

IN-WORK

Methodological guidelines to design, develop and implement work-integrated learning activities (D.2.2)

2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000087184



What will you find in this document?

This guide represents a comprehensive set of methodological guidelines designed to effectively guide the process of designing, developing, and implementing work-integrated learning activities (WIL) for students with special needs and disabilities. Throughout the document, you will encounter three symbols.



This first symbol represents tips that can assist you in understanding and applying concepts and strategies.



This second symbol summarizes stories drawn from reality and from our practical experience. We have included these stories to help you visualize the guide's content. Please, note that names and locations have been modified from reality and adapted for illustrative purposes in the story.



This third symbol represents tools you are free to use and adapt to the needs of your projects. You only need to reference the source:

In-Work Project (2023). Methodological guidelines to design, develop and implement work-integrated learning activities (D2.2). Inclusive Communities at Work (2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000087184). Retrieved from <https://www.in-work-project.eu/>

Enjoy the reading and enjoy the learning!

Table of Contents

1. Project Description - Inclusive Communities at Work (IN-WORK)	6
2. Introduction	7
3. Understanding Work-Integrated Learning for Students with Special Needs	9
3.1. WIL Educational Approach	9
3.2. Inclusive Higher Education: Ensuring Equal Opportunities	14
3. Work-integrated Learning Activities	20
4. Guiding Students with Special Needs in WIL	26
4.1. Before the WIL project	26
4.2. During the WIL project	28
4.3. After the WIL project	30
5. Support Measures during the WIL	32
6. Cooperation with the Workplace	33
7. Supporting the Workplace in Developing a more Inclusive Working Culture	35
8. Conclusions	36
9. References	38
Annex I – A roadmap for WIL implementation	41
Annex II – WIL activities definitions	46
Annex III – Template checklist –Before WIL	49
Annex IV – Template checklist –During WIL	50
Annex V – Template checklist –After WIL	51

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Examples of work-integrated learning activities	11
Figure 2. A typology of activity: exploration of contemporary WIL research and themes	20
Figure 3. Steps to follow before the wil project	27
Figure 4. Thinks to do during the work-integrated learning project	28
Figure 5. Things to do after the work-integrated learning project	30
Figure 6. Cooperation with the workplace	33
Figure 7. Strategies to support a more inclusive working culture	35

1. Project Description - Inclusive Communities at Work (IN-WORK)

The IN-WORK project aims to explore the university's role in fostering an inclusive culture. This takes place by developing and testing an intervention model that emphasizes the relationships between the university and its external environment while actively engaging relevant stakeholders. This project adopts the work-integrated learning approach, encompassing work-based learning such as internships and traineeships, to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for individuals with special needs within the realm of work. The project's activities take place both within and outside the university setting. Within the university, the goal is to encourage the inclusive use of work-integrated learning pedagogies by educators, utilizing online technologies as well. The project seeks to promote an inclusive culture beyond university, by involving businesses in the design and development of learning experiences. The objectives of the project are the following:

- Strengthen community ties by pursuing short-term objectives like co-designing learning experiences and medium-term goals such as promoting an inclusive culture.
- Support the idea that the university is an educational institution for everyone, not just students, by collaborating with stakeholders to co-design extracurricular activities. The university also serves as a host institution for traineeships for youths with special needs from the reference communities.
- Provide training for internal staff to design, develop, and implement work-integrated learning activities. This ensures the integration of these methods into the regular university curriculum, ensuring project sustainability.
- Validate the effectiveness of the approach and intervention model through real world testing during a regular semester of the academic year. This hands-on experience allows for adjustments and refinements as necessary to better cater to the needs of the target group in the future.



<https://www.in-work-project.eu>

2. Introduction

There is a shortage of skilled workers in Europe and, at the same time, people with higher education are excluded from the labour market because of illness, disability or other special reasons affecting their work. They have the ability and desire to work, but they might need special support in finding a suitable job, getting attached to the job and staying at the job. They will be able to make a valuable contribution to working life if the work is designed to meet their capabilities, for example by adapting work arrangements and working conditions. In recent years, it has also awakened to an understanding that many students in higher education need special support for several reasons. These students may need support in transition to working life as well. Inclusion and accessibility have played a significant role in developing universities to meet the needs of diverse learners.

IN-WORK Project develops inclusive and work-integrated learning in higher education institutions. It focuses on the students who need special support in their studies and will improve the study and employment opportunities of these students. The project will plan and implement pilot training for higher education teachers and staff to strengthen their ability to consider the opportunities offered by working life in learning and in guiding students into working life.

At the same time, the role of higher education as a bearer of social responsibility and a regional developer will be developed, because also cultural and contextual factors, and prejudices with a generalized resistance of the labour market prevent the employment of those in need of support. The project partners are Università degli Studi di Macerata from Italy (coordinator), Universitat Rovira i Virgili from Spain, European Universities Continuing Education Network from Belgium, and Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences from Finland.

This guide is intended for university teachers and other university staff who supervise students with special needs. The aim of the guide is to provide tools to utilize the work-integrated learning model in teaching work and thereby influence student's employment. The project is designed according to the principles of WIL. WIL is a university-business cooperation (Rampersad, 2015), which can be defined as a pedagogical practice that facilitates students' learning through connecting or integrating experiences across academic and workplace contexts (Billett, 2014). The second goal is to give teachers tools to influence the competence of working life partners in recruitment, orientation to work and support of diverse employees in changes in working life.



Further information materials

You can complement the contents of this guide with the documents you have below. These documents are part of the deliverables of the IN-WORK project. They will help you understand the challenges of the employment integration of young individuals with special needs and disabilities, as well as strategies for stakeholder engagement in WIL activities. Both documents are accessible through the project's website.

- In-Work Project (2023). Report on the Needs, resources, obstacles and opportunities for youths with special needs in insertion to work (D2.1). Inclusive Communities at Work (2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000087184). Available from <https://www.in-work-project.eu/>
- In-Work Project (2023). Methodological guidelines for stakeholder engagement (D2.3). Inclusive Communities at Work (2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000087184). Available from <https://www.in-work-project.eu/>

3. Understanding Work-Integrated Learning for Students with Special Needs

In this section, we will explore two crucial aspects of our discussion. First, we will "examine" the concept of WIL, delving into its theoretical foundations, principles, and diverse applications. Following that, we will shift our focus to students with special needs in higher education, where we will analyse their access, the support mechanisms available, and the measures taken to promote inclusivity and equity within the academic landscape.

3.1. WIL Educational Approach

WIL principles and theories

The theoretical approach of the IN-WORK project is based on the WIL methodology. WIL is an educational approach that combines academic learning (theory) and workplace practices in such a way that all parties (higher education institution, student, teacher, working life and the whole community) benefit from participation in the WIL programme. WIL refers to programs that link university students to a workplace related to their field of study by combining academic learning of a field of study with the practice of work. Perhaps the most significant part of the WIL method is that it is not a voluntary way of learning separate from studies, but it is integrated into the curriculum.

WIL is a multifaceted pedagogical approach that draws upon a range of theories to provide a rich and comprehensive learning experience. It integrates the principles of Experiential Learning, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Constructivism, Situated Learning Theory, Cooperative Education, Workplace Learning, and Problem-Based Learning:

1. Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). This theory states that reflective, self-directed and self-managed individuals can learn from practice and work (Kolb, 1984, Brookfield, 1996). Experiential learning theory emphasizes the importance of concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation in the learning process. WIL aligns with this theory by providing students with real-world experiences that encourage reflection and active engagement.
2. Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1996). This theory focuses on the role of social and contextual factors in career development. In the context of WIL, it emphasizes the influence of mentors, role models, and social support networks in helping students develop their careers.
3. Constructivism (Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories). Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes the importance of active learning and self-discovery (Piaget, 1950). In the context of WIL, this could mean providing students with opportunities to explore real-world problems and find their own solutions. This approach aligns with Piaget's belief that learning is an

active process where learners construct their own understanding based on their experiences. On the other hand, Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning (Vygotsky, 1978)... In a WIL context, this could involve collaborative projects where students work together to solve problems, guided by a mentor or teacher.

Both theories highlight the importance of active, experiential learning, which is a key component of WIL. However, they differ in their emphasis on individual discovery (Piaget) versus social interaction and guidance (Vygotsky). In WIL, students actively engage in their learning through hands-on experiences, which aligns with constructivist principles.

4. Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This theory posits that learning is situated within the context in which it occurs. In WIL, students learn within the context of a workplace or professional setting, which is highly congruent with this theory.
5. Cooperative Education (Schon, 1984). Schon's work on reflective practice is particularly relevant to WIL. Cooperative education programs often incorporate reflective practice, where students reflect on their experiences in the workplace and integrate them into their academic learning.
6. Workplace Learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2008). Marsick and Watkins have contributed to the understanding of workplace learning, emphasizing the importance of informal and experiential learning in the workplace. Their work is relevant to WIL, as it underscores the significance of practical experience in educational programs.
7. Problem-Based Learning (Barrows, 1980). Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogical approach where students work on real-world problems. PBL can be integrated into WIL programs, allowing students to address authentic workplace challenges.

These above theories collectively emphasize the importance of active engagement, social interaction, reflective practice, and real-world problem solving in the learning process. They highlight the value of learning within the context of a workplace or professional setting and underscore the significance of practical experience in educational programs. In WIL, students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active constructors of their own understanding. This approach aligns with the principles of these theories and provides a robust framework for enhancing students' employability and preparing them for the challenges of the modern workplace.

