

# Planning the journey to best practice in developing employability skills: Transnational university internships in Vietnam

CHRISTINE BILSLAND<sup>1</sup>

*Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

HELGA NAGY

PHIL SMITH

*RMIT International University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

---

Currently, there is little research into how Western universities can establish and implement effective WIL (Work Integrated Learning) in their offshore campuses. Given global concern with university graduates' general work-readiness, combined with a need for foreign universities to deliver relevant outcomes to its offshore students, greater insight is needed. This paper examines WIL in an offshore education context. It reports results from work supervisor evaluations of interns in a foreign university that delivers its WIL/internship program to undergraduate business degree students in Vietnam. Although preliminary results indicate that work supervisors are generally satisfied with intern performance on employability skill measures, the authors propose further research that would enable universities to deliver locally relevant WIL programs. The paper concludes by proposing WIL research initiatives aimed at incorporating richer communication and involvement with the company representatives/ frontline supervisors; understanding relevant factors of importance held by industry; and building closer connections with industry. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2014, 15(2), 145-157*)

Keywords: Employability skills, graduate attributes, higher education Vietnam, internships, transnational education, work integrated learning

---

The work-readiness of higher education graduates is a concern for governments, higher education providers and graduate employers. Higher education administrators are under pressure to provide degree programs more closely aligned with graduate employer and industry needs in terms of general employability skills. Internships and dedicated work integrated learning (WIL) courses are examples of the response of higher education institutions to this need. Predictably, research into effective WIL activities in higher education has increased, but is predominantly focused on Western institutions in Western countries. However, the need for employability skills in graduates is global thus, to partially redress the imbalance this paper examines the provision of employability skills in a transnational education (TNE) context; the example being a foreign university (FUV) that delivers business degree programs in Vietnam. The paper will discuss the needs of the Vietnamese educational context, the delivery of WIL courses by the FUV, methods of assessing effectiveness and finally make recommendations concerning university-industry liaison.

Research that clearly indicates a lack of employability skills among the graduate population include: the seminal findings of the Dearing report (1997) in the UK; the OECD Skills Strategy report (2011); and, a Manpower Group survey on global talent shortages (2012). All documented a mismatch between the skill levels of graduates and the expectations of their graduate employers. For the purposes of this research *employability skills* are defined as: communication, interpersonal, teamwork, problem solving, research and analytical, planning and organizing, technology, and lifelong learning skills.

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: Christine Bilsland, [christine.bilsland@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:christine.bilsland@students.mq.edu.au)

To address the issue, some universities have established work integrated learning (WIL) programs that incorporate more industry-relevant activities with closer participation and partnerships with industry (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2010; Freudenberg, Brimble, Cameron & English, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008). WIL programs endeavor to enable graduates to learn and to demonstrate greater work readiness, and internship placements represent one important aspect of work integrated learning. Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden (2010) defined work integrated learning as an integrated planned course of learning activities that include an industry placement concurrent with workshop activities designed to support employability skills through activity, discussion and reflection. Knight and Yorke (2003) further elaborated that work integrated learning should instill employability skills that not only enhance graduates' ability to find jobs and perform in the workplace, but that also contribute to their lifelong occupational success - implying that the value of internships stems not only from the opportunity to gain work skills and develop general work-readiness after graduation, but also builds a foundation for their future.

Bridgestock (2009) also claimed that enhancing graduate employability encompasses explicit incorporation of career management skills into higher education outcomes. In addressing the challenges of articulating valid *graduate attribute* statements into higher education policy, Barrie (2012) further adds to the depth and complexity of the desired graduate capability by proposing that universities develop "qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future" (p. 80). Therefore, an important consideration to be addressed in this action research project is whether the employability skill areas articulated by the home campus of the university appropriately relate to local and industry needs of the transnational host campus.

Research relating to employability skill expectations of graduate employers is particularly crucial for universities that engage in international education, particularly in transnational education where the university delivers its product to an offshore market; as in any international business venture, possible differences in the host market should be identified and understood. This paper is the first step in an action research project that investigates whether student interns of a foreign university that delivers its degree program in the offshore Vietnamese environment demonstrate effective employability skills that meet the needs of local industry partners, and ultimately how internships in Vietnam can better meet local industry needs.

