

Building host organisation capacity to provide safe and equitable Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for students with disability



Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

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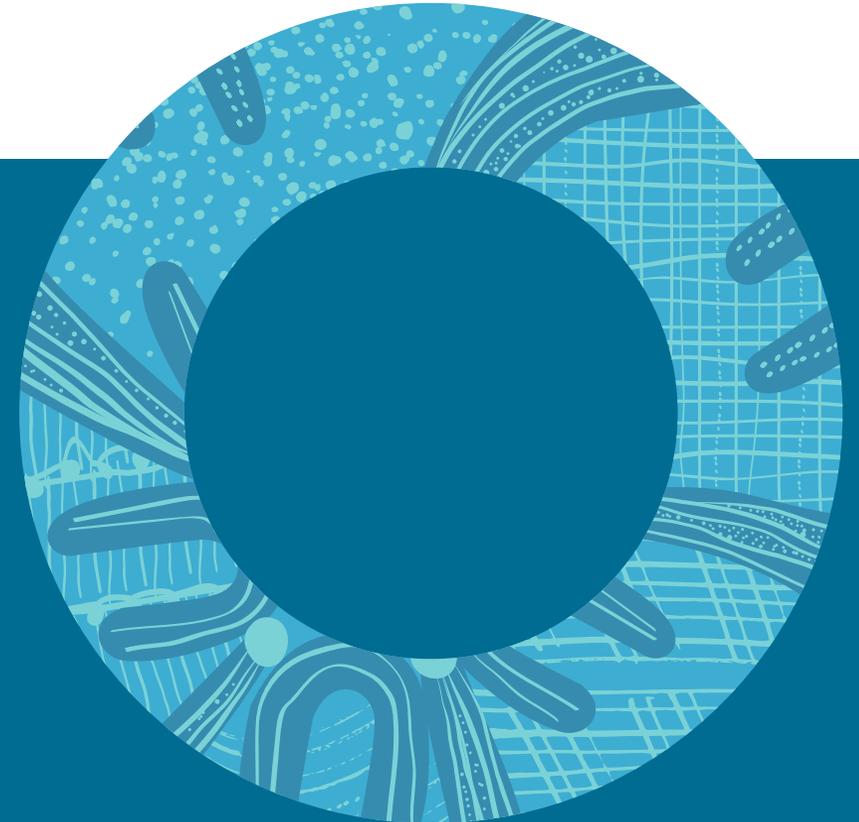
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Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Canberra acknowledges the Ngunnawal people and Edith Cowan University acknowledges the Noongar, traditional custodians of the lands where both campuses are located. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of their respective regions. We also acknowledge all other First Nations Peoples on whose lands each of us are gathering.



Project details

This joint project on Equitable Work Integrated Learning (WIL) was undertaken by:

- University of Canberra, Faculty of Health and Inclusion UC (Lead University); and
- Edith Cowan University, Schools of Medical and Health Sciences and Nursing and Midwifery

This project was funded by Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) in 2021/2022 (\$10,000)



Presentation overview

- Why did we choose to do this study?
- Background
- Project aims
- Project design
- Overall project findings
- Resources
- Questions



Background – Students with disability

- Increase of 2% from 2014 – 2020 in total enrolments of students with disability in Australian higher education institutions.⁽¹⁾
 - 5.5% (2014) to 7.4% (2020)
- After graduation:⁽²⁾
 - 7.1% of students with disability are more likely to be unemployed; and
 - 3.4% of students with disability are more likely to be employed in work that does not match their skill set.
- A WIL experience within the degree can enhance a student’s employability skills and readiness for the work environment.⁽³⁾
- However, students with disability have a poorer WIL experience than students without a disability.⁽⁴⁾

Legislation and university policies

Disability Discrimination Act, 1992⁽⁵⁾

- Students with disability must be offered the same educational opportunities as everyone else
- Definition:
 - 'disability' broadly encompasses physical, mental, sensory and intellectual impairment

Disability Standards for Education, 2005⁽⁶⁾

- Seeks to ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as those without a disability.
- 2020 Review found:⁽⁷⁾
 - Educational providers require further guidance to ensure equity and access to WIL

