

Work-integrated learning as a component of the capstone experience in undergraduate law¹

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There is currently little guidance in the Australian literature in relation to how to design an effective capstone experience. As a result, universities often fail to provide students with a genuine culminating experience in the final year of their degree. This paper will consider the key objectives of capstone experiences – closure and transition – and will examine how these objectives can be met by a work-integrated learning (WIL) experience. This paper presents an argument for the inclusion of WIL as a component of a capstone experience. WIL is consistent with capstone objectives in focusing on the transition to professional practice. However, the capacity of WIL to meet all of the objectives of capstones may be limited. The paper posits that while WIL should be considered as a potential component of a capstone experience, educators should ensure that WIL is not equated with a capstone experience unless it is carefully designed to ensure that all the objectives of capstones are met. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2012, 13(1), 1-12*)

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INTRODUCTION

The authors are currently investigating an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) funded research Project ('the Project') which aims to improve capstone experiences in law through curriculum renewal. The Project seeks to achieve curriculum renewal for legal education through the articulation of a set of interconnected curriculum design principles for the final year and the design of a transferable model for an effective final year program. This paper will report on an aspect of the Project relating to the role of work-integrated learning (WIL) as a component of a capstone experience. Conceptions of WIL and capstone experiences are currently high on the Australian university learning and teaching agenda. However, despite the obvious synergies between the two learning experiences, the relationship between capstone and WIL and the 'joined-up' role these learning experiences might play in facilitating student transition from tertiary study to the world of work and professional practice have not been clearly articulated.

This paper will report on the Project's examination of the relationship between capstone and WIL and their potential interconnectedness. First, the paper provides an overview of the Project's findings in identifying organising principles for the design of capstone experiences. These research- and evidence-based findings have synthesised the contemporary capstone

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literature in the light of iterative input from the Project's reference group and following feedback from final year student and recent graduate focus groups. Second, the paper will provide a brief overview of selected literature in relation to WIL. Third, the role of WIL as a component of a capstone experience is explored. Given the emphasis of WIL on the integration of discipline knowledge with the workplace and work practice, in particular the development of employability skills, this paper will suggest that the role of WIL in capstone experiences is primarily to aid the transition to professional practice by assisting students to develop transferable skills, to gain an awareness of the culture of their discipline and to provide career direction. It is the authors' contention that it is unrealistic to expect that WIL opportunities will be routinely capable of delivering on all of the desirable capstone objectives; rather the whole of the final year of the degree should be considered for its contribution in this regard. The paper concludes that the better view is that WIL should be viewed as one component of a larger, more holistic, capstone experience, rather than a stand-alone capstone experience in its own right.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

A capstone is "a crowning course [subject] or experience coming at the end of a sequence of courses [subjects] with the specific objective of *integrating* a body of relatively fragmented knowledge into a unified whole" (Durel, 1993, p. 223). It is an opportunity for final year students to both look back on their undergraduate study in an effort to make sense of what they have accomplished, and to look forward to a professional existence where they can build on that foundation. It is during the capstone experience that students complete the transition from their primarily student identity to embrace their beginning professional identity (Durel, 1993). Given the role of capstones in facilitating programme integration and student transition to professional practice, there is a clear link between capstone experiences and WIL.

In the process of conceptualising an organising framework to guide informed practice around capstone curriculum design, the Project has identified six capstone curriculum principles relating to transition, closure, diversity, engagement, assessment and evaluation (the draft Principles are included as Attachment A). Of these principles, the two principal objectives of capstones that can be drawn from the various definitions in the literature are closure and transition (Durel, 1993; Heinemann, 1997; Gardner, 1999). Gardner asserts that the most important elements of a final year experience are the opportunity to reflect on undergraduate learning; integration and closure; and a holistic approach to the transition to life beyond university. Reflective practice is one means of enabling students to achieve closure and transition to their post-university life.

