

Active Employability Exemplars

Introduction

On graduation from university, students must be ready to face their professional life with strong content knowledge, as well as with the necessary skills to succeed in their profession. Actively preparing all students through authentic learning experiences enhances their ability to succeed post-graduation.

The *ECU Curriculum Framework* seeks to ensure that all university courses have clear unit and course learning outcomes align to quality activities and assessment tasks. In all courses at the university, the course learning outcomes are linked to the professional preparation of students through the Graduate Attributes:

- Ability to communicate
- Ability to work in teams
- Critical appraisal skills
- Ability to generate ideas
- Cross-cultural and international outlook

To develop well rounded, employable students, the Curriculum Framework also requires that each course includes opportunities for students to engage with the community and to participate in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

By engaging students in strong course content, developing the Graduate Attributes and providing WIL opportunities, students are well placed to achieve and maintain employment in their chosen profession. This aligns with the view of Australian employers, who name the most important criteria for selecting graduates for employment as demonstrable communication skills, academic results, teamwork skills, aptitude, and interpersonal skills (Graduate Careers Australia, 2015).

Finding opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful, authentic WIL tasks that link unit assessments to both learning outcomes and the Graduate Attributes can be challenging. In this guide, staff members around ECU share good practice WIL methods to enhance student employability outcomes. With each vignette, a set of learning advantages that the vignette presents, such as 'clear link to course learning outcomes' and 'authentic learning', is included. Clear links to the Graduate Attributes are also noted. We hope these stories inspire and encourage others to create engaging opportunities for our students to effectively prepare them for their future career.

BES3500 - Business Career Development (Bachelor of Business)

Unit experience

BES3500 Business Career Development is a third year capstone unit in the Business Edge course. This course is designed to explicitly develop employability skills while engaging with the local community. The unit is partnered with a number of Not for Profit organisations to support them with projects.. Students can apply to a project of choice by submitting a formal applicaiton addressing the selection criteria.

Students form teams of up to four members and choose a project from a list developed by the unit coordinator and the Not for Profit manager. Through these projects, students have been instrumental in developing or delivering: seniors' computer classes, community garden spaces, strategic and human resources capability reviews, Fly-in Fly-out assistance packages, promotional and fundraising activities, and cross-cultural competency workshops.

Assessment

The main assessment task includes a group business report that explains the key business issues for the organisation and outlines workable and innovative solutions to address them. The students also provide an invoice that details their activities working with clients. This clarifies the magnitude of work involved in such projects and prepares students for contract work when they graduate.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

The students are highly motivated by the assessment and easily surpass the 15-hour minimum work requirement to work with participating organisations. The flexibility of the program means that students can design a project to suit their major or area of interest. Anecdotal evidence from surveys indicates that these projects imbue a high level of pride and empowerment for international students, who are not easily able to find internships, due to visa restrictions and business attitudes.

The strategy has been mutually beneficial for ECU, the students, and the participating organisations. Organisations rate the ECU experience as a valuable part of their strategy to engage with the higher education sector.

A recent crowd-funding project designed and implemented by three students attracted over \$6200 for Community Vision.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•

CMM3104 and JOU2111 (Journalism)

Unit experience

In early 2010, the ECU journalism program and the Western Australia Police Academy Detective Training School (WAPADTS) launched a unique training initiative involving joint mock scenarios. The sessions provide opportunities for trainee detectives to practise being interviewed by a 'media pack' of journalism students, while journalism students get valuable practice interviewing police and writing their stories.

The detectives are interviewed individually about the mock crime. Students must email their news stories

to the lecturer by the following morning to simulate industry deadlines. The stories are marked with tracked changes and emailed back to the students as well as the WAPADTS, so they too can learn from the written stories how they come across in an interview.

Assessment

Students take part in the activity either from Professional Placement 1 (CMM3104) or from Introduction to Journalism (JOU2111). For Professional Placement students, the eight hours they spend on this task count towards their hours of workplace experience. For the Introduction to Journalism students, their news story can be submitted as the story that is required for that unit's assessment. The students' stories are assessed on their conformity with professional standards of journalism writing.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	•
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

Prior to this initiative, ECU students had no specific training for interviewing detectives for crime reporting and WAPADTS's training was conducted in-house. The training has improved the trainee journalists' and detectives' understanding about the constraints each party faces. Completing this unit, students from both parties have stated that they feel more confident about their ability to elicit and convey accurate information, and are more willing to attempt to do so, than prior to the training.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	
Cross-cultural and international look	

BRO3000 Television Journalism

Unit experience

ECU's broadcasting major is the only one of its kind

in Australia providing an introduction to contemporary broadcast media, from radio and television to web-based and mobile technologies. The course was developed in close consultation with the industry and teaching staff. In this unit, students produce an item for consideration for the Channel 7 Perth show, Made in WA.

