

## CARRICK INSTITUTE : DISCIPLINE BASED INITIATIVES



Work Integrated Learning : A national framework for initiatives to support best practice

### Griffith University

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<b>Vignette title and details</b>	Journalism internships  5-14 days (or more)  For students enrolled in the Bachelor of Journalism or Journalism Major in the Bachelor of Communication and Bachelor of Arts, Griffith University
<b>Discipline</b>	Journalism
<b>Employment sector</b>	Media
<b>Student numbers</b>	30-40 per year
<b>Optional/compulsory</b>	Optional
<b>Credit bearing</b>	The program is credit-bearing
<b>Assessment</b>	A portfolio including industry-standard work output (news stories etc), a workplace diary, and a critical reflection on what has been learned.
<b>Payment</b>	No payment
<b>Number of staff involved</b>	All students have a workplace mentor 4 academic staff are usually involved in the program
<b>Weblink</b>	N/A
<b>Key Words</b>	Journalism internship; industry experience; structured work placements; reflective learning experience

## Overview

Journalism internships are offered to 30-40 third-year undergraduate and postgraduate Masters students, each year as part of the Journalism major at Griffith University's Nathan campus. The internships have developed gradually since the journalism program at Griffith started at the Nathan Campus in July 1995. Our workplace learning experiences for students of journalism started three years later in 1998, when Optus opened a community television channel in Brisbane. At the same time, students were also volunteering at local community radio stations 101.1 FM at Logan and 4ZZZ in the city. Those early mixed experiences were evidence enough that work experience — as we called it then — was a valuable learning tool that complimented what we were trying to do in our various courses at the university. The program expanded from 1999, and since then, with more academic staff appointed, final year students in print, radio, online and television journalism have been undertaking internships with a wide range of industry partners as part of our own self-managed internship scheme. The internships program is a credited component of the Journalism major and provides a 'capstone' experience for participants.

## Structure of program

From the start, we adopted a problem-based learning approach to journalism education at Nathan. 'Deep' approaches to learning are most likely to occur when students are engaged in a course or an assessment item for their own sake. This is especially the case with internship experiences which, for a significant number of our final year students, is where 'the penny drops'. The 'real life' experience and problem-solving methodology used in problem-based learning (PBL) seem to prepare students well for their short, intensive workplace engagements. Many students have been able to extend formal internship arrangements through private negotiations with potential employers. In this and other ways, internship placements seem to fit appropriately with a PBL framework in that deep understanding of issues and learning comes about by applying existing knowledge to 'real life' situations. This taps into the idea of learning as an active process, hence the emphasis on the need to instill in our students a culture of life long learning and the need to sustain this process by reflecting on their (and our) experiences.

There is strong evidence of students' positive perceptions of their encounters with the 'real world' since our work placements began — only a handful of the many hundreds of final year students who have completed internships have expressed some reservations. Interestingly, just one thanked us for the opportunity which he rated as his best experience at Griffith, then announced that it had convinced him never to become a journalist!

We build on the PBL concept by providing, through internships, the opportunity for students to 'learn through observation' — not simply to reinforce the practice of journalism 'on the job', but to more intuitively listen to and observe their surroundings, and to enable those observations to subtly feed into their understanding of the world they are about to enter. Most of the students are incredibly keen to find out if what we have taught them over the previous two and a half years is accurate, and to experience a real-life newsroom for themselves. In short, while they're eager to get in there and write stories, conduct interviews, attend parliamentary press conferences etc, they are also just as keen to walk through the front door of the newsroom and take it all in — to begin their observation of the industry, and thus begin their industry-based learning experience.

We also require students to provide a reflective essay at the end of their internship, so they are able to not only benefit from the practical experience they gain but to also reflect on how their practical experience relates to their classroom instruction over the past three years, often on issues of news media theory, media organizational structure, ethical issues and so on. The internships give us, as educators, a more powerful tool to convince students about what they may have experienced in a classroom environment for several years — but in the context of an industry internship briefing session, it suddenly takes on new relevance.

