


# Ready and WIL-ing: Science students' participation in work-integrated learning

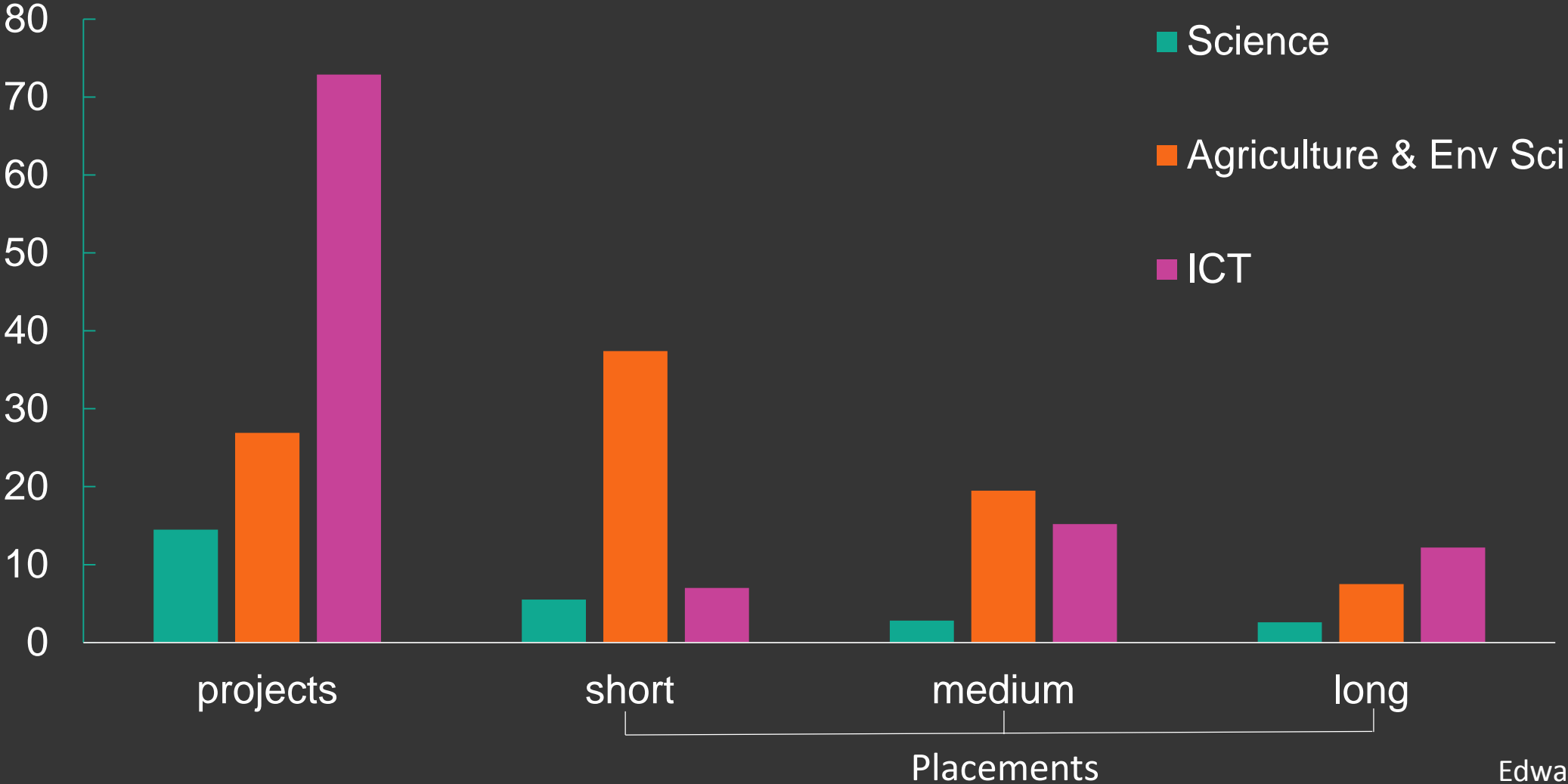
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# Student participation in WIL (%)



# *Successful WIL in Science project*

**Communities  
of practice**

**Resources:  
WIL Guide for  
Science**

**Students**

**Staff**

**Industry**

**Building  
staff  
capacity**

**Engaging  
stakeholders**

**Upscaling  
WIL in  
science**

**Climate for  
change**

**Leadership  
for change**

# Our research

How can we make engagement with WIL a priority for science students?

How can we make WIL experiences meaningful to science students?

Student focus groups and interviews

- N=138
- Four universities

## Students value and want WIL...

- Get hands-on experience
- Develop their skills
- Build networks
- Try out different options
  
- **Set themselves apart**

'It's advertised "you can put this in your resume." So many heads just pop up because that's all that we're looking for right now, what's going to make us look better when we start applying for jobs.'

## ... especially WIL in their desired workplace

- Students recognised that most WIL activities provided some value
- They thought WIL in the workplace was most valuable
- They also placed greater value on experiences directly related to their career goals

'I feel like [placement] just gives you a feel for - especially if it is directly relating to what you're doing, because it does give you a feel for what the industry would be like. And some experience in that industry.'

## ... but access is variable

- Students were often unaware of how to access WIL
- Where there were opportunities, barriers included:
  - Time
  - Money
  - Course structure
  - Competition
  - Confidence

'It's hard for us to find any. They don't have placements in our course, so you need to find it for yourself, if you were getting into that field.'

# Students were often unaware of career options

They suggested:

- Showing available roles and employers
- Giving examples of how they might use skills and knowledge
- Being explicit about the skills they are developing
- Providing opportunities to try things out

“You hear, you know, “Oh, with your degree, with your skills, you can go into anything.” But what specifically in industry are physicists called for? You never hear examples of this person’s gone into this industry and done really well.”



# Students want more access to WIL...

- Building WIL into courses:
  - makes it easier to access
  - creates support structures
  - encourages **all** students to participate
- Different opportunities suit different students
  - Discipline and prior experience
  - Career goals and orientation

‘Work placements should be compulsory in every degree you do and I don’t know why it isn’t... They expect us to do it without giving us the help to do it.’

## ... and want WIL earlier in their course

- Embedding WIL early in courses:
  - gives students time to plan
  - prompts further participation
  - builds confidence through preparation and scaffolding.

‘In first year, we probably wouldn’t have the skills to go straight in and do work experience in an industry environment, but at least having the exposure, just going and seeing.’

## On-campus WIL

- Context and purpose
- Hands-on experience and skill development
- Understand their discipline
- Experience relevant to future work
- Confidence in ability
- Makes learning more meaningful

## Workplace WIL

- Context and purpose
- Hands-on experience and skill development
- Understand their **profession and workplace**
- Experience relevant to future work **and employers**
- Confidence for **careers**
- Makes **degree** more meaningful
- **Build networks**
- **Test career options**

# Recommendations

To help students prioritise and get the most from WIL, we need to:

- Talk about WIL early and often
- Build WIL into courses, especially placements
- Make use of the full range of WIL activities
- Help students identify and integrate their knowledge and skills
- Support students to create their own opportunities

**“If you don’t know how to start,  
you don’t get the opportunities. I want  
to do something but I don’t know  
how to start it.”**