerships. Both the institutions and students play a vital role in taking on global challenges and ensuring a sustainable future.

Our study found that 13 per cent of students from the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment carried out work related to the SDGs. They include zero hunger, quality education, and clean water and sanitation.

Universities can play a role in developing students who are ready to take on global challenges and bring those skills to the future workforce. Employers can play a key role in engaging students during a critical moment in their young careers.

The study, *Improving engagement of interns and employers with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals* found that further engagement of co-op students (or interns) with the SDGs is required for them to be true agents of change in maintaining a sustainable world.

As a result of the study, Waterloo initiated a pilot program to further understand co-op student and employer perception of their engagement with the SDGs. Based on the approaches of the collaborators, the researchers implemented a self-guided exploration instrument in Spring 2021 across all international internships – whether done remotely or in-person abroad. Eventually, the goal is to extend the activity to domestic co-op terms.



**8 RESEARCH PROJECTS**  
underway

**7 PUBLISHED WHITE PAPERS,**  
peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and a co-edited special Canadian issue of the *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*

## Gen Z: Changing the world one co-op at a time

[uwat.ca/ZUY](http://uwat.ca/ZUY)

With so much uncertainty in the world, **Jahanvi Desai** (BES) doesn't know exactly what her career will look like, but she is certain about one thing: she wants to engage in meaningful work. Like many Waterloo students, Desai is using her co-op experience to engage in work that advances the SDGs.

Whether it's testing soil samples near Lake Erie, managing social media at a non-profit organization, or helping develop affordable housing, co-op work terms give Waterloo students an opportunity to make a social, environmental and economic impact at organizations around the world.

**“Our programs offer outstanding opportunities abroad, and we can use those opportunities to determine how students play a role in creating a more sustainable future.”**

**Shabnam Ivkovic, Director,  
international strategic initiatives**

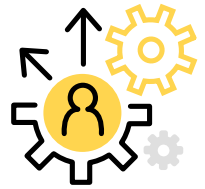
---

Subscribe to WxL's Insight newsletter to hear about events and research.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY



# FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

## A TIMELINE

of Waterloo's new  
WE Accelerate Program

[uwat.ca/ZUL](http://uwat.ca/ZUL)

