

WIL Evaluation: It Is Both What You Know, and Who “Knows” What, That Matters.

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Abstract

This article examines the complexity of evaluating WIL, in particular the challenges associated with macro-evaluations (large-scale network of stakeholders invested in, varied, multiple approaches to WIL beyond a single program, i.e., across a school/faculty/institution). This paper presents a case study of a bespoke WIL Evaluation, based on the implementation of two critical guiding questions – the “who” and the “what” of WIL. Our version of the what is important as it involved the inclusion of the sum parts of single WIL programs, discipline-specific approaches, as the sum total of course-wide offerings for Faculty-wide reporting. The who in this study involved the pinpointing, recruitment, and engagement of a large-scale, internal and external network of stakeholders invested in WIL, evaluation, and WIL evaluation. The study finds that the who of WIL evaluation is deceptively difficult. One of the ways to ensure relevance is to establish a robust group of stakeholders, to swiftly function as a collaborative network invested in the co-design of an evaluation process for an agreed set of WIL-types. In frame then, for the diverse group, is a mining of pertinent and reliable data, supplemented by expert advice, contributing to a rich understanding of the impact of WIL. The depth and breadth of the who is involved becomes fundamental when diverse WIL types are in frame. The scale of our macro-evaluation approach functions as a microcosm for how others might use a similar double-lens of the who-what to address the complicated process of designing and implementing a WIL evaluation that includes context-sensitive understandings of impact.

Keywords: Work Integrated learning; WIL evaluation, stakeholders, WIL types.

Introduction

This study continues an ongoing action-research investigation into how faculty-wide WIL activities might be framed as an evaluation of WIL, as detailed in the 6W’s of WIL Evaluation (WE) (Young et al., 2023). Upon addressing the Faculty rationale for evaluating WIL - our ‘why’ (Young et al., 2023) two further challenges associated with evaluating WIL are addressed in this paper. The first is the “who” of evaluation (the custodians of WIL and related evaluation data, WIL champions, support staff, policy makers and practitioners); and the second is the “what types” of WIL need to be evaluated. Our first critical guiding question was: “Who needs to be involved?” The “what” guiding question followed, “What is being

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evaluated?” This question was understood as, were there particular WIL-types that needed to be evaluated as part of our macro-evaluation of faculty-wide WIL activities?

This article presents a detailed exploration of the “who” and a summary of the “what” of WE. Whilst this research focused on the “who”, of note is that the identification and engagement of the complete WIL network of stakeholders could only be complete when decisions on what WIL types would be in-scope, meant that a revisiting of the “who” was necessary. Quite plainly, our discovery process was determined to find out who might know what about our diverse WIL offerings. The set parameters of this study were therefore predicated on ascertaining first, who was invested in and expert in WIL across the institution, second, what of our many WIL types should be in frame, and finally, because of this collective evaluation of multiple WIL offerings, who needed to be involved in the reporting and evaluation of the specific and sum total of the types?

This study follows the same action-research approach (ethics approval received) as a previous research-in-progress study (Young et al., 2023), and forms part of a large-scale research-in-progress study called the “Work Integrated Learning Participatory Action Research Project (WIL-PAR)”. The overarching study centred on a bespoke design of a faculty-centric “WIL Evaluation Framework” (WEF). We reported in our first study the importance of each institution finding their “why” for WE (Young et al., 2023). This study also draws on WIL Evaluation Project (WEP) which aimed to produce “a context-specific process for evaluating WIL, informed by existing theory and practice WIL studies” (Young et al., 2023). Both the project and the accompanying studies explore the burgeoning practice of WIL evaluation as it has been developed and practised in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment (SEBE – herein referred to as the ‘Faculty’).

As pointed out by Winchester-Seeto (2019), when it comes to evaluation, it becomes necessary to capture data on, measure, and then celebrate, the quality of each WIL program type. This was not only true for our macro-evaluation approach to WIL across our Faculty, but we also proposed, that within our context, no one set of indicators and measures were likely to be universally useful. We therefore only included in the evaluation, courses where there was a scaffolding of WIL activities culminating in either a placement or an industry-focused capstone. As a result, a mapping of where these WIL-types were occurring across curriculum was vital. In summary, we needed to tackle two interdependent factors – “what WIL-types” were in-scope and “who” was best placed to assist with our examination of the types for the future design of an evaluation that may or may not include those types? This paper addresses who could/should be involved in the design, testing and implementation of an ongoing context-sensitive macro evaluation of WIL. The process of finding out who knows what about WIL-related matters is the second fundamental guiding principle. The guiding question, “who should be involved?” is predicated on a practical query, “who knows what about WIL generally and specifically?” However, while the question appears simple, the discovery piece to seek out who knows what about WIL, is far from straightforward.

