Telling your story of work-integrated learning: A holistic approach to program evaluation

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Universities are increasingly investing in work-integrated learning (WIL) as a mechanism by which to enhance graduate employability. However, with such investment comes more pressure to demonstrate impact. Program evaluation can be undertaken for a diverse range of purposes including quality assurance, program improvement and accountability. Many evaluations in WIL have focused on measuring the impact of discrete models or cohorts on student outcomes, with less attention to partner and community impact. The complex nature of WIL, such as the involvement of multiple stakeholders, diverse models and delivery modes, means that a holistic approach may be more appropriate, measuring outcomes for multiple stakeholders, as well as program processes. This paper will discuss some of the opportunities, challenges and tensions associated with program evaluation in WIL, drawing on a case study of one Australian university, which implemented the evaluation of a university-wide WIL initiative. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

Keywords: Assessment, impact, outcomes, program evaluation, quality, work-integrated learning

Universities in Australia and internationally are increasingly investing in work-integrated learning (WIL) programs as a way of promoting graduate employability and employment, among the attainment of other outcomes (e.g., social impact) (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017; Sachs & Clark, 2017; Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014). While universities have long held close connections with industry and professions such as nursing, engineering and teaching (Universities Australia, 2014), the pressure to produce 'industry ready' graduates has resulted in a greater emphasis on WIL as a mechanism by which to ensure graduates will have the requisite knowledge, skills, networks and attributes for a smooth transition to the workforce (*National Strategy on WIL in University Education*, 2015; Oliver, Stewart, Hewitt, & McDonald, 2017; C. Smith et al., 2014). For the purposes of this paper we define WIL as a deliberate and systematic approach that integrates classroom learning with experiences and practices in the workplace (Sachs, Rowe, & Wilson, 2017). Given the extensive and growing investment in WIL, there is an imperative to evaluate WIL programs to ensure quality, impact, transparency, accountability and program improvement. With this focus on measuring the impact of WIL, comes a renewed interest in looking at evaluation mechanisms and methods to enable the reporting on both process and outcomes.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation is "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgements about the program, improve or further develop program

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effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming and/or increase understanding" (Patton, 2008, p. 39). There are different types of program evaluation, all of which can apply to WIL. This paper will focus on process and outcomes evaluation — as they provide a useful framework from which to understand and consider evaluation within the context of WIL. Process evaluation can be undertaken periodically throughout the lifetime of a program and involves determining how effectively a program is working by focusing on program activities (process), direct products and services delivered by the program (output) (Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2005). Outcomes evaluation seeks to understand the impact a program is having on the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of a target population (Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2005) (i.e., students, partners, the university or wider community). Monitoring a WIL program to ensure students, for whom the program is targeted, are able to access and participate in it without barriers, and examining how and why these processes are working, is an example of process evaluation. Measuring the extent to which a WIL program is effective in increasing the employability of university graduates (one of its key objectives), as well as identifying any intended and unintended outcomes, is an example of outcomes evaluation.

Cedercreutz and Cates (2011) note "that a well administered portfolio of experiential learning programs provides a competitive advantage for universities," however this success "depends, in [a] large part, upon its ability to tell its story…[with] Programmatic assessment…the vehicle in which the story can be told" (p. 69). There are a number of opportunities, challenges and tensions associated with telling such stories through evaluation of WIL programs. In terms of challenges and tensions, first, university structures and processes typically distinguish research and evaluation, with general evaluation often seen as a separate process (NHMRC, 2014). For example, in Australia, research ethics notably exclude ethical review of evaluation unless ethical issues arise (NHMRC, 2014). However, it can be difficult to pinpoint at the outset whether such issues will arise and thus warrant ethical review. Further, when undertaken, reviews may reveal ethical dilemmas, particularly around the potential influence of stakeholder interests on final evaluation outcomes (e.g., competing interests between a program funder's imperatives versus the need to mitigate against potential risks to program participants) (O'Flynn, Barnett, & Camfield, 2016). Complicating the need for ethical review is the fact that evaluation findings are often not published in academic literature, instead appearing in internal reports which are not always publicly accessible nor easily validated.