The integration of internships with higher education in Vietnam is in early stages of development; at the moment there is little published research available. The authors of this paper review results of intern work supervisor evaluation feedback from a foreign university in Vietnam (FUV) over the initial three semesters (2010-2011) of its WIL internship program with the aim of gaining insight into both the apparent strengths and weaknesses of the interns in terms of their employability skill levels as evaluated by their workplace supervisors. The findings will be used as a foundation upon which to continually build on our understanding of the requirements of Vietnamese employers, and thereby to constantly improve the WIL internship program by adapting it to meet local requirements.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United Kingdom (UK), fundamental literature on "employability skills" Yorke (2006) and Harvey (2000, 2005) indicated that employers in the UK tend to value employability skills more highly than disciplinary-based understanding and skills. In 2010, the Education

Development Initiatives (EDI) organization, with support of the CBI British Industry lobby group, published survey results gathered from surveying employers from a range of industries. Overall, results indicated the lack of employability skills as a major recruitment concern of graduate employers. Of great interest to WIL practitioners in the UK was the result that the employers of business graduates viewed the lack of employability skills as the highest concern in recruiting graduates (67%), while the lack of industry experience came a distant second (44%). Therefore, at least in the UK industry environment where the survey took place, relevant and useful internship programs must provide more to the intern than the opportunity to gain experience. Internships should also actively support the intern's employability skill development.

Similar concerns with graduate employability skills are found in the Australian commercial and higher education environment. Focus on whether graduate attributes match Australian employer requirements, and how to integrate relevant work skills into a tertiary curriculum has been reflected in considerable research since 2001 (Australian Education International 2010; Barrie, 2006; Barrie, Hughes, & Smith, 2009; Bradley, 2008; Vu, Rigby, Wood, & Daly, 2011; Zanko et al., 2010). Freudenberg, Brimble, and Cameron (2010) discovered general concern amongst government, industry associations and employers regarding the lack of "work-readiness" of commerce, accounting and business graduates. Concern over the lack of work readiness displayed by accounting graduates in particular has generated academic as well as industry-based research (Central Queensland University, 2009; Freudenberg, Brimble, Cameron, & English, 2011; Tindale, Evans, Cable, & Mead, 2005) into how tertiary accounting curricula can improve with relation to developing accounting graduates' employability and professional work skills. A growing body of literature is concerned with the challenges that international students from non-English speaking backgrounds studying in Australia face in achieving work-ready employability skill outcomes (Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010; Patrick et al., 2008).

Beyond the UK and Australia, published research in other global growth regions indicate a mismatch between graduates' skills and employers' expectations - particularly with problem solving, communication, team skills and management skills. Such research includes examples from New Zealand (Hodges & Burchell, 2003), Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010), South Africa (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010), Japan (Sugahara & Coman, 2010), China (Rose, 2013) and Malaysia (Chang, 2004; Daud, Abidin, Sapuan, & Rajadurai, 2011).

#### *Higher Education and Employability Skills – Literature Relevant to Vietnam*

Vietnamese employers surveyed through a joint International Labour Organization (ILO) and Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) project agreed on the critical importance of developing better labor skills in Vietnam (VCCI/ILO 2007). The World Bank's Vietnam Development Report of 2006 found that labor skills and education ranked third in a list of "constraints of doing business in Vietnam", and when compared to the rest of the world was a statistically higher constraint (World Bank, 2008). The World Bank Report concluded that the Vietnamese should address this constraint as a priority, because even with a conservative projection influenced by current trends shifting from agriculture to industrialization, increased integration with the global economy, and general growth, the gap will widen if action is not taken.

Other reports have concluded that in Vietnam higher education providers need to form closer links with industry and become more responsive to their needs (US Commercial

Service, 2013; Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Tran, 2010; World Bank, 2008). The Asian Development Bank (2010) reported that the Vietnamese government recognized the urgency to develop training systems more relevant to industry, and encouraged greater collaboration, partnership and feedback between industry and educational institutions. Tran (2012) reviewed the environment in Vietnam with respect to higher education's performance in delivering adequate employability skill levels and found that the demand for fully-rounded, work-ready graduates is recognized by all stakeholders including government, industry, higher education and the wider community, and that this recognition is reflected in stated missions and desired outcomes. However, in practice, higher education fundamentals - such as curriculum modifications, assessment practices and teaching methods - have not been adapted to incorporate this awareness; this resistance to change has deep roots in a lack of infrastructure, funding, and in Vietnam's political environment. A fragmented higher education system that lacks connections and opportunities to engage in communication and synergistic partnerships between various institutions and industry groups has developed in the current environment. Presumably to address these issues, the British Council has been invited by the Vietnamese government to expand their global project on employability skills into Vietnam. Initially, the project will target several State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) which historically have maintained their own separate education and training systems (British Council 2012). The British Council noted several aims of the Vietnamese government's 2005 policy to build a learning society: to establish closer education networks; to introduce industry relevant curricula; and to develop teaching methods that provide an essential foundation for this Learning Society.

Although there is little research measuring how Vietnamese employers view the importance of employability skills in potential graduates the extant literature indicates they do value employability skills (Luong, 2010; Duoc & Metzger, 2007).

According to Luong (2010), a Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy survey discovered a lack of all-round interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, the ability to apply knowledge to practical situations, and professionalism in the university graduates. Lam (2013) reported that Vietnamese universities such as Ho Chi Minh City's University of Economics & Finance and Hanoi's Foreign Trade University are starting to act to develop education and training partnerships with local business to boost relevant graduate skill levels.

