

# Promoting university to industry partnerships through an Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF)

## IRU Job-Ready Graduates briefing

### What is the National Priorities Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF)?

As part of the Federal Government's Job-Ready Graduates package, a new fund is being established.

The National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) will have a strong focus on STEM jobs and, the Government says, increase the number and quality of work-integrated learning opportunities for students.

It will provide a block of funds to each university totaling \$222 million in 2021 and indexed each subsequent year at CPI.<sup>1</sup> The funds are allocated to each university based on the number of Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) they enrolled in 2018:

Band Criteria (2018 CSPs)	NPILF funding allocation
0 – 9,999	\$3.25 million
10,000 – 14,999	\$4.75 million
15,000 – 21,999	\$7 million
22,000 and above	\$8.75 million

IRU members are split across these four bands.

The Education Minister has established a working group of university Vice-Chancellors to help design the fund and how it works. Two IRU Vice-Chancellors are members of the group: Western Sydney University's Professor Barney Glover and Murdoch University's Professor Eeva Leinonen.

The working group will provide advice to Government on the development of performance metrics for the NPILF as the basis for university to receive their allocated funds. The Government has suggested outcomes such as<sup>2</sup>:

- increasing the number of internships and practicums
- increasing the number of STEM graduates and improving their employment outcomes
- rewarding formal research partnerships with industries and advanced apprenticeships with industry.

<sup>1</sup> Job-Ready Graduates Technical Note 2020

<sup>2</sup> Minister for Education media release, 'National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund working group', 1 July 2020  
[iru.edu.au](http://iru.edu.au)

## Do we need it?

Over the past decade universities have greatly strengthened work-driven learning and activities across all courses. This has extended work-based learning from the traditional professions that have previously included placements through to the full suite of degrees. Doing so has transformed the large generalist degrees.

Universities have done this to ensure degrees prepare students better for their careers. Government has encouraged universities to do by supporting industry partnership initiatives and measuring graduate employment outcomes.

The NPILF is proposed to be funded from funds withdrawn for the annual Commonwealth Grant Scheme payment per student.

## Existing IRU and industry partnerships

Examples of current industry and business partnerships by IRU members include:

- **Charles Darwin University** – [Deloitte Integrated Industry Partnership](#)  
The CDU Business School has partnered with Deloitte, which has struggled to maintain a well-trained graduate base in the Northern Territory, to provide students with an opportunity for a semester-long work placement to improve student career readiness and employment opportunities. The program has greatly improved Deloitte's graduate intake and provides benefits for both sides of the partnership.
- **Flinders University** – [Science and Engineering Work Integrated Learning \(WIL\) Program](#)  
The Flinders Science and Engineering Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Program has successfully placed approximately 1,000 students (around 100 students each year) to work on innovative design, development and commercialization projects with industry partners. The program provides students with comprehensive preparation around innovation, project management and workplace preparation, as well as ongoing supervision and feedback.
- **Griffith University** – [Work Integrated Learning with Queensland businesses](#)  
Griffith University has business partnerships with a number of innovative firms in south-east Queensland. One of those partners is Brisbane-based game developer Halfbrick Studios, where students work in small, collaborative teams guided by Halfbrick mentors for 100 hours over the course of a semester. Halfbrick has benefited from tapping into Griffith's pool of emerging talent across a range of relevant disciplines, and has employed numerous Griffith graduates.
- **James Cook University** – [School of Business Law and Governance \(WIL\)](#)  
Final year students from JCU's School of Business, Law and Governance have the opportunity to enrol in one of three 'Work Integrated Learning' (WIL) subjects as best suits their current situation, learning the theory and practice of work with one of JCU's industry partners. A significant amount of evidence has been captured to demonstrate the positive impact the WIL experience has had in helping students become employment-ready, including feedback from industry partners.
- **La Trobe University** – [Animal and Veterinary Biosciences placements](#)  
AGR1WIL is a for-credit work placement course, compulsory for first year students in the Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Biosciences at La Trobe University. Students are placed at veterinary clinics, farms and agricultural businesses, pet care and grooming, animal rescue and sanctuaries,

zoos and tourist parks, and government agencies. Several students were offered ongoing employment after their placement.

- **Murdoch University** – [Young Professionals Program](#)  
Murdoch University has partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce to bring together students, business people and those interested in business in an interdisciplinary program that provides opportunities for young people to hear and share their stories of professional success. Students say it has developed their confidence to deal with people at very high levels and learnt how to work in a team of people from very varied backgrounds.
- **Western Sydney University** – [Western Sydney entrepreneurial hub partnership](#)  
Western Sydney University and University of Technology Sydney are collaborating to provide a major boost to research and entrepreneurial activities in the fast-growing Western Sydney region. Local communities, industry and business are set to benefit from the agreement, which will see the two universities' business incubator programs co-locate at the Western Sydney University's Bankstown CBD campus.

## IRU Work Integrated Learning (WIL) projects

Work integrated learning (WIL) is a practice that has high impact on students' learning and employability.

Analysis of WIL participation data shows that over a given year 37% of all university students have undertaken WIL activities as part of their study – though the number of WIL participants varies significantly across institutions.<sup>3</sup>

The IRU has created a [suite of resources](#) to support member universities provide quality work based experiences for their students.

The IRU is now collaborating with government agencies to scope the potential for students to participate online in real projects as part of their work-integrated learning at university.

This [pilot project](#) will see students working on live and real eWIL (e-Work Integrated Learning) projects across three government departments:

- Federal Department of Defence
- Federal Department of Finance
- Northern Territory Department of Trade, Business and Innovation

Students from IRU institutions will participate in the projects off-site using an online 'virtual workplace'. Utilising virtual workplaces in this way will provide opportunities for remote and equity groups to take part in future eWil projects. If successful, this pilot project could path the way for remote and equity groups to take part in future eWil projects in government.

The IRU has also hosted a series of webinars for university staff, discussing how to maximise the benefits of WIL.

Last updated 28 August 2020

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<sup>3</sup> Analysis of WIL participation data 2018