

# Developing graduate careers from workplace experiences

for students, industry, the professions, and the University



## Career Development Learning (CDL)

Career development links students, industry, the professions and universities.

**It is a lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving future for both private and public good<sup>1</sup>**

### Key points

Career Development Learning:

- contextualises work related learning experiences (both inside and outside University)- assisting students to develop knowledge, attributes, understanding and awareness of the world of work, with the potential for increased workplace productivity;
- links workplace experiences with students' career aspirations, benefiting industry and the professions by providing an avenue to promote themselves as employers of choice;
- benefits industry and the professions when it is embedded within their workplace programs –realising improved outcomes for students and staff of the host organisation;
- makes a significant contribution to workplace experiences when good practice underpins the embedding of CDL- before, during and after the experience; and
- assists students in planning for life after University.

“CDL puts students at the heart of the learning process”<sup>2</sup>

“The European Union has made career guidance the centrepiece of new skills for new jobs”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OECD, 2004; Patton & McMahon, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Professor Tony Watts, ALTC Symposium, Melbourne, June 2008  
<sup>3</sup> Director General Education and Culture, EU, Big Skills Conference, Sydney March 2009

The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council to undertake this scoping study which was titled “Career Development Learning: maximising the contribution of Work Integrated Learning to the student experience”

# Bringing clarity and understanding to workplace experiences

Professor Tony Watts notes “Career Development Learning significantly enhances the quality of Work-integrated Learning in its various formats, placing the student more actively at the heart of such programs, and adding value to their quality, by helping students to be career ready (in terms of lifelong and life wide transitions), as well as work ready”.

Career Development Learning connects students workplace experiences (both inside and outside University), brings clarity to an individual's career plans, can give greater insight to the curriculum and builds on a student's university academic experiences. This can increase student retention, student satisfaction with their course and overall university experience. In addition this can lead to improved graduate employment outcomes and contribute to graduate productivity when first entering the workforce.

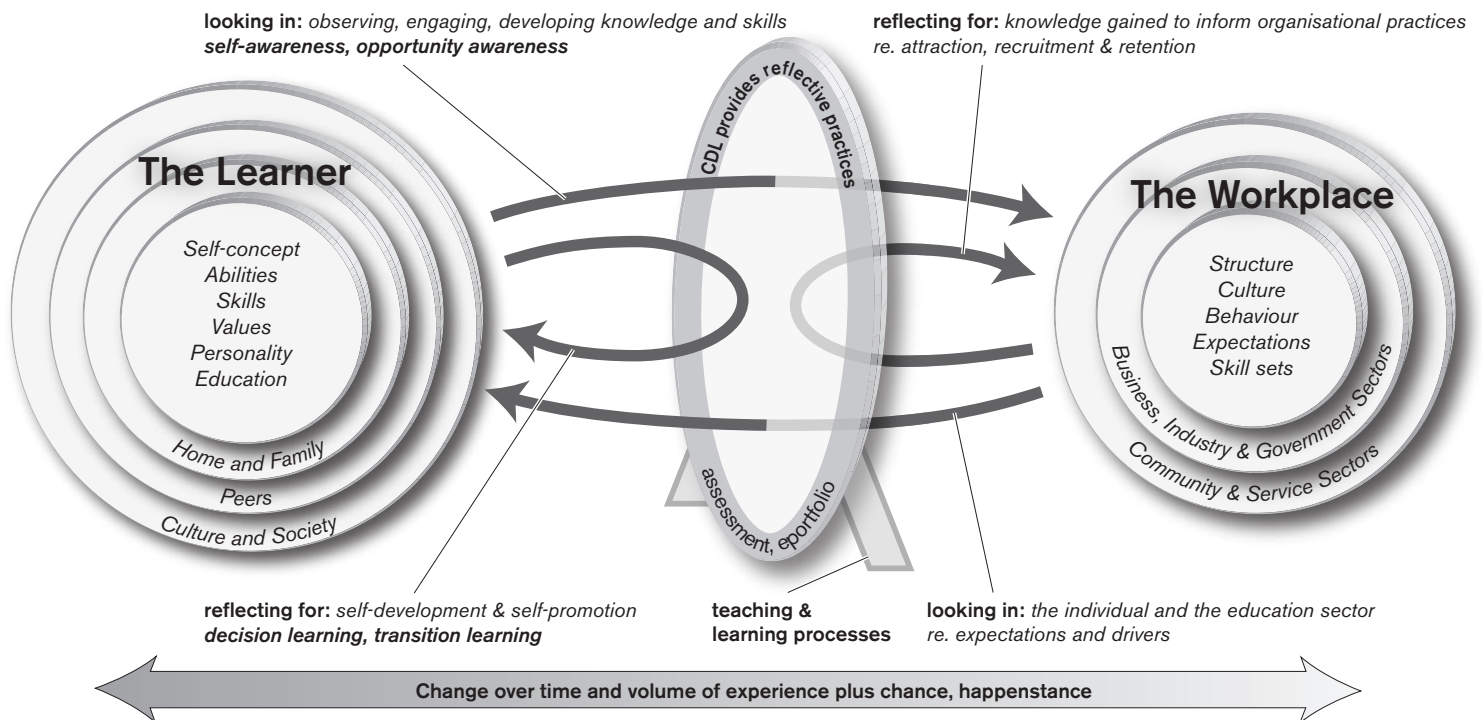
A critical success factor in the workplace experience being transformational relates to the underpinning reflective practices being designed around Career Development Learning. Career Development Learning becomes the process which brings clarity and understanding to workplace experiences. The metaphor of the two-way mirror embodies the unique capacity which Career Development Learning brings to the experience and was derived from the national symposium, staged as part of the action research process.