We see our model as a three-phase approach:

1. Students are prepared for the internship through two-four hours of preliminary briefing sessions which provides them with information about industry expectations of *their work*; what they should expect from industry; and how they can make the most of their internship experience, whether it lasts one week or all semester. We also conduct these briefing sessions with the workplace supervisors to ensure they are prepared for the arrival of the intern.
2. Students are familiarised with, and subsequently engage in, problem-based learning techniques with both their workplace supervisor and through peer reflective sessions following the internships

3. A formal reflective essay ensures students put together their practical experiences with theoretical material appropriate to a University-level course which ensures learning experiences beyond the classic 'work experience week' and provides more long-term learning and knowledge enhancement

Through a combination of preliminary briefing sessions, discussions with workplace supervisors, reflective assessment pieces for students, and in-class peer group discussions, we are achieving both industry and academic goals for our students, providing a more rounded and holistic learning experience than what may usually be expected from a short-term work placement. While some of the one-week internships may offer limited benefits compared to the more extensive semester-long internships also offered, the very nature of work placements — whether structured, unstructured, formal or informal (Billett, 2001b) — offer students learning experiences that we can not possibly provide them with in a classroom environment.

## Special features

We take particular care in matching students to specific workplace environments. For example, a student who wants to work in commercial radio must have a very different attitude to one who sees the ABC as a potential career destination. A student who has good general knowledge will work better in a newsroom than one who has a specific interest (e.g. music), who may be better placed with a magazine. Our industry links and expertise enable us to as much as possible match students with an appropriate 'employer'. Mostly this works.

We believe the internship experience for our students is often their most valuable 'university' experience and the comments we receive overwhelmingly support this. Variable workplace experiences are shared through a type of focus group de-briefing session among the students, where students discuss and debate the merits of their workplace experiences. We believe this process helps in reinforcing the importance of making connections between theoretical issues (e.g. around journalism practices) and the reality of everyday work. We believe the structure that we offer through the program — the credit-bearing nature of the internships; established assessment items attached to the internship; and a curriculum structure which supports the students internship experience is an important feature and reason for the success of our program.

Although we have not collected formal data, we estimate that about 30 percent of our internship students gain either part-time or full-time work as a direct result of their internship. This estimate is based on past anecdotes and emails from students indicating the benefits of their internship. We also gauge the success of our program based on the positive feedback received from students, and this is often in the form of discussion in the in-class peer group session in which students regularly identify the internship as one of their best learning experiences throughout their university career. We do spend time matching students to potential employers, and indeed ask students what their preference is in terms of their work placement — i.e. we attempt to match their internship with their ultimate career goals. The internship program forms part of the cross-campus Journalism major, which received a Griffith Excellence Team Teaching Award in 2004.

## Future work

The major difficulty we face is the time it takes both to organise and sustain the existing program. Academic staff do this as part of our usual workload with little or no formal recognition or support from either our school or faculty. It is a very time-consuming process and we believe our industry links and liaison would be greatly improved if we had more time to forge new alliances and extend existing ones. Ideally, we would like to have time for more detailed industry feedback beyond a brief telephone discussion or a written feedback sheet on particular students. Our ability to drop in on workplaces when students are there is extremely limited because of time constraints and the great variety of places in which our students are engaged (see Appendix A below for a list of our internship placements). With more resources, we might be in a better position to standardise to some degree the type of feedback we receive from this varied array of industry partners, perhaps even running an annual employers' focus group to shed light on their perceptions of the internship process and how it might be improved.

Our program has developed over the past 10 years, so there have been many occasions when we have introduced new aspects to our program in response to problems occurring in the year before. For example, in the early years of the internships we found many students were not obtaining a 'deep' learning experience and that their internships were occurring fairly similarly to a 'work experience week'. To counter this problem, we introduced the preliminary briefing sessions to better prepare students for their internship. We found, for example, that some industry supervisors were deliberately leaving the intern on their own for several hours at the start of the internship, to see if the student would take the initiative and start finding their own stories, doing interviews etc. Some students would just sit there for two hours and look around the newsroom hoping someone would come and help them, and this meant that they were immediately eliminated as a future employee and were usually given the

TV Guide to type out or some similar menial duty for the rest of their internship. Within the briefing sessions, we then started preparing students for this scenario so that they could go to their internship on their first morning armed with story ideas, potential interviewees, press conferences to attend etc so they could make a great first impression which would mean they were more fully integrated into the routine of the newsroom for the rest of their internship. This greatly enhanced their learning experience and ensured the students went into the internship with the belief that they now had to operate as a 'working journalist', not just a student who was there to tag along for the duration of the placement.

