

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Guidelines for Work-Integrated Education (WIE)

Prepared by
The Working Group on Curriculum Revision
under the Chairmanship of VP(AD)

1 Background and Purpose

1.1 The inclusion of work-integrated education as a component of academic programmes is part of the curriculum revision for the triennium 2005-08. Chapter 6 of the 'Guidelines for Curriculum Revision' prepared by the Working Group on Curriculum Revision explains the requirements of the WIE component. As many colleagues have raised questions about WIE since the release of the Guidelines, the Working Group has decided to prepare this document to provide further guidance on the implementation of WIE.

1.2 This document sets out the *basic principles* for the implementation of the University's policy on work-integrated education. *It does not attempt to provide prescriptive details on WIE designs.* Instead, *departments should devise their own strategies for WIE provision* in their programmes with reference to these basic principles while taking into consideration the specific conditions of their discipline. *The decision on the appropriateness of specific WIE strategies for a particular programme will rest with the respective host faculty and department.*

2 The PolyU's Policy of Formalising the Requirements of WIE

2.1 Starting from the triennium 2005-08, the requirements of WIE will be made mandatory so that *all full-time UGC-funded undergraduate programmes will include a WIE component which is credit bearing.*

2.2 The policy of making WIE mandatory is in support of accomplishing the strategic role of PolyU in developing 'all-round students with professional competence' and our vision of producing 'preferred graduates'. The emphasis on WIE is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To reaffirm the positioning of PolyU as a University offering academic programmes in a professional context.
- To strengthen the competitive edge of the University's professional-based programmes with a view to attracting more quality students and to enhancing the employability of students.
- To help achieve Strategic Objective 1 of enhancing the all-round development of students.

2.3 The prime purpose of including WIE is to enhance the quality and competitiveness of our academic programmes. The focus should be on helping students to develop a range of valuable generic abilities and to apply theories to real-life situations via the provision of work-based learning. Emphasis should be given to guiding students through their work-based learning and assessing the learning outcomes of the work-based experience.

Accordingly, the WIE activities should be ‘structured’ and ‘measurable’.

- 2.4 The WIE activities should be ‘*structured*’ in a way that students are guided to get the most out of their work-based learning opportunities, as follows:
- There should be intended learning outcomes set for workplace learning.
 - Work experience should be purposefully designed to provide intentional learning aimed at the attainment of the intended outcomes, that is, learning should not be left to occur incidentally as a side effect of work.
 - Mechanisms of support for student learning provided by the departmental and workplace supervisors should be devised to ensure that effective learning does take place.
- 2.5 Students’ learning from the WIE activities should be ‘*measurable*’ in terms of the following:
- Students should be required to document their workplace learning experience using instruments appropriate for demonstrating the attainment of WIE learning outcomes, e.g. reports, reflective journals, portfolios, etc.
 - Assessment of the attainment of intended learning outcomes and the provision of feedback to students should be built in.

3 Defining Work-Integrated Education for PolyU

- 3.1 PolyU has adopted a broad, general definition of work-integrated education as summarized in the sentence below. It will be elaborated in the paragraphs that follow.

Work-based learning experiences which take place in an organisational context relevant to a student’s future profession, or relevant to the development of generic skills that will be valuable in that profession, will be considered as satisfying the WIE requirement.

- 3.2 ‘Work-based learning experiences’ stipulates that the WIE activities must involve students in ***tackling and learning from tasks and problems from a real work place***.
- 3.3 The condition of ‘organisational context’ demands that the WIE strategies ***will engage students in carrying out activities in a company or an organisation of the real world*** so as to provide them with learning experiences which better prepare them for the real work place beyond the confines of the university. On the other hand, the indispensable requirement is only that the learning experiences ‘***take place***’ within an organisation. By this definition, while industrial placement of students for a specific period of time is encouraged, examples like cooperative projects for which students carry out project work within a company or an organisation on a visiting basis are also acceptable.
- 3.4 Relevance to students’ future profession is strongly encouraged in designing WIE provisions. If professionally related work-based learning cannot be arranged, general work-based learning which leads to the development of generic work competences can be provided instead. One example is students working as student helpers in offices of PolyU.
- 3.5 In order to ensure that all students will have at least one WIE opportunity, multiple formats for WIE provision can be included in a programme. Some examples include

sandwich programme, block placement, internship, cooperative project, clinical placement, Preferred Graduate Development Programme, community service, summer jobs, etc. Work-based learning experiences can also be scheduled at any stage of a student's study and be undergone in Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland or overseas.

4 Credits for WIE

- 4.1 The number of credits carried by a WIE component may vary from programme to programme depending upon the nature and extent of the activities and will be decided by the department.
- 4.2 Departments have the autonomy to decide whether the WIE component is an essential requirement of the programme. If the WIE component is considered an essential part of the academic programme, it should be included within the 90 credits. A WIE component can be counted outside the 90 credits, if the activities do not form part and parcel of the programme curriculum. WIE activities which do not form part and parcel of the programme curriculum can be assigned 'training credits' and will be reflected on the transcripts for co-curricular activities. Training credits will not count towards the 90 credits.
- 4.3 Whether the practical credits (for practical component) and training credits (for WIE component) will be counted in the GPA calculation will be decided by the department.

5 Organisation and Implementation of WIE

- 5.1 The PolyU will adopt a hybrid model for the organization and implementation of WIE. The model is hybrid in the sense that while it is basically decentralized with the departments owning the WIE, centralized support of some form will be provided via the Faculty Offices and the Student Affairs Office (SAO).
- 5.2 For the organization of WIE, departments should come up with an overall strategy for providing work-based learning experiences for students in their academic programmes and should be responsible for arranging professionally related WIE activities. Departments can only revert to the Preferred Graduate Development Programme (PGDP) of SAO if no suitable WIE opportunities can be identified. SAO can also provide assistance with organising WIE activities which are of non-professional nature.
- 5.3 In the implementation of WIE, attention should be paid to ensuring learning outcomes of the work-based learning experiences. Departments should come up with strategies for assessing the WIE component and they should be included in the programme document. Assessment of students will be carried out by departments. The Educational Development Centre (EDC) will compile a resource bank of examples to provide departments with ideas for designing support and assessment strategies for WIE.