Other surveys of Vietnamese employers of university graduates also reported that employers perceived the levels of problem solving, decision making and learning skills of graduates to be low ( Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Kamoche, 2001; Nguyen, 2011; Trung & Swierczek, 2009; World Bank, 2008). Quantitative studies in Vietnam by Duoc and Metzger, and Trung and Swierczek were found to support the importance of incorporating employability skills into Vietnamese higher education. Duoc and Metzger researched complaints by Vietnamese employers that graduates lacked both skills and practical experience, and found that employers in Vietnam do expect graduates to be proficient in communication skills, IT skills and English. They concluded that higher education should integrate the ability to apply knowledge, critical analysis, problem-solving skills and overall quality of work into their business courses.

Trung and Swierczek (2009) surveyed department managers on their needs, as well as one group of final year students and two groups of students from other years in four Vietnamese universities. Several findings concurred with Duoc and Metzger (2007). Their factor analysis resulted in the emergence of four skill factors of importance:

1. *information processing skills to solve problems;*
2. *interpersonal skills to effectively teamwork* incorporating cooperation-related skills;
3. *learning skills* incorporating active learning, self-esteem, career development planning, and self-confidence;
4. *decision making*, comprising identifying key causes, critical thinking, decision making, prioritizing, and goal setting.

In contrast Tran (2010), took a qualitative approach to investigate the issue from the student perspective; she interviewed local Hanoi business graduates and held focus group discussions with final year students of 10 universities in Hanoi and concluded that graduates view their university education as inadequate to equip them to perform in the job market. Tran described “the negative reaction to the universities’ contribution” as “massive” (p. 5) and recommended that universities not only revise their curriculum and teaching methods in order to become more market-oriented, but they should also build better links and engage in greater cooperation with industry.

#### *Embedding Employability Skills into Internships*

The foreign owned Vietnamese university examined in this study embeds employability skills into its business undergraduate curriculum both before and during its WIL internships.

First, it incorporates employability skill-related learning outcomes into many courses that precede the internship elective, and requires interns to complete a non-credit Workplace Preparation Program before they can engage in a WIL Internship. Second, it offers semester-long internships (12 weeks) with local Vietnamese and foreign organizations where each intern’s performance on key employability skills is assessed. Third, the interns receive additional support by attending supplementary workshops run throughout the internship period.

1. *Pre-WIL course work.* The FUV must explicitly integrate relevant skills into learning outcomes of most courses in the business degree programs, in order to conform to academic quality standards established by the university’s home country to enable university graduates to acquire and practice employability skills that match employer requirements. More specifically, students taking WIL must take a pre-requisite Workplace Preparation Program (WPP) for one semester before they can apply for a WIL internship. WPP incorporates job search, application writing, interview preparation, mock interviews, and business networking techniques to give prospective interns opportunities to apply related soft skills. As noted by Freudenberg et al., (2010) and Curzon-Hobson, (2003), and particularly by researchers in Vietnam (Duoc & Metzger 2007; Trung & Swierczek 2009) incorporating employability skills throughout the program helps graduates to acquire and practice these skills formatively in coursework prior to starting an internship.

2. *WIL Elective* - Students who have successfully completed requisite course units in the Bachelor of Commerce/ Bachelor of Accounting degree programs have an option to take a twelve-week (equivalent to one semester) internship working at a local or overseas organization. The internship’s aim is to provide the student with a “bridge” between study

and full time work, and to provide an opportunity to demonstrate and hone their employability skills.

This WIL elective is equivalent to two course credits – *Professional Development* constitutes the internship placement itself. *Personal Development* is a series of six sessions and assessment activities that run concurrently with the Professional Development internship. Both the Professional Development placement and the Personal Development sessions are compulsory components of the WIL elective, and must be taken simultaneously. As identified by Cooper et al., (2010) in general, and specifically in Vietnam by Duoc and Metzger (2007), and Tran (2010); closer liaison and cooperation with industry is highly desirable for higher education initiatives to work. Accordingly, the university deploys dedicated professional Career Centre staff as well as academic staff in order to foster mutually beneficial cooperation. The Career Centre provides the central, ongoing link between the university and the internship organization in delivering WIL internship placements. Career Centre staff establish internship agreements, arrange interviews, handle administrative details and maintain contact each semester with key company human resource staff in the internship organization. In addition, each intern is assigned an academic advisor. The academic advisors run “Personal Development” and provide the critical link with the intern’s direct work supervisor through workplace visits and communication. The intern’s direct work supervisor is requested to support the intern in a goal setting assessment, as well as to provide an evaluation of the intern’s skills at the end of the internship.

