

## **EDITORIAL**

### **Informing the Future of WIL: Learning from the Past to Progress and Move Forward**

ONDINE BRADBURY<sup>1</sup>

Editor-In Chief

Deakin University, Victoria, Australia

I extend a warm welcome to all the stakeholder groups involved in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) to the first issue of Work Integrated Learning in Practice (WIL in Practice). WIL in Practice invites submissions from administrators, academic staff and WIL stakeholders from a wide range of disciplines. This peer-reviewed journal emphasises the importance of sharing rigorous and informative publications within an inclusive and supportive environment.

In this first editorial, it is pertinent to reflect upon my personal reflections of WIL, and on the journey of design, production and development of this new journal. This journal was inspired by the National Association of Field Experience Administrators (NAFEA) community, and led by the NAFEA Executive Team, who encompass both professional and academic staff, and who make WIL happen. A professional journal, such as WIL in Practice, is a natural progression to celebrate and share the great work undertaken by WIL staff in higher education contexts, which highlights the complex, multifaceted nature of this space. The NAFEA Executive team are also passionate about providing a platform and space for those who are underrepresented in traditional journals.

The conception and development of this journal has occurred through a unique interdisciplinary collaboration of individuals with backgrounds that span across the various forms of WIL practice as well as from multiple jurisdictions across Australia. WIL in Practice is committed to representing the breadth of WIL research, learning and practice across both national and international contexts. Inherently, WIL encompasses diversity of stakeholders and contexts, embracing disparate roles that work within the space as well as across faculties and fields of learning. WIL brings to the higher education sector external practice from industry and professional partnerships that support students on practicums, internships, placements and other forms of WIL. The complex dynamics of WIL and interactions across professional boundaries, create opportunities for the growth of new knowledge within and between disparate professional silos. So, ambitiously in this editorial piece as well as focussing our attention on the future, it is important to look across, through and reflect on where we have journeyed from in this exceptionally important field.

WIL practices have not been without their share of pressures and challenges during the preceding tumultuous 24 months leading up to this first issue. Inherent challenges were amplified, and additional layers of complexity have been associated with the changes accompanying

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: [ondine.bradbury@deakin.edu.au](mailto:ondine.bradbury@deakin.edu.au)

workplace structural transformations and new ways of working. These have impacted every facet of WIL from administration to student and WIL academic experiences. This has propelled the need to shift from physical attendance to digital delivery in disciplines such as education, business and creative industries, and has placed additional burdens in many health disciplines such as allied health, nursing, dentistry and medicine. The impact upon students, university stakeholders and industry partners has been immense.

From the perspective of a student, the work of those in WIL administration can often be invisible. Communication through emails, phone calls, orientation opportunities and updates via information systems, such as InPlace and Sonia, allow for some structural aspects of the physical placement, internship or practicum to be revealed. What is unseen are the depth of relationships that are built, forged, and the substantial time that is required to sustain and maintain these enduring partnerships. If we take a moment to imagine how the complexity and facets of WIL could be visualised it would not be a simple process that emerges. When completing this task myself, I see a multidimensional diagram where permeable boundaries and multiple stakeholders materialise. It is no wonder that WIL represents some of the most complex and critical spaces in higher education and that WIL is one of the most valued components for students, industry, and funders of the higher education sector.

To further embed our successes and to provide high-quality and valuable WIL experiences we must continue to work collaboratively, apply evidence and reflect upon practice. Recently, NAFEA held their 2021 Conference “*The Future of WIL: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*”. Many of the presentations highlighted the need for increased transparency, co-design, co-creation and collaboration between the numerous stakeholder groups that work together yet often apart. Questions arose during the conference about availability of placements, resourcing for WIL, a lack of skilled or resourced staff, in placement departments and the importance of weaving together the structural and logistical dimensions of WIL. It is necessary to hear all voices and needs of stakeholders, including our students. Equity and inclusion are critical for many stakeholders, including our international student cohorts, those with learning needs and students with other external pressures or priorities. These topics need further work and can be a focus for WIL inquiry and research, and we anticipate that passionate WIL researchers will take up the challenge to inquire further and shed light onto these tensions and challenges.

### **From the Inaugural Issue to Visions for the Future**

Progress within the WIL space will continue to develop from the collaborations of diverse stakeholder groups. This includes staff from higher education institutions, both professional and academic, the students and our industry partners. It is our aim to ensure that this publication represents all of these voices. This may be in the co-design, co-construction or co-authoring of papers submitted to WIL in Practice. This approach supports the values and mission of NAFEA to incorporate equity and inclusion principles in designing courses. Within Issue No. 1, you will find empirical papers that employ mixed methods along with qualitative research in the field of nursing. Additionally, we have our first book review on a recent WIL-based publication. You will notice

that this journal, *WIL in Practice*, welcomes a variety of publication types. This includes empirical and academic articles, qualitative and quantitative research findings, book reviews and case studies, just to name a few. *WIL in Practice* accepts submissions throughout the year for bi-annual publishing, and periodically, we intend to publish special issues on topics of interest. In 2022, our first special issue (Issue No. 2) will highlight the key themes of the 2021 NAFEA Conference and will welcome submissions in March 2022 for publication in August 2022. The themes from the conference that cultivate future thinking related to WIL in this special issue will allow for a range of interpretation from key stakeholders across disciplines. Further details will be provided prior to the closing date for submissions, and I am sure that what is received for this issue will be inspired by the conference themes.

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce and extend my thanks to the *WIL in Practice* editorial board comprising of NAFEA members across five Australian universities: Dr Ricky Tunny (Queensland University of Technology), Dr Sheree Lloyd (Griffith University), Associate Professor Matthew Winslade (Charles Sturt University), David Reid (Swinburne University), and Katherine Theobald (Queensland University of Technology). The editorial board along with the NAFEA Executive Committee were instrumental in the design and development of *WIL in Practice* and I thank all those who provided their time, suggestions and support for this journal.

On behalf of the editorial board, I conclude by warmly inviting contributors to submit their work and potential reviewers to get involved in *WIL in Practice*. In embodying inclusion, we are seeking contributions from all of you with an interest in WIL irrespective of your experience or discipline. So please submit your work to the journal, become a reviewer or a member of the editorial board and join this growing community building new knowledge in the WIL space.



# Work Integrated Learning

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## in Practice

### About the Journal

WIL in Practice exists to disseminate good practice and learnings in work integrated learning (WIL), forming a valuable resource for NAFEA members and the broader WIL community. Publishing research and other suitable publications from academics, administrators and others whose interests align with the practice and administration of WIL, the journal will add to, and enhance, the existing body of knowledge that currently exists about WIL in all its various forms.

Early-career and emerging researchers and writers are also encouraged to submit their work. WIL in Practice provides an outlet for professionals to publish in a variety of formats.

WIL in Practice is supported by the National Association of Field Experience Administrators Inc. (NAFEA). WIL in Practice aims to be a high-quality and internationally recognised journal, publishing research and other suitable manuscripts from academics, administrators and the broader community whose interests align with the practice and administration of WIL. The journal will:

- Provide a welcoming, supportive and educative environment for authors at all levels to publish quality work
- Meaningfully contribute to the distribution of knowledge and professional development of WIL practitioners and researchers
- Publish at least once annually
- Take no action or inaction that is contrary to the values or directions of the NAFEA Executive Management Committee
- Operate in accordance with all laws and relevant policies.
- WIL in Practice is proudly supported by the National Association of Field Experience Administrators Inc. (NAFEA).

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