

Assessment Ideas for Work Integrated Learning Project Units

Introduction

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities are not typical classroom learning experiences for students. The learning and development students undergo in these activities is a combination of discipline-specific content knowledge, technical and generic skills, which provides unique challenges for the comprehensive assessment of WIL. This document provides a list of assessment types that can be used to assess WIL activities which have equivalence to small, medium and large essays and/or reports.

Each proposed alternative assessment type has an attached example, how-to guide and suggested approach to help you adapt them to your WIL activity.

Small Assessments

A task worth around 10-15% of the final grade. Roughly equivalent to an essay of 1,000 words.

These assessment types are generally designed to engage students in the early-to-mid stages of a WIL project. They explicitly construct the framework for a larger project; take stock within a larger project; or are a separate assessment task that builds key skills relevant to delivery of a project later in the semester.

| Assessment | Suggested Approach |
|---|---|
| Committee or Board Briefing Paper (~1 page). Example How-to guide | Students develop a paper that sets out the rationale for their project, incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear articulation of the problem addressed by their project • Academic evidence supporting the proposed approach of their team; • A summary of the key benefits the project should realise • An outline of how any significant risks around the project will be managed. The purpose of this exercise is to convince project sponsors that the project has a clear academic rationale and also a sound business framework to get their |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>endorsement. If using an industry mentoring model, ideally the mentors should be involved in the assessment of the briefing paper.</p> <p><i>Key skills: Problem Identification and Solution; Planning & Organisation</i></p> |
| <p>Press Release (~250 words)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>Students write a press release about their project. The release should adhere to short, concise, factually accurate statements, but written in an engaging way. It would need to cover key areas such as the evidence base supporting the project and benefits expected to arise from the project.</p> <p>It should also include other useful information such as who is involved in the project and what they bring to the team, as well as key project dates/milestones. Students should demonstrate competency in bringing salient points to the attention of the reader - demonstrating the academic credibility and potential impact of their project, whilst avoiding academic or technical jargon.</p> <p>Although the final product is short, teams should expect to submit at least one draft and self-assess or peer-assess against a provided exemplar. The marking of the press release should also take into account the robustness of student claims around the evidence base and rigour involved in articulating the potential benefits of the project.</p> <p><i>Key skills: Communication</i></p> |
| <p>Reflective Journal/Video (~200 words/30 seconds per reflection)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>These individual self-reflective pieces, whether written or using other multimedia (such as videos), would be conducted weekly/ fortnightly, depending on project duration. Ideally, students would upload these to an ePortfolio such as Mahara or PebblePad.</p> <p>One way of using these reflections could be to focus on how students are finding the process of working in a team. They would cover issues such as team dynamics (success, challenges, cohesion or tension) and how the individual has had to adapt to accommodate the different styles within the team. As an alternative to a journal or video reflection an online blog could be used for individual reflection or a Moodle discussion forum/Wikispaces could be used for group reflections.</p> <p><i>Key skills: Teamwork; Use of Tools & Technology</i></p> |
| <p>Pitch (~3 mins)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>Teams work together to prepare and present their project to an audience. They could use powerpoint or another method to help convey their key message. Students need to convey confidence and belief in their project and a solid grasp of the project's technical aspects, without getting tied down in detail.</p> <p>The pitch should be more than just a summary of their project, it should clearly articulate why this project is unique and innovative. The key to this mode is to make a couple of key points effectively, backed by evidence, whilst being prepared to answer questions relating to other aspects of the project. The pitch should be persuasive and appropriately adapted to the intended audience.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <i>Key skills: Communication, Professionalism, Teamwork</i> |
| <p>Progress Report (~1-2 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>A progress report can be delivered either as a team or individual project depending on the WIL experience. The report should be clearly structured and written concisely, outlining the key components of the report include the project's progress, current status and expected deliverables (including deliverable dates). If the project is on track, students should use the report as an opportunity to reassure their academic or industry project sponsor, but also to ensure they raise any uncertainties or problems they may have encountered along the way.</p> <p>If the project is not tracking well, this is an opportunity for the individual or team to signal that, explain the reasons why, and seek guidance or present a plan for getting the project back on track.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Planning and Organisation</i></p> |
| <p>Project Plan (~3 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>This plan process should begin with a Business Needs Analysis to identify any gaps or areas in need of development. For a small assessment, this might simply involve students articulating the need they are addressing and supporting this with some qualitative and quantitative evidence.</p> <p>The students should propose a clear solution and describe the broad approach they will take to get there (this could be done as a mind map). Students should then develop a timeline and project milestones which might be presented in the form a Gantt chart.</p> <p>The Project plan should be succinct, clearly structured and cover all the required information without excessive detail.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Problem Identification and Solution, Planning and Organisation</i></p> |

