

**WIL-ING THE BA:
WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES IN
THE AUSTRALIAN BACHELOR OF ARTS**

MODELS IN PRACTICE

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The University of Queensland

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INTRODUCTION

These cases emerged from requests for more detailed current examples that went beyond the data collected as part of the standard survey of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities. All Bachelor of Arts (BA) programs identified in 2016 as offering WIL units of study within their programs were subjected to a desktop survey. Data were collected in the categories illustrated in Appendix 1. Coordinators or equivalent verified the data collected and data were subjected to further analysis.

The cases included in this report were selected from a range of different types of universities. Each case was an example of where WIL was operating at a program level; that is, the WIL was either a compulsory part of the program or was considered a culminating experience. In addition to providing examples of what might be considered transformational WIL experiences for BA students, the cases also provide key insights into lessons learnt in developing and implementing such units. These are not the only examples of WIL in the BA and there are many other programs providing WIL experiences across Australia (see WIL in BA data set and summary report). They are, however, indicative of the direction WIL in the BA seems to be going.

Each case provides an overview of the information available from the institution websites related to the BA as a whole and the unit of study. Each case is followed by observations arising from a telephone conversation with the coordinators/conveners for each of the units. The discussions were semi-structured interviews. First, questions were asked around the planned, the enacted and the experienced curriculum. Discussions then centred on the successes and the challenges of implementing the unit of study and how the institution was modifying the experiences to meet the needs of students. A final commentary section provides further insight into the work being carried out at an institutional level.

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

OVERVIEW OF BACHELOR OF ARTS¹

JCU graduates are committed to lifelong learning, intellectual development, and to the display of exemplary personal, professional and ethical standards. They have a sense of their place in the tropics and are charged with professional, community, and environmental responsibility. JCU graduates appreciate the need to embrace and be acquainted with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia. They are committed to reconciliation, diversity and sustainability. They exhibit a willingness to lead and to contribute to the intellectual, environmental, cultural, economic and social challenges of regional, national, and international communities of the tropics.

Learning outcomes:

On successful completion of the Bachelor of Arts, graduates will be able to:

- *Demonstrate a broad and coherent body of knowledge with depth in the underlying principles and concepts of at least one discipline of the Arts, Languages or Social Sciences;*
- *Integrate knowledge of the diversity of cultures and peoples, their differences and commonalities, especially with respect to Indigenous cultures and peoples;*
- *Appraise the place and role of Australia and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region and the tropics worldwide;*

¹ Data accessed 19/10/2016 James Cook University website <https://www.jcu.edu.au/courses-and-study/courses/bachelor-of-arts-bachelor-of-business>

- Review critically, analyse, consolidate and synthesise information, claims, and evidence;
- Apply critical thinking, independent judgement, intercultural sensitivity, and national, regional and global perspectives, to identify and solve problems in at least one discipline of the Arts, Languages or Social Sciences;
- Present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas, through proficiency in written and spoken English language and numeracy, appropriate to their audience and in a range of modes and media;
- Demonstrate capacity for reflection, planning, ethical decision-making and interdisciplinary team work in diverse contexts of community engagement, professional work and/or scholarship; and
- Identify and have potential to act and reflect upon opportunities for lifelong learning and career development.

EXTRACT DESCRIBING “BA3000 - ARTS EDGE”

Core capstone subject²

This subject is the core capstone subject of the Bachelor of Arts course. Students will synthesise and integrate their learning across their BA studies. Students will look to their futures as employees, thinkers, leaders and global citizens. A range of individual and collaborative activities will allow students to demonstrate initiative, resourcefulness, imagination, innovation, scepticism and critical engagement with the grand challenges facing people and societies of the tropics.

