PRACTICAL LEARNING
STUDENT GUIDE

Faculty of Business,
Economics and Law
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Work Integrated Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Experience Based Learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of WIL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How students can get involved</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement assessment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement preparation Stage 1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives to achieve</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During placement Stage 2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After placement Stage 3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful links</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practical Learning

La Trobe University’s Strategic Plan (*Future Ready in 2017*) and the Faculty Operational Plan support the delivery of learning that engages students in the real world and allows them to link learning achieved at university with real world problems and challenges.

Professional accrediting and non-accrediting bodies also endorse the need for such learning as a way to better prepare students for the workforce they will enter upon graduation.

The Faculty offers a variety of practical learning opportunities to students designed to give them a competitive edge on the job market. These are classified as Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or Experience Based Learning opportunities (ExBL).

**WHAT IS WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING?**

WIL is the integration of educational theory and workplace experience. Simply put, WIL is about placing students in a workplace in order to apply knowledge learned at university in a real workplace.

**WHAT IS EXPERIENCE BASED LEARNING?**

This type of learning allows students to explore theory based concepts in a way that is relevant to real industry problems. However, ExBL does not necessarily occur in the workplace. For example simulations, guest lecturing and field visits are scenarios that facilitate ExBL without being in the workplace.

The Faculty of Business, Economics and Law participates in a variety of WIL and ExBL elements.
EXAMPLES OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

PRACTICUM SUBJECTS
Practicum subjects involve students spending a defined amount of time within a workplace for educational purposes, i.e. students will be expected to complete assessment based on their experience in the workplace and will generally spend between 100–200 hours in the workplace. The Faculty offers a broad range of practicum options to students. Involvement in practicum subjects can be a cost effective method for employers to deliver business solutions.

INDUSTRY PROJECT
An industry project will have a set timeline in which to complete a task. Ultimately, students will utilise skills around planning, organising and managing resources within a practical business setting, working on a project related to the discipline of study. Many organisations are able to introduce new projects and complete existing projects with the added student resource. Time spent on industry projects may vary and is as negotiated between student and host.

INTERNSHIPS
An internship enables a student to be placed in a workplace as a temporary and supervised employee, receiving on the job training within their chosen profession while still attending university. Internship structures vary and may be completed in block mode (5 days per week) over the period of a few weeks or 1-2 days per week over a few months. Depending on the workplace, internships may be paid or unpaid. Internships are a great way to introduce fresh ideas into the team and increasingly result in ongoing employment arrangements between students and industry partners. Students can also use internships to gain academic credit via practicum subjects. As mentioned above, depending on the practicum subject, the hours required are between 100–200.

SERVICE LEARNING
Service learning is a method of teaching that combines formal instruction with a related service in the community. This teaching method integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Through service learning, university students use what they learn in the classroom to solve real life problems. They not only learn the practical applications of their studies, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Service learning is becoming increasingly popular across Australian universities as it allows students to give back to their local communities whilst also meeting course placement requirements and providing personal and professional development.

EXAMPLES OF WIL SUBJECTS IN THE FACULTY
- Accommodation Operations Management THS2AOM
- Accounting Practicum ACC3AWP
- Clinical Legal Education LAW2CLE
- Food and Beverage Services THS1FBS
- Hospitality Enterprise Management THS2HEM
- Human Resources Management Practicum MGT3HRP
- Integrated Management Project MGT3IMP
- Legal Practice and Conduct LAW4LPP
- Marketing Practicum MKT3MPR
- Public Interest Law Practice LAW2PLP
- Rural and Regional Issues in Justice LAW2RRJ
- Sentencing Law Policy and Practice LAWSLP
- Special Topics in Tourism, Hospitality and Events THS3TTH
- Sport Practicum MGT3SPR
- Sustainable Community Events THS3SCE
- Volunteer Management MGT3SVM
EXAMPLES OF EXPERIENCE BASED LEARNING

INDUSTRY RELATED LEARNING
This refers to teaching practices which relate the learning experience of the students to the skills and knowledge of the relevant industry. Industry related learning can occur with or without direct contact with the industry. Examples of industry related experiences with industry contact include guest lectures. Examples of industry related learning without industry contact include the use of case studies.

MENTORING/SHADOWING
Refers to a personal developmental relationship where a more experienced person in industry helps a less experienced person such as a student. Experience, skills and a desire to help are among the most valuable assets in a mentoring relationship rather than age or title. Mentoring in business organisations can be an informal or formal process. Shadowing is a common form of ExBL utilised by the School of Law in the Judicial Mentoring Program.

SIMULATION LEARNING
Simulations seek to copy a real life work place or work project in terms of its tasks and culture in a simulated exercise where students replicate real world operations and conduct themselves within that environment, only within the university learning environment. Marketing for Sustainability is an example of a simulation within the marketing discipline.

GUEST LECTURES
Normally guest lectures are chosen because they are considered an expert in their field. The student learning experience will be enhanced because the guest lecturer brings added knowledge and a different perspective to the discipline, than what is taught during normal lecture or tutorial time. Guest lecturing is frequently implemented across a range of programs in the Faculty.

PROBLEM BASED LEARNING
With problem based learning, students may work in teams or as an individual. Thinking laterally and communicating with peers, this approach to learning teaches the students to work through problems together. The problems that are introduced to the students are generally problems they may encounter in the workplace.

STUDY TOURS AND FIELD VISITS
Study tours and field visits allow students to observe and ask questions of professional and industry practitioners in the workplace, i.e. this activity allows students to have an authentic learning experience that links theory with practice. It also provides a link between the student and the profession that often is not available in the classroom. Study tours, particularly those conducted overseas allow for a block mode approach while field visits built into the curriculum take place over the period of a semester or more.

