



**Get engaged!
Growing WPL through
a workplace supervisor
capacity building module**

ACEN Final Report

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A collaboration between
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&

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Executive Summary

Project Aim

The practical aim of the *Get Engaged!* project was to strengthen workplace student supervisors' (WSS) capacity to engage with the university. More broadly though, this one-year project aimed to enhance the growth of workplace learning (WPL) within organisations hosting students and to strengthen the ties of partnership between university WPL staff and WSSs. To this end a self-paced online capacity building module for WWS was developed and trialled in collaboration between Charles Sturt University staff and members of the Media Federation of Australia.

Method

The first phase of the project involved developing the module's content. The creation of the module content's was based on a number of sources: a review of pertinent literature; pre-existing knowledge and experience of the research team, including a previous pilot study and WPL resources previously created by the research team; and discussions with industry partners and WSS.

The second stage of the project involved developing the module's online structure and resource in collaboration with the university's web and educational designers. This resulted in the development of a self-paced, online, capacity building module for WSS consisting of seven distinct elements:

1. 'All about the module'
2. 'All you need to know about WPL'
3. 'Benefits of WPL for workplaces'
4. 'Engagement before placement'
5. 'Engagement during placement'
6. 'Engagement after placement'
7. 'Quick Links'

The final stage of the project involved seeking feedback from WSS and university staff - both academic and professional, engaged in WPL – on the initial version of the module. Participants were able to provide feedback by completing an online survey embedded in the module, by emailing the research team or via a one-on-one interview.

Key Findings

Overall, the module was well received by both WSS and university WPL staff. Participants indicated that the module was timely, useful, comprehensive and easy to navigate. More specifically, participants appreciated the fact that the module highlighted the importance of a 'good' university-workplace partnership. They also found the resources effective in building WSSs' capacity to enhance their engagement with universities, their workplace and the WSS role itself.

Suggested changes were all integrated to the module to create its final version. These changes included requests to include a quiz and a certificate of completion to provide evidence of professional development for WSS. They also included a recommendation to make the module inclusive in terms of the language and the visual content used, to improve the design for a more user-friendly experience, to create additional learning and teaching materials, and to scaffold all resources used throughout the module.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In recognising the key role that WSS play in a successful WPL experience for students, this project ultimately provided WSS with the tools and strategies to engage both with the university and with the

supervision role itself. Indeed, our findings suggest that the project's process and the use of the self-paced, online WSS capacity building module gave WSSs the means to develop a critical voice. The process enabled them to be active participants in the WPL process and the module gave them the relevant resources to advocate for their role, both with the university and in their workplace.

These findings have implications for successful engagement with WSS and partnerships between the university and industry sectors. We, therefore, recommend that:

1. When creating WPL resources for host organisations, university staff should **engage in collaborative processes with WSS** to ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, the relevance of the material and a sense of ownership of the material produced.
2. As universities engage with more workplaces in disciplines where there is no WPL tradition, special attention should be paid to **ensure that any WPL material is adapted to the language and practices used in the given discipline.**
3. Universities should focus on **building and advocating for relationships with industry at all levels**
4. University staff should allocate time and effort to **cultivate relationships with employees who will champion WPL** within their organisation and stress the importance of WPL-specific professional development for WSS.
5. Universities should **extend their duty of care to students to industry partners** to ensure that WPL is a successful, effective and valuable experience for all.

The Online Module can be accessed [here](#)

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Background and Literature Review

The development of Australia's future workforce depends on strong partnerships between university and industry, because universities increasingly rely on placements within host organisations to enhance students' work readiness and employability (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011). However, the development and maintenance of sustainable, productive partnerships require time, effort and ongoing engagement (Choy & Delahaye, 2011). Workplace learning (WPL), a key teaching and learning strategy to prepare students for practice, requires active collaboration between, and participation by, university and industry.

Further, as university enrolments increase and WPL becomes a mandatory part of the academic curricula, it is increasingly necessary for universities to engage with a wider variety of workplaces in order to ensure that enough placement opportunities are available for students. As a result, universities are now engaging with smaller workplaces and/or workplaces that may not have had any previous WPL experience. For such workplaces understanding the logistics of a placement experience and learning how to effectively engage with the university is often a difficult and time-consuming experience (Collis, 2010).

