

Student guide to: Work-Integrated Learning



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Tē Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

This guide is designed to support you through your Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) placement, internship, or project, helping to maximise your experience at the University of Waikato (UoW).

Key terms

WIL:

Abbreviation for Work-Integrated Learning. This is an umbrella term to describe learning experiences that integrate students' academic knowledge with authentic work-based practices.

Work Related Project:

These projects are managed at the University with input from the Host Organisation throughout the process. Students can work as individuals or in groups on projects, or by simulating professional practice while completing academic assessments.

Host or Partner Organisation:

The place where the student will undertake their WIL experience, like a company or non-profit organisation.

Host or Partner Supervisor Contact:

Main point of contact at the organisation who is involved in the work placement (for example, not an HR consultant).

WIL Advisor:

The person from UoW who is the main point of contact for your WIL Experience.

WIL Academic:

The person convening your WIL Paper.

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) fosters a collaborative partnership between students, workplaces and tertiary institutions. Participating in WIL offers students several valuable benefits:

- Connect academic learning with professional practice
- Transform classroom knowledge into real-world skills
- Identify personal strengths and areas for improvement
- Engage with professional environments and networks
- Contribute meaningfully to workplace projects.

It also cultivates essential personal competencies, including:

- Communication abilities
- Self-confidence
- Customer relationship management
- Industry and business understanding
- Independent working skills
- Professional networking
- Professional ethical standards.

Before WIL

Initial planning

- Speak with your WIL Advisor to see when WIL can fit into your degree structure
- Meet with Accessibility Services to create or update your RAP to ensure the employer is aware of any supports and accommodations you may need
- Check application deadlines or requirements; you may need to do this months before your placement starts
- Understand the Purpose: Know how the placement aligns with your academic goals and career aspirations
- Set Learning Objectives: Define what you want to learn – skills, knowledge, and professional behaviours
- Research the Host Organisation: Learn about its mission, values, culture, and recent projects
- Update Your Documents: Resume/CV tailored to the role with relevant expertise, cover letter, LinkedIn profile.

Finding your WIL opportunity

It is important to understand who is responsible for finding the WIL opportunity for the course you are taking. You are encouraged to discuss your placement with both your support people on campus (WIL Advisor / Accessibility Services) and with your whānau/ support people. Be sure to check what is expected of you, what the requirements are and if there is anything specific you need to consider.

There are helpful resources through The University of Waikato Careers and Employability platform MyCareer about internship and job hunting which can also be applied to finding WIL opportunities. The C&E Team offers a range of workshops to help prepare you to apply for internships, including those that help you to create appropriate CVs and cover letters, master interview skills, network, and develop your professional profile.



Before WIL

Professional readiness

- Provide necessary information for the placement
- Seek cultural or accessibility support if needed and update/ agree to share your RAP
- Discuss any specific requirements and commitments with UoW and Host Organisation
- Workplace etiquette: Learn about punctuality, dress code, communication norms, and confidentiality
- Technical skills: Brush up on tools or software relevant to the role
- Professional skills: Practice communication, teamwork, time management, and adaptability
- Reach out to the C&E Team for resources and CV, cover letter, and interview preparation

Course readiness

- Understand course requirements and commitments
- Consider travel expenses and costs
- Be aware of StudyLink support and transport options
- Be prepared for a different learning environment

Logistics

Enrol in the course (WIL paper) and gain access to MyWIL – you will be added to the system once you are fully enrolled in your WIL paper. Your WIL Advisor will confirm the appropriate nature of your WIL placement/internship or project.

The forms are:

- Placement Proposal Form – placement details
- Placement Agreement Form – for the Partner Organisation to sign
- Student Statement Form – your commitment to the course
- Health and Safety Form – keeping you safe
- Incident Report Form – to record any medium/ serious incidents.

In the Student Proposal Form confirm:

- Start and end dates
- Work hours and location
- Supervisor contact details
- Accessibility needs
- Any required paperwork and/or background checks outlined by the Partner Organisation.