Closure is not clearly defined in the literature and most commentators use the terms *closure* and *integration* interchangeably (for example see Heineman, 1997; Gardner, 1999). In our view, *closure* is a wider term which refers to a culminating experience that assists students to attain a sense of what it means to be a graduate of the particular discipline. *Integration* is one means by which that sense of closure can be achieved. Integration refers to the "objective of integrating a body of relatively fragmented knowledge into a unified whole" (Durel, 1993, p. 223). It includes, but extends beyond, the integration of theory with practice. It allows students "to pull together all the ideas presented in different courses [subjects] and construct some sort of integrated, meaningful whole" (Heinemann, 1997). Heinemann identifies several benefits of integration. First, it enables students to make sense of the confusion

caused by differences between subjects and academics (for example, in the use of terminology). Second, it is the means by which students understand what it means to be a graduate in a particular discipline. Third, only integrated knowledge is meaningful and useful and can be applied in unfamiliar situations. Finally, integration can achieve intellectual consolidation and allows for competence testing, an issue of increasing importance in the contemporary assurance of learning environment.

It has been argued that, in order to achieve closure, capstones should concentrate on the integration of existing knowledge and skills rather than the acquisition of new content (Bailey, Oliver & Townsend, 2007). While the importance of integration is acknowledged, in the authors' view a capstone experience should do more than achieve the integration of existing knowledge and skills. Capstones should also allow students to experience the complexity of the discipline in the context of their emerging professional identity, providing an opportunity to synthesise their undergraduate learning (Hovorka, 2009). Conceptualised in this way, a capstone is a culminating experience in which students are asked to integrate, apply, critique and extend the knowledge and skills they have acquired over the course of their undergraduate study (Wagenaar, 1993; Myers & Richmond, 1998; Hoffman, 2003). Capstone subjects are likely to be the only opportunities within the degree programme that traverse the breadth of the curriculum, adding depth and meaning to concepts and ideas previously introduced, and encouraging students to use this synthesised knowledge in authentic professional contexts.

In addition to such integration, synthesis and extension of programme learning, the culminating nature of the capstone experience is also reflected in the critical facilitation of student awareness of what it means to be a graduate of the discipline, and an emerging sense of professional identity; an identity which then continues to grow in their post university life (Durel, 1993; Hovorka, 2009). Well-designed capstone courses aid this transition by contributing markedly to the development of a relevant professional identity (Jervis & Hartley, 2005; Bailey et al., 2007), particularly by enabling students to make connections between their learning and authentic professional contexts. While the literature clearly recognises the important role of capstones in this development, it is less clear on how this should be achieved. WIL approaches - such as practicums, internships, fieldwork, placements and the like, that enable student engagement with the professional identity of their discipline - are most often referred to as effective mechanisms in this regard.

However, while providing retrospective closure (in the broad sense described above) is critical, effective capstones also support and facilitate transition (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998) and bridge the gap between university studies and new endeavours (Heinemann, 2007). Comparisons have been made between the transition from secondary to tertiary study and from tertiary education to professional practice (Jervis & Hartley, 2005; Wells, Kift & Field, 2008). In this regard, universities have been encouraged to provide students with specific support during the final year to assist them to navigate the changes associated with university completion and to develop an enabling, forward-looking focus in anticipation of life post-university; "[to] cope with impending change, become aware of how all aspects of their lives have contributed to their development as learners, and find connections between their academic experience and future plans" (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998). It is essential to a positive 'transition out' that graduates be equipped with the ability to deal successfully with the uncertainty, complexity and change that will attend a lifetime of modern

professional practice and will demand continuous engagement with new learning inevitably beyond the scope of their prior university studies.

