

# Work-integrated learning gone full circle: How prior work placement experiences influenced workplace supervisors

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This article reports of a study of workplace supervision and student experiences and outcomes through insights from semi-structured interviews with 21 graduates who had previously supervised work placement students. The study focused on questions framed from the perspective of the interviewees' work placement experiences as a student and then as a supervisor (e.g., impact, motivation, insights for future students/supervisors, and graduate attributes). The findings from this study indicate importance of workplace supervisors setting expectations and engaging in initial planning and organizing for effective management of the work placement. Findings also suggest that the supervising can usefully take the form of mentoring, and that this provides the supervisor with professional development in self-management, effective communication and leadership. Implications for future WIL practice include utilizing workplace supervisors, particularly those who are themselves WIL graduates, to help further enhance student WIL experiences, learning outcomes, and legacies.

Keywords: Work placements, supervisor capability, improving learning, student expectations, alumni

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Work-integrated learning (WIL) acts as bridge for the student between the academic present and their professional future. WIL is defined as a structured educational strategy using relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum. It aims to merge theoretical knowledge gained in academic studies with workplace experiences by developing relevant professional skills in preparation for future career opportunities (Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma, & Coll, 2010). Outcomes from WIL opportunities show that success can be considered in several different ways. Students have generally reported positive experiences during work placements (Dressler & Keeling, 2011; Fleming, Martin, Hughes, & Zinn, 2009) and use of critical reflection helps them develop lifelong learning skills and "a desire to contribute meaningfully to society" (Lucas, 2015, p. xi). Tertiary educators have reported that WIL gives their programs a point of difference that employers value (Martin, Rees, Edwards, & Paku, 2012) and enhances their real-world credibility as academics (Brown, 2010). Employers have reported positively on opportunities to trial potential new employees and to demonstrate corporate responsibility by 'giving back' to their industry by providing WIL placements (Atkinson, 2016; Fleming & Hickey, 2013).

Workplace supervisors are a crucial stakeholder in the WIL partnership between students, workplace, and university (Fleming, 2015; Keating, 2014; Martin & Hughes, 2009; Pungurm, 2007; Rowe, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2012). Supervisors' roles are complex, often blending mentoring,

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advising, counselling, performance management and problem-solving (ACEN, 2017; Beehr & Raabe, 2003; King, 2001; Mellon & Murdoch-Eaton, 2015). It is common for students to have low abilities in problem solving, independence, and stress tolerance compared to the general population (Gribble, Ladyshevsky, & Parsons, 2017a), and would require greater support in the workplace and likely best respond to a mentoring style of supervision. Research by Vaughan (2017) in general practice medicine, carpentry, and engineering showed how supervisors and employers used authentic experience and reflection to foster apprentices' field-specific dispositions, enabling them to cross 'vocational thresholds' to new understandings and professional identities. There are also benefits for supervisors and mentors, as well as those being mentored. Research shows role modelling and mentoring as positively associated with mentors' own career success and job satisfaction (Ghosh & Reio Jr, 2013).

The development of business and industry leadership, and supervisory or mentoring skills are important aspect of employee coaching (Gibson, 2004). Ashford and DeRue (2012) highlighted a need to learn from leadership experiences through 'mindful engagement', reflecting by looking back to learn for the future. Effective supervision involving mentoring has also been linked to transformational leadership to promote positive work attitudes and career expectations (Scandura & Williams, 2004). The role of supervisors in workplace learning is considered a multi-dimensional construct, with a wide range of supervisory behaviors and attitudes exhibited, depending on the context (Govaerts & Dochy, 2014). Supervisor support and mentoring has been shown to be critical for employees to be able to transfer skills and knowledge learnt through study or training to their workplace activities (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010; Govaerts & Dochy, 2014).

Thus, evidence related to the value of WIL and the importance of workplace supervision exists (Fleming, 2015), especially for mentoring (Hardie, Almeida, & Ross, 2018). However, there has been only limited research focused on the long-term career value of engaging with WIL. In particular, research exploring how workplace supervisors' engagement with their own WIL experiences as students had impacted their careers, and their current supervision practice.