Secondly, measuring program outcomes in WIL (particularly community impact) is notoriously difficult (Blackmore, Bulaitis, Jackman, & Tan, 2016; Cruz & Giles, 2000). Indeed, many employability measures such as graduate destination surveys are criticised for being too simplistic and failing to account for the complexities of employability (Cole & Tibby, 2013; Taylor & Hooley, 2014). Difficulties tracking graduates over time and isolating the effects of WIL from other factors that impact on employability (such as previous work or volunteering experience) also make measurement of impact complicated (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). Thirdly, there are also challenges associated with capturing the complexities of WIL in measures of quality and impact (processes and outcomes), including the involvement of multiple stakeholders, large variations in the way that WIL courses are designed/delivered, as well as the diverse array of experiences available to students (Smith, 2012; von Treuer, Sturre, Keele, & Mcleod, 2011). Competing stakeholder priorities is an example of one potential tension that could arise. Addressing the above areas would pave the way for opportunities to compare different areas, cohorts, diverse models of WIL, as well as identify specific issues.

Within the context of these challenges and tensions, the aims of this paper are twofold: first, to review existing approaches to program evaluation in WIL, exploring some of the complexities, challenges and tensions; and second, to showcase a holistic approach to evaluation in WIL, drawing on a case study of

an Australian university that has embedded WIL at an institutional level. The institution which forms the focus of the case study seeks not to isolate evaluation from their research agenda, but instead approaches its Research and Evaluation (R&E) strategy as an ongoing dialogue between researchers, evaluators and stakeholders which sees both components as contributing toward understanding and improvement of the program. Specifically, this paper considers the following questions:

- How has WIL been evaluated to date? What has been evaluated/measured? What approaches/measures have been used? What are the gaps in the literature?
- Given the complexities of WIL, how appropriate are current evaluation approaches and methods? What are some of the challenges and tensions of evaluating WIL in light of these complexities? What are some ways of responding to these?

PROGRAM EVALUATION IN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

A review of WIL program evaluation literature within Australia and overseas was undertaken. Distinguishing between research and evaluation can be difficult given the overlap of these areas and synonymous use of the terms. Some evaluation studies were possibly excluded by our review as they were not labelled as such, while research studies may have been inadvertently included because they were signposted as 'evaluation' or 'assessment' studies. While an effort was made to identify relevant literature from the widest range of WIL experiences as possible, it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive review of evaluation/assessment across all WIL models and areas. Rather we report on key themes, referring to selected scholarship.

Program evaluation has been undertaken for a variety of purposes in WIL, most notably quality assurance and program improvement (i.e., process), as well as accountability (i.e., outcome measurement) (refer to Table 1). While some of the studies we reviewed contained multiple objectives which traverse several of these areas (e.g., Chapleau & Harrison, 2015; Pretti, Noël, & Waller, 2014) the majority typically focus their evaluation on one aspect of a discrete WIL model and/or single cohort (e.g., Hiller, Salvatore, & Taniguchi, 2014; Langan, 2005) with a smaller number comparing multiple models or cohorts (e.g., Owen & Clark, 2001; Scicluna, Grimm, Jones, Pilotto, & McNeil, 2014; C. Smith et al., 2014; Tanaka & Carlson, 2012). Institution-wide approaches for WIL evaluation are largely missing, which likely reflects the small number of institutions that have governed and resourced WIL on a university-wide scale. It could also be that these evaluations have not been published (i.e., they are for internal reporting purposes). Longitudinal evaluations are also notably absent, although some research has been undertaken into the value and impact of service learning (e.g., Andersen, 2017; Astin et al., 2006; Clark, McKague, McKay, & Ramsden, 2015). Indeed, much of the literature is situated in the context of experiential and service learning (e.g., Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Ickes & McMullen, 2016; Toncar, Reid, Burns, Anderson, & Nguyen, 2006), covering a range of disciplines (e.g., social work, computing, criminology, sociology, psychology, business, and health related areas) and countries (e.g., Australia, UK, US, NZ, Canada, and Austria). Evaluations of work-based learning experiences appear to be a more recent focus (e.g., Armatas & Papadopoulos, 2013; C. Smith et al., 2014). In addition to empirical papers, a small number of theoretical/conceptual papers offer useful insights (and frameworks) for undertaking evaluations in WIL and related areas (e.g., Smith, 2012; von Treuer, et al., 2011).