Relevantly then, as the Project's draft Final Year Curriculum Principles (Attachment A) seek to explicate, capstone experiences also support transition by assisting students to consolidate the development of their self-management skills (for example, lifelong learning skills, resilience, self-confidence and self-efficacy). The acquisition of lifelong learning skills has been shown to smooth the transition from university to professional practice (Fairchild & Taylor, 2000), and to enhance motivation, initiative and creativity in the workplace. Reflective practice has been recognised as an essential aspect of lifelong learning (Brockbank & McGill, 1998), and personal self reflection is essential to the successful transition to professional practice (Hovorka, 2009). Reflection fosters both personal and professional development (Olsen, Weber & Trimble, 2002), and contributes to the acquisition and refinement of higher order cognitive skills, including critical thinking (Forde, 2006). Students need to be provided with opportunities to consider and reflect on what they have learned, and to contemplate the ways in which their knowledge could be used in a professional context (Dunlap, 2005).

A further vital component of any positive transition to the world of work is support for students to manage their career planning and development processes, and the provision of opportunities for them to consider how their own knowledge and skills might interact with different professional skill sets (Gardner, 1999). The literature suggests that universities should provide students with career development learning, together with information on graduate destinations, thereby enabling students to consider the career paths of those who went before them (Myers & Richmond, 1998) and empower their own career self-management. Smith, Brooks, Lichtenberg, McIlveen, Torjul and Tyler (2009) assert that:

...career development learning enhances student engagement; the student experience; student transitions; and contributes to workplace productivity. It is valuable to provide a wide spectrum of workplace experiences to facilitate student participation in work related learning, hence curriculum reform and design across the sector (including learning tools and resources) should enhance this wider access to career development learning and work related learning. (p.10)

The objectives of both closure and transition are advanced when capstones enable students to enhance their professional skills and competencies so they can be applied in complex environments post-graduation. A range of generic employability skills (as a subset of graduate attributes) have been identified as crucial outcomes of the capstone experience, including interpersonal and communication skills, critical thinking, decision-making, ethical and philosophical appreciation, and leadership (Aitkin & Neer, 1992, as cited in Heinemann, 1997, p. 6). In readiness for contemporary workplaces, adaptability and flexibility also warrant inclusion, as the nature of modern workplace practice sees vast changes occurring in remarkably short periods of time (Heinemann, 1997). Successful capstones involve the demonstration of higher cognitive skills, including higher order knowledge and critical analysis (Durel, 1993), and equip students with the building blocks, the links and the functions that span the divide between student and critical professional.

The capstone literature displays some tension between the sometimes opposing objectives of closure and transition (Heinemann, 1997). This is exacerbated by the tendency of most commentators to focus on capstone subjects rather than a holistic capstone experience which

may take place across a number of subjects of study. Existing capstone subjects generally focus on either closure (and integration) or transition (Heinemann, 1997), rather than seeking to balance the two objectives. A further complication is that much of the literature in the United States refers to capstones in or across majors rather than to capstones for an entire degree. Arguably, a capstone for a major may more readily achieve closure with the focus being on bringing together the various elements of the area of study, whereas a capstone for a whole degree may more readily focus on transition.

Before moving on to a consideration and comparison of WIL in the capstone context, specific consideration of the central tenet of reflective practice and its contribution to capstone closure and transition is warranted. As the brief overview above has demonstrated, reflective practice is a central theoretical foundation for the design and delivery of capstone experiences (Kift, Field & Wells, 2008) primarily because it is a malleable device that enables students to achieve closure on their programme learning and transition to post-university life from various perspectives, including learner capabilities and performance, career, workplace, personal development, professional identity and whole-of-programme achievement. For example, embedded reflective learning assists students to integrate what they have learned with existing knowledge (Dunlap, 2005) and to consider critically their prior learning (Baker, 1997) and the ways in which their knowledge and skills may be used in professional contexts (Dunlap, 2005). Integrative learning in its broadest sense – temporally across the programme of study, personally and professionally, and as between university identity and global citizenry – is encouraged by reflection and interpretation (Fernandez, 2006). As discussed above, integral to lifelong learning, reflection fosters both personal and professional development (Olsen, Weber & Trimble, 2002), and contributes to the acquisition and refinement of higher order cognitive skills, including critical thinking (Forde, 2006). In the context of programme completion, a reflective component also serves to highlight a student's sense of accomplishment.

