Developing, Maintaining and Assessing WIL programs: Avoiding the Pitfalls

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Why Do Students Choose Co-op?

Experience

develop skills

build professional network

sample different industries, jobs, locations

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Foundation: Curriculum/Preparation
Building Awareness and Language of Skills

**WHY?**
Provide a **language** for them to use to describe how their academic courses and co-curricular experiences are preparing them to make contributions outside the university.

**HOW?**
Develop **partnerships** between academic departments and career and WIL offices as well with community and industry partners. Identify **opportunities** within and/or outside the curriculum to engage with students on this topic.
Foundation: Partnerships

Critical Success Factors in Sustainable WIL Partnerships

Work-Integrated Learning in Ontario’s Colleges and Universities
Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education,
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario
Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
Application: Work Experience

**WHY?**
Students need to feel the WIL experience is giving them an opportunity to work in the "real-world"

**HOW?**
Job search and application process
Work and accountabilities assigned by external party
Institutional support provided (e.g. advisor; curriculum support via reflections)
Feedback and assessment provided by institution and external party

SIDE NOTE: Consider the value of cross-disciplinary job postings

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WIL Experiences: When Things Go Wrong

**Students**
- Lack of meaningful work
- Lack of opportunity for skill development
- Lack of support from supervisor or co-workers
- Lack of relevance to academic or career goals

**Supervisors**
- Excessive time required for training and supporting students
- Students not meeting expectations (e.g. skills, attitudes)
Assessment: Students and Programs

**WHY?**
Need to understand the **value** of our programs and how we can continue to **improve** them

**HOW?**
- Learning outcomes -> Program Assessment
  - Pre/Post assessments of student reflection (e.g. skills articulation)
  - Partner feedback on student performance
- Alumni surveys
- Labour market outcomes of graduates
Selected References & Resources

- Series of WIL research publications by HEQCO
- Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning by HEQCO
- International Handbook on Co-op and Work-Integrated Education published by WACE
- WatCACE website
- British Columbia (ACE) – Matrix of Work-Integrated Learning
- Waterloo Co-op Student Performance Evaluation
- LinkedIn Alumni Data (My Network -> Find Alumni)
WatCACE Research Highlights
www.watcace.uwaterloo.ca

Recent and Current
- Quality of Work Term Experience: Student Perspectives (OHCRIF grant)
- Unpacking the Co-op Supervisor Experience (OHCRIF grant)
- Lifelong Learning and Co-operative Education (WACE grant)
- Key Factors for Sustainable WIL partnerships (ACEN grant)
- Universities: A Talent Pipeline? (OHCRIF grant)

Outreach
- Monthly newsletter, “Co-op Research Matters”
- Developing a work-integrated learning research portal
Thank you!

Questions?

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