

Ako ā-Mahi

Student Guide to Work-Integrated Learning



Ako ā-Mahi
Work-Integrated Learning

This guide is designed to support you through your Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) placement, helping you maximize the experience.



Key Terms:

- WIL: Abbreviation for Work-Integrated Learning. This is an umbrella term to describe learning experiences which integrate students' academic knowledge with authentic work-based practice.
- Host or Partner Organisation: The place where the student will do their WIL experience, like a company or nonprofit.
- Host or Partner Supervisor Contact: Main point of contact at the host organization.
- UC Contact: The person from UC who is your main point of contact for your WIL experience.

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) fosters a collaborative partnership between students, workplaces, and tertiary institutions. Participating in WIL offers students several valuable benefits:

- Connect academic learning with professional practice
- Transform classroom knowledge into real-world skills
- Identify personal strengths and areas for improvement
- Engage with professional environments and networks
- Contribute meaningfully to workplace projects

It also cultivates essential personal and professional competencies, including:

- Communication abilities
- Self-confidence
- Customer relationship management
- Industry and business understanding
- Independent working skills
- Professional networking
- Professional ethical standards

Before WIL

- Speak with a Student Advisor to see if WIL can fit into your degree structure
- Check application deadlines and requirements
- Prepare necessary information (e.g. your CV) to send to your UC Contact
- Discuss any special requirements or support needed

Finding your WIL opportunity

It is important to understand who is responsible for finding the WIL opportunity for the course you are taking. You are encouraged to discuss your placement with your whānau and support people, including support provided on campus. Be sure to check what the requirements are and if there is anything specific you need to consider. There are helpful resources available through *Te Rōpū Rapuara | UC Careers* team about job hunting which can also be applied to WIL opportunities.



Preparation:

- Provide necessary information for placement.
- Seek cultural support if needed.
- Discuss any specific requirements with UC and Host Organization.

Course Considerations:

- Understand course requirements and commitments.
- Consider travel expectations and costs.
- Be aware of StudyLink support and transport options.
- Be prepared for a different learning environment.

During WIL

Starting a placement, internship or project is an exciting and sometimes stressful experience for many students. It will allow you to develop many personal and professional skills, as well as opportunities to develop your professional identity.

Key things to consider:

- Uphold UC's core values.
- Maintain professionalism, honesty, and integrity.
- Respect cultural diversity and workplace policies.

Communication

Always communicate appropriately and in a timely manner with the University, Host Contact and your WIL Coordinator, if required. There will be different expectations depending on your course.

Communication encompasses a broad spectrum of interactions including:

- Verbal communication (one-on-one discussions, meetings, group forums, telephone conversations)
- Written communication (emails, letters, reports)
- Active listening
- Adapt your communication style to different audiences
- Treat all written communication, including emails, as formal documents



Seek opportunities to:

- Engage in conversations
- Speak publicly
- Deliver formal presentations

Don't hesitate to seek guidance when you're uncertain about your communication capabilities – view this as a positive step towards personal and professional development.

Confidence

Adjusting to the workplace and understanding the norms and expectations of the organisation and industry take time. Try and be patient and enjoy the experience. Relax, learn, and view questions as a strength, not a weakness.

- Maintain an open-minded approach to new experiences and advice
- Reflect constructively on mistakes as opportunities for personal growth
- Be open to new ideas and ways of doing things
- Focus on your continuous improvement rather than dwelling on knowledge gaps

Networking

Relationship building is crucial across industries. Developing a strong professional network is the most effective strategy for maximizing future job opportunities.

Completing a WIL experience gives you a fantastic opportunity to start building your own professional network.

Where possible make the most of opportunities to attend meetings, events and talk to others at the organisation.

Talk to those around you about their careers journey – people are usually happy to share their story.

Present yourself professionally and authentically.

Professional Ethics

Professional ethics involves respecting an organization's culture while maintaining personal integrity. At a minimum, employers expect employees to demonstrate:

- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Courtesy
- Conscientiousness

Personal Accountability

- Be reliable: Do what you commit to doing
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Acknowledge mistakes honestly
- Maintain punctuality
- Dress appropriately for the workplace environment

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- Understand workplace expectations and culture.
- Follow all instructions of the host, including induction, training and H&S reporting requirements. Will you undertake a workplace induction?
- How do you report an incident in the workplace?
- It is mandatory for students to report any H&S incident during WIL into Assura
- What are the emergency procedures?
- How do you manage the risks?
- Only use plant machinery or equipment that you have been trained on and are competent to use.
- Seek support if needed from UC or other campus services.

