

# The Work-Integrated Opportunity and Development Tool: A Practical Approach to Maximizing the Value of Work-Integrated Learning

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Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a core feature of Business degrees and is increasingly common across other disciplines. Although the benefits of WIL are often promoted, students can struggle to connect learning from their WIL experiences to their progress and development, making it difficult for them to identify targeted learning opportunities, and communicate their WIL progress and achievements to prospective employers. Recognizing these challenges, this article offers an approach for those engaged in WIL that helps them benchmark and measure progress at different points in the process, thereby helping students and their Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to identify development needs and opportunities both before, during, and after the WIL experience. This article presents a tool kit for those engaged in WIL that enables measurement of students' goals, motives, values, expectations, and competencies, at different points in the WIL activity (pre, mid, and end), alongside staged reflective exercises. Using internships as an illustrative case, this article considers the value that the approach affords for both individual students and HEIs, and will be of interest to university educators, careers services, and other professionals responsible for creating value through WIL initiatives.

Initiatives that target improved employability outcomes for students are now centrally embedded in Higher Education Institution (HEI) strategies worldwide (Kinash et al., 2016), as HEIs seek to produce work-ready graduates who can compete and thrive in competitive, global job markets (Jackson, 2015; Jackson & Collings, 2018). The term work-integrated learning (WIL) describes the "*Infusion of industry and/or community engagement into student learning and assessment as a formal component of their studies*" (Jackson & Meek, 2020, p. 64). It has become a common practice in HEIs, and is an umbrella term used to include activities ranging from simulations, mentoring schemes, project-based learning, and consultations, but also work-based learning activities such as internships, placements, and practicums (Jackson, 2015; Jackson & Meek, 2020). Collectively, such activities contribute to a variety of employability aspects including helping students to refine career goals and develop professional competencies, networking capabilities, professional identity, and perceived employability (Jackson, 2017; Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Engagement in WIL offers crucial workplace exposure and experience prior to graduation. For instance, students engaged in internships have been found to benefit from improved academic outcomes (Binder et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017) and post-graduation employment opportunities (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Fuller & Schoenberger, 1991; Gault et al., 2000; Jackson & Collings, 2018; Sagen et al., 2000). Jackson and Collings (2018) found that 77% of graduates in full-time employment considered WIL to have been critical in helping them secure the position. Nevertheless, the mechanisms through which WIL opportunities like these yield such benefits that are less well understood (Inceoglu et al., 2019; Knouse &

Fontenot, 2008). In particular, it remains unclear how and what students learn through WIL activities (Inceoglu et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2017), and how their learning translates to the wide range of benefits that are so often cited (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999; Binder et al., 2015; Jackson, 2016). Pinpointing these mechanisms is imperative if students are to effectively communicate the value of their experiences to prospective employers, and accurately benchmark and promote their competencies, and the associated development that is so central to advancing their careers. It is also valuable because armed with such insights, students may have opportunities to shape their WIL experience to address their shortcomings and/or pursue development opportunities that meet personal career goals *during* the WIL experience itself.

The extent to which a university becomes involved in WIL experiences varies across institutions, and programs (e.g., Narayanan et al., 2010; Nyanjom et al., 2020), and will naturally depend on the purpose and goals of the activity. In many cases, the experience *itself* is considered the core experiential exercise, with HEIs intervening minimally, though there have been calls to increase the authenticity of WIL assessment (e.g., Jackson 2018; Schonell & Macklin 2019). Popular authentic approaches often involve assessing the student and their development *post*-activity using tools such as portfolios and presentations (Dunn et al., 2012; Hodges, et al., 2004). Such opportunities are valuable, encouraging students to recognize accomplishments and promote them in graduate job applications. However, they have limitations. Often, they rely on post-hoc rationalization of experiences, which can be limited by cognitive bias (Halliday, 1998; Jones, 1995) and in the extent to which they capture the development process itself, in real time. They consider what a student has

learned, but do not help students identify *how* they learned through their experiences (Jackson, 2015). Second, although WIL initiatives aspire to offer a positive experience, leading to high-quality opportunities, some experiences are less favorable. This can occur for a variety of reasons, ranging from poor role specification or supervision (Narayanan et al., 2010), to a student simply realizing that their personal skillset and interests misalign with those of the organization and/or the role (D'abate et al., 2009). From a personal development perspective, exercises that seek to showcase only successes and achievements risk underplaying the importance of adverse experiences, which can negatively reinforce to students the flawed view that objective 'success' is all they should be concerned with. Invaluable learning can come from neutral, even negative, WIL experiences (Perusso et al., 2020). Finally, we are increasingly noticing in our own institution that the more frequent requirement for students to sign non-disclosure agreements during their WIL activities, can mean that some students are unable to fully participate in such portfolio and presentation-based activities, which becomes problematic where such tools are used for summative assessment.