Literature Review

There is an absence of universal sector-wide agreement on what (and how) to report on, let alone measure, the impact of WIL. Higher Education (HE) institutions understand the broad value of WIL relative to graduate employability; it is also an important aspect of being an “engaged university” (Clark & Sachs, 2017). However, WIL is not always formally designated as the primary vehicle for enhancing student “employability”. Even if it is, we know that the different WIL types, when scaffolded across the curriculum are affected by non-curricula employability activities in terms of employability outcomes (Jackson & Dean, 2023; Young & Semple, unpublished manuscript, 2023). There is no universal method for enhancing one’s employability and any number of variables could affect one’s achievement and enactment of it (Cranmer, 2006; Harvey et al., 2002).

Studies to date have tended to investigate specific WIL types, single stakeholder viewpoints, discrete discipline areas, and outcomes over process (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Lloyd et al, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017; Young et al., 2023). The literature points to how “micro” WIL evaluations (i.e., of specific WIL types, discrete discipline areas) do not address the broader purpose of WIL, and that single studies are insufficient for reporting of Faculty-wide WIL impact on employability outcomes? A national WIL survey carried out by Universities Australia (2019) highlighted the scale and breadth of WIL in HE, with placement-based WIL being the most common, but certainly by no means, only WIL-type. The national WIL standards do not “prescribe any particular type or model of WIL”, so long as quality and standards are sound, assured, and monitored (TEQSA, 2017: 1-2).

A growing amount of scholarship has demonstrated that WIL is directly aimed at enriching student employability, and that there is a clear relationship between WIL and enhanced student employability (Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), 2015; Ferns et al., 2014; Sachs et al., 2016). This association can be traced back to WIL’s origins, as its objective was to “ensure university students [would be] employable as graduates, [including possession of] the range of capabilities that employers are seeking” (Orrell, 2011, p.8). Patrick et al. (2008) have suggested that WIL’s ability to increase student employability is due to its pedagogy which involves the integration of theory with practice - embedded within curriculum that has been purposefully designed. Examining this in more detail, Jackson (2013) posited that WIL “augments” graduate employability as it enables students to gain confidence through professional practice, to value employability skills, and obtain skills at a higher level than would normally be the case. In the UK and the U.S., WIL and employability have come to be seen as synonymous matters as have career education and employability (Hutcheson, 1999; Yorke, 2006).

While a key objective of WIL might be to enhance graduate employability, the way in which it involves engagement between a variety of stakeholders (e.g. students, partner organisations and host supervisors, professional and academic staff of the university) means that the objectives and outcomes of successful WIL stretch well beyond this (Orrell, 2011, 2018). WIL is never solely an input for, or an outcome of, enhanced employability skills or

even graduate employment outcomes. Examining the specific relationship between WIL and employability and employment outcomes is difficult, but the scholarly research, teaching practices, and reports confirm the degree to which employability – the term, concept, and pedagogical influence – has become embedded within higher education in liberal economies like Australia’s (Tomlinson, 2017). It seems timely then that we begin to postulate whether employability “can actually be measured, and if so, how” (Palmer et al., 2018; see also Jollands, 2016; Stott et al., 2014). The slipperiness of distinctions and definitions of WIL types, renders this a difficult domain for HE institutions to report on, let alone evaluate according to universal indicators. Factor in the life-wide and lifelong learning pursuits that can affect students’ achievement and enactment of enhanced employability (Cranmer, 2006; Harvey et al., 2002) and the complexities of evaluation are clear.

University stakeholders are yet to fully embrace theory and approaches from the discipline of evaluation which could be to the detriment of the sector’s evaluative capacity and subsequent outputs. Although there are guiding principles for evaluation (e.g. Young et al., 2019, 2023), the WEP evidenced, what the literature understands – that staff across the sector, do not yet apply these and/or understand how to evaluate (Cook, 2021, p.228). This is understandable given that wide-spread integration of WIL in higher education has involved relatively recent growth (e.g. in the past 10 years) (Orrell, 2018; Universities Australia, 2019).