This research, reported here, explores the links between undertaking work placements as a student and later, as a WIL graduate, supervising a work placement student in the workplace. The research explored a 'virtuous circle' whereby the benefits gained as a student provides further benefits as a supervisor of a WIL student. The main research questions focused on how workplace supervisors drew upon their prior student work placement experiences, and how these experiences informed their supervision of a work placement student in the workplace.

We explored these ideas by interviewing 21 WIL graduates who later had become workplace supervisors of WIL students. We were guided by the Rowe et al., (2012) Supervision Framework and the four key roles of supervisors: support, education, administration/managerial, and guardian. The first three roles are similar to the three functions of supervision identified by Proctor (1986) through research into clinical education, nursing, and counselling: normative (administrative), formative (educational), and restorative (supportive).

## METHOD

Using a qualitative research approach, the study examines the potential legacy impact of the work placement program first as a student and later as a workplace supervisor. Understanding graduates' perceptions is important because it helps inform and change teaching practice through increased focus on specific graduate attributes. For this study we interviewed 21 work placement graduates (seven each from Massey University's sport management and coaching, University of Waikato's science and

engineering, and Auckland University of Technology's sport and recreation) that have also supervised work placement students. The gender distribution of the participants were 57% male and 43% female, and the ages ranged between 21 and 50. Positions workplace supervisors held ranged from a team member supervising work placement students through to team managers and business owners.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews of 45-60 minute duration. The design of the semi-structured interviews was informed by the legacy study by Linn (2015), which used questions framed from the perspective of the interviewee's WIL experience as a student and then as a supervisor (e.g., impact, motivation, insights for future students/supervisors, and graduate attributes). The semi-structured interviews consisted of a list of specified questions established, while allowing for flexibility in the interview protocol to explore responses and interesting insights further (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). All interviews were fully transcribed by an independent person and reviewed by participants.

The data from this research was analyzed using the principles of qualitative data analysis outlined by Huberman (1994). These were data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The transcribed interview data were subjected to Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (informed by Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved generating initial codes, and then creating and reviewing themes. Several steps were taken to ensure credibility and dependability of the thematic analysis. An independent coder not involved in the interview process was used to minimize any potential for coding-bias, and then cross-checking of the themes was undertaken by an additional coder. All interview transcripts were coded using NVivo12, Computerised Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Use of NVivo12 permitted an orderly creation of codes (nodes) that were then grouped and sub-grouped into themes. The trustworthiness and credibility of the data were strengthened by utilizing three cohorts (SM = sport management, SR = sport and recreation, and SE = science and engineering) across three universities (Massey University, Auckland University of Technology, and University of Waikato). The study was granted ethics approval from each of the participating university's ethics committees (#4000018618; #18/15; #FSEN-2018-3).

## RESULTS

### *Supervisors: Contributing to Industry Growth*

This section presents findings split into two areas: findings from participants' perspectives of their role as a supervisor; and findings from participant perspectives on their experiences as WIL students. WIL graduates who were now work placement supervisors reported being motivated to take on a work placement student to give something back to their university and industry. They did this in recognition of the opportunities they were provided through their own student WIL experiences. A typical supervisor comment was (cohort and interviewee identifier noted):

It was an opportunity to be able to give back from having been a student myself ... [which] really gave me a lot of tools and fundamentals to be able to launch my career afterwards. I just wanted an opportunity to be able to help an individual who was going through the degree as well. (SM 6)

Others were motivated to support a WIL student because they wanted to use their own experiences to 'make a difference' for students.

When I have [work placement] students, my biggest motivation factor is to have an impact on their life so that they can gain access to things that I have come across or maybe beyond that as well. They learn from the classroom all the way to the practical setting, and that's probably the biggest motivation to provide them access. (SR 5)

Another workplace supervisor shared similar views, "I championed the [WIL] students because we needed to grow these people to get them experience in the industry" (SM 4).