### Aims and Objectives

This article presents a tool set for those involved in creating value through WIL. The *Work-Integrated Opportunity and Development Tool* (WIODT) comprises a series of exercises that enable students to take a more active role in their WIL experience and helps those involved in administering WIL to measure and track progress, and initiate targeted opportunities and interventions. The approach advocates a view that the value of WIL can be understood in terms of how it enriches an individual student's personalised career trajectory, and not in terms of *objective* career success measures alone (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Extending this argument, the WIODT approach proposes that by becoming involved *during* the WIL activity itself, and actively seeking feedback from collaborators in the WIL activity, students can be better encouraged to identify, reflect, and act on their development needs and aspirations, thereby gaining more from the experience in real time (cf. Schön, 1938), and enabling them to engage in cycles of learning (e.g., Kolb et al., 2014) during the WIL period. This is valuable since engaging in reflective practice during a WIL activity itself is identified as an enabler of subsequent student success (see Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh, 2008), thus helping such initiatives to become *high impact practices* for HEIs.

The WIODT can be incorporated into a wide range of WIL activities, such as part-time work experience, consultancy projects, and practicums, but within this article, the value of the approach is illustrated through its

application to internships. The article will outline the approach and processes involved in using the WIODT, then drawing on the experience of using it with students undertaking 9–12 month internships, will reflect on indicative findings from this illustrative case, to demonstrate the benefits of the approach for both individual students, and their HEIs.

In the following section, an illustrative case example is presented, to show how WIODT can be used.

## Method

### Case Context and Sample

In this case example, the WIODT was applied in the context of UK undergraduates who were undertaking a 'sandwich year' internship (or 'work placement'), in which the 3-year degree was extended to 4, to enable them to undertake a university-approved, graduate-level internship role instead of their third university year (Robinson et al., 2016). Internships of this kind have long been considered a staple offering within a UK business degree, and are increasingly common in other disciplines around the world (Jackson, 2015; Silva et al., 2016). In each case, the distinctive feature of this type of WIL experience is that it is related to the student's major, is somehow endorsed by the student's academic institution, and contributes to their learning (e.g., Bender, 2020; Robinson et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2018).

In this case, the internship itself involved a 9–12 month placement, and students were generally paid a salary by their host organization throughout the WIL experience. Students were majoring in either a business-management related subject (e.g., Management, Marketing, Economics, Accounting), Psychology, or Food Science; and were working in either the UK, USA, Europe, China, or Australia. In each instance, the WIODT was incorporated into an HEI module that students enrolled on, alongside their internship. The approach has now been running for 5 years, involving the participation of approximately 300 students each year. In this particular case, the WIODT was incorporated into summative assessment, but in other applications of WIODT, it has been used as a purely formative exercise.

## Materials and Procedure

### WIODT Instructions

The learning outcomes of WIODT are threefold. Upon completion of WIODT students should be able to:

1. Identify and articulate competency developments with improved accuracy and be

able to connect these developments to the WIL experience.

2. Reflect on their professional identity and how this aligns with their career values and goals.
3. Articulate to prospective employers the contribution that their WIL experience has made to their competencies and expertise.

The WIODT involves a three-stage process, underpinned by the completion of online questionnaires and reflective planning. The questionnaires align with reflective exercises which can be utilised as formative or summative exercises, depending on the institution's preference. These are further detailed in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

The WIODT stages are next summarised, followed by illustrative findings, and then a discussion of the benefits that can be realized through these exercises.

### ***Stage 1: Pre-WIL Experience***

Before the student begins their WIL experience, they complete an online questionnaire. Students are asked questions to help them consider their goals for the WIL, their workplace and career values, their expectations of the experience (e.g., internship) (in terms of the role, sector), and their professional network. They then undertake a detailed assessment (using a 93-item measure) of their work-based competencies (based on the framework by Bartam, 2005). The exercise takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire students are presented with their raw data scores. Students then write a short statement (1000 words) reflecting on their data and considering how these aspects contribute to their WIL plans and opportunities at this pre-WIL stage.

