WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING – STUDENT EXPECTATIONS OF PLACEMENT

PROTOCOL

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The Work Integrated Learning unit is aware that a number of students have not been reviewing our FHS Placements website or the Learning Management System (eLearning/Blackboard) site for the related placement unit of study. These electronic sites provide significant information, expectations and procedures for students in relation to their placements. To assist students, we have provided a basic summary below of the expectations for all students in relation to placements. This does not replace the need for students to familiarise themselves fully with the content of those electronic sites.

Provision of appropriate placements for students within the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) is a very important aspect of each professional right of entry program. All students are required to meet the following requirements as part of their placements;

1. The objectives of the program the student is enrolled in, including all relevant unit of study objectives
2. Australian professional accreditation requirements and
3. In professions that are registered, the relevant Australian professional registration requirements

The Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit coordinates placements in the programs provided at the Faculty of Health Sciences. The allocation process for placements and the actual placements are designed to meet those abovementioned requirements. Managing the whole placement processes for around 3,000 students every year, many of whom undertake multiple placements in a year, is a huge logistical activity for WIL staff, taking into consideration a large number of variables and take a considerable amount of time. On average across a year, the WIL unit has more than 400 students, across multiple disciplines, out on placement for any given work day.

The sourcing and allocation of placements is a complex procedure that requires the adherence to certain systems stipulated by external organisations that make the process of placement management extremely complex. The WIL team works extremely hard to obtain suitable placements for students, in a very demanding environment. A huge amount of staff time is spent on trying to obtain appropriate placement opportunities for students and manage the processes around these placements.

For these reasons, our processes around placements have to be quite structured, with very limited opportunity to make allowances for individual student circumstances or preferences unless there are extenuating reasons.

As the vast majority of placements we manage are in organisations outside the University, we have little or no control over issues impacting on an external site/organisation’s ability to provide placements. It is not uncommon to have late changes or cancellations to placement offers from sites that can sometimes impact on more than one student in a cohort. We understand that late changes to placement allocations are a source of anxiety to students. The WIL team’s primary objective in such situations is to find solutions to placement shortages, a process which is time consuming and subject to short time frames when unexpected late cancellations occur. With the focus on trying to find these solutions, staff have limited time to go into specific details with each student who is either subject to a placement change or has concerns about their allocation.
Expectations for all FHS student placements;

1. All placements are provided to students with the view to meet the program objectives, unit of study objectives, Australian professional accreditation requirements and (where appropriate) Australian professional registration requirements.

2. Only in extenuating situations can individual student circumstances be taken into consideration.

3. Some disciplines within WIL may allow students an opportunity to indicate their placement preferences before allocation takes place. Student preferencing provides the WIL team with additional information to assist the team in making decisions about allocation to placements. The opportunity to preference does not guarantee the student will be allocated to a preferred placement. Students will be allocated to an appropriate placement to meet their learning needs and accreditation/registration requirements, within the placements available at any given time.

4. All students must be familiar with the FHS Placements website http://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/placements/ This website provides significant information about placements that is essential for students. It is expected that students are familiar with this information. It is also expected that students are familiar with placement information provided on the relevant Learning Management System (eLearning/Blackboard) site relevant to that unit of study.

5. All students should expect to complete at least 1 placement outside of Sydney during the duration of their program. Students need to;
   - fund the costs involved for any out of Sydney placement themselves
   - apply in advance for scholarships or grants related to rural placements and take responsibility for applying for such rural scholarships or grants, before the student is aware that a rural placement may be available
   - notify the WIL team as soon as possible after receiving confirmation they have been successful in obtaining a rural scholarship or grant, to allow the WIL team to allocate the student to a rural placement in the appropriate time frame.

6. All students are required to attend any relevant placement as allocated within the greater Sydney area that is within 1.5 hours travel (each way) of their semester address. This includes student travel by public transport or by car. However, the WIL team reserves the right to place a student within a 5km radius of the Cumberland campus, should this be more than a 1.5 hour travel time. If a student has preferenced a placement that requires travel time of more than 1.5 hours each way, the 1.5 hour travel time limit does not apply.

7. Students may be moved from one placement group/type to another at any given time. This is due to a number of factors including the availability of various placement experiences offered at any given time, late cancellations by placement sites/organisations requiring subsequent changes as a result.

