WIL Central

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at UNSW
Student Supervision and Support Guidelines for Students

Contents

What is Supervision?

'Quality supervision and support is central to a positive WIL experience for students'
(Ferns et al. 2015, p. 171).

'Supervision … plays a critical role in WIL programs and is a key factor underpinning their
[student] success' (Winchester-Seeto et al. 2016, p. 101).

These quotations highlight the vital role of supervision in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).
Supervisors are referred to differently in different disciplines and professions e.g. mentor, advisor,
preceptor, course convenor etc., and their functions and purposes may also differ, but their
essential role is similar. There is no doubt that without supervisors, both at University and at the
workplace, few would accomplish the complex learning that needs to occur, or successfully
navigate the many emotional challenges. To survive and thrive in WIL, students need the support
and guidance of a dedicated supervisor (or supervision team).

A complex range of activities and factors underpin a positive WIL learning experience. Learning in WIL is very different to learning in a classroom and requires different skills. Hays & Clements (2011) suggest that 'supervision is the guidance and support students need while on placement to ensure the learning experience is optimised and that they have the overall most positive experience possible' (p. 3).

Simply put 'the purpose of supervision is to guide and manage work, support students to develop their skills, and formally recognize professional practice and learning' (ACEN 2017, p. 1).

Roles of Supervisors

The actual roles and duties of supervisors varies according to discipline, profession, and the model of WIL undertaken. Both University and workplace supervisors play an important part in ensuring student safety and well-being, as well as responsibility for enabling student learning. Workplace and university supervisors play different roles (Winchester-Seeto et al. 2106) and work collaboratively in administering, managing, educating, supporting and supervising the student's progress throughout the WIL activity.

For more detail on the roles and responsibilities undertaken by supervisors in WIL see Appendix A. It is important to note that these roles vary enormously depending on discipline and design of curriculum.

Supervision: Good Practice

Ellis (2010) states that 'good supervision is about the relationship between supervisor and supervisee (p. 106) and almost every aspect of supervision depends on a positive, open and supportive relationship between the two (Adams, 2013). It is particularly important that both supervisor and student understand that the student must be an active participant in their learning, as far as training, safety, and ability allows. Observation without any follow-up activity is not WIL and will not lead to positive learning results.

There are several strategies that are used in supervision:

- modelling – showing the correct approach and technique
- direct instruction – telling how to do something
- feedback – providing information on performance to help improve future performance
- self-directed learning – setting own goals and using reflective practice
- monitored practice – supervisor observes and checks progress (Goodyear, 2014; Giddings et al. 2003)

Feedback features strongly in any discussion about supervision good practice. To foster maximum progress, feedback should not only be about performance, but also address any concerns students have, and ideally be a two-way process (ACEN 2017).

Supervision Guide for Students

WIL staff (Course Authority and/or WIL support staff) and workplace supervisors play an important role in making WIL a positive and productive learning experience, but it is ultimately you, the student, who is responsible for your own learning. To gain the most advantage from your WIL Activity, there are many things you can do, beginning with being well prepared before starting, asking for help when needed, and taking every opportunity available to maximise your learning.

For more information see *Preparing for WIL: Student Checklist* and the [UNSW Work Integrated Learning Procedure](#).

Getting a WIL Activity organised

If you are undertaking a placement, it is important to check with your course WIL Staff to find out how to go about contacting your workplace supervisor. You also need to read up all the course documents and messages from WIL Staff to make sure that you have signed and submitted all the required paperwork so that your placement can start on time.

If you are required to find your own placement, you need to read the documents provided by WIL Staff and ask questions if you are not sure of how to proceed. If you are having difficulties finding a suitable placement, it is also important to contact WIL Staff as soon as possible to discuss options.

For students who are undertaking WIL projects on or off campus, you will need to be sure you have read all the communications from WIL Staff and signed and submitted all required paperwork. This must be done well before the course starts.

Preparing for the WIL activity

Before the WIL activity begins there are many things that need to be completed in addition to reading and signing the WIL Agreement (where required). These will vary depending on which course you take. Information is available in the course outline and other documents provided by WIL Staff (further information can be found in the *Preparing for WIL: Student Checklist*). It is important to start preparation well ahead of your placement to leave enough time for all of these tasks. Some of these tasks, such as police checks and working with children checks, can take some weeks to complete.

Making the most of opportunities in the WIL activity

Learning in a workplace is very different to learning in a classroom and requires a different approach. Some tips to enhance learning include:

- being curious and open to new experiences;
- asking questions (at the right time, not all the time; in the right place; and respectfully, with consideration of the workload of others);
- getting involved and not sitting on the sidelines, being active in volunteering to take on tasks etc;
- seeking feedback, thinking about it, and putting it into action;

- reflecting on the experience may lead to new insights e.g. through journals;
- if working in a group, making sure everyone in the group knows what is expected, and making it possible for all members of the group to learn and gain a positive outcome.

Keeping up with course requirements

Sometimes the placement experience seems overwhelming and it is difficult to remember that there are also other course requirements such as classes to attend, journals to be completed, or assessment tasks to submit. It is important, therefore, to be mindful of all of the requirements of the WIL activity and associated course, and to ensure quality time is allocated to complete all tasks. In particular, do not miss the important information, learning and opportunities for peer support that occur in orientation activities. Similarly, skipping or doing only the bare minimum for activities aimed to improve reflection e.g. journals or blog posts, can severely impact your learning and outcomes.

In the midst of all the things you have to do, it is easy to overlook your own well-being. Keeping up with course requirements and placement demands is not always easy and it is important to try and seek an appropriate balance between university work, placements and life outside the university. It is also important to reach out to others e.g. family, friends, WIL staff etc. if you are feeling overwhelmed or are having difficulties of any kind. This is better done as early as possible, as leaving this until the end of the WIL activity may not allow enough time for a successful outcome.