We would like to bring more structure to our work placements by conducting formal interviews with both the students and the workplace supervisor at the completion of the internship. This would provide important information to feed into the structure of the internships in the next offering. While we do conduct discussions with the participants, we feel the program would be stronger if this component was formalised. We are keen to expand our program to include more students, and for the internships to run for longer periods, but this requires significant staff time in preparation and monitoring of the internships which we are not able to take on with our current staffing arrangements.

## Additional Insights

Please see above, and our paper delivered to the Griffith University WIL Symposium – see below

### Learning and journalism: using formal work experience and reflection

*By Susan Forde and Michael Meadows*

#### Introduction

The journalism program at Griffith started at the Nathan Campus in July 1995. Workplace learning experiences for students of journalism at Griffith University started three years later in 1998, when Optus started a community television channel in Brisbane. Groups of final year students essentially ran the station for two years until Optus decided to shut it down. At the same time, students were also volunteering at local community radio stations 101.1 FM at Logan and 4ZZZ in the city. Those early mixed experiences were evidence enough that work experience — as we called it then — was a valuable learning tool that complimented what we were trying to do in our various courses at the university. The program expanded from 1999, and since then, with more academic staff appointed, final year students in print, radio and television journalism have been undertaking internships with a wide range of industry partners as part of our own self-managed internship scheme. The list of organizations where our students have worked or are still working is provided in Appendix 1.

There is strong evidence of students' positive perceptions of their encounters with the 'real world' since our work placements began — only a handful of the many hundreds of final year students who have completed internships have expressed some reservations. Interestingly, just one thanked us for the opportunity which he rated as his best experience at Griffith, then announced that it had convinced him never to become a journalist! An undesirable impact of workplace learning, perhaps (Billett 2001a, 98), but nonetheless an important one. Before we go into greater detail of the program itself and what we make of it in terms of its contribution to learning and teaching, let's have a look at exactly what we are talking about here — journalism.

Journalism as a cultural practice fulfils multifarious roles in managing society. Journalists might be described as responding variously to the needs of the powerful, as moral and social guardians, as storytellers, and perhaps most importantly, as constructors of nation and state in managing the symbolic arena. But despite concerted efforts by a wide range of journalism-related organisations and entities in Australia, the credibility of journalists working in the mainstream remains firmly lodged around the level of 'advertisers, real estate agents and car sellers' (Australian Press Council 2006). One poll rates journalists' credibility alongside that of sex workers (*Readers Digest* 2007)! Interestingly, television journalists are just slightly ahead of their newspaper colleagues in the credibility stakes although talkback radio hosts are deemed to be more credible than both. Journalists come in around 24 on the 2008 list headed by nurses, pharmacists, doctors and teachers (Roy Morgan Research 2008). The representative organisation for the majority of Australia's journalists — the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) — has attempted to address these negative perceptions over the years through a series of professionally-orientated seminars, release of an annual summary of local issues in its *Press Freedom* series, along with edifying articles in its regular magazine, *The Walkley*. From the academic side, there has been a swathe of books and journal articles in recent years dealing with journalism ethics, along with research projects investigating the shortfalls of journalistic practice, all designed to improve the way journalists do their job — and



perhaps more importantly, the way they are *perceived* to be doing their job. All of this seems to no avail. So what is the problem? Are journalists destined to remain pariahs because of the very nature of their work? Scholarly reflection on journalism education per se is remarkable by its absence in the three scholarly journals related specifically to journalism education in Australia — *AsiaPacific MediaEducator*, *Australian Journalism Review* and the now defunct *Australian Studies in Journalism*. A considerable number of largely descriptive essays have been written on specific journalism teaching and learning methodologies but there are few that have attempted to answer the 'How?' and 'Why?' questions. As with journalism practice itself, these are, of course, the most challenging. So let's have a go.