Like Deves (2011), we also observe that program evaluations in WIL have tended to focus on "impact or summative evaluation, to the detriment of both design and management evaluation" (p. 154). Meaning, that (in published evaluations) there has been more focus on outcomes (measuring impact)

than on process. However, the outcome/impact evaluations that have been undertaken are themselves heavily skewed towards the student experience, with partner and community perspectives largely absent (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). There are a number of potential reasons for this. Firstly, universities are focused largely on enhancing student satisfaction (which is in turn tied to funding, promotion and so on.) — so the focus is on documenting institutional impact on community engagement, not on community impact per se (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). This is at odds with WIL, which often emphasises mutual benefit, the creation of relationships and engagement with external stakeholders (Hammersley, 2017; Lloyd, et al., 2015; Patrick et al., 2008; Sachs et al., 2017). Secondly, students are a convenient and readily available source of data, unlike partners and the wider community from which it may be harder to obtain buy-in (i.e., in terms of asking them to do more work). Recently however, work on partner perspectives has started to feature more in the literature (e.g., Andersen, 2017; Lloyd et al., 2015).

Table 1: Summary of evaluation studies in work-integrated learnig

Focus Areas	**Examples of Measures**	**Selected Sources**
Benefits/value of WIL	Perceptions of stakeholders, e.g., satisfaction, self-reported measures of student learning, value for partners	Andersen (2017); Armatas & Papadopoulos (2013); Baker-Boosamra, Guevara, & Balfour (2006); Chapleau & Harrison (2015); Chillas, Marks, & Galloway (2015); Pretti et al. (2014)
Program improvement	Perceptions relating to the; objectives, content, structure, delivery of programs (including supervision and support provided) and methods of assessment for the purposes of program improvement	Cleak, Anand, & Das (2016); Harris, Jones, & Coutts (2010); Holbrook & Chen (2017); Langan (2005)
Quality assurance	Identification of quality dimensions and/or standards, e.g., quality curricula, standards for evaluating WIL programs	Khampirat & McRae (2016); Smith (2012)
Impact of WIL (on students, partners, universities, communities)	Changes in; attitudes, learning, career readiness, self-efficacy, academic performance; development of employability skills and professional competencies, employment outcomes, sense of community responsibility	Bringle & Kremer (1993); Clarke et al. (2015); Hiller et al. (2014); Ickes & McMullen (2016); Keele, Sturre, von Treuer, & Feenstra (2010); Owen & Clark, (2001); Pretti et al. (2014); Scicuna et al. (2014); Silva et al. (2016); B. Smith et al. (2011); C. Smith et al. (2014); Tanaka & Carlson (2012); Tolich, Paris, & Shephard (2014); Toncar et al. (2006)

Interestingly, quality standards are less well represented in the literature, however this does not mean it has not been done – it could be that some evaluations in this space have not been published. While there are currently no widely accepted accreditation standards at an international level for WIL programs there has been recent work in this area (Khampirat & McRae, 2016).

In summary, two trends were identified in our review of the literature: first, there has been a large focus on student outcomes; and second, evaluations undertaken to date have tended to focus on either process or outcomes (but rarely both). The complexities of WIL make the simultaneous measurement of program processes and outcomes difficult, which may explain an absence of evaluations on multiple models of WIL/student cohorts, as well as impact studies on partner organisations and communities. In 2012, Smith called for the development of "an evaluative framework that transcends the specific, practical minutiae distinguishing one implementation from another…[which could] be applied across a wide range of specific instances" (p. 249). Such a framework would "allow for evaluation of both major WIL curricula components and outcomes to further generate insight into what and how particular outcomes are facilitated" (Smith, 2012, p. 249), and thus be useful to institutions wishing to generate knowledge of whether a WIL program is effective (outcomes evaluation for students, partners and community) as well as explain the reasons why and how (process evaluation). A holistic approach to program evaluation may provide an effective way of assessing both process and outcomes (for students, partners and community) in WIL. The case study in the following section outlines one institution's holistic approach to designing and implementing a systematic WIL evaluation, assessing both program outcomes and processes across a whole of institution.

