

Recent developments in WIL and future directions

Assoc Prof Karsten Zegwaard
Director of WIL Research, University of Waikato, New Zealand
Editor, IJWIL
President, WILNZ



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Background of Work-Integrated Learning

- The term 'work-integrated learning' first appeared early/mid 1990's, became widely used early 2000's (Zegwaard et al., 2023)
 - First discoverable mention is WACE's mission statement (Imrie, 1995)
- WIL is an umbrella term used to describe a range of similar educational practices (Patrick et al., 2008)
- The educational approach is not new
 - Co-op started in 1906 (borrowed from Law studies)
 - Sandwich degrees probably around 1840
 - Apprenticeships traced back to Imperial Rome
- Work-integrated learning and work-based learning



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Defining work-integrated learning

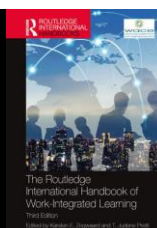
- There have been many descriptions of WIL for a particular disciplinary or local context, practice, and research purpose.
- National associations and educational institutions have also developed their own definitions.
- Broadly, there are two forms of WIL
 1. Work placement WIL - full immersion into a workplace, Co-op, practicums, internships, etc
 2. Non-placement WIL - mostly campus-based but with an external partner, consultancy project, product design and/or creation, investigation, performances



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Definition of WIL

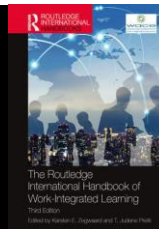
An educational approach involving three parties - the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder - consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development.



Zegwaard, K. E., Pretti, T. J., Rowe, A. D., & Ferns, S. J. (2023). Defining work-integrated learning. In K. E. Zegwaard & T. J. Pretti (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of work-integrated learning* (3rd ed., pp. 29-48). Routledge.

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Definition of WIL



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- An educational approach...
- involving three parties - the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder....
- consisting of authentic work-focused experiences...
- as an intentional component of the curriculum.
- Students learn...
- through active engagement...
- in purposeful work tasks...
- which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice...
- that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development.

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Research trends

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Methods and teams

Methods

- Pre-2000, mostly quantitative
- Early 2000, mostly qualitative
- Now often mixed methods
 1. Survey → interviews → **intervention** → survey → interviews
 2. Interviews → survey → interviews
 3. Data mining large datasets
 4. Observational studies
 5. Insider researcher

Research teams

- Increasingly common for papers to have 4+ authors
- Authorship teams including multiple countries



(Hoskyn & Zegwaard, 2016)

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Key focus: Employability

- The core driver of the expanding practice of WIL (Jackson, 2015; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017)
 - Government see it as a KPI (Cheng et al., 2021)
- Much research has focused on it
 - Most is inherently employability research
- Many conference themes mention employability
- Employability will remain a key driver and a key research focus
- WIL gives an employability competitive edge (ACEN, 2020)
- Institutions increasingly shifting to all students doing WIL
- If all students do WIL, the competitive edge becomes the norm
- Future focus: WIL beyond employability (Zegwaard & Pretti, 2023)



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Key focus: Non-placement WIL

- Until recently, little focus on developing and researching non-placement models of WIL (Dean et al, 2020; Rowe et al. 2022; Zegwaard, 2015)
- Became default model during COVID (Zegwaard et al, 2020)
- Different models been developed (Rook & Dean, 2023)
 - Consulting
 - Creative studio
 - Incubator/start-ups/enterprise/entrepreneurships
 - Community projects
 - Practice clinics
 - Performances
 - Commissioned works
- Lower resource requirement, easily scalable
- Increasing literature and research on NPWIL



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Key focus: Quality WIL



Quality frameworks

Campbell & Pretti, 2023	Sachs et al., 2017
Campbell et al., 2019	Smith et al., 2022
Lowe & Hay, 2016	Stirling et al., 2016
Martin & Hughes, 2011a,b,c,	Walker-Martin et al., 2022
McRae et al., 2017	WILNZ, 2024
	Winchester-Seeto 2019

- Ensure and evidence quality (Campbell & Pretti, 2023)
- Lessons from the past (Sovilla & Varty, 2023)
- Quality across the whole programme
 - for all stakeholders, at all stages
- Quality frameworks
 - Student experience
 - Curricular design
 - Institutional requirements
 - Stakeholder engagement
- Authentic assessment (Ajawi et al., 2022)
- Programme reviews (Marlow et al., 2022)
- Increasing focus on accreditation/certification of WIL (Ferns & Arsenaault, 2023)