EXAMPLES OF ExBL SUBJECTS IN THE FACULTY
- Event Planning THS3EOP
- HRM International Study Tour MGT3HRT
- International Accounting Study Program ACC3IAS
- International Management Business Study Tour MGT3IBT
- International Marketing Study Tour MKT3MST
- International Tourism THS3INT
- Marketing for Sustainability MKT3SUS
- Service Operations Management THS3SOM
- Sport Management Project THS3SMP
- Travel and Tour Operations THSITTO
- Wine Tourism Marketing THS3WTM
BENEFITS OF WIL

Feedback from industry indicates that graduates with exposure to industry via WIL or ExBL practices are more aware of workplace culture and expectations.

Not only does involvement in WIL and ExBL make students more employable, it also helps them to make decisions about future career options.

It is a proven fact – just getting a degree is not enough anymore, employers want people who can add value to their organisations! WIL provides the opportunity for students to differentiate themselves and to demonstrate the potential value they can add to a prospective employer’s organisation.

OTHER BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

WIL
- Expanding industry networks
- Increasing chances of finding employment quickly after graduation
- Depending on the industry, securing a part time or casual job to complement studies, e.g. Hospitality and Tourism students who complete placement as part of their studies may be offered ongoing casual work with their host organisation
- Developing soft skills such as interpersonal writing and communication, teamwork, leadership and time management
- Developing professional skills in a chosen field under the guidance of a mentor

ExBL
- Evidencing the practical application of the theory learnt during course
- Gaining clarity about future career direction, i.e. students who are exposed to industry practice via experience based learning often find their chosen industries are different to expectations
- The opportunity to work on ‘real’ industry standard projects
- Personal development – build confidence through working with a range of people from varying levels of seniority
- Enhancing resumes, developing portfolio
EXPECTATIONS

Expectations of students involved in ExBL will significantly differ from those engaged in WIL (some form of industry placement).

STUDENTS IN WIL
• Be punctual and appropriately presented – if in doubt about dress code, ask the host!
• Undertake placement in a professional and responsible manner, in line with the standards of the organisation they are working for and remember they are representing La Trobe University
• Make an active contribution to the organisation hosting their placement
• Get involved in the culture of the organisation
• Further develop their knowledge of the organisation/industry in which they are undertaking placement
• Use the opportunity to expand industry networks
• Seek feedback from host regarding progress while on placement
• Contact the WIL or Subject Coordinator in regards to any issues that arise in the workplace or concerns they may have
• Maintain and adhere to OH&S regulations.

STUDENTS IN ExBL
• Treat ExBL activities as an opportunity to learn more about their chosen industry, even though they may not be taking place in an industry setting
• Reflect on how course theory relates to the experience based learning activity
• Ask questions of industry staff if applicable, i.e. not all experience based learning activities will involve industry representatives; for example, case studies, simulations etc. Examples of experience based learning activities where students have the opportunity to engage with industry include field trips and guest lectures
• Make the most of opportunities presented.

STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN WIL OR ExBL SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF ALL OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED TO THEM.
La Trobe University annually renews an insurance policy which covers students who are on unpaid placements. Please see below for further details.

**FOR STUDENTS UNDERTAKING PLACEMENTS AS PART OF THEIR STUDIES**

- The Insurance Policies to Protect Students document will explain what kind of insurance coverage is provided for student undertaking unpaid placements: [latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students](latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students)
- Students who are paid for WIL activities are not covered under the university insurance policy. In this instance students will need to ensure that the organisation they are working with has insurance that will cover them while on placement.
- Please note there are particular insurance forms that should be used, dependant on the placement arrangement. The Unit or WIL Coordinator will advise students of the appropriate paperwork for their placement.

**FOR STUDENTS UNDERTAKING PLACEMENTS OUTSIDE THEIR STUDIES**

- Students who are undertaking their own independent placement outside of course requirements can still be covered under La Trobe’s insurance. Complete the Students on Work Placement form and return to the Career Development Centre as instructed on the form: [latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students](latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students)
- This form may be used for both unpaid placement as part of studies and unpaid placements that are not part of a student’s studies. However, please note that even placements undertaken outside a student’s course must still have some relevance to their discipline area for the universities insurance to cover them.
HOW STUDENTS CAN GET INVOLVED

Academics

Students who have been given this learning guide are already enrolled in a subject that involves placement. Students should speak with their Course Coordinator to find out what further opportunities exist within their course to engage in WIL and ExBL activities.

A member of the Student Services team on Level 2 of the Donald Whitehead Building can tell students how to get in touch with their Course Coordinator. Every course within the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law will contain some elements of experience based learning and many will also provide students with the opportunity to engage in WIL.

Secondly, contact a member of the WIL Team listed opposite.

WIL team

Marnie Long
Accounting, Event Management, Hospitality Management, Sport Management and Tourism Management
T +61 3 9479 6795
F +61 3 9479 1484
E marnie.long@latrobe.edu.au
latrobe.edu.au/fbel

Gail Quirk
Economics, Finance, HRM, Law, Marketing and Management
T +61 3 9479 6796
F +61 3 9479 1484
E g.quirk@latrobe.edu.au
latrobe.edu.au/fbel
Graduates talk about WIL and ExBL Learning at La Trobe University

“YOU GET TO SEE HOW THINGS WORK IN REAL LIFE, YOU MAKE CONTACTS AND MEET NEW PEOPLE.”

**ELISSA RONTANI**

**Bachelor of Business (Tourism and Hospitality Management) Graduate**

Elissa Rontani graduated from La Trobe University in 2010. The Bachelor of Business degree, majoring in Tourism and Hospitality Management provided her with a number of opportunities to gain industry experience.