CASE STUDY: EVALUATING AN INSTITUTION-WIDE WIL PROGRAM

Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) is a University-wide WIL program that was established at Macquarie University (MU) in 2010. Macquarie is a large metropolitan university located in Sydney, Australia. It has around 40,000 student enrolments and 3,000 staff located across a range of disciplines including business, engineering, information technology, law, psychology and the arts (Macquarie University, 2017). PACE's vision is to connect students, partners and staff in mutually beneficial learning and relationships that contribute to social impact and innovation. The program provides all undergraduate students with experiential learning opportunities with a range of local, regional and international community and industry partners. Since 2009 over 25,000 students have undertaken a WIL experience in one of 88 PACE units (courses) offered through five faculties. PACE units vary across a number of dimensions, including WIL activity length, mode of delivery, location, whether they are disciplinary or interdisciplinary and the sourcing of partners.

The PACE Research and Evaluation (R&E) strategy provides an overarching strategic framework for the evaluation of the program (PACE, 2014). Along with a focus on ongoing dialogue between researchers, evaluators and stakeholders (Owen, 1993) the R&E strategy's approach to planning, coordinating and consolidating research and evaluation activities among stakeholders enables the program to maximise research and evaluation impact. The strategy is intended to:

> …enable the University to gauge whether and how PACE is building the capabilities of, and transforming, these various parties to the program as well as whether and how it is affecting and changing our pedagogy, and more broadly the way we operate as an institution. This in turn will enable the University to evaluate the extent to which PACE is achieving its ultimate vision for mutually beneficial learning and engagement (PACE, 2014).

The scope, scale and diversity of PACE presents a number of contextual challenges for designing a university-wide program evaluation. These challenges include multiple and diverse academic and professional stakeholders with different opinions on what constitutes credible evidence, evaluation instruments that need to be relevant across different faculties, disciplines and WIL activities, and the

diversity of students and domestic and international partners. The dual focus on needing to provide credible and robust evidence of program impact, specifically student employability, while exploring other mutually beneficial outcomes and using data for continuous program improvement were also challenges that needed to be considered when designing an evaluation.

Considering this context, the objectives of the PACE evaluation are twofold: first, to produce credible evidence of impact ensuring that the program is accountable to internal and external stakeholders; and second, to examine program processes to identify areas for improvement, development and expansion.

The high-level evaluation questions are:

1. How effectively is the PACE program being implemented (e.g., scope, scale, quality, processes and systems)? (process)
2. To what extent does PACE contribute to outcomes (intended and unintended) for students, partners, the university and the wider community? (outcomes)
3. Which program components and/or processes are the most beneficial in enhancing the outcomes and experiences of students, partners and university stakeholders? (process and outcomes)

To answer the evaluation questions, a multiphase mixed methods outcomes and process evaluation has been designed (Table 2). This type of design combines and connects qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies sequentially, each building on what was learnt in the previous phase to address the evaluation objectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For example, in phase 1 a high-level 'theory of change' was developed using a collaborative participatory approach, which engaged multiple and diverse university stakeholders in a range of workshops and in-depth interviews. The theory of change process created a shared vision of what outcomes the program was hoping to achieve and the underlying assumptions of how change would occur (Davidson, 2005). This process identified that the scope of the program was broad and embodied the principles of reciprocity by valuing student, partner, community and university outcomes.

With such an ambitious scope, the first phase of the evaluation focused on developing an employability outcomes framework and in particular measuring the impact of PACE on graduate employment outcomes. Using data collected from 2013-15 by the Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) and Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS), the results found significant differences comparing employment data for PACE and non-PACE cohorts (Powell, Hill, Kraushaar, Myton, & Rowe, 2017). However, the analysis also raised a number of questions and alternative hypotheses that warranted further investigation. For example, are higher performing students more likely to enrol in a PACE unit and more likely to be employed four months after graduation? Or, are there other contextual factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, the type of course taken or labour market force considerations that may be influencing employment outcomes? (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). Furthermore, focusing solely on employment data did not provide any information about the impact of the program on student employability outcomes, outcomes for partner organisations, the wider community or University, critical program components, or areas for improvement.

