

A Systematic Review: Gender and Sexual Diversity in Work-Integrated Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic review of published research on gender and sexual diversity (GSD) in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in higher education. The review includes scholarly papers focussed on 'queer', 'work-integrated learning', and 'higher education'. The review excludes papers on employability, recruitment, or curriculum in higher education. Systematic searches were conducted with 14 papers identified, and following two rounds of screening, three papers were included in this review. The review sought to identify scholarship within higher education institutions globally regarding the enablers and barriers for students engaging in WIL who identify as GSD. Three key findings relate to structural barriers based upon discrimination and marginalisation: the significance of visually inclusive workplaces, the importance of support from key WIL personnel and the role of power dynamics. We conclude that research in this field is severely disregarded and underdeveloped.

Keywords: queer, LGBTIQA+, work-integrated learning (WIL), higher education, gender and sexual diversity (GSD)

Introduction

This systematic review aims to identify and analyse the literature related to diverse gender and sexuality identities in work-integrated learning in higher education. Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a term used to describe a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum (Patrick et al., 2008). An effective WIL curriculum has many demands to ensure students receive adequate knowledge related to their vocation, general employability skills, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning in authentic contexts (Cooper et al., 2010). The extent to which the WIL curriculum in higher education has achieved this aim has been the subject of much debate (Billett, 2011). In this review, all modes of WIL were considered (for example, internships, field experience, placement, projects and simulations) across all discipline areas of higher education (Carter et al., 2017).

A wealth of research attests to the benefits of WIL, including gaining transferable skills, building professional and workplace networks, and applying theory to real-world experiences

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(Smith, 2012). Given the potential impacts on career choices and employment outcomes, and the increase in WIL activities in higher education, it is timely to address the potential barriers for students engaging in WIL experiences. It has been long recognised that equity and access are among the most significant challenges for WIL (Patrick et al., 2008; Valencia-Forrester et al., 2019). Many of the current principles and strategies for inclusive WIL focus on introducing flexible systems, structures, and experiences (Peach et al., 2015). While the research into broad concepts of inclusive WIL has contributed significantly to scholarship surrounding equity (Campbell et al., 2021; Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2013; Mackaway et al., 2014; Orrell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008; Peach et al., 2015), the research often conflates equity groups when suggesting interventions or recommendations. However, each equity group has different enablers and barriers, acknowledging intersectionality between groups (Le et al., 2020).

Research into the experiences of employees who identify as GSD in the workplace exists; however, there are limited studies that focus on the specific needs and experiences of students who identify as GSD. Brown and colleagues from Diversity Council Australia have undertaken a large-scale survey into the experiences of employees who identify as LGBTIQ+ (Brown et al., 2018). Findings from the workplace show that marginalised employees who conceal their GSD identities are negatively impacted from a health and well-being perspective and are less satisfied with their jobs (Brown et al., 2018). Conversely, the Diversity Council Australia study found that employees who brought their authentic selves to their jobs resulted in more innovative, more effective workplaces and provided higher quality customer services (Brown et al., 2018). Student experiences are likely to be similar to employees, yet compounded by issues of power dynamics, among other factors. Students also need to navigate workplace and university administrative processes and systems that may include unconscious bias or discriminatory practices. Further research is required to understand the impact of student participation and access in WIL activities for students who identify as GSD to maximise student participation so that they reap the full benefits that WIL can provide.

In this scoping review, we ask the following research question: What are the enablers and barriers for higher education institutions engaging in WIL for students who identify as GSD? We conceptualised 'queer' as a term that encapsulates broader notions of identity regarding sex, gender and sexualities compared to LGBTIQ+. The word 'queer' has been used as a methodological term for searching purposes, referring to people who identify as LGBTIQ+ or as gender and/or sexually diverse (GSD). LGBTIQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual and plus, acknowledging identities may be fluid. In this paper, gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) is a term used to capture a range of identities not always acknowledged in the term queer or the acronym LGBTIQ+. The scoping review will provide an overview of relevant research, identifying gaps in the literature that could inform future research and recommendations.

