

Identifying Challenges, Creating Opportunities

2020-21

Indigenous Students and Work-Integrated Learning at UBC



Research Report Prepared by
Jennifer Doyle and Jackson Traplin

WE ACKNOWLEDGE OUR RESEARCH STUDY PARTNERS:

[UBC Vancouver](#)

First Nations House of Learning
Co-op Program Faculties
(Arts, Engineering, Forestry, Kinesiology, Sauder School of Business)
Centre for Student Involvement & Careers
Centre for Community Engaged Learning
Enrollment Services

[UBC Okanagan](#)

Aboriginal Programs and Services
Interdisciplinary Co-op Program
(Arts, Fine Arts, Human Kinetics, Management, Media Studies, Science)

WITH THANKS TO OUR RESEARCH STUDY TEAM LEADS AND STEERING COMMITTEE:

[Team Leads:](#)

Julie Walchli, Executive Director,
Work-Integrated Education and Career Initiatives, UBC Arts, UBC-V
Adrienne Vedan, Director,
Indigenous Programs and Services, Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs, UBC-O
Jamie Snow, Associate Director,
Community Relations, Interdisciplinary Co-op Program, UBC-O
Kristen Pike, Associate Director,
Indigenous Programs and Services, UBC-O

[Steering Committee Members:](#)

Robyn Leuty, Associate Director,
Career Centre for Student Involvement and Careers, UBC-V
Vicki George, Associate Director,
First Nations House of Learning, UBC-V
Allison Beardsworth, Associate Director
Strategic Indigenous Enrolment Initiatives, UBC

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BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training

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Executive Summary

Post-secondary institutions across Canada are working diligently to address inequities in Indigenous students' full participation in higher education. Nonetheless challenges such as the marginalization of Indigenous students, along with curriculum inadequacies, persist (Charbonneau, 2017; Gallop & Bastien, 2016). To this end, Work-Integrated Learning¹ (WIL) can serve as a key curricular and/or co-curricular, component of a student's post-secondary learning experience. At UBC, WIL opportunities such as research, co-operative education, and volunteering can supplement and enhance students' learning by including practical and hands-on experiences that local and global employers' demand.

As UBC takes steps to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, WIL can play a significant role in supporting and enhancing the lives and educational experiences of Indigenous learners. With post-secondary enrolment of Indigenous students likely to increase over the following decade, the need for greater supportive resources such as WIL at UBC's two campuses will be an essential element for Indigenous students' learning experiences (McKeown et al., 2018; Statistics Canada, 2019).

Below is a summary of some of the most pertinent challenges and recommendations from the research study, *Developing Effective WIL Programming for Indigenous Students of Canada across the University of British Columbia*. A complete list can be found in the *Challenges and Recommendations* section of the report.

Challenge: Low awareness of WIL among Indigenous UBC students. **Recommendation:** Targeted messaging to prospective, bridging, and 1st and 2nd year students detailing the variety of WIL opportunities offered at UBC in order to generate awareness of WIL.

Challenge: Low awareness of WIL among community partners. **Recommendation:** Continue to strengthen relationships with Indigenous community partners (e.g., First Nations Education Coordinators), so that these partners develop a deeper understanding of WIL, and of its value to students' post-secondary learning experiences.

Challenge: Lack of culturally relevant WIL supports and programming. **Recommendation:** Create innovative WIL supports and initiatives specific to Indigenous students (e.g., Indigenous

¹ See "Definition of Work-Integrated Learning" in the *Introduction* section of the report for a detailed definition of WIL.

student career advising, and culturally relevant WIL programming such as on-the-land activities).

Challenge: Lack of cultural knowledge training for WIL practitioners. **Recommendation:** Design training materials to aid WIL practitioners in order to best support Indigenous UBC students in WIL placements.

Challenge: Prohibitive structure of some WIL programming. **Recommendation:** Restructure and/or broaden WIL program requirements to create options for Indigenous students to engage in a variety of opportunities (e.g., spring- and summer-only Co-op placements for Indigenous students whose funding is often dedicated/allocated to FTE fall and winter semesters)

Challenge: Financial aspects of WIL opportunities. **Recommendation:** Establish financial awards for Indigenous students interested in engaging in WIL (e.g., grants or awards for qualifying Co-op/Intern students).

Background

Funded by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, our 2020/2021 research study, *Developing Effective WIL Programming for Indigenous Students of Canada across the University of British Columbia*, focuses on exploring current levels of Indigenous student engagement in Co-op/WIL opportunities across UBC's two campuses. The research study strives to accomplish three aims: 1) to understand Indigenous students' and community partners' perceptions of WIL; 2) to generate awareness of the challenges Indigenous students face to participating in WIL; and 3) to inform resource development and program revisions to create equitable access to participation in WIL opportunities at UBC.

The findings from our study are informed by recommendations from the Indigenous Strategic Plans (2018, 2020) and the TRC's Calls to Actions. For example, the ISP's Strategy 12, 'Education Renewal', emphasizes "enhance(ed) support for program redesign around competencies; the development of problem-solving experiences; technology-enabled learning; and continued growth in work-integrated learning" (p. 56); strategy 13, 'Practical Learning', articulating the university's dedication to "strengthen(ing) opportunities for students to develop professional and research skills while studying" (p. 57); and Strategic Plan's action 26, to "identify apprenticeships and new employment opportunities for members of, and in partnership with, Musqueam, the Okanagan Nation and other Indigenous communities" (2020, p.31).

Finally, our study supports and reflects the TRC's Calls to Actions, specifically, number 92(ii) affirming that "Aboriginal peoples [are to] have equitable access to jobs, training and education opportunities" (2015, p. 294).

This report summarizes the findings from our study, and we believe that learning from, and prioritizing, its recommendations will strengthen and diversify WIL opportunities for Indigenous students across both campuses.

Introduction

Statistics Canada (2017) reports that Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) are vastly underrepresented at the university level--only 7 per cent of Indigenous people hold an undergraduate degree, compared to 25 per cent of non-Indigenous people. Additionally, the population of Indigenous peoples across Canada is growing 4 times faster than non-Indigenous Canadians, and 43 per cent of Indigenous peoples in the country are under the age of 25 compared to 26 per cent of non-Indigenous peoples (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017). Clearly then, the growing Indigenous population, along with the importance of relevant work experience in fostering positive employment outcomes, represents a powerful opportunity for UBC, and WIL, to address the historic under-representation of Indigenous post-secondary students.

However, for UBC to meet this challenge, the specific barriers that Indigenous students face must be addressed. For example, only half of Indigenous students who apply for post-secondary funding through a third-party sponsor such as a Band, First Nation, or Metis Society, receive it (Malatest, 2004). Furthermore, for those who do receive funding, it typically only covers living expenses and tuition, and it often comes with parameters (e.g., completing an undergraduate degree in 4 years) (Malatest, 2002). In consequence, WIL opportunities that have associated fees or require students to extend their graduation date (e.g., Co-operative education), are often inaccessible for sponsored Indigenous students. Research with Indigenous Engineering students and alumni at UBC-O in 2016 provides similar findings: the cost of participating in co-op, the lack of perceived value in the co-op model, and the requirement that students be able to move for co-op terms are all identified as significant barriers to WIL engagement (Jacknife, 2016).

WIL and the Covid-19 Pandemic

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has impacted students' engagement in WIL opportunities at UBC in unprecedented ways. Colleges and universities have been tasked with shifting almost exclusively to online delivery of teaching and learning curriculum, including those with WIL embedded at the course and program level (e.g., community service and practicums). Statistics Canada (2020) reports that many Masters and Postdoctoral students have had their WIL placements cancelled altogether.

The pandemic has also created challenges unique to the research study. Community partner involvement (e.g., Indigenous education and industry partners) has been significantly limited, as several partners were forced to focus on efforts to mitigate pandemic-related crises in their communities. UBC students have also been tasked with an abrupt shift to an online method of course delivery which, by all indications, negatively impacted their participation in the study.

Definition of Work-Integrated Learning

To understand and assess Indigenous students' awareness of, and engagement, with WIL, it is helpful to have a working definition for this type of learning. Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, the country's national Co-op/WIL association, defines work-integrated learning in the following way:

A model and process of curricular experiential education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and includes the development of learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency, and life-long learning. ([CEWIL, 2021](#))

Note: For a list of the types of WIL and their attributes as defined by CEWIL, see Appendix A

Scope of WIL at UBC-O and UBC-V

While WIL opportunities offered by UBC differ in structure across the two campuses, most of these opportunities broadly adhere to the CEWIL definition. One notable exception to CEWIL's

definition includes general work experience opportunities that some UBC departments offer, but which do not necessarily take place at the course or program level.

Table 1: WIL opportunities currently offered by UBC

UBC Vancouver	UBC Okanagan
Capstone Projects	Capstone Projects
Community Engaged Learning	Community Service Learning
Co-op Education	Co-op Education
Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship
General Work Experience	General Work Experience
Practicum/Field Education	Practicum/Field Education/Internships
Volunteer	Volunteer
Work Learn	Work Study

Note: The above list of WIL opportunities offered at UBC's two campuses is not exhaustive as these programs and opportunities change over time. Additionally, WIL opportunities are sometimes structured differently between UBC-V and UBC-O. Where appropriate, WIL programs with similar program attributes have been grouped together in this report (e.g., Work Learn/Work Study).

