UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
Department of Education Innovation

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) POLICY

Document type: Policy
Policy Category: Teaching and Learning

Document number: S 5148/24

TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Policy on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is to provide a governance structure for the implementation of work-integrated learning that is embedded in the University's academic and professional qualifications.

The WIL policy regulates credit-bearing WIL placements through clearly defined principles and standards and by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and partners in WIL.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Students who are enrolled in programs that require WIL as part of their curriculum and students participating in internships or project-based WIL.

- Staff members who are responsible for:

  o integrating WIL into the curriculum and ensuring that learning outcomes are met, staff members who provide academic guidance and monitor student progress during placements;

  o the design, delivery, and assessment of WIL components within academic programs; and

  o supporting WIL-related activities.

- Professional bodies or industry partners involved in setting standards or providing accreditation for WIL programs.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

3.1   For Students

Failure to adhere to WIL requirements may result in an incomplete status for the WIL module and qualification not being awarded or disciplinary action for violations such as misconduct during placements (e.g., absenteeism, inappropriate behaviour).

3.2   For Employees

Non-compliance with their role in supervising, assessing, or coordinating WIL activities could lead to disciplinary action.

3.3   For External stakeholders

External stakeholders that do not comply with WIL agreements or fail to provide safe and conducive environments for students may have their partnership with the University terminated.

3.4   For the University

Non-compliance may result in reputational damage, making it difficult to attract quality students or partners. In cases where non-compliance leads to legal liabilities (e.g., workplace accidents involving students), the University could face financial penalties or legal action. Non-compliance with this policy where learning programmes have a WIL component, may lead to the de-accreditation of the qualification.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Work-integrated learning is based on partnerships with appropriate sites where students are placed for professional development. WIL is facilitated by means of agreements that clearly outline the respective responsibilities, duties, and obligations of the University, the placement site, and the students who are placed there.

Appropriate mechanisms exist to place students, orient them to their placement, provide adequate supervision and mentoring, and ensure sound assessment practices. UP and training providers share information about their expectations to ensure that WIL is well-coordinated and meets the needs of both partners.

5. DEFINITIONS

Community engagement:	Community engagement is defined in and regulated by the UP Community Engagement Policy. Community engagement differs from WIL primarily in that it is driven by the University's commitment to promoting social responsibility and active citizenship. However, in a profession such as social work, it also serves as professional practice. Although community engagement is ordinarily also attached to the curriculum and can overlap with WIL in the approaches to learning during community engagement, community engagement is not necessarily linked to a professional qualification or professional development as required by a professional body.
Experiential learning:	Experiential learning entails the transdisciplinary exploration of real-world problems that require the application of theory to practice so that students can make meaning of learning from direct experience.
Internships:	An internship is a fixed period of placement that is a statutory requirement for programmes that lead to registration with a professional body. Internships are arranged through formal agreements with workplaces. Their aim is to develop

students' professional competence standards as prescribed by the professional bodies.

Learnerships*:*   Learnerships are like internships, where students have the opportunity to apply their theoretical training in on-the-job practice. Learnerships involve a period of placement with an employer while students are enrolled for their qualification, and are framed by legally binding agreements between the employer, the student, and the training provider. Learnership placements do not ordinarily link to a professional registration.

Problem-based learning: Problem-based learning is a pedagogical approach or educational strategy often used in health contexts to develop diagnostic or clinical professional skills. It is also used in many other disciplines, including engineering, business, law, education, social sciences, environmental studies, and architecture. It can be taught in small groups,[1] and does not necessarily involve formal placement in a work context.

Project-based learning: Projects provide meaningful and authentic experiences for students to develop essential knowledge and skills in exploring complex questions, challenges, or problems[2] and developing conceptual knowledge. Project-based learning can, but does not need to involve, placement or engagement with communities or workplaces.

Work-based learning: This type of learning relies more on the knowledge and competencies required in the workplace than on the curriculum. Work-based learning aims to facilitate students' awareness of the nature and demands of a workplace and the attributes required.[3]

Work-integrated learning: Based on the CHE[4] guidelines, WIL is defined as curricular, pedagogic, and assessment practices that integrate formal learning with defined periods of paid/unpaid, structured, supervised, and assessed workplace placement as part of the statutory requirements for awarding a qualification.[5] WIL can be defined as authentic, situated learning oriented towards real-world and work-related competencies, and it aims to enhance student professional development by integrating theoretical knowledge attained through formal study with practice-based knowledge and skills gained from placement in professional contexts. WIL essentially comprises the career-focused education required to attain professional qualifications. It includes a range of pedagogical approaches, which are credit-bearing and comprise learning in formal and professional contexts.