Learning Outcomes

- demonstrate high level oral and written communication skills and media literacies;
- reflect on, integrate and document knowledge and skills acquired in the Bachelor of Arts;
- apply knowledge and skills to identify and address the ways in which learning from major areas of study enables employability in various forms;
- experience and reflect on the importance of collaboration and team work in various fields of employment;
- plan, and execute a high quality research and/or creative capstone project appropriate to their major; reflect on and integrate life-long learning knowledge and skills acquired during the students studies that will enhance their adaptability in fast-changing professional environments.

Assumed Knowledge: Students have successfully completed at least 48 credit points at levels 1, 2 and 3 of tertiary study

Prerequisites: Restricted to students enrolled in the final year of a Bachelor of Arts and who have successfully completed 48 credit points at level 1 and 2 of tertiary study

Contact hours: 39 hours workshops/Seminars - 13wks x 3 hr block workshops

Assessment: Presentations (30%); assignments (40%); engagement in reflective practices, group discussions and exercises (30%).

² Data accessed 19/10/2016 James Cook University website-
<https://secure.jcu.edu.au/app/studyfinder/?subject=BA3000#content>

DISCUSSION WITH THE ARTS EDGE COORDINATOR

In 2016, the unit of study was restructured in response to feedback from students. The coordinator commented that the changes had done much to alter the poor perception of the unit developed over time with mature age students. The key issue was the focus on developing career skills. The rationale for change was that many of the students enrolled in the course already had an acceptable level of “job” skills and therefore felt the focus on employability skills superfluous to their needs. The restructure reduced the number of assessments and the unit was reorganised to accommodate two streams: research and career. The newly introduced research stream met the needs of the mature age students in a more direct way. The unit is available in the Townsville and Cairns campuses and via external modes of delivery. The Singapore campus also offers the unit and it is received favourably by the cohorts that have completed it on the Singapore campus.

The coordinator made the following observation:

The course is designed as a capstone for students to examine what they have done, identify gaps in their knowledge and to rectify these gaps before they leave; it was designed to help them build a professional identity. The annual showcase conference provides a way to identify what they have got from their degree, self-reflection, realising everything they have learnt, and how they are equipped with many skills that can be applied in the real world.

COMMENTARY

The unit has been running since 2012 under this name. Graduate qualities were included in 2012 - 2013 in addition to learning outcomes. The original version included lectures. There have been a number of changes in description over the years. The unit has also been the subject of academic papers. For example, a paper presented at ACEN in 2012 focused on the development of the core curriculum and capstone units (http://acen.edu.au/2012conference/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/117_Rounding-the-edge.pdf). The program has been described in an international project outlining the benefits of Arts and Humanities to the 21st century workplace <http://ah21cw.com/2014/12/on-the-edge-of-unemployment-and-the-liberal-arts-the-arts-edge-program-at-james-cook-university-in-queensland-australia/>. There are also several examples of student presentations on their learning outcomes available on the internet, e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkQCsu9zjzE>

The unit exemplifies the complex nature of attempting to provide a WIL experience in the BA. On one hand it can meet the needs of the students in a useful and potentially transformative way; on the other hand it can be met with rejection, from staff and students alike. Navigating these complexities is a difficult and time consuming exercise, one that requires careful acknowledgement of the different contexts of students and campuses.

OVERVIEW OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

3 years full time (part-time study options available)

Key features of the BA³

Kickstart your inspiring and flexible career at University of Melbourne with our Bachelor of Arts – it's one of Australia's most popular degrees. Ranked #1 in Australia and #18 in the world for English Language and Literature (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2016)

More than 30 areas of specialisation available, including languages, psychology, economics and media and communications

Teaching and research excellence from internationally renowned researchers and leading practitioners in their fields

Most popular degree in Victoria (Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre 2015)

- **Flexibility**
Our innovative and flexible curriculum lets you tailor your degree to match your interests and career goals.
- **Choice**
Choose your areas of specialisation from more than 30 study areas, including languages, history, psychology, economics, and media and communications.
- **Diverse opportunities**
Access diverse career opportunities by gaining vital skills that are transferable across industries and professions, including communication, teamwork and research.
- **Aim higher**
By enrolling in one of Australia's most popular degrees, you will be surrounded by other high-achieving students from around the world, which will help you take on new challenges and push yourself to a higher level.
- **Global citizenship**
Develop an international perspective through cultural and language study, and enjoy opportunities to study overseas.