Elissa recalls some of her experiences, “One of the subjects I completed was Accommodation Operations Management. In this subject I worked at Rydges Hotel in their housekeeping department for one week. I also had the opportunity to work for 50 hours in the food and beverage department at Sofitel, where I then continued to work for another three years throughout the duration of my degree.

In another subject, Tourism Venture Planning (TVP), I had a charity which was the Cancer Council in my case, and had to organise a fund raising event for them. The event was called ‘Spice for Life’ and we raised $9000 for the Cancer Council.

This was a rare opportunity to gain experience in planning and facilitating and to see the event progress from start to finish was really rewarding. The effort put in by all the students was extremely high with the entire TVP class raising $23,000 for the Cancer Council.

Elissa went on to work as a project assistant as a project assistant for conferencing company Arinex and credits her experiences in the Experience Based Learning programs at La Trobe for assisting her in gaining her first job after university. Elissa makes the comment “It prepared and equipped me for the workplace and helped me to put what I was learning into practice.”

Elissa thoroughly enjoyed her time at La Trobe, not only being able to participate in practical learning programs but she also recalls the social community, meeting new people, and commends the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law for their assistance to students saying “It felt like you had your own personal service.”

Elissa’s goal is to progress to a Project Manager at Arinex and one day coordinate major conference events.

“When applying for a job in the interview process, employers ask you questions like what challenges you’ve faced and what motivates you and the majority of my answers came from my practical learning experiences.”

Elissa Rontani
Bachelor of Business (Tourism and Hospitality Management) Graduate
Lori Campagnolo
Bachelor of Business (Tourism and Hospitality Management) Graduate
Lori Campagnolo, a past student of La Trobe University, participated in Experience Based Learning during her studies and comments on how it helped her excel in her career. Lori currently works for Moonee Valley Racing Club as a Human Resources Advisor and firmly believes that her positive experiences with the ExBL program are what helped her to achieve her career goals.

Lori remembers her time spent at La Trobe quite fondly. Some of her best memories were of being able to make new friends and participate in enjoyable classes as well as the stimulating learning environment of the University itself. The main highlight of Lori’s learning experience was being able to co-ordinate a significant fund raising event for a charity organisation as part of one of her subjects.

When Lori completed her Bachelor degree in Tourism and Hospitality she was able to participate in practical learning and industry engagement during her studies. Lori recalls “I spent one month working Wednesday’s at the Como Hotel and one day of housekeeping at the Westin Hotel as well as organising a fund raiser for the Cancer Council.”

Lori firmly believes that her participation in the ExBL program assisted her in securing her first job. Lori was able to learn about certain aspects of working in a hotel, experience she would not have had if she did not participate in these practical learning activities. She also jokes “It gets you out of lectures” but more importantly “You get to see how things work in real life, you make contacts and meet new people. The most positive aspect of the ExBL program was being able to organise the fund raising event for the Cancer Council from start to finish. It was such an amazing experience.”

Lori hopes to remain in HR over the years to come and maybe even become the HR director one day.

Owen Woodall
Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management) Graduate
Owen Woodall has completed his Bachelor of Business degree majoring in Human Resources. Throughout his last semester, Owen participated in the HR Practicum subject and completed his placement at Darebin City Council.

Commenting on his experiences, Owen says “The best thing about the practicum was being put in a position where you are thrown in the deep end and out of your comfort zone. It also allows you to see what skills you need and how these skills can translate to work. There are a million reasons why it’s good!”

One of the most positive aspects of working with Darebin City Council for Owen was that upon the completion of his placement, he was offered casual work in their HR department which also allowed him to further his skills after the completion of his studies.

Owen then went on to work full-time at Connections Uniting Care as a graduate in HR and solely credits the ExBL program and his placement for helping him to achieve this position. “The practicum taught me new skills and how to network, so I got the interview at Connections because of a colleague at Darebin City Council knowing employees there.”

Evidently, practical learning has been of great benefit to Owen and he strongly recommends participation to future students who have the opportunity to likewise carry out practical learning throughout their studies.

Louisa Bisby
Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) Graduate
Among the things Louisa enjoyed about her time at La Trobe, the highlight was being able to participate in practical learning and industry engagement via the Sport Practicum. This subject enabled Louisa to spend some time completing a university placement at VicSport. Commenting on the benefits of completing this program, Louisa recalls some of the roles and responsibilities of working at VicSport such as assisting with planning and organising workshops. The program also aided Louisa in developing her communication skills and assisted in developing an understanding of how different operators work.

Louisa went on to work as a Game Development Officer at Melbourne Heart Football Club and credits her industry experience at VicSport for helping her to achieve this position. Louisa adds “The placement gives you a real insight into the expectations required of you before entering the sports industry.”
This will vary depending on the subject. One common element across all placements, regardless of which subject you are enrolled in, is the importance of reflection.

See The Learning Centre UNSW for any information on reflective learning lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/reflect.html:

Reflection is a form of personal response to experiences, situations, events or new information. It is a processing phase where thinking and learning take place. There is neither a right nor a wrong way of reflective thinking there are just questions to explore.

Most subjects involving placement will have a reflective writing requirement (via the assessment). Here are a few tips on how to write a reflective piece.