Benefits of Student Engagement in WIL

For many post-secondary students, engaging in WIL requires them to challenge themselves on both a personal and professional level. While the experience can be highly demanding, the benefits are significant. For example, researcher David Kolb (1986), in emphasizing how practical experience can positively influence the learning process, defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience [and that] knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming the experience"(38). Unlike the confined setting of classroom-based learning, experiential learning can help to initiate and sustain transformative qualities in the student - an experience which can reflect and compliment Indigenous students' often distinctive approach to learning.

A subset of experiential learning, WIL provides a learning experience that connects students directly to professional and career-oriented outcomes. Earnes and Coll (2011) contend that, by bridging theory with practice, WIL experiences help to create the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for employability. In a competitive global economy, Indigenous students who possess well-honed professional skillsets are more likely to prosper in their career aspirations.

Another benefit of students' engagement in WIL is that this type of learning provides the opportunity to create professional networks of individuals and groups that may have long-term career advantages. "Social capital" refers to the networks and relationships between people,

which, in sum, constitute a group (Portes, 2000). Portes asserts that the possession of social capital allows a group member to draw on the resources available from relationships within the group, particularly from group members who are richly endowed with not only social capital, but also that of economic and cultural capital. Stated simply, engagement in WIL is likely to result in strengthened professional networks among students, university staff and faculty, and WIL community partners.²

Finally, according to WIL academics and staff in both Australia and Canada, greater self-confidence is a key benefit associated with WIL. Additionally, students who have participated in WIL tend to develop both a better grasp of academic requirements and expectations, and a clearer understanding of the knowledge and skills required of graduates in the workplace. As a result, students are better equipped for the challenges they face in the workplace (Gribble & McRae, 2017), and report both a higher degree of well-being and feeling of engagement in their work following graduation (Gallup Purdue Index Report, 2015).

Literature Review

A literature review reveals that while much WIL research focuses on domestic and international students, WIL theory, and career/employment outcomes, there is an absence of scholarly, peer-reviewed work specifically focused on Indigenous students. However, information relevant to Indigenous students can nevertheless be gleaned from some of the articles. For example, a recent report prepared for the BC WIL Council and the Association for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning BC/Yukon (ACE WIL BC/Yukon) notes the need for “increased attention to culturally relevant WIL opportunities for Indigenous students” (Connell, 13).

Likewise, Pidgeon et al. (2014), while not focusing directly on WIL programs, support the need for culturally relevant programming. The authors assert that programs such as UBC’s SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) are critical components of Indigenous students’ success in post-secondary, stating that SAGE helps to cultivate “supportive inter-generational relationships and a sense of belonging in academe” (Pidgeon et al., 2014. p. 15). Taken together, these articles suggest that the positive impact of programs such as SAGE, and the

² For more information about networking as a WIL learning outcome, see the “Importance of Learning Outcomes” in the *Key Findings* section of the report.

culturally essential elements embedded in similar programs, can serve as appropriate examples to guide future WIL programming for Indigenous students.

While there is a deficit of scholarly work on Indigenous post-secondary students and WIL, UBC has produced several reports that focus on Indigenous students' experiences of programming relating to career preparation and success. For example, the *Executive Summary Report: Aboriginal Respondents to the New to UBC Survey 2017* indicates that, while 77 per cent (n = 829) of non-Indigenous survey respondents considered opportunities to learn outside the classroom (co-op, study abroad, community service learning, internships, practicum) as either "important" or "very important", only 70 per cent (n = 52) of Indigenous survey respondents felt similarly (UBC, 2018), suggesting that Indigenous students do not perceive the value of WIL to the same degree as non-Indigenous students.³

Another UBC report, the *Experiential Learning at UBC Okanagan Task Force Report* (2019), emphasizes the role of community partnerships and community building to enhance and expand experiential learning.⁴ In particular, the report identifies an opportunity for experiential learning (or WIL) to "work with co-op to take advantage of other learning opportunities that do not fit the co-op model" (p.5). Additionally, Kari Grain and Gillian Gerhard's (2020) report, *Experiential Education at UBC-Vancouver: Summary of Research and Recommendations*, speaks further to the need for community involvement in students' experiences of WIL. Addressing the challenges of exclusion and inequity, the report recommends that UBC "invite more community and workplace partners to be involved in [experiential education] decision making processes" (p. 12).

In summary, two general conclusions can be derived from the literature review: 1) The lack of scholarly interest and articles regarding Indigenous students and WIL and 2) A shared consensus among the articles about the need to strengthen our connections with local Indigenous communities and organizations-- a crucial factor in creating greater Indigenous student engagement with WIL opportunities.

³ For more information on Indigenous students' perceptions of WIL learning outcomes, see the "Importance of Learning Outcomes" in the *Key Findings* section further into the report.

⁴ See "WIL Engagement Opportunities" in the *Key Findings* section of the report for more information on community collaboration.

Key Findings

This section of the report focuses primarily on the key findings from the Indigenous student survey responses. The student survey findings have been supplemented and supported with themes emanating from community partner surveys and individual and group interviews with community partners and students.⁵

Notes

The percentages offered in the report’s findings below reflect the number of respondents to that particular question and not the total survey population. For example, “40%” denotes 40 per cent of students who responded to a specific question rather than 40 per cent of the entire survey respondent pool.

Table 2: Data Summary

Data Collection (both campuses)	Participants
Interviews/sharing circles	65 Community partners
Interviews/focus groups	46 Indigenous UBC students
Community partner surveys	30 valid survey responses
Indigenous student surveys	428 valid survey responses

Note: Community partners included UBC staff and faculty, Indigenous education partners and a mix of private and public sector industry partners.

Survey Structure

The student survey was structured to differentiate between respondents who answered *yes* to having engaged in WIL at UBC and those who answered *no*. *Yes* and *no* respondents were asked a different stream of questions depending on this initial response. All survey respondents were asked if their post-secondary education is sponsored by a third-party. Respondents who answered *yes* to this query were then asked a follow up question about their third-party sponsorship. The survey concluded by asking all participants what types of supports they felt would benefit future Indigenous students’ participation in WIL in addition to demographic identifiers (e.g., year level, campus).⁶

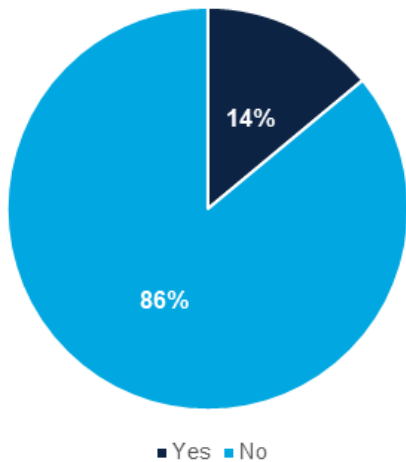
⁵ For details about the study’s research methods, see appendix C.

⁶ For a complete list of the survey questions, see appendix B.

Engagement in WIL

All student survey respondents were given a definition of WIL and examples of the types of WIL programming offered at UBC. Students were then asked “*Have you participated in any work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities at UBC.*” Of the 428 survey respondents, 86 per cent (n = 367) had not engaged in any WIL opportunities versus 14 per cent (n = 62) who indicated they had.

Figure 1: Respondents’ engagement in WIL at both campuses



Note: The term ‘program’ had been used in the survey to indicate the variety of WIL opportunities available to students across UBC’s two campuses. The research report has since used the terms ‘opportunity’ and ‘opportunities’ in order to be inclusive of the types of work-integrated learning that are not necessarily structured as a program (e.g., general work experience opportunities found on campus).

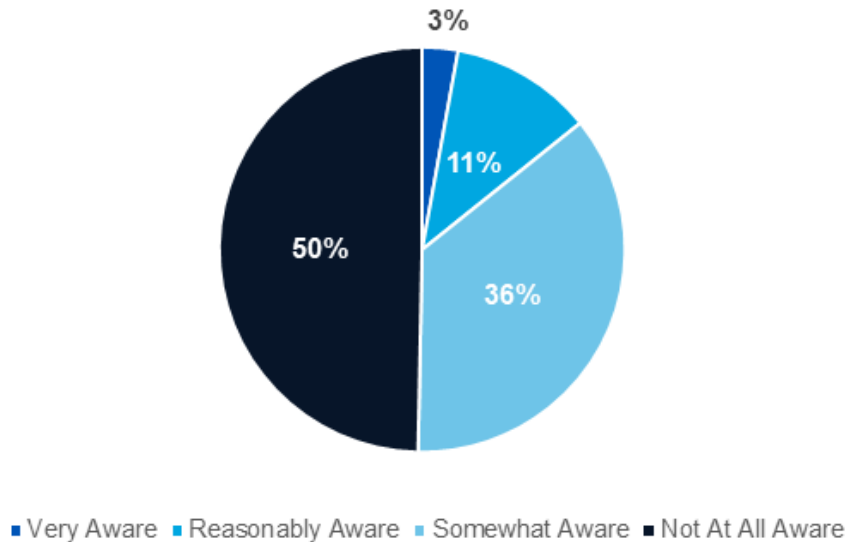
Further analysis was conducted on the 14 per cent of respondents who have engaged in WIL and it was determined that 3rd and 4th year respondents (n = 35) are engaging in WIL in much higher numbers than 1st and 2nd year respondents (n = 3). This may reflect a greater awareness of WIL amongst upper-level students, the structure of specific programs (e.g., WIL programs such as co-op are directed at upper-level students only), increased confidence in seeking out such opportunities by 3rd and 4th year students or a greater motivation to obtain practical work experience as graduation nears.

