

# How do we engage science students in WIL?

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# Our research

How can we make engagement with WIL a priority for science students?

How can we make WIL experiences meaningful to science students?

1. WIL specialist interviews
2. Student focus groups
  - N=85
  - Two universities

# Students value and want WIL

- Get hands-on experience
- Develop their skills
- Build networks
- Try out different options
  
- **Set themselves apart**

'It's a really good time to explore if that field or that sort of work would work for you or not. Like, you're not on a contract, you're not going to get fired if you don't like it.'

# All students?

- Staff told us that where WIL is optional, only a small proportion actively engage.
- Our students thought most of their peers were interested, but may not take the next step to engage.
- Not all students are interested or ready to think about WIL and employability yet

‘I think that a lot of students worry about it, but don’t necessarily take active steps... I’m not sure there’s enough proactiveness, I think convincing might be needed in that part of actioning the worry.’

# What encourages students to engage in WIL?

- Thinking beyond university
- Doing WIL
- Hearing about WIL
  - Importance
  - Relevant opportunities

'I look at jobs a lot online and be like yeah, that's the type of job I want and then start looking at ways to try and build my skills up for that job.'

# What are the barriers to engagement in WIL?

- Time
- Money
- Lack of visible, relevant opportunities
- Visa restrictions
- Confidence
- Optional WIL

'I wouldn't apply for something if I don't think I have the skills yet, even if I may technically have them I don't know I really do have them.'

# How do they find out about WIL?

- Common sources:
  - email or the LMS
  - Google or Seek
- Hard to find, easy to miss
- ‘There’s puzzle pieces you don’t even know are there.’

‘You actually have to go and talk to someone and you might actually happen to stumble upon it but that’s if you’re lucky.’

# 1. Communicate more...

- Talk more
- Talk earlier
- We all need to talk

‘Tell people what they’ll actually be doing, rather than just, ‘Oh, this gives you credit towards your degree.’ But what are you actually doing? People need to see the value in it.’



## ... and communicate better

- Make it easier to find information
  - Central page/hub
  - Newsletter
  - Facebook page

'All the tools are there... you just have to put in so much effort to look for them and I spend so much time researching and emailing and emailing... to find the person I want to actually talk to.'

## 2. Provide more opportunities

- Make some WIL compulsory
- Make use of on-campus WIL
- Include WIL at all levels of the course

‘I think, maybe, it would be quite valuable to scale back on the theoretical learning part of the degree and scale up on the work integrated part to encourage people to participate more.’

### 3. Support students to find WIL...

- How to approach employers
  - Making initial contact
  - Logistics
- Who to approach
  - Facilitate networking
  - Guest speakers
  - Organisations and professional groups

‘Trying to find an internship is really hard ... someone you can talk to that can direct you to the right place to apply for an internship or where to look or how exactly to go about doing an internship.’

## ... and access WIL

- Scholarships and grants
- Flexibility
  - Timing/length of placement opportunities
  - Course structure
  - Types of WIL

‘There needs to be more information about scholarships for sure... There’s stuff out there but knowing how to access it’

# 'Actioning the worry'

To encourage students to take the next step, we need to:

- Talk to students about WIL throughout their course
- Make it easier for students to find information on WIL
- Embed and scaffold WIL throughout courses
- Make use of the full range of WIL activities

# Want to know more?



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