For the most part, the literature to date has predominantly included investigations of specific WIL types, single stakeholder viewpoints, discrete discipline areas and outcomes (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Lloyd et al., 2015; Tomlinson, 2017). These studies are informative in explaining the unique ways that stakeholder-groups take part in, seek benefit from, and therefore value WIL (Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), 2015; Fleming, 2013; Patrick et al., 2008). Jackson & Dean’s (2023) large scale study of WIL impact, drawing on National Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) (WIL item) data, spearheads new evidence-based approaches. The GOS survey and the WIL items provide much needed data on WIL participation and the influence of WIL and employability-related activities on graduate outcomes (ACEN, 2022).

Beyond micro-studies of WIL impact, and current and future large-scale studies involving the five WIL items in the GOS, one of the next critical steps for the sector is to determine how an evaluation framework for WIL can support and inform decision-making (Gullickson, 2020). The research to date which includes single stakeholder viewpoints and discrete discipline areas is useful for pinpointing what matters collectively.

Method

While there are differences between research and evaluation - though the two can intersect (Mertens, 2009) - the purpose of our approach to evaluation was to determine views and inform decision-making (Chelimsky, 1996; Gullickson, 2020; Leiber et al., 2015) related to a bespoke evaluation framework. Our framework needed to address if there was reportable

value and impact, because of offering diverse WIL types, on our strategic student employability endeavours (Young et al., 2023).

The research therefore applied a participatory action research (PAR) method for the following reasons:

- Useful mode of provocation for a nebulous and nascent problem not yet comprehensively resolved for our Faculty, or the sector (Young et al., 2023).
- Assures an emphasis on inclusivity (of stakeholders) and collaboration.
- Assumes an iterative process needed when trialling and adopting a process for evaluating large scale (macro) versions of WIL.
- Ensures checkpoint cycles of “plan, observe, act, and reflect” can both call for, and inform, data collection methods to facilitate analyses likely to contribute to an ongoing refinement of a fit-for-purpose WIL Evaluation Framework (WEF).
- Promises an approach for investigating whether employability outcomes can be measured (Palmer et al., 2018).

The WIL-PAR research team, in collaboration with the WEP leadership, designed the study around the key WIL stakeholders of WIL, keeping in mind that whilst many of the participants in the study were also current stakeholders of WIL offerings, many would also be contributors to the outcomes (reporting) of impact of WIL across the Faculty. We therefore needed to know: what mattered to all of them about WIL (Rowe et al., 2018)? To define and resolve this open-ended question, our methodology involved segmenting the ‘who’ of WIL evaluation into 3 key stakeholder groupings (Group 1, 2, 3):

Group 1 – Faculty specific stakeholders

- 1A – the Faculty: those involved in the design, delivery and support of administering WIL processes and partnerships within the Faculty (i.e., teaching and third-space academic staff; professional staff, and curriculum leaders);
- 1B – Our Students: postgraduate, undergraduate, career starters, career advancers, local and international etc;
- 1C – Our Partners: employers, government and industry representatives, placement hosts, recruiters, etc).

Group 2: Data Custodians

- 2A Custodians/owners/designated managers of enterprise-wide data (including WIL data) (these could also be stakeholders in Group 1 or 3).
- 2B -Custodians of local (unit-level) data (including WIL data) (these could also be stakeholders in Group A or C).

Group 3: Policy Makers

- 3A - Stakeholders invested, and interested in, the outcomes and benefits of WIL and/or WE (i.e. Government bodies, accrediting bodies, other institutions, policy maker etc).

To find our “who”, three different techniques for creating a representative group was undertaken (from Groups 1&2):

- Endorsed nominees provided by managers for staff to join the WEP.
- The WEP lead recruited who she knew would be a valuable participant.
- Direct expressions of interest from individuals across the various stakeholder groups approached the WEP lead requesting to participate in the WE Advisory.

The WEP leadership processed the selection of participants for the WE Advisory in two ways:

1. Discussion with nominated individuals (and in some instances with line managers) on their capacity for active contribution.
2. Discussion amongst the WEP Leadership team (and in some instances with line managers), on the capability of participants for value-add contribution according to our ‘why’ and our ‘what’ within our bespoke approach to evaluating WIL.