**APRIL 2021**

Pilot program  
unveiled

**MAY 2021**

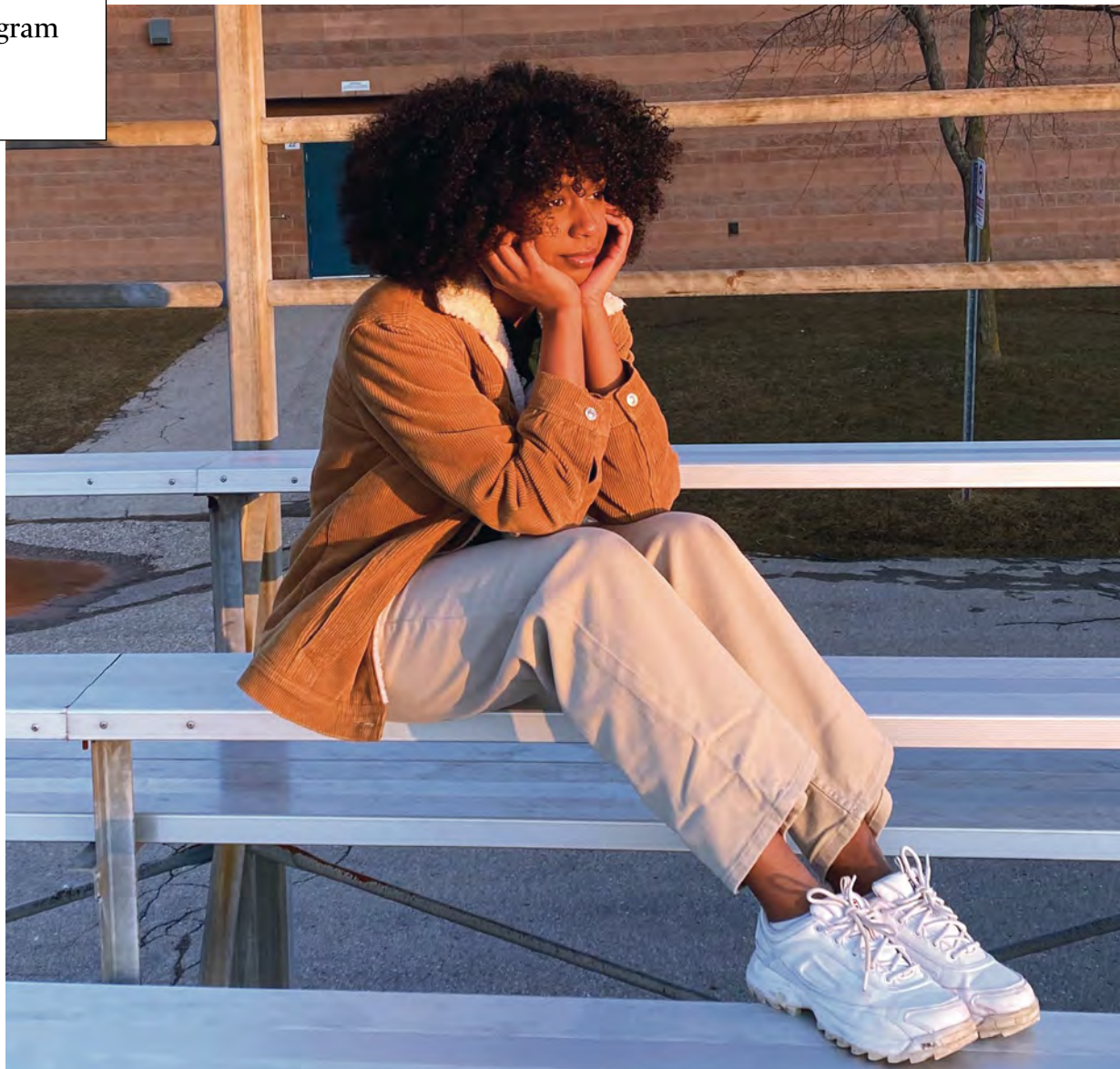
First cohort begins

**DECEMBER 2021**

570 students  
complete the program  
in its first two terms

**JANUARY 2022**

WE Accelerate  
continues through  
2022 and beyond





## WE Accelerate students turn a hopeful outcome into a rousing reality

[uwat.ca/ZUg](http://uwat.ca/ZUg)

It can be challenging enough to be a first work term student looking for a co-op job without adding a global pandemic to the equation. Yet, in 2021, that is exactly what many students faced.

**Aseel Osman** chose to enroll in the pilot offering of Waterloo Experience (WE) Accelerate for her first work term. And now, a year later, the decision is paying dividends. The Engineering student used her experience in the Digital Bootcamp stream of WE Accelerate to secure a position as a growth marketing intern at Sleek.

WE Accelerate is available to co-op students from all six faculties who are not able to secure a job in their first work term. Launched in Spring 2021, the program focuses on developing in-demand skills that student can leverage to work in a variety of future co-op positions.

This innovative program gives students the opportunity to solve real-world business problems and to choose from a variety of skill streams, including artificial intelligence and human-centered design. The skill streams and projects are developed in collaboration with employers like D2L, Deloitte, Manulife, Microsoft, Vidyard and University of Waterloo incubators.

## WXL HAS BEEN AWARDED A HEQCO GRANT

to study WE Accelerate outcomes in reversing unemployment

“I remember when I got the interview, they were saying, ‘Oh, wow, we really didn’t think an engineering student would apply to this job.’ However, when they saw my resume, they were happy with all the experience that I ended up getting from WE Accelerate.”

**Aseel Osman, Nanotechnology engineering student and WE Accelerate pilot participant**

“If it weren’t for WE Accelerate, I don’t know if the co-op experience would have been as smooth as it was. I think the main thing employers are looking for is experience. Building a project with other students and working in a small company really helped me stand out and gave me what I was missing.”

**Shaili Kadakia, Mathematics student and WE Accelerate pilot participant**

“They were fire coming out of the gate. They contributed and were making recommendations that we liked. That was impressive.”

**Charlotta Carter, Founder and CEO, LLENA (AI) and a WE Accelerate project provider**



# FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

Our research-backed Future Ready Talent Framework has been incorporated into co-op student evaluations, work term consultations, professional development courses and career workshops.

**CO-OP STUDENTS RATE  
THEIR EXPERIENCE 8.5/10**

**95% OF CO-OP  
STUDENTS**

were rated very good to outstanding by their employers for their paid work terms

**23.5K+**  
**CO-OP WORK TERMS**  
in 2021

**1,114**

**NEW ONLINE  
LEARNING ASSISTANT  
CO-OP POSITIONS**  
created to support the transition to online learning during the pandemic

**NEW IN 2021**

**PD8**

**INTERCULTURAL SKILLS**  
Already our most popular elective – had over 2,300 enrollments and a satisfaction rating of 96%

**4.5K STUDENTS  
COMPLETED PD1 –  
CAREER FUNDAMENTALS**

Getting students job-ready by developing and receiving feedback on their cover letter and resume, practicing interview skills and learning to navigate their co-op job search

**CENTRE FOR CAREER ACTION**

held **8,185** one-on-one appointments with students and staff





## Six women recognized as 2021 Co-op Student of the Year winners

From providing engaging social media for non-profits to developing an iOS app, University of Waterloo's Co-op Students of the Year made a difference in 2021.