8. For most disciplines, except orthoptics, the WIL team aims to provide students with 4 weeks’ notice of their placement allocation. In a small percentage of cases, this notice may be shorter and is generally due to circumstances relating to the placement organisation/site and is beyond the control of the WIL team. Cancellation of placements by sites/organisations is not uncommon. In a small number of cases there may be an insufficient number of placement offers provided. The WIL team will do what is reasonably possible to try to work around such problems.

9. Students may only approach the WIL team via email about their allocated placement if there is a very good reason the placement is inappropriate for them. The student must clearly outline the reasons for this in the email e.g. more than 1.5 hours travel by public transport or car (not preferenced), student
has already had the exact same placement experience, certain medical reasons, conflict of interest, pregnancy etc. Foreseeable issues require the student to have submitted an FHS Extenuating Circumstances form in the appropriate timeframe.

10. Students must be available to attend placements as per the program calendar. Students’ personal and work commitments outside of their university studies will not be taken into consideration for placements, except in exceptional circumstances. Students are strongly advised not to book personal travel or commit to other personal activities close to a scheduled placement period, as a problem during placement may require them to be available to make up any lost time. Make up time may occur out of the usual placement periods identified in the program the student is enrolled in.

11. All applications for exceptional circumstances for known or foreseeable issues in relation to a placement must be made using the FHS Extenuating Circumstances form. All applications for extenuating circumstances are to be submitted a minimum of 8 weeks before a placement is due to commence. Any unforeseen or unexpected exceptional circumstances must be applied for as soon as the issue is known. It is the student’s responsibility to review the criteria for an extenuating circumstances application before completing the form. Students who provide inadequate notice for known or foreseeable events (including requirements for elite athletes) that may impact on the placement will not have their application considered. The decision of the WIL team for an exceptional circumstances application is final.

12. Students should not compare their own personal and/or placement circumstances with those of other students. Each student’s situation relating to placements is managed on an individual basis by the WIL team. Privacy legislation does not allow WIL staff to discuss the circumstances about a student’s placement with other students, parents, family or friends.

13. Students are not to make any changes to the way in which a placement has been structured, nor approach a placement educator/supervisor to negotiate any changes. The WIL team will negotiate any appropriate approved changes that impact on the placement with the placement educator/supervisor, including WIL approved extenuating circumstances.

14. Students are not permitted to contact sites/organisations to arrange their own placements. Insurance considerations and placement agreements with organisations make this untenable. Organisations have requested that students do not make direct approaches to them.

15. If a student is unwell and cannot attend placement on any allocated day, the student must notify the placement educator/supervisor directly and email the WIL unit on the same day. Students are required to provide a medical certificate for any health issue that requires more than 1 day off in any given placement period. The medical certificate is to be provided to the WIL unit by the student via email as soon as possible. Students need to be aware that they may be required to make up time for time lost for ill health or other circumstances during a placement. The WIL academic staff will determine if and when a student needs to make up for lost time that occurred during a placement.

16. Placements provide students with opportunity to develop professional behaviours. It is expected that students will, at all times, liaise, communicate and work in a professional manner with WIL staff and anyone they come into contact with as part of a placement. Unprofessional behaviour from students is not acceptable and may lead to action under the University of Sydney Student Code of Conduct.

17. All students are required to attend the relevant WIL briefing and debriefing sessions relating to their placements, as scheduled. In a number of instances, this may also include an additional briefing session and/or completion of online or electronic modules and/or additional compliance requirements as required by the placement site/organisation.
18. All students are required to have completed the relevant pre placement compliance requirements prior to the placement, as required by that organisation. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of the placement by that organisation (e.g. NSW Health, ACT Health, private organisations) and impact on the student’s progression within their program.

19. All students are expected to be on placement for the allocated working hours that is usual for that placement site/organisation. Students are not to expect that any site will allow them to have a scheduled day off during a placement, even if the staff at that site is entitled to such time. Allowances will not be made for any personal work commitments or other personal commitments of a student when on placement unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been pre approved by the WIL team in writing.

Please remember: Staff within the WIL unit and staff at placement sites/organisations may be your work colleagues in the future. It is always advised that students keep this in mind and demonstrate professional behaviour at all times when dealing with staff in this University and those they come into contact with during placements.