Medium Assessments

A task worth around 20-30% of the final grade. Roughly equivalent to an essay of 2,000 words.

These assessment types are designed to engage students in the mid-to-later stages of a WIL project. They are more focused on the students explicitly constructing the framework for a larger project; taking stock within a larger project; or a separate assessment task that builds key skills relevant to delivery of a project later in the semester.

| Assessment | Suggested Approach |
|---|---|
| Write an executive summary (~750 words) | An executive summary can be a great way for students to present a compact final product, whilst still requiring sufficient rigour of research and application in the planning and execution of the task. Drafting is the key to |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>this task, with students potentially needing multiple opportunities (including provision of peer and academic feedback) to focus the summary and cut 'dead wood' of any unnecessary words or information.</p> <p>Students should note the various sections/headings of an executive summary and how focused and concise each section needs to be. Again, one of the key areas the marking should focus on is how well the students have been able to concisely communicate a complex set of information, providing a comprehensive coverage of key points.</p> <p>Although the finished product is relatively short, students may be required to include additional supporting information as appendices to demonstrate that</p> <p><i>Key skills: Communication, Professionalism</i></p> |
| <p>Present a business case (~10 pages; including tables, diagrams, infographics etc.)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>A well written and/or delivered business case should be concise and articulate in communicating the key idea and be persuasive to the assessor, showing the recommended approach for the project and evaluating this against a baseline 'do nothing' option.</p> <p>This type of task is a perfect opportunity to involve your industry partners in assessment design, as students will need a clear, industry-relevant framework to work within. For example, do your industry partners typically write one page business cases or longer? Are they usually accompanied by an oral presentation?</p> <p>You also will need to decide whether you want students to have a very defined framework for what the business case must look like, or whether you will give them more flexibility in how it is presented. Either way, the core principle is that the students must be able to articulate why it is important for their idea/project to be funded, what the benefits to the sponsor will be (the return on investment), as well as key high-level technical and practical (e.g., timelines) information about the project.</p> <p>Depending on the discipline, it may not always be appropriate for students to identify financial returns from their project, but students should nonetheless be assessed on their ability to identify other forms of benefit that should arise. Students should also be encouraged to draw upon evidence to support any claimed benefits (has a similar project in the past been found to have produced benefits in a different context, for example?) and also to include a plan for how the claimed benefits could be measured in the future.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Problem Identification and Solution</i></p> |
| <p>Draft a Research Grant Application (~ 8 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>The Research Grant application can act to market both the research idea and the researcher. It allows students to focus on the more technical aspects of their project, but still demands that they can clearly articulate the value of their anticipated outcomes.</p> <p>You could utilise the applicant profile section to encourage students to engage in reflective practice and include a description of their skills,</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>leadership qualities and aptitudes, rather than previous research expertise.</p> <p>Some industry-based Research Grants can also have different types of questions that potential applicants must answer (e.g. What does leadership mean to you?). Researching these types of grant applications and replicating their process can provide relevant experience for students.</p> <p>Ideally the Research Grant Application should include a literature review but if time is limited then an annotated bibliography can provide a suitable alternative.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Planning and Organisation</i></p> |
| <p>Develop a poster (1 page + Brief presentation)</p> <p>Example How-to-guide</p> | <p>Both the process of developing the poster and the final product itself should be considered in this assessment. Consider, did the student/s research the poster topic thoroughly and how did they evidence this?</p> <p>For the final product, how have they presented the information, product, outcome etc. the poster is focused on? The design should allow for clear and creative communication of ideas (i.e., not overloaded with text, using infographics, focusing on key points). The Learning Outcomes need to be well-aligned to focus on both technical comprehension and the ability to simply convey information.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Communication</i></p> |
| <p>Oral presentation (~10 mins)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>The presentation differs from the pitch, in that the focus is more on presenting an overview of findings from the project, rather than on persuasion.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the marking rubric should still encourage students to go beyond a simple summary of what they have done and ensure that they focus on the implications of their project in an academic sense (where further research may be required).</p> <p>Students should also be encouraged to discuss the practical/commercial or policy applications of their project and lessons they learnt around managing projects or working in teams that they would apply in future.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Communication</i></p> |
| <p>Simulated Role-play / Debate (~ 15 mins)</p> <p>How-to guide (Debates) How-to guide (Role-play)</p> | <p>A student role-play or debate both challenge students to behave to a professional and/or industry standard that goes beyond the classroom. This type of assessment should occur within an environment that simulate the workplace, industry or 'real-world' environment as closely as logistically possible.</p> <p>Students should be well prepared and researched for both tasks. The process and depth of this preparation can also be assessed as part of the final product.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>The role-play scenario can be manipulated to replicate a challenging situation commonly experience in your industry discipline (such as performance reviews). The debate can be centred around a topic relevant to the industry project outcome, such as the debating the viability of a business solution proposal - this can provide an opportunity to interrogate the students' reasoning behind their proposal.</p> <p><i>Key skills: Creativity & Innovation, Communication</i></p> |
|--|---|