Awareness of WIL

Respondents who indicated “no” to the above question (86%, n = 367) were given a definition of work-integrated learning and asked, “*What are your awareness levels of the various type of*

work integrated learning programs offered at UBC?” Respondents were asked to rate their awareness levels on a 4-point scale ranging from “not at all aware” to “very aware”.

Figure 2: Respondents’ awareness of WIL



Overall, respondents' awareness of WIL is exceptionally low. Most respondents (86%, n = 271) indicated that they were either only "somewhat aware" or "not at all aware" of the WIL opportunities available to them at UBC. Only a small percentage (3%, n = 13) of students indicated that they were "very aware" of such opportunities. While it can be assumed that some students actively choose not to engage in WIL, this data point indicates that one reason students are not engaging in WIL is simply because these opportunities are not in their periphery.

Most Recent WIL Program

The survey asked a follow up question to the 14 per cent (n = 62) of respondents who have taken part in WIL at UBC, “*What is the most recent WIL program you have participated in at UBC?*” There were 53 (86%) valid responses to the question. Below are the students’ responses:

Table 3: Survey Participants Most Recent WIL Experiences

WIL Opportunity	Respondents	
	Count (N)	%
Co-operative Education	12	23%
Work Learn/Work Study	9	17%
Research opportunities	8	15%
Professional Practicum	8	15%
Other	5	9%
Volunteer	4	8%
Community Service Learning/Community Engaged Learning	3	6%
Internships	2	4%
General development (work experience)	2	4%

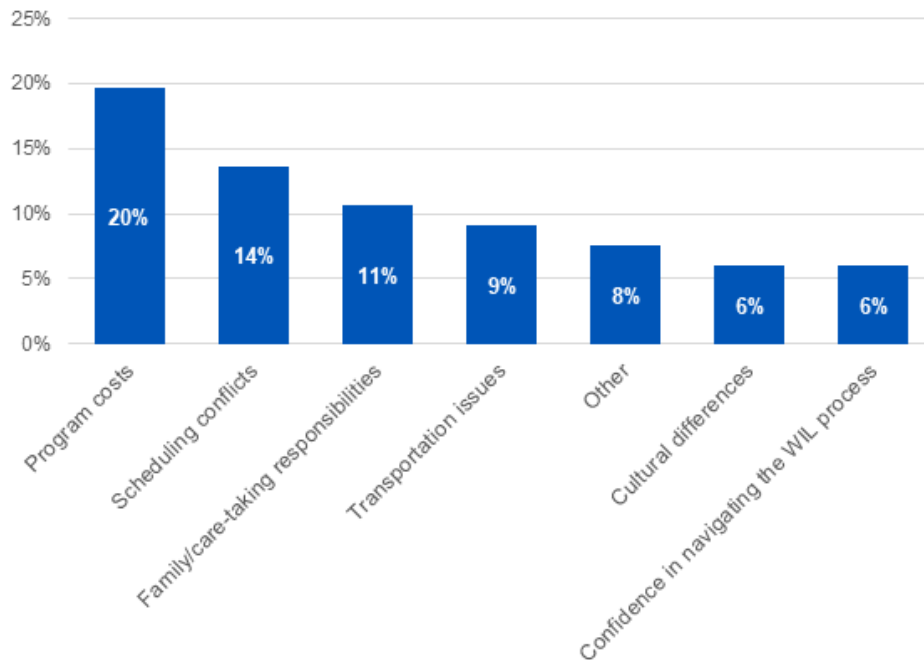
Note: The responses of students who indicated they had taken part in a recent WIL opportunity should be interpreted with caution as this figure represents n = 53 respondents. This may not reflect the actual distribution of Indigenous students' engagement in WIL types at UBC.

Participants who selected “other” were prompted to describe these opportunities. Responses included, “Indigenous undergrad research mentorship program (not sure if this is considered WIL?)” and “online learning how to work on our online courses.” These responses indicate that despite the definition of WIL offered in the survey, respondents may not have had a clear understanding of what constitutes WIL at UBC.

Challenges While Engaging in WIL

Students who have taken part in WIL were asked “*Did you experience any challenges at any time during your WIL experience at UBC?*” Respondents were offered a list of options and were able to select all that applied to them.

Figure 3: Challenges Encountered During WIL Experience



Program costs were identified as the top challenge among students at both campuses (20%, n = 13). It is important to note that one-to-one conversations and focus groups with Indigenous students revealed that “program costs” was a financial challenge that could be separated into two distinct categories: 1) costs related to participating in WIL (e.g., application fees, work clothing, transportation) and 2) third-party sponsorship limitations and requirements.⁷

For many students, having to pay for incidentals prior to receiving a payment for their work presents a major barrier. The following quote is just one example of the feedback linked to the challenges of costs associated with WIL engagement:

“We could be sent anywhere in BC for our professional practicums which is very costly to move far from home and can be hard to get places, especially during COVID when other modes of travel are being limited.”

Both program costs and transportation challenges are identified in this quote, indicating that there is overlap between the challenges students are experiencing - such challenges do not occur in isolation of one another. Furthermore, the fact that students rated program costs as the

⁷ A more detailed analysis on third-party sponsorship requirements and parameters can be found in “Third-Party Sponsorship” in this section of the report.

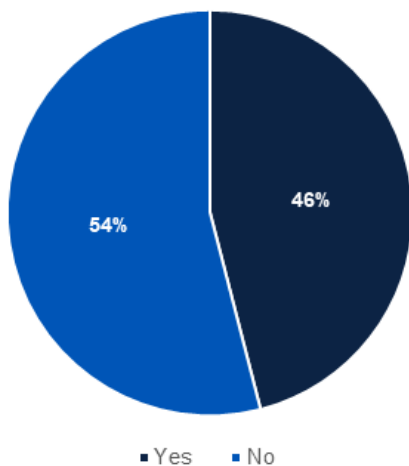
greatest challenge is an indicator that students are not aware of the available financial supports (e.g., emergency funding) that is available to support Indigenous students.

Valid survey responses (n = 3) indicating “other” challenges included “covid-related regulation”, “academic responsibilities” and “[there] wasn’t an option to work with an Indigenous community/nation.” These responses illustrate that students are experiencing an array of challenges in relation to their full WIL engagement at UBC.

Third-Party Sponsorship

All survey respondents were asked, “*Is your post-secondary education sponsored, at least in part, by a third party? (e.g., Band, First Nation, Métis Society, other).*” Almost half of the respondents (46%, n = 197) are receiving third-party sponsorship⁸ to financially support their education.

Figure 4a: Survey participants receiving third-party sponsorship



⁸ Third-party sponsorship refers to students whose tuition is funded in full or in part by an outside organization. For some Indigenous students, third-part sponsors may include a First Nation, Métis Society or other community partner.

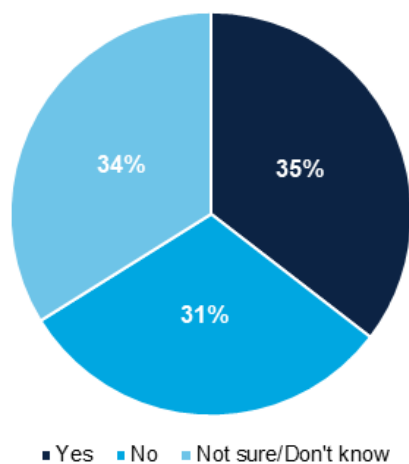
As indicated earlier in the report, third-party sponsorship often covers only the essentials required for a student to obtain a degree (e.g., tuition, living expenses) and may have stipulations attached to it (e.g., completing the degree in four years, deducting outside earnings from a student's funding). Such limitations can prohibit students from taking part in WIL opportunities that have fees attached or that might extend their degree beyond four years. Additionally, the deduction of outside earnings may disincentivize students from engaging in paid WIL opportunities.

"If I earn any income beyond what [my sponsor supplies], they will take it out of...what [funding] I get from them."

WIL Engagement and Impact on Funding

Students who indicated they were receiving third-party sponsorship (46%, n = 197) were then asked, "As a student sponsored by a third party, does participating in WIL impact your education funding? If so, please explain. (e.g., work-integrated learning programs such as co-op typically require a student to delay their education by a year in order to complete the program, but some sponsors only fund a four-year degree program)."