The workplace supervisors were also motivated through their heightened awareness of the need to provide students with good support and mentoring, and an understanding of the expectations of WIL. One workplace supervisor acknowledged the importance of their own understanding of what the students were going through, and they were "wanting to mentor someone and, given that I was still quite young, being able to relate with them and to be able to tell them that I was in that same position three years ago" (SM 2). The personal nature of this process suggested that supervisors had a high degree of empathy for students' experiences, informed by their own previous experiences as students.

#### *Supervisors: WIL Provides Management and Leadership Opportunities*

Overall, workplace supervisors considered that the impact of further engagement with WIL on their current role as positive. Typical comments from workplace supervisors were: "[WIL] opportunities are always a good way to enhance your own personal and professional skills, working with a younger person who maybe hasn't got as much experience" (SM 6); and "in all the years that I've hosted [WIL] students and from my [WIL] experience, it has always been a positive experience, and a mutual benefit" (SR 2); and "It has been very useful from understanding what can be considered useful from a supervising and management or leadership kind of role" (SE6).

Some workplace supervisors acknowledged the mutual learning that occurred: "They're going to learn things from the student as well as them learning from you" (SE 1). Experience in managing staff was also seen as a benefit to their professional development. As one workplace supervisor commented: "Having that management experience definitely helped with my career. ... It [was] around learning to work with people and [knowing] people aren't perfect. It's around figuring out what drives them, figuring out what motivates them" (SM 4).

Another commented: "Having the experience with managing/mentoring students/people is always a favorable skill to have" (SE 7). Some workplace supervisors acknowledged that they would not have had opportunities for staff management or leadership development without having a WIL student in the team. As this supervisor pointed out, "The practice dealing with a number of different people with differing backgrounds will help me grow as a manager" (SE 7). Workplace supervisors also acknowledged that having management and leadership experience would enhance future opportunities.

What I took from being a supervisor is now when I move forward in my CV I can say I have staff management and staff leadership [experience]. I can talk about these things and refer to legitimate positions within an organisation when I was in charge. (SM 3)

Workplace supervisors also commented that the relationships they developed through the WIL program would be beneficial to them in future roles.

I was very lucky to have amazing workplace supervisors where I was placed. They were enthusiastic, great teachers and really contributed to fueling my passion for science. I try to give the students that come through a [research institute] a similar experience and help them obtain insights and skills that can't be learned from a lecture theatre or lab (SE 7).

Having a good relationship with the students. It's harder in a bigger company, but there are lots of different people than in a small company. It's a lot of one on one and we've developed a good relationship; we can joke and laugh about things. (SE 4)

From a resource perspective, having a work placement student enabled some supervisors to be able to complete more tasks, have more time to focus on other aspects of their current roles, and provide 'back up' for their own roles. The contributions a work placement student had made were highly valued, for example, the student offered a "fresh set of eyes... and help to bounce ideas off especially when I was in the office by myself" (SM 2). In contrast, one supervisor acknowledged that having a student increased their own workload.

#### *Supervisors: Setting Expectations and Providing Support*

Having had prior work placement experiences, workplace supervisors were able to understand the expectations of a WIL placement from the learner's perspective. They were also aware of the importance of matching the expectations of the students to their own, and to support them "in terms of what they are trying to achieve" (SR 1). Workplace supervisors reinforced the need to be available and accessible to the student in order to provide the support and mentoring needed, whilst encouraging the students to engage in a reflective process. They also considered it was important that the objectives and purpose of the placement and the student learning goals were clear to both parties.

... help [students] to understand how they're developing and what they are looking to develop and how that might benefit them down the road so that they understand fully the outcomes they could take from focusing on areas of their personal development. (SM 3)

Workplace supervisors highlighted that it was important to ensure that the experiences provided for WIL students are genuine, and that the student is part of the team and made to feel welcome. One supervisor provided this advice:

Make them feel welcome. It's hard because it's real intimidating for a student to walk into an organisation with adults and people that have been in the profession for ages and you're just here to help them. They don't want to feel like they're a burden. (SR 6)

Another workplace supervisor's suggestion was to "treat [students] as if they are a future employee and have a structured program for them in the workplace...bring them into the culture, bring them into staff meetings, and just immerse them into the culture" (SM 5).