Conceptualised in this way, the role of reflective practice in effective capstone design is desirably broad and pervasive, facilitating both retrospective and forward-looking learning and, through personal reflection, enabling the potential for personal transformation, the promotion of self awareness and the acquisition of a sense of citizenship (Hovorka, 2009). It is suggested that these objectives are more expansive than those traditionally harnessed in the WIL environment, where the focus is understandably on reflective learning aligned to the context of the (authentic) workplace and the practice of work. This is not to deny the transformative potential of reflection in the WIL context, but rather to observe that its rationale and purpose are necessarily different, and quite intentionally so, in that environment.

The broad and complex objectives of effective capstone experiences that have been described in this section may be achieved in a variety of ways: for example, by way of an integrated suite of final year subjects; by modules placed across the final year programme, which might be further supported by cornerstone experiences at critical points throughout the programme to assure student preparedness for capstone engagement; or by individual subjects of study. WIL is obviously an increasingly common example of a capstone approach. Other capstone experiences frequently referred to in the literature include research projects; case studies; capstone events such as presentations, exhibitions, conferences and performances; project or problem based learning opportunities; and simulations, virtual learning environments and competitions. WIL as an example of a capstone experience will now be discussed.

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

In recent years, there has been a growing demand for graduates to have enhanced work experience and to be work ready. It has been argued that the integration of work and study while at university is a means of improving work readiness (Universities Australia, 2008) and of developing graduate attributes and employability skills (Bates, Bates & Bates, 2007). As a result, WIL has proliferated in Australian universities, many of which have included “WIL goals in intuitional strategic directions and the provision of internal structures and support” (Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher & Pretto, 2008, p. 3).

There have been many definitions of WIL provided by the literature (Abeysekera, 2006). WIL is widely used to describe situations where students spend time in a workplace setting as part of learning. The Australian Minister for Employment Participation, the Hon Brendan O'Connor has conceptualised WIL as having the “immeasurable value of integrating real work experience into academic programs” and further stated that “[e]ffective Work-Integrated Learning is the key to developing a person’s job-readiness” (O’Connor, 2008, p. 1). The 2008 ALTC funded WIL Scoping Study defined WIL as: “An umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick et al., 2008, p. iv). More particularly, WIL is described as “a class of university programs that bring together universities and work organisations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces” (Boud, Solomon & Symes, 2001, p. 4). The key characteristics of WIL can be said to be the centrality of an authentic experience, the integration of university learning and practice, collaboration between universities, industry and students and the award of academic credit (Abeysekera, 2006). WIL encompasses, but is not limited to, work placements; it also includes other authentic experiences that have a link to industry. Specific examples of WIL include work placements, projects, practicums, clinics, simulations, internships and service learning. Increasingly, these types of experiences are acknowledged as providing rich learning opportunities to prepare students for the future of “daunting complexity” and “relentless change” (LEAP Report, 2009, p. 13). In addition to the benefits to student learning, many universities also see WIL as an important component of a broader institutional strategy to encourage community or civic engagement, while industry connections provide partnerships on which to found research linkages and collaborations (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 18).

The pedagogical foundations for WIL lie in theories of constructivism and transformative learning. The theory of constructivism suggests that “learners make meanings by contextualising the content within the learning environment in the workplace” (Delahaye & Choy 2007, p. 3). According to Choy, “The workplace provides an authentic learning site to transform and construct vocationally and socially meaningful knowledge and skills” (2009, p.66). Critical self reflection is central to transformative learning theory: individuals make significant personal and social changes by critically reflecting on their assumptions and implementing resulting action plans (Mezirow, 1978, 1998). WIL provides a context for students to make new meaning and to integrate theory and practice (Weisz & Smith, 2005; Boud et al., 2001).