Also, as the university and industry sectors increasingly recognise the important role WPL plays in preparing students for practice, placement experiences are now expanding to including non-traditional WPL disciplines, such as the communications and creative industries (Sealey et al., 2015). In such industries, not only are placement support and resourcing often absent, but many workplaces and WSS may have limited to no experiences in supporting students and may not have undertaken a university WPL experience themselves (Smith & Smith, 2010). As Collis (2010, p. 4) notes "new research with creative industries stakeholders –particularly industry partners and creative industries academics– is necessary for designing an effective creative industries' work-integrated learning curriculum."

The role of WSS in WPL

The role of WSS is fundamental to the quality of WPL programs. Jancauskas, Atchison, Murphy and Rose (1999, p. 1) note that "without them, work-integrated learning, is little more than just 'work experience'". Yet, the WSS role is often not formally recognised and valued. In addition to this, only seldom are WSS given an induction into what is required to effectively supervise students in the workplace. Ill-prepared WSS, and overworked academics, can jeopardise the quality of WPL and be detrimental to students' professional identity development (Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt, 2005). There are also considerable risks for the student - as both a learner and future professional - and the employer hosting the student when WPL is handled poorly (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010; Groenewald, 2004).

With WSS reporting a lack of preparation and support from both universities and their own workplaces for their role (McEwen & Maxwell, 2015), it is becoming increasingly important that universities find innovative ways of engaging with industry or else risk devaluing and alienating industry partners and WSS. In addition to that, given the increasing number of students seeking WPL experiences and the scarcity of placement opportunities, universities must champion closer relationships with industry in order to maintain a competitive advantage, sustain current placement opportunities and source new partnerships with workplaces (Choy & Delahaye, 2009). Building the capacity of both workplaces and WSS increases the likelihood of universities planning, developing, implementing and sustaining such relationships (Jokelainen, Jamoookeeah, Tossavainen & Turunen, 2011).

Strengthening university-industry partnerships

Universities have a duty of care to students, but are also dependent on industry to ensure that WPL is a successful, effective and valuable experience. University staff agree that “mature relationships between universities, employers and the professions [are] the key to the development of work-ready graduates” (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 18). As part of this duty of care, universities have a responsibility to ensure that WPL programs are mutually beneficial to all stakeholders. This means that they need to ensure that sufficient resources and support are available to host organisations and WSS to ensure effective learning experiences for students (Orrell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2014). Failing to provide these resources and support to industry can suggest that universities are not being accountable for WPL and that they are shifting their duty of care of students and responsibility of WPL onto host organisations that are not necessarily adequately equipped to provide a supportive learning environment for students (Smith & Smith, 2010).

University staff who are able to engage effectively with industry partners are in a better position to: secure the support of and maintain industry’s interest in taking on students in their workplace; reduce the risk to stakeholders participating in WPL; enhance inclusive WPL; and close the gap in supervision practices and knowledge between the university and the workplace (Trede et al., 2015). With stronger university-industry engagement we can clarify the role and responsibilities of academics and WSS in providing quality WPL experiences for students, and better support WSS in their key role with students (McEwen & Maxwell, 2015).

Engaging with WSS

A number of studies have been conducted in recent years that highlight the benefits of close engagement between university and industry partners and what the industry sector needs from universities to build the capacity of their WSSs. For example, in a study of WSSs’ perceptions of WPL, Smith and Smith (2010) found that WSS believed that increased engagement between university and industry would enable:

1. Clarification about the roles and expectations of stakeholders;
2. Better flow of information about students’ academic programs to enable the development of more relevant structures of WPL experiences for students;
3. WSS to provide feedback during student’s placement experience; and
4. Seeing workplaces as a “contributor [...] to a culture of learning provision and support” (Smith & Smith, 2010, p. 2).

