

Transforming practice for international student employability

ACCESS TO AND PREPAREDNESS FOR INTERNSHIPS

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Agenda

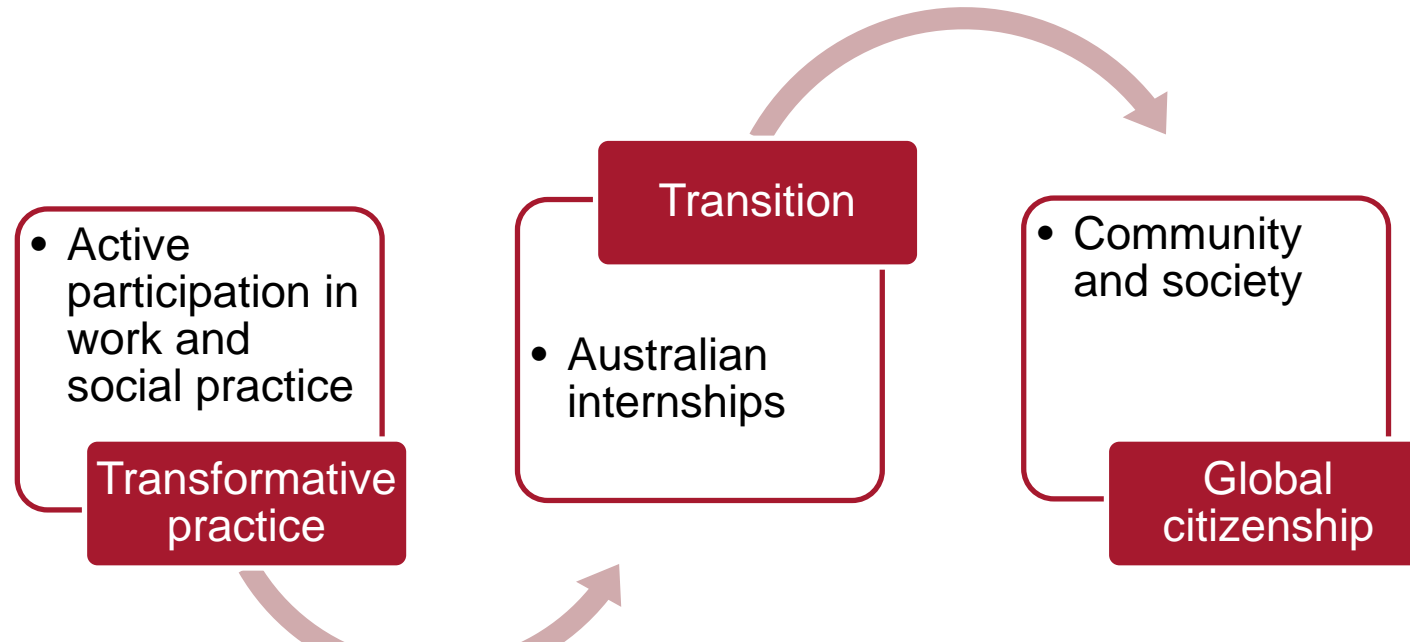


1. Employability and transformative practice
2. PACE at Macquarie University
3. Research - international students' participation in internships
4. Findings
5. Integrative practice
6. Discussion – Q/A

Employability

‘Students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy’ (Oliver, 2015).

The aim is graduates who can contribute to the community, but "only after they are successful at meeting their own needs can individuals effectively focus on contributing to others in society, be it by way of resources, or time and knowledge" (McRae, 2012).



PACE at Macquarie University



PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Integrated within all undergraduate degree programs at Macquarie University

- All undergraduate students complete at least one PACE unit
- PACE activities include professional or community engagement through internships, industry projects, or fieldwork

PACE Development Grant 2016

- Awarded to the PACE team in the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE)
- Investigated the participation of international students in **PACE internship** electives

Background

EMPLOYABILITY - CONTEXT

National context

- International education – 3d largest export industry
- Importance of increasing competitive advantage/maximising opportunities
- Emphasis on the student experience (Australian Government, 2016)
- Comparative dissatisfaction with employability outcomes

Literature

- Lack of research on WIL / international students (Gribble 2014, Universities Australia 2015)
- WIL linked to international competitive positioning for international students (Tran & Soejatminah, 2016)

“Consequently, international students are placing growing emphasis on acquiring post study work experience in the host country” (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012).