### **Learning about journalism**

One way of looking at why this is important to understand is offered by the work of cultural theorist Antonio Gramsci. He is perhaps best known for offering an insight into the ideological role of the media in the organisation and manufacture of consent — hegemony — and the specific role of journalism and, we suggest, journalism education in this process. He identifies media as the most dynamic part of the ideological structure of society but, significantly, he acknowledges that media take their place alongside other institutions which influence public opinion — cultural organisations, schools, universities, clubs and associations, family and sexual life, churches and religions, ethnically specific organisations etc (Hall 1986, 26; Gramsci 1988, 380-381). This acknowledges a strong theoretical link between media — including media practices — and other institutions, in this case, universities, that influence the formation of culture. Essentially, this is a process of cultural resource management where journalism — as an important and influential cultural form — is part of the melange. What we suggest in this paper is that this framework clearly places all related activity — including *learning about journalism* — within this theoretical web. It is part of a process that imagines society and our places within it (Anderson 1984). Just as journalism plays a critical role here, so does *learning about journalism* — particularly in the workplaces which sustain it.

Billett (2001a, 15) argues that workplaces have formal structures of 'experience and guidance' in place. This is most certainly the case for journalism interns, largely because of the still entrenched apprenticeship learning-training regime which has existed for almost as long as the press itself. Such workplaces are 'central to sustaining the practices...in which learning occurs', enabling learners to access the knowledge they need (Billett 2001a, 15). This is clearly evident in the comments in students' reflective observations, both written and verbal, of their internship experiences — the '*now I know why*' factor. They frequently comment on *now* understanding why specific problem-solving skills related to journalism practice are important — knowledge of the law, narrative skills, the ability to make judgements about the veracity of information, and the importance of being self-critical. Interns are usually paired up with a mentor — a co-worker — who is responsible for guiding them through their learning experiences on site. As Billett (2001a, 19) observes, the shared problem-solving activity that necessarily ensues in a workplace context is likely to produce a more powerful learning experience than any form of direct teaching.

The impact of such internship experiences stems from the inexorable links between learning and working and the particular context in which this takes place (Billett 2001a, 21-33). But not all workplace learning is necessarily positive. What Billett (2001a, 98) terms the 'hidden curriculum' of workplaces may produce unexpected and unwanted learning outcomes. From our perspective, students observe how journalists accept 'freebies' or 'junkets' in some workplaces which they may see as part and parcel of everyday practice. This activity tends to be widespread in commercial radio and television, for example, but is frowned upon in establishments like the ABC. We all dread an intern returning from a placement to announce: 'I can't wait to get my first junket.' Fortunately, in our collective experience, it's only happened once. But it has the capacity to create such ethical dilemmas which, we hope, students have the knowledge to resolve before they are assigned an internship placement.

### **Learning and journalism education**

Journalism education has a key role to play in offering experiences and learning situations which go beyond the narrow realm of the reporter in a reconstructed newsroom (Sheridan-Burns 2002). In short, journalism education's links to the academy might be usefully reviewed and strengthened to ensure students' experiences are not confined to a long string of journalism-specific courses which serve primarily to *narrow* their knowledge base — and their employability. So we see our internship program as very much complimenting an on-campus curriculum rather than replacing elements of it. Journalism courses within the tertiary sector globally have an uncertain relationship with the academy and the program here at Griffith is no different. Journalism educators worldwide have a challenge...

...to defend curriculum, methods and theories against industry-wide shared notions that the academy is not the place to teach students how to get a job in the media, and that journalism is not the place to thoroughly reflect on the roles and functions of news media in society (Deuze 2006, 22).

So we are in the unenviable position of having to negotiate 'essentialist self-perceptions of both industry and academy' (Deuze 2006, 22) — and speaking to an audience of the latter, we must wonder how *you* think about this whole question yourselves.