University policies and procedures⁽⁸⁾

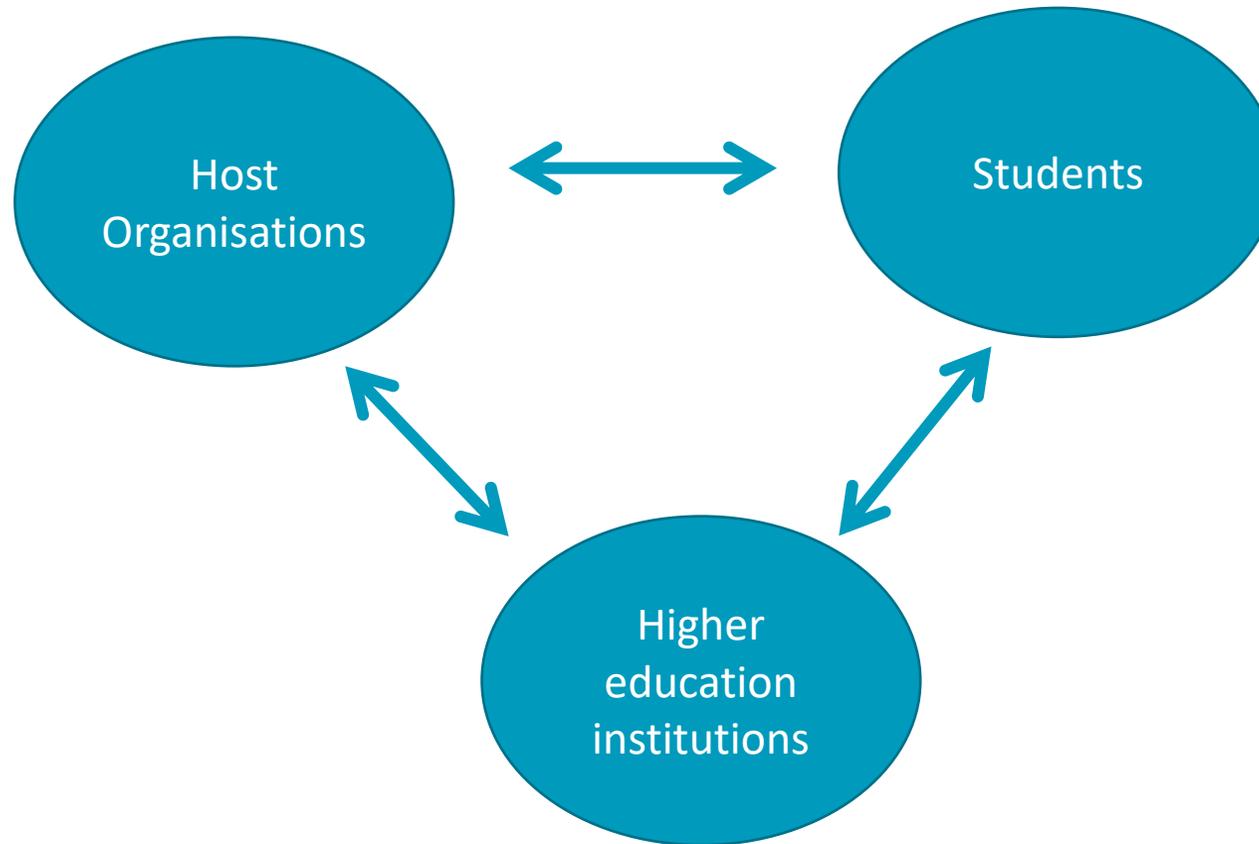
- Relating to:
 - WIL
 - Disability

5. Australian Government. Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Canberra: Australian Government; 1992. 6. Australian Government. Disability Standards for Education. Canberra: Australian Government; 2005. 7. Commonwealth of Australia. (2020). Final Report of the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005. Australian Government Department of Education. <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education2005/resources/final-report-2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005>.

8. Andrew, L., Arthur, T., Mawer, T., Krishnakumar, G., Sambell, R., Devine, A. Lawlis, T. (2023). Review of Australian Universities Work Integrated Learning Policies and Procedures: Referencing Disability. International Journal of Work Integrated Learning. Accepted.

WIL is a Tripartite relationship

Successful WIL requires collaboration and a stable relationship between the key stakeholders:



WIL is a Tripartite relationship

2008 WIL Report ⁽⁵⁾

“Stakeholders consider ensuring equitable participation and access by all students by collaboratively developing WIL funding structures, policies and strategic approaches.”

2015 National WIL Strategy ⁽⁶⁾

Highlight strategic leadership approach

Building capacity through support for employers and supervisors

Access and equity refers to costs, not people

2019 WIL Quality Framework ⁽⁷⁾

Stakeholder engagement is one of four framework domains.