3. *Workshops and Personal Development* – During the internship period, interns attend an orientation session as well as five supplementary workshop sessions. Academic advisors facilitate these sessions, integrating key employability skill topics - such as effective communication, conflict management, time management and lifelong learning - into the workshops. Guest speakers from various organizations occasionally participate in workshops to give interns added professional exposure. The authors have observed that a real benefit from the student viewpoint is that the workshops give interns the opportunity to meet together on a regular basis, and encourage participating interns to share workplace experiences. Not only do the interns learn from their own work experience; they learn from each other.

As stated by Curzon-Hobson (2003) and Cooper et al. (2010), ongoing support concurrent with the work placement for interns is valuable. Curzon-Hobson further elaborates that providing support for students to take a “critical stance” is important. Providing support for the intern to reflect on and critically analyze their experience and learn how to benefit more from learning at work, not just learn how to do the work itself, is important. Therefore, the personal development activities give interns opportunities to reflect, evaluate internship experiences, and plan for personal and career development. Academic advisors are available for individual sessions by appointment if interns want additional coaching support with their reflective/evaluative activities. Assessments include periodic blog submissions throughout the internship where the interns reflect on various aspects of their learning, and a final internship reflection assessment requires interns to evaluate their entire internship experience, and their own personal development.

## METHODOLOGY

The research instrument was the Intern Performance Evaluation (Table 1) that the interns' work supervisors submitted when the internship was completed. The performance evaluation consisted of a ten-item five-point Likert scale questionnaire made up of five "professional skill" and five "personal skill" items. Garson (2005) observed that the minimum recommended resolution in Likert scales is three points, as anything less produces too great a departure from normality. Ethics approval was secured from the FUV (Foreign University in Vietnam) College of Business.

TABLE 1. Intern performance evaluation form.

<b>Rating of Attributes</b>					
<b>How well did the intern perform in his/her job? 1=low, 5=high</b>					
<b>Professional Skills</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Integration of theory &amp; practice</b> adapting skills learnt to new situations at work					
<b>Problem solving skills</b> identifying problems and developing creative yet practical solutions					
<b>Analytical skills</b> collecting, analyzing and organizing information					
<b>Collaboration across departments</b> understanding performance as an individual and as a member of a team					
<b>Drive to learn</b> being enthusiastic; open to new ideas; eager to learn new skills					
<b>Personal Skills</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Time management skills</b> managing tasks and time for self and others; organizing work and meeting deadlines					
<b>Communication skills</b> speaking and writing clearly; able to convey messages effectively					
<b>People relations</b> engaging in discussions; able to relate with different people in different settings					
<b>Self-confidence/assertiveness</b> being pro-active, reliable and committed; taking on responsibility					
<b>Listening skills</b> understanding, interpreting and evaluating information					

The university placed 368 undergraduate business students into internships throughout the first three semesters of the WIL elective's introduction into the degree program in Vietnam (February 2010 to January 2011). Between week two and week five of the internship placement, an academic advisor met with each intern's direct work supervisor. In the meeting, work supervisors were introduced to the Intern Performance Evaluation.

The confidential nature of the survey and the use of aggregated data for university reports and documents were discussed with the work supervisors in the workplace meeting. All

work supervisors submitted performance evaluations for all students at the end of the internship placement period.

Because evaluation items reflected employability-skill related dimensions repeatedly encountered in the literature, we applied descriptive analysis to the aggregated results for the first three semesters of WIL in Vietnam to obtain an initial measure of the work supervisors' perception of intern performance. In addition to compiling average performance ratings (means) for each item over the three semesters, we compared the means of evaluation items (dependent variables) using one-way analysis of variance to uncover possible significant differences between item scores, and tested for correlations between dependent variables that might suggest inter-relationships between employability skill performance areas.

## DISCUSSION OF INTERN PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SURVEY RESULTS

Mean scores for the returned intern performance evaluations are noted in Table 2. Means for the ten dependent variables ranged from 3.8 to 4.3. The highest mean scores were found in Communication (4.0), Collaboration (4.2), People Relations (4.2), Listening (4.2) and Drive to Learn (4.3). The differences in mean scores were not statistically significant, and no significant correlations between variables were found to exist.

TABLE 2. Mean score results from returned intern performance evaluations

Skill	Skill Type	Mean	Rank
Drive to learn	Professional	4.3	1
Listening	Personal	4.2	2(tied)
People Relations	Personal	4.2	2(tied)
Collaboration across departments	Professional	4.2	3
Communication	Personal	4.0	4
Self Confidence	Personal	3.9	5(tied)
Analytical	Professional	3.9	5(tied)
Integration of theory & practice	Professional	3.8	6(tied)
Problem solving	Professional	3.8	6(tied)
Time management	Personal	3.8	6(tied)

It appears that the skills that require improvement according to workplace supervisors are: problem solving skills, integration of theory and practice, and time management. However these scores are not significantly lower than other items; generally the scores are quite high (the mean score calculated for all items is 4.0). We could conclude that the interns' performance does meet expectations, and that the foreign university, its courses and its WIL program in particular, are somewhat successful in developing employability skills of its offshore students in Vietnam. The highest scoring variables - collaboration, people relations and listening - are specifically addressed in learning outcomes of many academic subjects of the degree courses. Team and group work are assessed in most subjects of the curriculum. The personal development workshops engage interns in sharing work performance situations and challenges - both in the workshop sessions and in the reflective blog journals - that largely concern generic, rather than technical, skills and attributes.