### ***Stage 2: Mid-WIL Experience***

Half way through their WIL students complete an extended version of the questionnaire, revisiting their goals, values, and expectations, and re-evaluating their competencies. Crucially, the student's line manager and a workplace peer (or other workplace representative, such as a workplace mentor) are also asked to complete questionnaires rating the students' competencies. Students are provided with all three questionnaire responses for comparison. They then write another statement, comprising two sections. In Section A (recommended word count: c1000 words), they reflect on the new data, the reasons behind changes since pre-WIL, and the extent to which their own self-ratings are concordant with those of their colleagues. They are encouraged to think about notable development areas,

competencies for which they have experienced fewer development opportunities, and focal areas for the second half of their WIL. They are also encouraged to consider ways in which their opportunities have contributed to changes in expectations, goals, and/or values. In Section B (recommended word count: c750 words), they reflect on three key achievements from the first half of their WIL, and consider ways that their competencies, expectations, goals, and/or values have changed through these.

### ***Stage 3: End-of-WIL Experience***

At the end of the WIL experience students complete the questionnaire for the final time and are rated again by their line manager and peer. They then write a final statement, in three sections: Section A and B correspond with those of the mid-experience stage. Section C is added (recommended word count: 750 words) to encourage students to reflect on their collective WIODT data and use this to inform a vocational action plan for the short, medium, and longer term. The aim is to ensure they consider what they still must learn to build on their strengths and relative weaknesses.

Centrally embedded in the WIODT approach is formative feedback. Where feasible, students are encouraged to discuss their reflective statements with their work-based line manager, to contextualise the employer's feedback, and where relevant, to negotiate WIL opportunities that could take place during the WIL experience (examples might include securing a secondment, leading on a project, or having the opportunity to give a presentation). In addition to the 360-degree feedback that students receive through the activities themselves, they often benefit from being allocated a tutor within the HEI to work alongside them (for instance, an academic with disciplinary experience, or a professional from an employability service, depending on the initiative). While this is not a compulsory aspect to WIODT, the tutor can play an important role. For instance, by meeting with the student after they have written each reflective statement, they can help them consider ways to approach challenges, or harness opportunities within and beyond the WIL activity that will target their personal development needs and meet their personal career goals.

### **Illustrative Findings and Discussion**

In our organization we have now used this approach for 5 years and are beginning to broaden the range of activities for which it is used. In our experience, there are distinct benefits of the approach for both students themselves, as well as for the HEI or training provider. We will reflect on these next and, where relevant, use

extracts from students' reflective statements and module feedback to demonstrate.

### **Benefits for Students**

We have found the approach to yield a range of interrelated benefits for students themselves.

#### ***Deep and Holistic Reflection***

The WIODT approach encourages students to reflect deeply and holistically on their self-concept—who they are and what matters to them in life and their career, as well as undertaking a detailed analysis across a full range of graduate-level competencies. By measuring goals and values over time, it encourages them to see how their values and/or goals are changing as a result of their WIL experiences, e.g., “I thought that I valued money, but after working long hours, I now realise how important work-life-balance is to me....” This in turn can help them refocus priorities, or future plans and choices.

By measuring a diverse range of competencies, WIODT encourages students to see their competencies holistically, as well as from the perspective of the component parts. The ability to view competencies at the micro-level can discourage black-and-white reflections on the WIL, which can help move students (and the colleagues rating them) from blanket reflections such as, “I’m doing great/terribly at this internship,” to “I’m doing well overall, but I still need to work on X or Y.” They often comment that they now realise that their overall performance is more nuanced, and this can help their self-efficacy as well as their competency development itself. Similarly, this can help them see small steps in progress—“I didn’t realise, but I can see from my manager’s ratings that I am slowly getting better at Y.” By rating their skills over time, they can gain insights into the differential rates of their development. They can see rapid progress in some areas (e.g., following instructions, or meeting deadlines). Meanwhile, they often better appreciate competencies that they need to continue to focus on, or for which they have had low exposure to (e.g., leadership or entrepreneurial behaviour).

