



### Principles

#### **1. Do the principles provide clear guidance on what is expected of an indicator?**

It is unclear which set of principles this question refers to:

- The underpinning NPILF principles (p.11) are too vague to shape the NPILF or guide university planning, ignore high-quality student learning entirely, and are silent on mutual benefit, which is crucial to meaningful collaboration.
- The specific principles to each tier (table 3, p.12) do provide some clarity, however they are in tension with the model design: long-term/large scale/behaviour change characteristics are at odds with the short-term yearly reviews and reporting.

### Tiered indicators

#### **2. How many indicators (i.e. 10, 12, or 15) might universities need to meet, to achieve the outcomes of NPILF, while also accounting for university missions?**

The proposed matrix of 12 indicators across three areas is reasonable. However the indicators should permit calibration to reasonable timelines for full delivery.

#### **3. Do the indicators provide enough flexibility to meet the varied needs of business?**

Yes: indeed, the broad description of the proposed indicators may be too flexible, arguably capturing business-as-usual practices that do not meet NPILF's transformational objective.

#### **4. Do you agree with the metrics listed? Which are the most valuable? Would you add other metrics?**

The proposed metrics present numerous challenges:

- Rewarding increase of a datum penalises universities starting from a high base.
- Rewarding proportion of a datum, without a cap, drives growth upwards even when adverse beyond a certain point (e.g. a policy driving towards recruiting all academics from industry, or replacing all classroom study with WIL or WEI, carries a design flaw).
- *Curriculum co-designed or reviewed by industry* is difficult to measure, easily gamed and dependent on how 'curriculum', 'co-design' and 'review' are defined.
- *HDR WIL within 18 months* is poorly timed: WIL is most effective later, when underlying theoretical knowledge informs the professional experience.
- *Increase/proportion of WEI units* is problematic. WIL should be contained within curriculum with proper academic support.
- *Employment outcomes* is highly subject to externalities beyond the control of institutions and industry that vary by locality, field, and social factors. They are not a fair measure of employability, work readiness, learning quality or institutional effectiveness.
- The exclusive focus on STEM+ is a mistake – as industry constantly argues, future graduates across the board will need a blend of STEM and HASS skills. This reciprocal skill-sharing should be reflected symmetrically in the metrics.

QUT proposes the inclusion of the following metrics:

- Experiential and community-based learning (WIL).
- STEM units with HASS skills embedded.
- Professional development for workplace supervisors as mentors of future professionals.
- Training in leadership, entrepreneurship, and career management.
- Joint academic-industry dissemination of good practice in industry partnership.

#### **5. To be able to measure industry linkages, is there an appetite to create a new system of data collection?**

No. Too labour-intensive, particularly in the absence of agreed understandings of the link between the activities to be measured and the desired educational and work outcomes.

### Allocation methodology

#### **6. Is the proposed mechanism for allocation appropriate as a mechanism to incentivise new behaviours in the sector? Could re-allocation be introduced earlier/not at all?**

The allocation methodology is grounded in short-term measures of success, an approach that severely limits innovation, experimentation and aspiration. There should be scope for stretch goals or long-term indicators that recognise the complexity, time and effort required to realise meaningful and strategic change.

### Distribution options

#### **7. Which distribution method (i.e. banded; per EFTSL-rate; base; loadings) makes most sense? Or can you propose another method?**

The per-EFTSL rate + (modest) base is the only reasonable option of those provided. There is no case for bands, which introduce indefensible sensitivity at the boundaries for no benefit.

### Priorities – WIL, STEM-skills and Industry partnerships

#### **8. Do you agree with the definitions of WIL, STEM+ and Industry partnerships in the context of NPILF?**

The definitions of WIL and STEM+ in the consultation paper are problematic:

- NPILF should use the existing clear definition of WIL in the National Strategy on WIL in University Education.<sup>1</sup> Primarily, WIL should always occur within curriculum, involve meaningful work activity, and be connected to learning and assessment. Shadowing and mentoring activities are valuable for supporting industry partnerships and student preparedness for graduation, but do not meet the high standard that Australian education and industry hold for WIL activities. We also recommend against use of the term 'authentic', which creates ambiguity around the definition of WIL.
- The definition of STEM+ is too narrow to capture all advantageous job-ready skills, excluding leadership and cultural literacy, for example. The consultation paper refers to the inclusion of creativity, design, communication, problem-solving and digital literacies under the umbrella of STEM+ (p.5), but these are taught significantly (and in some cases predominantly) in units and courses not captured by the paper's definition. For NPILF to succeed, it must enable a skills-mixing approach that values and fosters HASS skills alongside and in concert with STEM skills. QUT recommends the revision of this design element so NPILF encourages in all graduates the full suite of STEM and HASS skills called for by industry and employer groups.

#### **9. How does a university measure and maintain the quality of WIL activities? – consider if a current program/framework could be used broadly across the sector.**

QUT employs an institutional quality assurance framework.<sup>2</sup> This framework is employed across the university sector to map, measure and maintain quality in WIL activities, with the intended purpose of supporting sector-wide benchmarking and internal quality improvement conversations. The framework was designed in partnership with RMIT, the University of Sydney, the Australian Collaborative Education Network, and a variety of other practitioners, and is well aligned to supporting the NPILF activities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Collaborative Education Network. *National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education*, March 2015. <http://cdn1.acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/National-WIL-Strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> QUT. *Institutional quality assurance of WIL*. <https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Collaborative Education Network. *Practical guidelines for using the framework to assure institutional quality of work integrated learning (WIL)*, June 2020. <http://acen.edu.au/resources/practical-guidelines-for-using-the-framework-to-assure-institutional-quality-of-work-integrated-learning-wil/>

**10. How does a university promote WIL, and the benefits of WIL (especially new, innovative or ‘remote’ approaches) to SMEs and large organisations, and is there a role for Government?**

Absent in the current proposals are incentives for industry (particularly SMEs) to engage with universities: the onus lies entirely and unrealistically on universities to entice industry partnership. There is a role for Government to inform industry and incentivise them to collaborate with universities. Government should also fund a student engagement program like the successful Canadian cooperative education program.