Figure 4b: WIL participation and impact on funding



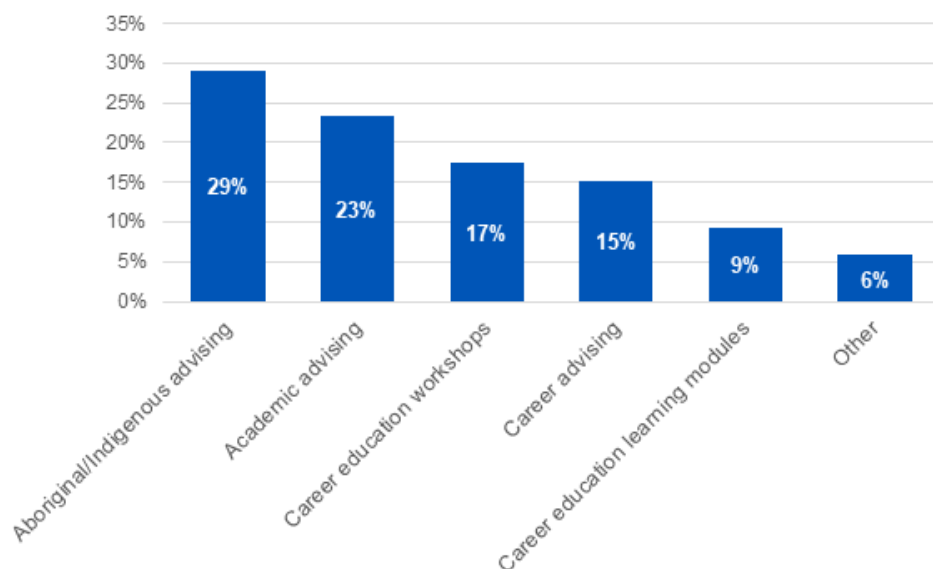
Notably, there were 127 valid responses to this question despite it being structured as an optional reply within the survey. This is worth mention as other optional qualitative questions in the survey elicited only a fraction of responses by comparison. This high response rate speaks to the challenges and confusion experienced by students receiving third-party sponsorship.

From these 127 valid responses, 35 per cent (n = 45) stated that WIL engagement at UBC would impact their funding and 34 per cent (n = 43) of respondents were unsure. As many as 69 per cent of sponsored students may encounter financial challenges if they elect to take part in WIL at UBC. Engaging with third party sponsors to discuss the benefits of WIL is an important first step in addressing this challenge. However, it is imperative to note that this work must be conducted in a thoughtful and deliberate manner and will require departmental collaboration (e.g., working with APS/FNHL to address this challenge).

UBC Supports and WIL Experiences

Respondents who have taken part in WIL were asked, “*What specific supports did UBC provide that helped you navigate your WIL program?*” Survey choices included resources that may not have a direct correlation to WIL supports (e.g., Aboriginal/Indigenous advising, academic advising).

Figure 5: Specific supports utilized by WIL students



Interestingly, 52 per cent (n = 45) of respondents indicated that the primary supports they utilized had been either Aboriginal/Indigenous student advising or Academic advising resources. These data points suggest that students are choosing services that primarily offer academic/curricular support rather than choosing services which offer career focused support.

The research study's focus group and 1:1 interview data provides more nuanced information about why this might be the case. These qualitative data points indicate students desire resources where relationships have already been established (e.g., Aboriginal/Indigenous advising or academic advising) because they feel safe and supported in these environments. Additionally, these data points reaffirm that students may have a limited awareness of the types of resources dedicated to WIL such as student career advising and career education workshops.

Examples of what survey respondents stated for "other" included: "my professors," and "support from a faculty member." These responses further support the narrative that students are not fully accessing and utilizing the career specific supports that are being offered to them and are instead seeking support from people that they may already have an established relationship with.

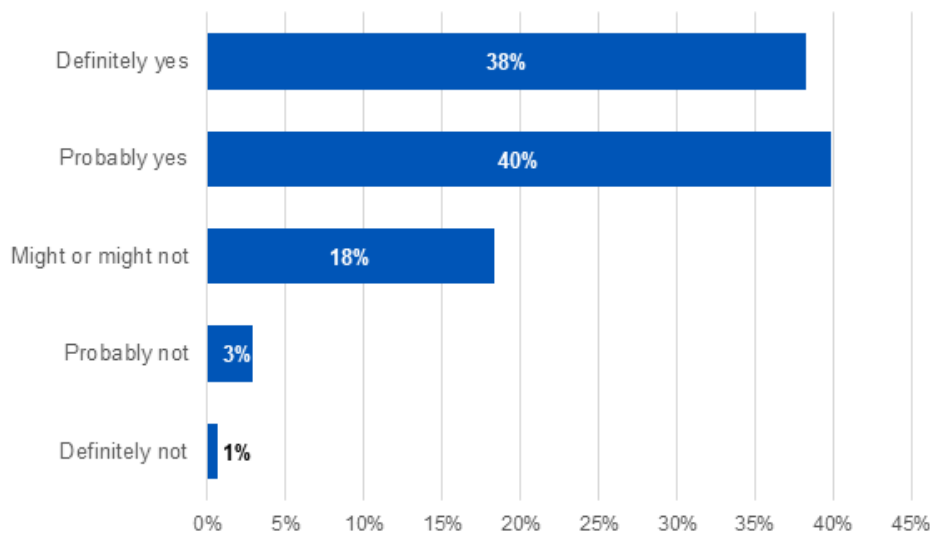
Additional WIL Supports

To gain additional insight into what types of support students would like to have, the study included a qualitative question asking respondents who have participated in WIL, "*What additional supports could UBC have offered you to better support your WIL experience?*" Responses to this question included "traditional Indigenous knowledge from an elder," "more financial support," "pathways to connecting with other programs on campus" and "more information provided to students about the opportunities." One survey respondent noted that their WIL program could have supported them better by helping them find "[work placements] closer to home and in areas where I would like to work when I am done school so I can begin to make relationships with future employers." The reappearance of these themes - greater awareness, financial support, and opportunities to connect with community - reinforces the necessity for UBC to focus attention and resources on these areas.

Mentorship

The survey asked respondents who have not engaged in WIL, "*Would you be more likely to consider WIL programs at UBC if you had the support of a mentor or counsellor (formal or informal) throughout the process?*"

Figure 6: Consider engaging in WIL formal or informal mentorship support



In total, 78 per cent (n = 243) of respondents indicated that formal or informal mentorship support would positively influence their decision to engage in WIL. It is important to differentiate here between mentorship and supervision. Most WIL opportunities are providing students with some form of supervision however, students are indicating that they want more guided support from start to finish. UBC's WIL programs usually consider a student's course load prior to them engaging in these programs, but several focus group participants noted that they were unprepared for the demands of balancing an academic workload and a WIL position.

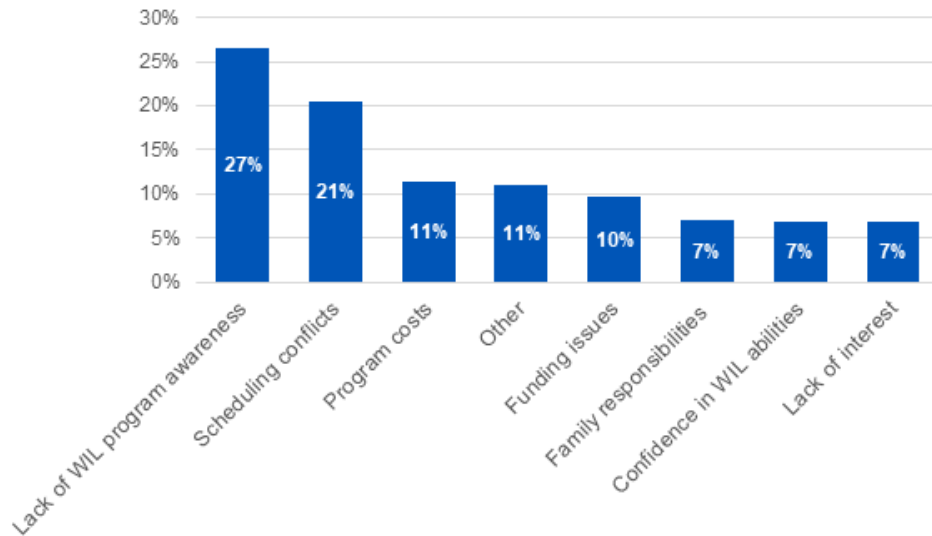
“It would have been helpful to have some guidance when I was making [the] decision [to take classes while participating in a WIL program].”

Some focus group participants also noted a lack of formalized support throughout their WIL experience. Clearly, guidance and support that begins at the initial stages of the WIL process and continues throughout each stage is paramount. In addition, a more formalized process for WIL support staff could be useful to help guide Indigenous students through their WIL experiences so there is consistency in WIL programming across the board.

Lack of WIL Engagement

Survey respondents who have not participated in WIL, which constitutes the majority (86%, n= 367) were asked, “What are the issues that may have prevented you from participating in work-integrated learning at UBC so far?”

Figure 7: Challenges to student participation in WIL



The greatest challenges preventing respondents from engaging in WIL included a lack of awareness (27%, n = 99), scheduling conflicts (21%, n= 77) and financial impediments (11%, n= 40). One student expressed that if professors don't reach out directly to students and offer research positions in first year, opportunities are limited thereafter. This student's misguided comment demonstrates the lack of awareness of the supports available for these types of WIL opportunities (e.g., research mentorship programs, undergraduate research funding). Furthermore, it points to a lack of confidence on the part of the student to either proactively seek out WIL opportunities or to pursue existing WIL positions. This point is reinforced by the following student's statement:

“It can be discouraging because I definitely didn't feel that I was good enough [to apply] for the [WIL] position...I could definitely see other [Indigenous] students looking at that and being like “no way, I'm not going to [apply].”

Responses to the choice of “other” included “covid-related regulations,” “academic responsibilities,” and “[there] wasn't an option to work with an Indigenous community/nation.”