This year, six women were recognized for their exemplary performance amid another pandemic year of in-person, hybrid and remote work.

Each year, one student from each faculty at Waterloo is presented with a Co-op Student of the Year Award for exceptional contributions to their employers.

---

Check out our Co-op Student of the Year page for more information on the winners

[uwat.ca/ZUM](http://uwat.ca/ZUM)



“To announce six outstanding women as our students of the year during a month when International Women’s Day falls is particularly special.”

**Norah McRae, Associate provost,  
Co-operative and  
Experiential Education**

OUR CO-OP MEMBERS  
ARE HIGHLY RATED  
BY THEIR EMPLOYERS



# FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

## Co-op for Community program gives Waterloo students opportunity to help non-profit sector

[uwat.ca/ZUA](http://uwat.ca/ZUA)

Co-op for Community is a unique partnership between United Way Waterloo Region Communities and the University. The donor-funded program creates meaningful co-op jobs for Waterloo students from all disciplines to work at local non-profits that are affiliated with the United Way and need talent. Donations to the program go directly to support Waterloo co-op students.



## THANKS TO GENEROUS DONORS, 12 STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY

through fully-funded work terms with the United Way

**Steve Menich** believes that students can help build strong communities through working with non-profit organizations.

In 2004, Steve's parents, Stephen and Eve Menich, made a generous gift to CEE, establishing a unique program that pays for students to become valuable staff resources at the United Way. Today, Steve and his wife Mary Ellen continue this impactful tradition.





# ALMOST 200 CO-OP STUDENTS

have worked for not-for-profit and charitable agencies over the last three years – we aim to double this number by 2025, and Co-op for Community will make that possible!

## Educating for impact

[uwat.ca/ZUb](http://uwat.ca/ZUb)

Based on his own meaningful experience as a co-op student during his time at Waterloo, Michael Steel and the Steel Family Foundation wanted to support non-profit organizations while helping students build their careers. The Steel Family Foundation established the Feridun Hamdullahpur Change Makers in Co-op program to fund positions at non-profit organizations.

**Michael Steele** (BASc '81) and his spouse **Stacey** know first-hand how the influence of an individual or event can change the course of a career – or even a life. Through awards sponsored by the Steele Family Foundation, they are giving University of Waterloo students the chance to find life-changing opportunities and experiences.



---

**Build careers and communities –  
Donate to the Co-op for  
Community program**



“The next generation of talent wants to see their contributions affect their organization in meaningful ways. Co-op for Community provides opportunities for students to take their skills and energy and apply them in a way where they can see real impact.”

**Norah McRae,  
Associate provost, Co-operative  
and Experiential Education**

“When you donate to the Co-op for Community program, you’re giving us the opportunity to build skillsets, learn more about the non-profit sector and help others.”

**Megan Logan,  
Arts and Business student**



# FUTURE PROOF OUR EMPLOYERS

Insights from the Work-Learn Institute's (WxL) research can guide employers on how to implement a quality WIL program that builds a talent pipeline to add considerable value to an organization. WxL provides employers with consultations, customized insights and training programs to improve workforce recruitment, onboarding, upskilling and retention.

## 2020 EMPLOYER IMPACT AWARD RECIPIENTS

### IMPACT IN INNOVATION

Geotab

### IMPACT IN INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ASSA ABLOY

### IMPACT IN RESEARCH

Odette Cancer Centre

### IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Polar

### IMPACT ON SUSTAINABILITY

Waterloo Institute for  
Sustainable Energy

**45%**  
**OF POTENTIAL  
EMPLOYERS  
POSTED JOBS**

in WaterlooWorks  
after attending  
one of our co-op  
fundamentals sessions

**90+**  
**ATTENDEES**

at our Building the  
future manufacturing  
workforce event

[youtube.com/  
watch?v=3AaUtsw49IA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3AaUtsw49IA)

## WE CELEBRATED OUR EMPLOYERS

by recognizing excellence and impact in the  
areas of innovation, international excellence,  
research, sustainability, and student experience  
with Employer Impact Awards

[uwaterloo.ca/hire/cee-impact-awards](https://uwaterloo.ca/hire/cee-impact-awards)



# 1,262 EMPLOYERS

attended the Work-Learn  
Institute's Future-ready  
workforce webinar series

[youtu.be/EvSs6ZevK98](https://youtu.be/EvSs6ZevK98)

## Staying on the frontline of training with students

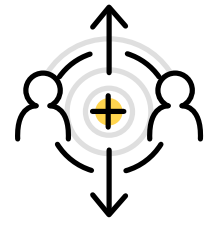
[uwat.ca/ZUP](https://uwat.ca/ZUP)

Axonify, a leader in training and communication solutions, helps frontline employees globally through its online learning management system.