#### *Supervisors: Planning and Organizing*

Workplace supervisors felt a responsibility to ensure the placement experience was well planned and organized. They identified a key responsibility as providing structure for the placement.

Structure [is important] ... a lot of the students just thought they could do what they wanted to do, but for me a big part was making sure they had structure in their role. They had a job

description, they had certain outcomes that they needed to meet, and they knew what they were here to do. (SM 4)

Providing students with a variety of roles and tasks also was an insight WIL graduates gained through looking back at their own WIL experiences. They understood the importance of inclusion and providing authentic 'meaningful work' with some sense of responsibility.

I was able to provide direction and guidance to the students. I was able to delegate jobs and tasks to them and give them ownership. I was monitoring their progress on a weekly basis and allowing them to develop and gain skills. (SM 5)

When planning workplace tasks, it was important to ensure that a WIL student had opportunities to extend their learning.

Create opportunities for [students] to make mistakes and learn from those. Allow them to make the roles their own, and gain that confidence by doing things themselves, and create processes that they think will work, rather than doing everything for them. (SM 6)

Workplace supervisors identified the importance of the university pre-placement preparation of the student and placement set-up requirements by the workplace. Both students and the workplace supervisors needed to understand the purpose and expectations of the placement. Workplace supervisors also highlighted the importance of the university placement coordinator/academic supervisor maintaining regular contact with workplace supervisors and students during the placement. As one supervisor mentioned, it was important to be "communicating because the student could be telling you one thing and it could be the total opposite. [It is important that] the supervisors on both ends are on the same page" (SR6).

#### *Supervisors: Mentoring*

In their role as a workplace supervisor, supervisors were aware of their 'duty of care' and the importance of being 'engaged' in the supervision process. Interestingly, some described the role of a workplace supervisor as mentoring. For example, one supervisor described their role as "mentoring them and helping them get experience. Giving them things to do and show them a bit of the industry so they get excited, because it is a cool industry to be in" (SM 4). In a mentoring role they were able to:

Help them to understand how they're developing and what they are looking to develop and how that might benefit them down the road, so that they understand fully the outcomes they could take from focusing on areas of their personal development. (SM 3)

Another important part of this role was described by one workplace supervisor as:

Supporting [the students] in terms of what they're trying to achieve... Normally they would have objectives of what they're trying to achieve, and [it's important to] support them into creating their project plan. (SR 1)

Facilitating personal and professional development was identified as a key role of the workplace supervisor. Helping students develop confidence was a critical element that workplace supervisors should initiate. "Personal confidence was a really big one. So from the start I would try and help them with things that they may not have been as confident in" (SM 5).

The workplace supervisors also acknowledged that WIL students needed support to develop and use reflective skills. These skills would enable students to link the theoretical knowledge gained from university to their practical experiences, and to critically analyze how they undertake the various tasks and activities during their WIL placement. Overall, workplace supervisors were able to use their own positive experiences to help them in their role as a supervisor.

However, some workplace supervisors had less than ideal experiences in their placements as students. For example, “[the placement supervisor] didn't know exactly what they wanted, and so they kind of just set me off and said, build me a web application to help with training people... and I had to come up with the idea from scratch... but it was much too much for just one summer.” (SE 5). These workplace supervisors had a desire to provide a better WIL experience for the student than what they experienced themselves. Knowing what was needed to set up a good WIL placement, the support students require, and understanding what constitutes poor supervision were major benefits of having workplace supervisors who have had prior WIL experiences as a student.

#### *Students: Adding Value*

The participants were asked about the impact they had made as a WIL student on their placement organization. They recognized the impact of their contributions to workplace activities, for example; technology development, easing the workload of others, business development, and changing the culture. A common response was that as a WIL student they were able to provide assistance to their supervisor, for example, “the main thing I did was take work off my supervisor” (SM 5). Another mentioned how being a WIL student enabled the organization to achieve additional work that they may not have been able to achieve without a student. “If I wasn't there, she wouldn't have been able to do it because she was only one person, so she didn't have the resources to deliver this extra stuff” (SM 4).