Canadian journalism academic Stuart Adam, amongst others, has been critical of the narrow conception of the journalist as a reporter, arguing for using disciplines like history, philosophy, literature, political science and English to provide students with the skills of journalism. This throws into question the appropriateness of journalism *itself* as a basis or a medium for education. Adam describes journalism as a set of practices which entails expressing a judgment on the importance of an issue, engaging in reporting, adopting words and metaphors, solving a 'narrative puzzle', and assessing and interpreting information (Adam 1988, 9; 1993). He argues that the first step is to develop a theory of journalism by investigating it as a method of expression and communication which takes place in a variety of different settings. A second step is to incorporate elements of academic culture into journalism education. This approach sees journalism education as offering a focus for other disciplines rather than competing with them (Parisi 1992, 10; Adam 1989, 73). In doing work, journalists take part in a sequence of processes — their ability to do this effectively and efficiently mirrors the standard and nature of their education and training. A problem-based approach to journalism education seemed to offer one way of achieving this and that is why we have applied elements of this approach in our program here at Griffith. The thrust of Adam's argument is that the fields of journalism — professional practice, ethics, communication and society, communication theory, law, for example — need to be integrated as different approaches to the same course. The internship elements of professional practice fit appropriately within this context. Thus, following Adam (1989; 1993), we need to think about journalism at university level as an *organisational determinant* rather than as comprising separate fields such as professional practices, ethics, communication and society, theory, law etc. Perhaps in this way, its association with the academy, along with the theoretical and practical relevance of internships, might be more easily accepted as a valid extension of learning.

### **Problem-based learning**

Traditional approaches to teaching at tertiary level — the lecture/tutorial/workshop approach — offer limited opportunities to engage students more actively in learning processes related to journalism. We have tried to avoid a program that relies on excessive workloads — for example, weekly assignments — which achieve a 'surface' or 'reproductive' approach to learning (Biggs, 1990; Trigwell and Prosser, 1991; Ramsden, 1992), and which are quite common in other journalism courses around the country. 'Deep' approaches to learning are most likely to occur when students are engaged in a course or an assessment item for their own sake. This is especially the case with internship experiences which, for a significant number of our final year students, is where 'the penny drops'. The 'real life' experience and problem-solving methodology used in problem-based learning (PBL) seem to prepare students reasonably well for their workplace engagements. PBL has been adopted widely, particularly by the health sciences — medicine, nursing, physiotherapy — but it is also used as a teaching and learning methodology by other disciplines such as architecture, engineering, social work, mathematics, law, optometry, metallurgy and geography (Alavi 1995, p. 4; Boud, 1985, cited in Sadlo; Oxford Centre for Staff Development 1992).

Internship placements seem to fit appropriately with a PBL framework in that deep understanding of issues and learning comes about by applying existing knowledge to 'real life' situations. This taps into the idea of learning as an active process, hence the emphasis on the need to instil in our students a culture of life long learning and the need to sustain this process by reflecting on their (and our) experiences (Ross 1995, 179-180; Ellyard 1995, p. 25).

### **Workplace learning and journalism internships**

While we see our internships as an example of problem-based learning, we do so within the very specific application in a media newsroom. Although Billett identifies the general use of 'problem solving' in a generic context as 'fanciful and flawed' (2003: 8), we use it in a specific journalistic context with which students are familiar before they embark on internship placements. Furthermore, we build on the PBL concept by providing, through internships, the opportunity for students to 'learn through observation' — not simply to reinforce the practice of journalism 'on the job', but to more intuitively listen to and observe their surroundings, and to enable those observations to subtly feed into their understanding of the world they are about to enter. Most of the students are incredibly keen to find out if what we have taught them over the previous two and a half years is accurate, and to experience a real-life newsroom for themselves. In short, while they're eager to get in there and write stories, conduct interviews, attend parliamentary press conferences etc, they are also just as keen to walk through the front door of the newsroom and take it all in — to begin their observation of the industry, and thus begin their industry-based learning experience.