**REFLECTIVE WRITING IS:**
- Student response to experiences
- Student response to thoughts and feelings
- An opportunity to gain self knowledge
- A way to achieve clarity and better understanding of what students are learning
- A way of making meaning out of what students are studying

**REFLECTIVE WRITING IS NOT:**
- Just conveying information, instruction or argument
- Pure description (although there may be some descriptive elements)
- Decision or judgement (whether something is wrong or right)
- A summary of course notes
- A standard university essay

**WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD REFLECT UPON?**
- Perceptions of the placement experience
- What they have found challenging, inspiring, interesting and why
- Questions they have and conclusions you have drawn
- How they solved a problem
- Comparisons and connections between what they are learning and:
  - Prior knowledge and experience and
  - Prior assumptions and preconceptions

Note: These questions have been adapted from The Learning Centre UNSW: lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/reflective.pdf

All students who undertake placement as part of their enrolment into a subject will need to complete some form of assessment regarding their placement experience.
Keep in mind that reflective writing is quite subjective; meaning that in addition to being reflective and logical, students can also be personal, critical and hypothetical. In this forum students are permitted to make recommendations based on their placement experience, not just academic evidence.

**OTHER COMMON FORMS OF PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT:**

- Placement Report – contents will vary depending on whether students undertake an operational or project based placement
- Presentation – professional business presentation based on the placement experience, often with peers and industry in the audience
- Reflective Journal – taking reflective notes after each shift, using the tips provided above
- Learning Contract – agreement between student and employer which outlines the parameters for the placement. This can include, aims, learning outcomes, placement activities
- Host Report or student evaluation – supervisor’s evaluation of student placement performance. This should be used as a learning opportunity. Take constructive feedback on board for future improvement
- Applying an academic theory to a problem you experienced/observed in the workplace – identifying an issue in the workplace and trying to solve it using an academic theory. This gives students another opportunity to bring theory and practice together. Questions to ask: what is the problem, how is it currently managed, first thoughts on how it might be resolved and useful theory?

**REFLECTION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT.**
The more preparation students undertake prior to placement, the more likely they are of achieving the targets they set themselves.

The more preparation students undertake prior to placement, the more likely they are of achieving the targets they set themselves. It is a good idea for students to undertake a self-assessment of their skill set prior to going on placement so they are aware of areas they can enhance (while on placement). Employers are looking for the following general skills.

**SELF-RELIANCE SKILLS**
Self-management, self-awareness, pro-activity, willingness to learn, self-promotion, networking, planning action, self-confidence, personal organisation.

**PEOPLE SKILLS**
Team skills, social skills, oral communication, leadership, client orientation, second language, networking skills.

**GENERAL SKILLS**
Problem solving, flexibility, business awareness and ethics, IT/computer literacy, handling information, application of numbers, commitment, enthusiasm.

**SPECIALIST SKILLS**
Occupational skills, technical skills, understanding commercial goals, company related expertise, strategic planning skills.

NB: Information regarding the application of key competencies in the workplace is covered in the next section of this document (During placement Stage 2).

The following are some examples of why students typically undertake placement:
- Employers value students/graduates with practical experience
- Develop new skills and experiences
- Looks good on resume
- Work out if suited to a particular industry
- Link practice with academic theory
- Develop useful industry contacts
- Secure ongoing employment
- Meet new people
- Money (although please note the majority of La Trobe University placements are unpaid).

Students should identify what they want to achieve from placement by developing a list of targets (refer to table on opposite page).

Can these targets be met in other ways as well as through placement? For example, can students develop these skills as a result of any other activities they take part in? This may be achieved by voluntary work, being a member of the Student Union or club or member of a sports team. Any of these activities will enable students to develop people skills and some might enable them to develop your business and awareness skills too.

Students are unlikely to achieve all of their targets in one sole placement. It is therefore, a good idea for students to work on further developing skills through other activities they are involved with.

Adapted from the Careers and Employability Service (2009), The University of Nottingham.
OBJECTIVES TO ACHIEVE

Tick all the objectives that are important to achieve on placement.

ACADEMIC STUDY
- Apply academic discipline in the workplace
- Further develop knowledge of a specific subject area
- Broaden academic learning
- Gain the ability to transfer academic skills to new situations
- Gain confidence to apply knowledge in work situations
- Take greater responsibility for your own learning and development
- Improve research skills e.g. develop new methods of gathering and analysing information
- Assess and improve study skills

WORK CULTURE
- Understand the way the organisation works i.e. how decisions are made
- Be aware of health and safety procedures
- Be sensitive to cultural differences in the workplace

BUSINESS SKILLS AND AWARENESS
- Develop entrepreneurial skills
- Improve IT skills
- Develop creative ability
- Develop financial skills i.e. ability to read accounts or manage personal finances
- Develop project management skills
- Learn to solve work problems effectively
- Learn to communicate in a professional environment
- Learn to be flexible and adapt
- Show enthusiasm, motivation, flexibility and willingness to learn

PEOPLE SKILLS
- Develop a network of useful contacts
- Improve team working skills
- Improve communication skills e.g. presentation and listening
- Improve interpersonal skills e.g. ability to interact with a wide range of people
- Develop an ability to lead others e.g. manage people in a team
- Learn to manage conflict
- Develop effective negotiation skills
- Learn to accept and apply criticism
- Develop assertiveness

WORK CULTURE
- Understand the way the organisation works i.e. how decisions are made
- Be aware of health and safety procedures
- Be sensitive to cultural differences in the workplace

BUSINESS IMPACT
- Understand how to add value to the organisation
- Challenge the norm and bring in new ideas
- Help the organisation become more effective

CAREER MANAGEMENT
- Review and evaluate learning and performance
- Find out how organisations recruit and select - what skills and abilities they look for
- Find out about the organisations connected to the work you are in e.g. suppliers, customers
- Seek feedback on development from others
- Find out what really motivates and is of interest
- Look at how you cope with stress
- Learn how to cope with uncertainty and make informed decisions
- Take advantage of in-house training

Adapted from the Careers and Employability Service (2009), The University of Nottingham.
DURING PLACEMENT
STAGE 2

The work environment is very different to the academic environment. Observe, listen, be open minded, reflect, ask questions and request feedback.