The final selection of the participants for the study (and the project) was based on the level/extent to which each group (including the sum-total of individuals from that group) indicated their capacity (workload) and capability (expertise) to be involved in any cycle, phase and stage of the evaluation process. We also included a third consideration, and that was an individual’s level of interest in engaging – those with a strong desire to participate were direct enablers of supporting collaborative change.

The WIL-PAR research question that aligned to this investigation of the “who” of WIL was: “R1 - What steps and key considerations enable decisions of who should be involved, and what stakeholder roles and responsibilities are required, during the various stages of operationalising a WIL evaluation framework?”

Findings

In answering our research question, we understood that landing on the “who” (individuals and groups that should be involved in the evaluation) would be heavily persuaded by the “what” (the scale of the evaluation and the types of WIL in scope for evaluation). We were always transparent about our hypothesis, that a continuation of “micro” WIL evaluation approaches (i.e., specific WIL types, single stakeholder viewpoints, discrete discipline areas) would prevent improvements to our understandings and reporting of the breadth and depth of WIL impact on employability outcomes.

In our case, the consequences of deciding not to undertake a micro-evaluation (say for example, only an evaluation of placement-based WIL), even before we landed on the additional WIL types that would eventually be included in the evaluation, significantly influenced the shape of the WEF and this study. Our WIL types brought to the surface the many ways to address the impact of WIL because of the enormous value that context-specific interventions purposed with enhancing student employability can have across an entire course of study.

A major consideration was that the pedagogical practices and the assessment interventions inherent to each type were not always identical. Other specificities of each WIL-type that influence both participation and engagement data included factors such as enrolment in a compulsory versus elective unit offering (as pre-conceived value for the student stakeholder may affect participation rates and also engagement experiences). Consideration of whether the activity was embedded or extra-curricular was an essential factor when comparing the data, as was whether the units were wholly WIL focused versus the WIL experiences that made up a smaller component of the unit.

The following factors pertained to the “what” and our desire to report on and analyse beyond university-level data (enrolment data):

- mine, gather, report on unit-level qualitative and quantitative data.
- detect the changes to, and consequences of, smaller-scale interventions (i.e., individual assessments within WIL unit).

The following factors indicate where the “what” and the “who” converged:

- determine the impact of a single WIL unit in relation to their course-wide student employability learning gains from the student, staff and industry perspective.
- to compare offerings for significant signs of impact.

The last set of factors pertained mostly to the “who” and our desire to enable a collaborative and inclusive process, involving our breadth of practitioners and policy makers who would be of value throughout the evaluation lifecycle (Taut, 2008).

- trial an evaluation framework that considered multiple WIL types in relation to stakeholders’ requirements.
- produce a scalable (and therefore repeatable) process for longitudinal evaluations.

The WEF process of grouping stakeholders into expert areas (as described in detail in the method) reflects the rigour, time and investment needed to even establish a “who” network. Notwithstanding that not all people could remain involved in the WEF long term, operationalising the participant group into the following categories - noting that in some

instances participants might satisfy all of the below - was an invaluable exercise for gathering the right tribe for our project and the research:

- who has the capability (expertise) to contribute to the bespoke approach?
- who has the capacity (workload) to contribute to key phases of the WEF?
- who is an enabler for effective contribution?

The process of discovery (for enabling and active participants) ensures that while some individuals may perhaps be initially obscure, the discovery of the sum-total of all participants is an outcome of the action-research itself.

The WEP revolved around the underpinning ethos that the project needed to operate in consultation not isolation. As such, the establishment of a collaborative network, identified from the onset as being instrumental for providing contextual considerations and possible iterative refinements to the WE framework, was fundamental to enlivening our action-research methodology. Both the formal engagement of diverse stakeholder groups (e.g. staff, students, and partners invited to take part in the WE Advisory) and the informal knowledge sharing sessions (e.g. individual staff members, established university leadership groups, or Faculty-specific team discussions), involved far more than an identification and establishment of stakeholder groups. It involved more than the need and fulfilment of regular meetings for the network. A bilateral knowledge sharing was critical so that the WEP could inform its stakeholders of ideas, actions and operational directions taken, but also for WEP members to gain direct access and respond to, context sensitive feedback provided by the stakeholders of specialist areas. Stakeholders needed to feel they were acknowledged and duly engaged in their expert practice areas, but also knowledge and practices elsewhere. This supported our data collection which was needed to ensure we were gaining institution-wide insights to support the development of a co-designed, fit-for-purpose, meaningful set of evaluative tools for the institution.

