Organisation guide:

Hosting a student on placement

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Nau mai, haere mai ki te Ako ā-Mahi o Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Welcome to Work-Integrated Learning at the University of Waikato

We're thrilled to have you on board as a host for our talented, motivated and forward-thinking students from the University of Waikato. Your involvement plays a vital role in helping students bridge the gap between their academic journey and their professional aspirations.

Our students often share inspiring stories about the impact of their workplace supervisors. These experiences highlight how meaningful guidance and support can shape their confidence, skills and career direction. We hope this partnership brings mutual value–while students gain real-world experience, your organisation may benefit from fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, and new ideas.

For students, entering the workforce in their chosen industry is an exciting time filled with opportunity, challenge and growth. University is a space where they explore career possibilities, build essential skills, and begin to understand how their learning connects to the world of work.

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a powerful way to support this transition. It connects academic learning with practical experience, helping students develop professional identity, build networks and deepen their understanding of what they've studied in a real-world context.

Thank you for partnering with us to support the next generation of professionals. Together, we're helping students take confident steps into their future careers.

Jennifer Milam

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic

Purpose

This document has been designed to help you understand and prepare for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) at The University of Waikato (UoW), more specifically for placement-based WIL experiences. This information may not be as suitable for project-based or other WIL experience formats; however, we encourage you to take a look.

This resource includes:

- Advice on how to get the most out of the WIL experience (before, during and after)
- An outline of what UoW requires from your organisation and supervisor
- Support tools for students

This booklet is designed to be read in conjunction with any other information you may have received from the programme you are working with. Please work with your UoW contact to gather any additional UoW programme-specific needs.

If you have any feedback suggestions about this brochure, please email these to wilcu@waikato.ac.nz

"Amazing opportunity as a psychology student to work for Hamilton City Council. I learned a lot about conflict resolution and team management, which are great skills to have going into the professional workspace."

Summer Cameron, Bachelor of Science

Key Terms

WIL Experience:

The general term used in this guide to describe the Work-Integrated Learning experience. This guide focusses on those in a placement setting.

Host Organisation:

The organisation where the student will conduct their WIL experience. This may be a governmental organisation, community organisation, private company, educational provider, not-for-profit organisation or community group.

Supervisor:

The term used to describe the person responsible for the student whilst they are in a WIL experience at the Host Organisation. This person will provide support, guidance, mentorship, and often will provide oversight to tasks/projects.

Elements of this role may be split between various staff, depending on the WIL experience.

Specific programmes may also have specific terms for this role.

UoW Contact:

The person from UoW who is your main point of contact for the course you are engaged with. Your UoW Contact may be known as a Course Coordinator, Academic, Clinical Director, WIL Advisor, Administrator, or something else altogether.

"I learnt creative and innovative thinking, reflective self-improvement and cross-cultural collaboration from The Impact Lab that will be vital to my future career."

Lingyu Meng, Computer Science

Understanding WIL

Work-Integrated Learning (or WIL) may be a new term for you but it has been around for a long time in the academic environment. You may be more familiar with terms such as placement, practicum, internship, or apprenticeship. In essence, WIL is a teaching and learning practice (based on theories found in education, psychology, and sociology) where students are given the opportunity to connect their discipline and the skills they are learning to the world of work as part of a course or programme of study.

WIL Expectations

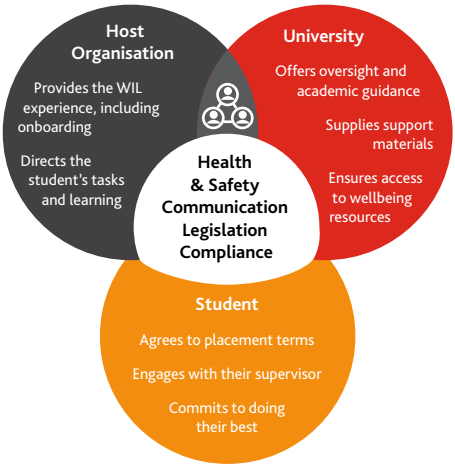
For a tertiary education provider and a host organisation there is a shared responsibility to ensure students are in a safe and supported environment as stipulated in various legislation.