At the beginning of semester, the managing director of Channel 7 addresses the students. Students work individually to film, edit, script and present their stories for the show. Students must generate their own ideas for the show - a valuable attribute in editorial decision making. Students gain insights into how programs are made, with detailed technical and production instruction from industry professionals. The Channel 7 content manager oversees the selection of stories for the final show.

Assessment

The assessment task for this unit is to prepare material for Made in WA. Students are provided with the program brief and allocated a time period to complete and present their stories. Throughout the semester, students receive and provide feedback on each other's performance. All students pitch their work to Channel 7, requiring them to engage at an industry standard level. Assessment tasks are marked according to industry standards.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	•
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

The vast majority of students are highly supportive of the unit and understand the value of making industry standard stories. It is rare for students at an undergraduate level to have material aired on a major commercial network. For those whose work is selected, seeing their work presented on air gives students a real sense of achievement.

Made in WA is broadcast on Channel 7 and GWN7 state-wide. This year's audience has been around 15,000. In 2014, the show was watched by 68,000, as it followed an Eagles AFL match. The reputation of ECU Broadcasting is exceptionally high through units like this.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•
Cross-cultural and international look	

IST5133 Information Resources & Services (Information Services)

Unit experience

IST5133 Information Resources and Services and IST5135 Information Services Management are part of the Graduate Diploma of Science (Information Services Specialisation), which is accredited by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). These units cover foundational topics in library and information studies. Students complete two practica (60 hours), which is required for accreditation.

On each practicum, students are expected to complete work equivalent to a qualified library staff member, with the support and guidance of an experienced staff member. This allows students to begin to develop the skills and knowledge required for information professionals. A PebblePad workbook is used to provide ongoing support and feedback to the student from the practicum supervisor and the ECU instructor. PebblePad is also used for the assessment of the units.

Assessment

Students assess their own knowledge before and after each practicum. While on practicum, students submit daily duty sheets for instructor and supervisor feedback. On completion of the practicum, supervisors assess students' work and students submit a final practicum report for instructor assessment.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	•
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	

How did it go?

Using PebblePad has been generally positively accepted by practicum hosts. In particular, the ability to monitor and assess students' performance immediately has been well received. Students have reacted positively to the ease of access and quick turnaround.

By using PebblePad, practicum assessment is transparent, immediate and effective in enabling two-way communication among students, practicum hosts, and instructors. In addition, maintaining an online portfolio is encouraged by the accreditation body, and this is a good opportunity for students to build good professional habits and showcase their achievements.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	
Cross-cultural and international look	

Occupational Therapy (Job Club, offered after graduation)

Unit experience

The job club is a voluntary support group designed to support graduating students in finding work in the field

of occupational therapy. The job club was started when

it became apparent that students were experiencing increased challenges in the job market for occupational therapists with temporary freezes on government positions, hospital site changes and a rapidly changing healthcare landscape. This was an opportunity to extend support beyond graduation to graduates as they transitioned to working therapists.

In the job club, students talk about what they have done in their job searching. They bring applications and resumes for feedback and editing and they ask questions about preparing for interviews or following up after interviews. On request, more formal sessions are offered, such as managing Continued Professional Development (CPD) points. We share industry specific tips, guidelines and methods in job seeking that are often unspoken. We are also able to give job-seeking ideas and suggest particular contacts or courses related to specific job goals.

Assessment

As this is not a unit, there is no assessment attached. Success is defined by students securing employment.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	
Builds ePortfolio	
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	

How did it go?

The job club is just one part of the picture, but together, all of the components of the course have had proven results.

We have had a number of emails from students thanking us for the support they were offered in job club, on placement and throughout the course. Extending support beyond graduation has enabled students to feel that they are an ongoing part of an ECU Occupational Therapy community, and that contributes to their confidence.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•
Cross-cultural and international look	

SCC3201 Analytical Chemistry (Bachelor of Science (Chem))

Unit experience

SCC3201 Analytical Chemistry is a third year unit, with typically ten to fifteen students per semester. The unit provides students majoring in chemistry with detailed theory and practice of key analytical methods in separation science. Emphasis is placed on the development of relevant laboratory skills that are authentic to current work practices and workplaces.

In this unit, the traditional lecture and prescribed laboratory experiment are replaced with a five-hour session that is largely devoted to laboratory work. The students apply their chromatographic knowledge and problem solving skills to work with a local industry, Degrees Brewery.

This activity begins with a visit to the brewery where the brewer outlines the issue: factors influencing off-flavours in beer. Students research the topic further to enhance their understanding of the related theory and plan and design laboratory experiments. In designing and executing the experiments, students face unexpected challenges, providing opportunities for problem solving. The students develop team and interpersonal skills that promote a collegial environment as they work collaboratively with their peers, the laboratory staff, the lecturer and the brewer.

Assessment

Students are assessed on their final reports and portfolio of work created through completion of the Brewery activity.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	•
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	

How did it go?