In seeking to identify the synergies between WIL and capstone experiences, it is evident that the key concepts of “integrat[ion] of theory and practice and eas[ing]... transition into the workforce” (Patrick et al., p. 10), principally enabled through reflection and engagement with professional identity, are common features. More recently, attention is being devoted to the potential for WIL to contribute intentionally to career development learning (Smith et al.,

2009), the extent to which this currently occurs being “unclear” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 9). Less frequently mentioned in the WIL context is the attention directed to the student’s sense of completion as a graduate of the discipline, their emerging global citizenry, the pervasiveness of reflective learning (as broadly conceived in the previous section) and the more expansive view of integrative learning that includes, but clearly reaches beyond, the integration of theory with practice. Empowering graduates with the skills they need to cope with endemic change in their future working lives as they transition from student to beginning professional (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998) is an additional capstone outcome that is rarely reported in the WIL environment.

RELATIONSHIP OF WIL TO CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Many of the objectives of capstones identified by the Project can be achieved through a carefully designed WIL subject, while providing experiential learning opportunities is increasingly seen as an element of capstones (Kerka, 2001; Andreasen & Wu, 1999). As has been identified, capstones and WIL share many common objectives: to contribute to the development of a relevant professional identity; to prepare students for the demands that will be placed on them when they enter the world of work (Bailey et al., 2007); and to bridge the theory-practice divide (Bailey et al., 2007). WIL can play an important role in the capstone experience in assisting to achieve these objectives. Pedagogical investigation across a range of disciplines suggests that capstone experiences may include WIL in a large variety of forms, including internships, research projects, study abroad programs, theses, specialist seminars, and field trips (Hovorka, 2009). This is because, ideally, capstones should seek to highlight the real-world relevance of what has been learned in the classroom, and should provide students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in real or work-like contexts, drawing on the experiences of those already practicing in the field (Reid & Miller, 1997). WIL is an obvious and transformative means of achieving this real world relevance.

WIL is also recognised as contributing to student engagement which links to “desirable learning outcomes such as critical thinking” (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006, p. 23). The AUSSE (Australasian Survey of Student Engagement), includes a “Work-Integrated Learning” engagement scale (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2010), which acknowledges the role of WIL as supporting high quality learning and student engagement (Patrick et al., 2008, pp. 20-21).

Despite their common objectives, it is interesting to observe the disconnected ways in which WIL and capstone approaches have been developed and are considered. Taking the AUSSE (ACER, 2010) as an example, the “Work-Integrated Learning” engagement scale, which is unique to the AUSSE and does not appear in the United States National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on which it is based, is accompanied by the descriptor “Integration of employment-focused work experiences into study” and contains the following items:

- Blended academic learning with workplace experience;
- Improved knowledge and skills that will contribute to your employability;
- Developed communication skills relevant to your discipline;
- Explored how to apply your learning in the workforce;
- Industry placement or work experience; and

Acquiring [sic] job-related or work-related knowledge and skills. (ACER, 2010, p. 69)

In the AUSSE, the item encapsulating capstone engagement is included under the “Enriching Educational Experiences” engagement scale with the accompanying descriptor “Students’ participation in broadening educational activities” (ACER, 2010, p. 68). The items under that scale include, relevantly include:

Practicum, internship, fieldwork or clinical placement;

Community service or volunteer work ...;

Culminating final-year experience; and

Independent study or self-designed major. (ACER, 2010, p. 68)

While this disjunct might be explicable on the basis of the AUSSE survey’s adaption from the American to the Australasian context, the distinction drawn between “culminating experience” (or capstone) and the *means* by which it might be enacted, under either of the two engagement scales, is instructive.

Interestingly also, it does not seem that the two notions – WIL and capstone – are necessarily considered to be interchangeable by the relatively well-established WIL community. In 2008, the national WIL Scoping Study (Patrick et al., 2008) recognised and reported on “the plethora of terms used to describe WIL” (2008, p. 51) and collected “a range of terms and definitions ...in use across the practice of WIL” which reflect the “breadth and depth” of that practice and also “a range of institutional purposes” (2008, p. 9). Interestingly, *capstone* was not a term that was used by any stakeholder as recorded in that Report; indeed neither of the words *capstone* or *culminating* appears anywhere in the 2008 WIL Report.