This means that before a student commences a WIL experience, it is important all aspects of the WIL experience are clearly articulated to all parties, including:

- roles and responsibilities
- the process to raise issues or concerns
- available support mechanisms

Your UoW Contact will be in touch with specific information relevant to the programme of study the student is engaged in.

Setting up for Success



Responsibilities

All parties play an important role to ensuring the success of any WIL experience, each with their own responsibilities. For more details, please refer to programme-specific documentation or be in touch with your UoW Contact.

At a high level, these include:

- A signed Placement Agreement Form
- Health and Safety Induction and any necessary training
- Workplace Orientation

As with any new employee, an induction on the student's first day is very important. For some students this may be their first time in a professional setting, so not only does an orientation and induction provide students with critical information, it can also help the student settle in and understand some of the workplace norms for your organisation.

Induction

- Outline emergency procedure, including location of first-aid supplies, fire extinguishers, and any other relevant items
- Highlighting any hazards, associated risk and mitigations
- Explaining report procedures for incidents and accidents
- Providing the student with relevant policies and procedures, including those regarding physical and emotional harm, bullying and harassment

Orientation

- A tour of the office/environment
- Introductions to the team and explanation of their responsibilities
- Discussion of workplace norms, such as work hours, dress code, any location (office or field) regulations and policies that are relevant, social media expectations, AI ethics, breaks and lunch expectations

Safe Working Conditions

UoW expects students will be in a safe (both physically and psychologically) and supported environment.

Please share with the student any relevant safety policies and procedures, including those relating to bullying harassment and discrimination, as well as reporting processes.

If you do not have a policy for this, please contact your UoW Contact.

If you are made aware of an incident involving the student, please inform your UoW Contact as soon as possible.

Getting Started

It's fantastic that you've agreed to host a student, so… what next?

Plan and prepare! This helps to make the most of the opportunity, for you as the organisation's contact/supervisor, your organisation and the student.

Consider these questions:

- What is your organisation hoping to gain from this experience? What are your goals? What can you do to set this experience up for success?
- What is the type of experience you are providing? Are there defined parameters you need to be aware of? How much flexibility is there for the student to be involved in wider opportunities?
- Are there other areas of the organisation that may be useful for the student to be involved with? Do they have any appropriate tasks and opportunities for the student?
- What support mechanisms do you have in place that you can tap into? What additional support needs to be organised? Who will be the student's main point of contact? How can you enable them to be part of the team?

Students learn a lot from working in a team. They can see how different people work together, practice collaboration skills and have exposure to the various workstreams of the organisation.

- What is the plan for the first week? Who will be responsible for discussing the WIL experience? What tasks or activities can the student start with while they are settling in? Have you set aside time in the first week to support them? (Students often want to be able to take the initiative but they need to understand what they are doing and settle in.)
- Have you confirmed details for the first day with the student, including where they go, on what date, at what time, and who they are meeting when they arrive?
- Has an orientation and induction been arranged?

We've designed a checklist on page 14 to help you keep on track while you prepare for your student and we encourage you to refer to this.

During the WIL Experience

Supporting a student to develop personally and professionally throughout their experience can come in a variety of forms. Some suggestions include:

Communication

- Be available to help ease the student into the experience and encourage students to find solutions or alternatives. Support the student to break the larger elements of the job or project into smaller components to help them more easily monitor their own progress.
- Understand how to best communicate with your student – do you prefer email, text or phone, or in person? Will this work for the student as well? At what frequency? Is this understood by you both?
- Be generous with positive reinforcement to help build confidence. Provide feedback throughout the experience so the student has an opportunity to reflect and improve.
- Establish structured check-ins to connect with the student. It is important that these are regular and predictable, and in a forum where the student can raise concerns or questions.
- It is also an opportunity for you to provide feedback to the student.
- Respect what a student is comfortable sharing about themselves and provide relevant documents on your organisation's diversity and inclusion policies.

Professional Development & Self-Confidence

- Support the student in their career progression by exposing them to appropriate networking and development opportunities.
- Understand what drives them – consider ways you can involve the student in these areas.
- Encourage the student to ask lots of questions and ensure someone is available to help where required.
- Encourage your wider team to approach and include the student where appropriate, e.g. inviting them to meetings.
- When mistakes are made, help students to understand the impacts and support them to learn from these.
- Guide the student to create realistic deadlines. Regular check-ins on progress can help get you on the same page and help to ensure the student gains a good understanding of typical work practices.