Another study indicated that employers would benefit from universities providing WPL resources and support specifically focused on delivering clear information to host organisations and WSS about assessing students in the workplace and managing interactions between universities and employers (Patrick et al., 2008). At the same time, the industry sector needs a better understanding of the culture, systems and language used within the university (Choy & Delahaye, 2009), including the processes for engaging and communicating with the university (Patrick et al., 2014).

From this, it is clear that a shared understanding of WPL by university and industry is essential for achieving positive outcomes for all stakeholders (Choy & Delahaye, 2009). It is also clear that there is a need to move beyond providing ‘just-in-time’ resources on an as-needed basis for workplaces. Rather, in ensuring a long-term approach to WPL sustainability, universities need to make sure that a variety of comprehensive and valid resources are available for a range of workplace types and all WSS at all times (Sealey et al., 2015).

While there are national guidelines and models to ensure quality WPL supervision of student, little consideration has been given to strengthening WSSs' capacity to engage effectively with students, university staff and relevant colleagues in their workplace. Furthermore, as WPL continues to expand and universities seek partnerships with a rising number of workplaces in diverse locales, it becomes increasingly unlikely that a university representative will be able to visit each workplace and provide the necessary information to ensure a positive WPL experience for all (Collis, 2010). Providing online resources to support workplaces and WSSs is thus, not only more economical and time efficient than visiting individual workplaces, it also ensures that WSSs are able to access just-in-time support when most needed as well as access it as an induction into WPL or ongoing professional development tool.

Project Outline

To address some of the issues raised by the literature and observed in practice, the research team successfully secured funding from ACEN to conduct a collaborative study between Charles Sturt University (CSU) and the Media Federation of Australia, an alliance of media agencies who represent the common interests of the media, communications and advertising industries, entitled *Get Engaged! Growing WPL Through a Workplace Supervisor Capacity Building Module*.

Project Aim

The main aim of this one-year project was to strengthen WSSs' capacity to engage with the university. More broadly, though, the project sought to better understand how to enhance the growth of workplace learning (WPL) within organisations hosting students and to strengthen the ties of partnership between university WPL staff and WSSs. To this end a self-paced online capacity building module for WSSs was developed and trialled with CSU staff and members of the Media Federation of Australia.

The study's objectives were fourfold:

1. To identify at what stages of a WPL program engagement with WSSs is necessary;
2. To identify what engagement strategies are possible within the reality of the workplace, before, during, and after placements;
3. To clarify the role, responsibilities and expectations of academics and WSSs in providing quality WPL experiences for students; and
4. To develop, test and evaluate an online, self-paced WSS capacity building module with a strong emphasis on WPL pedagogy.

Project Management

The project was conducted between December 2015 and November 2016. In January 2016, the research team applied for CSU's Human Research Ethics Committee's approval to recruit voluntary participants, collect, store, analyse and disseminate data from university staff and members of the Media Federation of Australia. Their approval was granted on 15 February 2016.

Given the tight deadline, at initial planning meetings the research team devised a project timeline to ensure that the project's outcomes were met within in a timely manner. A four months period was allocated for the creation of the module, including writing, editing and finalising the content and resources as well as working with web and educational designers to build the module online. This timeline is included below, in Table 1.

Table 1 Project timeline

Timeline	Tasks
December 2015	Conduct literature review Begin ethics application for project
January 2016	Develop module content and resources Complete and submit ethics application for project
February 2016	Develop module content and resources Meetings with industry partners Receive ethics approval for project
March 2016	Edit module content and resources Work with IT to build online module
April 2016	Work with IT to build online module
May 2016	Advertise project and recruit participants
June 2016	Trial module with WSS and WPL staff
July 2016	Trial module with WSS and WPL staff
August 2016	Trial module with WSS and WPL staff Analyse feedback data Review/edit module based on feedback
September 2016	Work with IT to upgrade module website and make necessary changes from feedback Present project at ACEN National Conference Begin writing final report for project
October 2016	Write final report for project Disseminate module among WPL networks
November 2016	Submit Final Report to ACEN

To ensure the effective management of the project, the research team met at regular intervals to progress the study, but also with CSU's web and educational designers to develop and refine the module. In addition to that, a one-day meeting was held with industry partners to establish common ground around the project and gain feedback from WPL partners in the media and communications industry on the approach.