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Focus: Student Wellbeing

- Topical challenge and opportunity for wider community
- Higher education has challenges (Office of the student, 2021)
 - Student more self-reliant on finances and learning progress. Greater responsibility of self, new experiences
 - Legal requirements for institutions to ensure student wellbeing
- WIL has some unique challenges (Konstantinou et al., 2023)
 - Applying and being rejected for positions, moving for placement, placement costs, new environments, real tasks and real consequences
- Supporting students with additional support requirements
 - Neurodiverse
 - Mental and physical health issues
- Designing support structures
 - Transparency of support needs
- Not just students, WIL staff also (Wheeldon et al., 2023; Zegwaard & Pretti, 2023)
- Special issue in IJWIL, 2025 publication



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Focus: Equity, access and inclusion

- Equitable access to higher education is ongoing work
- Some WIL practices creates context with inequity
 - Find your own placement model (Harrison & Ip, 2013)
 - First in family to university
 - International students (Jackson & Pham, 2022)
 - Students from remote regions
 - Minority groups
 - University structure (Hicks & Swain, 2007)
 - Compulsory unpaid placements
 - Minimum GPA requirements
- Resourcing
 - WIL coordinators
 - Support structures
 - Communication pathways
 - Transparency on needs
 - Enhancing resilience
- Special issue in IJWIL, 2024



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Focus: Managing risk

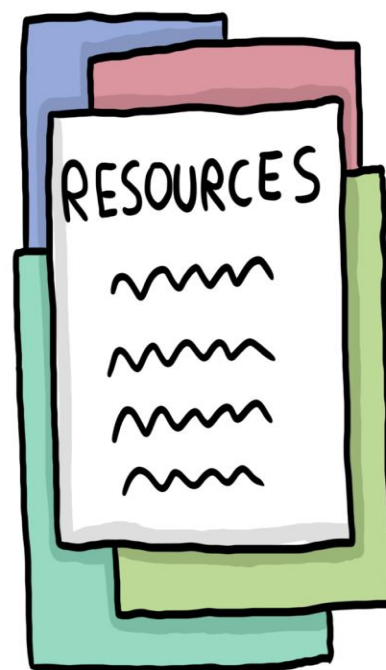
- Institutions are inherently risk averse
-WIL is inherently risky
- Risk is not necessarily all bad
 - Authentic
- Identifying and tracking risk
 - Institutions need to know the risk
- Managing and reducing risk
 - Procedures
- Assurances
 - Institutions need to know the workplace has safe practices
- Be quick to respond
- Craig Cameron (Cameron et al., 2023; Cameron et al., 2019a&b; Cameron & Orrell, 2022; Cameron, 2017a&b, 2018)



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Some focus: Resourcing and technology

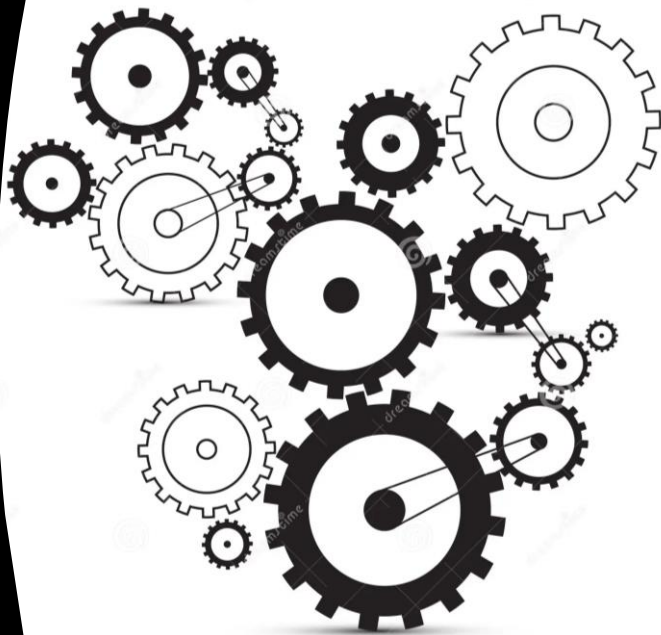
- Some research looking into staff workload
- Technology for workflow
 - WIL platforms: SONIA, InPlace, Simplicity, Orbus, Worktrack
 - Tracking workflow, external relationship, and student locations (Bayerlein et al., 2022)
- Technology for learning
 - Remote work placements
 - Virtual/online WIL
 - Simulated work placements
- Artificial intelligence
- Much more research needed!