Blending work and learning

Ferguson and van der Laan (2020) conducted a study on the association between "work" and "learning". They describe the differences and similarities among work-related pedagogies, such as work-related learning, work-based learning, workplace learning, and work-integrated learning. Although there are overlaps among these concepts, the most important aspect is the union between the world of work and learning. The differentiating factor of WIL is that it seeks to improve

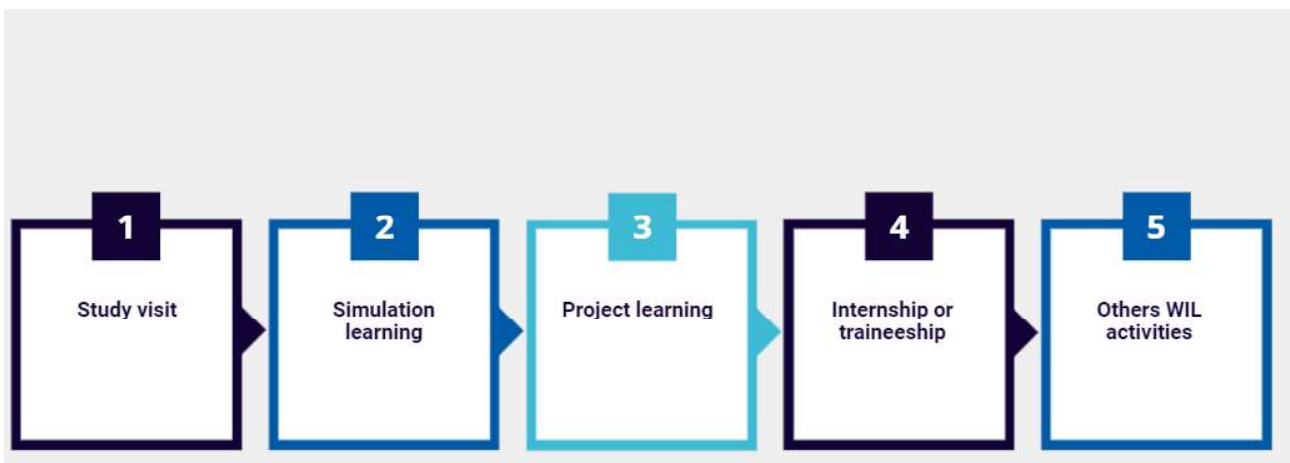
employability. In that sense, WIL encompasses an active involvement of students in genuine workplace practices and experiences, being integrated within a purposeful curriculum aligned with specific academic disciplines. Its priority is the cultivation of graduate learning outcomes and the facilitation of career pathways.

In this context, Patrick, Peach and Pocknee (2008) provide a comprehensive definition of WIL as an "encompassing term encompassing various strategies that harmonize theoretical knowledge with practical work experiences within a deliberately designed educational curriculum." (p. iv) While these descriptions may diverge in the location of learning, they both encompass a variety of endeavours that fuse learning with hands-on application.

Rowe et al. (2012) advance the notion that participation activities can be broadly evaluated along two dimensions: the proximity of learning to the traditional campus-based classroom setting (i.e., on-campus vs. off-campus) and the extent of engagement with practical experiences (e.g., high engagement, as in teaching practicums, versus low engagement, such as passive observation). The foundational principles of experience-based learning can be traced back to the philosophy of Dewey (1938), who championed the educational value of well-structured experiences as potent sources of knowledge acquisition.

WIL, in its essence, incorporates and embraces the concept of experience-based learning, culminating in a harmonious intersection with the realms of professional work, realized through a myriad of pathways. WIL embodies an educational paradigm in higher education where the boundaries of the academic institution become more porous. Practices such as interactions with industry experts, immersive simulations where students simulate the operation of fictitious businesses, virtual patient interactions in healthcare education, and deeply engaged practicum experiences in teaching are increasingly prevalent within the pedagogical landscape of universities.

FIGURE 1. EXAMPLES OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING ACTIVITIES



The most common types of WIL require students to spend time in a workplace learning skills and doing tasks related to their field of study. Forms of workplace learning may include, for example clinical placements, internships, practicums, and fieldwork. These are common in fields of study like health, teaching, and law and engineering. WIL activities can also take place also on campus, as so-called internal WIL. There are two common types of internal WIL, industry projects and simulated and virtual experiences. The first one means students work alone or as a team to complete a project or develop a product for a client e.g. as part of their coursework. Simulated and virtual experiences allow students to do work-related tasks in a mock work environment on campus.

Importantly, these pedagogical approaches are not superficial or tokenistic. They are deliberate strategies meticulously designed to blend classroom learning with real-world workplace experiences. Activities constituting WIL span a continuum, ranging from low to high levels of authenticity and engagement within the workplace. The effectiveness of WIL is inherently context-dependent, influenced by the specific discipline and the pedagogical objectives underpinning the educational approach.

WIL represents a multifaceted educational journey, service, and encounter firmly rooted in pedagogical foundations and theory (Moreland, 2005). It embodies a versatile concept meticulously crafted to amalgamate abstract theoretical constructs with practical, experiential learning, thereby augmenting graduates' aptitude for innovation, productivity, and collaborative contributions to the workforce. While this breadth of interpretation may introduce a degree of ambiguity, it concurrently fortifies the range of possibilities and opportunities that WIL offers.



Stories to inspire you

In this section, we summarize the situation of WIL in higher education in Finland, Italy and Spain. These cases provide a glimpse of how an educational system can structure WIL experiences. While Finland, Italy, and Spain all incorporate work-based learning through internships into higher education, the specifics and regulations of these experiences vary between these countries. Our objective is to assist you in identifying opportunities within your institution.

WIL in higher education. The case of Finland

In Finland, every student gets some experience of working life during his or her studies. According to the Government Degree on Universities of Applied Sciences (1129/2019) a traineeship is part of the bachelor's degree in Finnish universities of applied sciences. Each university is responsible for the curriculum and defines the internship's duration, goals, and implementation. Additionally, the study fields are different from each other, and the internships are structured differently in different fields. Each student has an individual plan and individual goals related to studies and employment.

With the help of the traineeship, the student can direct her/his studies towards this goal and acquire the necessary competence.

WIL in higher education. The case of Italy

In Italy, WIL experiences are gradually evolving. However, the specifics of WIL implementation and the extent of its integration into the Italian educational system can vary across institutions and regions. The incorporation of curricular training into university education has been a fundamental development since 2004. Ministerial Decree no. 270, dated October 22, 2004, stipulated that, alongside the educational components defining academic programs, curricula must encompass educational activities related to internships and practical training experiences in various sectors, including businesses, public administrations, and private organizations.

As articulated in the same decree, curricular internships are experiential learning opportunities formally endorsed by the university and executed under specific agreements that govern the relationships between the participating entities. In addition to curricular internships, Italian universities have the capacity to establish and oversee "training and guidance traineeships." These traineeships are designed for individuals who have recently completed their degrees or professional training and serve the dual purpose of aiding career decision-making and enhancing employability during the transition from academic institutions to the workforce. They achieve these objectives by providing exposure to a productive environment and facilitating direct immersion in the dynamics of the professional world.

The orchestration of internships involves three primary stakeholders: the institution serving as the promoter (i.e., the university), the host organization (which may be a company or business entity), and the intern (typically a student). To initiate an internship, the formulation of a comprehensive training and guidance project is imperative. This project outlines the internship's objectives and methodologies, ensuring alignment with students' academic pursuits. It also specifies the names of the academic and company mentors involved and delineates the internship's duration and time frame.

WIL in higher education. The case of Spain

In the Spanish university system, WIL is carried out through external internships, which can be curricular or extracurricular. Curricular internships are part of the study plan and are compulsory or optional depending on the degree. Extracurricular internships are voluntary and complementary to academic training. Internships are regulated by the Organic Law of Universities and Royal Decree 592/2014, which establish the conditions and requirements for their implementation.

Internships are agreed between the university and the company through an agreement, with the aim of contributing to the theoretical and practical training of the students. Students have an academic tutor and a professional tutor who guide and evaluate their performance. Internships can be paid or not, depending on what is established in the agreement. Other modalities of work-based learning are service learning (APS) and dual training. APS integrates service to the community with the learning of contents, skills, values and competencies. Dual training is a training model that alternates periods

of stay in the company with periods of study at the university, with a longer duration and involvement of the company than in external internships.

3.2. Inclusive Higher Education: Ensuring Equal Opportunities

Students with special needs and disabilities in higher education

There have always been students with special needs in higher education, and these students have managed their higher education better or worse. In the last ten years, there has been more talk about students with special needs both in research and in legislation in different countries. There are diverse ways to consider students with special needs.

In higher education, it is crucial to distinguish between students with special needs and underrepresented students. While there may be overlap between these two groups, they each face unique challenges and require different forms of support. Students with special needs are those who, due to various difficulties such as a physical, emotional, behavioural, or learning disability or impairment, require additional or specialized services or accommodations (Kimball et al., 2016). They can have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of students of the same age and special educational provision needs to be made. These students might require specific accommodations to fully participate in the educational experience (Cheng & Lai, 2020); De Los Santos, Kupczynski & Mundi, 2019).