COMPETENCIES IN THE WORKPLACE

This section of the manual looks at 9 key themes and provides hints and tips for students, which aim to help students develop each of these competencies. Quotes are from graduates used in the study and are used to highlight key points.

1. Communication skills
Communication can be in many forms. Initial individual face-to-face contact may be at times verbal (7%), perceived tone (38%), visual - associated gestures, e.g. eye contact (55%) or kinesthetic, e.g. handshake. Listening carefully, empathising with other people and asking questions are also essential aspects of good communication.

“Learn how to talk to different people and realise that people need to be communicated to in different ways.”
- Think about the audience - people respond differently to different styles of communication
- Communicate in person – face-to-face or via phone, do not always rely on email
- Use the English language correctly, both written and verbal
- Remember to use good etiquette, e.g. always begin a phone call by asking the respondent if they have time to talk
- Seek opportunities to talk in front of an audience and make a formal presentation, students should challenge themselves!
- Practice before making a formal presentation
- Students are encouraged to ask questions if they don’t understand or require assistance
- First impressions are important! Dress appropriately for the occasion, make eye contact, have a firm handshake
- Proof read all documents – check spelling, grammar and format
- Formalise documents – letters and reports.

2. Self confidence
The work environment is very different to the academic environment in which students are used to operating. Unlike university where performance is measured by grades, performance in the workplace is often vague, intangible and based on the perceptions of others. Students need to adopt learning styles that quickly build confidence. Remember, it is impossible to know everything about the organisation from the outset. Observe, listen, be open minded, reflect, ask questions and request feedback.

“Relax and enjoy the experience rather than becoming overawed... and understand that asking questions is not a weakness.”
- Students should make sure they are clear on what is expected and what the objectives are
- Watch others, listen carefully and ask lots of questions
- Absorb how supervisors and others in the office conduct themselves professionally
- Students should focus on what they do know and how they are improving rather than what they do not know
- Ask questions – this is not a weakness, asking for help shows a willingness to learn
- Ask for feedback – be prepared to take on constructive criticism
- Be open minded – students will find that being inflexible will prevent them from trying new ideas
- Reflect on the experience – students will only improve by understanding mistakes and thinking of better ways to do things
- Be professional – attempt everything to the best of ability, but do not forget to enjoy the experience!

3. Industry and business knowledge
The placement is a great opportunity to apply theory to practice and develop real life knowledge of the industry. It also encourages the development of skills such as Project Management and IT. Students should take the time to enquire, research and familiarise themselves with the organisation and its industry networks.

“Be familiar with Microsoft documents, including MS Word and MS Excel as well as other computer programs and computers in general.”
- Be familiar with all Microsoft programs
- Be aware of computer keyboard short cuts and workplace related functions, e.g. out of office replies
- Seek opportunities to develop generic business skills such as marketing and project management
- Enquire about the organisation to gain an overall perspective on the context in which the business operates
- Research the organisation and the people within the organisation.

4. Personal organisation
Personal organisation is the key to surviving challenging situations and working under pressure. Employers demand efficiency from their staff. To be effective and efficient, it is important to be able to set and prioritise goals and plan how to achieve them in the time available. Given that situations change, it’s also important to be flexible – which means being able to prioritise and reschedule.

“Learn to prioritise deadlines, work ahead of time, have a plan of action (as if the work is planning for an event)”.
- Clarify project objectives with the supervisor
- Discuss with the supervisor what needs to happen in order to achieve each objective
- Create an action plan by breaking down big tasks into smaller tasks
**IMMERSE YOURSELF... DON’T GO INTO A WORKPLACE SITUATION TRYING TO BE AN OBSERVER, BUT TO UTTERLY EMBRACE THE EXPERIENCE.**

- Think about contingency planning, what is the back-up plan if something goes wrong?
- Schedule a recurring meeting with the supervisor to report task status
- Alert the supervisor if feeling overwhelmed and ask them to help prioritise tasks.

5. **Professional networks**
Relationship building is important in all workplaces. Building a network of contacts is the best way for students to maximise job opportunities in any career.

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. Ask the contact to consider their current networks and how they could extend and develop these.”

- Students should introduce themselves to as many people as possible
- Research as much information as possible about new contacts
- Keep a list of contacts and their profile
- Sell capabilities modestly utilising as many opportunities as possible
- Existing contacts may be able to help students extend their network
- Identify like minded people that might want to collaborate in the future.

6. **Client relationship management**
Success for all organisations is about pleasing the client–either through service or products. It is therefore critical to understand customer needs and how to deal with stakeholders.

“Try to look through a different lens and put yourself in the shoes of the customer.”

- Investigate as many sources as possible to understand what makes quality client service
- Students should research clients so they are able to think about their role through the clients eyes
- Respect all clients and understand that often a role exists only because of them!
- The more students know about clients, the more informed they will be to do the job
- Attend as many events as possible that allow interaction with clients.

7. **Enthusiastic participation**
Employers value team members who approach their work with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can be demonstrated by a willingness to be involved, a positive can do attitude and enjoyment of the task at hand. By being proactive, volunteering, supporting the team, asking questions and demonstrating initiative, students can add value to the workplace.

“Immerse yourself... don’t go into a workplace situation trying to be an observer, but to utterly embrace the experience.”