"MULT20010 - ARTS INTERNSHIP"⁴

This subject involves completion of an 80-100 hour work placement integrating academic learning, employability skills and attributes and an improved knowledge of organisations, workplace culture and career pathways. The placement is supplemented by pre- and post-placement classes, including a compulsory placement induction in Week 1 and compulsory pre-placement sessions in Weeks 2 & 3, designed to introduce workplace culture and strategies for developing, identifying and articulating employability skills and attributes and linking them to employer requirements. The placement should draw on specific discipline skills associated with the course of enrolment. Pre-placement seminars will also include career development and planning, self-assessment, reflexivity and professional skills.

³ Data accessed 19/10/2016 University of Melbourne <https://coursesearch.unimelb.edu.au/undergrad/1500-bachelor-of-arts>

⁴ Data accessed 19/10/2016 University of Melbourne website <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/view/current/MULT20010>

Students are responsible for identifying a suitable work placement, by Week 1 of semester, with support from Student Programs staff. In the semester prior to your placement you should attend Melbourne Careers Centre's employment preparation seminars and workshops and access other careers resources to help you to identify potential host organisations (<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/careers/>). You will need to commence your approaches to organisations at least 4 weeks before the placement. More information is available in the Subject Guide. Placements must be approved by the Coordinator. If you have problems finding a placement you should contact the subject co-ordinator.

On completion of the subject, students will have completed and reported on a course-related project in a workplace. They will also have enhanced employability skills including communication, interpersonal, analytical and problem-solving, organisational and time-management, and an understanding of career planning and professional development.

Learning outcomes

Students who complete this subject will:

- Illustrate a general understanding of the concepts and principles of career development planning theory and practice;
- Demonstrate an independent approach to learning and knowledge;
- Identify and articulate their knowledge and skills and apply them to relevant organisational contexts and work-settings;
- Produce original work in an appropriate format which demonstrates analytical, research and problem-solving skills;
- Reflect on the process and output of a work project/placement to articulate their academic and career development learning from the experience;
- Contribute as a member of a team.

Assessment

- 1,500 word career case-study based on an interview with an employee in your placement organisation 30% due mid-semester;
- Team-focused activity: 20 minute group presentation on a work-related or discipline specific topic 20% (to be presented in weeks 10, 11 & 12 classes);
- 2,000 word reflective essay based on classroom and placement learnings 50% due at the start of the examination period;
- 80 hours of satisfactory work placement (hurdle);
- 100% attendance at seminars (hurdle).

Other internship like subjects...

- *MULT30019 Arts Internship* -This subject involves completion of an 80-100 hour work placement integrating academic learning, employability skills and attributes and an improved knowledge of organisations, workplace culture and career pathways. The placement is supplemented...
- *MULT20012 Community Volunteering for Change*-This subject will provide an understanding of the community sector and community development through a substantial volunteer experience. The aims of this subject are to enable you to undertake and report on a community-based project, gain...
- *MULT30020 Community Volunteering for Change*-This subject will provide an understanding of the community sector and community development through a substantial volunteer experience. The aims of this subject are to enable you to undertake and report on a community-based project, gain...
- *MULT20014 Community Volunteering for Change-Global*-This subject will provide an understanding of the community sector and community development through a substantial volunteer experience

abroad. Students have the opportunity to undertake a placement of 80-100 hours with a not-for-profit...