We prepare the students for internships, particularly at daily newsrooms such as ABC-TV and radio, and *The Courier-Mail*, by stressing the importance of a broad general knowledge. In short, we need to send students to

these daily newsrooms who have already engaged with the broader 'academy', as Sheridan-Burns (2002) and Adam (1988) suggest, and have taken on study in or at least have a strong understanding of politics, history, culture, and perhaps literature. We cannot stress enough to students that the knowledge they have *outside* the narrow realm of journalism practice is what will set them apart from the crowd in a newsroom that sees a new intern every second week — and indeed, it is these broader skills and knowledges that industry is looking for. It is often this preliminary discussion which drives home to students what we may have been telling them in a classroom environment for two years. Over the past eight years we have seen several students withdraw their name from some of the tougher internships due to this — they recognize that their general knowledge, their engagement with fields outside journalism, is not sufficient and will make their life in the newsroom difficult and potentially embarrassing (if they stare blankly when an older sub-editor mentions the Fitzgerald Inquiry, they will be immediately eliminated as a potential cadet/employee). The point we're trying to make here is that the internships give us, as educators, a more powerful tool to convince students about what they may have experienced in a classroom environment for several years — but in the context of an industry internship briefing session, it suddenly takes on new relevance.

An important part of this initial briefing session is also to highlight to students the aims of the program — clearly, to learn more about their industry, to make contacts, to possibly obtain part-time work — but in an educational sense, we also want them to think about what they are experiencing and to reflect on what they have learned. We therefore set an assessment task following the internship which requires students to provide a 'reflective summary' of their experiences. They are aware that this will be required after their internship, and as a result we expect they will be continually thinking about their experiences and giving meaning to them during their internship, in preparation for the reflection they will need to provide to us, as assessors, and to their classmates at the completion of their placement. We not only require a written reflection, but also hold a joint 'plenary' session where all the internship students sit and talk together about their experiences. Those who have already completed their placement at *The Courier-Mail* or the *Sunshine Coast Daily* might warn students who are yet to start there about particular chiefs-of-staff, journalists to avoid, journalists to look-up and so on. They are also asked to reflect on any ethical dilemmas they may have encountered, any instances where their classroom experience has contradicted their industry experience, any observations they may have made about the power of the media, the place of the media in contemporary society and politics, and so on. Students are required to consider these issues in the in-class peer group plenary session, and then to build on these discussions through their written reflective piece which will also include references, broader reading in a more formal report structure. Such discussion allows the interns to place their experiences not just within the narrow frame of what they may have learnt about journalism during their internship, but more broadly what they may have learned about the media, media practice, and the role of the media in contemporary civil society during their time.

In the briefing sessions we also warn the students that at many placements, they will need to take a great deal of initiative with them — a number of our work placements leave students to their own devices for the first half-day of their internship, just to see what they will do. If they sit there, stare at the ceiling, look around the news room, and keep waiting for someone to come and help them, they are immediately dismissed as a serious cadetship prospect. If they approach their new-found freedom differently, and locate a phone, start looking up some press releases and following their own stories which they then present to the chief-of-staff at the end of the day, they have made a great start. So in our briefing sessions, we suggest they use their initiative, follow their own stories, come up with their own story ideas and this enhances their internship experience enormously.

The theme that is really emerging here is the preparation that we put into the internships — it is the key to maximizing the students' *ability* to get as much as possible out of their short time on placement, which in our program varies from one week at large organizations such as *The Courier-Mail* and the ABC, to two days per week for the entire semester at some of the smaller media organizations such as *Scene Magazine*, *Time Off*, and smaller local newspapers. We further prepare for the internships by identifying a work placement supervisor at each workplace. They are contacted two or three weeks before semester begins to find out if they are prepared to take on interns, and if so to discuss what their role will be. Several discussions occur with this contact person before the student arrives for their placement, and following the internship each workplace supervisor is contacted again to provide feedback on the student's performance. This Internship Report, which can be provided either verbally or in hard copy, feeds into our assessment of the student and also informs our organization of the internships for the following year. It also enables us to 'match-up' the students' account of their internship with the account from their supervisor. We have found supervisors, who are usually editors, deputy editors, chiefs-of-staff, or senior journalists — inevitably appreciate interns who are curious, eager, and keen to observe what is going on around them. They will praise the writing ability of students who can produce good copy, but they will appreciate more the students who were significantly engaged with the workplace and their environment. So our preparation with the internship supervisors (at the work placement) is coupled with preparing the students for what lies ahead, and has been found to maximize the students' learning experiences year after year.