The WEF evaluation highlights what was evident to the WEP leadership, which was that a wide and extensive collaborative network was necessary for beginning a macro-evaluation process. Indeed, it has been expressed that there are many benefits to be reaped when all stakeholders involved in higher education activities work in “partnership” (Alves et al., 2010; Healey et al., 2014; Temmerman, 2018). For us, we took very seriously the knowledge that “partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself” (Healey et al., 2014), and all who participate have the potential to benefit from the collaboration.

We discovered that the “who” guiding question was best explored as a series of questions, not just who needs to be involved, has the capability or capacity to contribute to specific phases of the WEF, but also who can be formally designated as being accountable for the sum of parts? First, it is prudent to identify who the stakeholders are (Bryson et al., 2011; Glenaffric, 2007). Following identification, it is also prudent to ensure all stakeholders understand both evaluation as a process, distinct from research, as well as the commitment and

conditions employed to facilitate effective collaboration (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Greene, 2000; Wallace & Alkin, 2008).

The second round of inclusion of WIL stakeholders played an important role in the credibility of our approach to WE. All priorities, which varied based on WIL practitioners' lived experiences and Faculty/Institutional strategy, were able to be placed inside the framework once the WIL types were prioritised and decided. While the timing and resourcing of this was more than anticipated, the lengthy and detailed discussions amongst stakeholders were pivotal for determining what mattered collectively. This speaks to the fact that "collecting data from multiple stakeholders across the whole institution provides a unique opportunity to measure outcomes on a large scale, as well as the ability to drill down to assess which program components are the most effective and for whom" (Rowe et al., 2018, p. 280).

The following is a summary of the steps we took to refine the who and overarching what for our WEF. The first step to operationalising guiding question #2 (who should be involved) for our team involved acquiring institutional acknowledgement and support (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). As a matter of professional standard, the project undertook a resource analysis of the range of individuals and groups invested in WIL in SEBE and Deakin, as well as those likely to be affected by an evaluation (Yarbrough et al., 2010). Next steps involved an education piece to inform the stakeholders involved in WE, that while evaluations of WIL are critical component of good practice WIL (Sachs et al., 2016), it is a significant endeavour in and of itself, and is best approached as a microcosm of WIL:

1. Stakeholder-wide inclusion of individual understandings of WIL.
2. Identify and acknowledge the typical and diverse (positive and negative) outcomes of WIL.
3. Agreement on working definitions of WIL and related terms (i.e., employability).
4. Classified WIL-types according to dimensions, activities and program applications.
5. Shared horizon scanning documents (i.e., WIL-specific studies) to provide insight into micro evaluations.
6. Identified the types of WIL interventions that should be in scope (and why).
7. Identifies the types of WIL that would be out of scope (and why).
8. Identified individuals who had accountability for and/or were custodians of specific data.
9. Revisited our why and the importance of WE more generally for the sector.
10. Refined the process of evaluation based on items above.
11. Revisited and refined the sub-guiding questions pertaining to the 'who' and 'what'.
12. Signpost the possible future methods and indicators (how and when) of the data - including institutional, faculty-level, school-level, unit level data considerations.

13. Report to WE Advisory Group on project deliverables (traffic light system) for this stage of the WEP.

The WEP set a series of deliverables. The first deliverable was to: “Establish collaborative network and engage with diverse stakeholders (e.g. staff, students, and partners) for the purposes of co-designing evaluative tools, as well as piloting, implementing, and refining the framework.” The details of this specific deliverable are presented below, as they inform the actions taken when addressing the who and the what of WE (see below in Table 1). Deliverable 1 also addressed our overarching research question (R1) pertaining to the steps and considerations for who should be involved in the evaluation process (including the participant roles and responsibilities).

Table 1: WEF Deliverable 1 – the who of WIL Evaluation.