This article begins by providing a brief overview of the literature that situates the marginalisation of students who identify as GSD in the WIL context through key reports and projects. It then explains the systematic review process, which resulted in three papers being

discussed. We conclude by discussing critical learnings from the review, namely that students who identify as GSD are severely disregarded and underrepresented in the literature.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students in WIL Contexts

Previous scholarship on inclusive WIL practices has primarily focussed on international students (Felton et al., 2017; Gair et al., 2014; Gribble et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2013; Lilley et al., 2008; Murray et al., 2012; Razack, 2001;), low socio-economic students (Brough et al., 2015) and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous students (Orchard et al., 2010; Ranzijn et al., 2008, Reedy, 2011)² and students with a disability or mental health condition (Leon, 2010; McAuliffe, 2012). In 2015, Peach led an Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) project entitled *Enhancing Access, Participation, and Progression in WIL*. This project found that some groups of students faced WIL barriers and suggested adopting inclusive education principles to improve students' access and engagement with WIL experiences. The 2017 *Good Practice Report – Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Report* commissioned by the Australian Government made a key recommendation that marginalised and disadvantaged groups are "considered, investigated, and resources allocated to support the development of policies and inclusive practice" (Sachs, Rowe, & Wilson, 2017, p. 29). In 2019, the Universities Australia *Work Integrated Learning in Universities: Final Report* called upon universities to carefully consider how they develop WIL opportunities for particular equity groups.

There is significant agreement amongst these reports and projects that there are prevailing equity issues within the WIL context. However, the extent to which these projects and reports have engaged with voices, stories and issues from students who identify as GSD vary. For example, the Peach et al. (2015) project did not explicitly discuss students who identify as GSD. In the Sachs et al. (2017) report, a sub-section is devoted to inclusive WIL, which includes a text box that lists students who identify as GSD as one of the ten marginalised and disadvantaged groups. However, the report does not expand on how this equity group is marginalised and disadvantaged (sections on disadvantaged groups such as international and Indigenous students are expanded). While the implementation of marriage equality legislation in 2017 may have suggested a shift in societal attitudes to people with GSD identities, the 2019 Universities Australia report did not explicitly mention students who identify as GSD. However, there was a significant focus on international students and, to a lesser extent, Indigenous students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and regional and rural students in the report.

In highlighting the absence of the GSD equity group in the various projects and reports that have been written to inform WIL policy in practices in higher education, we do not intend to position students who identify as GSD against other disadvantaged or historically underrepresented groups. There is essential work, research and support needed for all equity groups in the WIL context. Instead, we aim to highlight how students who identify as GSD

² Special issue 2 (Volume 23 (2022) of the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning has recently published 13 articles on indigenous issues in WIL.

have tended to be overlooked or included without exploring further the specific barriers (or enablers) to participation that may be distinctive to this equity group.

There has been an increasing focus on WIL within the higher and vocational education sectors, a growth in student enrolments and heightened awareness around the risks of exclusion and lack of access to equal opportunities and participation in WIL for students from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups (Mackaway et al., 2014; Orrell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008). Therefore, this review is a timely piece of research to identify future priorities that may increase the benefits and improve the outcomes for students who identify as GSD.

Method

A systematic review is an overarching term used to describe a broad understanding of literature reviews (Grant & Booth, 2009). In this review, we have engaged Arksey's and O'Malley's (2005) guidelines for systematic scoping reviews. We used a protocol design, tailored search strategies, and replicable methods for producing scholarly research relevant to the research question. The initial step of the review was to identify relevant studies. The team created a search design based on extensive knowledge in the field and practical experiences (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The search design was recorded, and the team developed further criteria for screening a final set of studies to be included. The criteria included: peer-reviewed article AND 'queer' OR 'lgbtiq' OR 'gender and sexual diversity' AND 'higher education'. We decided that searching from 2010 would provide scope for contemporary research more relevant to current times, given the evolving nature of political and social understandings of gender and sexuality. A 'search tracker' was used to track and record various searches in different databases. These were collated in an MS Excel worksheet.