- Be selective about choosing projects that are of interest (where possible)
- Choose a project that will provide a placement that will be of benefit after graduation (i.e. help the student to secure a job)
- Secure a meaningful project that will add value to the organisation and provide a greater sense of satisfaction
- Students are encouraged to seek involvement in projects that challenge and push them out of the comfort zone
- Push the boundaries – students should not be narrow minded about the types of tasks they get involved with
- Support the team by finding ways to help
- Get involved in as many activities as possible from daily organisation to big events
- Undertake some voluntary work beyond the scope of project expectations
- Add value, be proactive – go the extra mile to show dedication
- Remain positive, even in challenging situations.

8. **Self sufficiency**

Asking for help is a positive thing however, relying on other’s peoples instructions is not. Students must remain pro-active (not re-active) as employers value people who use their initiative to overcome problems and who think creatively to add value. Time management is a key issue here.

Students are encouraged to plan ahead, set goals and specific targets – take ownership and responsibility of projects.

“Always think what else you can do in a situation, how can you make it better, or what more can you do when you have ‘nothing’ to do.”

- Set some personal development goals
- Think ahead, have some ideas about what to do next, rather than waiting for instruction
- Students are encouraged to provide suggestions to the supervisor or think through some possible solutions if they think they have a problem
- Ask questions and make suggestions – this shows students are trying to think for themselves
- Students should challenge themselves to think creatively by drawing inspiration from a variety of sources, including their own intuition.

9. **Professional ethics**

Professional ethics is about respecting the culture of an organisation while maintaining personal integrity. At the very minimum, organisations expect employees to be honest, trustworthy, courteous and conscientious.

“When in (the workplace) organisation leave the student persona at the door and imagine yourself as a member of staff and what the required conduct would be for actions, dress, etc.”
DURING PLACEMENT
STAGE 2

- Be professional – students should treat the workplace like a job – in everything they do because everything counts
- Remember that bad impressions reflect badly not only on the student, but the university and the organisation
- Enquire about the values and codes of conduct of the organisation at induction
- Observe the conduct of other members of staff for guidance
- Be polite and respectful of others – people always remember the way others made them feel
- Use professional language – colloquial language may offend some people
- Be reliable – students should say what they are going to do and do what they say

This information has been sourced from How to Make the Most of Work Integrated Learning: A Guide for Students, Lecturers and Supervisors, Andy Martin and Helen Hughes, 2009, Massey University.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: TEN TOP TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Focus on continual improvement
   How to make the most of the experience
   - Students should set some clear targets for what they want to gain from the experience
   - Be clear about what is expected and how performance will be measured
   - Think ahead to future goals and identify how the placement can act as a ‘stepping-stone’
   - Think about and list the skills and experience that will increase employability in the future
   - Make sure the placement develops some of these skills and expertise
   - Set regular personal development targets, broken down into small manageable steps.

2. Increase self awareness
   Placement is an ideal opportunity to develop new skills and explore a future career direction.
   - List strengths and weakness. Use others to help. Continually update the list.
   - Actively seek feedback from colleagues
   - Notice and write down experiences that are motivating – and those that do not
   - Make an effort to establish values and underlying beliefs. People are generally not comfortable if they do things that work against these values.
   - Be constructively critical and continually ask challenging questions
   - Learn to learn from feelings and intuitions.

3. Gain relevant skills and experience
   In today’s world of work, it’s crucial to seize every learning opportunity
   - Volunteer for new projects or roles outside the job description
   - Work with people across departments and try and learn from them
   - Show willingness to develop and do not be afraid to ask for new opportunities
   - Try to gain and recognise the skills from work in customer facing environments (e.g. retail, sales, services, reception)
   - Make the most of work opportunities in small business where there is more responsibility and a wider range of job roles
   - Get as much variety in work as possible
   - Adapt to change and uncertainty in a positive manner.

4. Develop teamwork skills
   Teamwork skills appear high on almost every employer’s list of successful attributes
   - Make a real effort to fit into your organisation – get involved with teams
   - Understand the culture of the organisation (different values and personalities and how they like to operate and conduct business)
   - Look at differing team roles – leading, managing, improving, promoting, developing, organising, producing, inspecting, maintaining and advising
   - Students should find out the roles they prefer when working in teams, but also be flexible. Develop the art of listening to other people’s views
   - Identify the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful teams
   - Seek opportunities to work in a variety of team environments
   - Get involved in social activities or take the lead role in organising
   - Increase awareness of office politics

5. Become indispensable
   The more value students add to the organisation the more indispensable they become. This may have a major impact on future salary levels and career prospects.
   - Be prepared to do the boring mundane tasks
   - Make a positive impact – look to achieve an early success
   - Take a broader look at the needs of the whole organisation
   - Identify the organisation’s priorities, such as changing customer needs, new products or services, emerging markets and competitors
   - Become indispensable by performing a crucial role, developing invaluable expertise, or attaching oneself to growth areas
   - Identify the best career development opportunities for and plan how to reach them
   - Look at ways to ‘free-up’ the boss’s time by offering to take on some of their tasks
   - Take the initiative – do not wait to be told what to do.
6. Explore opportunities
It’s important for students to position themselves to explore as many career avenues as possible:
- Do not sit in an academic bubble – look at how theory is transferred into practice (and vice versa)
- Explore as many career development opportunities as possible
- Regularly visit the careers service and keep up-to-date with changes in the graduate job market
- Do not be afraid to approach managers in other parts of the organisation for an ‘advisory interview’
- Students should identify the things they ‘absolutely do not want to do’ in their future career
- Seize any opportunity for continual professional development, e.g. internal training courses.