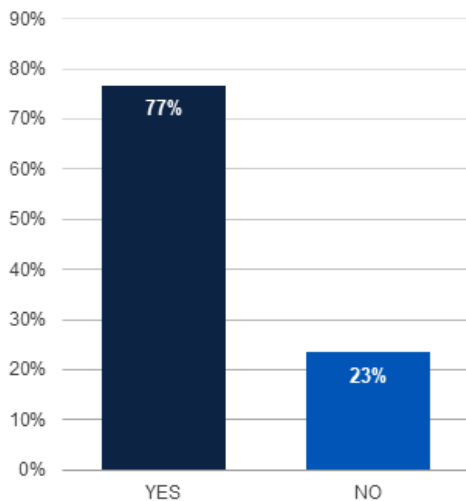
Again, such qualitative responses call attention to the need for greater awareness of WIL opportunities and more guided and formalized support.

WIL Engagement Opportunities

Students who have engaged in WIL were asked, “*Why did you choose to take part in this WIL program?*” Examples of some of the qualitative feedback responses include “to gain experience and try out the field I intend to enter” and “it was through the Longhouse and I could connect to other indigenous students.” These responses illustrate that not only are students engaging in WIL to explore career options and professions, they are often seeking WIL opportunities where there is an Indigenous component.

Further to the topic WIL engagement opportunities, survey respondents who have engaged in WIL were asked “*When you first thought about WIL opportunities at UBC, did you consider working in partnership with an Indigenous organization or community?*”

Figure 8a: Students’ consideration of working with an Indigenous community or organization

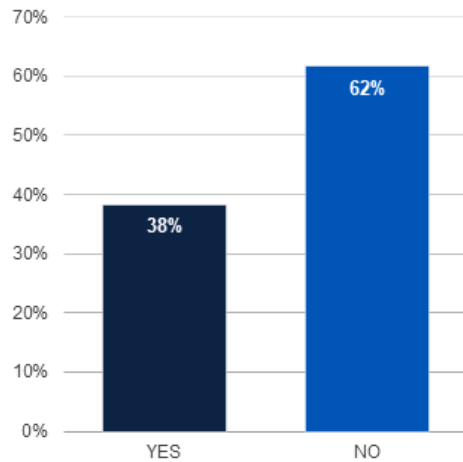


A substantial portion (77%, n = 36) of respondents stated they did consider working in partnership with an Indigenous organization or community. This data point is important inasmuch as it shows that many survey respondents who are considering WIL are also considering WIL placements in environments where there is a shared sense of culture or Indigenous identity.

In a follow-up question, respondents were then asked “*Do you feel you were given ample opportunities to work with an Indigenous community or organization leading up to your work experience?*”

A total of 62 per cent (n = 29) of respondents indicated that they felt they were not given the opportunity to work with Indigenous organizations or communities. Taken together, data points from figures 8a and 8b indicate that while most survey respondents may have been inclined to work with Indigenous organizations or communities in a WIL placement, respondents were either unaware of such opportunities or it may be that these types of WIL opportunities do not currently exist in the numbers that would allow for wide Indigenous student engagement.

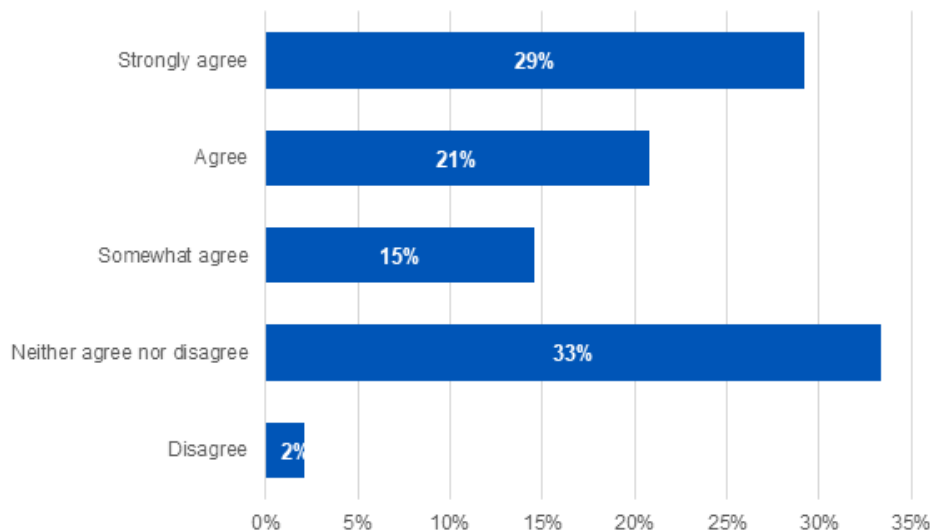
Figure 8b: Opportunity to work with an Indigenous organization or community in a WIL position



Support for Indigenous Identity

The survey asked students who have participated in WIL to select their level of agreement with the following statement: “*My Indigenous identity was valued or otherwise supported during my WIL experience.*”

Figure 9: Students’ identity had been valued



Note: this figure excludes ‘strongly disagree’ as no respondents selected this option.

On a positive note, 50 per cent (n = 25) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. However, it is imperative to consider the 50 per cent (n = 25) of students who either somewhat agreed, had been impartial, or disagreed with this statement.

This outcome may reflect the data presented in figures 8a and 8b. Respondents are asserting that they want to work with Indigenous communities and organizations, however, they aren't seeing these opportunities being offered by WIL programming. If a person doesn't feel seen or represented, it is unlikely that they will feel valued.

Importance of Learning Outcomes - 'Yes' Respondents

Survey respondents who had participated in WIL were asked, "How important were the following WIL outcomes to you?"

Figure 10a: Importance of learning outcomes for students who have taken part in WIL

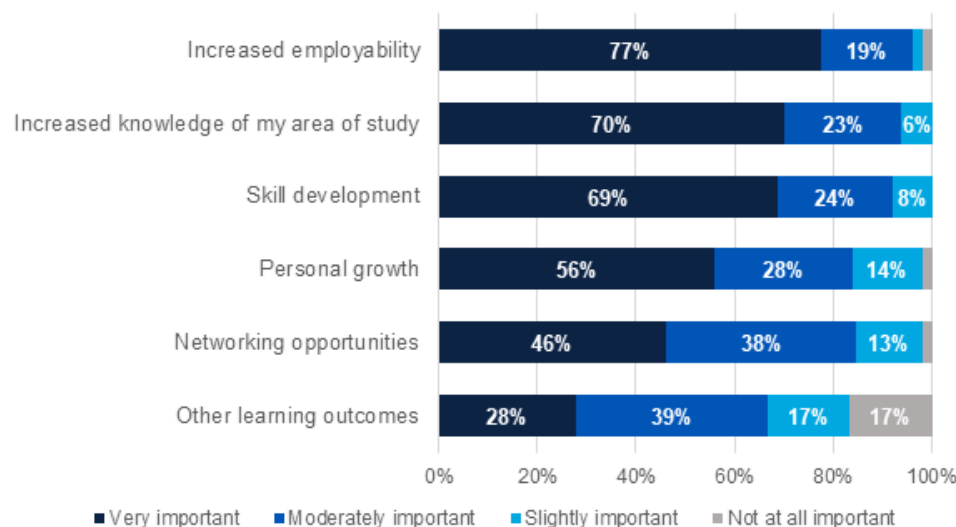


Figure 10a indicates that "increased employability," "increased knowledge in my area of study," and "skill development" had been respondents highest ranked choices. Surprisingly, students at both campuses had rated "networking opportunities" as a learning outcome of low importance despite networking being one of the intrinsic benefits of WIL participation. Focus group discussions and interviews with students on the topic of networking indicated that these students expressed a much more favorable reaction to the terms "relationship building" or "community connections" than they did "networking."

Respondents who chose “other learning outcomes” gave qualitative responses which included “field experience,” “apprenticeship,” “cultural teachings,” and “holistic knowledge.” Such responses speak to the want by these respondents for a diversity of hands-on learning experiences as well as the desire for WIL mentorship and Indigenous-centered outcomes.

Importance of Learning Outcomes - ‘No’ Respondents

The survey asked respondents who had not participated in WIL “*Should you consider taking part in WIL at UBC, how important are the following learning outcomes to you?*”

Figure 10b: Importance of learning outcomes for students who have not participated in WIL



Note: When comparing between campuses, 66 per cent (n = 130) of UBC-V respondents to the above query indicated networking opportunities to be ‘very important’ as opposed to 48 per cent (n = 49) of UBC-O respondents to the same query.

Figure 10b indicates that “skill development,” “increased knowledge of my area of study,” and “increased employability” had ranked at the top among respondents’ learning outcome choices. These data closely match the responses from those in figure 10a. These data points demonstrate that survey respondents are listing “networking opportunities” as a lower priority and so undergird the importance of reframing UBC’s messaging to Indigenous students of the value of this particular outcome.