Highlights the importance of stakeholder partnerships:

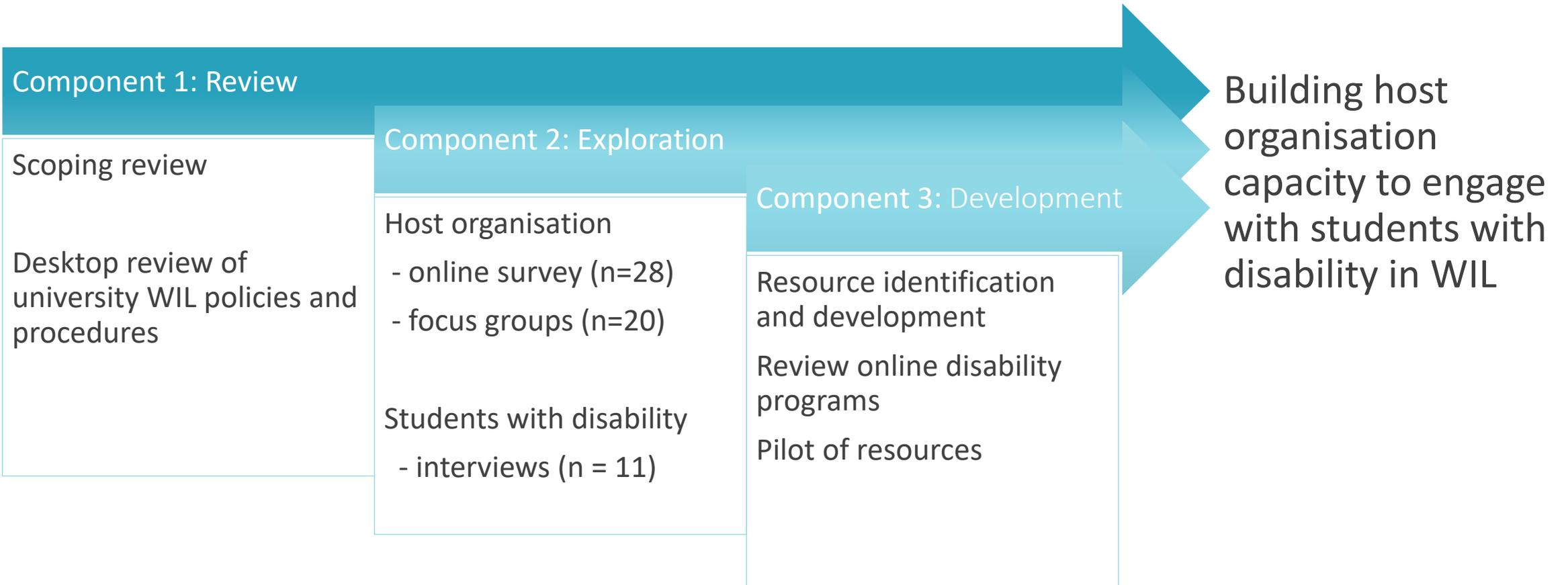
- in the design and strategic approach to WIL; and the
- quality of the WIL experience.

Project aims

Aims of the project were to:

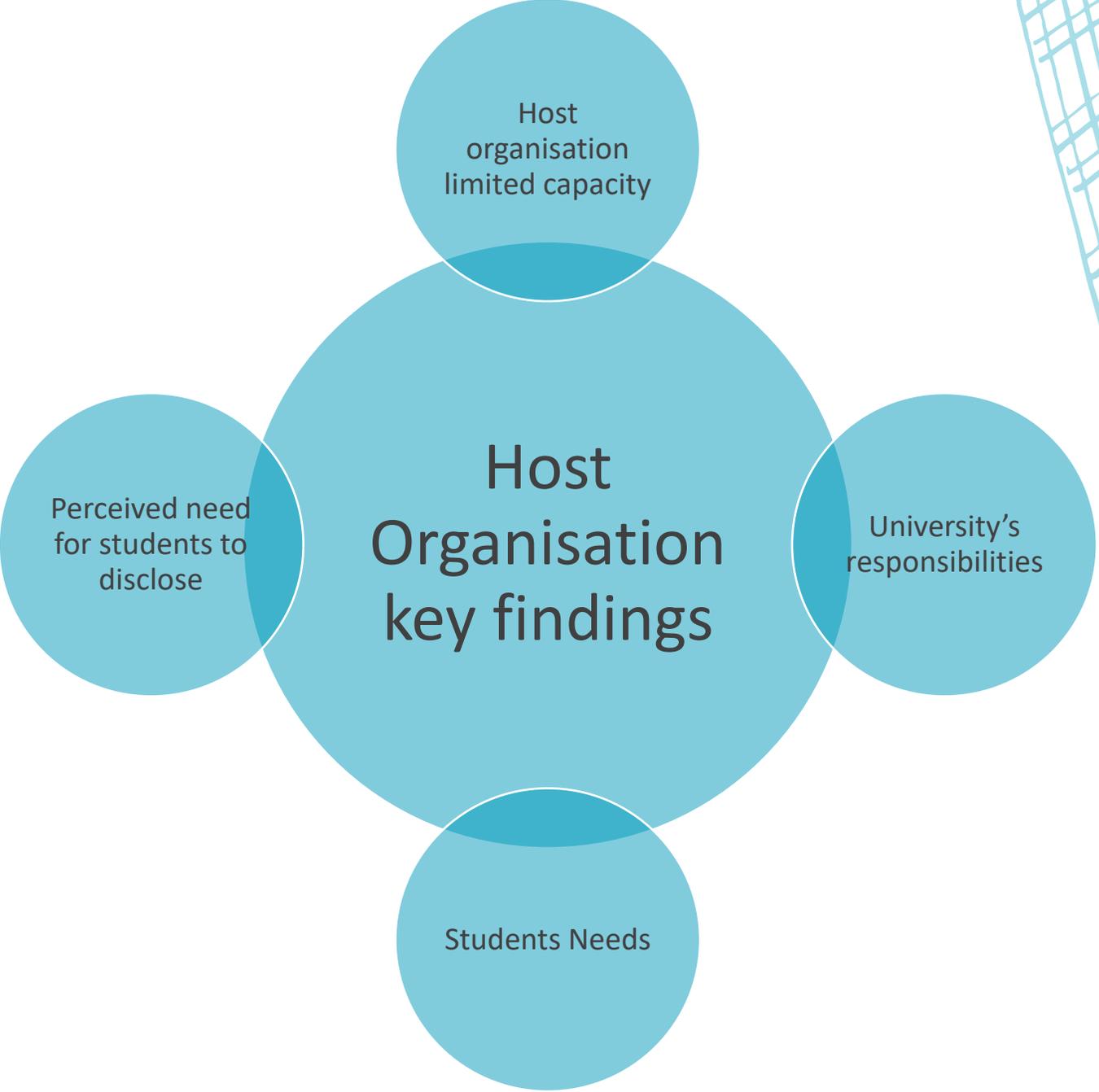
- Explore the challenges and capacity of host organisations to provide a meaningful and appropriate WIL experience for health students with disability through the perceptions of students and WIL supervisors: and
- Develop resources that provide host organisations with the information and tools to effectively host and supervise health students with disability.

Study



Scoping Review

- The literature highlighted a deficit approach to providing WIL for students with disability
- Despite the calls to action in Australia and Internationally to embed WIL in higher education courses, very little has changed over the last 15 years in relation to:
 - Organisation and professional beliefs and behaviours toward disability
 - Organisational culture
 - Perceived need for students to disclose
 - Students feeling safe or stigmatised
 - Students being treated the same



Host organisation – quotes...

“It’s the same as whether I have a competent or not yet competent intern, we still need to understand what their skill set is and how we can best use them.

So, I don’t look at it in terms of like, this is a challenge. It’s just understanding what that individual can do so not knowing is the worst thing.” [FG participant 3]

“The biggest hurdle we have at the moment is we don’t have wheelchair accessible toilets. We have gender neutral toilets and we have private accessible spaces. we have a wheelchair accessible toilet in the building next to us.

But in terms of offering someone an adequate solution, it’s just not really reasonable to expect them to go out of the building, down the road around the corner with the special key.” [FG participant 4].



Student quotes...

'Getting people to think, what does that mean for you? How does that impact? So actually getting people to STOP, ASK and LISTEN about how your disability affects you' [Interview 5]



"While it [disclosure] might be helpful to an internship, it might have negative repercussions, and getting a job in the future, and even like going to other people that I know in the industry for support, it's like there's so much **stigma** around being disabled and being in the workforce that it's just something that we're kind of taught not to disclose." [Interview 3]



Questions TO ASK STUDENTS



PRE-PLACEMENT

What are your strengths, and things you'd like to work on?