- *MULT30021 Community Volunteering for Change-Global*-This subject will provide an understanding of the community sector and community development through a substantial volunteer experience abroad. Students have the opportunity to undertake a placement of 80-100 hours with a not-for-profit...
- *POLS30001 Parliamentary Internship*-In this subject students will have active experience working for a Member of the Victorian Parliament (MP) in the settings of Parliament, the Parliamentary Library, Parliamentary Offices and electorate offices. Each student will complete a...
- *POLS30002 Public Affairs Internship (Int. Students)*-In this subject students will have active experience working for a senior person with a policy-making and / or management role in the organisation in which they are placed. The central task will be to complete a policy report or professional...
- *POLS30003 Public Affairs Internship*-In this subject students will have active experience working for a senior person with a policy-making and / or management role in the organisation in which they are placed. The central task will be to complete a policy report or professional...
- *SOCI30005 Sociology Internship*

DISCUSSION WITH THE FACULTY OF ARTS WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING COORDINATOR

The academic responsible for the WIL processes and course development/monitoring was highly experienced and had been developing these programs over a number of years. She provided insight into the different outcomes of the programs across the institution. The coordinator also made transparent the amount of work required to ensure a positive outcome for all students. She suggested that that one to one interaction with students at an institutional level was a significant part of providing a successful experience for the student. She also suggested that more regular contact with students on a needs basis was also sometimes necessary. Following this up the coordinator spoke of the need to develop the skills to “*negotiate the real world of work*”, to “*understand that adjustments have to be made to navigate this world*” and to “*understand how to analyse organisational structures and the people that inhabit them, alongside of analysing self and one’s place in the world*”. The units of work were designed to achieve these aims by:

- Including a number of planned interactions between students and staff over the course of the WIL experience. The coordinator inserted contact points into the process at the beginning, the middle and the end of the experience.
- Providing a selection of different opportunities for students to access.
- Expanding the options for WIL each year to accommodate the needs of a diverse student population.

She gave an example of a recently developed pilot project being implemented in Semester 2, 2016 called *30001 Industry Projects*. It is designed to give students a WIL experience within the university. The projects are campus based but driven by industry needs. Small groups of students work together on real life issues with industry partners. The project work models “real” work, professionalising the notion of group work in a work situation. The student partners have to shape a proposal and concept and then present it to the industry partners. If they are successful they then move forward and complete the project. As the program was in its early stages there were no specific outcomes yet, however initial reports had been positive, particularly for students who struggled to look outside the institution for work like experiences.

When asked to articulate what WIL in the BA might provide or what the BA might look like articulated in WIL the coordinator’s perspective was that BA students are exposed to an open structure whereas traditional WIL opportunities are highly structured and organised experiences. Placing a traditional (or non-traditional) WIL experience into a less structured BA experience opens students up to new ways of thinking. This exposure allows students to develop the capability to translate the learning from their HASS experiences into multiple

professional opportunities. What she went on to say was that the humanities enabled students to see that there were different ways to accomplish the same outcome and that BA graduates have to be more alert to the possibilities and be flexible when understanding the world of work.

COMMENTARY

An institutional (or perhaps faculty) commitment to providing a WIL experience to students is indicated by:

- The number of opportunities and diversity of experiences available;
- The presence of a named coordinator of processes based within the faculty;
- Continuing improvement of the processes as evidenced by the pilot project designed to deliver a WIL experience in an innovative way to a more diverse group of students; and
- The espoused view of the need to be flexible and fluid in order to make adjustments quickly in response to students needs.

OVERVIEW OF BACHELOR OF ARTS⁵

The Bachelor of Arts offers students a unique range of interdisciplinary skills. Students develop their capacity for critical analysis, creativity and problem-solving, as well as a thorough understanding of the relationship between theory, research and practice. They choose from a wide range of major study areas, equipping them for diverse careers in areas such as media, management, finance, education and government.

A key component of the degree is the Grand Challenges final-year project. Conducted in collaboration with the Swinburne Institute of Social Research, the project fosters team-based research activity and challenges students to go beyond the comfort of discipline boundaries. Students develop valuable collaborative skills as they research innovative solutions to contemporary issues facing society. The course offers students lifelong learning skills with a global and multidisciplinary awareness.

OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE BA PROGRAM – BACHELOR OF ARTS (PROFESSIONAL)⁶

The Bachelor of Arts (Professional) is designed to foster students' individual development and allow them to develop research and analytical skills that can be applied to a range of situations. Arts students learn how to gather, synthesise and assess information, how to conceptualise issues and how to express themselves effectively, both orally and in writing. It is also intended to develop interdisciplinarity and collaboration.

The professional industry-linked component provides students with the opportunity to gain awareness, experience, and links to industry, whilst enabling them to apply their knowledge, techniques and skills to solve industry-related problems. This option is intended for students who wish to focus on a particular area of their career or consultancy.

EXTRACT DESCRIBING “ARTS30001- THE GRAND CHALLENGES”⁷

Aims and objectives

The Grand Challenges, which focusses on some of the most important challenges facing humanity in the 21st Century, aims to provide Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of International Studies students with:

⁵ Data accessed 19/10/2016 Swinburne University website
<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/course/bachelor-of-arts/>

⁶ Data accessed 19/10/2016 Swinburne University website
<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/course/bachelor-of-arts-professional/>

⁷ Data accessed 19/10/2016 Swinburne University website
<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/courses/units/The-Grand-Challenges-ART30001/local>

- *A distinctive learning experience, offering students the opportunity to work with other students and academic staff across a range of humanities and social science disciplines, on a project responding to one of the major social, cultural and economic challenges of the 21st century*
- *Skills and demonstrated capability in interdisciplinary, project-based analysis and problem-solving*
- *Skills and demonstrated capability in teamwork*
- *Skills and demonstrated capability in communicating scholarship and knowledge across disciplines and to a wider audience.*

After successfully completing this unit, students will be able to:

1. *Systematically review, critically evaluate, and apply research from a variety of sources to inform students' knowledge and conceptual understandings in an interdisciplinary humanities and social sciences context*
2. *Formulate and synthesise arguments that are fit for purpose and demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and evidence in an interdisciplinary humanities and social science context*
3. *Generate creative solutions to complex problems in the humanities and social sciences*
4. *Appraise, integrate and apply theoretical principles in a collaborative, interdisciplinary context*
5. *Apply knowledge and skills with responsibility and accountability for students' own learning and practice, individually and in collaboration with others*
6. *Interpret and communicate ideas, problems and arguments in creative ways suitable to a range of audiences using a variety of media.*

Assessment

1. *Individual Action Plan (10%)*
2. *Group Presentation (10%)*
3. *Individual Reflection (20%)*
4. *Final Report (40%)*
5. *Individual Reflection (20%)*

DISCUSSION WITH THE DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

In 2015, Swinburne redesigned their BA to encompass both the Grand Challenges capstone unit and the new Professional BA. The Grand Challenges is a double unit capstone which involves students working in a multidisciplinary team of about five people. The teams are asked to research in an area that is perceived as being a “grand challenge” in society. The unit of study is being facilitated through the Swinburne Institute for Social Research which ensures a multidisciplinary research focus. The unit was run in 2016 for the first time as a pilot project with a small number of students. The challenge focus was “housing”. This focus could be aligned with any aspect of housing, for example, homelessness, housing affordability and access or urban renewal. This focus works particularly well in Melbourne. This initial focus can be extended to other urban challenges like transport and migration during future iterations of the unit. The focus could turn to the following critical global problems and engagement processes in the 21st century such as sustainable cities, the borderless world, digital transformations and the future of democracy

Each team works with a mentor to develop a research question, scope and brief. Each team develops a series of solutions and insight into the problem. They then write a report and present the project back to the community and stakeholders. In the future the coordinators hope to bring outside stakeholders in to provide some of the challenges.

The intended outcomes include:

- industry and end-user perspectives on the grand challenges;
- theoretical and conceptual resources for engaging with the challenges; and
- techniques for interdisciplinary collaboration.