They have hired University of Waterloo co-op students since 2016 in roles such as JavaScript developers, quality assurance analysts and product management support specialists. **Andrea Vrbanac** (she/her), vice president of people & culture at Axonify, gives us her insights on how the company attracts and retains early student talent:

**“Co-op students bring creative energy and new perspectives to our team. Their impact and eagerness to contribute in a meaningful way is celebrated across the business, with accomplishments being recognized through our ‘Values in Action’ Slack channel during regular company update meetings. Employment of co-op students also gives our employees the opportunity to mentor bright and enthusiastic students, further enriching the experience of students and full-time Axonifiers alike.”**





# FUTURE PROOF OURSELVES

With the aim of fostering a culture of engagement, transparency and continuous improvement, we are implementing new onboarding and development processes. These include:

- foundational information about the Future Ready Talent Framework,
- equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism best practices,
- workforce planning,
- improving internal and external communications, and
- building self-awareness and intercultural skills.

## Wellness activities help CEE staff connect and recharge through challenging times

[uwat.ca/ZUe](http://uwat.ca/ZUe)

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted operations for various groups around campus, the Wellness Committee looked for ways to keep CEE staff connected when working remotely.

Formed in 2019, CEE's Wellness Committee aligns itself with the University of Waterloo's Wellness Collaborative. Currently, the committee has 16 members from across CEE's six units.

CEE's Wellness Committee prioritizes "mental wellness, spiritual wellness, sense of belonging, active living and healthy eating, and commitment to wellness at all levels," explains Ross Johnston, executive director of Co-operative Education and founder of the committee. To promote these values, the Wellness Committee hosted 36 virtual events for staff, including mental health workshops, cooking classes, seminars and trivia.







## DEVELOPED **2** NEW PORTFOLIOS

- › Associate director, EDI and anti-racism
- › Associate director, Indigenous initiatives

“So often people talk about mental health and wellbeing, but they don’t put things into action. Not only does the Wellness Committee talk about the importance, they put on a wellness week to focus on mental health.”

**Michelle Maree, CEE Wellness Committee representative**

## CCA HAS DEVELOPED CAPACITY AND UNDERSTANDING

to undertake an equity, anti-racism and trauma-informed approach to processes and programming, including managers completing a 12-week course in anti-racism, and staff completing a 6-week course in trauma-informed service systems

ENGAGEMENT

TRANSPARENCY

IMPROVEMENT





# STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS AND FUTURE MILESTONES

## GOAL

Continue to lead the world in co-operative education and support the workforce of the future through fully-integrated academic and experiential learning opportunities.

## OBJECTIVES

- › Leverage Waterloo's employer, industry, government and alumni networks to enhance our connection to the community, Canada and the world.
- › Continue to demonstrate global prominence in the development, recruitment and retention of future-ready talent, with a focus on building a diverse workforce.
- › Increase interdisciplinary opportunities for co-op students to gain locally and globally relevant research experience.



## Securing and advancing global leadership

### ACTION

In 2023, CEE will host the global WACE Conference – an international conference focused on research and advancements in WIL. Industry leaders from more than 40 countries and 100 institutions will be invited to attend the conference in Waterloo to share learnings and advance the understanding, practice and leadership of co-operative education and WIL.



## Further implementation of the FRTF

### ACTIONS

- › In 2022-23, we will further integrate the FRTF into the academic review process to create stronger alignment between academic courses and the WIL environment.
- › We are developing new offerings including a pre-WIL experience course for graduate students centered around the FRTF.
- › In 2023, we will host our first annual employer impact conference to further engage employers with key elements of the FRTF and SDGs while building collaborative relationships.



## Increased impact on UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### ACTION

CEE's international strategic initiatives will implement activities to support the SDGs in work term evaluations and launch a web page to highlight activities, opportunities and supports related to the SDGs and WIL.



## Diversifying WIL opportunities and expanded models of WIL

### ACTIONS

- › WIL Programs will become the Centre for Work-Integrated Learning to better reflect the growing portfolio which includes programs (e.g., EDGE, WE Accelerate, Grad WIL), courses (e.g., WatPD) and other WIL-focused curriculum and strategic initiatives to help students see connections between WIL experiences and classroom learning.
- › As WE Accelerate becomes an ongoing offering, our focus is to track student employment outcomes over time to understand its impact on future employment rates as compared to students employed in traditional co-op work terms.



## Embedding equity in WIL

### ACTION

In 2022, an Associate Director of Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and anti-Racism (EDI-R) and an Associate Director of Indigenous Relations will join CEE. These new positions report to the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and anti-Racism and the Office of Indigenous Relations, respectively. These roles will develop action plans for CEE in alignment with the direction from both offices.

UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO  
200 UNIVERSITY AVE. W., WATERLOO, ON, CANADA N2L 3G1

[uwaterloo.ca/hire](https://uwaterloo.ca/hire)