---

[1] Trullas et.al. (2022). Effectiveness of problem-based learning methodology in undergraduate medical education: A scoping review. *BMC Medical Education, 22:* 104. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03154-8
[2] https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl
[3] https://wbl.fhi360.org/introduction-to-work-based-learning/
[4] CHE Work-integrated learning good practice guide. HE Monitor 12, August 2011
[5] See HEQSF, 2013

Workplace learning:	This is learning that takes place at a workplace where students are placed for practicum-based learning. The period of placement varies. Depending on the supervision model, workplace learning can be partially or fully integrated with the curriculum.

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WIL is a strategic educational approach that integrates academic learning with practical professional experience through structured partnerships with placement sites.

In accordance with the policy statement, WIL involves agreements that clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of the University, the placement sites, and the students. These agreements are intended to ensure effective management of the WIL process, including student placement, orientation, supervision, mentoring, and assessment.

WIL aims to provide students with authentic, real-world experiences that develop their work-related competencies and enhance their development of professional competencies. By combining theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom with practical skills acquired in professional settings, WIL supports career-focused education and is essential for students pursuing professional qualifications.

WIL encompasses a variety of **credit-bearing** pedagogical strategies and is accompanied by a guarantee of proper supervision, mentoring, and structured assessment. These strategies can also be incorporated into a learning programme outside of WIL placement and typically include workplace learning, work-based learning, experiential learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, internships, and learnerships.

This comprehensive WIL policy is focused on credit-bearing WIL placements that aim to integrate academic learning and professional practice through structured placements in a work context to ensure students are well-prepared for the demands of their profession.

7. ASSESSMENT

Assessment of WIL takes place in accordance with the Assessment Policy which makes provision for a range of formative and summative assessment practices.

Because WIL is aimed at professional development, assessment of WIL should ideally be structured to focus on day-one professional competencies (knowledge, skills, values/attitudes),[6] as may be prescribed by the relevant professional body, rather than on formal academic assessment of content only. Students are expected to keep detailed records of their attendance and professional activities during WIL for audit, verification, and assessment purposes prior to graduation.

8. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Recognition of prior learning will not be considered for WIL, especially where WIL is credit-bearing and integrated into the academic curriculum as a prerequisite for the awarding of a qualification and where it is a requirement for registration with a professional body.

9. STUDENT SUPPORT

9.1 Students with special needs

Students with special needs must be accommodated in the WIL component with careful consideration of the relevance of the placement, accommodation needed during the placement, and any other support that might be required. Students must register with the relevant unit to enable the University to ensure that they can participate optimally in the WIL component of their programme.

9.2 International students

International students who participate in WIL during their stay in South Africa, must register for the relevant WIL-related modules and comply with all the requirements set out in the relevant study guide.

---

[6]
https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Conferences_Events/sites/deans2009/deans_abstract/day3/session6/Jorna.pdf

10. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT

10.1 Overview

Quality assurance and management of WIL begins with the selection of an adequate placement site, with consideration of the human and other resources and infrastructure, to offer a quality placement that enables students to meet the professional outcomes of their learning programme. A formal agreement between the University and the placement site shall make provision for mechanisms to assure and manage the quality of the WIL placements.

10.2 Quality assurance

Quality assurance in the WIL policy provides an outline for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of WIL placements in the University. The policy is designed to ensure that WIL is delivered at a high standard, aligns with the University's strategic priorities, and meets the needs of all stakeholders.

Governance and oversight will be provided through a dedicated WIL governance structure responsible for setting standards, monitoring compliance, and ensuring alignment with strategic priorities. All partnerships with placement sites must be formalised through agreements that outline the respective responsibilities, duties, and obligations of the University, the placement sites, and the students. These agreements should be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.

10.3 Quality management

Quality management for WIL placements must provide effective oversight and facilitation of students' practical experiences. This involves, *inter alia*:

1. **Placement site:** Placement sites are identified, evaluated, selected, and approved using predefined criteria to ensure a meaningful, relevant, high-quality, and authentic workplace experience. Site visits will confirm the sites' capacity to support WIL objectives. Placement sites must comply with health and safety regulations.

2. **Orientation:** Students will undergo orientation prior to their placement to prepare them for the work setting, including understanding site operations, culture, and expectations.

3. **Site supervision/mentoring:** Qualified supervisors and/or mentors must be available to students to provide professional guidance and support, with regular check-ins conducted to monitor progress and address any issues. Students are expected to adhere to a code of conduct, maintaining high standards of professional behaviour.

4. **Assessment:** Assessment in the workplace will be based on clearly defined criteria for academic and professional day-one competencies. Continuous feedback mechanisms must be in place to collect and analyse input from supervisors and mentors, students, and placement sites. Auditable procedures must be in place to record students' adherence to placement requirements and authorised/unauthorised absence from the WIL placement. Academic assessment must be moderated by academic staff at the University.

