



VITRUAL PLACEMENTS & WIL GUIDELINES

WHAT ARE PLACEMENTS AND WIL?

Placements are a unit, unit component or other work integrated learning (WIL) activity that is required as part of a unit or program of study (including in an elective unit), that gives students a practical experience in the application of theoretical concepts and knowledge in a workplace environment, and may include clinical practice, clinical placement, practicum, internship, professional placement, professional experience, industrial experience, work experience or professional practice.

WHAT IS A WORKPLACE?

A workplace is anywhere that work is carried out for a business or undertaking, including work undertaken as work experience or by volunteers. Increasingly this work may be undertaken at home or at another remote location.

WHAT IS VIRTUAL WIL?

Virtual (or digital or online) WIL describes a placement or WIL activity that is undertaken remotely

IS IT A 'REAL' EXPERIENCE?

Yes! Once considered to be only an inauthentic simulation of work, virtual experiences are being considered as a good reflection of the move of many Industries and organisations who are operating online. Particularly as a result of the COVID19 impact upon the Australian and international workforce, online placements and WIL experiences have become critical for ensuring that students are equipped to work effectively and confidently in dynamic digital work environments, in preparation for job readiness.

WHAT COULD VIRTUAL PLACEMENTS LOOK LIKE?

Virtual placements may be provided by the same partners you are working with. The duties at your placement may generally be the same, with some adjustments made to accommodate the changing needs of working online.

Virtual placements can be undertaken anywhere, physical abilities may be less of an impact on the experience, students develop their digital presence and experience digital workplace cultures and practices.



Virtual placements maybe synchronous (communication between partners and students is simultaneous, eg via chat, videoconferencing, web conferencing, audioconferencing) or asynchronous (communication is not dependant on real time interface, eg email, online discussion forums, e-portfolios).

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS PREPARE AND CONSIDER FOR A VIRTUAL PLACEMENT?

- How to co-create experiences with partners to scaffold the student's experience as a structured opportunity for learning?, For example
 - Establishing and communicating clear learning objectives for the virtual activity
 - Designing and aligning learning outcomes, assessment and learning activities – are there differences in virtual assessments?
 - Integrating disciplinary theory and concepts into the virtual experience.
- How to ensure students remain connected and in communication with both the University and the industry partner?
- Does Western have a current student placement agreement with the partner?
- Can our existing partners provide a virtual experience? Can the experience be co-developed?



- Coordinating and negotiating virtual placement expectations
- Providing support for students – contact points, covering varied hours, etc.
- Providing support resources, such as guidelines on cultural sensitivities, working in virtual teams, etc in relation to the unit or discipline.
- Reviewing any accreditation or certifying body requirements around virtual placements
- Pre-placement preparation needs to be identified for students
- Any visa limitations or requirements for online placements?
- What is a student’s awareness around a digital environment is a ‘real’ work environment, with real workplace cultures, practices, and skills?
- Do we provide clear guidelines of how to setup a space to undertake a virtual placement?

HOW DO PLACEMENT PARTNERS PREPARE FOR A VIRTUAL PLACEMENT?

- Induction/orientation for students
- Online supervision arrangements
- Clarity about how the privacy risk regarding data going will be managed
- Partners should notify Western and students about:
 - How privacy risks and data will be managed
 - Preferences for data connections that students need to have
 - How online supervision will be undertaken?
 - How students are covered if they have any injury or accident during their placement?
 - Recommending, if required, an ergonomic or specific hardware set up
 - What specific equipment are students required to have?
 - Selecting the most appropriate communications technology and supporting students in its use.

HOW DO STUDENTS PREPARE FOR A VIRTUAL PLACEMENT?

- How can students maintain any privacy requirements of the placement partner?
- What kinds of data connections do students need to have?
- Is there anything that may inhibit my participation in the placement?
- Do the students need to be observed or supervised while having the discussions with a potential client?
- How can students assess their own ergonomic set up?
- What equipment are students required to have?
- Students may work with placement partners and Western to develop activities and project briefs, provide feedback on process and supervision.
- Students will follow guidance (and practice) on protocols, behaviour and expectations when working virtually.
- Enabling students to collect, curate and evidence development and achievements from their WIL experience in a portfolio.

REFERENCES

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