All Australian universities provide **work-integrated learning**<sup>1</sup> in many of their academic programs. Whether this is an Internship, work experience, practicum, practical placement, industry based project, vacation work or mentoring; this **work related learning** involves students applying their discipline knowledge and reflecting upon the experience, learning about themselves and the world-of-work in order to empower them to enter and succeed in the world-of-work and their wider lives.

**Work related learning** can occur in activities inside and outside of the curriculum and outside of the University itself through students own part time employment, vacation work, voluntary work, work experience and extra curricular activities. Students learn from their work related learning experiences – wherever they occur. (Moreland, 2005)

<sup>1</sup> Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum (Patrick, C-J. et al., 2009). It is important to note that whilst the term Work Integrated Learning is understood within Higher Education the term is not widely understood amongst students, professional associations and industry.

## CDL & WiL: Looking from both sides of the two-way mirror



# Benefits

Career Development Learning benefits all stakeholders.

## For Industry and the Professions

- providing for the present needs for work ready graduates
- building relationships with Universities
- becoming an industry and employer of choice
- assisting in attraction/retention
- improving the learning experiences of students

## For students

- improved educational experience
- greater connections with the world of work
- greater understanding of themselves in relation to their career development, their academic studies and transition to employment
- building the individual's workforce preparation and adaptability

## For Government

- improved social inclusion and educational participation
- improved transitions from university to the labour market and help to strengthen links between university and the labour market
- enhanced workplace productivity
- improved workforce adaptability and sustainability

# Good practice

Good practice is central to effective implementation.

For all participants to benefit from the implementation of Career Development Learning in the workplace experience – university staff, host employers and students should:

- expect mutual benefit;
- understand the key objectives for both stakeholders and participants;
- understand their respective roles and responsibilities;
- have clearly articulated expectations; and
- have a shared understanding of Career Development Learning and Work integrated learning, and the associated terminology.

## Six Principles

1. Flexible partnerships support effective career development learning.
2. Workplace experiences can provide genuine career development learning opportunities for all students. Multiple experiences and contexts enrich this learning.
3. Career Development Learning is student centred, and designed to actively engage students in the workplace experience.
4. Career development learning supports quality student centred learning opportunities across all aspects of students' lives.
5. Universities encourage students' career development and workplace learning by supporting their capacity to systematically reflect, record and articulate the acquired skills and experience.
6. Quality assurance across the experience contributes to better outcomes.

In essence we are talking about...  
the right graduate...in the right role...  
in the right organisation...in the right  
industry...for the right reasons...  
leading to more satisfied and productive  
workers – the link to 'private and public  
good'.  
(OECD, 2004)

"Most graduate employers see this as  
a no brainer...it has to be a win for the  
uni, the students and the employers"  
Ben Reeves,  
Chief Executive of the Australian  
Association of Graduate Employers

"From a business perspective,  
encouraging partnerships with the  
business community will extend the  
resources available for learning in the  
higher education sector" Further, it will  
provide benefits to business through  
outcomes based on "quality constructed  
learning experiences for students"  
Mary Hicks,  
Australian Chamber of Commerce and  
Industry

## Final comment

Career Development Learning assists students to prepare for their life after University. By utilising Career Development Learning to connect workplace and academic experiences, we assist students to:

- develop a greater understanding of themselves;
- understand the employment opportunities available; and
- prepare their transition strategies to employment or further study.

This also provides insights for industry and the professions into the university and its students, thereby enriching processes related to attraction, recruitment, retention and workplace productivity.

## More information and tools to help you

The project website is the focal point for further information [nagcas.org.au/ALTC](http://nagcas.org.au/ALTC)

Outcomes from this project include:

- an eManual where case studies, tools and resources and further information can be sourced from the project website. This includes resources and tools for universities and business and industry.
- a Full Report on the Scoping Study includes an Executive Summary, the academic literature, the research methods and outcomes. The Report is located at the project website (downloadable PDF)
- the Project Website also includes background papers for the National Symposium as well as the presentations from Symposium Leaders.

## Next steps

1. Visit the eManual website for case studies, tools and resources
2. Read the background papers – from [nagcas.org.au/ALTC](http://nagcas.org.au/ALTC)
3. Speak to colleagues across industry, academic staff, teaching and learning staff and careers service staff, to investigate the integration of Career Development Learning into WIL activities at your local university.
4. Speak to staff in your campus Careers Service for links, facilitation, advice, assistance and additional resources.

## Who supported this project

The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council to undertake this scoping study which was titled “Career Development Learning: maximising the contribution of Work Integrated Learning to the student experience”. The Project Team represented 5 Australian universities – led by the University of Wollongong – with Flinders University, Monash University, RMIT, and the University of Southern Queensland.



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