Dissemination of Findings

Throughout the *Get Engaged!* Project, the team generated and disseminated a range of outputs including presentations and news items, as follows:

- Two video conferences for CSU staff (both academic and professional) involved in WPL to present and discuss the module (5 May and 26 July 2016).
- A showcase presentation at the National 2016 ACEN Conference entitled: 'Get engaged: Growing WPL through a workplace student supervisor capacity building module'.
- An article on the module in the Media Federation of Australia's 2017 Intern Program.
- Email promotion of the module among partner organisations.
- An item with a link to the module included on the National ACEN's website and newsletter.

Method

Module Creation

To ensure the module's content was based on research, practical and relevant to the end users, the research team collected data from five different sources. The team conducted:

1. A literature review of the field to identify and confirm observed issues for WSS to appropriately engage with WPL.
2. The team's knowledge and experience of what is needed to enhance engagement between industry and university and what is an effective WPL pedagogy.
3. Discussions and workshops Industry partners and WSSs to determine what information and resources were needed to enhance university/industry engagement.
4. A pilot study conducted by McEwen and Maxwell (2015) with the Media Federation of Australia that explored WSSs' perceptions of what is needed to enhance engagement with universities.
5. Online WPL modules previously created by CSU's Education For Practice Institute (EFPI) (see <https://www.csu.edu.au/efpi/home/wpl-professional-development> for more information about these modules).

The module included theoretical content as well as numerous downloadable resources. For practical reasons, these resources included pre-existing material sourced from:

1. EFPI (e.g., a WPL planner for WSS)
2. CSU's School of Communication and Creative Industries (e.g., course outlines)
3. Engagement resources from industry contacts (e.g., the Media Federation of Australia provided a welcome letter that they send to students prior to placement)
4. ACEN's website (e.g., a FAQs sheet about work-integrated learning in the creative industries)
5. CSU policy documents (e.g., the CSU WPL Disability Policy)

The module's content was divided into six distinct elements:

1. 'All about the module'
2. 'All you need to know about WPL'
3. 'Benefits of WPL for workplaces'
4. 'Engagement before placement'
5. 'Engagement during placement'
6. 'Engagement after placement'

The first three sections function as an introduction to the module and WPL, while the final three sections form the substantive basis of the module. These distinct elements, with the addition 'Quick Links' box, provided different entry points according to WSSs' level of experience in WPL and information needs.

After having drafted these sections, the researchers engaged in a thorough editing and refining process, based on feedback sought from colleagues. Once the content was finalised, the research team worked with a CSU Educational Designer to develop the structure of the online module using a Wordpress website.

Data Recruitment Strategy

A number of strategies were used to gather feedback on the module's content and structure from university staff (both academic and administrative) involved in WPL. They included:

- Email invitations and follow up emails to staff involved in WPL at CSU to participate in the study in May 2016.
- Two CSU WPL video conferences (in May and July 2016) showcasing the module where interested staff were asked to review the module and provide feedback.
- Targeted email invitations to participate in the study to staff involved in WPL at other universities than CSU.
- Flyers about the module distributed at EFPI events, including the Practice-Based Education Summit held in April 2016.
- Advertisements published in CSU's internal media inviting staff to trial the module, provide feedback and share the module with their partner WSSs.

The following strategies were used to gather feedback from WSSs:

- Email invitations to members of the Media Federation of Australia to participate in the study.
- Email invitations to CSU's School of Communication and Creative Industries' industry partners to take part in the study.
- Email invitations to partnering WSS from the advertising industry involved in the initial module creation phase to trial the module and provide feedback.

Data Collection

Data were collected between June and August. It was originally anticipated that WSS would provide feedback via a survey embedded within the module and university academic and professional staff involved in WPL would participate in an interview of approximately one hour. However, due to the low level of participation, the initial recruitment strategy was modified to allow participants to choose between three ways to provide feedback on the module:

- 1) an anonymous online survey embedded in the module;
- 2) one-on-one face-to-face or telephone interview with a member of the research team; and
- 3) email feedback to a member of the research team.

