

Student teachers' reflections on online assessment during teaching practice placements

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Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a vital pedagogical strategy in higher education for engaging student teachers to apply their knowledge and skills in authentic contexts. This paper provides an exploratory case study of an open distance and e-learning university (ODEL) in South Africa, to evaluate the effectiveness of online assessments for final-year student teachers. Through an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, a qualitative approach was adopted to interview six (n=6) participants on their experiences and perceptions of online assessment during placement. Findings demonstrate that online assessment facilitates reflective pedagogy and enables student teachers to receive constructive feedback. Mentoring emerged as a vital support strategy during teaching placements. However, several drawbacks - such as stress, anxiety, power outages, connectivity, dysfunctional computers, and incorrect lesson plan templates - affected the online assessment of teaching practice. This study highlights the benefits and challenges in online assessment in WIL, contributing to growing quality WIL practice and effective online assessment.

Keywords: Teaching practice, work-integrated learning, online assessment, exploratory case study, semi-structured online interviews, thematic analysis

Work-integrated learning (WIL) facilitates practical learning and is a vital component of professional development in higher education (Zegwaard et al., 2023). WIL is best understood as a pedagogical approach among three stakeholders, the student, the educational institution and industry or community partners. By participating in WIL "students learn through active engagement in purposeful lesson planning, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful teaching practice that is relevant to the students' subject methodology and or professional development." (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38). For students studying teacher education, exposure to classrooms and school settings is crucial for 21st century student teachers' toolkits. In addition to the practical experience, engagement in WIL activities prepares students to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in their studies (Department of Basic Education, 2011; Du Plessis et al., 2010). By observing and learning from experienced teachers (mentor-mentee relations), students gain an understanding of the complexities of instruction and management. Nielsen (2024, p. 35) claims that "opportunities to learn while in field practice are used to mean opportunities to learn by engaging in real-life teaching activities in the field practice placements, thus focusing on the training of teacher-skills aspects of the education." WIL is indeed a valued practical tool, contributing to students' "situational learning" (Rusznayak & Bertram, 2021, p. 36).

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of accessible generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, teacher education facilities have been faced with reimagining new methods of assessing student teachers (Davids et al., 2023; Ge, 2024). In this dynamic technology-driven era, online teaching and assessment practices have been exponentially impacted by the use of GenAI and web-based digital assessment tools (Ali et al., 2023; González et al., 2023; Naidu & Sevnarayan, 2023). Although the literature reveals that following the pandemic, some teacher education programs have reverted back to physical assessment of teaching practice (Chavez & Lamorinas, 2023; Oguguo et al., 2023), there is an

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immediate need to investigate ways to best facilitate online assessment in teacher education to optimize student learning on placement.

There is limited reliable evidence concerning student teachers' experiences of online assessment during teaching practice placements from an ODeL perspective. Some teacher training institutions have invested in AI software tools and upgrading of learning management systems to assess students using a blended teaching practice approach (face-to-face or online using MS Teams videoconferencing). But other faculties of teacher education have experienced budgetary constraints to implement online teaching practice, and may be restricted from affording travel to visit students during teaching practice to observe and assess their learning. In this way, online assessments may be necessary to accommodate educators and students during teaching placements.

This exploratory study investigates student teachers' perspectives of online assessment during teaching practice placements in an open distance and e-learning university (ODeL) in South Africa. It does so to better understand the benefits and challenges of online assessment and recommend improvements to quality curriculum and pedagogy. To achieve this aim, the following research questions have been formulated:

- What are student teachers' views of online assessment for teaching practice at an ODeL teacher education college?
- How do student teachers prepare for online assessments during teaching practice placements and how do school mentors support them?
- What are the challenges of online assessment at an ODeL university for students?

This paper next turns to provide the context of the study, including the regulatory and higher education context for teacher education in Africa. The methodology is presented next before findings and recommendations for online assessments in WIL are highlighted.

CASE STUDY

In 2019, the University of South Africa (UNISA) which is an ODeL university, migrated from the Sakai LMS to Moodle of which Microsoft Teams is a "plug in" in the learning management system (LMS). The university launched awareness campaigns at the university's regional centers, created open educational resources (OER) and promoted awareness of the new LMS by means of roadshows. Academics, support staff and students were trained to use Microsoft Teams LMS during the pandemic to become familiar with the platform. As a result, the pandemic did not disrupt university operations.

