

National Priorities & Industry Linkage Fund Consultation Paper

UOW welcomes this important initiative to support collaboration between universities, industry, business, government and wider community in order to improve the career readiness of graduates.

Principles

1. *Do the principles provide clear guidance on what is expected of an indicator?*

The principles outlined in Figure 1 are clear. However, it is not clear if the 'Specific principles to each tier' elaborated in Table 3 are illustrative or exhaustive, and intended to guide or prescribe articulation of university plans and reporting.

Tiered Indicators

2. *How many indicators (i.e. 10, 12 or 15) might universities need to meet, to achieve the outcomes of NPILF, while also accounting for university missions?*

The requirement for universities to meet 10 or more indicators to receive full funding will likely induce caution in NPILF planning and may discourage innovations that are perceived to be risky.

3. *Do the indicators provide enough flexibility to meet the varied needs of business?*

Yes, although we note that some of the proposed indicators are encouraging growth which may be difficult to achieve given the resource constraints faced by the sector for the next few years and the external environment which is a key determinant of employment and industry willingness to engage.

4. *Do you agree with the metrics listed? Which are most valuable? Would you add other metrics?*

University of Wollongong (UOW) recommends that further consultation be conducted with stakeholders on metrics. The list in table 4 is too limited and needs development. We have particular concerns with:

- Improvement in employment outcomes. These are significantly if not primarily shaped by macro-economic factors and not the extent of industry partnerships.
- Increase in Cat 2-4 income is not a suitable measure: it favours larger universities and thereby conflicts with the principle of "Flexibility across the diversity of universities."
- It is not clear why placements within 18 months is the best WIL metric for HDRs.

5. *To be able to measure industry linkages, is there appetite to create a new data collection system?*

UOW would support the development of a national database provided it is designed to maximise efficiency for users (with respect to data entry and extraction).

Allocation methodology

6. *Is the proposed mechanism for allocation appropriate as a mechanism to incentivise new behaviours in the sector? Could re-allocation be introduced earlier/not at all?*

It is not clear that the proposed schedule, with the allocation mechanism taking effect from 2024, will provide sufficient time to accommodate for outcome lag indicators. Re-allocation is important but not until the sector has time to assess baseline performance.

Distribution Options

7. *Which distribution method (i.e., banded, per EFTSL-rate; base; loadings) makes most sense? Or can you propose another method?*

Some costs are not strictly scale related but rather relate to the organisation actually engaging in an activity. Hence, the Per-EFTSL rate + base is the most appropriate of the models discussed, especially in terms of consistency with the principle of “Flexibility across the diversity of universities.”

Priorities – WIL, STEM+ skills and industry partnerships

8. *Do you agree with the definitions of WIL, STEM+ and Industry partnerships?*

The consultation paper offers two definitions of WIL (p.4 & p.7). The latter definition is more appropriate because it is student-centric, and it includes but is not restricted to ‘authentic industry engagement, supervision and assessment.’ However, there is scope to improve on this definition to capture the full breadth of WIL practice in the sector. We suggest that [ACEN](#) be consulted.

We support the inclusion of allied health in the STEM+ definition, as these programs have a strong science base (in biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology) especially in foundation years.

The definition of “Industry” is broader than might typically be expected and may cause confusion. Consideration could be given to “Business & Community Interaction” as per the UK HE-BCI Survey.

9. *How does a university measure and maintain the quality of WIL activities? – consider if a current program/framework can be used broadly across the sector.*

ACEN has produced a framework for the evaluation and quality assurance of WIL across Australian universities: <https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/wp-content/uploads/sites/261/2019/12/Final-Report.pdf>

10. *How does a university promote WIL, and the benefits of WIL (especially new, innovative or ‘remote’ approaches) to SMEs and large organisations, and is there a role for Government?*

11. *How can universities best engage industry, particularly SMEs, with WIL?*

12. *How can universities help STEM+ students ‘think beyond the lab’ and expose them to the vast employment landscape they can access?*

We recognise the importance of this. We are scaffolding WIL and Career Development Learning across all our courses, to give students the understanding, skills and resources to expand their range of possible career opportunities.

13. *Are there specific challenges for SME’s in engaging with universities that need to be addressed in the framework?*

In general, the opportunity costs are high for SMEs to engage with universities. The specific challenges will be unique to each SME and require tailored University-SME engagements. A turnkey solution (or associated metric) is unlikely to be sufficiently flexible.

14. *Does the framework allow sufficient knowledge sharing to enable universities and industry to build on successful models?*

This may occur provided best practice examples are shared as planned and universities are given credit for adopting these best practice models. However, there is a risk that the emphasis on providing unique

'demonstrators' and 'innovators' as indicators will incentivise universities to reinvent the wheel rather than adopt proven models.

Existing practice

15. *Does your business or university have good examples of WIL, or partnerships, which can be used as exemplars?*

UOW is working towards an integrated business development approach, whereby student internships are seen as a first step in developing a long-term partnership with industry. UOW has many examples of good practice, particularly student driven activities such as UOW Formula SAE, UOW Solar Decathlon participation and award-winning program of industry directed student projects in Engineering and Information Sciences. Others include:

- [STEM camp for girls](#): annual boot camp to develop STEM skills in 15-17 year olds
- [Generator Labs](#): a best practice approach to establishing research partnerships with industry
- [Advantage SME](#): an exemplar program to help UOW researchers engage with SMEs
- [iAccelerate Programs](#): such as Start-Up, that support students to develop entrepreneurial skills

General

16. *Does the framework sufficiently address the lifetime of learning challenge facing the workforce?*

17. *Does the 12 month NPILF cycle (as set out above) allow enough time to implement and report on activities?*

18. *Do you have any other feedback or comments?*

The overarching approach appears to be aimed predominantly at undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students. Less clear is the extent to which the NPILF is intended to include postgraduate research students (doctoral and research masters). Clarification on this would assist universities in formulating NPILF plans.

Note: answers to Q 10, 11, 16 and 17 require elaboration that is not possible due to the page limit.