The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participants were asked a mixture of questions that elicited quantitative, Likert scale, answers and qualitative, short open text, answers.

In addition to those options, informal feedback on the module was also gathered from WSSs and university WPL staff who attended the various project dissemination activities, such as the video conferences, workshops and the ACEN National Conference showcase presentation.

Results

Participant Information

A total of 12 WSS and university staff provided formal feedback on the module. The majority of participants were academics from CSU (n=7). The remainder included 3 professional WPL university staff (2 from CSU and 1 from another university) and 2 WSSs. Most participants provided feedback via email (n=8), 2 of which also provided feedback during an interview. More detailed information is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Participant demographics and data collection method

ID	WPL role designation	Collection method
1.	Academic, Faculty of Arts and Education, CSU	Email
2.	Academic, Faculty of Science, CSU	Email
3.	Professional, Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Flinders University	Telephone interview
4.	Professional, Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Studies, CSU	Email
5.	WSS, Media Federation of Australia	Telephone interview and email
6.	WSS, PHD Media	Telephone interview and email
7.	Academic, Faculty of Science, CSU	Online survey
8.	Academic, Faculty of Science, CSU	Email
9.	Professional, Future Moves Program, CSU	Email
10.	Academic, Faculty of Science, CSU	Online survey
11.	Academic, Division of Student Learning, CSU	In person interview
12.	Academic, Division of Student Learning, CSU	Email

Module Feedback

The overall feedback on the module was very positive indicating that the module was much-needed. Participants found the module to be a useful, informative and comprehensive resource. They also found the module functional, easy to navigate, lively and colourful. The content was particularly well received, with participants specifically noting the usefulness of the multimedia and downloadable resources.

A recurring feedback was that, while participants found the module a useful resource for all WSSs to engage with, they noted its greater potential in inducting or informing new or inexperienced WSSs or WSSs new to the university about WPL. The university staff who provided feedback on the module suggested that their partnering workplaces would be amenable to implementing the module as evidenced by a WSS who stated: "I'd love to include it in next year's intern program in terms of getting people prepared".

Participants suggested improvements for the module. These centred around five main areas: ensuring the module is more inclusive and addresses the diversity of users and disciplines; including additional resources throughout the module; making resources easier to find; providing additional scaffolding for included teaching and learning resources; and including a certification for WSS based on the successful completion of a multiple choice quiz. All suggested module changes are included in Table 3 below.

Responding to Feedback

Following data collection phase, the research team met to discuss and appropriately address all the feedback gathered and decide whether to make changes to the module's content and structure. The team worked with the web and educational designers to implement these changes and create the final version of the module.

While some suggested changes - for example, allowing universities and WPL academics to upload their own specific WPL resources for WSS to the module - were not possible within the existing technical constraints of the project, other changes were implemented in the final version of the module. For

the research team, this refining phase was an important step in ensuring that the module was as useful and responsive to the specific needs of WSS as possible.

Table 3: Module feedback and responses from the research team

Feedback	Response
Terminology could be more inclusive – so that it is suitable for the broad range of WPL experiences that students engage with across the university.	Where possible more inclusive terminology was used throughout the module, e.g., the phrase “office dress code” was changed to “dress code”.
Other workplace supervisors are also an important source of learning for WSS – this should be clearly stated in the module.	Other workplace supervisors were stated as an additional source of learning for WSS – e.g., in the diagram in the “all you need to know about WPL” section of the module.
The two videos included in the module leave the viewer hanging. No additional information or scaffolding is provided around the video. Without this scaffolding, the university is often presented in a bad light.	A teaching and learning resource scaffolding the videos was included in the module.
The module is often very text heavy.	Additional images were included throughout the module to make the resource more visually appealing and break up walls of text.
I would like to be able to print off and fill in some of the static lists of bullet points.	Where long lists of bullet points were used, these were changed to downloadable image checklists. This makes the module more visually appealing and also means that additional resources are available in the module.
An area of the module that could be improved is the culture of learning at the worksite and how this can be developed.	Additional information about the culture of the worksite is included in the scaffolding materials for the video.
I think it would be useful to have a resources section where people can download documents directly in addition to where they are located within the body of the module.	A folder with all of the downloadable resources was included in the ‘Key Documents’ section module. In the All About the Module section, the following statement is included: “A number of downloadable resources are incorporated throughout the module and a folder with all of these resources is included in the ‘Key Documents’ section of the module.”
In the narrative there seems to be quite a lot of onus placed on the workplace to seek information, rather than it being provided by the university.	A clear statement was included in the “Engagement Before Placement” section stating that ideally universities will provide you with all information necessary to ensure a positive placement experience. However, if the university does not provide you with this information, here is how you can access it.
The culture of learning at the worksite and how it can be developed needs to be expanded on in the module.	The culture of learning was explicitly referred to in resources scaffolding the videos used in the module.
There are some links on the HETI website about allied health placements that may be useful to include in the module.	The following resource from HETI was included in the module: http://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/Global/allied-health/The-Superguide.pdf .