Moving to a new technology aligns with the technology acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989). It comprises four components, namely perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), perceived attitude (PA) and actual behavior (AB). In accordance with the TAM premise, academics, support staff and students are supported to use Microsoft Teams with great ease for their daily strategic operations. Staff and students have accepted and have been empowered to use Microsoft Teams, which is useful for performing tasks and achieving the college's strategic objectives. Scholars maintain that Microsoft Teams, as a videoconferencing platform, promotes remote learning and authentic assessment and, therefore, is a suitable LMS for online assessment (Ali et al., 2023; Evans, 2022; Poston et al., 2020).

This study was conducted at a college of education at an ODeL university, the largest in Africa. The college has 44,986 final-year students enrolled for the Bachelor of Education (Bed) and the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). These programs require visits from teaching practice supervisors and

external mentors, presenting a major challenge for supervisors which had to be addressed. Over the past five years, the college of education has experienced a consistent increase in final year students to be assessed during teaching practice. However, according to the college's Teaching Practice office, only 16,872 (26.6%) of student teachers were visited in 2023. It is of great concern that 73.4% of them went unsupervised. The high number of unsupervised student teachers could cause the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to deregister or cancel the accreditation of the college's teacher qualifications. Seeing that the college produces more than 50% of the initial teacher education, deregistration of its qualifications would result in a shortage of teachers. Therefore, it was decided to address and prioritize the assessment of final year Bed and PGCE students.

In order to address resourcing and travel challenges with in-person assessments on placements, the college management revised the mode of delivery of supervision for final-year teacher students to include both online and face-to-face assessments during their teaching practice placements. College lecturers, school mentors and supervisors had the option to assess students by either visiting classrooms or using the official Microsoft Teams platform for online teaching practice videoconferencing. The aim of this article is to assess final-year Bed and PGCE students who have used an online teaching practice assessment approach during their placement. This blended learning approach is different to online teaching, which is, according to Ibna Seraj et al. (2022, p. 2) "initially planned and prepared to be provided virtually." Through the online supervision approach, supervisors aim to enhance the teaching skills, knowledge, and confidence of students. Online assessment tools for teaching practice may include computers, cell phones and video cameras. At the College of Education (CEDU) internal supervisors use Microsoft Teams for video conferencing and to have pre- and post-lesson discussions with students. During the supervision process, Microsoft Teams is used to observe lessons visually in accordance with criteria for efficient online assessment practices. Al-Hunaiyyan et al. (2024, p. 1291) maintain that Microsoft Teams provides a range of features and resources that are essential for academic settings. It is argued that this platform can be used for pedagogical reflections on the teaching experience. It allows student teachers to reflect on their lived experiences during school placements and ways to improve their teaching practice. In addition, Fuertes-Camacho et al. (2021, p. 3) assert that "reflective capacity refers to the ability, desire and tendency of students to engage in reflective thought during their academic studies and practices."

Using Microsoft Teams to evaluate lessons will undoubtedly enhance the student teacher's reflective skills, which are vital for their professional competence. Hence, it is crucial to reflect on the 'user experience' (of both students and supervisors) to obtain an in-depth understanding of Microsoft Teams' strengths and limitations. For example, a blended approach to teaching and learning applied by Evans (2022) reveals that Microsoft Teams is an effective videoconferencing platform for reflection and authentic assessment practices. Regarding the teaching process itself, Rusznyak and Bertram (2021, p. 36) assert that "pre-service teachers are said to accumulate this knowledge by observing and reflecting on lessons taught by others, as well as gain in preparing, teaching, and reflecting on their lessons." Recordings on Microsoft Teams, which can be used for reflection, are crucial because it means a supervisor does not need to be present in a classroom.

Challenges of Online Teaching Practice Assessment

COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for the digitalization of education (Kang & Park, 2022) on the one hand, and has also accelerated digital transformation on the other. Universities across the globe conducted teaching and assessment via online platforms to ensure continuity of teaching and learning

(Coman et al., 2020). It forced teachers to use various online teaching platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, YouTube, and Microsoft Teams.