7. Use contacts and develop the art of networking
We all need a helping hand to grow and develop, so it’s vital to build a network of contacts through working life:
- Keep an up-to-date diary or log all the people met
- Students are advised to look for role models they can learn from
- Use every opportunity to build new relationships. Clients, suppliers, distributors, competitors, colleagues and organisations in related fields are all potential avenues for future career moves
- Know how, and who, to ask for help
- Keep eyes and ears open for courses, training sessions, meetings and external events – they are all useful ways to expand networks
- Maintain links with key contacts, if only through the occasional phone call or email
- Build contacts and do not be afraid to use them

8. Boost self-confidence
Believe it or not, students can really boost self-confidence:
- Students should list all the achievements they are proud of – they will be great for the resume. Do not undersell them.
- Keep a file of any positive feedback, certificates or awards
- Step beyond the comfort zone, and be prepared to take small incremental risks
- Be proud of achievements and value experiences – both good and bad
- Develop assertiveness. Do not be pushed into working full-time hours for part-time pay.

9. Learn to learn
Learning to learn from both personal and other people’s experiences is a crucial skill for the 21st Century:
- Keep a regular log (even if it is a mental log) of everything learnt
- Learn from both successes and failures. If an experience is negative, turn it into something positive by learning from it
- Recognise personal reaction to failures and disappointments
- Students should identify, observe and learn from people who are competent in skill areas where they are weak and need help (e.g. excellent presenters, capable managers, good networkers)
- Learn to accept critical feedback and act on it
- Make lots of time to reflect on progress personally and professionally.

10. Promote successes
If students do not promote themselves, who else will?
- Use every opportunity to sell successes to the people who matter (boss, boss’s boss, other key contacts)
- Learn from highly regarded people. How do they promote themselves?
- Student should not undersell themselves
- Keep resume up to date
- Students can write down all the interview questions they have ever been asked and use the experience to plan for the next one
- Ask employers for a reference before leaving placement, when the students contribution is fresh in their minds
- Focus on doing every activity well. Remember – people are only as good as their last job.

Sourced from Centre for Careers Development, University of Nottingham, 2009.
Developing and recording skills means when students graduate they will have the full range of skills employers look for. Recording these activities and skills will be invaluable when students complete graduate application forms. It is much quicker if students have a written record that you can adapt to answer the questions.

There are different levels of reflection that students will have about their placements. For students to enhance employment prospects they need to achieve the highest level possible. Whilst undertaking placement, students should think about the areas they have made substantial progress in.

The information below is also relevant to any reflection students may be required to do for assessment.

**ENHANCING LEARNING DURING THE EXPERIENCE**

**Level 1**

Experience only - students experience the learning without giving any thought to it - it just happens. They find it hard to relate the areas of work covered to their learning targets. They are often not sure if they have encountered a topic or not.

**Level 2**

Record and make explicit the experience - students are able to articulate their learning experience to others but only at a superficial level.

**Level 3**

Reflection on the learning experience - students know what the learning has meant to them. They are able to interpret the learning in a deeper way, providing a range of examples and a clear explanation of what they have gained from the experience.

**Level 4**

Making the links and matching the learning - students are able to draw together and internalise their learning through concepts and models. They can see the links and applications to other learning situations and/or potential careers.

**Level 5**

Application of learning to new situations - students can put their learning into practice in new situations. They can make connections and piece together what they have learnt. They are able to transfer their learning and add value in the new context.

**Level 6**

Adapting to new situations - students are more flexible and effective in applying their learning to new situations, constantly evaluating its worth and adapting their model of thinking accordingly, thus taking responsibility for, and control of, their own development.

Students should indentify the level they currently sit at and work towards the next level.

**Targets achieved?**

One of the first activities students should undertake when they have finished placement is to go back to the targets that they initially set. Have they achieved all that they wanted to? Are there activities and skills that still need to be developed further? If so, then students may need to see if there are alternative ways they can develop these skills or factor them into their next experience.

**Conclusion**

Any effort you put in at each stage will have benefits when you come to look for that next step - whether further study or a graduate job. Employers are constantly looking for students who have not only undertaken placement but can articulate the skills and experiences they have had.

“You can do as much studying as you want, but this won’t guarantee a job when you complete your studies, so gaining this experience is beneficial for all parties”.

Janine Peyer, Financial Controller, Amora Hotels, New Zealand

**And finally…**

It is important to stress that all experience is good, whether you are working in a bar or undertaking a course relevant placement.

Sourced from the Careers and Employability Service, The University of Nottingham (2009).
Activities to assist in identifying skills, interest and values

Download the Your Career and You: Self Assessment for Students and Graduates booklet which is produced by Graduate Careers Australia. This has some activities to assist students to identify goals, interests, values and skills.


Complete a free online interest quiz from Job Outlook. Note: the results will be very general, so you may wish to see a Careers Consultant to assist interpret the results.


Sourced from the La Trobe University Career Development Centre.
Practical Learning Student Guide

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW MUCH TIME DO STUDENTS NEED TO COMMIT TO WIL?

This depends on a variety of factors such as whether the WIL is completed as part of studies or independently. Different subjects will also have different time requirements. The amount of time spent in the workplace will range from 25 hours approximately for compulsory placements that are embedded in the overall subject curriculum to 100–200 hours for a dedicated practicum subject.

While the hours spent on unpaid WIL activities may temporarily impact a student’s (paid) casual work schedule, it is important to remember the value of industry work placements in terms of future employment prospects. Please note these hours do not include time for the completion of assessment that is attached to the WIL activity. Students are also expected to attend your normal lectures and tutorial while on placement—time management is an important skill to learn and one that students will utilise frequently when working in industry!

Hours spent on placements that are arranged by students outside of their study are as negotiated between employer and student.

DO STUDENTS RECEIVE CREDIT TOWARDS STUDY?