The searches were conducted up to February 2022 in the following electronic databases, using the search terms outlined above: ProQuest, ERIC Plus Education Source, Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, APA PsycInfo, Informit, Public Health+ and Science Direct. Included articles were those written in English and were published in peer-reviewed journals. Any newspaper articles, newsletters, books, or conference papers were excluded using search functions. The initial search resulted in 17 articles; three articles were duplicated, so one of each of these was removed immediately. There were 14 articles included in the first round of review, a full list of these articles is presented in Appendix A.

The lead researcher conducted the initial search. The papers were presented with titles and abstracts to the two other researchers. Initially, the title and abstract were reviewed by each author independently to ensure the articles included the keywords in the original search terms. We then met and recorded our individual decisions on a spreadsheet. Any documents that were not considered journal articles were removed in the initial review, including a list of contributors (#8) and a subject index (#9) which would not be considered research articles. During the final full-text review, the following papers were removed for the following reasons:

Table 1: Exclusion Justification

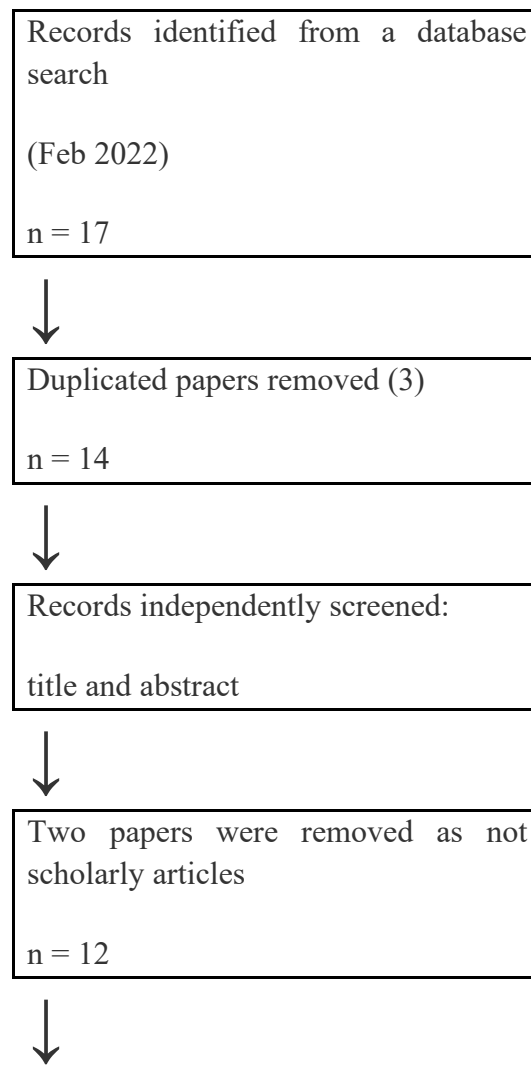
Paper Number	Authors	Year	Title	Exclusion Justification
#2	Le, T. T., Le, N. H. G., & Tran, H. V.	2020	Pride and prejudice: An intersectional look at graduate employability of transgender and queer international students	Focus on employability.
#3	Osborne, N., & Grant-Smith, D.	2017	Resisting the "employability" doctrine through anarchist pedagogies and prefiguration	Focus on employability.
#4	Johinke, R.	2020	Social production as authentic assessment: Wikipedia, digital writing, and hope labour	Focus on recruitment and employability.
#6	Robertson, Harris, A., & Baldassar, L.	2018	Mobile transitions: A conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move	Focus on transnational mobility.
#7	Campbell, A.	2015	Performing cultural heritage: Authenticity and the spirit of rebellion	Focus on students in research programs.
#10	Massey, J., Field, S., & Yolande, C.	2014	Partnering for economic development: How town-gown relations impact local economic development in small and medium cities	Focus on employability and student retention post-studies in a local context.
#11	Raby, R.	2020	Introduction (Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education).	Focus on doctoral students and an editorial focus.
#12	Brugmann, R., Côté, N., Postma, N., Shaw, E. A., Pal, D., & Robinson, J. B.	2019	Expanding student engagement in sustainability: Using SDG- and CEL-Focused inventories to transform curriculum at the University of Toronto	Focus on sustainable development courses and the development of inventories.