Currently, South Africa is experiencing power outages, which affects online assessment. Eskom as a state-owned energy company in South Africa has implemented geographical power outages or rolling blackouts as a method locally referred to as load shedding (De Ruyter, 2023). Hofstatter (2018) and Lindeque (2020) concur that load-shedding has many consequences that negatively influence students' online assessment.

As a result of these technological barriers, CEDU lecturers and student teachers may be affected by power outages daily. Furthermore, access to technology, smartphones, laptops, and the affordability of buying internet data were major threats to student's continued participation in online education (Aldabbus, 2020; Fořtová et al., 2021; Tariq & Fami, 2020; Ullah et al., 2021). A South African study by Mokoena (2017) reports that many students have challenges with teaching practice (TP) placements and lack support from mentors at schools. What is surprising, is the contrary findings of Mosleh et al. (2022) that online teaching improves stress-coping mechanisms. One can conclude that online teaching practices have affected not only the stress levels of students, but also their mental health and has resulted in frustration and anxiety (Pressley, 2021). In South Africa, in-service teachers and student teachers are facing new instructional requirements that has caused high levels of stress (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to examine both the benefits and challenges of online assessment during placements from the students' perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Before we embarked on this study, ethical clearance was obtained from an existing project (Ref #2018/03/14/90060059/MC). This exploratory case study uses an interpretive-constructivist paradigm for the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007; Van Wyk & Taole, 2015) by exploring the student teachers' experiences of online assessment during teaching practice sessions. We have evaluated student teachers' teaching practice sessions online by means of Microsoft Teams as a virtual conferencing platform. We explained the purpose of the study to them before the interviews. A qualitative approach was adopted to collect data by way of semi-structured online interviews with six individuals (PGCE 1-3; 4th Year Bed 1-3). After their letters of consent had been received, participants were coded for reporting purposes, such as male and female according to their registered qualification (e.g., male and female PGCE 1-3; male and female Fourth Year Bed 1-3.) The dates and times of online interviews were arranged with the participants and the online link was provided for teaching practice. Before each session, the participants were informed of confidentiality and anonymity and that if they felt uncomfortable about the interview, they could withdraw from the study. The semi-structured online interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams lasted 30 minutes and were recorded, transcribed and downloaded. The themes were identified according to a manual thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the qualitative data, a thematic analysis process was applied and identified themes emerged. Trustworthiness is an important scientific acid test for measuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. To ensure the integrity of the data sets and identify themes, the participation validation (member checking) process was used (Nowell et al., 2017). This methodological process would offer complete insights into the views, preparations, and challenges of student teachers when online assessments are applied during online teaching practice placements.

FINDINGS

After a thematic analysis of the data sets, the following themes related to student teachers' views of online teaching practice assessment emerged:

- Students found recorded MT videos promote pedagogical reflections and constructive feedback.
- Students adapted to a new approach of online teaching practice assessment.
- Students valued the guidance and supportive role of experienced mentors.
- Students experience challenges affecting teaching practice online assessments (stress, anxiety, load-shedding, connectivity, dysfunctional computers and incorrect lesson plan templates).

Theme 1: Students Found Recorded MT Videos Promoted Pedagogical Reflections and Constructive Feedback

After each online assessment, student teachers use the recorded MT videos to reflect on the teaching situation. This action is known as reflective pedagogy. A good pedagogy is required to reflect on what was good about a lesson and what needs to be improved in future iterations of the same topic. Furthermore, feedback is an essential tool for pedagogical improvement and both student teachers and mentor teachers can benefit from it. Reflection and constructive feedback contribute to development, provide guidance and open learning opportunities for individualized learning and professional growth. One of the participants commented:

I was skeptical about using Teams for my TP assessment. But after practicing at home, my online class session was not bad. It gives me more time to reflect and be more creative in my lessons. (Female, Further Education and Training (FET) Phase, PGCE3)

After the presentation of the lesson, every student teacher must reflect on what was good about the lesson and what could be improved in the next lesson. The following final-year male student believed that the purpose of reflection and feedback are to improve the lesson for future activities on the same topic:

I prepared well, all my activities and the students enjoyed my lesson. After my lesson, I rethink what went well and what must I focus on in the future. I stress for nothing. I like the constructive feedback from my professor. It was very helpful, and I will certainly implement the suggestions in my next lesson. (Male, Intermediate Phase, Fourth Year Bed)