However there are many limitations to interpreting the positive scores as evidence of success; we must consider alternate explanations on which to base further exploration. First, interns are not full-fledged employees - the work supervisors might take this status into

consideration and apply lower expectations and standards than they would to graduate employees. Second, the intern performance evaluation is a university appraisal document, not a workplace appraisal document. Therefore, evaluating the intern's performance is not generally a key performance indicator or part of the work supervisors' official job descriptions. Third, as Rowe, Mackaway, and Winchester-Seeto (2012) state, it is crucial for workplace supervisors to have a clear understanding of the purpose of WIL activities. A key purpose for academic advisors to visit intern supervisors is to engage in clear communication on the WIL program and assessments, especially the Intern Performance Evaluation, so that the evaluation is clearly understood. However in reality the Performance Evaluation scores cannot be moderated and validated as is done with other university course assessment and grades. Fourth, the evaluation is done as an information sharing communicative activity – although students cannot “fail” on the basis of a low scoring performance evaluation, the evaluation is done in open consultation; therefore supervisors may be reluctant to assign low scores. Finally, the relationship between work supervisor and intern can be a collegial “mentor/mentee” relationship. Interns are not permanent members of the organization; the performance evaluation is not an official company document; therefore, as a mentor the work supervisor may wish to provide the intern with positive support and encouragement. Each of these considerations may operate to varying degrees, and synergistically influence work supervisors to give interns high scores.

It is interesting to note that *drive-to-learn* is the highest-scoring scale item (4.3). We could interpret this as evidence of success in developing interns' learning orientations throughout the degree program and WIL course. However an alternate explanation could be sample bias. WIL is a two-course elective – students need to give up two other courses in order to fit the internship into their study. As interns are generally low paid, students may choose other academic courses before graduating to “real” higher paid jobs, rather than spending a semester on an internship during which they can earn only two credits. Students taking WIL must plan their courses in advance so they have two credits left for the internship.

Therefore, higher results in the *drive to learn* (as well as the overall high results on most performance evaluation items) may be due to a self-selection sampling element – students choosing and planning to do WIL may be more driven to learn – that is to value the opportunity to learn in a relatively low-paid internship placement, and delay the gratification of earning more money as a higher-paid graduate, than students who don't choose WIL. For this reason, it is also possible that students who choose WIL are freer of financial pressures than students who don't choose WIL. They may also be more analytical and able to prioritize activities. This is speculative, but we believe it is important to do further research inquiring into possible motivational differences between transnational students who choose WIL as an elective and those who do not.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the TNE environment the practice of internship may be, if not entirely new, somewhat different in orientation and in practice to the local industry, cultural and social background and experience of the work supervisor. Therefore we find that it is important to focus on engaging in communicative activities with industry. Career Centre internship liaison activities and workplace visits by the academic advisors described earlier in this report are important and valuable fundamentals of this engagement approach.

Both the academic advisors and Career Centre departments of TNEs are in positions to help their institutions understand the local conditions and if necessary adapt and improve their WIL offering to the mutual benefit of the HE institution, interns, graduates and industry employers. Therefore, we identify that research into how the boundary spanning function of WIL roles in the TNE is potentially valuable – not only through workplace visits by the academic advisors and initial set-up/maintenance of the Career Centre staff, but through other activities such as industry fairs, industry project participation, coaching and mentoring, guest speaker and lecturer sessions and series.

Further development of both the academic advisors and Career Centre staff as boundary spanners may have particular value in the TNE context. Boundary spanners are individuals in an organization whose roles are incumbent on linking the organization with its environment. Effective boundary spanners facilitate the organizations ability to understand, anticipate contingencies, and create mutually beneficial relationships (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Peach, Cates, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Jones, and Lechleiter (2011) reported how university WIL programs provide potential means for universities to engage boundary spanners to understand changing industry/employer needs and to act proactively and effectively. Boundary spanning could be seen as a new direction in offshore higher education markets such as Vietnam, in keeping with the previously-mentioned government initiatives to increase collaboration between university and industry stakeholders in the process of curriculum development. Hoat et al. (2009) reported an indicator of this possible trend where eight medical schools in Vietnam undertook a change process between 2007 – 2009 involving teachers, students and external stakeholders to move from a traditional curriculum to a more community-oriented education. We believe that universities offering internship programs offshore have a valuable opportunity to leverage the connections established with local industry/businesses in order to continually make their tertiary education product relevant to all stakeholders.