Business Knowledge

- Provide a variety of tasks for the student to get stuck in to.
- Encourage the student to connect what they have been learning in their degree with the WIL experience.
- Don't assume prior knowledge – assume initially that everything will need to be explained. Terms and tasks that may seem common sense or familiar to you may be completely new to the student, such as acronyms you may use frequently.

Supporting a Remote WIL Experience

With the increasing use of remote working, it helps to consider how you communicate and interact with a student if hosting remotely. One of the most important elements when supporting a student remotely is communication and building rapport. This means it is more important than ever that channels of communication are clear.

In addition to the above suggestions, you may want to consider:

- Extending invites to virtual or face-to-face meetings and/or social activities. This helps the student feel a part of the team and build workplace connections they may otherwise miss out on.
- Keeping an eye out for any changes in the student's communication, personality, or quality of work when connecting with them, as remote work may add or emphasise personal challenges for the student. Together, discuss their experience and explore any barriers. Please reach out to your UoW Contact if you have any concerns.

Student Support and Pastoral Care

Once students are enrolled at UoW, including during their WIL experience, students have access to a wide range of support services through the University.

If you or your team become concerned about a student you are hosting (or their performance), please keep your UoW Contact informed and reiterate to the student there are UoW support services available to them.

Student Support Services

Students can also find details about various support services available on campus here

Student Absences

Life happens. Sickness and bereavement can and do happen. However, these occurrences can impact students differently depending on the requirements of their programme of study, such as the required hours and attendance and their cultural background.

It can be helpful if you understand the WIL requirements of the student. However, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to be aware of the requirements, keep track of their hours and be in touch with their UoW Contact if there are interruptions that may affect their course requirements. It is also the student's responsibility to ensure they keep you in the loop. If you have not heard from your student or do not know what is happening, reach out to your UoW Contact.

Culturally Responsive Workplaces

Sometimes students from Māori and Pacific backgrounds are asked to complete work outside of, and additional to, the scope of their placement (e.g translating works, providing cultural advice). Workload in this capacity may be considered cultural taxation and would not be appropriate unless clearly related to the student's programme of study, outlined in the placement scope, and discussed with the student. If you have any questions or are unsure, have a chat with your UoW Contact in the first instance

Reporting an Incident or Near Miss

Although the Host Organisation has primary duty of care, UoW also has a shared responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. This means that it is important that if any incident or near miss occurs while a student is on a WIL experience you notify your UoW Contact as soon as practically possible.

Raising a Complaint

If you would like to raise a complaint about any aspect of the WIL experience, there are a variety of mechanisms available to you, depending on the situation:

- Your UoW Contact
- The Programme Coordinator, Head of School/ Department, or Dean (Academic)

If it needs to be raised further, you are able to go through UoW's complaints process – informal anonymous report or formal complaint.

Complaints

Discontinuing a WIL Experience

On rare occasions, a student may no longer be able to continue with their WIL experience, for example:

- If your organisation is no longer able to provide appropriate opportunities for the student.
- If there is a change in the student's situation, meaning they are no longer able to continue with their placement.
- If your organisation is no longer able to provide a safe working environment.
- If the student no longer feels safe in the environment.
- If the student breaches legal, ethical, or professional codes of the industry, or shows negligence or unsafe practices.

If you are aware of a situation that may impact a student's ability to make the most of their WIL experience, or if the student has indicated they would like to end their WIL experience, please get in touch with your UoW Contact as soon as possible. UoW will work with you to understand the challenge and work towards the best outcome possible for both your organisation and the student.

"During my placement I not only gained hands-on experience but also engaged with a lot of smart and interesting people. I was encouraged to take initiative and develop new ideas which greatly contributed to my professional skills."

Edward Wilson, Bachelor of Software Engineering

Wrap up and Feedback

Nine times out of 10 the WIL experience will be a positive one for both your organisation and the student.

However, there is always an opportunity to learn and develop.

Feedback is an essential part of the WIL experience. We encourage you to pass on any feedback about the experience and process to your UoW Contact so that we can learn from it too.