Drawing from these lessons, phase 2 (currently in progress) expands the evaluation to assess program outcomes and processes, collecting data from students, industry/community partner organisations and University stakeholders (Table 2). This is important as Macquarie University (MU) wants to generate knowledge about not only whether PACE is effective, but also explain the reasons why, and explore any contextual factors that may be influencing program success.

Table 2: PACE Evaluation Mixed Methods Design

Method	Design	Data Source	Evaluation Focus	Measures
		Phase 1		
Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)	QUAN PACE & Non-PACE cohorts (2013-15)	Graduates	Outcomes	Graduate employment four months after graduation. Inclusion of PACE specific outcomes questions from May 2018.
Macquarie University Graduate Destination Survey (MQGDS)	QUAN	Graduates	Outcomes	Graduate employment twelve months after graduation. Inclusion of PACE specific outcomes questions.
		Phase 2		
PACE Student Survey	Pretest posttest QUAN Open-ended QUAL	Students	Outcomes & Process	Student motivations and previous employment experience, perceptions of PACE including wrap-around support from unit convenor, partner organisation and PACE staff, impact on employability & active citizenship outcomes and areas for improvement. Consent to link to GDS and MQGDS.
PACE Partner Survey	Posttest QUAN Open-ended QUAL	Domestic & international partners	Outcomes & Process	Partner perceptions of PACE, impact of the program on student, partner and community outcomes and areas for improvement.
PACE Unit Review	QUAN>QUAL Survey followed up with in-depth interviews	PACE Unit Convenors	Process	Understand the focus, nature, design and modality of PACE learning experience and quality of the PACE Unit.
Most Significant Change Technique	QUAL Participatory evaluation technique	Students Partners University stakeholders	Outcomes	Documentation of most significant change stories (intended and unintended outcomes) student, partner and community impact.
PACE Operational Data	QUAN	Administration data	Process	PACE typology, no. of partnerships, length of partner engagement, no. of students enrolled in multiple PACE Units, no. of multi-disciplinary partnerships, student demographics and academic performance.
Focus Groups & Interviews	QUAL	University Stakeholders	Process	Efficiency of systems & processes, strengths and areas for improvement.
Purposeful Case Studies	MIXED	Graduates, Partners University Stakeholders & Administration data	Outcomes & Process	Examine longitudinal outcomes for partner and students through multiple perspectives. Identify critical program components and areas for improvement.

Collecting data from multiple stakeholders across the whole institution also provides a unique opportunity to measure outcomes on a large scale, as well as the ability to drill down to assess which program components are the most effective and for whom.

Outcomes that will be measured include whether students have enhanced employability, active citizenship and professional networks, and the degree that PACE has strong engagement with, and to, the capacity of partner organisations. Data will be collected using a pretest posttest PACE student survey, posttest partner survey, the most significant change technique (Dart & Davies, 2003), purposeful case studies, and graduate employment data.

Program components that will be examined include the quality of the PACE unit, curriculum (PACE unit review), the strength and effectiveness of partnerships (PACE partner survey and operational data), the efficiency of systems and processes (operational data) and the impact of wrap-around support for students and partners (PACE student survey, PACE partner survey and case studies). In order to streamline data collection evaluation instruments, surveys where possible, have been designed to collect data on program outcomes and processes (e.g., student and partner survey).

DISCUSSION

WIL programs can be evaluated for multiple purposes, however much of the existing focus (from published evaluations and research) has been on measurement of student outcomes (with less attention to process and other areas of impact). Given the complexities of WIL — including multiple stakeholders, design/delivery modes and cohorts — there is a need for outcomes measurement to be expanded and processes also to be examined, in order to find out both the how and the why. The approach to evaluation outlined in the case study is unique in WIL as it adopts a holistic approach combining and focusing the evaluation on both process and outcomes and situates this within a broader research agenda on WIL. More specifically, it involves methods to evaluate program impact for all stakeholders including partners and community (who are less well represented in extant literature), while also examining contextual information, the critical program components that are leading to program success and areas for improvement.