While the pilot project is just drawing to a close, anecdotally there has been some very positive feedback from both staff and students. Over the next few years, the project will grow with potentially 300 students enrolled in the unit in 2018. The staff are looking forward to the challenge of this number of students by placing a number of strategies in place. A series of resources are currently being developed and these will be online and accessible at all times. The unit development process is a formative one which feeds back into the next stage, essentially learning as it goes.

COMMENTARY

There are a number of issues being faced in the implementation of the capstone. The instability of staffing arrangements is perceived as a key concern as the research institute is being disestablished and staff are being redeployed into other departments in the school. Having access to these key people is seen as a strength of the Grand Challenges unit and finding appropriate alternatives may be problematic. The dean was unsure as to what might occur in the future as the staff in their current institute roles had provided teaching support across the unit of study. A further challenge is to shift the process online to cater for the increasing number of students enrolled in the course along with the provision of mentors to facilitate the process.

OVERVIEW OF BACHELOR OF ARTS⁸

Arts graduates are highly sought after by employers because arts courses ensure you develop strong capabilities in a range of areas such as problem solving, research, creative thinking and communication – skills essential for success in the 21st century workplace. Macquarie's Bachelor of Arts allows you to turn your passion into a career by exploring your interests in depth and honing your skills and knowledge through internships, practical application and expert teaching.

Key features:

- No other course at Macquarie offers as much flexibility and as wide a range of units as the Bachelor of Arts.
- You'll be taught by active researchers, published academics, and award-winning teachers and industry professionals.
- You'll have the opportunity to connect with employers and communities via internships, work-integrated learning opportunities and study abroad experiences.

EXTRACT DESCRIBING "FOAR300 - PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ARTS"⁹

This unit provides an opportunity for students to engage with the community through a variety of activities. Examples include individual and group activities with public-sector agencies, professional bodies, companies, industry partners and not-for-profit organisations. The unit promotes learning through participation with community partners as well as the development of graduate capabilities and professional skills. Students will be encouraged to apply theory from their degree to real-world situations. Student learning will be facilitated through orientation and induction activities, scaffolding for skill and knowledge development and debriefing; supported throughout by rigorous academic assessment. The unit will have particular emphasis on social inclusion and focus on Indigenous issues, cross-cultural development, social justice, poverty reduction, human rights and gender equity.

The unit is open for enrolment to students from all disciplines; however enrolment is contingent on an appropriate PACE activity being determined in advance, in consultation with Faculty PACE staff. Due to the nature of this unit it is important to contact the Arts PACE team four weeks prior to the commencement of Session 1 or Session 2. Students wishing to enrol in this unit should lodge an online enquiry via ask.mq.edu.au prior to submission of a waiver application to request further information.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Critically reflect on the development of their Graduate Capabilities as well as their overall experience in the unit: Participation and Community Engagement in Arts.
2. Apply to their future career paths an understanding of core concepts such as ethics, career skills, and social inclusion/inter-cultural understanding as well as broad themes relevant to Arts such as the role of the humanities, arts and social sciences in community engagement.

⁸ Data accessed 19/10/2016 Macquarie University website
<http://courses.mq.edu.au/2016/undergraduate/degree/bachelor-of-arts>

⁹ Data accessed 24/10/2016 Macquarie University website
http://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/57970/unit_guide

3. *Understand the ways in which they have, through engagement with the community, actively contributed to the wellbeing of people and the planet.*
4. *Recognise how their engagement with the community has facilitated mutually beneficial opportunities for the generation and the sharing of knowledge.*
5. *Apply the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom to real life situations such as those experienced in their activity.*
6. *Have an enhanced sense of ways in which they have more broadly contributed to a socially inclusive and sustainable society through FOAR300 as a whole.*

Activities

- *Workshops: 9 x2 hour workshops = 18 hours*
- *Online modules: 4x2 hour modules = 8 hours*
- *PACE Activity = 50 hours (minimum)*
- *Assignments = 50 hours*
- *Class preparation and reflection = 24 hours*
- *Total = 150 hours*

DISCUSSION WITH THE ACADEMIC DIRECTOR OF PACE FROM THE FACULTY OF ARTS

“FOAR300 Participation and Community Engagement in Arts” is seen as a non-discipline specific unit which does not limit enrolment by anything other than maturity. Students have to be in their third year of study. There is no assumption of knowledge as students come from many different discipline backgrounds which is one of the first challenges of providing this kind of experience. The unit has to be broad enough to cover all of these different disciplines and still provide an interesting and useful experience.

