LWB422: Virtual Law Placement

Supporting Real World Learning

CHALLENGE

Offering virtual work placements to address the constraints of a limited employer pool for large student numbers, cost of delivery and need for flexibility required by external/remote and part-time students. Foster a pro bono culture for undergraduate law students raising awareness of social justice issues and embed an international perspective. Undergraduate law students apply legal knowledge and skills to complete a real world project in a team and engage with others in the workplace using the affordances of technology.

RATIONALE

The Virtual Law Placement (VLP) is one of a series of work integrated learning units to provide the student with the experience of using and developing their legal knowledge and skills in a real world placement. VLP is distinctive from other units in this series in several important respects:

• VLP provides students with an opportunity to access a greater variety of work placement opportunities within the diverse range of working environments that are represented by the Career Streams for elective law subjects including international work placements
• Students use online communication technologies to enable them to be virtually, rather than physically present at the workplace and to engage with other participants in the workplace, including the workplace supervisor of the virtual placement
• Students have the opportunity to learn about the most effective methods of applying for a professional legal position.

TEACHING APPROACH

Students are offered placements in a range of organisations which represent the diverse graduate destination opportunities including social justice and international placements.

• QUT Careers and Employment and academic learning support on applying and preparing for the virtual placement.
• Liaison between unit coordinator, workplace and workplace supervisor.
• Self-assessment and reflective practice.
• Engagement with online training resources and completion of the virtual workplace project.
• Assessment on tasks associated with employment.
• Use of the unit’s QUT Blackboard site and communication tools.
• Workplace supervision, feedback and evaluation.
• Unit content, structure and IT platform designed with industry partners for mutually beneficial, worthwhile and authentic participation.

Project partners are:


LEARNING OUTCOMES

Anticipated outcomes include:

• Respond to a job advertisement and prepare a letter of application, resume and response to selection criteria in order to apply for employment as a law graduate;
• Work independently, manage and prioritise time effectively to achieve goals, embrace innovation, manage change productively as it occurs and take responsibility for professional learning and career development;
• Complete a workplace project by being a productive and co-operative team member or leader and applying existing legal knowledge, research, reasoning, critical analysis and problem solving and workplace skills in a real world context;
• Work in a virtual environment and engage with, understand and embrace the communication skills, literacies and technologies required to interact in the workplace;
• Develop professional and social and ethical responsibilities in the context of completing a team project in a real world context in the virtual workplace; and
• Learn from experiences by documenting, evaluating and reflecting upon self performance and development during virtual placement, recognising gains in knowledge and skills and developing an action plan for future development.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS USED

Using QUT Blackboard, students access practical online resources on topics such as teamwork, ethics, ePortfolio, careers, project and time management, plus workplace supervisor resources on assessment and facilitating online discussion.

A visual organiser enhances navigation of learning resources in the Blackboard site.

Communication and collaboration tools reflect those of the workplace, such as Sharepoint which all current participating project partners use.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

• Use a networked approach for collaborative design (for example, Teaching and Learning Support Services, learning designers, teaching developers, Careers and Employment Service, online career development modules, Equity) and industry partners for authentic content and approaches.
• Access existing resources where possible.
• Be prepared … long lead time; time consuming.

Additional information:

• www.law.qut.edu.au/about/wil/