On the other hand, underrepresented students are those who, due to various socio-economic factors, are not adequately represented in higher education. Kosunen (2021) describes the underrepresented groups in higher education as follow: family background (heritability of education), working class background, students living in non-urban areas, students studying in the fields with a minority gender, students with immigrant background, students with a disability or operational limitation, linguistic and cultural minorities, students with learning difficulties, and sexual and gender minorities. These variables can have a significant impact on the academic progress and success of undergraduate underrepresented minority students (Kricorian et al, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2018).

It is important to note that a student can belong to both categories. For example, a student with a disability (a special need) who also comes from a working-class background (an underrepresented group) would fall into both categories. In such cases, it is crucial that institutions provide support that addresses all aspects of the student's experience. While students with special needs often require tailored educational strategies or resources to overcome their individual challenges, underrepresented students may need broader systemic changes to address the disparities they face. This can include policies aimed at increasing access to education, financial aid programs, mentorship opportunities, and efforts to create a more inclusive and diverse educational environment.

Korkeamäki and Vuorento (2021) elaborated how the higher education students reported the health and functional limitations affected their studies. In total 35% of respondents reported having a disability or health problems. Mental health problems (14%) were the most common factor limiting

students' success in their studies. Additionally, students reported other health problems (10%), learning difficulties (6%), sensory impairment (2%) or physical disability (2%). In the survey conducted by the Finnish Student Health Service in 2021, a total of 14% of respondents reported they have some learning difficulty, illness, or disability, which affects learning. The most common learning difficulty was dyslexia and in total 10 % of the students in the universities of applied sciences and 6 % of the students in the universities reported to have been diagnosed with dyslexia (Parikka et al., 2021).

Students with special needs often face unique challenges at university. These can include physical barriers, such as lack of accessibility in campus buildings, as well as academic barriers, such as lack of appropriate accommodations in the classroom. In addition, these students may face social and emotional barriers, such as stigma and lack of understanding from their peers and professors. Despite laws and policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all students, there is often a gap between policy and practice.

This gap has an opportunity cost for students with special needs and disabilities. A study by the Fundación ONCE (2022) shows that while the success rate is similar to that of students with no special needs, performance and assessment scores are slightly lower. Possible reasons for this include teachers not having sufficient guidance, entrance exams not being adapted for these students, a complex scholarship system, and limited opportunities for in-person access, resulting in lower attendance than expected.

Participation in WIL programs can present additional challenges for students with special needs. These programs often involve placements in real-world work environments, which may not be equipped to accommodate students with certain disabilities. Furthermore, the collaborative and interactive nature of WIL can pose difficulties for students with social or communication impairments. Universities and workplaces need to work together to ensure that WIL programs are inclusive and accessible to all students.

The practices of inclusive education are linked to the goal of increasing student participation. Inclusive teaching can consider students' diverse backgrounds and needs for support (Pesonen & Nieminen, 2021). Because the need for support is so diverse, there are no simple solutions, but solutions must be devised individually for the situation of the student in question. WIL can be particularly easy for one person who needs special support, while for another it can be more challenging than theoretical studies.

Accessibility: Promoting equal opportunities

All EU countries promote accessibility and inclusivity in higher education, particularly for students with special needs and disabilities. Each country has adopted unique frameworks and strategies to ensure equal access and benefit from higher education. Here, we will summarize the support systems of Finland, Italy and Spain to foster educational opportunities for all, emphasizing the significance of

an inclusive educational environment. These initiatives can serve as examples for other regions seeking to enhance inclusivity in higher education.

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has made couple of reports (Laaksonen, 2005, Penttilä, 2012; Kosunen, 2021) and universities made a joint publication Saavutettavuuskriteeristö [The Accessibility Criteria] about accessibility in higher education in 2019 in OHO-project, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Saavutettavuuskriteeristö, 2019). According to The Accessibility Criteria, the word “accessibility” means how well the university’s facilities, electronic systems, learning environments, teaching methods and attitudinal atmosphere enable the participation and quality of students with a wide variety of personal characteristics and different life situations.

The Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) and the Universities Act (558/2009) regulate the inclusion of higher education in Finland as well as the document “The Accessibility Plan for Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions” (2021) done by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In accordance with these regulations and guidelines, each higher education institution must draw up an equality plan that defines the measures to be taken to promote equality. At an accessible university, both students and staff members can feel equality and inclusion, regardless of their personal characteristics or life situation. (Saavutettavuuskriteeristö, 2019.)

In Italy, regarding university students with disabilities, their right to access higher education is rooted in the principle of educational continuity, as affirmed by the Italian Constitutional Court (sentence 215, 1987). This principle extends to curricular internships, ensuring equal educational opportunities and inclusive internship guidance.

The National University Conference of the Delegates for Disability (CNUDD) has developed guidelines to safeguard students' right to study and promote inclusion, autonomy, and active citizenship (CNUDD, 2014, p.5). CNUDD's mission is to facilitate access to university, training, and lifelong learning, recognizing that knowledge, higher culture, and research participation contribute to holistic human development, workforce entry, and the realization of personal aspirations (CNUDD, 2014, p.5). To facilitate educational success throughout the university journey, Italian universities have established dedicated roles, including the Rector's Delegate for Disability and Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs), and administrative support structures referred to as University Disability/SLDs Services (SDDA) according to CNUDD guidelines.

SDDAs serve as the primary contact point for students with disabilities and play a crucial role in coordinating various university services to protect their right to study. SDDAs collaborate with the Rector's Delegate for Disability and SLDs, acting as intermediaries between the university system, students, families, local and health services. They oversee tutoring, orientation, personalized support services, and administrative management to ensure effective service provision (CNUDD, 2014, p.7). SDDAs also assist in preparing and managing the processes required for students requesting curricular internships. Efforts to provide orientation and tutoring during curricular internships are integral to creating viable pathways to the labour market. The recently issued Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 underscores the importance of equal opportunities and access

to education and labour market-oriented learning for people with disabilities in Europe, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The term “special need” is used in Spain for both education and work contexts, and it refers to people who need extra support or adaptations due to a physical, mental, or developmental condition. The concept covers different situations such as physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, and mental health disorders. In education, there are two types of students with special needs:

- Students with disabilities. They have a disability certificate of 33% or more and need specific support for academic activities.
- Students with specific educational needs. They do not have a disability certificate, but they have specific educational needs that can be proven, such as learning disorders, developmental disorders, or mental disorders.

People with special needs and disabilities have the right to access higher education on equal terms with others, in accordance with the Spanish Constitution and international conventions ratified by Spain, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Royal Decree-Law 1/2013 on the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion.

The Spanish university system is dedicated to promoting inclusive education, respecting diversity, ensuring equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and universal accessibility for students with disabilities (Síndic de Greuges de Catalunya, 2021). To achieve this objective, universities offer various services and support, including:

- Providing information and guidance on admission procedures, scholarships, grants, academic adjustments, and accessibility measures.
- Offering personalized attention and ongoing support from specialized staff, such as tutors, mentors, counsellors, or psychologists.
- Providing technical aids and assistive technologies such as computers, software, magnifiers, hearing aids, or sign language interpreters.
- Conducting training and awareness-raising activities for the university community on disability-related issues.



Promoting accessibility in WIL

Here you will find some strategies for implementing WIL in an accessible way, particularly for students with special needs. Each student is unique and may require different adaptations. The goal is to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and succeed.

- Web Accessibility. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) develops strategies, standards, and supportive resources to make the web more accessible for people with disabilities¹. This includes guidelines such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are an international standard². For WIL, this could mean ensuring that any online components of the program, such as virtual internships or online training modules, are fully accessible.
- Easy-to-read information. European standards exist for making information easy to read and understand. These standards cover a wide range of topics, including text structure and layout, vocabulary and grammar, and images and symbols. For WIL, this could involve providing easy-to-read job descriptions, training materials, or feedback forms.
- Adaptation of learning materials. It's important that learning materials can be adapted to meet individual students' needs. This might involve using assistive technologies like screen readers, voice recognition software, or magnification software. For WIL, this could mean providing work instructions or training materials in multiple formats.
- Personalized support. Personalized support can be crucial for the success of students with special needs. This might involve specialized tutors or mentors, psychological support, or occupational therapies. In a WIL context, this could mean providing a workplace mentor who is trained in supporting people with disabilities.
- Staff training: Staff should receive adequate training to understand and meet the needs of students with special needs. This might involve training on various disabilities, inclusive teaching strategies, and the use of assistive technologies. For WIL, this could mean providing disability awareness training for workplace supervisors.
- Accessible physical environment. University facilities should be accessible to all people. This includes accessibility to buildings, classrooms, labs, study areas, and services like the library

¹ See Making the web accessible for further information. Available at: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

² See Introduction to web accessibility for further information. Available at: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/>

or cafeteria. In a WIL context, this could mean ensuring that work placements are in physically accessible locations.

- Materials in different formats. Providing materials in different formats can help cater to diverse learning needs and preferences. This might involve providing written documents, audio recordings, videos, or interactive online modules. For WIL, this could mean providing work instructions or training materials in multiple formats.



Stories to inspire you

In this case study, you can examine how accessibility is crucial for ensuring equal opportunities for a student with a hearing impairment during his internship at a technology company. Carlos, a talented university student, faces the challenge of addressing specific accessibility issues within the company as he embarks on a WIL experience.

Background

Carlos is a university student who has excelled in his academic program despite his hearing impairment. He has performed well in the classroom, but now faces the exciting challenge of embarking on an internship at a leading technology company. The company has offered him an exciting opportunity, but it also poses specific challenges from an accessibility perspective due to his hearing impairment.