Students often have expectations about the role and/or sector they are entering and, by tracking the extent to which these are realised during the WIL, are often better equipped to notice (mis)alignment of these expectations and experiences and consider how their expectations aligned with their actual experiences, and/or how their expectations have changed. As one student noted in their end-of-WIL reflection: “I really learned a lot about myself by completing the various assessments. Reflecting on what I had and had not accomplished midway in my placement allowed me to

think about how I would be able to improve, and what I truly wanted to get out of my placement.” Certainly, many students have preconceptions about certain jobs that are not borne out in reality or find that things they thought they would like or learn are not as expected.

#### ***Measurement Over Time***

This approach to pedagogy puts development at the heart of WIL, by providing detailed, multi-layered feedback for students which is repeated over time. WIODT, therefore, enables students to benchmark, track, and manage their WIL experience, encouraging them to take ownership of their own development. The detailed breakdown of competencies enables students to notice different baselines in their skills. Some competencies may be high to start with, while others can be low, and this enables students to set more meaningful personal goals for the WIL experience. One student noted: “[WIODT] really helped me to think about my strengths and weaknesses, giving me a focus for my internship.”

Measuring this over time can also enable students to see differential rates of progress, making visible the competencies that they have quickly or rapidly improved, as well as those that have remained fairly static (or low) over a period of time. At times, some competencies may even dip in the middle of the WIL, and measuring this can be helpful to students, who can use this information to take stock of plans and seek additional feedback. This can also be useful as it means that students cannot easily ignore their development needs. This is important because when an experience is going well, students often report being tempted to focus only on further fine-tuning of their strengths. However, by capturing a more comprehensive range of graduate competencies, students are encouraged to unpack and confront weaknesses as well and take proactive steps to address them within the WIL, where appropriate.

In other cases, this periodic measure can help students to think about what a skill actually means. For instance, capturing measurements from the start of the WIL experience can encourage them to think about what they know about the field. Often, a student will have had little or no exposure to certain competencies (e.g., leading, delegating) prior to the experience, so find benchmarking their proficiency difficult. Not only does their ability develop during the WIL, but feedback from students who have completed this exercise has highlighted that their perceptions of the meaning of particular competencies (leadership, negotiation, strategic thinking, for instance) can also evolve dramatically as they gain practical experience of these aspects.

In each case, the benefit of multiple measurements in real time, is that students can act on development

needs in real time, and/or make better-informed plans that deal with their needs (Bender, 2020). They can also contextualize the feedback, by using the information to frame questions that help them improve or take stock: “I like it when I need to write the reflection essays, it helps me to realise what I have learned and gained from the placement.”

### ***Multi-Source Feedback***

A third key benefit of WIODT for students is the approach provides them with multi-source feedback. Feedback from their colleagues can sound daunting but is generally welcomed by students: “I have been really satisfied because of the opportunity to receive feedback from both managers and module teams as well.”

Multi-source feedback enables students to calibrate their own ratings. This is because their self-perceptions of proficiency are often different to those of their managers. While there can be times when their own ratings are higher than those offered by colleagues, there are plenty of instances where the inverse is true, and colleagues’ ratings are much higher than students’ self-ratings. This can have a positive impact on a student’s self-efficacy and can provide much-needed reassurance to a student during the WIL experience itself. Similarly, where two colleagues offer different feedback on the student’s proficiency, the data itself can facilitate and empower the student to have a conversation with their colleagues to try to better understand the underpinning reasons for this.

Subsequent conversations exploring the reasons for the scores can also be useful in helping students identify areas of potential and challenge, which can feed directly into their WIL plans during the WIL itself, helping the student to achieve even greater competency growth through the experience. For instance, many of the organizations we work with have used WIODT measures as a basis for their in-house performance appraisal, providing students (and their university tutors) chances to feed into the WIL, and facilitate opportunities that target their competencies, and which match the student’s personal goals and aspirations. This might include negotiating mentoring experiences, secondments, or the creation of other in-WIL opportunities, all of which are known to be valuable in helping students get more from WIL experiences (e.g., D’abate et al., 2009):

“One aspect that my line manager, peer, and I had marked moderately ...was public speaking, projecting credibility, and responding to an audience. I had conversations with my line manager after the mid-[WIL] questionnaire and to bridge this gap, I enrolled on a presentation course. I was able to confront my weakness, and now I’m going to present at [the company] head office in front of sales

managers, which will include having to handle challenging questions” (Student Intern).