Attend induction sessions (including and most importantly Health and Safety Induction). Meet your team and understand your role and clarify expectations with your employer/ workplace supervisor. Discuss the supports and accommodations you may need.

During WIL

Starting a placement, internship or project is an exciting and sometimes stressful experience for many students. It will allow you to develop many personal and professional skills, as well as provide opportunities to develop your professional identity.

Key things to consider

- Uphold UoW's core values
- Maintain professionalism, honesty and integrity
- Respect cultural diversity, workplace tikanga, and policies
- Update your documents: Resume/CV tailored to the role with relevant expertise, cover letter, LinkedIn profile.

Confidence & active learning

Adjusting to the workplace and understanding the norms and expectations of the organisation and industry take time. Try to be patient and enjoy the experience. Relax, learn and view questions as a strength, not a weakness.

Maintain an open-minded approach to new experiences and advice:

- Reflect constructively on mistakes as opportunities for personal growth
- Keep a learning journal to reflect on daily tasks, challenges and achievements
- Ask questions, it shows curiosity and initiative
- Seek feedback by regularly asking for constructive feedback and acting on it.

Communication

Always communicate appropriately and in a timely manner with the University, Partner Organisation and your WIL Advisor, if required. There will be different expectations depending on your course.

Communication encompasses a broad range of interactions including:

- Verbal communication – one-on-one discussions, meetings, group forums, telephone conversations
- Written communication - emails, letters, reports
- Active listening
- Adapt your communication style to different audiences
- Treat all written communication, including emails as formal documents.

Seek opportunities to:

- Engage in conversations
- Speak publicly
- Deliver formal presentations.

Do not hesitate to seek guidance when you are uncertain about your communication capabilities – view this as a positive step towards personal and professional development.

Health, safety & wellbeing

- Understand workplace expectations and culture
- Follow all instructions of your workplace supervisor, including induction, training and H&S reporting requirements
- Secure a signed Agreement Form from your employer
- Fill out and submit the Health & Safety Form in MyWIL, which covers H&S induction, emergency procedures, bullying & harassment policies and so on
- Complete your Risk Assessment Module in Moodle
- Remember you have an Incident Form in MyWIL in case you need to report anything. It is mandatory for students to report any H&S incidents or near misses during WIL
- Only use plant machinery or equipment that you have been trained on and are competent to use.

Seek support if needed from your WIL Advisor or other campus services.

Risk awareness

It is important that you complete the Compulsory Risk Awareness Module on Moodle before you start your placement.



Networking

Relationship building is crucial across industries. Developing a strong professional network is the most effective strategy for maximising future job opportunities.

Completing a WIL experience gives you a fantastic opportunity to start building your own professional network.

Where possible make the most of opportunities to attend meetings, events and talk to others at the organisation.

Talk to those around you about their career journeys – people are usually happy to share their stories.

Present yourself professionally and authentically.

Professional ethics

Professional ethics involves respecting an organisation's culture while maintaining personal integrity. At a minimum, employers expect employees to demonstrate:

- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Courtesy
- Conscientiousness

Personal accountability

- Be reliable – do what you commit to doing
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Identify how you can discuss and disclose your disability or impairment prior and during your placement. Talk to Accessibility Services and your WIL Advisor for advice.
- Acknowledge mistakes honestly
- Maintain punctuality
- Dress appropriately for the workplace environment you are in.



When things go wrong

If something happens, or you have a concern that something does not feel right, let someone know. If you feel threatened, in danger or an emergency has occurred, always call 111.

Absences: Life happens, things come up, sickness occurs. If you are unwell or have an emergency or cannot attend your placement for any reason, be sure to contact your workplace supervisor, host contact, or WIL Advisor.

Contacts

Your Host or Partner Organisation contact – is there someone else you feel comfortable and can trust to talk with at the Partner Organisation?

Your UoW Contact – if you don't feel you are able to speak with someone within the organisation, that's okay. Have a chat with staff members involved in your course. Their contact details should be on Te Hononga Platform or Moodle, including their office location.

