



## *Excellence in work-integrated education: evaluation evidence of achievement of learning outcomes*

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## *Funded OBE research project 2009*

- **Title:** Excellence in Work-Integrated Education: Evaluation evidence for achievement of learning outcomes
- **Purpose:** To propose an integrated and coherent framework for designing, implementing, assessing and evaluating Work-Integrated Education (WIE) in BA programmes in PolyU.
- **Research methods:**
  1. Survey (questionnaires, focused group discussions, interviews)
  2. Ethnography (workplace visits and observations)
  3. Textual analysis of WIE documents, student journals and employer reports

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## *Aims of talk*

1. To outline current WIE procedures and practices for BA students in ENGL
2. To report on preliminary project results

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## *WIE, Department of English*

1. BA (Hons) in Language Studies for the Professions (BALSP), since 2006
  - **Learning outcomes:** Category A and B
2. BA (Hons) in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP), starting 2009-10

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### *Category A: Professional/academic knowledge and skills*

- (a) have gained a richer understanding of the effective use of bi-literate and trilingual skills for communication and of the development of inter-personal / business relationship in the workplace
- (b) display awareness of the use of language by leaders/supervisors in achieving their goals in professional contexts
- (c) have cultivated personal values and work attitudes to meet professional expectations

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### *Category B: Attributes for all-roundedness*

- (d) have developed greater confidence in creative and critical thinking and in making independent judgements
- (e) display awareness of and appreciate cultures, both human and corporate, within the professional setting
- (f) identify goals for their personal and professional development in the future

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## *WIE in ENGL*

- 3 training credits with 3 grades (pass with merit, pass and fail)
- 160 hours for BALSP students
- Part-time, full-time, or summer job
- Staged activities of orientation, pre-placement training, supervision, and assessment (appraisal form and final report with reflective journal)

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| <b>Local, Mainland and Overseas Programme<br/>2007-08</b> | <b>No. of BALSP<br/>Participants</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Warwick University Placement Programme (ENGL)             | 45                                   |
| Southern Cross University Placement Programme (ENGL)      | 16                                   |
| Tsinghua University Summer English Camp (ENGL)            | 31                                   |
| Shanghai University MBA Centre                            | 2                                    |
| Tsinghua Science Park English Teaching Programme (ENGL)   | 1                                    |
| Other department-coordinated local placements (ENGL)      | 34                                   |
| Preferred Graduate Development Programme (PolyU)          | 57                                   |
| Student-acquired placements                               | 26                                   |

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## *An example: Warwick University Placement Programme*

- May-July 2008
- 8 weeks
- Offshore Placement Subsidy to cover accommodation, air-ticket, travel insurance, and work visa
  
- Home stay
- 3 weeks of pre-placement training and post-placement oral presentations
- 5 weeks of work placement: training companies, city council, university offices, community service organisations, etc.
- Optional weekend excursions

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## *Types of ENGL-coordinated local WIE placements*

- Advertising
- Banking and Finance
- Editing
- Education
- Insurance
- Printing and Design
- Trading
- Training and Executive Development
- Translation
- Voluntary Services

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## *Preferred Graduate Development Programme (PGDP), SAO*

- Mainland, overseas and local placements during summer vacation
- Students apply via SPECIAL ePortfolio
- Students submit the details of PGDP to ENGL two weeks before the commencement of placement
- Offshore Placement Subsidy to cover accommodation, air-ticket, travel insurance, and work visa

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## *Student-acquired placements*

- Self-acquired jobs, voluntary community services, and campus employment
- Students apply to ENGL for converting jobs to be WIE placements
- Students submit a copy of employment letter two weeks before the commencement of job, and provide details of job responsibilities
- **Unannounced site visits** by ENGL's WIE Officer

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## *Support for WIE*

- Financial: shared responsibility for overseas placements among:
  - Department Traveling Scholarships
  - SAO Offshore Placement Subsidies
  - Students' own contribution to costs
  
- Programme support
  - Various pre-placement briefings
  - Staff visits to WIE workplaces
  - Email communication with students to provide support and advice
  - Website to provide WIE information to students

<http://www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/WIE/index.html>

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## *Assessment of WIE*

1. Students' Performance Appraisal Form, completed by work supervisor
  
2. Final Report, completed by the student
  - A brief description of the company or organization
  - Expectations and objectives of placement
  - Description of job duties
  - Post-placement self-evaluation
  - A personal development plan
  - A reflective learning journal (3,500 words)
  - Submission within one month upon placement completion

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## *Project results to date*

- Post-questionnaire for employers/ work supervisors
- Post-questionnaire for students attending overseas placement programmes
- Interviews: comparing BALSP graduates and current students

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## *Employers' evaluation*

- Most WIE employers evaluated students' overall work performance very positively in work attitude, enthusiasm, and sense of responsibility.
- Employers appreciated that students were able to contribute their knowledge and skills to the workplace and produced excellent work.
- Some employers tended to think students only possessed average professional/ business ethics due to their lack of work experience.
- Students also needed to improve their problem-solving skills and interpersonal skills.
- Punctuality was a concern in some cases.