At the end of the WIL experience, you may be asked to fill in some paperwork relating to the student to help the program team understand the student's progress. This can be an opportunity to speak with the student and discuss any feedback you had with them and to help them achieve a deeper learning experience. We're aiming for WIL feedback to give the student an overall summary of their placement performance and development – this would include feedback you have provided the student throughout the placement. Nothing in this summary should come as a surprise to the student.

Feedback options for you to consider:

- Conducting an exit interview with the student
- Sharing your insight with your UoW Contact (both positive and constructive)
- Asking for feedback from the student and/or your UoW Contact

The student may request you to act as a reference for future job applications or ask for a letter of recommendation. Please keep in mind that students have limited professional experience and your support may be the key to them securing future professional or academic opportunities. Accepting any such requests is at your discretion.

Your Next Student

How did that go? Would you be interested in hosting another student (perhaps next intake, or the following year)?

We really appreciate your support hosting UoW students and are keen to understand how we can work with you in the future. Please reach out to your UoW Contact to discuss next steps, your requirements, or if you have any questions.

We see firsthand the transformational effect WIL has on students – without support from hosts like you this transformation would not be possible.

Legal and security considerations

Privacy and Confidentiality

We understand that students may be subject to information that is sensitive in nature, and it is therefore important to be clear with the student what your expectations are and what is required of them.

Relevant confidentiality provisions have been incorporated in program specific documentation, for example the Placement Agreement. This not only protects you and your organisation, but also the student. Be in touch with your UoW Contact for a copy of UoW's confidentiality agreement template if needed.

Intellectual Property (IP)

The provisions for intellectual property associated with the placement are outlined in the programme-specific documentation.

For unpaid placement students, unless otherwise agreed:

a. as between the University and the Placement Provider any Intellectual Property created by the Student in the course of the Placement shall vest with the Student;

b. as between the University and the Student; the ownership and treatment of any Intellectual Property created by the Student during the Placement will be in accordance with the University's Intellectual Property and Copyright policy.

Insurance

It is general practice for the University to ask and confirm with organisations that they have public liability insurance.

Student Payment

When WIL experiences are arranged through UoW, the WIL experience will generally be unpaid, and there is no expectation that an employment relationship will come out of it.
If the student and host organisation enter into an employment agreement, this will be treated by UoW as a private agreement, excluding UoW.

Security Checks

We understand and accept that there are times when the host organisation requires additional checks to be completed:

Police Vet (background check)

Please advise your UoW Contact as early as possible if you require a Police vetting check to be completed as they can take several weeks to be processed.

Working with Children (Children's Act check)

If any WIL experiences undertaken by the student involve working with children under 18, they will require a Children's Act check to be completed.

Please advise your UoW Contact as early as possible if you require a Children's Act check to be completed as they can also take several weeks to be processed.

Host organisation checklist

Consider printing and updating the checklist below to give you confidence that nothing inadvertently falls through the cracks.

Preparing to host a student:

- ☐ Placement requirements defined and confirmed
- ☐ Placement start and end dates confirmed
- ☐ Student confirmed
- ☐ Documentation received (Agreement Form)
- ☐ Primary supervisor/mentor confirmed
- ☐ Secondary supervisor confirmed (if required)
- ☐ Supervisors understand their role and responsibilities
- ☐ Communicated with the student about first day
- ☐ Work area ready for student, including any IT needs (as required)
- ☐ Any documentation required from your own organisation completed
- ☐ Plan for student's first week in place
- ☐ Completed any required documentation from UoW (Agreement Form)

First week and beyond

- ☐ Workplace Health and Safety induction completed, including sharing relevant policies
- ☐ Risk assessment completed by student
- ☐ Project or tasks defined for placement including first few days work tasks
- ☐ Workplace tour completed (if applicable)
- ☐ Set up regular communication channel, e.g. weekly meeting
- ☐ Set up a mid-placement review
- ☐ Invite the student to broader organisational opportunities, e.g. leadership meetings, or networking opportunities

Wrapping up

- ☐ Any final documentation completed (student evaluation)
- ☐ Placement debrief completed (if appropriate)
- ☐ Complete the feedback loop–discuss with the student and UoW
- ☐ Advise student if any further opportunities available
- ☐ Exchange professional contact details

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KO TE TANGATA
FOR THE PEOPLE

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