Do you have any reasonable adjustments that may be required to help you complete your placement?

Are all of our inclusion policies & procedures clear? Would you like additional information on these in an alternative format?

Are you aware of the additional supports available to you whilst on placement? Both from us and the university?

PLEASE NOTE: we are open to replicating supports or reasonable adjustments you may receive at the university while on placement.

Would you like to highlight to us any strategies that may support your experience whilst on placement with us?

Do you know who to speak to if you have further questions or concerns on these at a later date?

→ PLACEMENT

Do you have any concerns about completing the placement?

Are there any additional support methods you would like us to consider for the next phase of your placement?

Are there any particular difficulties you have encountered so far? What are they? Why do you feel this is?

Have we implemented the necessary support strategies or reasonable adjustments you highlighted to us before commencing?

If the student did not raise any – would they like to consider this now in light of their first few weeks on placement?

Are you happy with the support you are receiving from us?

If you are not comfortable speaking to us regarding some supports or strategies, do you know who to contact at university?

→ POST-PLACEMENT

As a host organisation, what did we do well?

Is there something you wish you knew at the start of the placement that we did not provide or discuss with you?

What could we improve on?

Reflection

CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSFUL MOMENTS AND EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR TEAM NOW THAT THE PLACEMENT HAS CONCLUDED!

Developing the professionals of tomorrow is an achievement you should be proud of as an organisation!

? As an **organisation**, consider two top actions or changes you can make for the next student placement you facilitate.

? As an **individual**, consider how this experience enhanced your own perceptions of mentoring students on placement?

What did you learn about yourself that can be carried forward in a positive manner?

*Placement also refers to other Work Integrated Learning experiences such as internship

Supporting student placement diversity and inclusivity in the workplace

Thinking about hosting a student at your workplace? Here are some questions to consider, to guide your preparation.

No two workplaces are the same and recommend the following questions be considered within the means and resources that are available to your workplace.

You do not need to have answers to all these questions prior to hosting a student.

Resources are included below to assist with developing responses to the questions.

- Are there organisational policies and procedures in place to support inclusivity and accessibility?¹
- Does your organisation have a current, registered, and recognised Disability Action Plan (DAP)?² (example DAP [here](#))
- Does your organisation promote itself as inclusive and accessible?¹
- Have you advised the university and student what inclusivity and accessibility measures are already in place?
- Are you aware of the supports, services and systems that the University can provide you?
If not, do you know who to contact to find out about these supports, services and systems?
- Is there an on-boarding process^{3,4} for all student placements/interns that creates a safe and supportive environment to assist with transparent communication?
- Do on-boarding processes provide a supportive opportunity to discuss reasonable adjustments?
Such as:
 - Opportunities for students to provide access to their 'reasonable adjustment plan'(RAP – these plans may also have other names depending on the state/territory and university you are working with)
 - Privacy policy – understanding what information you can and cannot share about the student^{5,6}
 - Hours/days of work, dress code
- Is there a process in place if a student divulges a previously undeclared disability during the placement?
- Are there clear lines of communication between your organisation, the university and the student?⁷
- Who will be the supervisor/mentor allocated to the student, how will this be communicated?
- Has the student supervisor/mentor had inclusivity and accessibility training?¹
- Does the built environment support inclusivity and accessibility?^{7,8,9}
 - Public transport/parking
 - Access to the building
 - Office equipment
 - ICT systems
 - Is there any equipment needed by the student during placement that can be provided by the university?

Supporting Resources:

¹Access and Inclusion Checklist:

<https://includeability.gov.au/>

<https://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers>

<https://includeability.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/IncludeAbility%20-%20Disability%20Access%20and%20Inclusion%20Health%20Check%20-%20Interactive.pdf>

<https://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/creating-accessible-and-inclusive-workplace>

²Disability Action Plan:

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/publications/disability-action-plan-guide-2021>

³Customising the Workplace:

<https://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/customising-job-person-disability>

⁴Induction checklist:

<https://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/creating-accessible-and-inclusive-induction>

⁵Protection from discrimination at work:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/protections-at-work/protection-from-discrimination-at-work>

⁶Workplace privacy:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/sites/default/files/migration/711/workplace-privacy-best-practice-guide.pdf>

⁷Communication:

<https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/wordsatwork-building-inclusion-through-power-language>

⁸Accessibility Checklist:

https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2016/Accessibility%20checklist%20for%20employers.pdf

⁹Digital Accessibility:

<https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility#wai>



EQUITABLE WIL: CASE STUDY 1

Lakshmi is a Master of Speech Pathology student who is about to commence her first placement. Lakshmi has cerebral palsy and fatigue. She has been registered with the university's disability support service since the commencement of her course and has been receiving reasonable adjustments throughout her studies.