Deliverable 1: Establish collaborative network and engage with diverse stakeholders (e.g. staff, students, and partners) for the purposes of co-designing evaluative tools, as well as piloting, implementing, and refining the framework					
Project focus	Measure of Success	Barriers/considerations	Enablers	Associated factors	Sample actions
WE Advisory	Establishment of WE Advisory - active collaborative network.	Deakin Re-imagined affecting membership and capacity; how best to engage without burdening needs continuous thought.	Advisory members	Gatekeepers & Decision-Makers; Governance; L&T Practices; Methodology & Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Partners; Staff; Strategy; Students; Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of membership (including students, alumni, and partners) and establishment of representative stakeholder-wide group by end of 2021. • Meetings to enable updates and consultation on the work of the project. • Engage the expertise and feedback of members as part of co-designing the WEF and its tools. • Seek feedback on WEF and the content of its tools
Engagement with executive and university leadership	Regular and as required meetings with work progressing on basis of executive support or feedback as appropriate; institution-wide matters receive institutional support.	Deakin Re-imagined affecting capacity and availability, as well ability to strategize or integrate within day-to-day business; goals to be revisited where necessary.	EXEC; ADTL	Accreditation; Data; Data Management; Ethics; Gatekeepers & Decision-makers; Governance; Government; L&T Practices; Legalities; Methodology & Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Partners; Policy and Procedure; Reputation; Research; Resourcing; Scholarship; Staff; Strategy; Students; Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updates to FACULTY ADTL and seek input, involvement, and influence. • Consult with the EXEC to ensure institutional awareness, alignment, and support as needed. • Seek assistance from executive and leaders as regards introductions to relevant staff and projects within the university. • Collaborate on ways of integrating elements of the WEF into the day-to-day business and governance of the University. • Ensure high-level guidance and support for work associated with the WEF, especially where it might require changes to existing practices and/or policies. • Identify and secure resourcing as required. • Seek feedback on strategically significant matters (e.g. WEF, tools, issues, etc.)
Strategy Executive and WE project members	Strategy Executive members well-informed re: WEP as part of a broader, collective effort.	Strategy Executive meetings are limited & spaced out. Ensure synergies are identified & collaboration facilitated.	Strategy Executive members & respective projects	Gatekeepers & Decision-makers; Governance; L&T Practices; Operational Business; Outcomes; Research; Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the project as regards contributions to the strategy. • Inform refinements to the strategy based on learning made possible through project. • Acquire awareness and understanding of other strategy projects. • Identify synergies and cross-over between WE and other strategy projects.

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Project focus	Measure of Success	Barriers/considerations	Enablers	Associated factors	Sample actions
Faculty WIL Team	Partner and student feedback made readily accessible and illustrated for staff; professional development supported.	Deakin Re-imagined, staff availability/capacity affecting planning; a number of issues with evaluation practices and data identified by MIS399 students.	FACULTY WIL Team members – especially those in more senior roles	Data; Data Management; Gatekeepers & Decision-makers; Governance; L&T Practices; Legalities; Methodology & Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Partners; Policy & Procedure; Resourcing; Staff; Strategy; Students; Systems; Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascertain current evaluation practices and data reporting needs as well as aspirations. • Assist with data cleaning, analytics, and dashboard creation. • Explore how evaluation can become a shared process that is integrated within day-to-day business. • Identify tools that can support staff in their engagement with evaluation practices and data • Collaborate on mapping FACULTY WIL operations for benchmarking purposes. • Illustrate ways evaluation might support work.
WIL unit academic staff and Course Directors	Staff feel they are acknowledged and being duly engaged; WEP operates in consultation not isolation.	Deakin re-imaged could affect capacity and availability; how best to engage without burdening needs continuous thought.	FACULTY WIL Unit Convenors, FACULTY Course Directors	Data; Data Management; Ethics; Gatekeepers & Decision-makers; L&T Practices; Methodology & Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Partners; Policy and Procedure; Reputation; Research; Scholarship; Staff; Strategy; Students; Systems; Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand existing evaluation practices and data. • Collaborate and seek feedback on the design of WEF tools (e.g. WIL unit review form, etc.) • Consult on approaches to embedding evaluation within units and across courses. • Identify evaluation, data needs - corresponding research projects, and evaluation aspirations. • Collaborate on mapping FACULTY WIL operations/academic functions for benchmarking. • Illustrate ways evaluation might support work.
WIL and HE networks	FACULTY's WEP developed relative to, and inclusive of, scholarship, knowledges, and practices elsewhere.	Networking can take precious time away from work that needs to be done internally and should be managed carefully	ACEN, HES, individual colleagues	Accreditation; Data; Data Management; Ethics; Government; L&T Practices; Legalities; Methodology and Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Policy & Procedure; Research; Scholarship; Staff; Strategy; Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in forums (e.g. ACEN, HES, Deakin WIL, etc) and discuss information presented with stakeholders as relevant • Consult with and learn from the experiences of colleagues at other universities re: WIL evaluation. • Connect with internal and external HE staff who have developed and/or published relevant resources where further dialogue would be of assistance.