Background

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PACE INTERNSHIPS

PACE FBE context

- Small number of international students participating in PACE internships relative to student cohort

Project aims

- Explore international students' motivations to undertake internships/internship units
- Identify barriers to participation
- Identify relevant, effective support

Methodology

- 9 focus groups with 40 international students
- Content analysis – 30 unsuccessful student internship applications

Findings – student focus groups

MOTIVATIONS

Motivation to undertake an internship

- Perception of value of internships – affects motivation/decision to invest
- Desire to experience Australian workplace culture (linked to motivations to study in Australia)
- Internship experience enhances employability – work experience in Australia may lead to a better job here or in home country
- Opportunity to demonstrate the ability to put knowledge into practice
- Develop cultural competence

“I'm going back to my country after, but I'd like to say that I have an experience working in English-speaking country or working with people from different countries and did work in English”

(Mayumi, female Japanese student)

“I can like be offered more jobs if I have experience, like internship overseas”

(Da-hee, female Korean student)

Findings – student focus groups

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

- Students would like more information about internship opportunities relevant to their degree
- Some students lack confidence and feel unprepared to apply
- Lack of experience
- Lack of cultural competence
- Perceived employer issues
- Lack of networks
- Financial considerations

“After you graduate if you study for at least two years, we can actually have a working visa for two years. So actually visa is not really the main issue, but employer’s perception is the main issue”

(Nurin, female Malaysian student)

“Maybe [employers are] afraid that [international students’] communication would reduce efficiency or something”

(Edelina, female German student)

Findings – content analysis

UNSUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS

- Analysis considered features of the genre': the persuasive/promotional textual properties in relation to other linguistic features towards achieving an effective text (Bhatia, 1993; Connor, Davis and DeRycker, 1995).
- Most texts demonstrated formal and accurate business letter writing format and adherence to the genre, however,
 - Only half included: return address, writer, dates, complete name, title and address of the recipients.
 - Only a handful was error-free in terms of typos, punctuation and spelling mistakes.
 - These did not specifically address the selection criteria or anticipated needs of host organisation
 - The business discourse(s) although 'relevant' from a general point of view did not engage with the potential audience
 - The core issue presenting a relevant SELF to the potential host/employer and link to the external environment and how the applicant can make a contribution within the organisation

Two examples of text

RELEVANCE; COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Response relevance to advertised position

"Currently I am working [centre on campus] where I am responsible for assisting students in day-to-day issues that they encounter in the university. This requires me to have an in-depth understanding of the university's policies and programs and to integrate this knowledge on a daily basis with the questions that student have. I ensure that I provide quality services by always being attentive to the students' needs and following up afterwards to ensure that the academic requirements have been met during the semester" (male finance student, 2016).

Are the communicative skills sufficient for the role?

"I have advanced excel skills in both iOS and Windows system. I'm really familiar with Australian taxation system (check out [unit code and name]: 85/100)..." (female finance student, 2016).

Targeted employability strategies

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment

Promote the value of internships

- Intercultural experience
- Enhance employability

Arrival and transition

Share information about internships
Support planning (save space for PACE!)
Support preparation
International student mentors/buddy programs

Student experience

Support students in developing social networks

Build connections between local and international students

Learning & teaching

Share positive messages and information about internships in class

Build connections between local and international students

Programs

Scaffold employability skills through pathway and degree programs

Promote the value of internships through program information

PACE and Careers

Provide relevant and timely information about internships

Assist with applications and interviews

Share success stories

Identify potential host organisations

Transforming practice

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Practice – FBE
 - February 2017 – shared information about PACE internships with incoming international students
 - April 2017 – Workshop for 40 sessional teaching staff – engaging international students
 - May 2017 – Internship application workshop for students
 - May 2017 – Workshop for career advisors – application issues and relevant support
 - Planning for:
 - Messaging to students at S2 international student welcome sessions
 - Messaging to students through LMS (BE Successful for all FBE students)
 - Messaging to students through programs via Program Directors
 - Career Accelerator Program 2018 – will include a dedicated session for international students
- Practice – University wide
 - Macquarie International will engage two international student interns S2 2017
 - Interns will staff an on-campus International Student Welcome Desk
 - PACE internships – new placements for S2 2017 include a message that local and international students are encouraged to apply
 - Identify additional host organisations

How can transformative practice enable our international students to enhance their employability?

Thank you for joining the showcase and discussion.

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