Generally students will receive some form of credit for WIL activities that are undertaken as part of their studies via assessment tasks. Assessment will vary depending on the subject. Examples of common assessment tools for WIL include reflective journals/reports, business reports, presentations and feedback from the host organisation. The Subject Coordinator will be able to tell students exactly what assessment will be required in relation to the placement.

Placements that are undertaken outside of studies are not guaranteed credit. Sometimes students may be awarded credit if the placement undertaken is relevant to the subject content. This will need to be negotiated with the relevant Subject Coordinator.

IS THERE ANY ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO ORGANISE A PLACEMENT?

If students are undertaking placement as part of their studies, some form of assistance is usually provided. In many instances the Faculty will have established relationships with industry partners and an ongoing placement arrangement will be in place. Practicum subjects will generally try to match specific students to a particular organisation based on skills/interest and suitability to the workplace culture in that organisation. Other subjects will encourage students to source their own placement however, Subject Coordinators will be on hand to assist with their industry contacts if required.

Securing a position can be a competitive process—many industry partners will want to interview students for WIL placements. So it is a good idea for students to have a current resume and cover letter ready to go. They may wish to drop into the Careers and Development Centre to get some tips on resume writing and interview skills.

DO STUDENTS NEED TO PREPARE FOR WIL ACTIVITIES?

There will usually be some preparation required before placement. Orientation workshops are generally run by the Subject or WIL Coordinator where expectations and responsibilities while on placement will be outlined.

Students may also be required to read some academic texts/articles that are related to placement. Students involved in placement should also show initiative and make sure they read up about their host organisation prior to placement. Students should be aware of any current issues/hot topics that are relevant to the industry in which they are undertaking WIL.

As there is usually some form of assessment attached to WIL activities, it is advisable for students to familiarise themselves with required assessment tasks prior to placement.

WHAT HAPPENS IF STUDENTS ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND PLACEMENT DUE TO ILLNESS?

That depends on the structure of the placement. In some instances students will be required to complete a certain number of hours to meet placement and assessment requirements. If students become ill and are unable to attend, they are required to reschedule the shift. Sometimes students will meet placement requirements based on project completion, not hours completed.

CANT STUDENTS EXPECT TO BE PAID?

No. To be covered by the universities insurance policy students will need to undertake unpaid placement. This is regardless of whether the placement is part of studies or has been independently arranged by the student.

If an employer does wish to pay students for the placement, they should acknowledge acceptance (in writing) that student activities will be covered by the organisational insurance policy.
If in doubt contact the Subject or WIL Coordinator for clarification.

It is also expected that students will call the host organisation to inform them that they are unable to attend work on that day. Medical certificates are expected for any absence from placement – no exceptions.

Can Anyone Help Students with Resume and Interview Skills?

Yes, the Career Development Centre can assist with resumes and interview skills. The department runs a series of workshops throughout the academic year and also employs Career Consultants who will take individual student consultations. Appointments can be made by contacting the Career Development Centre: latrobe.edu.au/careers

The Subject and WIL Coordinators will also be able to assist this area.

Is There a Dress Code?

There will always be a dress code of some description, although this will vary depending on the particular workplace. For example, students working in Hospitality and Tourism will generally have a uniform of black pants and white shirt while students working in a corporate business organisation would be expected to wear a suit/slacks and shirt. Sports students working in a football club would wear the club’s sports uniform and so on.

Regardless of where students are placed, a clean and neat appearance at all times is required. Contact the host organisation prior to commencement of placement to clarify expectations around dress code and presentation.

How Will Students Know What Activities to Undertake while on WIL?

The host organisation will advise students of their role and responsibilities while on placement. They will be relevant to student’s area of study. Students should tell their mentor if they have to complete an assessment task on the placement experience – they may be able to incorporate particular activities that will help with assignments.

Student should not be afraid to approach their mentor if they require further clarification of duties. If students feel that the organisation is making unreasonable requests of them, contact the Subject or WIL Coordinator.

Is Support from the Faculty Available to Students while on Placement?

Where possible the Subject or WIL Coordinator will visit students during their placement. They will also be available via email, phone or at scheduled meeting times to provide other support as required, e.g. provide guidance to assist students in meeting project goals set by the organisation.

Note: Students undertaking structured vacation work placements will not generally receive a placement visit unless specifically requested. Regular contact will be maintained with organisations that are hosting large volumes of students on placement however, it will not be possible to visit all students on placement in this situation.

Can International Students Participate in WIL?

International students are able to participate in WIL within the guidelines set out under their student visa. Please note that unpaid hours are sometimes counted towards the maximum amount of hours that international students can work per week. This will depend on how the subject has been classified by the Faculty. WIL Coordinators can tell international students if the subject is exempt from visa restrictions. International students should be mindful of this when undertaking WIL, particularly if they already have a casual or part time job.

Please contact La Trobe International if you are unsure of visa restrictions: latrobe.edu.au/international

WIL is Described by Many Different Terms, What’s the Correct Terminology?

There is no correct terminology, it depends who you ask! At La Trobe University students may hear a placement referred to as an internship, practicum or WIL. Other universities may use the terminology IBL (Industry Based Learning), Co-Operative Education or a sandwich year. The main thing is to remember that an industry placement is referred to as WIL within the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law. All other practical learning opportunities will be referred to as ExBL.
Program bookings and enquiries

Marnie Long
Accounting, Event Management, Hospitality Management, Sport Management and Tourism Management
T +61 3 9479 6795
F +61 3 9479 1484
E marnie.long@latrobe.edu.au

Gail Quirk
Economics, Finance, HRM, Law, Marketing and Management
T +61 3 9479 6796
F +61 3 9479 1484
E g.quirk@latrobe.edu.au