As the WIL program continues we will extend quantitative analysis of intern performance scores to incorporate perceived “importance” factors of the intern work supervisors. We will also examine possible differences between results from supervisors in different industry types (as defined by the Foreign University in Vietnam’s career and employment centre), gender differences, and, national/cultural orientation of the intern organization.

The critical impact of the work supervisor in any work integrated learning program was reviewed by Rowe et al. (2012). Our current Internship Performance Evaluation items were developed in an Australian university context. Therefore, future research with the local work supervisors will explore whether these items are relevant to the local work environment as well. In the next step of the research project, we will gather and analyze comments using NVivo software from the open questions on strengths, weaknesses and additional remarks that workplace supervisors can provide on the Intern Performance evaluation for each student. This qualitative analysis will aim to better understand work supervisors’ concerns. Analyzing comments will result in richer feedback from the work supervisors and greater insight into how well interns’ employability skills are perceived. We also propose future research that incorporates in-depth interviews with work supervisors of specific areas of concern that arise from survey results in the ongoing intern evaluation surveys.

## REFERENCES

- Aldrich, H. & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary spanning roles and organization structure. *Academy of Management Review*, 2(2), 217-230. Retrieved from [http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=howard\\_aldrich](http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=howard_aldrich)
- Asian Development Bank. (2010). *Skills Enhancement Project* (Project 41339-013). Retrieved from <http://www.adb.org/projects/41339-013/main>
- Australian Education International (2010). *International graduate outcomes and employer perceptions*. Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from [https://aei.gov.au/News/Latest-News/Documents/2010\\_International\\_Graduate\\_Outcomes\\_.pdf.pdf](https://aei.gov.au/News/Latest-News/Documents/2010_International_Graduate_Outcomes_.pdf.pdf)
- Barrie, S. C. (2006). Understanding what we mean by the generic attributes of graduates. *Higher Education*, 51, 215-241.
- Barrie, S., Hughes, C., & Smith, C. (2009). *The national graduate attributes project: integration and assessment of graduate attributes in curriculum*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/projects/nationalgap/resources/gappdfs/national%20graduate%20attributes%20project%20final%20report%202009.pdf>
- Barrie, S. (2012). A research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(1), 79-92.
- Bradley, D. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education Report*. Australian Government Department of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/ResourcesAndPublications/ReviewOfAustralianHigherEducation/Pages/ReviewOfAustralianHigherEducationReport.aspx>
- Bridgestock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(1), 31-44.
- British Council (2012). *Lifelong learning strategies* (Vietnam). Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>
- Central Queensland University (CQU). (2009). *Examining career outcomes and generic skills of culturally diverse accounting graduates entering the Australian workforce*. Retrieved from <http://learning.cqu.edu.au/FCWViewer/getFile.do?id=34325>
- Chang, M. (2004). Why some graduates are more marketable than others. In *Workshop of enhancing graduate employability in a globalized economy*, Putrajaya, Malaysia.
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Curzon-Hobson, A. (2003). Higher learning and the critical stance. *Studies in Higher Education*, 28(2), 201-212.
- Daud, S., Abidin, N., Sapuan, N. M., & Rajadurai, J. (2011). Enhancing university business curriculum using an importance-performance approach: A case study of the business management faculty of a university in Malaysia. *International Journal of Education Management*, 25(6), 545-569.
- Dearing, R. (1997). *Higher education in the learning society: A summary report*. Retrieved from <https://bei.leeds.ac.uk/Partners/NCIHE/>
- Duoc, T. Q., & Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: Multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643.
- Education Development Initiative (EDI). (2010). *Education and skills survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbi.org.uk/business-issues/education-and-skills/in-focus/education-and-skills-survey/>
- Freudenberg, B., Brimble, M., & Cameron, C. (2010). Where there is a WIL there is a way. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5) 575-588.
- Freudenberg, B., Brimble, M., Cameron, C., & English, D. (2011). Professionalising accounting education - The WIL experience. *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships*, 45(1) 80-91.

