



Priority Project: Employability

University-wide Experience Subjects

Mentor Sites:	Griffith
Scalability:	Moderate
Partner Institutions:	Flinders, Murdoch, James Cook, La Trobe, Charles Darwin

OVERVIEW

The development of high-level employability skills requires that students participate in a range of experiential learning activities. In most cases, students undertaking professional degrees will have the opportunity to participate in work-integrated learning or placement. However, those enrolled in generic degree programs (Bachelor of Arts, Science, Health Sciences) commonly do not have integrated work placement as a component of their degree and are required to engage in activities external to the curriculum, in order to gain experience and develop supplementary skills and perspectives. In addition to work-based experiences, there is a benefit for all students to engage in diverse experiences across varied contexts, including exchange and international tours, volunteer activities, social entrepreneurship and cross-disciplinary industry challenges/internships.

A significant proportion of the IRU student demographic has limited capacity to engage in activities outside of those required for degree attainment, due to financial pressures, carer responsibilities, and lower levels of academic and social capital. To acknowledge this limitation and support student engagement, the provision of 'for credit' activities may facilitate greater uptake of these important experiences. Within the IRU, there are examples of credit-bearing, elective subjects that facilitate student to undertake experiences that will directly improve their employability skills. The La Trobe, Big Idea subject (Innovation Case Study) and the Griffith, Community Internship (Innovation Case Study) and Commonwealth Games Internship (Innovation Case Study) subjects are excellent examples.

SCALABILITY

Subjects such as the Community Internship provide the opportunity for a significant number of students to engage in internship activities during their studies. The scalability of such subjects is limited by the strength of the industry/community-based networks of the institution. However, the Griffith example provides an opportunity for students to utilise their existing volunteering relationships as part of the subject, thereby reducing the number of required internships.

PRACTICE

The Griffith University Community Internship subject (Case Study 3) provides an opportunity for students to develop a range of professional and personal skills while making a difference in their community. The subject combines 50 hours of community-based volunteering in a not-for-profit organisation, with a structured academic program of lectures, self-paced modules, Academic Advisor consultations, workshops and reflection. The internship assists students in exploring a range of issues related to supporting community needs and the ways in which they interact with their communities as graduates and citizens. Over 300 internships are available across the year with the subject running in mixed mode across multiple campuses and semesters.

The La Trobe University subject Social Entrepreneurship (Case Study 2) exposes students to the concept and experience of social enterprise (a commercial enterprise which creates social value). Across the semester, students collaborate to design a social enterprise, develop a business plan and present their "pitch". The best student groups have the opportunity to represent La Trobe in the Big Idea competition alongside other Universities in Australia. Subject content is delivered via a combination of lectures, webinars and tutorials with opportunity for students to engage with business leaders and social entrepreneurs outside of the University.

THE PROJECT

Potential exists for the collaborative development of a series of common subject shells and assessment activities to recognise and facilitate student participation in a range of experiential activities such as:

1. Volunteering
2. Entrepreneurship
3. Global mobility and exchange
4. Industry experiences (not recognised as WIL)
5. Sustainability

By administering these subjects as University-wide free choice electives, a significant potential exists to bring students together into multidisciplinary groups for discussion and sharing of experiences/learning across the semester of study. The implementation of comparable subjects across IRU members would also facilitate opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration by students and academics.

Phase one project design and implementation is scheduled for March 2017-July 2018 (Detailed Timeline in Table 2) and is designed across the following four stages of activity.

Stage 1: Development of subject curriculum and assessment.

Stage 2: Development of institution specific subjects.

Stage 3: Implementation of subjects across institution

Stage 4: Implementation of subjects across institution

Stage 5: Phase 1 evaluation and reporting

TIMELINE

	2017												2018					
	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	
Stage 1: Development of subject curriculum and assessment																		
Collation of example subjects from across the IRU																		
Collaborative development of a base subject curriculum and assessment																		
Stage 2: Development of institution specific subjects																		
Consultation with institutional departments																		
Subject approval and leadership																		
Subject coordination																		
Stage 3: Implementation of subjects across institution																		
Communication to students																		
Student enrolment and participation																		
Stage 4: Phase 1 evaluation and reporting																		
Development of evaluation tools																		
Evaluation																		
Reporting																		

PROJECT WORKING GROUP

The success of this project will require collaboration across multiple areas of the institution to ensure the curriculum is fit for purpose and supportive of a broad range of students. It is proposed that each institution establish a priority project working group to lead implementation and report to the Student Success Liaison Group quarterly. Working group membership is suggested as follows.

- Careers and Employment Service representative
- International department representative
- Learning and Teaching Unit representative
- Industry/alumni engagement representative
- Entrepreneurship champion
- Employability champion (academic)
- Student representative
- IRU Vice Chancellor's Fellow