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Project focus	Measure of Success	Barriers/considerations	Enablers	Associated factors	Sample actions
WE Team	Team achieves deliverables effectively and as possible based on productive collaboration.	Deakin re-imagined, non-WE workload, resourcing, and illness can have impact on productivity for the small team; review of goal posts and priorities necessary throughout.		Data; Data Management; Ethics; Gatekeepers and Decision-makers; Governance; L&T Practices; Methodology & Indicators; Operational Business; Outcomes; Partners; Policy and Procedure; Research; Resourcing; Scholarship; Staff; Strategy; Students; Systems; Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review scholarly publications and background information to have a clear understanding of contexts such as FACULTY, WIL@Deakin, FACULTY WIL, institutional strategy, policy etc. • Continuously identify key stakeholders with whom to engage and connect with. • Set and document actions and tasks necessary to carry out deliverables. • Provide supervision and learning support to IBL student. • Flag ongoing resourcing needs to and explore opportunities for student partners. • Undertake succession planning for the project and implement measures as needed. • Meet on a regular basis to ensure effective project management and success. • Facilitate collaboration and co-design practices. • Report on the WE Project and the WEF within that to relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Discussion

Our pilot found that the design of a context-sensitive WEF for our Faculty needed to reflect on the degree to which stakeholder collaboration in evaluation might have an effect on outcomes (Wallace & Alkin, 2008). When we set about including in our WE stakeholder group, the practitioners of WIL, the policy makers, and also those that were invested in evaluation generally, we saw the value in bringing “behind the scenes” players into the centre of the process (McRae & Johnston, 2016). It meant that the data retrieval and analyses became a collective endeavour, and all contributed in different ways to the eventual design of our WEF.

We found that those that have the capability (i.e., expertise) and capacity (i.e., workload) and are assigned as being accountable for evaluating WIL outcomes, are sometimes, but not always, involved in the direct delivery of WIL. An expansive network of stakeholders, beyond the obvious WIL-centric roles, but those who may have a vested interest in the inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the reporting of it, was evident in our study. We noted a delineation between the stakeholders who “caused” an impact, as well as those for whom the impact was felt (i.e., effect). Who is involved in WIL (and the evaluation of it), who the evaluation is for, and who the evaluation is of, are valuable categories that are useful for structuring considerations of faculty/institution-wide WIL interventions. Evaluation is a rich and diverse landscape and investigating how to even begin rigorously evaluating the breadth and depth of WIL offerings for an institution/faculty requires resolve and resources.

In short, our key finding is that for macro-evaluations of WIL, a reframing a common saying is best expressed as: “It is both what you know, and who ‘knows’ what, that matters in WE”. From this, a series of unexpected, but significant, reflections arose:

- When designing a macro-evaluation (as opposed to single smaller scale studies), the institutional/faculty-wide context and understanding of impact is a complex, but critical consideration.
- Establishing and engaging with the necessary and appropriate stakeholders of WIL, as well as the custodians of the WIL data, was deceptively difficult.
- The diversity of our faculty-wide and program-centric WIL processes and practices contributed to the complexity of mining and reporting on what mattered most for our key stakeholders. Notwithstanding, the discovering that some unit data- pertaining to partners for example, or even anecdotal evidence- was held locally. This confirmed the associated shortcomings of reporting on WIL (Business Higher Education Roundtable, 2016).
- The “who” of evaluation needed to involve 2 cycles (pre and post establishment of the what of WE); those initially identified as knowing about WIL, WIL evaluation, and/or evaluation generally; those who had expert insight into the refined set of WIL types chosen as in-scope for the WEF.