When things aren't going as planned

If something happens, or you have a concern that something doesn't feel right, let someone know. If you feel threatened, in danger or an emergency has occurred, always call 111.

Absences: Life happens, things come up, sickness occurs. If you are unwell or have an emergency or cannot attend your placement for any reason be sure you contact your Host Contact or UC Contact.

Contacts:

- Your Host or Partner Contact – Is there someone else you feel comfortable and can trust to talk with at the Host Organisation?
- Your UC Contact - If you don't feel you are able to speak with someone within the organisation, that's ok. Have a chat with staff members involved in your course. Their contact details should be on LEARN including their office location.
- Ako ā-Mahi | Work-Integrated Learning – If you would like to raise an issue through another avenue, you are able to talk with Ako ā-Mahi | Work-Integrated Learning. Email akoamahi@canterbury.ac.nz and they will arrange a time to speak with you.
- UC Report It – UC has additional options to make an informal anonymous report, or formal complaint. Details can be found here: <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/report-it/>
- UC Security - 03 364 2111 or 0800 823 637 or view the emergency plan



After WIL

Upon completion of your WIL experience, you will have learnt so much, so it's a great time to wrap things up well, which will help with your future career development.

Transform workplace experiences into meaningful learning through two key approaches:

- Reflection in action (during the experience)
- Reflection on action (after the experience)
- Ask for feedback – this will help you understand how others perceive you. Be open to constructive feedback and see this as an opportunity for further personal growth
- Wrap things up – do you need to hand anything over? Have you finished everything you were able to?

- References – ask your host if they would be happy to provide a reference for you or act as a referee.
- LinkedIn – build your professional network based on your new connections.
- Te Rōpū Rapaura | UC Careers have some great resources to help with preparing or updating your CV.

Support and helpful links

UC Careers for students | University of Canterbury

Student Services Hub | University of Canterbury

UC support services | University of Canterbury

UC Māori | University of Canterbury

NZUni Talent – our students, your future

Tertiary Students | Metro Christchurch

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Who can I talk to if I don't feel comfortable on my placement?

Start by talking to your UC Contact for your WIL placement – this could be your academic supervisor, placement coordinator, or clinical educator.

What do I do if I'm asked to do something outside of the scope of my internship/ placement?

If the task aligns with your goals and learning outcomes, it can be beneficial. However, if it doesn't align or makes you uncomfortable, it's okay to say no or check with your UC Contact first.

What do I do if I am being bullied or are experiencing harassment on my placement?

Talk to your UC Contact – they are there to support you. Bullying, harassment, or discrimination is never acceptable.

I am feeling overwhelmed while on placement – is this normal? What can I do?

It's normal to feel a range of emotions during a placement, from excitement to feeling overwhelmed. This environment is different from typical courses, as you'll be meeting new people, learning workplace norms, and balancing tasks and expectations. Additionally, managing other priorities like courses, work, and personal life can contribute to these feelings

TIP: Plan your upcoming week by listing all your required activities (placement, work, courses, etc.) and make sure to set aside time for activities you enjoy and that help you relax. Effective time management is crucial to navigate this period successfully

What do I wear?

This will depend on the organisation and type of work. For example – if you placement involves outdoor education, a singlet and shorts might be suitable, while a corporate or clinic setting may require long pants and a shirt, jersey, or blazer. Always consider health and safety; for example, wear covered-toe shoes if working with machinery or food. If unsure, dress more formally on your first day or consult your Host Contact.

Can I apply for special consideration?

Yes, you can. Speak with your course coordinator if your WIL experience is impacted. More information is available at www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-related-topics/special-consideration

Can I continue working at my placement?

This depends on the placement and organisation. Discuss with your Host Contact if you wish to continue. If possible, clarify whether it will be paid or volunteer work. If not, seek feedback to understand why – a “no” now doesn't mean forever.



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W: www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/other-study-options/work-integrated-learning

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