S 5148/24

11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

11.1 Professional bodies

Statutory professional bodies prescribe the requirements for WIL in terms of professional competencies for programmes that lead to registration with such a professional body. These requirements must be accommodated in the WIL curriculum and ensure that students' placements meet the requirements and standards prescribed by the professional body.

11.2 University

Security Services collaborate with WIL coordinators to ensure that security protocols are in place for student safety where required.

Deans of Faculties are responsible for the implementation of WIL in qualifications in their Faculties.

Capacity development supervisors and mentors assist WIL coordinators in the development and dissemination of emergency procedures and contact information by means of short courses in supervision and/or mentoring.

Career Services may assist in identifying and establishing partnerships with appropriate placement sites where needed. In some cases, they may coordinate with placement sites to ensure alignment with students' career goals.

WIL/module coordinators plan, manage, and coordinate WIL in accordance with academic and professional standards; facilitate agreements between the University, placement sites, and students; develop guidelines that are in line with this policy and arrange orientation sessions before placements commence; provide support and guidance to students and placement sites throughout the WIL process; monitor and evaluate adherence to the requirements of WIL; and address issues or concerns that may arise.

Students adhere to the terms of the placement agreement and comply with all WIL placement policies and procedures; participate in orientation sessions; familiarise themselves with health and safety protocols; communicate effectively with site supervisors and the University WIL coordinator regarding their placements; act with professionalism at all times; complete the required assessments; and provide feedback on their placement experience to the WIL coordinator.

11.3 Placement site

Site manager/coordinator collaborates with the University to finalise placement agreements and ensure legal and regulatory compliance; communicates the site's expectations to the University so students can be adequately prepared during their orientation; undertakes to provide appropriately structured and supervised work experience for students in line with the prescribed WIL curriculum; and ensures that the necessary infrastructure, human and other resources, and equipment are in place to facilitate a quality WIL placement.

Site supervisor/mentor orients students to their WIL placement, the work environment, and the health and safety practices and emergency procedure protocols to be followed; offers appropriate supervision and/or mentoring and structured feedback and assessment of students' performance

and progress; addresses any issues related to student welfare and communicates with the University as needed.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

The risk management of WIL-related placement processes entails managing placements effectively, mitigating risks, and protecting all stakeholders. Key aspects of risk management that must be assured include:

1. **Health and safety compliance**: All industry placements must comply with health and safety regulations to provide a secure working environment for students. The University will collaborate closely with placement sites to identify, manage, and mitigate health and safety risks. This includes ensuring that placement sites meet relevant health and safety standards and addressing potential hazards that could impact students.

2. **Emergency protocols**: Comprehensive emergency protocols and procedures must be established to handle incidents during industry placements. Students will be thoroughly informed about these protocols as part of their orientation. The University will work with placement sites to ensure they have clear procedures for managing emergencies, and students will be made aware of whom to contact in the event of an incident.

3. **Legal considerations and placement guarantees**: The University is dedicated to providing a safe and legally compliant placement experience. This involves ensuring that placement agreements address legal requirements and responsibilities related to student safety and well-being. The University will work with placement sites to develop clear agreements that cover legal obligations and is in line with the relevant institutional policies.

4. **Insurance coverage**: Students engaged in WIL are covered by the University of Pretoria's insurance policy. This coverage is intended to protect students during their placements and effectively manage any associated risks.

5. **Communication strategy:** A strategy to inform students of emergency contacts and procedures must be in place at both the placement site and the University. This strategy will also be shared with placement sites through various channels (eg, clickUP, email) to ensure consistency.

6. **Grievance procedure**: A grievance procedure must be in place to ensure that the site manager/coordinator, supervisor/mentor, student, and WIL coordinator agree on how to manage complaints or conflicts relating to (i) the professional and/or ethical conduct of students or supervisors/mentors during the placement, (ii) the adequacy of the WIL placement, and (iii) assessment and feedback.

13. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Policy on Curriculum Design and Development

S 5148/24

- Policy on Teaching and Learning
- Policy on Community Engagement (CE)
- Policy on Assessment
- Reimagining Curricula for a Just University in a Vibrant Democracy
- Information Governance and Privacy Protection (iGaPP) policies

14. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Deans and Directors are responsible for the implementation of this policy in the relevant Faculties and Professional Services Departments and to ensure that it is integrated into both the curriculum and the operational processes of the University.

15. POLICY LIFE CYCLE

The policy should be reviewed at least five years after the date of approval.

16. DOCUMENT METADATA

Document number:	*S 5148/24*
Document version:	*S 5148/24 is the 1st approved version*
Document approval authority:	*Senate*
Document approval date:	*23 October 2024*
Document owner:	*Director: Education Innovation*
Next review date:	*23 October 2029*
Visibility: Display on staff intranet Display on student intranet Display on public web	√ √ √