Overall, the level of impact on the organization varied due to the different roles and activities they, as students, were involved with, and was described as ‘some impact’ through to ‘significant impact’. Examples of the type of impact were: “A fresh set of eyes who's just been going through university having different experiences to what you have here. It's just bringing another direction” (SM 2), and “a new injection of personality into the environment, that's always good” (SR 7). There was also evidence of an impact on an organization after the WIL student has left. For example, as one workplace supervisor mentioned, “It was nice to be able to leave them with an actual product that they ended up selling and helped the company.” (SE 4).

Although participants were asked about the impact of their own WIL experience on the organization, they seemed more comfortable talking about the impact of the WIL experience on themselves. For some, their impact on the organization during their WIL experience was not immediately apparent or understood. The reasons for this included that their placement involved creating future deliverables such as activities that have not yet taken place. Some of these might be tangible, for example, a policy that was produced. In both examples, it would be difficult for the student to determine the direct impact on the organization. WIL activities that reduced the workload of others were often related to the impact on an individual in the workplace rather than organization as a whole. A frequent comment was the organization expressing gratitude for a ‘spare pair of hands’ to assist existing staff.

Workplace supervisors identified several benefits from their previous WIL experience. The benefits included an understanding of the importance of setting clear expectations and the need for support, the importance of planning and organization, mentoring, and development of graduate attributes.

*Students: Setting of Expectations and Maximizing the WIL Opportunity*

In interviews, workplace supervisors suggested that future WIL students should choose their placement organization or project carefully. They advised that students must be prepared prior to starting their placement, the employer's expectations are clarified, and the purpose of the tasks required during the placement are understood. One workplace supervisor advised that to "make the most of the opportunity... work with the people around you both in terms of networks and their knowledge... go in with your eyes open, be prepared to learn, ask lots of questions, and don't be afraid of looking dumb" (SE 2).

Workplace supervisors considered it important for students to take opportunities to challenge and extend themselves, push comfort zones by taking on unfamiliar tasks, to use their initiative and to "take ownership with that role and do the best that you can do" (SM 4). In order to make the most of the experience, workplace supervisors advised students to: ... "put 100% into the [WIL experience], and it will help you with your future job... If you put in the work you'll get the benefits" (SM 5). They also identified important aspects of self-management for WIL students, such as being punctual, professional, and proactive about seeking workplace opportunities. Additional advice workplace supervisors provided was that students should be proactive in asking for help or advice from their supervisor to understand the professional expectations, networks and connections "don't be afraid to ask questions and keep asking them until you've got enough information" (SE 1).

*Students: Enhance Learning Outcomes*

Supervisors identified aspects of self-management developed by students - self-sufficiency, self-awareness, self-confidence, time management, personal organization and planning, effective communication, organizational awareness, and leadership. These attributes were similar to those they considered important for graduates to be able to contribute to a workplace. They were also like attributes they described developing themselves through their own WIL experiences.

These findings about self-management are consistent with the findings by Martin and Rees (2018) review of learning outcomes from some 300 sport management and coaching students. Workplace supervisors identified that self-management, along with a sense of self-awareness and self-confidence, are key graduate attributes important for students to develop. "Planning, multi-tasking, and time management are all important" (SM 5);

A lot of self-awareness from the [WIL experience]; self-awareness of my ability; self-awareness from my personal life...The [WIL] experience gave me a lot of confidence... and by the end I felt a really big sense of achievement going through the whole process and especially all the theory and always writing about it (SM 3).

The literature has long indicated that effective communication (both written and oral) is an important attribute for graduates entering the workplace (Burchell, Hodges, & Rainsbury, 2000; Coll, Zegwaard, & Hodges, 2002; Zegwaard, Khoo, Adam, & Peter, 2018). The workplace supervisors also identified the importance of communication, especially within a professional context. "Communication skills is probably a key one, and that's what I keep encouraging with the [WIL students]" (SR 5). As workplace supervisors they were responsible for "ensuring that they understood communication and how crucial and important that is" (SM 6). Another highlighted the importance of written communication as well, "professional communication and writing was important. Allowing the student to start writing in a professional manner if they hadn't done before. I would monitor and help them with that" (SM 5).