Feedback	Response
<p>To be of use professionally the module needs some assessment to apply learning – so even some vignettes and MCQs answered online.</p> <p>The problem we have in our industry is the time for people to go through it all.</p>	<p>A ten-question multiple choice quiz was included in the module. Following completion of the quiz, WSS have the option of asking for a certificate of completion. This makes the module more ‘useful’ professionally and incentivises completion by WSS – as WSS are able to use the certificate of completion to evidence professional development.</p>
<p>The benefits for industry section is quite text heavy, static and boring.</p>	<p>A graphic was created in which images of industry partners and WSS were linked to quotes from them about the benefits of WPL for workplaces.</p>
<p>In discussing how to assess students on placement, it might be helpful to include the importance of written as well as oral feedback.</p>	<p>The section was updated to include the following information “You may also want to consider different ways of providing feedback. For example, you can provide the student with written feedback in addition to oral feedback.”</p>
<p>In the section about how to communicate with the university, I wonder if we could suggest that workplaces include WPL contact information on their websites.</p>	<p>The section was updated to include the following information “Think about how you, in turn, can make your contact information more easily accessible to the university. For example, is your contact information available online through your workplace website? Are you clearly delineated as a WSS and a contact point to discuss workplace supervision on your website?”</p>
<p>The welcome letter (a resource available in the module) is a great idea. We suggest that our students do this and also thank the supervisor for hosting them and give them a bit of background information about themselves.</p>	<p>The following information was included alongside the resource “In creating your welcome letter you may also ask the student to provide you with some background information about themselves, for example, their learning goals and what outcomes they would like to achieve from the placement. It might also be an idea to ask the student what strengths they believe they will bring to the placement and what their prior experience of this type of work has been.”</p>
<p>There is one issue that occurs throughout the resource and that is a lack of acknowledgement of student diversity. The photos I saw were all of students who are essentially the same – no Indigenous faces, no Asian faces</p>	<p>In choosing additional images for the module, emphasis was placed on representing a greater range of cultural diversity.</p>
<p>For any video it would be useful to have the length of the video somewhere obvious before I download it – then I can decide whether and when to download.</p>	<p>This information was provided with the videos.</p>

Discussion and Recommendations

Feedback from participants indicated that the online engagement module created as part of this project is a much-needed resource, with both WSSs and university staff involved in WPL noting that no similar resource was previously available. Participants stated that they appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the module and felt that by doing so they were ensuring that the resource was relevant and responsive to the needs of workplaces and WSS. These findings have implications for successful engagement with WSS and partnerships between the university and industry sectors.

How to address issues of inclusiveness and diversity?

Gaining this feedback is imperative, as Brooks (1998, p. 48) outlines “widely differing institutional cultures have often made collaborations between universities and the workplace, particularly business and industry, difficult to sustain.” These differing institutional cultures often act as a hindering factor to positive WPL experiences between universities and workplaces. The consultative process engaged in with industry, both before and during the module creation phase, was, therefore, necessary in ensuring that these differing cultures were illuminated and intersections between universities and workplaces, particularly in terms of engagement, explicitly outlined in the module.

