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# The WIL Pathway: Shared understandings build vocational identity, occupational capacity, and professional transition

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# Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

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## \* What is WIL?

- \* “range of activities and experiences that draw together formal coursework with industry or workplace learning in a purposeful way” (Brown, 2010, p. 507).

## \* Benefits and Value

- \* for students
- \* for industry and the professions
- \* for communities and society

## \* Challenges for engaging with WIL

- \* Structured programs

- \* Collaborative approaches

- \* **Appropriately prepared, trained and resourced people - from across the gambit of academics, career development personnel, and employers**

- \* The role of WIL co-ordinators and supervisors

## \* Enhancing opportunities

- \* Career Services departments

- \* Professional associations

# This paper

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- \* Evolution of a partnership
  - \* an **Educator** from the discipline of Human Resource Management,
  - \* a **Careers Officer** from the Graduate and Student Employment Services
  - \* the Teaching and Learning Good Practice Officer (herewith, '**T&L Officer**')
- \* A scaffolded approach to embedding WIL activities in a HRM major
- \* A framework identifying the elements which make such a pathway possible

# The aim

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- ✿ To engage staff from across three areas of the university to reflect on activities around the HRM major and determine what made it an exemplar of good practice.
- ✿ The intention was to achieve this through a self-study approach utilising conversations, use of student feedback and critical reflection.



# The process

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- \* Self-study
- \* Purposeful conversations
- \* Student feedback
- \* Analysis through critical reflection

# Finding & Discussion (outline)

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- \* Serendipitous meetings
- \* Seeking synergies
- \* A capstone experience
- \* Vocational identity
- \* Occupational capacity
- \* Graduate attributes
- \* Graduates return
- \* Transition into the professional world

# Serendipitous meetings

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- \* “The HR WIL Activity started out as a corridor conversation. The difference between this conversation and others is that the conversation has been nurtured and developed for a number of years”.
- \* “The collaboration has been driven by several factors . . . predominantly these have been related to a sense of professional responsibilities, personal concerns for the students being employment ready, and to pedagogical aspects”.



# Seeking synergies: The course structure

Figure 1: A WIL pathway linking theory and practice for the HRM major

**Bachelor of Business Human  
Resources Management (HRM)**  
= **two second year subjects**  
+ **four third year subjects**

## SECOND YEAR

### **ORIENTING THE HR**

**PROFESSIONAL:** An introduction to the world of HR and why people in organisations are important; opportunities to learn about negotiating toward win/win.

## THIRD YEAR

**DEVELOPING THE HR PROFESSIONAL:** Building knowledge and understanding of HRM practices with focus on specific aspects such as industrial relations, personnel economics, and managing internationally. Exposure to various aspects of HR, including opportunities to facilitate training, to engage with the HR profession through activities such as the forum, and to work in the industry by undertaking an industry placement subject..

**THE HR PROFESSIONAL  
CONSOLIDATION &  
MATURATION:** Reflective practice with an ongoing commitment to growing the profession and engaging with best practice.

# A capstone experience

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- \* A key aspect of the subject is the JCU HR Managers Panel Forum, an integrated activity collaboratively presented by JCU Careers and Employment with the School of Business.

- \* **A reflective essay** - reflection on the topic, linking theory with commentary from the industry professionals, and to think about strategies for dealing with the issue, which are practical



# Vocational identity

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- ✿ One of the most successful activities we can deliver is to enable connections with industry professionals. These connections fulfill all of our goals and feedback from students is consistently positive. Students who attend these events go on to identify themselves as an emerging professional and see the advantages in engaging with the profession throughout the remainder of their studies. This is evidenced by student feedback to me, such as: 'I know why I am doing this degree'; 'I know how to make connections and network with people. Networking isn't scary anymore'; 'I have been successful in getting an interview for a job'

# Occupational capacity

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- ✿ “ This annual event highlights how a collaboration between the academic staff, careers staff, the local employer group and JCU graduates can benefit students, meet the JCU WIL agenda, and provide a better prepared workforce for the community.
- ✿ The surprising thing for me is the impact of this kind of activity. In reality it isn't a difficult activity to deliver. We can find the speakers, order some food, promote it to students.
- ✿ The outcomes also aren't hard to see. Students have a much clearer vision of themselves and their potential pathways as an HR professional after these events. They build confidence and skills as they engage in few conversations with supportive industry guests. In addition, the University can boast another WIL activity in the program. The careers service fulfills our goals of improving vocational identity, building capacity and supporting successful professional transitions”.



# Graduate attributes

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\* **Graduate qualities include:** exemplary personal and professional moral and ethical standards; a commitment to lifelong learning and intellectual development; **an understanding of regional issues; and, a sense of professional, community** and environmental **responsibilities.**

\* “As students are exposed to authentic learning experiences they develop graduate attributes, build an understanding of regional issues, community responsibilities and foster professional aptitude.”



# Graduates return

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- ✿ In 2012, four JCU HRM Graduates participated in the JCU HR Industry Panel Forum
- ✿ In 2012, the JCU HR Panel Forum was duly sponsored by AHRI, sharing the theme '**HR is everyone's business**'
- ✿ A HRM graduate on the AHRI Committee in Cairns
- ✿ "The relationships that we now have with the local branch of the Australian Human Resources Institute and JCU graduates of the HR program will continue to enhance this activity".

# Transitioning into the Professional World



Figure 2: Elements which work to developing HRM Professionals.

## In conclusion . . .

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- ✿ “What can be difficult is developing and maintaining the partnerships that make these activities an ongoing and integrated part of the academic development of our students. We have offered activities similar to this with other discipline areas and while they have always been successful, many have been a one-off event. The difference with the HR activity is the willingness of the HRM lecturers to collaborate with us to make this activity an integral and ongoing part of the program”.



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Thank-you!!

Questions??      Comments??

