

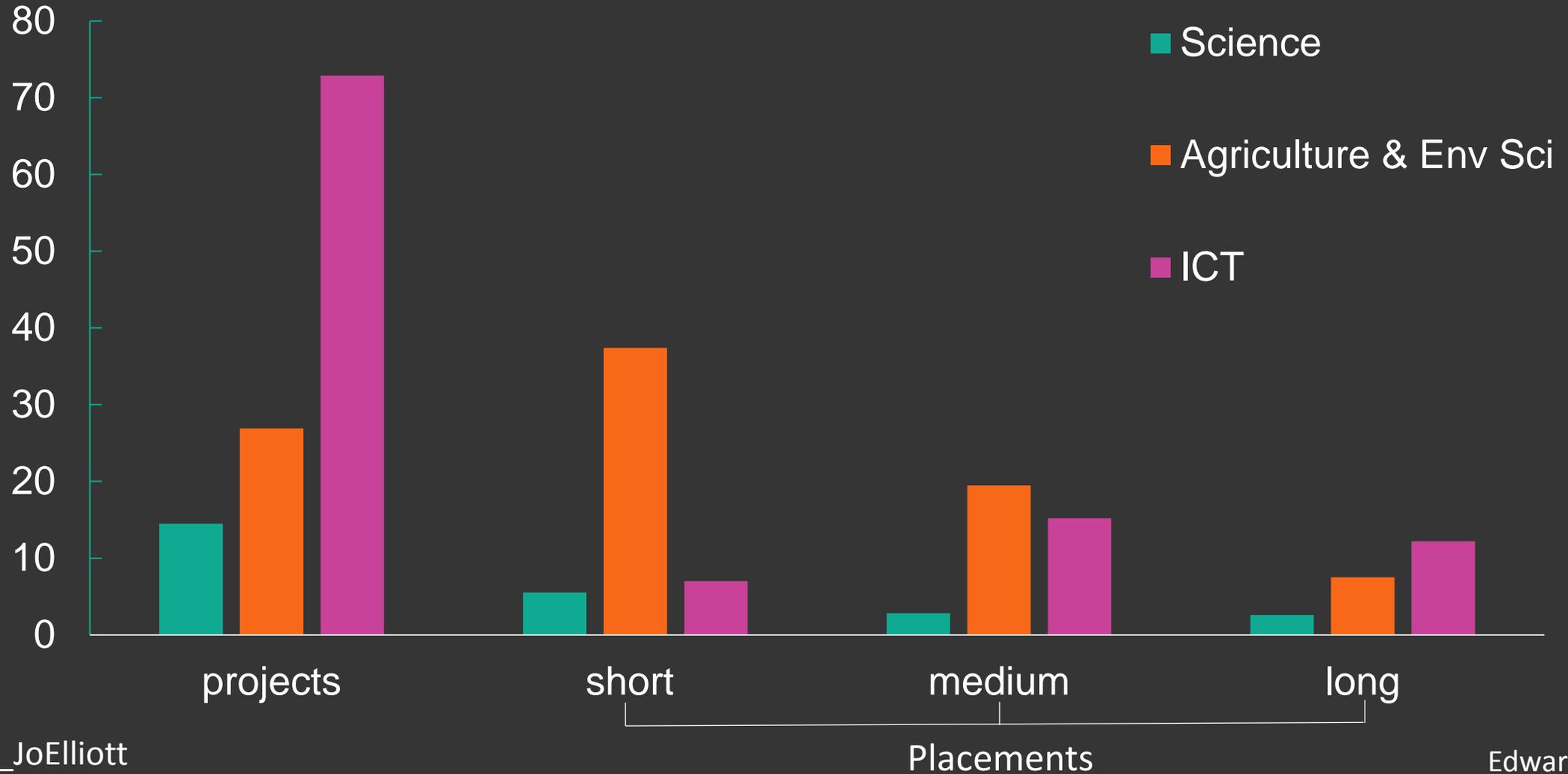
# WIL-ing participants: Science students' participation in work-integrated learning

Dr Jo Elliott, Dr Trina Jorre de St Jorre  
and Prof Liz Johnson

Deakin University



# Student participation in WIL (%)



# *Successful WIL in Science project*

**Communities  
of practice**

**Resources:  
WIL Guide for  
Science**

**Students**

**Staff**

**Industry**

**Building  
staff  
capacity**

**Engaging  
stakeholders**

**Upscaling  
WIL in  
science**

**Climate for  
change**

**Leadership  
for change**

# 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 specialists interviews

N=23, 13 universities

2. Student focus groups and interviews

N=138, four universities

## Students value WIL...

- Get hands-on experience
- Develop their skills
- Build networks
- Try out different options

... but interest doesn't equal participation

“It's advertised "you can put this in your resume." So many heads just pop up because that's all that we're looking for right now, what's going to make us look better when we start applying for jobs.”

# 1. Make WIL more visible

Students were often unaware of how to access WIL

Embedding WIL early in courses:

- raises students' awareness
- gives them time to plan
- prompts further participation

“I find just finding opportunities [difficult]. Because I don't feel like we're given many – or like we're told about many opportunities by our lecturers or tutors.”

## 2. Scale up WIL in the workplace

### Students:

- place greatest value on workplace-based WIL
- think all students should have access to placements
- need support and guidance to self-source placements

“Everyone around you is a professional in that area... you have to be working in a professional manner and communicating with everyone there rather than just blundering your way through a mock exercise”

### 3. Provide more WIL on campus

Students do see value in on-campus WIL

- Scaffolding understanding
- Build confidence
- Showcase available roles
- Demonstrate value of WIL

“In first year, we probably wouldn’t have the skills to go straight in and do work experience in an industry environment, but at least having the exposure...”

## 4. Provide support and alternatives

Not all students have the same access to WIL

Make it easier to access by:

- Offering credit
- Providing financial support
- Helping students negotiate roles
- Offering alternative WIL

“I have to work quite a lot to help our finances at home. [I study part-time] and I’m working more than I’m at class. I do want to do things... but I always have scheduling conflicts”

## 5. Make it relevant

Students placed greater value on experiences directly related to their career goals

Highlight relevance through:

- Authentic tasks and examples
- Explicit learning outcomes
- Assessment and reflection

“[Develop] the skills that they want to see their candidates have in those fields ... Definitely develop that stuff and really keep it close and narrow into that job that you’re looking for or that field that you’re looking for.”

# Recommendations

To help students prioritise and get the most from WIL, we need to:

- Talk about WIL early and often
- Build WIL into courses, especially placements
- Make use of the full range of WIL activities
- Help students identify and integrate their knowledge and skills
- Support students to create their own opportunities

**“If you don’t know how to start,  
you don’t get the opportunities. I want  
to do something but I don’t know  
how to start it.”**