A central focus of this project was to provide resources to assist WSS in emerging WPL disciplines to engage better with universities and students, to be better supported in their workplace and gain confidence in their supervision role. With the support of partner organisation, the Media Federation of Australia, this project increased the number of capacity building opportunities for all workplaces and WSS, but particularly those who have not traditionally had a culture of WPL or previously acted as a WSS. Indeed, feedback from participants suggested that this module would be of most benefit to new or inexperienced WSSs or WSSs new to the university. One thing that became clear from feedback is that as WPL expands and universities continue to partner with non-traditional WPL disciplines, special efforts need to be made to ensure that language is inclusive. In providing feedback, participants noted that some of the language used throughout the module was not inclusive to their particular WPL scenario (e.g., the use of the phrase “office dress code” when participants felt that their workplace could not be described as an office), and in taking this feedback on board, the research team tried to use inclusive language throughout the final version of the module.

Recommendation 1

When creating WPL resources for host organisations, university staff should **engage in collaborative processes with WSS** to ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, the relevance of the material and a sense of ownership of the material produced.

Recommendation 2

As universities engage with more workplaces in disciplines where there is no WPL tradition, special attention should be paid to **ensure that any WPL material is adapted to the language and practices used in the given discipline.**

How to encourage the use of the module by WSSs?

While all participants could see the worth of the module, a recurring comment was about the difficulty most WSSs would have to find enough time to fully engage with the module content. This issue is also raised in other studies that explored WSSs’ perceptions of WPL. Indeed, between supervising students and maintaining their regular job duties, WSSs are not provided with the space to take part in professional development opportunities (such as this module) to build their capacity as WSS (Atkinson, Misko & Stanwick, 2015).

We employed a number of strategies to address this issue. First, from the onset, we ensured that the module was self-paced and contained multiple entry and exit points. This was important in making the module as flexible as possible to the different information needs and level of WPL experience of WSSs. Following feedback from participants that WSS may still struggle to engage with the module, we included a multiple choice quiz in the final version of the module. Upon completing the quiz a certificate of completion is generated for the WSS to provide evidence of professional development that can then be used in performance reviews or in CVs.

Despite these strategies, it may still be the case the WSS will not have the time and space to engage with the module. Research indicates that if even one person in an organisation engages with WPL resources they can act as a champion to build the capacity of fellow staff in their workplace (Choy & Delahaye, 2009). This strategy was used with our industry partner, the Media Federation of Australia. Though too early to evaluate its effectiveness, we are confident that the inclusion of the module in the Media Federation of Australia 2017 Intern Program will have a positive impact on the uptake and engagement of WSSs with the module.

Recommendation 3

Universities should focus on **building and advocating for relationships with industry at all levels**

Recommendation 4

University staff should allocate time and effort to **cultivate relationships with employees who will champion WPL** within their organisation and stress the importance of WPL-specific professional development for WSS.

How to ensure a sense of ownership of WPL for WSSs?

With many WSSs reporting feeling unprepared for their supervision role and research indicating that little consideration is given to strengthening the capacity of WSS to engage effectively with students, universities and their workplace (McEwen & Maxwell, 2015), it is clear that more needs to be done to support WSS. This project responded to this need by producing a self-paced, online WSS capacity building module with a strong emphasis on engagement created in consultation with industry. Creating such resources helps to ensure the long-term sustainability of high-quality WPL learning experiences and supervision capacity (Sealy et al., 2015). Further, making such resources available to WSS sends the message to partnering workplaces that universities are taking accountability for WPL and valuing industry partners.

The self-paced, online WSS capacity building module developed and trialled in this project provided WSSs with the opportunity to develop a critical voice. It also enabled them to be active participants in the WPL process and to advocate for their role, both with the university and at their workplace. In recognising the key role that WSSs play in a successful WPL experience for students, this project, ultimately, provided WSSs with the tools and strategies to engage with both the university and with the supervision role itself. Finally, it showed them that the university valued their work and was interested in establishing close partnerships with them, which included the provision of resources and professional development.

Recommendation 5

Universities should **extend their duty of care to students to industry partners** to ensure that WPL is a successful, effective and valuable experience for all.