Our vested interest in producing a macro-evaluation of WIL; multi-dimensional WIL types that incorporated feedback of all stakeholders (Smith, 2014) resulted in a richer WIL landscape, namely because the WEP enabled an unintended form of capacity building for many. The resourcing of champions and experts, including the systems that support those involved in WIL and the process of evaluating it, for us became front and centre by revisiting time and time again the “who” of a WEF. The who became our spearhead for enabling “the ongoing improvement of practice, process and outcomes based on meaningful reflection on the collected data and experiences” (Taylor et al., 2009 in Campbell et al, 2020).

This is why we argue that while macro-evaluations of WIL, involving a complex network of stakeholders was deceptively difficult, it was indeed vastly valuable. The engagement of all stakeholders who might have incidental, through to detailed, and even expert, insight into WIL has highlighted the much-needed conversation that investigating the impact of WIL, whilst complicated, is crucial. We note that the interdependency between the multiplicity of WIL offerings and the vast network of stakeholders involved, rendered this process deceptively difficult but positively powerful for our Faculty. Grappling with the impact of the multiple WIL types, in relation to each other, was an ambitious undertaking, but a worthwhile concern given our strategy was to ensure students, who experience employability across an entire course, have multiple opportunities to engage in WIL.

Our hypothesis, that a move away from ‘micro’ WIL evaluation approaches (i.e., specific WIL types, single stakeholder viewpoints, discrete discipline areas) would enable improvements to Faculty-wide understandings of WIL impact has been proven in our case because of the sheer volume of insight gleaned from our expert participants in the study. Such an approach may also be true and advantageous for sector-wide reporting of institution-sensitive reporting of WIL innovations.

Getting the “who” part of setting up a WEF right, reminded us again, that WE is an extensive enterprise. For us, WE involved both the obvious stakeholders involved in the WIL activity/program/type, and additional stakeholders responsible for, and expert in, big data systems, evaluation and reporting. We found firsthand, as pointed out in the literature, that successful WIL ventures are contingent on integration within a university’s day-to-day business (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008).

Conclusion

Whilst the findings and discussions were not intended to directly respond to broader debates relating to the possible indicators and measures for universal WE models, our case study does function as a microcosm for the premeditations necessary when considering what to consider when measuring WIL impact, particularly as the what will directly impact “who” needs to be involved in an evaluation. Diverse WIL and its expansive stakeholder groups, will play a significant role in the future of evaluation, as seen by the Australian HE sector’s prioritisation, and by the critical conversations led by ACEN (2023), of possible ways for measuring WIL impact.

We argue that practice-based understandings of the who-what double lens is vital for those contributing to the debates when there is a collective onus on setting quality standards and indicators of success for WIL. The prelude described promises to be invaluable for institutions planning for an adaptation of reporting and an adoption of context-sensitive institutional evaluation of WIL. Our lived experience insights on the steps taken when designing an evaluation enveloping wide-scale multiple WIL activities/programs for large-scale stakeholder groups, exhibits the critical factors involved in a macro-evaluation. The challenges associated with, and the means for addressing ever-increasing wicked problems, provides options beyond single studies of WIL.

We conclude from the evidence of the “who-what” of our WE case study, that the intersecting double-lens provides a pithy means for satisfactorily prying open ways to report on context-specific iterations of WIL, whilst also building insight into how to collectively measure what matters for most. This paper also anticipates a transferability of our theory to practice approach, to ignite similar studies across other contexts. This study therefore contributes to the paucity of practice-led trials of macro-evaluation approaches to WIL. As the scholarship and practice of WE are relatively nascent, there is much to learn about the why, how, when, where, but in particular for WIL, the who-what, when evaluating diverse WIL offerings.

In WE, discovering what you know, and who “knows” what, is a critical step toward improving WIL operations, understanding of stakeholder needs and benefits, curriculum innovations and enhanced capacity and expertise for all involved. As such, by presenting the parameters of a context-specific WEP, focusing on the interdependency of “the who” with the “what-types” of WIL, and framed by the related guiding questions of WIL evaluation (Young et al., 2023), lessens the burden somewhat of a deceptively difficult challenge of WE. The double-lens of the who-what provides greater rigour to the growing call for context-sensitive understandings of WIL impact.

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in Practice

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