Lakshmi approaches the disability support service to find out how adjustments can be made for her on placement. Her main concern is her reduced functional and physical capacity as tasks can take longer to complete and/or may be restricted. Lakshmi fatigues physically and mentally more quickly than her student peers and she needs regular rest breaks.



RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES/ ADJUSTMENTS

- Lakshmi requires a 10-15 minute break every three hours. She also needs access to a private and quiet place for these breaks.
- When facilitating sessions with children, recommended groups be restricted to no more than five people.
- Part-time placement to be considered for Lakshmi.



EQUITABLE WIL: CASE STUDY 2

Matthew is in his final year of a Bachelor of Nursing. He has a hearing impairment in his right ear and is scheduled for cochlear implant surgery in a few months. Matthew has not registered with the universities disability support service as he has managed his disability on his own and does not feel comfortable disclosing his personal information to others.

However, on previous placements, Matthew struggled to perform certain tasks and needed to ask his placement supervisor for assistance. Specifically, he found he could not confidently assess a patient's heart rate or blood pressure using a stethoscope. As this is his final year and he wants to do well on his final placements, Matthew has decided to register with the disability service so he can receive the necessary adjustments and so that his host organisation will be aware of his needs before placement commences. Based on his previous experiences Matthew knows the adjustments/ equipment he needs.



RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES/ ADJUSTMENTS

- Matthew requires access to an approved electronic sphygmomanometer/ automatic blood pressure machine to assist with blood pressure measurements and clinical assessment.
- When being assessed, Matthew requires a learning environment with minimal background noise.
- Loud noises can often limit Matthew's hearing perception; however, he is very proficient at lipreading so facing him when speaking is recommended.
- It is recommended Matthew be provided hard copies of emergency evacuation and other essential procedures when being verbally briefed on these.



EQUITABLE WIL: CASE STUDY 3

Ella is a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy student. She was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder as a child. This condition impacts her ability to navigate social interactions, changes in routine and her ability to process instructions. Ella is registered with the university disability support service and receives adjustments for participation, group work and extra time for processing. The disability support service has provided adjustment recommendations for her upcoming project placement.

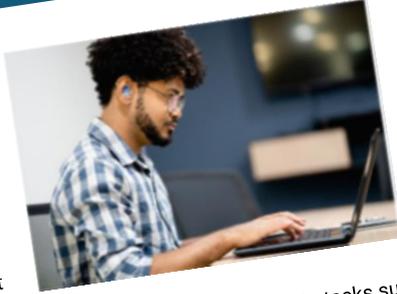
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES/ ADJUSTMENTS

- Part-time placement to be considered for Ella.
- Flexible work arrangements, with the option of working from home on specified days.
- Ella requires a slow and in-depth orientation of workspaces.
- Instructions to be provided in writing where possible.
- Ella to be given additional time to process and understand instructions.



EQUITABLE WIL: CASE STUDY 4

Jamie is a Bachelor of Health Science student. They were diagnosed with dyslexia as a child and has recently been diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. These conditions have a significant impact on their ability to both read and write (they find handwriting particularly difficult). Jamie is registered with the disability support service at university and receives adjustments such as alternate texts in electronic format, so they can use text-to-speech technologies for textbooks and other reading material.



Jamie is struggling to complete tasks such as reading and providing summary notes of reports and taking timely minutes for team meetings. The disability support service provides a placement support letter to the relevant university discipline, who then communicate Jamie's adjustments to the host organisation.

They have been given access to Otter.ai, a notetaking software that produces live transcripts of lectures/meetings. Jamie also has adjustments for assessment tasks to be completed on a computer with extra time for processing. Jamie did not disclose their condition before commencing their internship in a government department office, as they didn't think they would require any adjustments in the workplace.

In the third week of their placement, Jamie contacts their placement coordinator saying they need special provisions and would like the university to provide documentation to the host organisation on their behalf.

