International Students WIL Engagement Strategy

This is a guide for tertiary institutions to increase international student engagement and enhance their experience and positive outcomes of Work integrated Learning (WIL). The strategy outlines a series of proactive activities which if implemented may assist in addressing reported challenges that impact on international students' engagement with WIL.

Goals	Reported challenges to engagement	Strategy	Suggested actions
Improving Communication	• A lack of communication between stakeholders. • Range of modes of communication required for varied learning styles and exposure to improve employability. • Lack of understanding of 'What is WIL?' and what is its value. • Lack clarity around visas and other legal requirements.	Consider a range of communication factors including: • Improved communication to support students before, during and after their WIL experience. • Recognition of the importance of global 21st century communication methods. • Using a range of learning and teaching strategies to communicate information. Provide students with a clear overview of 'What is WIL?' and its benefits. • Provide clear direction on where to access advice on visa and legal requirements associated with WIL.	• Develop comprehensive plans, expectations and timelines for how to communicate with workplaces before, during and after the workplace experience. • Use of a combination of online, face-to- face, through interactive image and sound, and oral and written communication. • Use methods such as interactive delivery, activities in small groups, use of video clips, reflective feedback sessions, open discussions, illustrating ideas through mind mapping, images, simulations, role plays, volunteering, drawing and modelling to support learning. • Develop guides for understanding and using employer feedback. • Highlight recent reports of current workplace communication tools. • Encourage the completion of the WIL to Work Credentials.

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Encouraging appreciation of the value of cultural diversity	• Dealing with language barriers and cultural differences in professional contexts. • Lack of understanding by employer of the benefits international students can bring.	• Understand that language and culture is 'both ways'. • Encourage students to understand the positive contribution of diversity to the workplace. • Showcase the benefits that international students can bring to the workplace. • Support students in understanding workplace cultures.	• Review support systems to determine if they are a. running effectively and b. used regularly by international students. • Provide examples of the impact of international students in the workplace in WIL. • Provide students with tools to help understand workplace cultures. See WIL to Work Credentials.
Raising Awareness of Available Support	• Knowing what support is available. • Having to socialise not only in the professional workplace context, but also in new cultural and university contexts.	• Raise awareness of support available. • Appreciate and support the multi-socialisation process that international students face.	• Create a list of support tools and services available both within the institution and externally. • Set up online networks, face-to-face meetings if possible, support materials and resources and other means of communication.
Building Networks	• Not interacting with others outside of their own social and cultural groupings but equally universities not having systems in place to encourage contact with domestic students. • Not being aware of or frequenting university support services that exist.	• Build effective networks both personally and professionally – before, during and after work experience.	• Have systems and programs in place to encourage contact with domestic students. • Clearer communication and marketing about available services. • Development of specific networks for work placement purposes. • Provide information around formal mentoring programs or encourage students to obtain a mentor informally.

Goals	Reported challenges to engagement	Strategy	Suggested actions
Preparing students for future opportunities	• Accessing workplace opportunities or finding workplaces that are educated about employing/ supervising/ hosting international students.	• Consider a broader scope of workplace opportunities for international students.	• Regularly update knowledge surrounding workplace opportunities for international students, taking into consideration the changing demands in the work environment. • Provide information to employers and potential hosts or supervisors about international students. Such professional learning needs to include information about visa requirements, language proficiencies and professional competencies international students already hold. See 'The WIL to Work' Credentials. • Pay greater attention to matching international students with workplaces is also recommended where possible.
Enhancing students' Reflection	• Limited exposure of and focus on positive outcomes and success stories is available.	• Share positive experiences of international students on work placement with others. • Support students in developing and recognising their own professional identity.	• Explicitly sharing these stories easily accessible to International students on work placement. • Provide students with resources and support for developing, recognising and communicating their emerging professional identity. See 'The WIL to Work' Credentials.

This strategy has been developed based on work by Georgina Barton and the Principles of Inclusive WIL:
http://acen.edu.au/access-participation-progression/?page_id=637

Refer to the ACEN website for additional case examples of Inclusive WIL: http://acen.edu.au/access-participation-progression/?page_id=672