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF WIL FOR THE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

While the descriptors might not currently be aligned and the relationship between WIL and capstone demands further theorising, there is no denying the potential of WIL to contribute to an effective and positive capstone experience. In terms of transition, WIL is generally viewed as a means of developing graduate attributes and employability skills. During WIL experiences, students are provided with mentoring and training which strengthens their transferable skills and abilities, solidifies their sense of work ethic and enhances confidence in their job performance (Kane, Healy & Henson, 1992). Skills often include enhanced time management, corporate-specific communication skills, collaborative workplace skills, critical thinking, self-discipline, and an ability to initiate business related activities (Wesley & Bickle, 2005). Moreover, while it might not embed career development learning, WIL frequently provides direction for career choices (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 21), and often increases the job prospects of students upon graduation (Tovey, 2001).

Under the broad objective of achieving closure, WIL does provide students with the opportunity to gain a “cultural awareness of their discipline” while experiencing the world of work and affords “students ... the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in authentic and meaningful contexts” (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 13). There is some evidence that WIL has the potential to be effective in assisting students to integrate the broad sweep of knowledge and skills attained over the course of their degree. A student quoted in the WIL Report “summed up her learning as *taking all of the skills learned through uni and using it all in*

this [WIL] course – it's all wrapped up in this [WIL] course" (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 21). However, we suggest that WIL will usually be limited in its capacity to integrate fully a degree's knowledge, skills and attributes. Particularly, the disparateness of dynamic workplaces, the extraordinary diversity of WIL opportunities, their iterations and learning objectives would seem to militate against assurance of this type of integrative learning for many WIL experiences. For example, in a placement situation where the experiential component of WIL is not controlled by the university, it may be particularly difficult to ensure there is an application of the integrated knowledge skills and capabilities that have been learnt throughout the degree. According to Ram (2008,): "It is difficult to find a single ... placement in which a student majoring in computer based information systems could use all of the areas of information and communications technology (ICT) prescribed in a tertiary program of study" (p. 137).

For the reasons discussed, despite the parallels between the objectives of WIL and capstones, WIL alone will rarely assure all of the desirable elements of a capstone experience. It is the authors' view that the role of capstone goes beyond the objectives of WIL and that the better view is that WIL, particularly in relation to preparation for the transition to professional practice (Orrell, 2004), might be one component of a capstone experience; how large a component will depend upon the precise nature of the WIL concerned. Rather than relying on a single WIL subject as providing the entire capstone experience, the final year as a whole should be designed in a coherent way in order to achieve the overall capstone objectives.

CONCLUSION

The literature reveals that the two principal objectives of an effective capstone experience are transition and closure and that reflective practice is one of the central theoretical foundations by which these objectives may be achieved. Experiential learning is also increasingly seen as an essential element of capstones. This paper has argued that some of the objectives of capstones identified by the Project may be achieved through a carefully designed WIL subject: particularly, WIL focuses on the transition to professional practice, seeks to integrate theory with practice and provides opportunities for reflection. However, the capacity of WIL to provide closure on a student's whole-of-program education may be limited where the experiential component of WIL depends on a work experience which is not controlled by the university. Given the overlap between the objectives of capstones and WIL, it has been suggested that WIL should be considered as a potential and valuable component of the capstone experience. However, educators would be well advised to take care in equating WIL with capstone unless all desirable capstone objectives are met. This paper has advocated a broader, more holistic, approach to intentional capstone design for a positive final year experience that is delivered to all students; one that embraces, but does not rely on, WIL in isolation.

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ATTACHMENT A

DRAFT FINAL YEAR CURRICULUM DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Transition

An effective capstone experience supports transition by:

- Drawing on students' self-management and other legal skills to deal successfully with uncertainty, complexity and change;
- Assisting students in beginning to develop a sense of professional identity; and
- Supporting students to manage their career planning and development.