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### *Results of student post-questionnaire: Warwick University and Southern Cross University*

- Improved English language ability and confidence in using English for communication
- Improved inter-personal skill
- Greater confidence in making independent judgments
- Better understanding of the workplace ethos
- Helped identify career interests and prepared for future employment
- The programme has met their expectations
- A rewarding learning experience
- To recommend the placement programme to other students

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### *BALSP graduates*

1. How well do you think the individual learning outcomes listed in the course COM202 Work-Integrated Education have been achieved?
2. How do the learning outcomes which you have achieved through WIE help you achieve the programme outcomes of BALSP?
3. Did you acquire additional professional and generic skills from WIE that are not included in the list of programme learning outcomes?

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## *BALSP graduates*

4. Are there any professional and generic skills which you expected to learn but did not in WIE?
5. Did you develop 'organizational awareness' (company culture), 'commercial awareness' (understanding of the business issues of the field in which one works in) or 'global awareness' (cultures and economies) in WIE?
6. How have individual learning outcomes which you achieved in WIE contributed to your current job?
7. What are your goals for future learning?

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 1 Category A (a)

- Have gained a richer understanding of the effective use of bi-literate and trilingual skills for communication, in either oral or writing proficiency rather than both
- Have gained better interpersonal skills
- Uncertain as to whether better business relationship in the workplace has been gained

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Category A (b)

- Were aware of their work supervisors' specific language/ behavior, due to differences in ranks

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Category A (c)

- Have cultivated personal values or work attitudes
- Realized the difference between study and work
- Not only should students act differently but also think differently at work

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Category B (d)

- Have developed creative and critical thinking in one way or another
- When required to solve problems without supervisor guidance, able to make the right independent judgment and solve the problems in their own ways

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Category B (e)

- Were aware of the human or corporate culture of the organization in which they worked, especially for those students who worked abroad or worked in foreign-funded companies

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Category B (f)

- Found WIE useful for their future personal and professional development
- WIE helped with identifying career aspirations

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 2

- The difference between BALSP programme learning outcomes and WIE learning outcomes lies in the subject nature and assessment method
  - This needs to be further explored.

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 3: qualities not in programme learning outcomes

- Flexibility
- Numeracy
- Planning and organizational skills

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 4

- Learned everything expected
- Not enough writing practice
- Not able to observe her supervisor giving commands
- Did not need to solve any interpersonal problems as the colleagues and supervisors had been so nice
- Job responsibilities were different from what were expected

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 5

- All have developed organizational and commercial awareness
- Not all have developed global awareness

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 6: WIE and current jobs

- Competence in English language
- Better email language
- Better research skills
- Better interpersonal skills for negotiation with clients
- How to work in a quiet environment
- **BALSP programme** required a lot of reading: useful in current taxation job

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## *BALSP graduates*

### Question 7: Goals for future learning

- More global exposure
- More artistic exposure (currently exhibition design)
- Better language proficiency, esp. spoken English
- Better Business English
- Better negotiation skills
- To become a better teacher
- To take all the exams required for taxation practitioner license

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## *Current BALSP student 1*

- Spoke better Mandarin after WIE
- Able to adjust to fit the mainland China cultures, but not the other way round
- Increased awareness of Chinese culture and cultural differences
- To contribute to China's development - interested in working in Mainland after graduation
- Not to take everything as given
- Say 'no' if faced with unfairness
- Made independent judgment and decision
- The difference between studies and work

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## *Current BALSP student 2*

- Increased awareness of the importance of English in the workplace
- Improved Mandarin and English
- Formal vs. informal English use in different settings of communication
- Increased cultural awareness and appreciation
- Enhanced self-confidence
- Considered benefits for the future when taking up work tasks
- Worked seriously and made greater efforts
- Increased critical thinking, independent decision-making, and interpersonal skills to accomplish work tasks
- Enhanced organisational, commercial and global awareness
- Language learning is life-long

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## *Suggestions for WIE procedure*

1. Create a database of students' job preferences
2. Enhanced training regarding the relation between the work nature and development trends in the industries and **professional communication**.
3. Enhanced student awareness of learning outcomes, especially those relating to generic skills, and a sense of proper work ethics

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## *Main study*

### Research methods:

1. Survey (questionnaires, focused group discussions, interviews)
2. Ethnography (workplace visits and observations)
3. Textual analysis of WIE documents, student journals and employer reports (methods in discourse analysis, corpus linguistics and pragmatics)

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## *Suggestions for assessment and evaluation of WIE*

Six parties should be involved:

1. Employers/ workplace supervisors
2. Students
3. WIE Coordinators (Officers)
4. Subject Leaders and front-line teachers
5. Alumni
6. Parents

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*Thank you!*

*Q&A*