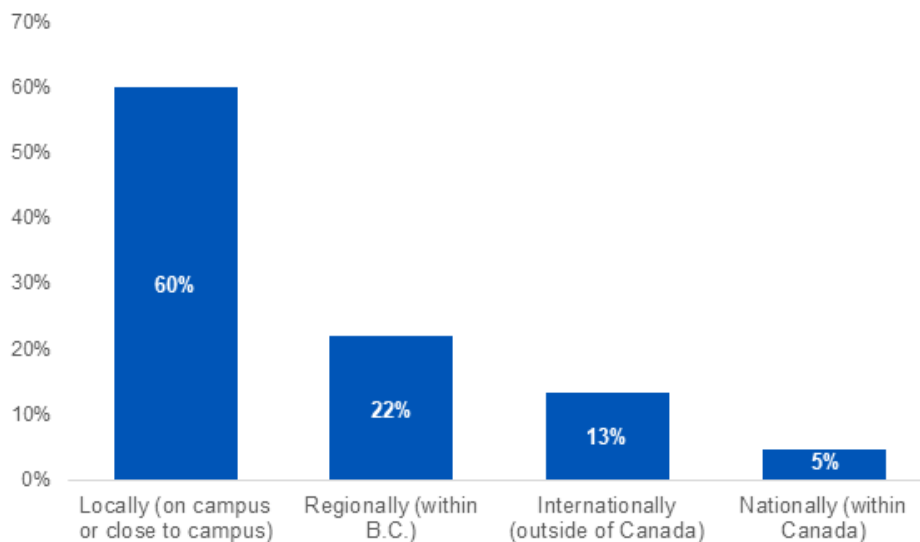
Notably, more graduate student survey respondents (53%, n = 8) reported “networking opportunities” as very important than did undergraduate survey respondents (44%, n = 16). It

may be that through their graduate work (e.g., formal research, presentations, teaching assistant experiences, etc.), graduate students have accumulated a degree of networking and/or community connections and so perceive the value of networking over and above their undergraduate counterparts.

WIL Preference and Locality

Respondents who have not participated in WIL were asked, “If you were to participate in WIL programming at UBC, rank where you'd prefer this type of learning to take place.”

Figure 11: Ranking of the locality of preferred WIL placements



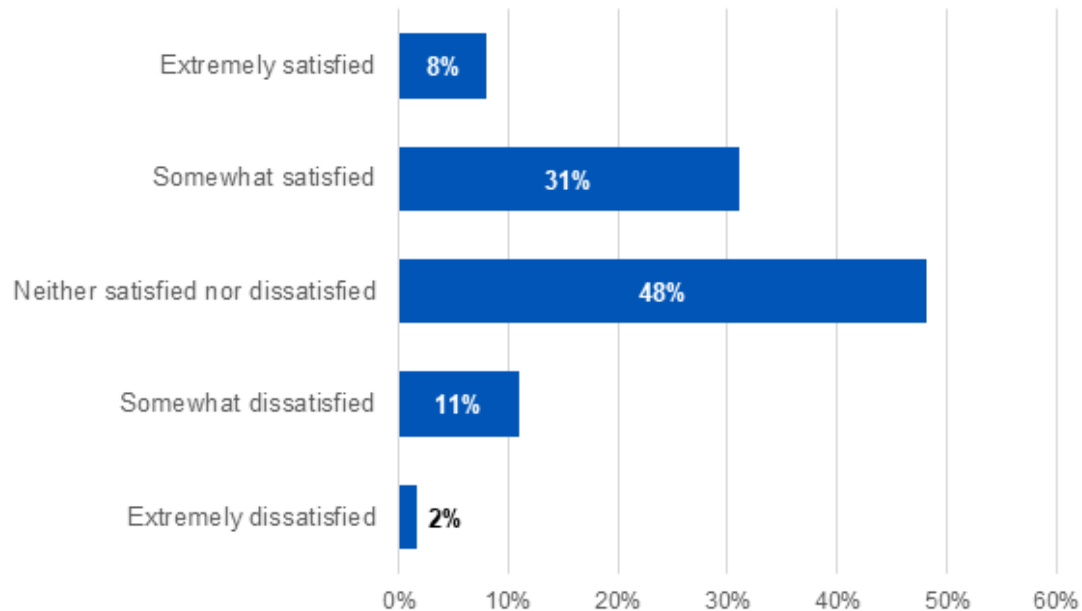
Most respondents (60%, n= 96) indicated that their preference would be to remain local - either on campus or close to campus. Transportation challenges, the limitations of Indigenous students' post-secondary funding, and family obligations are probable explanations for this preference. It is also worth noting that students who have strong ties to their local Indigenous communities or have established an Indigenous community on campus may be reluctant to relocate in order to engage in WIL.

“With [the possibility of being placed away from home in a co-op position], barriers for me would be [that] I have kids. I have a husband that works.”

Community Connections

All survey participants were asked, “How satisfied are you with UBC’s current connections to Indigenous organizations and communities in regards to WIL programming?”

Figure 12: Students’ satisfaction with UBC’s current connections to Indigenous organizations and communities

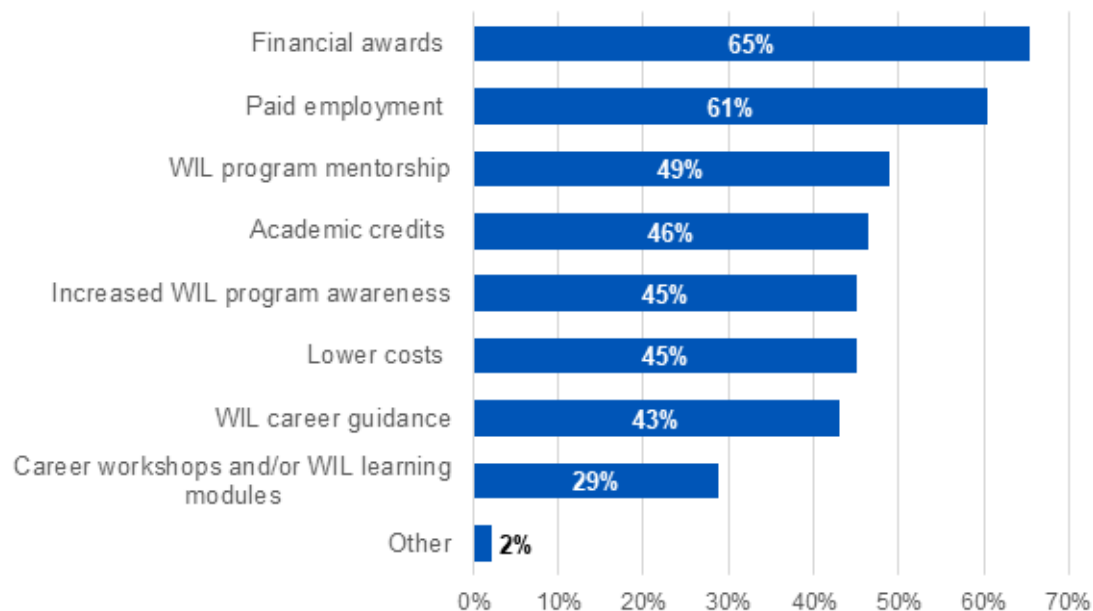


48 per cent (n= 166) of respondents chose “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”. This neutral response may suggest that students simply don’t have the necessary information to definitively answer this question. This data point also underscores the importance of departmental collaboration to promote these types of student opportunities to UBC’S Indigenous community partners.

Resources Worth Considering

The survey concluded with a question to all respondents asking “What are some resources worth considering so that future Indigenous students can to participate more fully in WIL programs at UBC?” Respondents were given multiple examples and asked to select all choices that they felt were important.

Figure 13: Resources worth considering for Indigenous student engagement in WIL



Key themes that are discussed throughout this report, such as program costs, mentorship, and WIL awareness, emerge again in students' responses to this question.

Additional qualitative responses to this question included "connections with Indigenous organizations with WIL positions," "more opportunities to work with the Indigenous community" and "welcoming environment[s] for indigenous students." These responses reinforce students' desire for opportunities to work with Indigenous community partners and the need for inclusive work environments.

Challenges and Recommendations

Below is a list of challenges that this study has identified and recommendations to improve Indigenous students' engagement in WIL opportunities at UBC. Several initiatives currently being worked on align with these recommendations including a work-integrated learning resource guides for Indigenous UBCO and UBCV students which outline the various WIL opportunities presently available to them.

Challenge: Low awareness of WIL among community partners. **Recommendation:** Continue to strengthen relationships with Indigenous community partners (e.g., First Nations Education Coordinators, third-party post-secondary education sponsors, etc.) in order that these partners

have a complete understanding of the value of value of WIL as it pertains to students' post-secondary learning opportunities.

Challenge: Low awareness of WIL among Indigenous UBC students. **Recommendations:** Targeted messaging to prospective, bridging, and 1st and 2nd year students detailing the variety of WIL opportunities offered at UBC in order to generate awareness of WIL and to allow students to plan to integrate WIL opportunities into their degree experiences.

Challenge: Students' perceptions of the benefits of WIL at UBC. **Recommendation:** Alter messaging surrounding the benefits of WIL engagement to appeal to Indigenous students' often unique perspectives (e.g., changing 'networking' as an important learning outcome to 'relationship-building' or 'creating connections').

Challenge: Lack of capacity within current UBC student services to provide nuanced WIL guidance. **Recommendation:** Strengthen UBC's WIL supports (e.g., Indigenous and general academic advising, career advising, formal mentorship) to provide better wraparound services for Indigenous students engaged in WIL.

Challenge: Deficit of scholarly peer-reviewed articles about Indigenous students and WIL. **Recommendation:** Conduct formal research on the underexplored subject of Indigenous post-secondary students' experiences and perceptions of WIL to begin to build a corpus of knowledge in this area.

Challenge: Inconsistent support throughout students' WIL experiences. **Recommendation:** Develop a formalized process for WIL practitioners (supervisors, employers, etc.) so Indigenous students are provided with more guided support throughout their WIL placement.

Challenge: Prohibitive structure of some WIL programming. **Recommendation:** Restructure and/or broaden WIL program requirements to create options for Indigenous students to engage in a variety of opportunities (e.g., spring- and summer-only Co-op placements for Indigenous students whose funding is often allocated to FTE fall and winter semesters).