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Focus (again): Integration of WIL within the curriculum

- WIL integrated work with learning (Ajjawi et al., 2022)
- Linking learning in other courses into WIL activities and visa versa (Campbell et al., 2022)
- WIL also needs to be integrated into the curriculum
 - Bolt-on programmes
 - Scaffolding WIL across the curriculum
 - Employability education (pre-WIL – WIL – post-WIL)
- Explicitly linking employability outcomes to WIL



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Upcoming focus WIL in graduate degrees

- Sporadic mentions in the older literature
- More recent, insightful publications
(Bracewell et al., 2024; O'Connor, 2023; Olsson & Bernhard, 2023)
- Australian PhD programmes
- Defining WIL in graduate programmes
- Probably more widely practiced than recognised



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Upcoming focus: Multidisciplinary Interdisciplinary

- Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary
- Future workplaces will be more multidisciplinary than now
- Multidisciplinary teams working on multidisciplinary projects
- Students learning often restrained within set disciplinary contexts (Ferns et al., 2022)
 - Universities tend to be departmentalised
- The Impact Lab (Adams-Hutcheson et al, 2023)



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Upcoming focus: UN Sustainable Development Goals

- A challenge? A key focus area?
- 17 far reaching, ambitious, and important goals
- Impacts access to education
- Education to help achieve goals
- Will change/disrupt workplace focus (McRae et al., 2023)
- How are we preparing our future leaders?
- How are our activities mapping onto the SDGs?
- We need sustainable solutions for our future.



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Challenge: Maximising from WIL



- WIL represents significant external engagement and networking
- How are these levered?
 - Funded research collaborations
 - Employer advisory panels, sponsorship
 - Quest lecturers, mentors
 - Media events and profile
- Data mining
 - Work performance evaluations
 - Employer types and locations



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Where to from here?

- Need to focus on the challenge areas:
 - Ensure and prove quality
 - Diversify our offerings
 - Resourcing and platforms to track workflow and transparency
 - Wellbeing and EAID
 - Managing risk and maximising gain
 - Integration and multidisciplinary
 - UN SDGs

For Namibia

- Develop more non-placement WIL
- Community-based WIL
- Entrepreneurships, enterprise and start-ups
- Develop local examples of good practice
- Read research and publish



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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GLOBAL WIL

International online professional learning

Certificate of Global Work-Integrated Learning

1. Theories of WIL
2. Quality dimensions
3. Assessment
4. Student engagement
5. Industry engagement
6. Capstones

<https://globalwil.org/>

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International networking: WILspace

- Based on the SSONG concept
- Small groups meeting once a month for a year
- International mix
- Discuss a topical issue
 - Assessment
 - Paid vs unpaid
 - Artificial intelligence
 - Wellbeing
 - Equity

Will be offered again, but for a shorter period.

Google site: <https://sites.google.com/view/wilspace/home>

Facebook, search for WILspace.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/557927183073412>