Another workplace supervisor shared what they considered important was “communications, interpersonal skills, and relationships - what you set as your values around your professionalism” (SM 6).

When workplace supervisors reflected back on their time as a work placement student, they identified elements important for leadership development, such as the ability to work in groups. “I assume that they’re going to be looking for leadership roles where they are working in groups. I try and capitalise on that and give them opportunities with the groups that I’m working with” (SR 2), and “A person that is a team player, definitely has the ability to work with the team but also the ability to lead and work on their own at times” (SR 1).

## DISCUSSION

### *Virtuous Circle*

The findings of this study lend support for the notion of a ‘virtuous circle’. The themes which emerged from the findings indicated that the participants valued their work placements as students, and then later gained further value as WIL supervisors. Even though a common motivator for employers to take work placement students is for potential future graduate recruitment, it has long been established that employers also hold strong altruistic motives (Braunstein, 1999; Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014; Patrick et al., 2009).

Altruistic motivation also showed up in this study, where participants commonly indicated that they saw supporting students for work placements as a way of ‘giving back’ to their discipline, as well as a way to influence the education of future employees of their industry. This motivation of giving back was underpinned with the recognition of the benefits work placements had afforded them, the importance of real experiences for students, and a desire to be able to provide such experiences for current students. Previous research identified mutual benefits or reciprocity as an important motivation for workplaces to be part of WIL experiences (Fleming & Hickey, 2013), ranging from access to expert knowledge (Crump & Johnsson, 2011), to graduate recruitment (Braunstein, Takei, Wang, & Loken, 2011), and even recruitment of graduate research students for research projects (Zegwaard & McCurdy, 2014). In this study the workplace supervisors identified mutual learning, along with the new and fresh ideas that students bring to the workplace as some of the benefits they gained from being part of WIL.

Past research has indicated that employers will take on (unpaid) work placement students for economic gain (Durack, 2013; Svacina, 2012). However, several participants in this study indicated that there was in fact little short-term economic gain of taking on a work placement student and that their motivations were primarily altruistic and for long-term recruitment potential.

### *Developing Leadership and Mentoring Skills*

Past research has shown that even though leadership skills are perceived as important, they are not strongly sought by employers in a new graduate (Coll et al., 2002; Hodges & Burchell, 2003; Zegwaard et al., 2018). However, the importance of leadership skills increases as careers progress, eventually becoming particularly sought after for those with significant career experience (Martin & Rees, 2018). Leadership development, however, is challenging and requires a series of underpinning skills. For many workplaces, and as evidenced by the participants perceptions, having work placement students creates a valuable opportunity for staff to develop supervision and leadership skills, and opportunity

that may have been more difficult to provide without students. In fact, a number of participants identified that the opportunity to supervise students in the workplace strengthened their skill set and helped with career promotion to team leadership and management positions.

One theme in our findings underlines leadership development opportunity in WIL supervision. Our participants reported developing leadership skills while supervising work placement students. Many described a supervision approach consistent with mentoring believing mentoring to an effective form of a student's management alongside a line management instructional approach. As students are likely to have low levels of independence and stress tolerance (Gribble et al., 2017a), a mentoring style of supervision would likely best support these students. Both leadership and mentoring skills are best developed through the practice of leadership and mentoring, where the opportunity to supervise a student in the workplace creates the opportunity for professional development of these skills. This recognition fits with other findings that highlight the importance of providing resources (and in this case opportunity) to develop human capital through on the job learning (Hardie et al., 2018; Pons, 2015).

### *Setting Clear Expectations*

The workplace supervisor has a significant role in creating meaningful WIL experiences (Fleming, 2015; Hardie et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2012). Workplace supervisors advised that experiences needed to be genuine or authentic and encompass a variety of roles within the workplace. Over time, it was important students were afforded opportunities to extend their learning. Experiencing a positive learning experience in the work placement has long lasting positive impacts on the student emotional intelligence in the same way that a negative experience has a lasting negative impact on emotional intelligence (Gribble, Ladyshevsky, & Parsons, 2017b). Furthermore, when supervisors do provide feedback it must be tailored in a way that it is beneficially received by the student (Eva et al., 2012). However, very little research has focused on gaining supervisor perspectives on how to provide better or more positive support for WIL students. For some workplace supervisors, it may be the first instance of managing a staff member, and guidelines are needed around how they could move beyond day-to-day supervision to mentoring (Hardie et al., 2018).