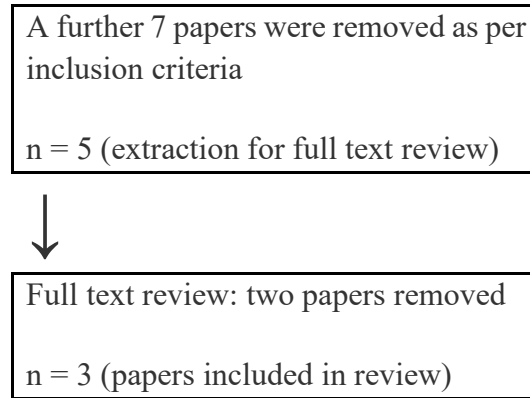
#13	Gao, Y., & Thomas, C.	2021	Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant issue in society, with implications for healthcare workers	Focus on intimate partner violence.
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The team decided that if any of the reviewers had identified the paper to go to the full-text review, a final decision would be made during the full-text review. Five papers were included in a full-text review.

In the following review round, the full texts of potentially eligible studies were screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria and coded as "yes" (i.e., include), "no" (i.e., exclude) or "maybe" (i.e., for discussion). Any differences of opinion were resolved through discussion, and reasons for exclusion were recorded. Of the remaining 12 articles, all three reviewers agreed that papers #1, #5 and #14 should be accepted for a full-text review as they met the research focus. This process is explained in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram detailing searching, screening, extraction and reviewing.





Review and Discussion

Of the 14 papers, three were scholarly works focussed on work-integrated learning (co-op workplaces or professional placement sites), queer theory and people who identify as GSD. The final three papers included for full-text review are listed below and will be summarised directly in relation to the research question posed in the following three sections, respectively. We would like to acknowledge there was a small number of publications that met the review parameters. However, the following three publications provide a useful starting point for this research field within these early stages.

Table 2: Inclusion Justification

Paper Number	Authors	Year	Title
#1	Mallozzi, R., & Drewery, D.	2019	Creating inclusive co-op workplaces: Insights from LGBTQ+ students
#5	Crowhurst, M.	2016	Using a critically aesthetic auto-ethnographic reflective methodology to reflect on a queerly identifying preservice teacher's wish to change her allocated professional placement site
#14	Itano-Boase, M., Wijsingha, R., Cukier, W., Latif, R., & Hon, H.	2021	Exploring diversity and inclusion in work-integrated learning: An ecological model approach

The study by Mallozzi and Drewery (2019) focussed on exploring LGBTQ+ student experiences during their WIL/co-operative education activity within the Canadian context. Mallozzi and Drewery highlighted some key themes that emerged from the eight semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ students, including the negotiation strategies used in the recruitment process, perspectives on inclusion within the workplace and how WIL stakeholders can enhance inclusion. The study notes the lack of research on students who identify as GSD

within the WIL context. Generally, research has concentrated on equitable access for marginalised groups rather than their experiences. The study also highlights that inclusion research on employees who identify as GSD does not adequately address the interpersonal dynamics between students and supervisors during a WIL experience. Of course, the workplace experiences of GSD employees, including discrimination, may indicate the kinds of barriers faced by students.