Large Assessments

A task worth around 40-60% of the final grade. Roughly equivalent to an essay of 3,000 words.

These assessment types are designed to engage students in the mid-to-later stages of a WIL project. The focus is on students communicating the key outcomes of the project, while not necessarily being assessed on the final project outcome itself. This allows students to experiment and fail safely during the actual project, without compromising their success in the subject. However, these tasks still require students to have been engaged in the project and have a deep understanding of the underpinning discipline knowledge to be able to complete them successfully.

| Assessment | Suggested Approach |
|---|---|
| <p>Final Report (~ 10-15 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>The final report should have evidence of extensive research and preparatory work which should be assessed in greater or equal standing to the final outcome. In most cases, the use of primary sources should be encouraged (e.g., stakeholder interviews), as well as reading of relevant reports and academic literature.</p> <p>The report should be structured according to the standard practice in your industry discipline. The report should be written clearly using accessible language to effectively communicate ideas to a broad audience. Finally, the report should provide recommendations for consideration based on associated supporting information and clear and logical reasoning.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Communication, Problem Identification and Solution</i></p> |
| <p>Produce an illustrative or instructional video [or manual] (~10 mins)</p> <p>Example and How-to guide Example software</p> | <p>Students should perform extensive research to create the content. Both creative</p> <p>This justification and the evidence of prior research can be judged by either an oral or written report or other equivalent alternative. Students should document the process of developing the final illustrative or informational video.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Students' should display competency in delivering the message clearly to the audience through video direction, design and execution. Although the marking rubric may not focus overly on the technical quality of production, students should be marked on how well they are able to use the medium to communicate their message - ensuring, at least, that any lack of quality is not a distraction.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Use of Tools & Technology, Creativity and Innovation</i></p> |
| <p>Portfolio of Work (~20 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>This portfolio should present a concise summary of the student's self-identified professional identity and working history. This may be more suited to creative disciplines, but it is worth thinking in any discipline about whether students could put together a folio of smaller tasks in a cumulative fashion over the semester.</p> <p>As part of this, students should be encouraged to engage in reflective practice, providing information on the development of their professional identity career focus through the semester. Clear guidelines are essential for the students in terms of what could be included in the folio - you may want to provide quite structured requirements, or leave students flexibility (provided they can demonstrate how they are meeting the learning outcomes).</p> <p>The portfolio should be shaped to create an attractive candidate summary for a prospective employer in your industry and this may impact on what students put in there. For disciplines other than creative arts, where finished products may be more text-heavy, care should be taken to ensure that the content of the portfolio is clear and engaging, or short summaries developed. Industry partners may be able to provide input for this and/or review and feedback for the final portfolios.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Professionalism</i></p> |