Finally, in our applications of WIODT, we have found it useful to present the aggregated cohort-level data to all students in a debrief, enabling them to further benchmark by contextualizing their own progress, alongside that of their peers. Students can use this information to identify development needs and plan opportunities that match their career aspirations, by seeing how their competency baselines and rates of growth compared with those of their peers. It can also encourage them to recognize strengths that they were not aware of. For instance, while their own proficiency might seem low, it might still be superior to their peers. In competitive graduate job markets, these insights can enable them to showcase distinct abilities and accomplishments in their job applications.

### **Benefits for HEIs and WIL Providers**

One catalyst for developing this approach to assessment was the growing occurrence of non-disclosure agreements which we had found prevented increasing numbers of students from being able to showcase their WIL activities through portfolios and presentations. By shifting the focus to competency development, and focusing on their reflective development, we have found the approach to be a leveller in which all students can engage, simultaneously reducing the need to adapt the assessment for students at particular organizations.

A welcome by-product of the WIODT approach is that the micro-level measurement of students’ proficiency and the data that it yields can enable a university to develop targeted, evidence-led, employability provision that is tailored to meet the development needs of different student groups. While the detailed development data can be personally useful to students, it also enables HEIs to gather aggregated information about their students, which is vital to producing an evidence-based approach to understanding student needs (Inceoglu et al., 2019). Such an approach can enable them to plan strategic initiatives that target their students’ specific development needs (e.g., for specific aspects of leadership or presenting) either ahead of the WIL, or upon its completion, and in turn can help facilitate impact from initiatives (Koh, 2008). Measuring discrepancies in student and employer ratings of student competencies, and identification of areas of relative strength/weakness among students overall can also highlight employability gaps in the curriculum and facilitate invaluable conversations between HEIs, employers, and policymakers (Neary, 2014). It is also possible to use the data to explore demographic

differences in students' competencies (e.g., exploring the data by gender, discipline, or program).

For instance, through exploration of the cohort level data in our organization, we have been able to uncover that:

1. Competencies develop from different baseline levels, and at different rates.
2. There are discrepancies in the self-ratings of competencies by students and their work-based colleagues (managers and peers).
3. There are differences in competency levels and development according to demographic groups such as gender and discipline.

Such insights offer invaluable information for HEIs, who can use this to tailor opportunities that better meet the needs of students, thereby enhancing their success and maximizing inclusivity.

For instance, by highlighting that some competencies develop from a low initial baseline, we have been able to implement other within-curricula initiatives to enhance pre-WIL competency levels, while in other cases, have developed targeted interventions following the activity (e.g., where a particular competency remains low even after a year of work). We have even identified instances where it is common for self-ratings to drop in the middle of the WIL (e.g., for self-ratings of leadership competencies). Through qualitative exploration of this, we have identified that students' perceptions of the concept of leadership change and are therefore now helping students to reconsider the notion of leadership prior to the WIL.

For other competencies, our cohort-level data can demonstrate much higher baseline levels with only small, incremental improvements during the year. Each of these instances raises important questions about the value of the WIL at a more macro level, which is helping us to better measure and understand the portfolio of WIL initiatives, as well as raising important questions about the optimal length of such activities—for instance if a competency develops rapidly and then plateaus, perhaps a short internship or consultancy project is preferable to a full-year in industry? Using WIODT to measure students' progress across different WIL initiatives enables us to explore the benefits of different types of WIL and develop both targeted and generalized initiatives, that enhance the development of particular employability outcomes (Inceoglu et al., 2019).

Finally, by uncovering patterns across the differences in the competency ratings of students and their workplace colleagues, we can help students more accurately benchmark and evaluate their proficiency, showing them areas where their confidence may be misplaced, as well as areas where they often under appreciate their abilities. For instance, as outlined, we

have found that in our cohorts that students routinely mis-calibrate their leadership skills pre-internship. We are also finding there to be gender and degree major differences. By scrutinising the collected data, we can more meaningfully work with students ahead of their WIL to prepare and advance their development, which is essential if HEIs are to produce work-ready graduates (Schonell & Macklin, 2019).