2. Closure

An effective capstone experience provides closure by:

- Supporting students to integrate, synthesise and extend their learning in the program; and
- Enabling students to attain a sense of completion and an understanding of what it means to be a law graduate and a global citizen.

3. Diversity

An effective capstone experience responds to diversity by:

- Enhancing students' capacity to engage with diversity in professional contexts; and
- Being inclusive of all students.

4. Engagement

An effective capstone experience promotes student engagement by:

- Requiring students to assume active roles, to apply their learning in realistic and unfamiliar contexts and to take responsibility for their own work; and
- Providing opportunities for reflection to enable students to make connections between their learning and professional contexts and to assist the development of their professional identity.

5. Assessment

An effective capstone assessment recognises the culminating nature of the experience by:

- Aligning assessment practice to the capstone principles; and
- Requiring students to make appropriate use of feedback and to reflect on their own capabilities and performance.

6. Evaluation

An effective capstone experience:

- Should be regularly evaluated to ensure its relevance, coherence and alignment with the program;
- Contributes to the whole of program evaluation; and
- Contributes to the demonstration of student attainment of the discipline learning outcomes.



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**Asia-Pacific
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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative education (APJCE) arose from a desire to produce an international forum for discussion of cooperative education, or work integrated learning (WIL), issues for practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and is intended to provide a mechanism for the dissemination of research, best practice and innovation in work-integrated learning. The journal maintains close links to the biennial Asia-Pacific regional conferences conducted by the World Association for Cooperative Education. In recognition of international trends in information technology, APJCE is produced solely in electronic form. Published papers are available as PDF files from the website, and manuscript submission, reviewing and publication is electronically based. In 2010, Australian Research Council (ARC), which administers the Excellence in Research (ERA) ranking system, awarded APJCE a 'B' ERA ranking (top 10-20%).

Cooperative education/WIL in the journal is taken to be work-based learning in which the time spent in the workplace forms an integrated part of an academic program of study. More specifically, cooperative education/WIL can be described as a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program, developed and supervised either by an educational institution in collaboration with an employer or industry grouping, or by an employer or industry grouping in collaboration with an educational institution. An essential feature is that relevant, productive work is conducted as an integral part of a student's regular program, and the final assessment contains a work-based component. Cooperative education/WIL programs are commonly highly structured and possess formal (academic and employer) supervision and assessment. The work is productive, in that the student undertakes meaningful work that has economic value or definable benefit to the employer. The work should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editorial board welcomes contributions from authors with an interest in cooperative education/WIL. Manuscripts should comprise reports of relevant research, or essays that discuss innovative programs, reviews of literature, or other matters of interest to researchers or practitioners. Manuscripts should be written in a formal, scholarly manner and avoid the use of sexist or other terminology that reinforces stereotypes. The excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. All manuscripts are reviewed by two members of the editorial board. APJCE is produced in web-only form and published articles are available as PDF files accessible from the website <http://www.apjce.org>.

Research reports should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research. Essays should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to, and discussion of, relevant literature, and a discussion of the importance of the topic for other researchers and practitioners. The final manuscript for both research reports and essay articles should include an abstract (word limit 300 words), and a list of keywords, one of which should be the national context for the study.

Manuscripts and cover sheets (available from the website) should be forwarded electronically to the Editor-in-Chief. In order to ensure integrity of the review process authors' names should not appear on manuscripts. Manuscripts should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words, include pagination, be double-spaced with ample margins in times new-roman 12-point font and follow the style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in citations, referencing, tables and figures (see also, <http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html>). The intended location of figures and diagrams, provided separately as high-quality files (e.g., JPG, TIFF or PICT), should be indicated in the manuscript. Figure and table captions, listed on a separate page at the end of the document, should be clear and concise and be understood without reference to the text.



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