Conclusion

As Choy and Delahaye (2011, p. 158) argue “inevitably, innovative models of work-integrated and work-based learning require universities to work in partnership with workplaces to appropriately design and facilitate learning in the workplace.” In achieving its aim of strengthening WSSs’ capacity to engage with the university, this project demonstrated this partnership between universities and workplaces in action. In providing WSSs with a critical voice in the WPL process and creating a relevant, useful and much-needed WPL engagement resource, this project’s output can, ultimately, be seen to strengthen WSSs’ capacity to engage systematically and effectively with universities to better align industry, university and student expectations, roles and responsibilities to enhance WPL experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Survey Questionnaire

Growing WPL through a Workplace Supervisor Capacity Building Module

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to gain a better understanding of workplace learning (WPL) from the perspective of the workplace student supervisor (WSS). Specifically, this project aims to elucidate necessary engagement strategies to enhance WPL and strengthen WSS' capacity to engage effectively with universities, students and relevant colleagues in their workplace. Based on this information, the researchers aim to create a self-paced online workplace supervisor capacity building module, with the goal of enabling WSS to strengthen their engagement capabilities with CSU.

In this survey, you will be invited to respond to nine questions. These questions will primarily focus on your evaluations of a workplace supervisor capacity building module and your perceptions of how such a module could be embedded within CSU's WPL programs.

Please read the following Participation Information Sheet by clicking [here](#)

If you have further questions please contact Dr Katelin Sutton kasutton@csu.edu.au

If you have read the information sheet and consent, click NEXT to start the survey.

Your Background

1. What is your profession? _____

2. How much experience do you have in supervising students as a WPL educator?

- Less than 6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

3. How useful did you find the workplace supervisor capacity building module?

← 1 (Not useful at all) 5 (Very useful) →

4. Would you recommend the module to other workplace student supervisors in your workplace?

1 (No definitely not) 5 (Yes definitely) →

5. List three areas of the workplace supervisor capacity building module that you found most useful:

- _____
- _____
- _____

6. List three areas of the workplace supervisor capacity building module that you think could be improved:

- _____
- _____
- _____

7. How amenable do you think your workplace would be to implementing the workplace supervisor capacity building module for all workplace student supervisors?

8. What do you believe the benefits for your workplace would be for all workplace student supervisors completing the module?

9. How has your engagement with the university changed as a result of completing the module?

Thank You

We appreciate you taking the time to participate in this survey.

This project is expected to have significant value because it will conceptualise, test and evaluate, with supervisors' strong participation, a self-paced, online workplace supervisor capacity building module that will include a map with timely engagement strategies.

Findings will be disseminated via CSU-wide video conference seminars, an online final report available on the EFPI website, and peer-reviewed scholarly articles. This variety of dissemination methods seeks to inform the professional development of WPL practices.

Appendix 2 - Interview Template: Workplace Student Supervisors

1. What is your role in your company?
2. Describe your role as workplace student supervisor.
3. Do you think engaging and liaising with the university is an important part of your role as a workplace student supervisor?
4. Can you please provide some initial feedback about the workplace supervisor capacity building module?
 - a. What do you think is the value of this module?
 - b. How did you experience this module?
5. What areas of the module do you think work particularly well? List the key feature(s) or activities of the module that are most effective in enabling better engagement.
6. What areas of the module do you think need improvement (and how would you modify these areas)?
 - a. What feature(s) need changing to make it more effective?
7. What benefit would there be for your workplace if all staff completed the module?
8. What would need to happen in order for your workplace to make the module mandatory? (Please explain your answer).

Appendix 3 - Interview Template: WPL University Staff

1. What is your role at CSU?
2. What value do you see in building workplace supervisors' capacity for better engagement with the university?
3. What areas of the module do you think work particularly well?
 - a. What are the key features that strengthen university-industry partnerships and engagement?
4. What areas of the module do you think need improvement (and how would you modify these areas)?
 - a. What features (if any) do you believe are missing from the module?
5. What benefit would there be for the university if workplace student supervisors completed the module?
6. What would it take in order for workplaces to be willing to implement the module as part of their workplace learning program? (Please explain your answer).
7. How can university staff encourage workplaces and workplace student supervisors to engage with the module?