The literature has highlighted the importance of establishing the expectations for all the stakeholders (Assudani & Kloppenborg, 2010; Beard, Coll, & Harris, 2001; Fleming & Haigh, 2017; Horstmannshof & Moore, 2016). Workplace supervisors' perceptions highlighted the same need for clear expectations at the beginning of the work placement. The areas focus on; workplace expectations, students' expectations, and universities' expectations.

Workplace supervisors in this study said that in order to obtain good effective management of the student and of the work placement tasks requires a clear understanding of all the stakeholders' expectations. When these participants reflected on their own experiences as a work placement student and later as a supervisor, they identified the need for clear expectations as a benefit to both. However there tends to be a general expectation that it will be the university that takes the lead on developing a shared understanding of the expectations of all work placement stakeholders (Bates, Bates, & Bates, 2007). Our research participants echoed this, stating that the university should be involved at the initial stages of setting up the work placement, including guiding the expectations of the task, learning, and preparing the student prior to work placement commencing. Other researchers have reported similar findings, especially around clarifying the roles for each of the stakeholders in order to improve the students' learning experience (Patrick et al., 2009; Rowe et al., 2012; Winchester-Seeto, Rowe, & Mackaway, 2016).

A clear expectation is that the WIL experience should enhance employability not just the chance of getting employment (Jackson, 2015; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). Workplace supervisors provided some advice to support this; the choice of placement organization needs to be carefully considered so it is well related to a student's career direction and development of the critical capabilities for employability not just in their next but also in their future roles. Students also need to be prepared to make the most of the opportunities available to them; to ask questions; seek advice from their supervisors and workplace colleagues; and ensure they utilized the networks created through their WIL experience.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this research show the ongoing legacy benefit of remaining engaged with WIL. The notion of a virtuous circle was identified where the benefits afforded to a student engaging in WIL becomes an ongoing benefit once they become a workplace supervisor by way of them investing into a new work placement student and through their own career development. Many workplace supervisors saw the importance of giving back to their discipline by investing in a new generation of students progressing through the education system. Their primary motivators for supporting a work placement student was altruistic in nature and the potential for graduate recruitment. In addition to giving back to their industry, supervisors are characterized by their appreciation of opportunities they themselves receive in the process of providing opportunities for students. The research showed that workplace supervisors identified that supervising students developed leadership and mentorship skills and provided benefits for career progression.

In order for the workplace supervisor to able to effectively manage the work placement students, expectations have to be clear and established at the onset of the work placement. To effectively develop clear expectations, we suggest a set of guidelines be developed for workplace supervisors. This would support them to move beyond supervision of the students' day-to-day activities and into providing mentoring leadership for the students.

The intent of this research was to determine what value the work placement experience has added through the student engaging with work placements and later, as a WIL graduate, when supervising other work placement students in the workplace. This study has shown that the WIL can create a beneficial and ongoing legacy when the WIL student becomes the workplace supervisor.

Good workplace supervision requires supervisors to have, or develop, their own mentoring, management, and leadership skills. These can usefully be developed by having experienced WIL as a student. This means that WIL coordinators are likely to find it useful to actively recruit and utilize supervisors who are familiar with WIL from personal experience. Such supervisors could offer their support to coordinators in setting expectations and engaging in the initial planning and organizing, as well as the ongoing management, of the WIL placement.

Even though the study is limited by the sample size and the disciplines included in the study (sport, events, science, and engineering), the findings may be transferable to other disciplines and other institutions where WIL is offered as part of the tertiary education curriculum. It would be useful for further research to compare students' experience of supervision by mentors with and without previous personal WIL experiences. It would also be useful to develop learning resources for workplace supervisors to maximize their gain from engaging with WIL, as well as to further enhance students' learning opportunities.

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