CEWIL Research Matters

April 2019

• **Article #1** • **Article #2** • **News/Updates**

Article #1

What value do stakeholders place on the academic standards and grading practices in work integrated learning (2018)

Author(s)

Robinson, K.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 19(4), 349-357

Source

WIL Research Portal

Purpose: To determine stakeholder perceptions of grading practices in work-integrated learning (WIL) courses within a Human Services school.

Methodology: Constructive Grounded Theory was used to interpret the experiences of employers, academic staff, field supervisors and students. Data was gathered through surveys and focus groups.

Key Findings: Assessment of learning outcomes in WIL courses in Human Services is a contentious issue with stakeholders holding differing opinions.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Tyler Schwartz *(Undergraduate Coordinator, ARTS Co-op, Simon Fraser University)*

Q: What insights did you gain from reading this article that were useful to you?

A: Providing grading that is more consistent with academia may hinder a student's learning and lead to less engagement from the employer. Grading seems to only appeal to high achievers. The findings around the importance of reflection and how imposing some strict reflection guidelines would be the way to provide consistent evaluation criteria if we were to look at using a graded evaluation. Using pass/fail allows us the flexibility to adapt to students' unique learning and reflection styles, and allows us to encourage risk-taking in multiple areas and adaptability mid-stream in a semester.

Q: In what ways do these findings have the potential to change practice for us at Simon Fraser University?

A: Placing a stronger emphasis on the importance of reflection will be a greater benefit for students than focusing on what skills they are developing. It seems that prepping students to engage in a reflective activity and encouraging metacognition at every step will build good habits that will carry over to the rest of a student's career. This also means we need to change the focus of our conversations to ensure that students have the right vocabulary and reference points to understand how the reflective process will help them with job searching and career-building in general.

Q: How might the results of this work impact your work?

A: This will change the pre-departure conversations I have with students and also influence on-site discussions about the reflective activities that students are engaged in. It will result in more focused questions and resources that I provide for my students to maximize their placement with an employer.

Q: Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)? If so, in what ways could this information be shared with them? Does this study raise questions for you that require further research/investigation?

A: Helpful for students, but not necessarily for employers. It sounds like employers do not benefit from a graded scale and places too much pressure on them. It also creates validity concerns when an employer is grading activities that they were not involved in. For students, it can help ease some anxiety and provide some focus on how to approach a WIL course.

Article #2

The impact of work placement on graduate employment in computing: Outcomes from a UK-based study (2018)

Author(s)

Smith, S., Taylor-Smith, E., Smith, C. F., & Webster, G.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 19(4), 359-369

Source

WIL Research Portal

Purpose: To determine whether work placements experienced during undergraduate studies were associated with aspects of graduate employment for a sample of recent computing graduates from Scottish universities.

Methodology: Participants completed an online questionnaire and then were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Key Findings: Compared to students who did not complete a work placement, students who completed a work placement during their undergraduate degree earned more, found graduate positions more quickly, and were more likely to be employed.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Harriet Chicoine *(Program Manager, Co-operative Education, Faculty of Applied Science, Simon Fraser University)*

Q: In what ways do these findings have the potential to change practice for us at SFU? Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)? If so, in what ways could this information be shared with them? Does this study raise questions for you that require further research/investigation?

A: These findings could help SFU co-op in how we recruit and retain students to engage with co-op. In terms of recruitment, it can ensure both the student and potentially their parents fully understand the benefit of prolonging their time in university towards the goal of being hired shortly after graduation into positions that are relevant to their degrees. This will also be true to retain students within the program, as it is sometimes difficult for students to land their first co-op positions and feel time is running by to complete their degrees. We have produced stats in the past to support this; however it would be good to do so again. In particular for FAS co-op, it would be good to demonstrate the types of positions co-op students graduate into, as these are not entry level (but at the very least, junior development). Many of our students take on Q/A testing as their first co-ops or other entry level positions; however, once they graduate, they are qualified both technically and with their soft skills to enter the job force at a higher level. All of this would not only be used as a recruitment and retention tool, but also to support student engagement while part of co-op.

This type of information would also be beneficial for other stakeholders, such as employers and university partners. As an example, for employers to understand that by completing co-op, students arrive post-graduation with the required technical and soft skills, and ramp up time for "new employees" is significantly reduced. For our university stakeholders, to inform how to ensure our SFU alumni progress through their careers having jump-started their careers by completed co-op.

Contribute

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