Accessibility challenges in the company

Communication in meetings and noisy environments. In a typical work environment, meetings are frequent and often occur in noisy, crowded spaces. Carlos may face difficulties in following group conversations and team discussions due to his hearing impairment.

Phone communication. Phone communication is essential in many companies. Carlos may encounter challenges in making or receiving phone calls, especially if real-time transcription or sign language interpreters are not provided.

Emergency alarms and alerts. In emergency situations such as building evacuations, Carlos needs to receive visual or tactile alerts instead of auditory alarms to ensure his safety.

Solutions to promote accessibility

Assistive technology. Equipping Carlos's workstation with assistive technology, such as a real-time transcription system or hearing amplification devices, can facilitate his participation in calls and meetings.

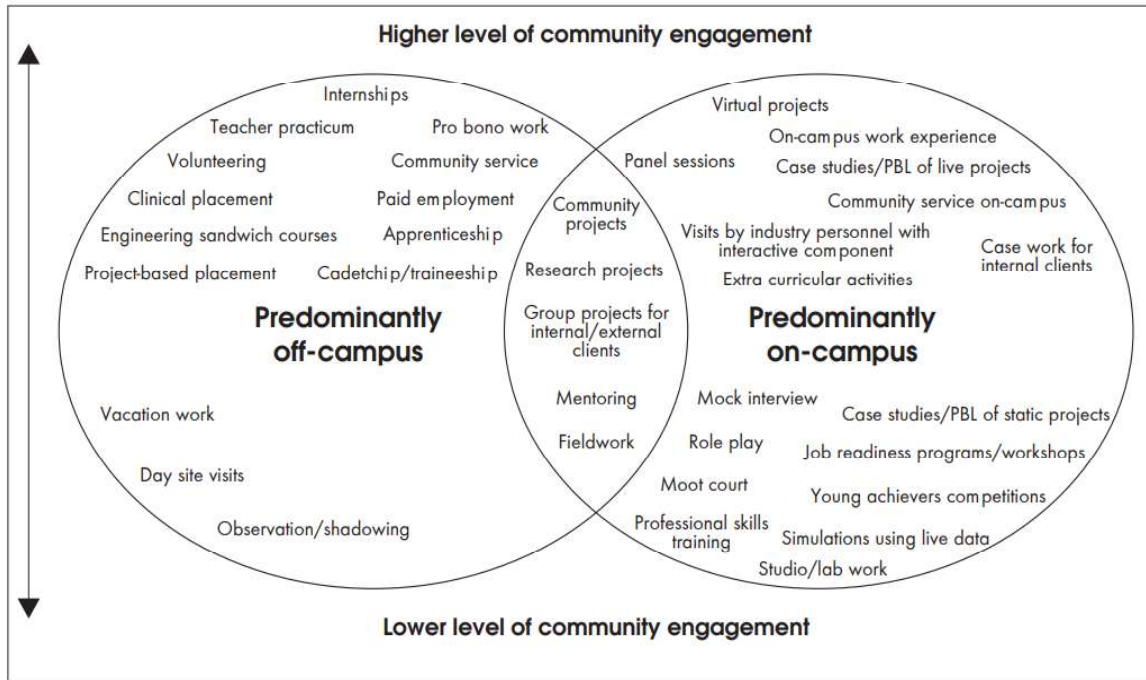
Inclusive communication policies. Establish policies that promote written communication over oral communication, using accessible internal messaging systems, and ensure all employees are aware of these policies.

Visual and tactile alerts. The company should implement visual and tactile alert systems in case of emergencies to ensure the safety of all employees, including Carlos.

3. Work-integrated Learning Activities

Work-integrated learning activities are implemented in diverse ways. Educators have significant autonomy in structuring their instructional methods, leading to considerable variation in the extent of WIL across different instructors and institutions. Rowe et al. (2012) categorize various types of WIL activities based on their location (on-campus/off-campus) and the degree of engagement with the workplace or the community, as illustrated in Figure 2. In Annex I you will find a short description of the WIL activities included in Figure 2

FIGURE 2. A TYPOLOGY OF ACTIVITY: EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY WIL RESEARCH AND THEMES



Source: Rowe et al. (2012, p. 251)

Learning environment: on campus/off campus/hybrid

Creating a suitable work integrated learning environment for students with special needs requires careful consideration of students' individual needs, abilities, and preferences as well as the possibilities of the workplace to offer suitable tasks, support and guidance. It is also important to consider what the student is supposed to learn, whether learning objectives have been set in the curriculum or whether the student defines the learning objectives himself/herself. The most appropriate learning environment can vary greatly from one student to another. Studying on -campus and off-campus each has its own strengths and weaknesses. The choice between the two depends on the student, the goals of learning and the opportunities and requirements offered by the environment. Some students may benefit from a combination of both, such as hybrid programs that blend campus-based and workplace-based learning. Whether the student is studying on-campus or off-campus, WIL offers the opportunity to study in many ways and take into account the diversity of students.

Campus is often a more familiar environment for students than a workplace, and teachers and fellow students are familiar. It allows in-person interaction with professors and peers and can foster a sense of community and support. It helps especially students who have challenges with social functioning and participating e.g., in role-play or moot court. Learning on campus is more structured, making it easier for students to stay on schedule and focus on the task. At the same time, a tight schedule can be challenging for students with work or family commitments to attend classes. On campus students have access to libraries, laboratories, and other facilities that might not be available elsewhere. On campus learning, the teacher can more easily plan assignments suitable for students in need of support, monitor their progress and provide immediate feedback.

Off-campus learning can complement traditional classroom education and offer unique opportunities for personal and professional growth for students with special needs. On-hands-working challenges students to step out of their comfort zones, fostering independence and resilience. Success at work promotes personal growth and self-discovery, increases self-knowledge and self-efficacy and all this strengthens the self-confidence of students in need of special support. By working, students in need of special support identify the requirements of the job and test their own chances of succeeding in the tasks in question. Students can also identify their own strengths and compensation methods that are significant in choosing their future workplace and working tasks. Experiences gained off-campus can significantly enhance a student's resume or CV, making them more competitive in the job market, because they can show their capability to the job. Students with special needs can build valuable professional networks through off-campus experiences. This can open doors to internships, job opportunities, and collaborations in the future, which allows them to become attached to the community and society.

The most important in off-campus learning is the opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. This hands-on experience can deepen understanding and help students see the practical relevance of what they are learning. For example, internships offer the opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a working culture and gain a deeper understanding of the demands

of working life, which can make it easier to direct their own learning. Off-campus experiences can provide a competitive edge in the job market and can be an asset when seeking employment or pursuing advanced degrees. Off-campus experiences often focus on not only developing practical but also meta skills – e.g., problem-solving, communication, collaboration, adaptability, and cultural competency - that are highly valued by employers.

Although off-campus learning has many advantages, it is also good to consider its weaknesses, especially when it comes to learners with special needs. Some students may be nervous about going to a new, unfamiliar place and may need someone to go with. Studying at workplaces can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of social interaction and support. Some students may find it easier to work off-campus, if they can work together with a fellow student or a group of students they know. Noise, lighting or smells in the workplace may prevent concentration of the student with sensory overload and thus learning. Sometimes employers or colleagues may have unconscious biases or prejudices towards students in need of special support. It is important to assess the accessibility of the off campus learning environment, e.g. to ensure that it is physically accessible for students with mobility impairments and that materials and resources are available in accessible formats for students with visual or hearing impairments. The most essential thing is to ensure that the student receives adequate social and emotional support and WIL activities are suitable for his/her needs.

It is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to creating a suitable learning environment for students with special needs. Each student is unique, and their individual needs should guide the development of a tailored educational experience and work-integrated learning activities so that it maximizes students' potential for learning, growth and joining the community.



Criteria to choose between on-campus, off-campus and hybrid WIL

Here is a table that outlines the criteria to consider when choosing between on-campus, off-campus, and hybrid WIL for students with special needs

Criteria	On-campus	Off-campus	Hybrid
Familiar environment	Yes	No	Depends on the program
In-person interaction	Yes	Depends on the workplace	Yes, and also real-world interaction
Structured learning	Yes	No, more self-directed	Both structured and self-directed
Personal growth & self-discovery	Limited compared to off-campus WIL	Yes, high potential for growth and discovery	Combines benefits of both
Real-world application & practical skills development	Limited compared to off-campus WIL	Yes, high potential for practical skills development	Combines benefits of both
Flexibility (e.g., for work or personal commitments)	Limited due to fixed schedules	High, especially with flexible workplaces	High, can be tailored to individual needs
Networking opportunities & job market competitiveness	Limited compared to off-campus WIL	High potential for networking and enhancing employability	Combines benefits of both
Need for additional resources or support	Low, resources are typically provided by the institution	High, may require additional support for accessibility or accommodations	Moderate, depends on the balance between on-campus and off-campus components
Accessibility (e.g., for students with physical disabilities)	High, campuses are typically designed with accessibility in mind	Varies, depends on the workplace	Depends on both the campus and workplace facilities
Fostering an inclusive culture	Varies, depends on the institution's	Varies, depends on the workplace culture	Can combine the benefits of both environments

	commitment to inclusivity		
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Community engagement: high/medium/low

The main aim of WIL is to strengthen the student's engagement to the community but, at the same time, it creates a reciprocal outcome that enriches the learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens communities. As shown in Figure one, different WIL activities enable different levels of community engagement. Depending on what kind of activities are used in learning, students' and communities' engagement can be at a high or low level both on-campus and off-campus activities. Different activities also require different levels of engagement from the community. At its best, community engagement can enable individual, equitable and fair learning opportunities for students in need of special support. At the same time, workplace competence increases and social responsibility develops, which can also affect the success of the company/workplace.