One of the initial barriers presented to students is whether to bring their authentic selves to the workplace and 'come out' to co-workers. In the study, students found visual symbols, such as the rainbow flag, as indicators of inclusive workplaces, but they felt that the lived experience of the culture is necessary to understand if the workplace is truly inclusive (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019). In particular, experiences of inclusive language practices were considered important (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019). Supervisors were also considered critical enablers in establishing feelings of inclusion (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019). Likewise, academic and professional university staff play a significant role in educating WIL stakeholders on inclusive practices and combating discrimination in the workplace (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019). University staff also have a role in ensuring that their administrative processes and systems support inclusive WIL practices and consider diverse student cohorts. While the study sample size of Mallozzi and Drewery has limitations, the themes are useful for future research to build upon and validate from different cultural contexts.

The second paper by Crowhurst (2016) reports on a critical incident between an academic and a student who identified as queer in Australia. The student expressed that they felt uncomfortable attending the university-organised professional experience (WIL component in teacher education) at a religiously affiliated school. The student confided in the author, a queer ally, that they felt unsafe and uncomfortable as their sexuality was positioned as problematic by the school and religious institution. Unlike in a university context, the student noted that on professional experience, they would be unable to opt-out of harmful situations given the power and assessment dynamic present in WIL. Drawing upon a critically aesthetic auto-ethnographic reflective methodology, this article was designed to generate discussion and professional critique of the institutional arrangements for WIL in place for students who identify as GSD.

The article is framed around critical questions and discussions between the author/academic and the student. Crowhurst (2016) notes that not all the workplaces where students will conduct WIL experience will be safe spaces for students who identify as GSD, and not all workplaces will be supportive of equal opportunity principles. The paper discusses the barriers of the highly regulated and legislative informed space of professional experience and draws upon the university's WIL policy and the equal opportunity legislation to frame the discussion. The paper resulted in the inclusion of a clause into the professional experience handbook, which is shared with students, industry and university staff that states:

All RMIT staff and students who are visiting schools or completing professional placement are expected to work in accordance with the achievement of the International Charter of Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Legislation. All RMIT students and staff who enter workplaces other than RMIT do so on the understanding that they are fully protected by Victorian Equal Opportunity Legislation without exemption (Crowhurst, 2016, p.3).

The final paper by Itano-Boase et al. (2014) focusses on the structural barriers students face in relation to diversity and inclusion in WIL. The Canadian study uses a critical ecological model and mixed-methods approach. Whilst the 'diversity' focus was primarily interested in people with disabilities, Indigenous people and racialised people, the authors acknowledge 4.7% of the WIL applicants (n = 3235) identified as LGBTQ (as per the acronym used in the paper). The authors subsequently discuss some implications for how people who might identify as LGBTQ have difficulty accessing and fully participating in WIL in Canada.

The analysis reveals that LGBTQ participants were subject to both institutional and societal barriers, although the analysis was not deeply interested in exploring the LGBTQ experience. They noted that LGBTQ participants were more likely to be associated with Humanities and Social Science disciplines; the disciplines that are the most difficult to find placement for and sectors that receive little government funding in support for WIL placements. According to employers, recruitment and selection was primarily left to the individual to find a 'good fit', even though most employers noted specific strategies and policies intended to attract and welcome 'diversity'. A variety of commitments to various understandings of diversity for WIL experiences was shared from the employer's perspectives, ultimately revealing limited specific policies and focus for LGBTQ participants. When discussing the study's outcomes, the author acutely notes: "the hiring systems, processes, and supports for WIL students from diverse groups were not organized or well-developed in most cases, and each organization had a different level of commitment" (Itano-Boase et al., 2014, p. 265). The authors conclude that a lack of funding and a one-size-fits-all model for WIL procedures will not be effective.

Conclusion

This review sought to examine the research question: What are the enablers and barriers for higher education institutions engaging in WIL for students who identify as GSD? In response, this article began by outlining the field in recent reports and projects and then explained the systematic review process, resulting in a full review of three papers. We acknowledge the sample size of papers is small, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. However, the small sample size of papers in and of itself highlights that further research is needed in this field.