The internships also enable us, as academics, to reach out to the industry and to show them that perhaps what we are teaching *is* relevant to what they do, and *can* provide them with worthy and talented writers/journalists. Deuze (2006) has suggested that as journalism educators we are constantly justifying the academic strengths of our work to the academy; while also trying to emphasise the practical strengths of our teaching to the industry. Internships enable us to confront this seeming contradiction, and indeed to identify the complimentary nature of what we do — industry desires cadets who have good practical skills, but who just as importantly have a strong background and general knowledge of politics, history, culture, literature and so on. The academy and our own calling as academics and researchers requires us to produce high-calibre graduates who are knowledgeable with a strong liberal arts background, but also — increasingly — employable. Through a combination of preliminary briefing sessions, discussions with workplace supervisors, reflective assessment pieces for students, and in-class peer group discussions, we are achieving both industry and academic goals for our students, providing a more rounded and holistic learning experience than what may usually be expected from a short-term work placement. While some of the one-week internships may offer limited benefits compared to the more extensive semester-long internships also offered, the very nature of work placements — whether structured, unstructured, formal or informal (Billett, 2001b) — offer students learning experiences that we can not possibly provide them with in a classroom environment.

## Conclusion

We acknowledge that simply describing the structure of our work placements does not necessarily demonstrate the value of our internship scheme (Billett, 2001b). Indeed, it is something that remains to be done, for us to formally interview our internship students and produce some solid statistics about the learning outcomes and the success of the program from the students' point of view. Anecdotal information from the students, provided through their reflective pieces over the past eight years and their in-class peer group discussions certainly suggest that the students have regularly indicated their internship to be one of the most valuable learning experiences during their university career. Each year, we estimate about 30 percent of our students would obtain either part-time or full-time paid work as a direct result of their internship — but this is only our estimate, based on anecdotes, and something which we recognize needs to be formally ascertained.

As we mentioned earlier, not all the students' learning experiences are positive — we have had several cases of students leaving their internships early because they felt they were not being treated appropriately in the workplace; or because they were being given menial tasks to complete and they felt they could obtain a better learning environment elsewhere. This has occurred, to our knowledge, on three occasions in the past eight years. The 'interdependence' of learning and working (Billett 2001, 39) is clear from our experiences thus far. The shared problem-solving which occurs when our interns are joined with an on-site co-worker certainly has the potential to provide a far more valuable and lasting learning experience for the student than we can provide through direct teaching. Further, the reflection that the students are required to provide both to their peers, and in the format of a formal referenced paper for assessment, encourages their engagement in the workplace beyond a simple 'work experience week' and illuminates connections between practice and theory. We hope our interns — the journalists of the future — will help to improve the standing of Australian journalists beyond the credibility of real estate agents and used car dealers because they will not only deliver practical skills to the workplace, but they will also bring a university-level knowledge base and background which informs and moulds their practice. By applying a problem-based learning approach to a specific, rather than a general, workplace context, and through timely preparation of both the students and the workplace for the upcoming internship, a positive and highly beneficial learning experience is achieved which, we hope, will stay with our students for years to come.

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## Appendix 1.

### Internship placements for Griffith journalism students

#### Print

*The Courier-Mail*  
*Sunshine Coast Daily*  
 Quest Newspapers (suburbans)  
*Time Off*  
*Rave Magazine*  
*Scene Magazine*  
*The Reporter (Logan)*  
*The Koori Mail*

#### Radio

ABC radio News (Brisbane)  
 4BC News

4KQ News  
4ZzzZ  
101.1 FM  
Bay FM, Redlands  
National Indigenous News Service  
MMM/B105 News (from 2008)

**Television**

ABC TV, Brisbane  
Stateline  
Australian Story  
National Nine News  
Seven News  
Ten News  
SBS News, Sydney  
Briz 31

**Online**

ABC News Online (Brisbane)  
Crikey.com

**International**

Agence France Presse, Malaysia  
*Vietnam Economic Times*, Hanoi