The level of community engagement and its impact on students' learning can vary widely depending on the specific community, its resources, attitudes, and existing support systems. Engagement is influenced by factors such as motivation, satisfaction, compatibility, and communication. Efforts to enhance community engagement should be context-specific and tailored to the unique needs of students and their communities.

There can be disparities in the level of community engagement and support available to students with special needs across different communities or regions. This lack of equity can result in unequal access to opportunities and services. In some cases, lower levels of community engagement may perpetuate stigmatization and negative attitudes toward students with special needs, making it difficult for them to fully integrate and participate in community life. Lower community engagement may lead to reduced advocacy for students' needs, potentially limiting their access to appropriate work-life-activities. For this reason, it is important that teachers take into account the needs of both students and the community when they are planning WIL-activities. They have to build cooperation models in which all parties benefit from cooperation. Teachers play an important role in promoting social justice and developing equal learning opportunities for every student. Even in communities with lower engagement, there is the potential to build awareness and educate community members about the needs and strengths of students with special needs.

Enabling students in need of special support to integrate into working life not only increases their opportunities to participate equally in community activities, but also enables learning and development for work communities and thus the development of an inclusive society. Cooperation with students in need of special support enables the workplace to examine and develop its own practices, culture, accessibility and equality. Individuals or small groups within the community can initiate grassroots efforts to support Students with special needs, fostering a sense of inclusivity and collaboration. Higher community engagement can lead to increased support for Students with special

needs and bring diverse perspectives and expertise to the table, leading to innovative solutions and tailored support for students with special needs. Increased community engagement can promote a more inclusive mindset within the community, fostering acceptance and understanding of students' needs. A well-engaged community can support not only academic but also social, emotional, and personal development for students with special needs. Community engagement can also facilitate networking opportunities for students with special needs, potentially leading to internships, job placements, or mentorship connections. This enables more and more people with partial work ability to find job opportunities.



Criteria to choose between on-campus, off-campus and hybrid WIL to promote stakeholder engagement

In this table you will find some criteria to promote stakeholder engagement when choosing between on-campus, off-campus, and hybrid WIL for students with special needs.

Criteria	On-campus	Off-campus	Hybrid
Strengthening community ties	Medium	High	High
Reciprocal learning outcomes	Medium	High	High
Integration into working life and community activities	Medium	High	High
Development of inclusive society and workplace culture, accessibility and equality	Medium	High	High
Promotion of a more inclusive mindset within the community	Medium	High	High
Fostering university-business relationships	Low	High	High



4. Guiding Students with Special Needs in WIL

A student with special needs may need support in different stages of WIL. The teacher must be aware of what kind of support the student needs, what his/her strengths are and what kind of goals he/she sets for his/her work-integrated learning. The teacher should be familiar with the workplace, its requirements and learning opportunities. It would also be a good idea to find out in advance how the workplace views the student's support needs and what kind of support the student can receive at the workplace.

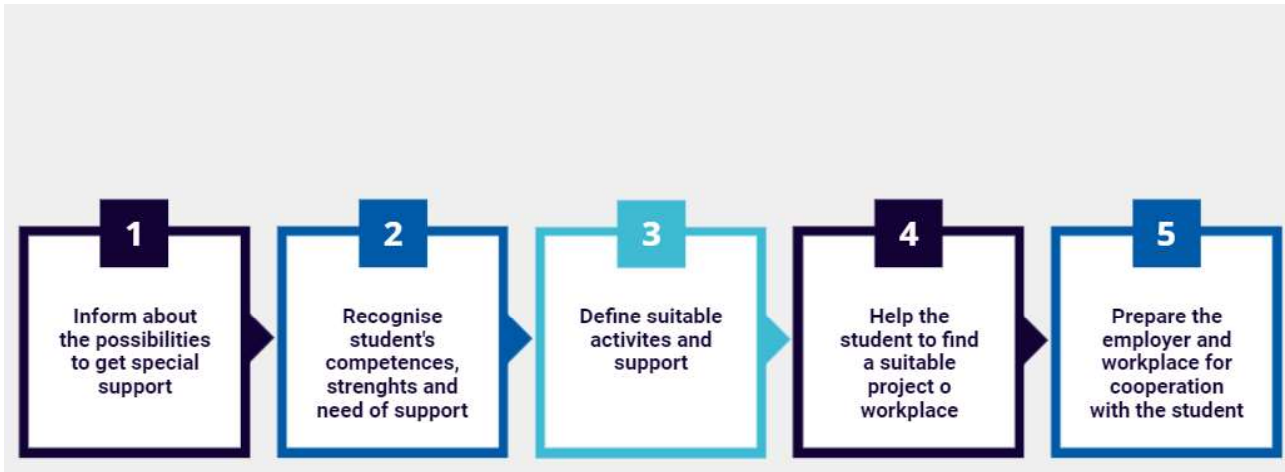
In this section, we will address the fundamental stages in the implementation of WIL projects for students with special needs. The process is divided into three key sections that span from initial preparation to the evaluation and continuous improvement of the WIL experience.

To assist you in the implementation of WIL activities, a roadmap has been included in Annex II. In the context of WIL, a roadmap serves as a strategic plan that outlines the desired outcomes of the WIL program and includes the major steps or milestones needed to achieve them. It can be used as a communication tool to articulate the strategic thinking behind the WIL program, explaining both the goals of the program and the plan for achieving them. For example, the roadmap could outline key stages in the WIL program, such as planning and preparation, implementation of work-based learning activities, feedback and assessment, and reflection and evaluation.

4.1. Before the WIL project

Before implementing any WIL activity it is important to understand and address the individual needs, abilities, and preferences of students with special needs. Key aspects include informing students about available support, recognizing their competences and needs, defining suitable activities and workplaces, preparing the employer for cooperation, and ensuring a safe and inclusive learning environment (see Figure 3). In Annex III you will find a checklist template. It serves as a practical tool for guiding and assessing the support for students with special needs in WIL projects.

FIGURE 3. STEPS TO FOLLOW BEFORE THE WIL PROJECT



Inform them about the possibility of getting special support!

It is important to agree on who is responsible for arranging the support during WIL at the university and in the workplace, because a student might need support from both parties. After this, informing is important, so that the student knows how to apply for support if needed. Informing other staff is also important, so they know how to tell the student where they can get support. The student needs to know what kind of support is possible to obtain, from whom, and how. They also need to know the procedure to ask/apply for support.

Recognize student's competences, strenghts, and need for support!

When you start working with the student, organize time for counselling. Hear the student's thoughts about the internship. What is the student interested in? What kind of goals she/he has with her/his studies and after graduation? Is there some kind of fear or tensions related to WIL?

Ask about a student's needs of support, possible special needs, and diagnosis. Do not forget to ask about student competences and strenghts. What kind of limitations does she/he have? In which situations are they a hindrance and how can the student compensate them?

Define the suitable activities and workplace!

When you know the student special needs, start the discussion about what kind of project /workplace could be suitable for the student. Is the student more interested in working alone or in a group? Would the student prefer local or remote work? How would it serve the needs? Is there a need for flexible or shorter hours?

Help the student to find a suitable project or workplace!

Some students may need help in finding a suitable job. There might be problems choosing a suitable workplace, applying, or contacting the workplace. Support the student in the job search process if needed. The better you know about the jobs in the area and the opportunities and requirements offered by working life, the easier it will be for you to help students find a suitable workplace. Therefore, make sure that you visit employers in working life and familiarize yourself with different workplaces as a learning environment.

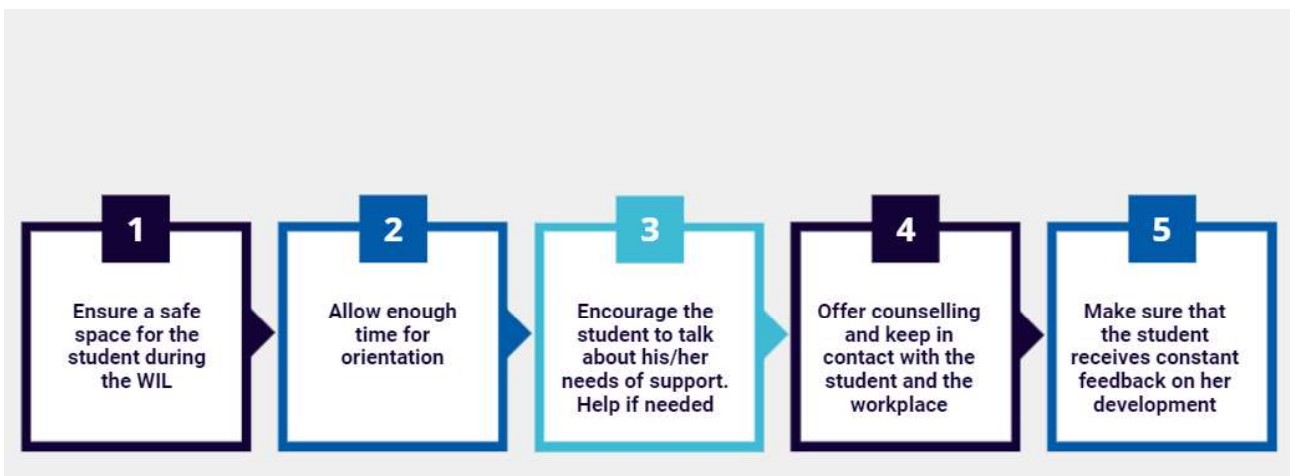
Prepare the employer and workplace for cooperation with the student!