Work-Integrated Learning Central Unit – if you would like to raise an issue through another channel, you are able to talk with the Work-Integrated Learning Central Unit.

Email: wilcu@waikato.ac.nz and they will arrange a time to speak with you.

UoW Security: Contact security staff at Unisafe on **07 838-4444**.

After WIL

Upon completion of your WIL experience, you will have learnt so much. It is a great time to wrap things up well, which will help with your future career development.

Transform workplace experiences into meaningful learning through two key approaches:

Reflection

- Reflection in action (during the experience)
- Reflection on action (after the experience)
- Review your learning objectives
 - what did you achieve?
- Reflect on your strengths and areas for growth.

Feedback & acknowledgment

- Request a final evaluation or reference letter
- Thank your supervisor and team
- Share your experience with peers, WIL Advisors or your paper convenor.

Next steps

- Update your CV and LinkedIn with your experience
- Identify how this experience informs your career path
- Stay in touch with professional contacts
- Access the Careers and Employability Team on how to make the most of this WIL experience by including in your Professional Profile and attend the 'After WIL' workshop.

Sign up for these and more on MyCareer.

Helpful links

- MyCareer (UoW Careers & Employability Career Development Platform)
- Student Support Services.

Student
Support
Services



MyCareer
Student
Login



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who can I talk to if I don't feel comfortable on my placement?

Start by talking to your UoW Contact for your WIL placement – this could be your academic supervisor, WIL Advisor, or support services staff.

What do I do if I'm asked to do something outside the scope of my internship/placement or project?

If the task aligns with your goals and learning outcomes, it can be beneficial. However, if it doesn't align or makes you uncomfortable, it's okay to say no or check with your UoW Contact first.

I am feeling overwhelmed while on placement – is this normal? What can I do?

It's normal to feel a range of emotions during a placement, from excitement to feeling overwhelmed. This environment is different from typical courses, as you'll be meeting new people, learning workplace norms, and balancing tasks and expectations. Additionally, managing other priorities like courses, work and personal life can contribute to these feelings.

Tip: Plan your upcoming week by listing all your required activities (placement, work, courses, etc).

What do I do if I am being bullied or are experiencing harassment on my internship/ placement or project?

Talk to your UoW Contact immediately – they are there to support you. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination are never acceptable.

What do I wear?

This will depend on the organisation and type of work. For example – if your placement involved outdoor education, a singlet and shorts might be suitable, while a corporate or clinic setting may require long pants and a shirt, jersey, or blazer. Always consider health and safety; for example, wear covered-toe shoes if working with machinery or food. If unsure, dress more formally on your first day or consult your Host Contact.

I'm worried about being judged if I disclose my disability.

Many students share this concern. Disclosure decisions are personal. University staff can help you weigh the benefits of disclosure and discuss strategies for managing conversations professionally.

Can I apply for special consideration?

Yes, you can. Speak with your course convenor if your WIL experience is impacted. More information is available at:

Assessment Regulations
University of Waikato



FAQs

Can I complete WIL if I am an international student?

International students will need to have either of the following two conditions stipulated on their Study Visa to be eligible to participate in WIL placements (internships and professional experience). This does not apply to students completing projects on campus.

- Visa holder may work for practical experience related to the course
- Visa holder may work in any occupation for any employer for the purpose of meeting course requirements in New Zealand.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have the appropriate work rights for the duration of their placement. This applies to Trimester times and holiday periods.

Can I continue working at my placement?

This depends on the placement and organisation. Discuss with your Host Contact if you wish to continue. If possible, clarify whether it will be paid or volunteer work. If not, seek feedback to understand why a 'no' now doesn't mean forever.







THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Tē Whare Wānanga o Waikato

KO TE TANGATA
FOR THE PEOPLE

0800 WAIKATO (0800 924 528)
info@waikato.ac.nz
waikato.ac.nz