Theme 2: Students Adapted to a New MT Approach to Online Teaching Practice Assessment Practices

As an open-distance and e-learning university, we have changed the way our final-year students are assessed. Although the teaching placements remained the same, the context and conditions changed from only face-to-face assessments to blended assessments. In this case, the supervisors had to assess students in a face-to-face or online mode of assessment. Because online assessment saves the supervisor (lecturer) and the student time and because feedback is immediate, it is a cost-effective strategy. One female participant mentioned:

After receiving the call from the Unisa professor, I was informed that I would be assessed online. Truly speaking, I was nervous. I was exposed to online exams, so being assessed online is another learning opportunity. I adapt my lessons. Now I like how the online assessment changes the way we are assessed. This is an effective time-saving, cost-effective assessment practice. The

mark assigned to my TP assessment was immediately available. (Female, Foundation Phase, 4th Year Bed1)

All final-year students were informed that they had to adapt to the Teaching Practice office's new online teaching practice approach. This also creates new learning opportunities for supervisors, mentors, and students on how to use online teaching practice assessments. A participant observed the following:

I was informed that all final year students will be assessed either face-to-face or online, but truly speaking, I want to be assessed face-to-face but there is always the first time. I had to switch from face-to-face teaching practice to online teaching. What can I say...I had to change my grade 10 lesson. It was a new experience. (Female, FET Phase, 4th Year Bed2)

Another participant said the following about the new rules related to teaching practice assessments:

Sometimes is it good to change how we are assessed, we are the new generation because we are in the 4IR. Change is good, jah...it gave me autonomy in lesson planning... an online class. It was my first time to be evaluated online. After all, it was not that bad ... By the way ... for me, it was a new experience to assess using my cell phone. (Male, FET Phase, PGCE2)

Theme 3: Students Valued the Guidance and Supportive Role of Experienced Mentors

The role of a mentor, as an experienced professional, is to guide, support, coach and offer advice. It emerged that mentors created impactful learning opportunities for participants during placements. Seeing that mentors are familiar with the circumstances of the profession, they are uniquely positioned to help student teachers grow a teacher identity. One of the participants believed that his mentor helped him to be the best teacher:

I appreciated my history mentor teacher. I am thankful for his guidance and ongoing support. He is an experienced teacher. I learned so much from my mentor since my placement at the school. My mentor gave sound advice and showed me how to teach difficult topics. I have learned so much in the past quarter from him. (Male, FET Phase, 4th Year Bed1)

Mentors play a crucial role in shaping, guiding, and influencing prospective students. One of the participants (female student) said that she had learned new skills in teaching visually disabled learners.

I have been placed in this school for blind (visually disabled) learners since 2021. I was assigned to a Foundation phase mentor ... an experienced teacher. She has many years of teaching visually disabled learners. She supported me in my lesson preparations. After receiving the call that I was to be assessed online, my mentor teacher advised me on how to adapt my lessons with specific activities to match up with the time allowed for my session on Teams. (Female, Foundation Phase, 4th Year Bed3)

Theme 4: Students Experience Challenges Affecting Teaching Practice Online Assessments

Since the implementation of an online blended teaching practice assessment, several challenges or drawbacks have been reported. Many participants complained of personal anxiety, load-shedding's effect on online connectivity, and outdated and dysfunctional computer software, including laptops and mobiles. Students who were unfamiliar with Microsoft Teams struggled to use it during online sessions.

I was planning for my Grade 11 Economics lesson to be taught online. There is no scheduled time for when Eskom will implement load-shedding on the day and time on our class timetable. You plan on the day, but anything can happen, the next moment. (Female, FET Phase, PGCE1)

Other challenges were personal anxiety, mobile connectivity issues and outdated and dysfunctional computer software. A male participant raised the following concern:

These online disturbances and disconnection had created stress and anxiety. This load-shedding is a major concern and challenge for most of us during teaching practice. I had no control over when Eskom introduced load shedding in my area. You can only pray that on the day you teach the lesson nothing will happen. (Male, Intermediate Phase, 4th Year Bed1)

Another student was anxious about her dysfunctional laptop:

Since I received a call from the teaching practice office, I was under huge pressure, and my anxiety levels were very high because I would be assessed online. I could not sleep the night before my online assessment because my laptop had a serious technical challenge, it was dysfunctional. (Female, FET Phase, PGCE2)

Ignorance of official teaching practice lesson plan templates was a major issue. Many students used either their placement schools' lesson plans or their own lesson plans.