Find out about the work community's possibilities to offer meaningful learning experiences and sufficient support for the student. You can also encourage the workplace representative to contact you with any concerns. With the student's permission, tell them what kind of support will help them. Also explain how the workplace/employer benefits from supervising a student studying in the WIL model.

4.2. During the WIL project

In this section, we delve into the critical aspects of ensuring a safe and supportive environment for students with special needs during their WL experiences. Figure 4 summarizes the key actions. In Annex IV, you will find a checklist to ensure that nothing is forgotten during the development of the WIL experience.

FIGURE 4. THINKS TO DO DURING THE WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING PROJECT



Ensure a safe space for the student during the WIL!

Many students with support needs feel vulnerable in new situations. They may have prior difficult experiences of bullying behind them. Therefore, especially for these students, it is important to take care of creating a safe space. According to the Oxford Dictionary the safe space means “a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or any other emotional or physical harm.”

Allow enough time for orientation!

Orientation in the WIL is important for all learners. A student in need of special support may need more time for orientation than other students. If the student has difficulties with working memory, the student may need more repetitions than other students.

Encourage the student to ask questions every time she/he is not sure what to do. In this way, work safety is taken care of and at the same time the student learns to ask questions when necessary.

Encourage students to talk about their needs of support during WIL and help if necessary!

When you and the student have reviewed student special needs and support needs, encourage the student to bring them up in the workplace.

If necessary, you can arrange a meeting where the student, you and the representative of the workplace discuss how to support the student in various work-related situations. Agree in advance with the student which topics will be discussed.

You can also encourage the representative of the workplace to contact you with any concerns. Remember the duty of confidentiality when you talk about the student’s sensitive matters. You can speak in general terms, but when it is concerning a student's sensitive matters, the student must be involved or talk about her/his challenges.

Offer counselling and keep in constant contact with the student and the workplace!

Agree with the student and workplace about how you will be available during the WIL period. Make sure a student and staff in the workplace know how you can be contacted during WIL.

Check regularly during the WIL period that the student is doing well and has no special questions or issues. You can send her/him a message or call her/him regularly. This makes it easier for the student to contact you if needed.

Although employees are experienced in their own work, they may feel insecure with a student who needs special support. It is a good practice to also contact employer and student’s workmates regularly and help them to solve surprising situations that they encounter when guiding and supporting student's learning.

Make sure that the student receives constant feedback on her competence development!

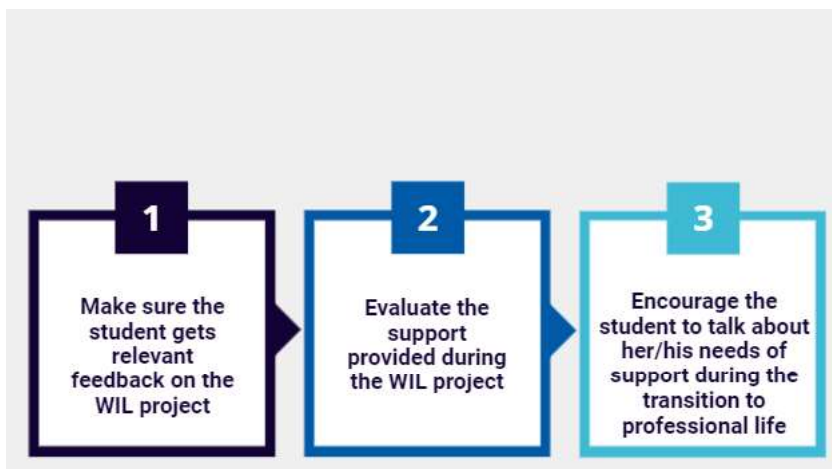
Feedback is important for the student’s development. As a teacher you might have to guide a student’s workmate to give feedback to the student. Students are also waiting for feedback from you.

If there is room for improvement in a student's activities during WIL, it is important that the feedback comes immediately so that the student can improve her/his actions and learn this way. The feedback should be given in a constructive way. Pay attention to the learned skill or task and give feedback on its development and improvement. No negative feedback should be given on the student's personal characteristics.

4.3. After the WIL project

In this section, we delve into the vital aspect of feedback during WIL for students with special needs. Ensuring the student receives pertinent feedback is paramount. We explore how to evaluate and tailor support measures realistically, fostering self-awareness, and encouraging students to advocate for support as they transition to professional life. Figure 5 summarizes some key actions. In Annex V, you will find a checklist to ensure that WIL experience is properly evaluated.

FIGURE 5. THINGS TO DO AFTER THE WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING PROJECT



Make sure the student gets relevant feedback from the WIL!

It is important for the student to receive feedback on her work during the WIL. When it comes to a student with special needs, it is important to consider the impact of special needs for work. Although it is important to consider the student's strengths and competencies, the need for support should also be discussed realistically.

Evaluate the support provided during the WIL!

If some support measures have been planned for the student, the realization of these should be evaluated. At the same time, it is assessed whether the support measures were suitable for the student.

The assessment increases the student's self-awareness, and the student will later be able to address the need for support.

Encourage the student to talk about their needs of support during the transition to professional life!

WIL can be a key point for a student with special needs in identifying their needs for support in working life and bringing them into discussion with a future employer. It is good for the teacher to encourage the student to mention the need for support when she/he finds employment.



Stories to inspire you

In this case study, you can examine how to provide effective feedback. Feedback must help students understand their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and guides them towards achieving their learning objectives. This is an example of a teacher speaking with a student.

Alex, I wanted to take a moment to discuss your recent WIL experience. I have some feedback that I believe will be beneficial for you.

Firstly, I want to commend you on your dedication and hard work. You have shown great initiative in taking on tasks and you have demonstrated a strong ability to adapt to new situations, which is a crucial skill in any workplace. Your positive attitude and willingness to learn have not gone unnoticed.

In terms of areas for improvement, I noticed that you sometimes had difficulty with time management. This is a common challenge and it is something that can be improved with practice and the right strategies. For example, using tools like planners or digital calendars can help manage your time more effectively.

I also observed that you were sometimes hesitant to ask for help when you encountered difficulties. Remember, it is okay to ask for assistance when you need it. Everyone needs help sometimes and it is an important part of the learning process. I want to encourage you to continue developing your communication skills. Effective communication is key in the workplace and it is something that will benefit you in all areas of life.

Remember, this feedback is meant to help you grow and improve. You should be proud of what you have accomplished during your WIL experience. Keep up the good work, Alex!

5. Support Measures during the WIL

The need for support is very individual. Even people with the same diagnosis or need for support may require very various levels of support. Therefore, it is always necessary to plan the support together with the student and discuss her/his needs and wishes for support.

Individual guidance and counselling

Individual guidance and counselling are the most important forms of support. Counselling includes time, listening and stopping at the student's concerns. It is important that the student knows how she/he can contact the teacher and get help at a low threshold when needed.

Peer-assisted learning and role modelling

Peers can play a significant role in supporting students with special needs. This can include peer-assisted learning, where students work together on tasks or concepts, and role modelling, where one student demonstrates a skill or behaviour for another.

Mentorship

Mentorship can provide students with special needs a role model and someone who can guide them through specific challenges

Clear and accessible instructions

Some students who need special support may have difficulty remembering or understanding long instructions. Therefore, giving instructions piece by piece often makes it easier to learn them. Similarly, written instructions may help some students.

Flexible working hours

Students who need support often wish for flexibility in working hours and the length of the working day. For some students, simply knowing that they have the flexibility to shorten their workday if necessary is sufficient. However, there are instances where consistently shorter working hours are required.

Use of assistive technology

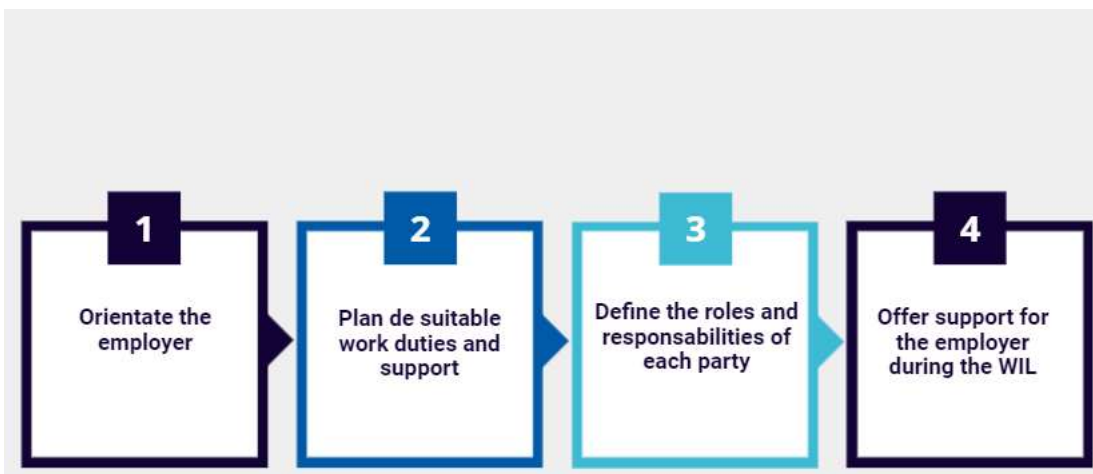
Assistive technology can be very helpful for students with special needs. This can include read-aloud software, word processing programs with spell-check and grammar-check features, and apps that can help students organize and schedule their time. Developers have created assistive devices for various physical difficulties, such as to support reading and writing.