Implications for Practice

Prior to undertaking a similar approach to evaluating a WIL program, it is important to have a clear understanding of the context, purpose of the evaluation, nature of the program, the program components being evaluated, and how success, impact and quality is defined and measured, before determining the methods. A program theory of change or program logic model can be a useful evaluation tool for articulating program outcomes, assumptions about why a program will work, and the causal links between program processes (inputs, activities and outputs) and anticipated outcomes (Davidson, 2005).

This process not only creates a shared vision for stakeholders but can also be used to formulate and prioritise evaluation questions and focus. For example, at MU, due to the scope of the program, the first phase of the evaluation focused on student employability outcomes, before being expanded to partners, community and the wider university.

Examining WIL outcomes and processes across a whole of institution takes a long-term commitment to evaluation, which requires ongoing stakeholder engagement and buy-in. Embedding evaluation within the program and university systems/processes (Preskill & Torres, 1999) — so that data collection

is not seen as an add-on to program delivery — is a useful strategy for engaging stakeholders. Although this is a challenge as it requires an ongoing investment in personnel and systems, in the long term it ensures that evaluation activities are sustainable. Taking a mixed methods approach can also be a useful strategy to engage different stakeholders who have different opinions on what constitutes credible evidence. For example, quantitative metrics on student outcomes, collected through student surveys or graduate destination surveys, can be complemented by rich and detailed stories of impact collected through qualitative methods, such as case studies or the most significant change technique (Dart & Davies, 2003). Using mixed methods also enables the tailoring of evaluation data to different audiences to ensure that it is credible, useful and actionable.

Another consideration is how evaluation data will be used to improve work-integrated learning programs. Questions that need to be considered include: Who is accountable for using evaluation data? Who is the custodian of the evaluation data and how are decisions made in relation to its use? What role does the R&E team (or equivalent position/team) play in this process? How can evaluation data be used in an ongoing way rather than at defined points (e.g., program management waiting for a traditional evaluation report)? How can an evaluative culture be created where program management make ongoing data-driven decisions? What systems are required to allow easy access to, or even real-time access to data? Drawing from evaluation theory and literature, and sharing strategies across institutions may provide some useful lessons.

Implications for Research: Aligning Research and Evaluation Agendas

The relationship between research and evaluation is complex (Barnett & Camfield, 2016; O'Flynn et al., 2016), particularly for WIL. While both draw on the same methods and approaches to data collection and analysis, evaluation tends to focus on "producing practical and approximate knowledge for immediate use by clients for a specific goal or decision" (and thus has implications for the plans and priorities of stakeholders, as well as the use of resources), while the emphasis of research can be thought of as general "long-term understanding which may or may not have immediate implications" (Barnett & Camfield, 2016, p. 529). An approach which assembles both research and evaluation in the one strategy is based on an understanding that the application of knowledge for the purpose of continual improvement requires the generation of new knowledge through research with all stakeholders, and the corollary that there be an integration of research and evaluation in the "cycle of inquiry" (Wadsworth, 2010, p. 14; see also PACE, 2014). As Wadsworth notes, "the iterative and recursive processes of seeking to continuously renew, re-organise, adapt, adopt and generate change in knowledge and practice are literally critical" (2010, p. 51).

This approach however is not without its challenges, as there are inherent tensions when adopting an approach to research and evaluation which blur boundaries between the two. On the one hand, quality data collected using mixed methods can inform complex evaluations, longitudinal studies, interventional studies, cross-institutional comparisons, benchmarking and so on (all current gaps in the literature). Program improvement processes can also contribute data to a research agenda that creates general knowledge on the impact of university-community engagements, student experiences and the role of partnerships in higher education. On the other hand, university governance structures (at least in Australia) are generally set up to review research, and evaluation is more often perceived as an operational strategy. Data collected is not for research purposes (and therefore is not subject to ethical review).