Feedback – making the most of it

Feedback is vital to learning and will be an important feature in future work and workplaces. Seeking and dealing with feedback is a useful skill both in the placement, and for any future employment.

Feedback can be sought from: WIL staff, your workplace supervisor and others in the workplace.

Making the most of feedback involves:
- listening and asking questions to clarify;
- carefully considering, accepting or taking the feedback on board;
- using the feedback effectively;
- asking questions respectfully where there is disagreement with feedback

Professional conduct

It is expected that you behave professionally at all times and abide by the UNSW Student Code of Conduct. This includes making sure you know and abide by any workplace protocols such as appropriate professional dress, understand rules about confidentiality, privacy, work health and safety, use of mobile phones and other personal computing devices, etc. Showing courtesy to co-workers and taking opportunities to network will make the placement more enjoyable for everyone.

Communicating regularly with UNSW WIL Staff and workplace supervisors

Communication is important to making sure everything runs smoothly and that everyone has an enjoyable and positive learning experience. You should keep in regular contact with WIL staff and your workplace supervisors (electronically or face-to-face) throughout your WIL activity. This applies when everything is going well, but most especially when things are not going so well. Regular communication also means you do not miss out on receiving important information and updates.

When there are concerns or difficulties

If you have concerns or are encountering difficulties, you should talk to an appropriate person. Which person is most appropriate will depend on the issue and if not sure, you should contact WIL staff. Names and contact details will be available in the course guide.

For serious issues you must tell the workplace supervisors and make contact with WIL Staff as soon as possible. For further advice contact your WIL Staff or UNSW's WIL Central at wil@unsw.edu.au.

Sexual misconduct is a UNSW term that describes behaviour of a sexual nature that is unacceptable, this includes sexual assault and sexual harassment. Students can report incidents of sexual misconduct on the reporting portal at www.student.unsw.edu.au/harassment

If you are feeling overwhelmed or not coping with the placement or course, you can seek help from UNSW CAPS (Counselling and Psychological Services) or Medical Services. WIL Staff can provide contact information.

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APPENDIX A: Roles and Responsibilities of Host and Academic Supervisors

(From Winchester-Seeto et al. 2016)

Host supervisor	Academic supervisor
Administrative/management role	
Communication	*Communication*
Inform university of student issues	Provide information to students/hosts on expectations
Ongoing feedback to university	
Regular communication and feedback with student	Provide feedback to hosts on student progress
	Check in on students
Prevention of problems	Be available to host/student to deal with issues
Recruitment and selection	*Recruitment and selection*
Advise university of requirements and opportunities for student interns	Matching student (interests, skills) to host organisation
Selection process, e.g. interviews	Ensure project meaningful for student and beneficial for host
Duty of care	*Student preparation*
Orientation/induction to organisation/specific context, e.g. health/safety	Pre-placement meetings, e.g. code of conduct, CV writing
Key people in organisation	Setting and managing expectations
Managing the experience	*Managing problems and trouble shooting*
Setting expectations/roles, e.g. learning contract	Trouble shooing problems and intervening when needed (host/student)
Managing deadlines, timely completion	Undertake at-risk assessment/visit
Problem students	
Logistics of placement	*Monitoring*
Work requirements, workspace and requisites	Monitor student/host during placement
Paperwork	Site visits, phone calls, Skype etc.
Project design and logistics	*Sourcing project, activity and partners*
Provide a meaningful experience to students	Negotiate contract, deadlines
Scoping and negotiating projects	Ensure project/activity aligns with learning outcomes
	Connect students with range of options for partners
	Maintaining relationships
	Review placement to identify concerns/future opportunities
	Provide feedback to partners for quality assurance/enhancement
	Organise partner events

Support role

Emotional support
Mentoring students
Being flexible

Emotional support
Pastoral care of students, e.g. first point of call for students with issues
Advise partners of potentially sensitive activities for particular students

Special issues
Support students with particular issues, e.g. mental illness

Special issues
Support students at risk

Availability and accessibility
Ongoing supervision of student, e.g. regular meetings
Being available and accessible to students

Partner support
Support partners

Make comfortable
Make student feel comfortable in workplace
Ease students negative emotions, e.g. anxiety

Problem solving
Support students experiencing difficulties, e.g. making deadlines

Personal and professional development
Mentor students, e.g. career advice
Introduce students to expectations of the profession

Educational role

Assessment and evaluation
Input to university on student performance for assessment
Complete evaluation/assessment form for university
Provide formal feedback to student on performance

Assessment and evaluation
Setting assessment tasks/criteria
Allocating final grade
Provision of academic feedback to student

Designing project or activity
Ensure activity meets required learning outcomes
Negotiate project in negotiation with students/ academics

Curriculum design
Curriculum design and development

Educational input
Teach specific skills
Provide additional training/materials to link course
Answer student questions

Teaching
Facilitate pre-activity workshops/tutorials re: transition to professional life/job-readiness
Teach generic skills (e.g. team work), link theory to practice

Ensuring a quality learning experience	*Education related to specific project*
Act as role model/mentor to students and guide learning	Provide academic assistance to students on specific aspects of activity
Identify specific skills students need to develop	
Provide meaningful work	
Feedback	*Debriefing*
Provide regular feedback on student progress/performance	Facilitating student reflection on their experience/learning
	Integrating theory and practice
Overseeing student progress	
Ensure students are on track	
Provide students with a variety of work	

Reference: Winchester-Seeto, T., Rowe, A., and Mackaway, J. 2016, 'Sharing the load: Understanding the roles of academics and host supervisors in work-integrated learning', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, Vol. 17, No. 20, pp. 107-118.