As mentioned earlier, the support must be planned individually. Often small things may help the student to cope at work, and it can be important to know that it is possible to get help if you need it.

6. Cooperation with the Workplace

As we have already mentioned, it is important to work with the learning community. Students's need for support depends not only on their own characteristics, but also on what the environment demands and expects and what kind of support is available. Therefore, it is important to pay special attention to the workplace where the student is learning with the WIL method. Workplace practices, prejudices and guidance models can prevent or enable student's work integrated learning. Figure 6 shows some key elements of the cooperation with workplace.

FIGURE 6. COOPERATION WITH THE WORKPLACE



Orientate the employers!

Offer the employer training in how the student's special support needs should be considered in the workplace. There could be an open course about how to build a more inclusive working life, which you can offer for the employers. Show the workplace the benefits of cooperation with a student in need of special support.

Contact the employer before the WIL if needed. Agree with the student about what you can tell the employer about the student's support needs. You can remind the employer that she/he can contact you if there are any concerns during the WIL.

Plan the suitable work duties and support!

Help the employer and the student to plan suitable work duties for the student with special needs. When you define the suitable tasks, you must consider the student's challenges and the student's ability to work.

You should also plan together what kind of support and possible aid the student needs to fulfil their work duties. As a teacher, you can discuss what reasonable adjustments meant in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled.

It might be good to make a written agreement in which the work tasks are recorded. Then all parties can return to the agreement, and it can be updated if necessary.

Define the roles and responsibilities of each party!

When planning the student's work tasks together, it is also important to define the responsibilities and duties of each party under the student's supervision. This avoids situations where, for example, the employers are unsure about what is expected of them.

Agree together on who will supervise work tasks, and possible written assignments. It is beneficial for the students to know whom to contact if they find the WIL too burdensome or, conversely, the work tasks too simple, or if they need any kind of help or support during the WIL.

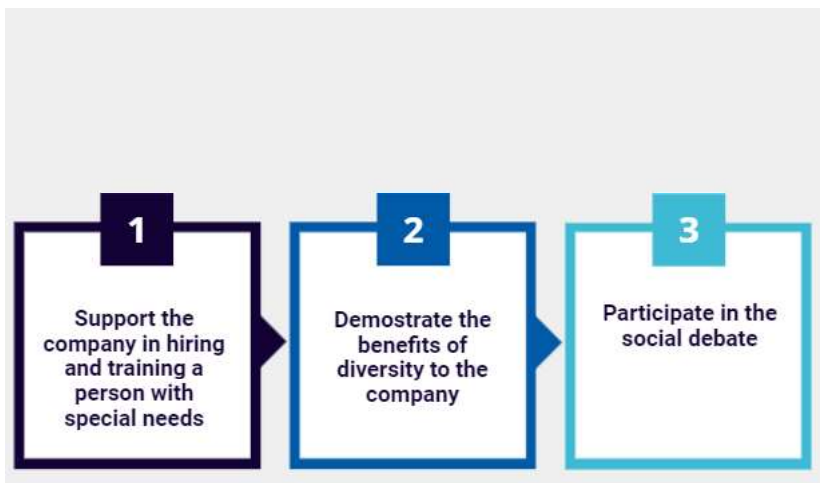
Offer support for the employer during the WIL!

Be accessible to the employer during the WIL. Inform the employer how to reach you and encourage them to get in touch if there are any questions or if the student's work tasks need to be re-planned.

7. Supporting the Workplace in Developing a more Inclusive Working Culture

An inclusive culture is one that values and respects individual differences, encourages the participation and contribution of all employees, and recognizes that each person brings unique skills and experiences to the workplace. In an inclusive work environment, every employee, including those with special needs, has the opportunity to reach their full potential and feels valued and respected. The importance of an inclusive culture is even more pronounced in the context of WIL, as it provides young people with special needs the opportunity to learn and grow in a supportive environment. In Figure 7, you have some examples of actions that you can carry out and that do not require a great effort

FIGURE 7. STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKING CULTURE



Support the company in hiring and training a person with special needs!

As a teacher, you can contribute to diversity in recruitment and inclusive working life. With the cooperation of a company and a university, you can set an example for hiring someone who needs special support.

You may also help the company to find the potential financial support that is available to support those with various functional limitations.

Demonstrate the benefits of diversity to the employer!

A well-managed WIL can enable a student with special needs to get a job in the company. It also gives the company an experience of a more inclusive workplace and some ideas about what kind of support measures could be available at workplaces.

Participate in social debate!

As a teacher, you can promote the development of a more inclusive working life and society also by participating in the discussion of the topic on social media. You can highlight successes in the employment of those in need of special support. On the other hand, you can also raise issues in practices or legislation.

Finally, remember that in your own communities - inside and outside the university - you are an influencer who, by your own example, influences the thoughts, speeches and practices of students, university staff and stakeholders on the employment opportunities of people in need of special support.



Addressing employer concerns about hiring individuals with disabilities

We present here, as an example, some of the questions that employers consider when hiring a person with a disability, and how we can flip the script.

Employer: Can a person with a disability perform the job as effectively as someone without a disability?

You: Absolutely! People with disabilities bring unique skills and perspectives. With the right accommodations, they can perform their job duties just as effectively.

Employer: What about potential legal issues? Could we face lawsuits related to disability discrimination?

You: As long as you follow the guidelines set out by laws, you should be able to avoid legal issues. It is all about p treating all employees fairly and equally.

Employer: What if the person with disability makes their co-workers uncomfortable?

You: It is important to foster an inclusive workplace culture where diversity is valued. Any initial discomfort can be addressed through awareness and sensitivity training. Over time, employees will adapt and learn to work together effectively.

Employer: What if the person needs time off for medical appointments?

Professional: Just like any other employee who may need time off for medical reasons, employees with disabilities have the right to request flexible working arrangements. It is about maintaining a balance between accommodating the employee's needs and ensuring the work is done.



8. Conclusions

The IN-WORK Project represents an innovative proposal addressing the pressing issue of the students employability, while simultaneously striving to bridge the gap for individuals with higher education who face barriers to employment due to disability or unique circumstances. By recognizing the untapped potential of these individuals, this project seeks to create a more inclusive and accessible pathway to the labour market.

The proposed pedagogical guide wants to play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of WIL practices within university settings, particularly in support of students with special learning needs and disabilities. By equipping educators and university staff with the necessary tools and strategies to incorporate the integrated learning-to-work model, it opens a door of opportunity that not only benefits the students but also significantly contributes to universities and businesses alike (Dean, 2023; Zegward, Prettin, Rowe & Ferns, 2023).

The guide systematically addresses the various facets of WIL. It starts with an exploration of the concept of WIL and the unique challenges and opportunities faced by students with special needs in higher education. Furthermore, it takes a comprehensive look at the learning environment and community engagement aspects pertinent to these students. Moving forward, it transitions to the practical side of WIL, discussing activities that can be implemented and offers a structured guide for educators, supporting them throughout the various stages of the WIL process, encompassing preparations before, during, and after the experience. Additionally, the guide underscores the significance of support measures during WIL and the pivotal cooperation between educational institutions and workplaces. This holistic guide provides a comprehensive toolkit for institutions, educators, and students, ensuring a more inclusive and productive integration of WIL into higher education.

This guide benefits students, institutions, and employers. The inclusion of students with special needs and disabilities in workplace environments enriches workforce diversity, fosters innovation, and promotes a culture of equality. Furthermore, companies engaging in this process gain a highly skilled and diversified workforce, enhancing their competitiveness and social responsibility image. For universities, the implementation of these practices strengthens their role as agents of social change and regional development, solidifying their position within the community. Ultimately, for students with special needs, this opportunity not only provides them with valuable work experience but also significantly enhances their employability prospects, allowing them to unleash their full potential in the world of work.

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Annex I – A roadmap for WIL implementation



Objective of the University Roadmap of Implementation

The aim of this roadmap is to support teachers and staff in planning a Work Integrated Learning program at their institution. The WIL program includes activities such as industry projects and consultancy projects, joint development organized by youths with special needs and their peers on specific topics, work-based learning activities, such as internships (curricular, students) and traineeships (for youths not enrolled in the university) that can be online, on-site or blended.

The WIL program will take place throughout the period of _____.

The University Roadmap of Implementation is a strategic planning tool that will help project partners get prepared for the WIL program. The University Roadmap includes important milestones and deadlines. The University Roadmap will help teachers and staff align their efforts to implement the WIL program, tracking achievements and adjusting strategies, if needed.