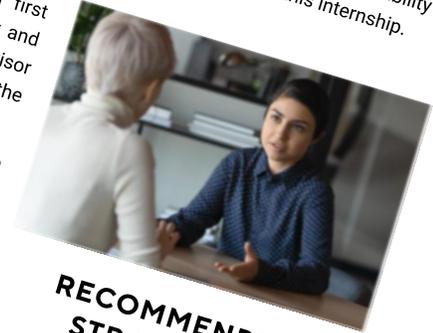
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES/ADJUSTMENTS

- Alternate format for texts - electronic.
- Jamie allowed access to a personal device to access text-to-speech assistive technologies.
- Jamie to have access to a private and quiet space so that they can use their dictation technology.



EQUITABLE WIL: CASE STUDY 5

Abigail commenced her Health Science internship at Sexual Health and Family Planning Australian Capital Territory three weeks ago in a research role. She has been asked to review and update the organisations marketing and communication material. This includes survey development and drafting the annual report. In her first week at the office, Abigail seemed shy and reluctant to ask questions. Her supervisor felt that Abigail was disengaged from the work and tried to build the connection.



Towards the end of the first week, the supervisor noticed that Abigail was taking longer and longer breaks and although she was responsive via Microsoft Teams and email, she rarely contributed to group discussions or sought help when necessary. In the second week Abigail called in sick for two days and did not provide medical certificates.

On her return she did not offer any explanation and seemed even more disengaged. Early in the third week, the supervisor tried to provide feedback on Abigail's performance. Abigail became defensive and disclosed that she had a serious mental health condition.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES/ADJUSTMENTS

- Part-time placement to be considered for Abigail.
- Flexible work arrangements where possible for Abigail.
- Provide a quiet space for student to take breaks.
- Limit group work.



TIPS TO SUPPORTING STUDENT PLACEMENT DIVERSITY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

Before commencement of Work Integrated Learning

- Plan for a range of individual needs
- Ensure accessible physical spaces and learning materials
- Provide upfront organisational information in accessible formats
- Identify and communicate the core or inherent requirements of training/tasks
- Provide clear information about expectations and responsibilities
- Provide up-to-date and accurate information
- Inform people clearly about the services and support available, and how to disclose their disability at each stage of engagement - promote and normalise inclusion, make it safe for students to disclose
- Explain how information is used and how the organisation is bound by privacy and confidentiality
- Encourage students to self-advocate and how to do this

During Work Integrated Learning

- Introduce the student to the team
- Set up a series of regular meetings with the student to ensure there are frequent opportunities to discuss progress, barriers to learning and to provide constructive feedback
- Focus on learning needs, rather than disability
- Uphold privacy and confidentiality
- Consult people directly about issues that may affect them
- Focus and build on what people can do (not what they can't)



During Work Integrated Learning (continued)

- Ensure strategies are in place to minimise barriers
- Use appropriate language
- Challenge your own potential biases
- Ask if any assistance is required; people with disability have quite different capabilities and like to be as independent as possible
- Ask the person how you can support better support their learning
- Remembering the person has the same rights as other students or colleagues
- Not being surprised by different or unusual requests
- Be honest if you don't know how to help
- Get help if you need it - contact WIL/placement coordinator
- Seek the student's permission if you are required to speak to other staff members about the disability
- Only ask information that you really need (e.g. any adjustments that can or need to be made)

After Work Integrated Learning

- Conduct an exit session with the student
- Reflect on the areas that worked well and were problematic
- Set up a process to reflect on, record and create amendments for future student work integrated learning
- Set up a process to provide and receive feedback to the student and the university



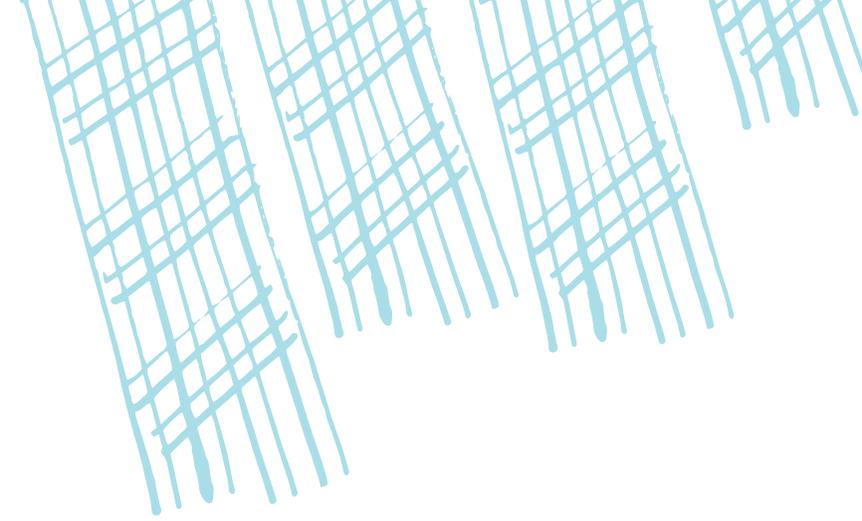
What's next?.....