**11. How can universities best engage industry, particularly SMEs, with WIL?**

Despite the complexity inherent in multi-sectoral partnership, universities are effective providers of WIL in partnership with metropolitan and regional SMEs. Best practice depends on a university’s approach to the following key challenges:

- There is inherent asynchrony between the university academic calendar and availability of opportunities in the workplace. To unlock the full range of potential partnerships opportunities, universities, industry partners and students must collaborate to build stronger temporal connection between work activity and curriculum learning.
- Partners must recognise that students in the workplace are not substitutes for employees. In addition to the associated productivity cost of hosting a WIL placement, industry partners are asked to invest mentoring and supervision resources into students, recognising that student placement is a development opportunity for all parties.
- Successful WIL partners are alive to what university students can offer SMEs, rejecting preconceptions about students’ lack of skill and capability. Each generation of students enters the workforce with new skillsets, and best practice in WIL utilises the capability and knowledge differences between student and business for reciprocal benefit.
- Strong performance requires universities to coordinate internal approaches, liaising with industry from a single or limited point of contact, shepherding inquiries to the appropriate internal area and ensuring ongoing quality relationships.

**12. How can universities help STEM+ students “think beyond the lab” and expose them to the vast employment landscape they can access?**

Universities can facilitate STEM+ students to “think beyond the lab” by: encouraging cross-fertilisation of tangible real-world skills from HASS disciplines; supporting more WIL opportunities; using real world examples in classrooms; and exploring professional identity within traditional academic curriculum. WIL experiences are most effective when academic and professional knowledge is used in tandem; work experience contextualises theoretical knowledge, which in turn helps to reflect and create deeper understanding of lived experience. This process is strengthened by repeat exposure and ongoing reflection both within individual WIL subjects and across the course of study. Quality and sustained WIL experience, assists in building workplace capabilities, understanding professional roles and exploring career possibilities. Importantly, non-STEM+ students, and their future employers, will benefit equally from this blended approach and should be supported by NPILF.

**13. Are there specific challenges for SME’s in engaging with universities that need to be addressed in the framework?**

Yes. They include: awareness of opportunities for collaboration and engagement; identifying the best people to approach; limited resources; time and cost barriers to entry; difficulty identifying and capitalising on benefits of engagement; lack of structured Government support on the SME side; lack of shared language and context; mutual lack of understanding of imperatives, constraints and motivations.

**14. Does the framework allow sufficient knowledge sharing to enable universities and industry to build on successful models?**

No, there is a clear lack of incentive for an industry partner to share knowledge with other SMEs and with the university.

**Existing practice**

**15. Does your business or university have good examples of WIL, or partnerships, which can be used as exemplars?**

- QUT Business School developed a partnership with superannuation fund QSuper to deliver benefits for student learning and job readiness, while providing QSuper with insights in support of their ongoing innovation and product development as well as staff professional development opportunities. Students work in project teams, partnered with QSuper staff coaches, to progress through an innovation cycle culminating in presentations to senior executives of QSuper and QUT senior leaders. This approach was included as part of the WIL Innovation Project.<sup>4</sup> The model was extended to other partners (e.g. RACQ) and will be extended to multiple partners in 2021.
- ComPaSS (Community-Partnered Social Solutions) is a collaborative project between QUT Business School, Queensland Corrective Services and the Eidos Institute, a social-purpose non-profit, introducing QUT students to pressing social problems and inviting them to think creatively and critically about potential solutions. In Semester 2, 2020 a team of QUT business students worked on the first phase of a project exploring the Corrections 2030 vision, particularly around reducing recidivism.
- Business innovation WIL activities with Suncorp and Brisbane City Council.

**General**

**16. Does the framework sufficiently address the lifetime of learning challenge facing the workforce?**

No. The framework squarely addresses the traditional undergraduate student and neglects the rising cohorts of emerging non-traditional student groups, students learning remotely, graduates and professionals in the workplace.

**17. Does the 12 month NPILF cycle (as set out above) allow enough time to implement and report on activities?**

No. QUT supports the use of a variety of short- to long-term indicators and reporting timelines, in order to capture a broader range of beneficial activity, allowing for the complexity, time and effort required to realise meaningful and strategic change, and thereby encouraging genuine innovation and experimentation.

**18. Do you have any other feedback or comments?**

We would reiterate the necessity of broadening the skill matrix to include HASS skills alongside the defined STEM+ skills. This accords with decades of advice from industry and the experience of long-term graduate outcome surveys. To fail to drive a blended approach – in which HASS-based students acquire and use STEM skills and STEM-based students acquire and use HASS skills – would be a lost opportunity for NPILF, and would impoverish the outcomes of the initiative. NPILF design should recognise the value of multi-skilled graduates – already apparent to employers, educators and students – to drive economic growth, public sector innovation and community value alike, through the application of diverse skill-sets to solving large, complex and transdisciplinary challenges.

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Collaborative Education Network. *Innovative Working Integrated Learning Models*. <https://acen.edu.au/innovative-models/>