Students responded very positively to working with industry. The problem-oriented approach adopted for the Brewery activity and aligned assessment (ePortfolio) item provided students with the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Using the ePortfolio approach, students see the value of showing the instructor what they have learned. Many students said that the unit was more work than a typical unit and that they put more effort into the unit because it was interesting and relevant.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•
Cross-cultural and international look	

FBL3501 (Bachelor of Business)

Unit experience

FBL3501 Business Practicum is one example of WIL offerings in the School of Business. Students spend

100 hours in a professional environment aligned with their discipline. Practica take place in the public and private sectors, local government and in Not for Profit agencies. Students return to campus at the mid-point of their placement and at its conclusion to reflect on their experiences. Through peer discussions and activities, students identify strategies to manage issues arising in the workplace and ways to improve their professional outcomes.

Throughout the semester, there are regular follow-ups with both students and hosts to ensure a quality learning experience. Significant emphasis is placed on communication and feedback between the workplace supervisor, student and academic team.

Assessment

Assessment tasks focus on reflection and comprise of an initial placement plan where students outline their targeted outcomes, strategies to achieve these and evidence to demonstrate successful performance. Their major assessment involves compiling a skills ePortfolio of their achievements on placement, which includes, among other items, a structured supervisor evaluation of the student's performance.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	•
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

Student feedback on their WIL experience is positive. The majority report very favourably on their placement and are grateful for the opportunity they have been given to gain relevant work experience. Students have a clear framework to operate within and current arrangements minimise the risk of learning outcomes not being met through regular contact and feedback with both host and student via email and site visits. Feedback may relate to individual student performance, or on the structure and content of the program.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•
Cross-cultural and international look	

SCC3201 Health Science Professional Practice (Bachelor of Health Science)

Unit experience

HST3502 is a final year Health Science core unit with a student-centred approach to support a range of professional roles within Public Health and Health and Safety Agencies. Students explore techniques in applying for positions in a range of working environments, including rural settings; participate in an industry interview; and practice professional conduct to enhance employability. Students undertake a 75-hour practicum in a workplace focused on their major field of study from the Bachelor of Health Science course. Students package their experiences and skills into an ePortfolio to enhance and facilitate career planning.

Assessment

The first assessment piece for this unit is a job application. This includes a cover letter, a resume and an industry interview with Health and Safety agency partners. The second assessment is an ePortfolio that includes a series of structured activities linked to the learning outcomes. Students create a compilation of skills, abilities and passions, a practicum reflection and feedback relating to the attainment of relevant public health competencies.

Practicum supervisors provide structured feedback on professionalism, cooperation, initiative, administrative competence and skills competence.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	
Clear link to course learning outcomes	
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	•
Student motivation to learn	•
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

Overall, students find the practicum to be a worthwhile and enriching experience. The rich learning outcomes of the unit, aligned with the flexibility in assessment and opportunities for industry engagement, ensure that the unit approach is student-centred and improves student employability skills for future applications and in the workplace.

All courses would benefit from this model that allows for professional skill acquisition, utilising a professional ePortfolio and opportunities to utilise communication tools to network with industry.

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	•
Critical appraisal skills	
Ability to generate ideas	
Cross-cultural and international look	

BES1500 Business Communication and Analysis

Unit experience

BES1500 Business Communication and Analysis is the first unit in the Business Edge course: a series of units designed to equip students with the employability skills required for workplace success. Each of the Business Edge units focuses on providing students with opportunities to reflect upon, develop, and articulate employability skills and experiences. BES1500 focuses on the development of three employability skills: communicating effectively, analysing data and using technology, and self-awareness.

Students complete a series of constructivist-based learning activities designed to promote discussion, reflection and skill development. The unit incorporates a number of WIL experiences in collaboration with the ECU Careers Centre and ECU Academic Skills Centre, as well as with volunteer organisations, including AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentor Experience). These learning experiences are aligned with the unit's three core employability skills.

Assessment

Throughout the unit, feedback on skill development is used to assist students with selecting positive examples of their ability to display the unit's three employability skills. These examples are showcased within a PebblePad ePortfolio. This includes development of employability skills that have occurred from within and outside the unit and course.

Learning advantage

Deep learning of content	•
Clear link to course learning outcomes	•
Clear link to unit learning outcomes	•
Authentic learning setting	•
Professional / Community engagement	•
Builds ePortfolio	•
Student motivation to learn	
Enhanced reputation for ECU	•

How did it go?

UTEI feedback on the unit has been extremely positive, with unit and lecturer scores consistently being rated higher than School, Faculty, and University averages.

I really enjoyed the self-awareness section of this unit. The online portfolio that we created was the most interesting, and really got us to look at where we are going and how to get there. The best aspect of the unit was learning how to work, adapt, and communicate in the workplace. It was good to learn how to better conduct yourself when applying for jobs in terms of communicating your skills and positive body language

Graduate Attributes

Ability to communicate	•
Ability to work in teams	
Critical appraisal skills	•
Ability to generate ideas	•
Cross-cultural and international look	