- Gamble, N., Patrick, C., & Peach, D. (2010). Internationalising work-integrated learning: Creating global citizens to meet the economic crisis and the skills shortage, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5)535-546.
- Garson, D. G. (2005). *Data levels of measurement*. Retrieved from <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/datalev1.htm>.
- Harvey, L. (2000). New realities: The relationship between higher education and employment. *Tertiary Education & Management* 6(1), 3-17
- Harvey, L. (2005). Embedding and integrating employability. *New directions for institutional research*, 128(Winter), 13-28.
- Hoat, L. N., Nguyen, L. V., van der Wilt, G. J., Broerse, J., Ruitenber, E. J., & Wright, E. P., (2009). Motivation of university and non-university stakeholders to change medical education in Vietnam. *BMC Medical Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6920/9/49>
- Hodges, D., & Burchell, N. (2003). Business graduate competencies: Employer views on importance & performance. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 4(2), 16-22.
- Kamoche, K. (2001). Human resources in Vietnam: The global challenge. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(5), 625--50.
- Kelly, K. (2000). The higher education system in Vietnam. *World of Education News and Reviews*, 13(3). Retrieved from <https://www.wes.org/ewenr/00may/feature.htm>
- Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2003). *Assessment, learning and employability*. Buckingham, UK. Open University Press.
- Lam, T. (2013, August 30-31). Sowing seeds. *Vietnam Economic Times Special Report*
- Luong, B. (2010). *Students in Ho Chi Minh City are weak in soft skills*. [Web log message] Retrieved from OneVietnam.org website <http://talk.onevietnam.org/students-in-ho-chi-minh-city-are-weak-in-soft-skills>
- Manpower Group (2012). *Talent shortage survey research results*. Retrieved from [https://www.manpower.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2012\\_Talent-Shortage-Survey-Results.pdf](https://www.manpower.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2012_Talent-Shortage-Survey-Results.pdf)
- Nguyen, M. T. (2011). Vietnamese students employability skills. *Canadian Centre of Science and Education International Education Studies*. 4(4) 175-191.
- OECD (2011). *The OECD skills strategy*. Retrieved from the OECD website: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/47769132.pdf>
- Patrick, C., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). *The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study [Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report]*. Brisbane, University of Technology. Retrieved from: [http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants\\_project\\_wil\\_finalreport\\_jan09.pdf](http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants_project_wil_finalreport_jan09.pdf)
- Peach, D., Cates, C., Baden-Wuerttemberg, B., Jones, J., & Lechleiter, H. (2011). Responding to rapid change in higher education: Enabling university departments responsible for work related programs through boundary spanning. *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships*, 45(1), 94-106.
- Pop, C., & Barkhuizen, N. (2010). The relationship between skills training and retention of graduate interns in a South Africa information, communication and technology company. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 1(2), 75-83.
- Rowe, A., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2012). "But I thought you were doing that" - Clarifying the role of the host supervisor in experience-based learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(2), 115-134.
- Rose, P. (2013). Internships: Tapping into China's next generation of talent. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*. 14(2), 89-98.
- Sugahara, S., & Coman, R. (2010). Perceived importance of CPA generic skills: A Japanese study. *Asian Journal of Finance & Accounting*, 2(1), 1-23.
- Tindale, J., Evans, E., Cable, D., & Mead, S. (2005, November - December). Are our accounting programs preparing graduates for professional accounting work? Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Sydney, NSW, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/publications-database.php/4893/are-our-accounting-programs-preparing-graduates-for-professional-accounting-work>

- Tran, T. T. (2010, November). *Enhancing graduate employability: Challenges facing higher education*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne, Vic., Australia.. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/publications-database.php/6098/enhancing-graduate-employability>
- Tran, T. T. (2012). Vietnamese higher education and the issue of enhancing graduate employability. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 3(1), 2-16.
- Trung, T. Q., & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia-Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 456-586.
- United States Commercial Service (2013). *Doing business in Vietnam: 2013 country commercial guide for US businesses*. Retrieved from [http://export.gov/vietnam/build/groups/public/@eg\\_vn/documents/webcontent/eg\\_vn\\_063160.pdf](http://export.gov/vietnam/build/groups/public/@eg_vn/documents/webcontent/eg_vn_063160.pdf)
- Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry VCCI/ILO (2007). *Youth Employment in Vietnam: A Project with Employers' organizations 2007-09, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam*. Retrieved, from [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/projects/youth/vietnam\\_reportv5.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/projects/youth/vietnam_reportv5.pdf)
- Vu, T., Rigby, B., Wood, L., & Daly, A. (2011). Graduate Skills in Business Learning. *Asian Social Science*, 7(41), 2-11.
- Wickramasinghe, V., & Perera, L. (2010). Graduates', university lecturers' and employers' perceptions towards employability skills. *Education & Training*, 52(3) 226-266.
- World Bank (2008). *Vietnam: Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report*. Retrieved from the World Bank website:  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEASTASIAPACIFIC/Resources/Vietnam-HEandSkillsforGrowth.pdf>
- Yorke, M. (2006). *Employability in higher education: What it is, what it is not*. Retrieved from The Higher Education Academy website: [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/was%20York%20-%20delete%20this%20soon/documents/ourwork/tla/employability/id116\\_employability\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_336.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/was%20York%20-%20delete%20this%20soon/documents/ourwork/tla/employability/id116_employability_in_higher_education_336.pdf)
- Zanko, M., Papadopoulos, T., Fallshaw, E., Taylor, T., Woodley, C., & Armatas, C. (2010, December). *Embedding professionally relevant learning in the business curriculum through industry engagement*. Paper presented at the Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference, Adelaide, SA, Australia. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3339&context=commpapers>





## About the Journal

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

In this Journal, Co-op/WIL is defined as an educational approach that uses relevant work-based projects that form an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study (e.g., work placements, internships, practicum). These programs should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program. These programs can be described by a variety of names, such as work-based learning, workplace learning, professional training, industry-based learning, engaged industry learning, career and technical education, internships, experiential education, experiential learning, vocational education and training, fieldwork education, and service learning.

