WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) refers to diverse approaches to learning which bring together the theory of a discipline with its relevant work practice, using a specifically designed curriculum. The practice of WIL in various forms in engineering, health and education is well developed, with relatively long histories of collaboration between Australian workplaces and universities.

This resource offers some advice on the benefits and challenges for employers participating in WIL in the discipline of information technology. This is a field, where students are expected to exhibit work-readiness when they graduate, but where the traditions of WIL are less well defined. The resource commences with some characteristics of effective WIL supervisors and industry mentors and proceeds to identify more specific, discipline-linked characteristics of information technology.

AN EFFECTIVE WIL SUPERVISOR AND INDUSTRY MENTOR IN GENERAL:

- asks the students lots of questions;
- seeks explanation from the student on specific points of detail;
- encourages the students to analyse workplace interactions;
- requests evaluations of how effectively work tasks are performed;
- discusses effective interpersonal skills involved in work interactions;
- checks the student’s knowledge and understanding;
- links practical knowledge with theoretical ideas;
- verbalises problem-solving and practical thinking processes.
SOME KEY POINTS ABOUT WIL IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

**BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS:**
- IT students can perform industry standard projects such as creating or revitalising a website, developing databases, developing i-phone/i-pad applications, devising new software.
- IT students can develop elements of corporate identity and multimedia presentations for a business making it more visible in the marketplace.
- IT students are analytical, can trouble-shoot technical problems and are also painstaking in attending to detail and finding solutions.

**HOW EMPLOYERS CAN ASSIST:**
IT students undertake WIL in the form of industry projects, virtual projects and placements and collaborative and multidisciplinary enterprises in industry with students from other disciplines.

**INDUSTRY/EMPLOYER GUIDANCE IS NEEDED IN THE FORM OF:**
- Advising on project topics of interest and value to industry.
- Supplying feedback on project scoping, project management and project evaluation.
- Communication of knowledge about processes of workforce collaboration.
- Advice about practices of effective communication in the virtual world.
- Introduction to professional ethics and relevant professional networks.