I am aware of the Unisa lesson plan template for my TP portfolio, but my mentor said that I must use their lesson plan. After my online teaching ... I was negatively assessed because I did not use the official Unisa TP lesson plan template. So, I had learned the hard way, which had impacted my final allocated mark. (Male, FET Phase, PGCE1)

DISCUSSION

This study sought to determine student teachers' perceptions of an online assessment during WIL placements to support teaching practice at an ODeL teacher education university. The data revealed that despite initial skepticism, students quickly grew accustomed to using the virtual online videoconferencing platform Microsoft Teams (Almodaires et al., 2021; Jayothisa et al., 2021; Poston et al., 2020). There are several possible explanations for this finding. Students generally have a much better understanding of digital devices because they grow up in a world where technology is part of daily life (Amasha et al., 2018; Evans, 2022). They not only are curious and quick to accept new technology, but also can explore diverse functions. In this case study, lecturers and student teachers were exposed to MT as an online assessment platform in either four-year Bed or two-year PGCE programmes. This finding agrees with that of Aram and Shachar (2024) about the crucial role that digital technology plays in the lives of young children. It is interesting to note that the students perceived the online supervision assessment approach as a benefit. A possible explanation for this could be that because students feel vulnerable, they are more comfortable when their supervisor is not physically present in the classroom. This may minimize the fear and intimidation often associated with classroom visits (Almodaires et al., 2021). This corroborates the findings of Mahmoud (2020) that some supervisors regard themselves as inspectors. Consequently, they can negatively influence behavior by turning inexperienced students into change-resistant agents.

Another important finding of the study is the recognition amongst participants that this method of online supervision using MT to record lessons, taught which offers extra time for reflection on their

pedagogy and classroom management practice. This finding might be explained by the fact that online sessions can be recorded, allowing the student the opportunity to reflect on his/her interaction with the supervisor. Furthermore, it can be deduced that these student teachers view the online supervision process as a means of enhancing their creativity with lesson presentations. This finding matches that of Mahmoud (2020), who claims that novice teachers' teaching pedagogies display fresh and innovative ideas. It is encouraging to note that the participants in this study confirmed the recognized association between sound lesson preparation and learning satisfaction. This finding is consistent with that of Iqbal et al. (2021) who state that a teacher without a lesson plan is unable to stay on track and distribute the learning outcomes of a lesson. The data also showed that the students were impressed by the constructive and helpful feedback from their supervisors. Since online supervision of teaching practices is a relatively new approach at Unisa, supervisors may have recognized the need for intensified assistance to students.

This study sought to explore: how do student teachers prepare for online assessment during WIL placement? It was shown that online supervision and assessment of classroom teaching through MT not only created new experiences, but also caused uncertainty and nervousness among some students. This finding corresponds with that of Paksuniemi et al. (2021) who found that the digitalization of teaching practice supervision methods by means of MT initially met with skepticism among in-service teachers. The fear and uncertainty factors may have elucidated the rationale behind the students' preference for in-person assessment initially. A potential explanation for the tension felt by the students could be attributed to this formal assessment task that carries significant weight in determining their final mark and the successful completion of their studies.

The data showed that the students eventually came to accept and embrace the online assessment approach after they had realized its benefits outweighed the drawbacks. For example, participants viewed that online assessments are time-saving and cost-effective. This finding is in agreement with that of Tartavulea et al. (2020, p. 923) who declare that "students' abilities concerning the use of the Internet and mobile devices make them 'digital natives', who appreciate the flexibility and efficiency these technologies provide." The online assessment mode is also viewed as advantageous seeing that communication lines are open throughout the evaluation process and that feedback is immediate (Ali et al., 2023). Tartavulea et al. (2020) note that this is a form of synchronous communication because it takes place in real time and participants are simultaneously logged online. This allows for immediate discussions and reflections (Paksuniemi et al., 2021).