There has been a growing enrolment in PACE. PACE is a compulsory part of the program. In 2015, 1500 students were enrolled in a PACE unit. In 2016, there will be approximately 2000 and then in 2017 it will be 2500. All these students can't be accommodated in one unit and to meet this challenge the PACE people have been working with staff within the disciplines to source units that already provide a practical component or alternatively help them develop a new unit. The FOAR300 unit is external to this development process within the faculties. It provides a more general non-disciplinary specific experience across the Arts faculty. It currently sits as an additional option or as an elective within some of the programs.

The compulsory nature of PACE will only become a very real issue in 2018 as students enrolled this year come up against it as a hurdle. This is the first year Macquarie will have to manage the compulsory nature of the program with students who may not be interested and/or willing. To mitigate this potential challenge the institution is developing units of study that will be embedded at the 100 and 200 levels through to the capstone/PACE unit at 300 level. This will provide essential scaffolding for students in the build up to their final year PACE unit. For example, the developed 100 level unit is about the student knowing who they are, what skills they have and what skills they will need to go further in their degree.

The director suggested the program was:

“How to be an Arts student 101”. Which includes asking questions like where are you headed with this? What sorts of things will you need to do in the next three years to get your degree? In the 200 level we have built in a lot more scaffolding around reflection and around getting students thinking about what sort of skills they will want to develop in their PACE unit which will be coming up in their next year. What sort of work do you like doing etc?

While the 200 and 300 units are still in development it appears they will provide the student with a scaffolded experience that leads them through to having the ability to communicate their own employability. How do you explain to an employer what you have done? How do you connect up the different experiences along the way and then articulate them? The director suggested that this was one of the major challenges for BA students in particular. She comments: “They know a lot of things, however they have a hard time connecting them with things that are happening outside of the university and packaging them for a future employer.” She also suggests that part of the solution is to make what is implicit, explicit for the students.

The response to the unit has been very positive. The director quoted student evaluation responses which included the “*applicability of the things they have learnt*” and more specifically the “*development of reflective practice*”. The director also suggested that the skills developed also had applicability beyond the unit itself.

COMMENTARY

As FOAR300 sits outside of any discipline, it also operates as an “umbrella” unit allowing the students to draw together the different threads of their degree. This is a complex task. There is some evidence to suggest that the structure of the unit and the tasks involved assist in this process. There appears to be potential here for the individual student to develop an understanding of their skill sets and subsequently be able to begin the translation of these across multiple career paths.

This kind of understanding does not necessarily occur in a vacuum and what comes across strongly is the interaction between the facilitator and the students and the thinking that is apparent as they workshop ideas together. The director defines it as a “more active type of learning” which relies less on transmission of knowledge and more on this interaction between the student and teacher and also the peer interaction.

CLOSING COMMENTS

There appears to be a movement across these and other institutions to provide a series of distinctive experiences for students to develop an explicit understanding of the skill sets they have developed during their BA degree and to be able to articulate these in their search for employment on graduation. The potential for these experiences to be transformative for the student is becoming more readily recognised and thus there appears to be an increase in institutional support on a number of levels. This is evidenced by:

- The sometimes compulsory nature of the experiences on offer,
- The increase in the number of WIL organisations embedded at the institutional and faculty level,
- The increase in investment from institutions in both human and financial resources,
- The focus on curriculum transformation that embeds student understanding of the core BA skillsets being developed at the heart of the program.