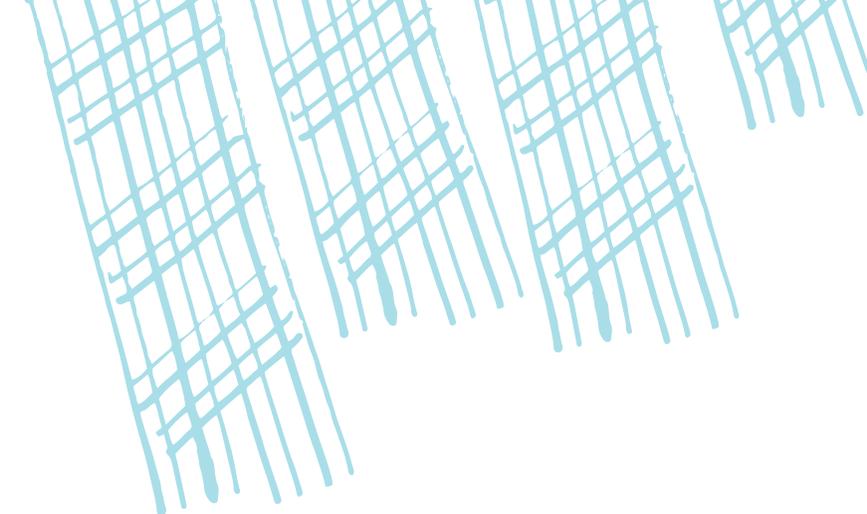
- We need to move to a strengths based approach to providing inclusive and equitable WIL for students with disability.
- Higher education institutions need to review, improve and monitor their current practices and policies to ensure WIL coordinators, host organisations and supervisors engage collaboratively to provide students with disability safe and equitable WIL experiences.
 - Utilise documents from the Australian disability strategy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - Improve language and terminology
- Higher education institutions have a key role to play to ensure a sustained stakeholder relationship.
- Host organisations utilise the resources to enhance their knowledge, understanding, capacity, and capabilities to provide students with disability an equitable, safe and meaningful WIL experience.

Outputs from project:

- Two papers accepted:
 - Challenges to delivering university health-based WIL to students with a disability: A scoping Review in HERD.
 - Review of Australian Universities Work Integrated Learning Policies and Procedures: Referencing Disability. In IJWIL.
- One paper under review for a Special Edition in the International Journal of Work Integrated Learning
- One paper being developed on WIL experiences of students with disability
- ACEN Report: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P1WGJFk5ILfgjFVxytWw7IVK6ELCmKjq/view>
- Presentations:
 - Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) webinar
 - WACE conference presentation
 - Australian Disability Clearinghouse for Education and Training (ADCET) webinar – 6th July
 - Resources have been included in the ADCET database

Questions?





Discussion Questions

Discussion question 1:

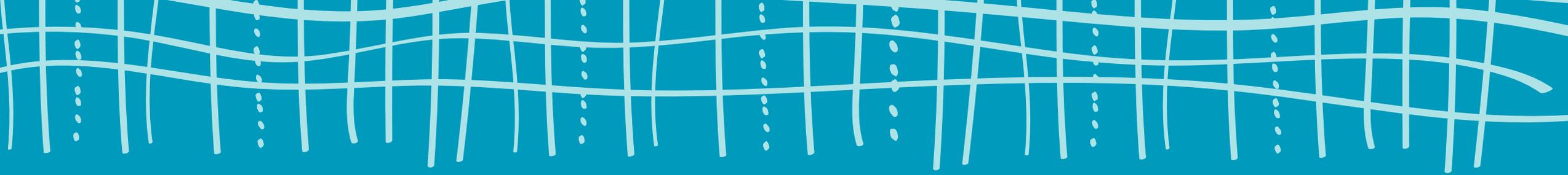
What processes do you currently have at your workplace or tertiary institution to ensure a safe and equitable WIL for students with disability?

Discussion question 2:

What has worked to successfully engage students with disability in WIL?

Discussion question 3:

What would you need to host students with disability in WIL?



Thank you