### Limitations and Considerations

Like all activities, there are limitations to the approach. For instance, since some competencies inevitably develop over a long-term period, it can be difficult to capture progress in very short WIL activities. This approach, therefore, works particularly well for WILs such as internships and consultancy projects which take place over a number of months, as it enables growth to be captured.

Similarly, we have found that the use of WIODT as an assessment approach needs to be implemented cautiously. There is value in incorporating WIODT as an assessment tool, though each stage of WIODT can be adopted for purely formative purposes. WIODT enables a summative assessment to be much more than an 'evidence-building' activity. Integrating both formative and summative aspects encourages students to see utility and authenticity in the WIL assessment. Nevertheless, third-party ratings by colleagues can undoubtedly be worrying for students, so this aspect should be carefully managed. Where adopted for summative assessment, we find that students respond most positively where summative grading is based on the quality of reflections and action planning, rather than on their scores or colleagues' ratings of them (see suggested marking rubric in Appendix 3).

The multi-rater aspect of the WIODT feedback is a valuable benefit, so should be sought where possible. However, the multi-rater aspect can be reduced (e.g., to one line manager, rather than two colleagues) or adapted (e.g., to peer feedback) where there are limited opportunities for feedback, or the line manager is supporting multiple students (e.g., in the case of a group consultancy project). Nevertheless, it is important that third-party feedback comes from people who are close enough to the student's work that they are able to rate their progress to ensure that the feedback is respected. There is an option in the colleague version of the questionnaire to respond with "unable to comment," which can be used for specific skill areas, where they have not had the opportunity to develop a particular skill for instance, or where they have not witnessed their performance. Its use as a blanket feedback rating can be demoralizing to students, though these insights can afford useful data for the HEI—it is helping us to

recognize competencies that are not routinely covered during an internship.

### Conclusions

This article does not propose that the WIODT approach should replace all other types of WIL assessment—indeed WIODT can be incorporated into portfolio and presentation assessments if desired. Rather, this article seeks to outline an approach that can help universities assess students in such a way that provides useful feedback to them, while simultaneously enabling them to understand and reflect on their WIL goals and skills, and working in parallel to develop and enhance them. This represents a shift toward evidence-based pedagogy, enabling universities to embed the measurement of student learning in the curriculum in ways that have a direct benefit to both students and universities, simultaneously. In increasingly challenging market conditions, it is imperative that HEIs demonstrate the incremental value of the employability initiatives they offer. In adopting the WIODT approach, students and universities can better conceptualize WIL as opportunities for reflective and reflexive learning.

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## Appendix 1 Questionnaire Templates

This appendix document is available from the author in the form of a Microsoft Excel Document. It contains the questionnaires required to complete the WIODT exercise, along with guidance notes. They can be copied directly from Excel into most questionnaire software platforms.

## Appendix 2 Brief for Students

### Overview

In this activity you will complete three reflective statements during your *[work integrated learning experience]* at different time points: pre-*[WIL]*, mid-*[WIL]* and end-of-*[WIL]*. In each statement you will reflect on your skills and professional development during your *[WIL]*. After completing each statement you should meet with your university tutor to discuss your reflections and consider whether and how you could take action to try to further enhance your *[WIL]* opportunity.

### Pre-*[WIL]* Exercise Instructions

Before starting your *[WIL]*, you will complete an online questionnaire. You can access this by selecting the following hyperlink: *[insert hyperlink to the questionnaire platform you use]*. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enable you to reflect on what your current goals and values are, both in life and at work, as well as your expectations for your *[WIL experience]*. The questionnaire then enables you to assess your proficiency across a wide range of work-focused skill areas (referred to hereafter as competencies). This questionnaire should take around 15–20 minutes to complete.

Once you have downloaded your completed questionnaire *[NB. institution should provide instructions about how to do this in relation to their chosen platform]*, you should write a statement *[suggested word limit: 1000 words]* reflecting on your questionnaire responses. Your reflections should be personal to you, but you may find it useful to consider several of the following aspects:

- What matters to you in life and work, and why.
- How you expect your *[WIL]* to align with these priorities.
- What you wish to achieve while undertaking *[the WIL activity]*.
- Your expectations for your role and *[WIL]*, and/or how you expect your *[WIL]* to align with your career plans.
- Your professional network, and whether (and how) you wish to develop this.
- Your personality characteristics, and how you think this might affect your work behaviour and/or work preferences.
- Your current competence, including any areas where you feel especially proficient, or any development needs that you identify and hope to address during your *[WIL experience]*.