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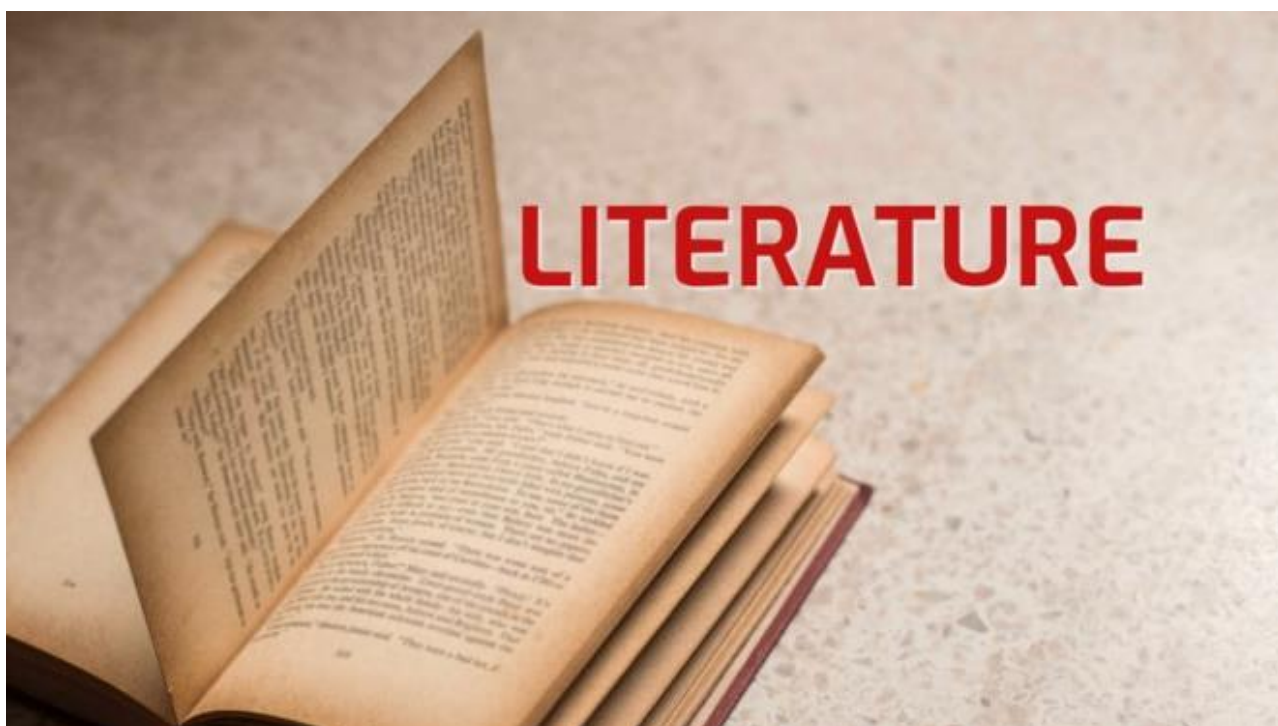
National associations

Connect with the wider family

- SASCE – Southern Africa
 - Regular conferences and webinars
 - Valuable contacts
- WACE – the international association for WIL
 - World conference, 2025, Istanbul – May
- CEWIL – Canadian associations
 - Great online resources
- ASET – UK work-based learning association
 - Helpful good practice guides
- WIL Australia (formally ACEN)
 - Biannual conferences – November 2026
 - Great online resources
- CEIA, WILNZ, TACE



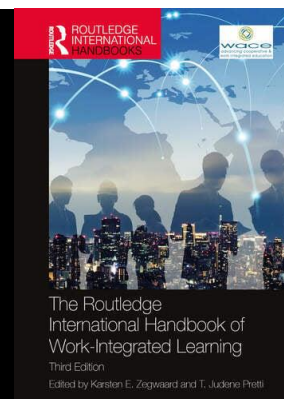
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The Routledge International Handbook of Work-Integrated Learning (3rd ed.)

- Compilation of established knowledge and critical discussion of the practice of WIL
- A 'go to first' book for WIL practitioners, educators, and researchers
- 37 chapters, nearly 100 authors, 644 pages
- Five sections:
 - 1) *defining and theoretical background*,
 - 2) *benefits*,
 - 3) *models of WIL*,
 - 4) *developing and managing WIL*, and
 - 5) *topical issues*
- Available in hardback and eBook – paperback/softback next year.
- www.routledge.com/9780367741761



Watch for discounts. 20-25% off is common.

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Advances in Research, Theory and Practice in Work-Integrated Learning
Enhancing Employability for a Sustainable Future

Edited by Sonia J. Ferns, Anna D. Rowe, and Karsten E. Zegwaard



Advances in Research, Theory and Practice in Work-Integrated Learning

Provides critical reflection of existing scholarship and practice of WIL, with chapters authored by 59 researchers

Includes latest developments in:

- Teaching and learning within WIL program
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Maximizing learning outcomes through WIL
- Exploring the diverse forms of WIL practice

<https://www.routledge.com/Advances-in-Research-Theory-and-Practice-in-Work-Integrated-Learning-Enhancing/Ferns-Rowe-Zegwaard/p/book/9780367897758>

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International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning

ISSN: 2538-1032

www.ijwil.org

- Central journal for WIL, commenced 25 years ago
- More than 600 published articles
- Open access, double blind reviewed, 50-member international review board
- Indexed on Scopus, EBSCO, ERIC, DOAJ, Cabells, ESCI
- Q2 journal (71 percentile)
- Special issues:
 - Assessment
 - Employability
 - Research methods
 - Impact of COVID (double special issue)
 - Cultural perspectives
 - Equity, inclusion and access (*Issue 1 of 2024*)
 - WIL and wellbeing (*to be published start of 2025*)

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Resources: Books and good practice reports

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Any Questions?



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