While the three research papers used different methods and theoretical framings, there were several similarities. Each of the three papers identified structural barriers students who

identify as GSD face in WIL experiences, including administration and university systems and the inherent discrimination in workplaces. Crowhurst (2016) highlights the lived experience by drawing on a student's experience who felt that on WIL they were "not able to be 'out' to others and it would be too stressful to function within an environment where queer sexualities are positioned as problematic" (p. 16). The researchers also identified how workplace discrimination and inequality were a barrier. Mallozzi and Drewery (2019) and Crowhurst (2016) highlighted that this barrier was compounded in a WIL context where power dynamics between universities/industry partners, supervisor/student, performance assessment, and professional reputation add to the complexity. The papers also agreed that enablers included support from key personnel such as academic and university professional staff and the supervisors of students during WIL experiences.

The review processes provided insights into this research field that can inform future direction. First, we concur with Itano-Boase et al. (2014) and Mallozzi and Drewery (2019) that there is limited research on the experiences of students who identify as GSD in WIL placements. While the initial search yielded a potential pool of research, many of the articles were dismissed because of a lack of focus on students who identify as GSD. We believe this equity group has a particular legislative and rights-based needs that justify more attention.

Second, the three articles reviewed were relatively small scale and not longitudinal in scope. For example, the Mallozzi & Drewery (2019) study included a sample size of eight students, and Crowhurst's (2016) paper focussed on an exchange between an academic and one student. While Itano-Boase et al. (2014) research would be considered a larger sample size, the paper conflates equity groups rather than a clear focus on students who identify as GSD.

The review demonstrated that this field is very under-researched. Given the importance of WIL for learning, employment opportunities and engagement with industry, there needs to be a concerted effort to research the experiences of WIL students who identify as GSD and acknowledge the needs of these diverse communities and the barriers they face (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019). Understanding the barriers and enablers of participation and access across disciplines is crucial to inform relevant recommendations and strategies. This aim is important considering the increase in WIL activities in higher education and the potential for students to be excluded from participating in WIL or experiencing negative impacts on placement, affecting career choices and employment outcomes. Therefore, we would call for more substantially funded research, which may involve research that honours the intersectionality of students who identify as GSD. This research may involve more variation in sample sizes to learn more about the breadth from the organisational and individual level. Potential research should be systemic and longitudinal so shifting attitudes, enablers and barriers can be documented. The research in this field needs to illuminate fully the current state of WIL practices, interrogate the hetero-cis-normative assumptions subsumed in policies and practices, and extend the research that enables students who identify as GSD to engage thoroughly in WIL experiences.

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APPENDIX A

The table below provides an overview of the initial search findings and results from the three independent reviewers. Green shading indicates that the publication was included, orange indicates that the publication was excluded in review.

Table 3: Reviewers' Results

Paper Number	Authors	Year	Title	R1	R2	R3
#1	Mallozzi, R., & Drewery, D.	2019	Creating inclusive co-op workplaces: Insights from LGBTQ+ students			
#2	Le, T. T., Le, N. H. G., & Tran, H. V.	2020	Pride and prejudice: An intersectional look at graduate employability of transgender and queer international students			
#3	Osborne, N., & Grant-Smith, D.	2017	Resisting the "employability" doctrine through anarchist pedagogies and prefiguration			
#4	Johinke, R.	2020	Social production as authentic assessment: Wikipedia, digital writing, and hope labour			
#5	Crowhurst, M.	2016	Using a critically aesthetic auto-ethnographic reflective methodology to reflect on a queerly identifying preservice teacher's wish to change her allocated professional placement site			
#6	Robertson, Harris, A., & Baldassar, L.	2018	Mobile transitions: A conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move			
#7	Campbell, A.	2015	Performing cultural heritage: Authenticity and the spirit of rebellion			
#8	Notes on Contributors	2016	The Sociological Review			
#9	Subject index	2019	A current bibliography on African affairs			

Paper Number	Authors	Year	Title	R1	R2	R3
#10	Massey, J., Field, S., & Yolande, C.	2014	Partnering for economic development: How town-gown relations impact local economic development in small and medium cities			
#11	Raby, R.	2020	Introduction (Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education).			
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Work Integrated Learning

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
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