In whichever areas you choose to reflect on, you should consider what you think this means for the objectives of your *[WIL]* in the coming *[weeks/months]*, and any action(s) you intend to take to try to achieve them. Please note that the previous bulleted list is not exhaustive, nor should you necessarily reflect on every one of these points.

Following completion of your statement you should share this with your university personal tutor *[or WIL tutor, if applicable]*, and arrange a conversation to consider how to take action on the basis of your reflections to help you identify and harness possible development opportunities *[adapt to suit the WIL support system that the institution has in place—a workshop with other students can also achieve this mentoring purpose]*. Where possible, you should also consider discussing your reflections with your workplace line manager, to contextualise their feedback, and convey your goals and aspirations for your *[WIL]*. This exercise can be a useful way to facilitate such a conversation with your employer.

### Mid-*[WIL]* Exercise Instructions

Toward the middle of your *[WIL]* you will complete a second questionnaire (a slightly abbreviated version of the pre-*[WIL]* questionnaire). This time, your workplace line manager and a workplace peer will also be asked to complete the part of the questionnaire relating to your competency development and proficiency. They will also be asked some questions about their perceptions of your employing organization's values, so you can consider how well your own values and goals align with these. The purpose of this process is to provide you with formative feedback from within the workplace to further support your skill and professional development, and to provide a basis for your reflections.

Once you have all three questionnaires, write a statement reflecting on the collective data. This statement should comprise two sections:

In Section A [*suggested word limit: 1000 words*] reflect on the results of the three mid-*[WIL]* questionnaires. As before, you should consider the ways in which your competencies, goals, values, and expectations have changed over the first half of your *[WIL]*. You may also wish to reflect on any discrepancy between your own ratings of your competencies and those provided by your manager and peer. For instance, if you feel that ratings in a particular area are too generous, unjust, or misleading, for any reason, you should reflect on why you think this is the case. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to improve self-awareness, so your *[WIL]* can be a constructive and developmental process.

In Section B of the statement [*suggested word limit: 750 words*], reflect on three key achievements from any time during the first half of your *[WIL]*. As you outline these achievements, reflect on how they have helped you to develop your proficiency or competency areas where you have had fewer opportunities to develop, and/or areas of competency development that you intend to focus on in the second part of your *[WIL]*.

Following completion of your mid-*[WIL]* reflective statement you should share this with your university personal tutor [*or WIL tutor, if applicable—see earlier note*], and arrange a conversation so you can discuss how to take action on the basis of your reflections. The discussion will help you to identify and harness possible development opportunities. You should also consider discussing your reflections with your line manager, to contextualise their feedback, and convey your goals and aspirations for your *[WIL]*.

### End-of-*[WIL]* Exercise Instructions

At the end of your *[WIL]* you will complete a final questionnaire. This questionnaire asks similar questions to the pre- and mid-*[WIL]* questionnaires, to enable you to reflect on the second half of your *[WIL]*. When you complete this you will be asked for a final time to rate your proficiency across the range of competencies, as well as your current goals, work values, ambitions, and expectations. Again, your line manager and a peer will also complete a questionnaire, and you will be sent these questionnaires to consider, as before.

Once you have all three questionnaires, write a statement reflecting on the collective data. This end-of-*[WIL]* reflective statement should comprise three sections:

In Section A [*suggested word limit: 750 words*], you must reflect on the collective questionnaire data, and how it compares to earlier ratings (pre- and mid-*[WIL]*). You should think about the reasons for any changes over the course of your *[WIL]* term, including areas where you feel you have particularly developed a skill set, or have had fewer opportunities to do so.

In Section B [*suggested word limit: 1000 words*], you should reflect on three key achievements from the second half of your *[WIL]*, and consider the ways in which your competencies, goals, values, expectations and priorities have changed over the course of your *[WIL]*.

In Section C [*suggested word limit: 750 words*], you must reflect on your future career and development needs, and formulate an action plan to help you address these during your final year, and the longer term. The action plan can adopt any format, but should consider plans for the short, medium, and longer term.

Following completion of your statement you should share this with your university personal tutor [*or WIL tutor, if applicable—see earlier comment*], and arrange a conversation to consider how to take action to identify and harness possible development opportunities on your return to university.