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

## Submitting Manuscripts

Before submitting a manuscript, please ensure that the 'instructions for authors' has been followed ([www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors](http://www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors)). All manuscripts are to be submitted for blind review directly to the Editor-in-Chief ([editor@apjce.org](mailto:editor@apjce.org)) by way of email attachment. All submissions of manuscripts must be in MS Word format, with manuscript word counts between 3,000 and 5,000 words (excluding references).

All manuscripts, if deemed relevant to the Journal's audience, will be double blind reviewed by two reviewers or more. Manuscripts submitted to the Journal with authors names included will have the authors' names removed by the Editor-in-Chief before being reviewed to ensure anonymity.

Typically, authors receive the reviewers' comments about a month after the submission of the manuscript. The Journal uses a constructive process for review and preparation of the manuscript, and encourages its reviewers to give supportive and extensive feedback on the requirements for improving the manuscript as well as guidance on how to make the amendments.

If the manuscript is deemed acceptable for publication, and reviewers' comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the manuscript is prepared for publication by the Copy Editor. The Copy Editor may correspond with the authors to check details, if required. Final publication is by discretion of the Editor-in-Chief. Final published form of the manuscript is via the Journal website ([www.apjce.org](http://www.apjce.org)), authors will be notified and sent a PDF copy of the final manuscript. There is no charge for publishing in APJCE and the Journal allows free open access for its readers.

## Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts the Journal accepts are primarily of two forms; *research reports* describing research into aspects of Cooperative Education and Work Integrated Learning/Education, and *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and give critical explorative discussion around a topical issue.

The Journal does also accept *best practice* papers but only if it present a unique or innovative practice of a Co-op/WIL program that is likely to be of interest to the broader Co-op/WIL community. The Journal also accepts a limited number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

*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.

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



# Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

ISSN 1175-2882  
www.apjce.org

## EDITORIAL BOARD

### *Editor-in-Chief*

Dr. Karsten Zegwaard

University of Waikato, New Zealand

### *Copy Editor*

Yvonne Milbank

Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

### *Editorial Board Members*

Ms. Diana Ayling

Unitec, New Zealand

Mr. Matthew Campbell

Queensland Institute of Business and Technology, Australia

Dr. Sarojni Choy

Griffith University, Australia

Prof. Richard K. Coll

University of Fiji, Fiji

Prof. Rick Cummings

Murdoch University, Australia

Prof. Leigh Deves

Charles Darwin University, Australia

Dr. Maureen Drysdale

University of Waterloo, Canada

Dr. Chris Eames

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Mrs. Sonia Ferns

Curtin University, Australia

Ms. Jenny Fleming

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Dr. Phil Gardner

Michigan State University

Dr. Thomas Groenewald

University of South Africa, South Africa

Dr. Kathryn Hays

Massey University, New Zealand

Prof. Joy Higgs

Charles Sturt University, Australia

Ms. Katharine Hoskyn

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Dr. Sharleen Howison

Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand

Dr. Denise Jackson

Edith Cowan University, Australia

Dr. Nancy Johnston

Simon Fraser University, Canada

Dr. Mark Lay

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Assoc. Prof. Andy Martin

Massey University, New Zealand

Ms. Susan McCurdy

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Ms. Norah McRae

University of Victoria, Canada

Prof. Beverly Oliver

Deakin University, Australia

Assoc. Prof. Janice Orrell

Flinders University, Australia

Dr. Deborah Peach

Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Dr. David Skelton

Eastern Institute of Technology, New Zealand

Prof. Heather Smigiel

Flinders University, Australia

Dr. Calvin Smith

Brisbane Workplace Mediations, Australia

Prof. Neil Taylor

University of New England, Australia

Ms. Susanne Taylor

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Assoc. Prof. Franziska Trede

Charles Sturt University, Australia

Ms. Genevieve Watson

University of Western Sydney, Australia

Prof. Neil I. Ward

University of Surrey, United Kingdom

Dr. Nick Wempe

Whitireia Community Polytechnic, New Zealand

Dr. Marius L. Wessels

Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa

Dr. Theresa Winchester-Seeto

Macquarie University, New Zealand

Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

[www.apjce.org](http://www.apjce.org)

Publisher: New Zealand Association for Cooperatives Education