| <p>Conference/Journal Paper (~3-4 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to guide</p> | <p>This assessment will mainly apply to Work Integrated Learning experiences based in a research-intensive WIL subject. In other WIL subjects, it may be one option that students could choose amongst others.</p> <p>In a research-intensive WIL subject, students could be paired, or work in groups, with an academic mentor to submit a paper for journal publication (or a conference presentation if a suitable conference can be targeted - consider dedicated graduate or undergraduate research conferences).</p> <p>In other subjects, if a student wanted to choose this as an assessment option, it may be sensible to identify relevant PhD projects being undertaken in the area so that the student can be supported appropriately.</p> <p>A part of the assessment should be students' rationale for the journal/conference they have chosen and understanding who the target audience is. Depending on the audience, it may be important to not only inform the reader of the prior evidence, research and outcomes relevant</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>to the paper, but also to consider the relevance to the community and industry.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Communication</i></p> |
| <p>Prepare a submission to an inquiry [e.g. Parliamentary Inquiry / Royal Commission] (~4 pages)</p> <p>Example How-to-guide</p> | <p>Students will need to perform an extensive amount of research prior to writing the submission, but can easily be pointed to multiple online repositories of inquiry submissions.</p> <p>A common pitfall for students, however, may be to simply present their opinion. It is important they understand the difference between giving a point of view based on anecdotal evidence or personal experience and providing an evidence-based submission based on the information they have gathered through their project. If recommendations are included then the viability and evidence behind these recommendations should be assessed in the rubric.</p> <p>This task is often suited to forming part of the final project deliverable, but it is also possible to incorporate it as a mid-point activity. Students may not have all the necessary information, but with the right support, it can be a valuable experience for students to have to produce such a submission before they feel they are 'ready' - potentially helping them to organise their thoughts ahead of the final project stages.</p> <p><i>Key skill: Problem Identification and Solution</i></p> |

References

- Nightingale, P., Te Wiata, I.T., Toohey, S., Ryan, G., Hughes, C., Magin, D. (1996) Assessing Learning in Universities Professional Development Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia.
- Brown, S., Rust, C., Gibbs, G. (1994) Strategies for Diversifying Assessment Oxford Centre for Staff Development, UK.
- Lombardi, M.M (2008) Making the Grade: The Role of Assessment in Authentic learning
- Middlemas, B., Vamvakari, J. 10 Different assessment ideas wikis video student conference to use on your taught programmes. DOI: <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/4aa7c5/globalassets/documents/learning-and-teaching/1020ideas20to20try20final20booklet20201420middlemas20and20vamvakari.pdf>

Additional Resources

- Shepherd, I. ['Effective Debriefing - Guided Performance Review'](#). SimConHealth
- A ['Framework for Assessing WIL'](#) by the Higher Education Research and Development Society (HERDSA)
- [Guidelines for WIL Assessment](#) by the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN)
- Cummings, R. ['Equivalent assessment: achievable reality or pipedream'](#) - A framework for comparing the equivalence of different assessment types.

- Galvin, A., Noonan, E. & O'Neill, G. 2012. ['Assessment Workload and Equivalences'](#) - A guide to measuring assessment equivalence for exams and essays based on student effort time (hours).