Challenge: Financial aspects of WIL opportunities. **Recommendation:** Dedicate funding for Indigenous students interested in engaging in WIL (e.g., financial awards for qualifying Co-op/Intern students).

Challenge: Targeted WIL promotion. **Recommendation:** Promote UBC WIL opportunities at Indigenous-focused events (e.g., Indigenous student job fairs, Indigenous career-planning webinars, etc.).

Challenge: Perceived lack of local WIL opportunities. **Recommendation:** Better promote local WIL opportunities where they exist (e.g., Indigenous student newsletters, social media), and develop more Indigenous-specific and general 'on-campus' or 'close-to-campus' WIL opportunities (e.g., Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partner WIL placements).

Challenge: Lack of culturally relevant WIL supports and programming. **Recommendation:** Create innovative WIL supports and initiatives specific to Indigenous students (e.g., Indigenous student career advising, culturally relevant WIL programming such as on-the-land activities).

Challenge: Lack of cultural competence training for WIL practitioners. **Recommendation:** Design training materials to aide WIL practitioners to best support Indigenous UBC students in WIL placements.

Conclusion

Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary education must be provided with a multitude of experiential learning options by their institutions. As part of an historically marginalized group in Canada, and as an underrepresented group in academia, Indigenous students who engage in work-integrated learning at UBC are sure to have educational experiences that will impact them in profound ways. By striving to fulfil this report's recommendations, and by working to realize related goals and action items contained in fundamental documents such as the University of British Columbia's *Indigenous Strategic Plan 2020*, WIL practitioners, as well as campus leadership and administration at UBC, empower Indigenous students to thrive in their learning journeys and prosper in their future careers.

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Appendices

Appendix A. [CEWIL](#) Work-Integrated Learning Types and Attributes

1. **Applied Research Projects:** Students are engaged in research that occurs primarily in workplaces, includes: consulting projects, design projects, community-based research projects.
2. **Apprenticeship:** Apprenticeship is an agreement between a person (an apprentice) who wants to learn a skill and an employer who needs a skilled worker and who is willing to sponsor the apprentice and provide paid related practical experience under the direction of a certified journey person in a work environment conducive to learning the tasks, activities and functions of a skilled worker. Apprenticeship combines about 80% at-the-workplace experience with 20% technical classroom training, and depending on the trade, takes about 2-5 years to complete. Both the workplace experience and the technical training are essential components of the learning experience.
3. **Co-operative Education (co-op alternating and co-op internship models):** Co-op alternating consists of alternating academic terms and paid work terms. Co-op internship consists of several co-op work terms back-to-back. In both models, work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study. The number of required work terms varies by program; however, the time spent in work terms must be at least 30% of the time spent in academic study for programs over 2 years in length and 25% of time for programs 2 years and shorter in length.
4. **Entrepreneurship:** Allows a student to leverage resources, space, mentorship and/or funding to engage in the early-stage development of business start-ups and/or to advance external ideas that address real-world needs for academic credit.
5. **Field Placement:** Provides students with an intensive part-time/short term intensive hands-on practical experience in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements may not require supervision of a registered or licensed professional and the completed work experience hours are not required for professional certification. Field placements account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, clinic, practicum, and internship.
6. **Internships:** Offers usually one discipline-specific, supervised, structured paid or unpaid, and for academic credit work experience or practice placement. Internships may occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been

completed and prior to graduation. Internships can be of any length but are typically 12 to 16 months long.

7. **Mandatory Professional Practicum/Clinical Placement:** Involves work experience under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional (e.g. preceptor) in any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Practica are generally unpaid and, as the work is done in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload.
8. **Service Learning:** Community Service Learning (CSL) integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and critical reflection to enrich the learning experience and strengthen communities. In practice, students work in partnership with a community-based organization to apply their disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the community.
9. **Work Experience:** Intersperses one or two work terms (typically full-time) into an academic program, where work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study and/or career goals.

Appendix B. Indigenous Student Survey Questions

1.) Work-integrated learning (WIL) integrates your studies in a workplace setting and typically involves partnerships between the student, the university, and community or industry partners. WIL programs at UBC include research positions, co-op education, professional practicum, internships, service learning, volunteer, work-learn/work-study, and general student development opportunities. Have you participated in any work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities at UBC?

- Yes
- No

2.) Have you taken part in any WIL opportunities at other post-secondary institutions? This may include any of the above programs plus others such as apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, field placement, etc.

- Yes (Please list the type of program)
- No

3.) What is the most recent WIL program you have participated in at UBC? (streamed query)

- Work-learn/work-study
- Community service/community engaged learning

- Research positions
- Volunteer
- Co-op education
- General student development opportunities
- Professional practicum
- Internships
- Other (please specify)

4.) Why did you choose to take part in this WIL program? (open-ended, qualitative response)

5.) When you first thought about WIL opportunities at UBC, did you consider working in partnership with an Indigenous organization or community?

- Yes
- No

6.) Do you feel you were given ample opportunities to work with an Indigenous community or organization leading up to your work experience?

- Yes
- No

7.) Did you encounter any challenges at any time during your WIL experience at UBC? (select all that apply)

- Program costs
- Transportation issues
- Scheduling conflicts
- Cultural differences
- Family/care-taking responsibilities
- Confidence in navigating the WIL process
- Other
- I did not encounter any challenges

8.) If you encountered any of the challenges listed above, please describe them in detail. (open-ended, qualitative response)

9.) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
The support I received from UBC in reference to my WIL experience met my expectations.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10.) What specific supports did UBC provide that helped you navigate your WIL program? (select all that apply)

- Career advising
- Academic advising
- Aboriginal/Indigenous student advising
- Career education workshops
- Career education learning modules
- Other

11.) What additional supports could UBC have offered you to better support your WIL experience? (open-ended, qualitative response)

12.) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I feel that my WIL experience at UBC aligned with my area of study.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13.) How important were the following WIL outcomes to you? (Choices included: increased employability, networking opportunities, skill development, personal growth, increased knowledge of my area of study, other learning outcomes)

- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

14.) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: My Indigenous identity was valued or otherwise supported during my WIL experience.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15.) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I received mentorship (formal or informal) during my WIL experience at UBC.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16.) Is your post-secondary education sponsored, at least in part, by a third party?
(e.g., Band, First Nation, Métis Society, other)

- Yes
- No

17.) How satisfied are you with UBC's current connections to Indigenous organizations and communities in regards to WIL programming?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

18.) What are some resources worth considering so that future Indigenous students can to participate more fully in WIL programs at UBC? (select all that apply)

- Financial awards (for WIL programs with inherent fees)
- WIL program mentorship
- WIL career guidance
- Academic credits (for traditionally non-credited WIL programs)
- Paid employment (where paid positions don't already exist)
- Lower costs (for WIL programs with inherent fees)
- Increased WIL program awareness
- Career workshops and/or WIL learning modules
- Other

19.) Which UBC campus do you attend?

- UBC Vancouver
- UBC Okanagan

20.) What is your current level of study at UBC?

- Bridging program (e.g., Aboriginal Access, Aboriginal Transfer Partnership, etc.)
- Bachelor's degree – 1st or 2nd year
- Bachelor's degree – 3rd or 4th year
- Master's degree or post-graduate studies

PhD program

21.) As a student sponsored by a third party, does participating in WIL impact your education funding? If so, please explain. (e.g., work-integrated learning programs such as co-op typically require a student to delay their education by a year in order to complete the program, but some sponsors only fund a four-year degree program) (open-ended, qualitative response)

22.) Work-integrated learning is in part a process which integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting. These opportunities typically include partnerships between academic institutions, host organizations, and individual students (e.g., the UBC Co-op program). Outcomes of work-integrated learning may include employability, personal agency and life-long learning. What are your awareness levels of the various types of work-integrated learning programs offered at UBC?

- Very aware
- Reasonably aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not at all aware

23.) What are the issues that may have prevented you from participating in work-integrated learning at UBC so far? (select all that apply)

- Scheduling conflicts
- Program costs
- Family responsibilities
- Funding issues
- Lack of WIL program awareness
- Confidence in my WIL abilities
- Lack of interest
- Other (please define)

24.) If you were to consider participating in work-integrated learning while you study at UBC, what types opportunities would you be interested in? (select all that apply)

- Work-learn/work-study
- Community service/community engaged learning
- Applied research
- Volunteer
- Co-op education
- General student development opportunities
- Professional practicum
- Unsure
- Other (please identify)

25.) If you were to participate in WIL programming at UBC, rank where you'd prefer this type of learning to take place. (drag and drop - most preferred location at the top)

- Locally (on campus or close to campus)
- Regionally (within BC)
- Nationally (within Canada)
- Internationally (outside of Canada)

26.) If you were to take part in WIL at UBC, how important is it that you work with an Indigenous community or organization?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

27.) Should you consider taking part in WIL at UBC, how important are the following learning outcomes to you? (Choices included: increased employability, networking opportunities, skill development, personal growth, increased knowledge of my area of study, other learning outcomes)

- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

28.) Would you be more likely to consider WIL programs at UBC if you had the support of a mentor or counsellor (formal or informal) throughout the process?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Appendix C. Research Methods and Data Sources

The project's research methods involved three central components:

