Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA

Guidance note
Work-integrated learning

Version 2.0 (4 May 2022)

1. What does work-integrated learning encompass?

In the context of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HES Framework), work-integrated learning (WIL) encompasses any arrangement where students undertake learning in a work context as part of their course requirements. WIL can be undertaken as part of coursework or research training.

WIL activities may include:

- professional workplace placements (also known as internships, clinical placements, fieldwork, practicums) whether local, interstate or international

- online or virtual WIL (e.g. telehealth) with real clients or industry input

- industry-partnered projects in the classroom (e.g. hackathons, incubators/start-ups) that involve industry, community or professional partners

- a simulated work environment with industry input, consultation or assessment, or

- activities in other contexts involving industry or community partners.

The nature and scope of WIL may vary in purpose (with a focus on technical skill acquisition, professionalism, professional responsibility, identity and values, enculturation to professional roles etc), duration (short-term to long-term, part-time or full-time), timing in the curriculum (in the first, middle or final years), extent of supervision and tasks and responsibility given to students, as well as the extent of integration of the student learning with the activities of the workplace or with the remainder of the student's coursework.

In all cases WIL experiences must build towards the learning outcomes of a course and meet other HES Framework requirements such as those regarding staff qualifications, professional accreditation and student support tailored to the needs of the cohort. The specific variations in the form of the WIL activity and the field of study should also be considered in accordance with the HES Framework.

Positive WIL experiences can enable a provider to build and grow relationships with industry or community organisations to inform and enhance approaches to teaching and learning. Importantly, positive WIL experiences ensure that students have educationally sound opportunities to further develop and demonstrate their learning and build their professional networks. Developing good practice in WIL is a dynamic field of educational research and practice. TEQSA recognises this dynamism as a strength and will support innovative approaches to WIL, providing that they safeguard the quality of the student experience and meet the applicable requirements under the HES Framework and other applicable laws.

2.   What TEQSA will look for

The HES Framework requires TEQSA to consider a provider's WIL arrangements both directly under Standard 5.4.1 as well as indirectly through several others, as below:

Part A: Standards for HE Providers	Key considerations
5.4.1: Delivery with Other Parties	• Provider is to ensure that WIL experiences and supervisory arrangements for WIL experiences are quality assured
1.4: Learning Outcomes and Assessment 3.1: Course Design	• Methods of assessment are to be appropriate for the level and nature of learning outcomes
2.3: Wellbeing and Safety 2.4: Student Grievances and Complaints	• Provider remains responsible for the student's safety and welfare

Further, WIL may form part of a provider's engagement with employers, industry and the professions (Provider Category Criteria B1.2.9 and B1.3.12, as applicable).

The HES Framework requires TEQSA to consider the following aspects of a provider's WIL arrangements:

- WIL forms part of a coherent course of study including through sound constructive alignment between expected learning outcomes of a course of study and methods of assessment and the teaching and learning content of WIL

- WIL is delivered through adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the student's success, including supporting diversity and equity considerations

- the provider has taken effective steps to monitor and support the wellbeing and safety of students engaged in WIL, and has clear student grievance processes capable of resolving issues students may have with the WIL aspects of their course of study, as well as managing critical incidents should they eventuate

- the provider has in place and implements policies and procedures for quality assuring WIL including quality assuring the student experience and external supervision

- WIL is well-conceived in design and rationale, educationally sound and its implementation is quality assured and monitored by the provider, irrespective of approach. Ideally this should be supported by authoritative educational research and

ongoing WIL-related scholarship by staff involved in planning and delivering WIL units

- WIL that forms part of requirements for professional accreditation is fit for that purpose and is clearly and accurately described in representations made by the provider or its agents.

3. Common issues

Within the context of the HES Framework, TEQSA has identified a range of common issues which are indicative of risks to the quality of WIL. These include, but are not limited to:

- the role and integration of WIL is inadequately considered by the provider in designing a course of study and/or specifying and assessing the expected learning outcomes. Relatedly, a provider's supports services may not be adequate to meet the needs of students undertaking WIL (Standard 5.4.1 and Section 2.3)

- students involved in WIL experience limited engagement with their provider during their experience, and have few opportunities to engage with other students (Standard 5.4.1 and Section 1.4)

- the outcomes and effectiveness of WIL vary markedly from site to site, or from time to time (Standard 5.4.1)

- the experience does not contribute to achievement of the learning outcomes associated with the WIL units, such as in a simulation which is too different from a real-life application of the targeted skills (Standard 5.4.1, and Sections 1.4 and 3.1)

- the roles and expectations of all parties involved are not agreed, e.g. through a formal agreement, or are poorly specified, including expectations about the ownership of any intellectual property generated by the student in the course of a WIL experience (Standard 5.4.1)

- the provider's expectations of the role and outcomes of WIL are unrealistic, unreasonable, impractical, or not informed by input from the relevant industry or sector, or are not supported by the provider's level of involvement (Standard 5.4.1 and Section 3.1)

- there are lapses by the WIL partner for which the provider remains accountable, such as where the partner:

    - lacks capabilities which are key to learning outcomes

    - does not adequately provide for supervision of students, including training of and support for supervisors

    - does not obtain or use student feedback, or

    - does not adequately protect academic integrity (Standard 5.4.1 and Section 3.1).

The risks involved with WIL experiences are highly contextual depending on the circumstances of the provider, industry or community partner, method or mode, location, students, expected learning outcomes, and field of education.

While students may be invited to take the initiative in searching for WIL opportunities, under the HES Framework a provider remains accountable for ensuring that the WIL experience is educationally sound and students have access to appropriate support. WIL should not be treated merely as another form of 'work'. WIL arrangements must be consistent with the guidance available from Fair Work Australia on work experience and internships. For overseas students, workplace arrangements must conform with local employment and workplace legislation, including safety.

TEQSA welcomes the diversity of educational delivery across the sector and acknowledges that its Guidance Notes may not encompass all of the circumstances seen in the sector. TEQSA also recognises that the requirements of the HESF can be met in different ways according to the circumstances of the provider. Provided the requirements of the HESF are met, TEQSA will not prescribe how they are met. If in doubt, please consult your TEQSA case manager.

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	19 August 2016	Made available as beta version for consultation.
1.1	25 August 2017	Updated to incorporate consultation feedback.
1.2	11 October 2017	Addition to 'What will TEQSA look for?" text box.
2.0	4 May 2022	Major revision.