The data also showed that the supervisors informed students beforehand how their TP evaluations would be conducted which made the online assessments fair, transparent and reliable. Consequently, their supervisors' approach is well in line with the departmental and Unisa policy imperatives. DHET (2015, p. 18) states that "practical learning must be appropriately structured and fully integrated into overall learning programmes, while including structured supervision, mentoring, and assessment." Although the students were familiar with online assessment of their teaching skills, they realized the importance of gaining a thorough understanding of the use of online platforms. This may explain why they referred to themselves as "the new generation" in line with the 4th Industrial Revolution. These students understand that online learning platforms and educational apps offer an excellent opportunity to increase teachers' professional development and performance. This finding aligns with that of DeCoito and Estaiteyeh (2022) that found teachers who regularly use online learning platforms are more efficacious in integrating technology into their teaching practices.

Finally, reasons why students face a myriad of challenges in their online teaching practice assessments were identified (Aldabbus, 2020; Fořtová et al., 2021). From a Nigerian perspective, Onyema (2020) holds that some students cannot afford good laptops owing to socioeconomic inequality, while Cucco et al. also attribute the digital divide to socioeconomic inequalities. To compound this matter, because not all higher institutions prepare their students for it, many students were not ready to take up this challenge. Moreover, Barril (2018) and Ferri et al. (2020) agree that the lack of equipment and infrastructure has increased the digital divide. The researchers argue that internet accessibility is crucial in the effective delivery of online education and, particularly, online TP assessments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated unequal access to internet connectivity and smart devices, as well as teacher training in an online mode of education (Dayal, 2023). Findings revealed that some students had often struggled because of poor internet connectivity during the online assessments but received a second opportunity to be assessment at rescheduled date. It can be argued that unreliable internet connectivity has been the reason for the opposition to online work and online teaching (Bakhmat et al., 2021). These findings corroborate the ideas of Chaplot and Kujal (2020) who suggest that limited access to technology and internet connectivity cause many problems. After all, student teachers and mentor teachers require connectivity to participate in online teaching or any online activities. Another reason for the stress and anxiety among student teachers during the online TP assessment was Eskom's inability to ensure sufficient electricity (Hofstatter, 2018; Khoza, 2024; Lindeque, 2020). Stress (Cacha et al., 2019), frustration and anxiety (Pressley, 2021) affect online TP and its assessment (Haider & Al-Salman, 2020). Another challenge is students who overlooked the CEDU's official lesson planning template, which impacted on their online assessment grading.

CONCLUSION

This research set out to determine student teachers' perceptions of online assessment during teaching practice placements. Findings reveal that despite initial skepticism, students quickly adapted to the virtual online videoconferencing platform Microsoft Teams. The findings contribute to the literature regarding online assessment of teaching practice by promoting the use of MT to decrease the number of unsupervised final-year students. From a practical perspective, CEDU student teachers prepared and planned TP placements in accordance with the requirement of WIL and the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (MRTEQ) policy. This study describes MT as an effective platform for online assessment seeing that it creates awareness and enhances the professional and digital literacy skills of student teachers as well as lecturers. Lecturers, supervisors and student teachers have been exposed to ways of assessment during online supervision, which created new learning experiences.

The study's main limitation is its small sample size. Only teaching practice placements of participants using Microsoft Teams are investigated. Because this study was conducted at one teacher education college at an open distance e-learning university, the results cannot be generalized and should be interpreted with caution. More research is needed globally to examine the impact of online assessments for students on placement in other disciplines, programs and countries.

The following recommendations for further research are based on the key findings and the gaps emanating from the literature. A mixed-methods design study of student teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and fairness of online assessment methods compared to that of traditional assessment methods can be investigated. The barriers that lecturers encounter when conducting online assessments during teaching practice placements and strategies to overcome them can be examined. Student teachers' views of lecturer support and the teaching practice unit in an ODeL university could

also be studied. Finally, conceptual and theoretical framework research may be conducted according to a systematic review of learning for practice and learning in practice.

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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 related to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE).

In this Journal, WIL is defined as:

An educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38).*

Examples of practice include off-campus workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurship, student-led enterprise, student consultancies, etc. WIL is related to, and overlaps with, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, WIL practitioners, curricular designers, and researchers. The Journal encourages quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of quality practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ; www.wilnz.nz), and the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily in 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 good 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.

Good practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of good practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or it was 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.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

Reference

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