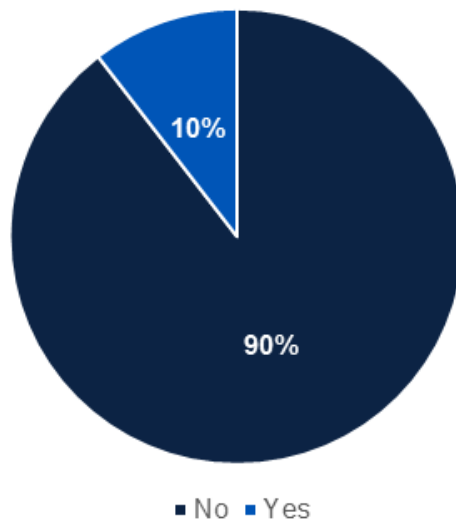
- A review of scholarly, peer-reviewed literature (e.g., academic articles, UBC enrolment reports) had been conducted in order to incorporate a wide array of perspectives on the topic of Indigenous post-secondary students and WIL programming and to bring context to the deliverables attached to the project.
- Interviews with key community partners were conducted in order to capture nuanced, qualitative information on our subject (e.g., Indigenous UBC students, UBC staff and faculty, industry and Indigenous community education partners).
- Online surveys circulated to key community partners (e.g., Indigenous UBC students, UBC staff and faculty, industry and Indigenous education partners) to garner a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Appendix D. Survey Responses Not Included in Main Body of the Research Report

WIL Engagement at Other Post-Secondary Institutions

The survey asked survey participants “have you taken part in any WIL opportunities at other post-secondary institutions? This may include any of the above programs plus others such as apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, field placement, etc.”

Figure 14: WIL engagement at other post-secondary institutions



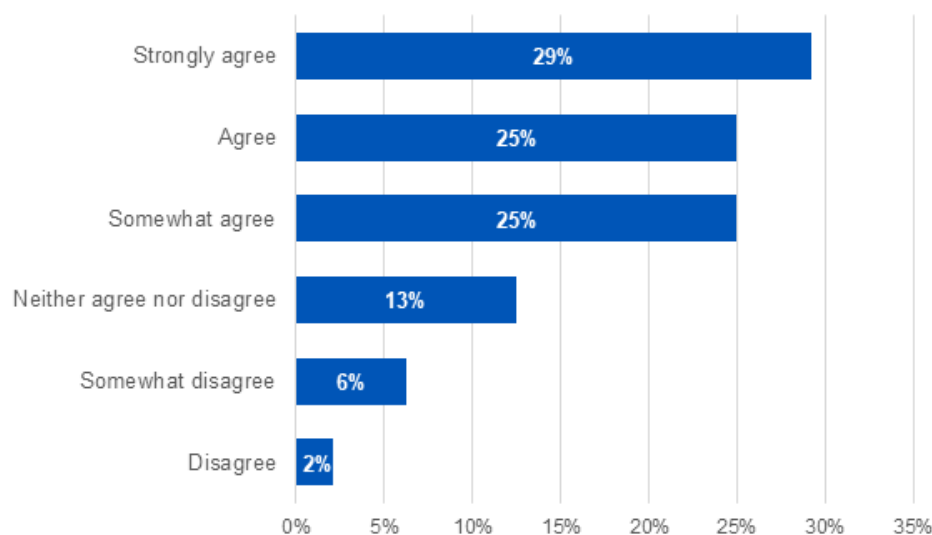
The study felt it was important to gauge survey participants experiences of WIL outside of UBC (e.g., students who had transferred from another institution) in order to understand if disparities existed in regards to student engagement in WIL. A total of 10 per cent (n = 44) of respondents to this query indicated “yes” to WIL engagement at other post-secondary institutions while 90 per cent (n = 376) indicated “no”. This data indicates that low engagement in WIL may not be specific to UBC, but in fact may be a challenge that spans post-secondary institutions in the province.

Qualitative responses included responses such as “forestry,” “math tutoring,” and “student volunteer” which speak to WIL as defined by CEWIL, but other responses included “First Nations studies,” and other credential completion indicating that some respondents did not have a full understanding of what is defined as WIL.

Expectations of Support

In reference to WIL challenges, respondents who had recently participated in WIL at UBC were asked what their level of agreement to the following statement was “*The support I received from UBC in reference to my WIL experience met my expectations.*”

Figure 15: Students’ WIL experience and expectations of support



Note: It is difficult to measure a baseline for expectations of support among survey respondents (i.e., students may have varying understandings of 'support').

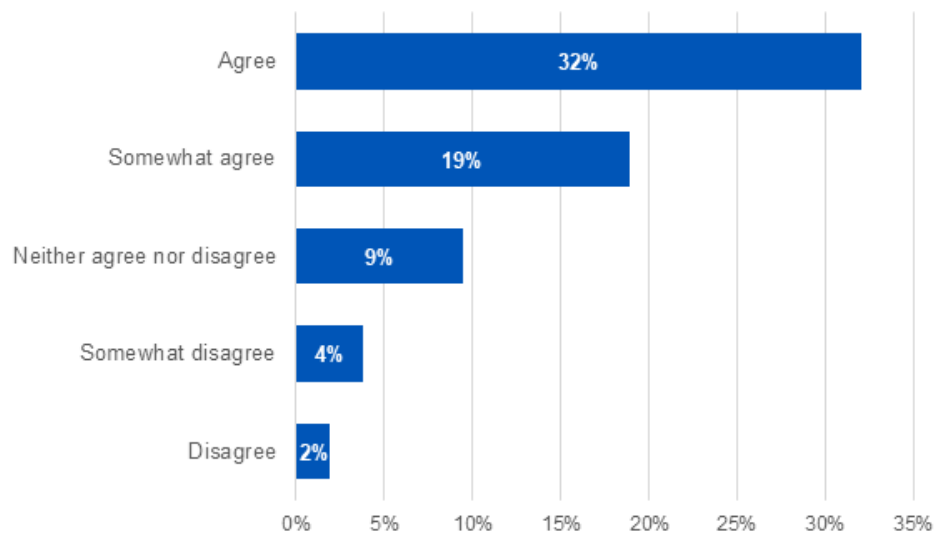
Of the 48 respondents to this query, 54 per cent (n = 26) either indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the supports they received during their WIL experience had indeed met their expectations. Another 38 per cent (n = 18) indicated they either only somewhat agreed or didn't

agree nor disagreed. Only a minority of respondents (8%, n = 4) either somewhat disagreed or disagreed entirely with this statement.

Student Engagement and Mentorship – ‘Yes’ Respondents

Survey respondents were queried as to their level of agreement with the following statement: “*I received mentorship (formal or informal) during my WIL experience at UBC.*”

Figure 16: Engagement in WIL and mentorship support



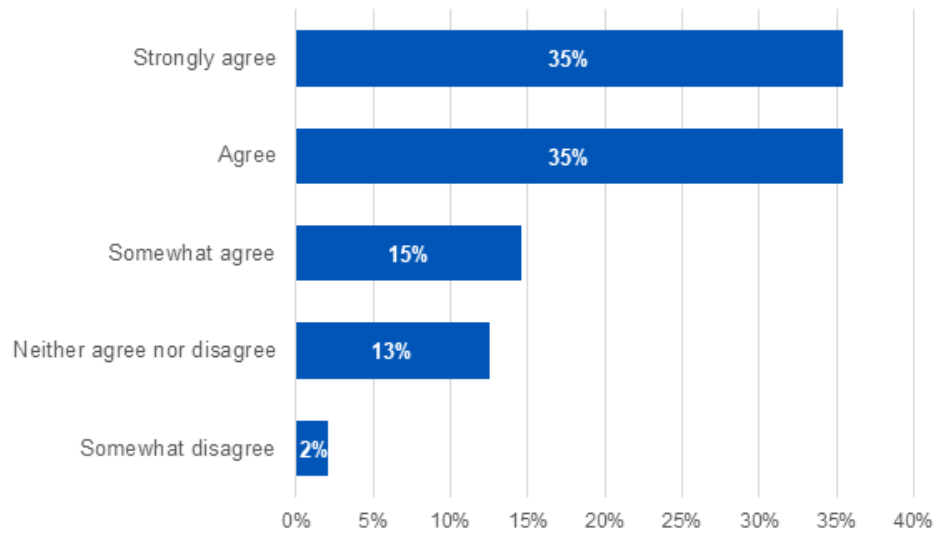
Note: This figure excludes ‘strongly disagree’ as no respondents selected this option. Furthermore, survey respondents had not been queried as to the type of mentorship they received nor whether this mentorship had impacted their WIL experience.

Most respondents to this query (51%, n – 35) either agreed or somewhat agreed that they had received some kind of formal or informal mentorship during their WIL experience. As with “Mentorship” in the *Findings* section of the report, while most students in a WIL position are offered some form of supervision, survey respondents have indicated that they would be more likely to engage in WIL with some type of WIL mentorship.

WIL Experience Alignment with Students Area of Study

Survey respondents were queried as to their level of agreement with the following statement: “*I feel that my WIL experience at UBC aligned with my area of study.*”

Figure 17: WIL and alignment with students' area of study



Note: This figure excludes 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' as no respondents selected these options.

Most respondents to this query (70%, n = 34) either agreed or strongly agreed that their WIL experience had been in line with their area of study. While this data appears positive, it is worth noting that WIL opportunities which may not align with a student's area of study provide learning experiences that both bolster their employability as well as enhance their personal agency during and after their post-secondary journey.