Within the Australian context, how to use evaluation data for research purposes is increasingly a topic of discussion with few clear guidelines on how to proceed. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's peak body for ethical oversight of all research, acknowledges that it is unclear what level of oversight, evaluation activities require and that research and evaluation, rather than being distinct, exist on a continuum (NHMRC, 2014). The general advice is that if the evaluation activity raises ethical issues, then ethical review and approval should be sought (NHMRC, 2014). Specific guidance for researchers can be obtained from the Australian *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, 2007 – updated May 2015). The problem with this documentation however, is that this is not established to review evaluation (unless there are ethical 'triggers' present). It can be difficult at the start of an evaluation to decide up front when, or if, data may be used for research, by whom, and in what contexts. Likewise, many of the 'triggers' for ethical review, as set out by the NHMRC, may not be present at the start of an evaluation project. This is different from research, where the mandate is to obtain ethics approval where data is collected from human participants for the purposes of research, regardless of whether ethical triggers are present. Evaluation activities therefore require extra planning to determine if ethical triggers are likely to arise, and if so, to obtain the required ethics approval. As a result, having a strategy which can guide these decisions and align both research and evaluation to broader strategic considerations (such as learning and teaching strategies and research priorities) can be very useful.

Another potential solution to this (currently being pursued by MU) is the establishment of a research databank, with ethics approval currently being sought from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The proposal is that consent from stakeholders will be obtained in order to retain their data in a research databank, and this data will be stored separately from other data collected as part of day to day program operations. A local team will act as a custodian of the data, guided by standard operating procedures for its use and sharing. Ethical issues pertaining to the storage of evaluation data as research data will be considered upfront, including obtaining consent to use evaluation data for secondary purposes, storage of the data and developing standard operating procedures for the release of data. It is intended that researchers at the university will be able to apply for ethics approval to access the data for their own research purposes, thereby enabling:

- Standard operating procedures relating to data requests and the release of data;
- Participant consent, for example, participants are provided the opportunity to consent to have their data used and stored, and there is no need to apply for a waiver of consent;
- Streamlined data management and reporting to improve the articulation of program outcomes, enabled through the embedding of evaluation and research in university systems.

The purpose of this approach is to act as a type of middle ground between research and evaluation (and thereby balance the various regulatory requirements). At MU, WIL program evaluation is a priority project embedded within the program's R&E strategy. As such, setting up these systems is seen as a long-term investment in understanding not only the impact but enabling continual program improvement. As discussed in the case study above, the PACE program evaluation uses mixed methods to collect data from stakeholders to improve the quality of the program, ensure its smooth implementation across the University and to evaluate whether it is meeting its stated aims of increased employability, active citizenship and enhanced student experience. Data collected is high-quality and fit for a variety of purposes. The establishment of a research databank, drawn from high quality evaluation data with clear participant consent, embodies a combined strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

Quality program assessment can serve to "solidify" WIL as an academic endeavour, rather than it being simply viewed as a student service (Cedercreutz & Cates, 2011, p. 70). Cedercreutz and Cates (2011) note that "assessment [evaluation] is most effective when it is multidimensional, integrated into a larger system and demonstrated over time through performance outcomes. It is through assessment that educators meet their responsibilities to students and society" (p. 69). The implementation of an institution-wide WIL program at MU provided an opportune time to develop and trial a holistic evaluation, examining program outcomes and processes. While further research and evaluation is needed to determine more broadly the short and longer-term impact of WIL on stakeholders (in particular for communities), a whole of program approach to evaluation aligns well with a research agenda which can enable such a pursuit, as it uses evaluation to do more than supporting an institution's quality standards and meeting reporting requirements. Rather, it can have broader implications such as the potential to give back to communities, thereby, also aligning well with WIL, which has at its heart, a stakeholder approach founded on mutual benefit and recognition of different perspectives and needs.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE). Since then the readership and authorship has become more international and terminology usage in the literature has favored the broader term of WIL. In response to these changes, the journal name was changed to the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning in 2018.

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum*". Examples of such practice includes work placements, work-terms, internships, practicum, cooperative education (Co-op), fieldwork, work-related projects/competitions, service learning, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, applied projects, simulations (including virtual WIL), etc. WIL shares similar aims and underpinning theories of learning as the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training, however, each of these fields are seen as separate fields.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily of two forms; 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider best practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed 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 to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data. And a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Best practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal also seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of best practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or is situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

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