Sections of the University Roadmap of Implementation

Teachers and staff need to use the University Roadmap of Implementation to provide updates on their progress regarding the necessary steps for launching the WIL program at their institution. The University Roadmap of Implementation is a strategic planning tool that will help them get prepared for the WIL program and includes the following sections:

- Section A - Milestones in the preparation of the piloting of the WIL program
- Section B - Monthly report of activities

Section A - Milestones in the preparation of the piloting of the WIL program

	Important Milestones/ Key Goals	Deadline
Milestone 1 (M1)	Disseminate the WIL program among the main stakeholders, including university students, business companies, NGOs and third sector players, faculty, and instructors, support services, social and health bodies supporting youths with special needs and regulatory bodies through events, conferences, seminars, lectures, trainings, etc.	
Milestone 2 (M2)	Hold meetings with stakeholders to engage them in the WIL program.	
Milestone 3 (M3)	Receive formal expression of interest from stakeholders willing to participate in the WIL program.	
Milestone 4 (M4)	<p>Pair stakeholders.</p> <p>The university has to facilitate the connection between host organizations and students participating in the WIL program. This pairing process will be carried out following a thorough assessment of students' needs, interests, as well as the requirements of the host organizations. In addition, the host organizations need to be able to implement individualized accommodations for students with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.</p>	
Milestone 5 (M5)	<p>Define in collaboration with the stakeholders the WIL activities and the expected results.</p> <p>Stakeholders need to co-design the type of the WIL activity (industry project, consultancy projects, joint workshops, internships, traineeships) its modality (on-site, online and blended) and the WIL program description (objective and scope, working hours, supervision and mentorship, etc.)</p>	
Milestone 6 (M6)	<p>All parties (university, student, host organization) sign the WIL Agreement.</p> <p>The WIL agreement outlines the legal and contractual terms of the placement, including expectations, responsibilities, working hours, intellectual property rights, confidentiality, and any other relevant terms and conditions.</p>	

Section B - Monthly report of activities

Date: _____

Milestone 1

Have you disseminated the WIL program among any stakeholders? Please list all relevant dissemination activities (e.g. the events, conferences, seminars, lectures, trainings, etc.) below.

Dissemination event, conference, seminar, lecture/ workshop, training program, etc.	Date held	Number of Participants	Type of stakeholder (e.g. professors, students, SME, etc.)	Observations/notes
<i>e.g. Regional Conference on the Future of Inclusive Education</i>	<i>e.g. 15/11/2023</i>	<i>e.g. 15 attendees</i>	<i>e.g. teachers</i>	<i>e.g. None</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>

Milestone 2 and milestone 3

Have you held any meetings in order to engage stakeholders in the WIL program? If yes, please list them below and provide important info (M2).

Have you received Formal Expression of Interest from stakeholders willing to participate in the WIL program? If yes, please list them below (M3).

Stakeholder who participated in the meeting	Contact person	email	Date held	Did you received a formal expression of interest?	Observations/notes
<i>e.g. Carrefour</i>	<i>e.g. Jordi Pérez</i>	<i>e.g. JordiP@gmail.com</i>	<i>e.g. 15/11/2023</i>	<i>e.g. pending</i>	<i>e.g. None</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>		<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>		<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>		<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>		<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>
<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>		<i>complete</i>	<i>complete</i>

Milestone 4, 5 and 6

Pair stakeholders (M4). Indicate the stakeholders' pairs and provide the program's dates.

define the type of WIL activity, WIL modality and WIL program description. (M5).

Define in collaboration with the stakeholders the WIL activities (M6). Have all parties signed the WIL agreement? Please provide details.

Stakeholders' pair (M4)	Start date (M4)	End date (M4)	Type of WIL activity (M5)	Type of WIL modality (M5)	WIL program description (M5)	Signature by the host organization (M6)	Signature by the student (M6)	Signature by the University (M6)	Observations/notes (M4-M6)
e.g. Carrefour	e.g. 15/2/2024	e.g. 16/4/2024	e.g. industry project	e.g. online	e.g. The student will work on a digital transformation project and will support the development of e-commerce platform.	e.g. yes	e.g. yes	e.g. pending	complete
complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete



Annex II – WIL activities definitions

Off-campus WIL activities

- Internships: A period of work experience offered by an organization for a limited period of time.
- Teacher practicum: A field experience in a school or classroom to gain practical experience in teaching.
- Pro bono work: Professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment or at a reduced fee as a public service.
- Volunteering: Offering to do something without being forced to do it or without expecting payment for it.
- Community service: Voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area.
- Clinical placement: A period of practical experience that a student spends in a hospital or community setting to gain practical experience in their field of study.
- Paid employment: Work performed for compensation in the form of an hourly wage, salary, or piece rate.
- Engineering sandwich courses: A type of education where periods of formal training and education alternate with periods of work experience.
- Apprenticeship: A system of training a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training and often some accompanying study.
- Cadetship/Traineeship: A type of vocational training that combines formal learning with workplace learning.
- Project-based placement: A temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than merely employment.
- Vacation work: Temporary employment that students undertake during their breaks from study.
- Day site visits: Short visits to a site to observe the operations and tasks being performed.
- Observation/shadowing: A short-term experience where an individual learns about a job by walking through the work day as a shadow to a competent worker.



Hybrid WIL activities

- Community projects: These are initiatives where students collaborate to work on real-world problems within a community. They provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in a practical setting, while also contributing to the community.
- Research projects: These involve students conducting research on a specific topic, often under the guidance of a faculty member. Research projects can help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills.
- Group projects for external/internal clients: In these projects, students work in teams to complete a task or solve a problem for a client. The client could be an external organization or an internal department within the university. These projects help students gain real-world experience and develop teamwork and communication skills.
- Mentoring: This is a relationship in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person (the mentor) guides a less experienced or less knowledgeable person (the mentee). Mentoring can provide students with valuable insights, advice, and support.
- Fieldwork: This involves students going out into the field (outside the classroom) to learn through direct experience and observation. Fieldwork can be particularly common in disciplines like geology, archaeology, biology, social work, and anthropology.

On-campus WIL activities

- Visual projects: These are projects that involve creating or interpreting visual material, such as designing a poster, creating a video, or analyzing a piece of visual art.
- On-campus work experience: This refers to work opportunities provided on the university campus. It could be part-time jobs, internships, or work-study programs that provide students with practical experience in their field of study.
- Case studies/problem-based learning (PBL) of 'Live' Projects: In this approach, students learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem. 'Live' projects refer to projects that are currently ongoing or relevant.
- Panel sessions: These are discussions that involve a group of people gathered to discuss a topic in front of an audience, typically at conferences, conventions, or academic settings.
- Community service on-campus: This involves volunteer work conducted on campus that benefits the community. This could include organizing events or participating in charity work.
- Visits by industry personnel: This involves professionals from various industries visiting the campus to share their experiences, conduct workshops, or scout for potential employees.

- Extra curricular activities: These are activities that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school or university education.
- Case work for internal clients: This involves working on real-world problems or projects for clients within the same institution.
- Role play: An educational method in which people spontaneously act out problems or situations in order to stimulate discussion and understanding.
- Mock interview: A practice interview that helps students prepare for an actual job interview.
- Moot court: A mock court where law students argue hypothetical cases for practice.
- Professional skills training: Programs designed to help students develop the skills needed in a professional setting.
- Case studies PBL statics projects: These are problem-based learning projects focused on statics (a branch of physics that deals with bodies at rest or forces in equilibrium).
- Job readiness programs/workshops: Programs or workshops designed to help students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to enter the workforce.
- Young achievers competitions: Competitions designed to recognize and reward young people who have achieved significant accomplishments.
- Simulations using live data: These are learning activities that replicate real-world systems using live data.
- Studio/lab work: Practical work conducted in a studio (for arts and design courses) or lab (for science/engineering courses).

Annex III – Template checklist –Before WIL



Action	Not started	In progress	Completed
Informing and planning support			
Inform students about the availability of special support			
Agree on responsibilities for arranging support during WIL at the university and in the workplace.			
Ensure that students know how to apply for support, if needed			
Understanding student's needs			
Explore the student's interests, goals, and concerns			
Inquire about the student's support needs			
Assess the student's competencies, strengths, and limitations.			
Defining suitable activities and workplace			
Define suitable activities and workplace			
Consider the student's preferences			
Helping the student find a suitable project			
Explore the type of project or workplace suitable for the student			
Assist students in finding a suitable job, including help with the job search process			
Visit employers to familiarize yourself with different workplaces in the area			
Preparing the workplace			
Explore the workplace's capacity to offer meaningful learning experiences and support for the student			
Discuss with the student the required support, and how it benefits the workplace/employer.			
Encouraged workplace representatives to communicate any concerns.			

Annex IV – Template checklist –During WIL



Action	Not started	In progress	Completed
Creating a safe space			
Ensure a secure environment where students can work free from discrimination, criticism, harassment, or harm			
Give special attention to students with prior experiences of vulnerability			
Orientation and time management			
Orient students requiring special support			
Encourage students to seek assistance whenever uncertainty arises.			
Open communication and support			
Prompt students to openly discuss their support needs in the workplace			
Schedule confidential meetings to address concerns and challenges.			
Ensure workplace representatives can contact you with any concerns			
Counselling and communication			
Establish clear communication channels between the student, workplace, and yourself			
Regularly check in with the workplace and provide support to colleagues in addressing unexpected situations.			
Regular feedback and development			
Provide constructive feedback on the student's competence development.			
Guide workplace colleagues in delivering feedback and offer your input promptly.			



Annex V – Template checklist –After WIL



Action	Not started	In progress	Completed
Ensure that the student gets relevant feedback from the WIL			
Ensure the student gets relevant feedback from the WIL			
Conduct an assessment to increase the student's self-awareness about their knowledge, skills, and special needs.			
Evaluate the support provided during the WIL			
Evaluate the support measures received by the student.			
Encourage students to seek assistance whenever uncertainty arises.			
Encourage the student to discuss their support needs during the transition to professional life			
Encourage the student to mention their need for support when they find employment			

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