



WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING & GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY SUMMIT: **Season IV**

*Rethinking WIL for the digital age:
Can humanity learn fast enough
to employ itself?*



17 – 18 July 2025
Emperors Palace,
Johannesburg

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS



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Retired Professor of
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EVENT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The intersection of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and graduate employability has emerged as a critical nexus for preparing students for the complexities of the modern workforce. WIL and graduate employability are not merely sequential or complementary processes but rather a symbiotic dance, where each partner sets the tempo, informs, challenges, and elevates the other in a dynamic interplay that redefines career readiness for a globalised, technology-driven economy.

Virtual WIL placements, powered by AI simulations or remote collaboration tools, are expanding access to work experiences beyond geographic and economic barriers. A student in remote South Africa can now intern with a Silicon Valley startup, syncing their employability to global standards without leaving home. Yet, this shift also complicates the choreography: how do we ensure virtual WIL fosters the same depth of human connection and contextual learning as in-person experiences?

Set against the backdrop of a world where automation and quantum computing are reshaping industries, the 4th edition of the Work Integrated Learning & Graduate Employability Summit promises to be a rich, forward-looking experience for all involved. With its compelling theme and well-crafted program, the summit will not only address the current trends and challenges in WIL but also actively shape its future direction.

Attendees can expect to gain valuable knowledge, forge meaningful partnerships, and be part of a collective effort to enhance how we connect education with employment. From actionable recommendations to energized networks, the event outcomes will help ensure that WIL continues to grow as a transformative approach, preparing learners to thrive in their careers and contribute to their industries from the onset.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This summit welcomes a broad audience of stakeholders involved in work-integrated learning and workforce development. By bringing together this diverse audience from classroom to boardroom the conference creates a rich environment for cross-sector dialogue. Each group will have the opportunity to voice their experiences and expectations, making the conversations well-rounded and impactful.

Attendees will include:

Lecturers and Academic Leaders

University and college faculty, WIL coordinators, career services professionals, and curriculum developers who integrate practical experience into learning. These attendees will gain insights into designing and managing impactful WIL programs.

Policymakers and Administrators

Government officials, education authorities, and policy advisors focused on education, skills training, and employment. They will explore how policies and support systems can expand quality WIL opportunities and address skills mismatches in the economy.

Industry Leaders and Employers

Company executives, HR managers, training supervisors, and internship/apprenticeship hosts interested in talent development. Industry participants will learn how to better collaborate with educational institutions and leverage WIL to develop future employees.

Students and Early Career Professionals

Learners who have participated in internships, co-operative education, or other WIL experiences (or plan to). Students and recent graduates can share their perspectives and discover how WIL programs can be improved to enhance employability and career readiness.

SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

Navigate future directions

Facilitate discussions on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in WIL. This includes examining how changes in the workforce and technology will influence WIL, and brainstorming ways to adapt (or even reinvent) WIL for the future.

Explore curriculum innovation

Educators and administrators will discuss how to integrate real-world projects and placements into the curriculum in creative, scalable ways. This might involve redesigning courses to include industry-provided problems, developing micro-placements or project-based WIL for large student cohorts, and using multidisciplinary capstone projects as WIL. The conversation will also touch on ensuring academic quality and learning outcomes in WIL courses, and moving beyond once-off internships to a more integrated WIL curriculum.

Foster collaboration

Bring together academia, industry, and government to strengthen partnerships and co-create strategies for effective WIL programs. By connecting diverse stakeholders, the event seeks to build a community committed to improving student work experiences.

Inspire policy and strategy recommendations

Through the insights gathered in discussions, the conference will generate recommendations to guide policy and institutional strategy on WIL. This might take the form of a conference summary report or whitepaper highlighting best practices and suggesting actions for governments, educational institutions, and industry bodies. For example, delegates may put forward ideas for incentives to encourage industry participation in WIL, or frameworks to ensure quality and equity in WIL opportunities.

Share best practices

Provide a platform for educators and practitioners to exchange success stories, case studies, and research findings on WIL. Participants will learn about proven models and innovative practices from different institutions and sectors, enriching their own approaches.

EVENT FORMAT

The conference program is designed to be engaging and interactive, with a variety of session formats that cater to learning, sharing, and networking:

Keynote Speeches

Inspiring keynote addresses will kick off each day, delivered by prominent thought leaders in education and industry. Expect visionary talks that set the stage for the day's theme – for example, a keynote might paint a picture of the future workforce and challenge attendees to rethink how WIL can evolve. These sessions will energize participants and provide big-picture insights into WIL trends.

Panel Discussions

Expert panels will bring multiple perspectives together on stage to delve into the key topics. Panelists may include educators, employers, policymakers, and students, ensuring a well-rounded conversation. Moderated discussions will allow panelists to share experiences and debate ideas (such as how to balance academic and industry expectations in WIL), followed by Q&A where attendees can engage directly with questions. Panels offer a dynamic way to compare approaches and learn from diverse successes and challenges.

Interactive Workshops

Hands-on workshop sessions will give attendees a chance to actively develop skills and solutions. In workshops, participants might collaborate on designing a WIL curriculum module, practice using a new online tool for mentoring interns, or work through case studies of common WIL obstacles. Facilitators will guide small group activities, making these sessions practical and outcome-oriented. Attendees will gain not just knowledge but also tangible tactics and resources to apply after the conference.

Networking Opportunities

Recognizing the value of connections, the schedule will include dedicated networking events. Structured networking sessions (like roundtable meet-ups sorted by interest area) and informal social gatherings (coffee breaks, an evening reception) will help participants expand their professional network. Educators can meet potential industry partners, employers can find like-minded peers or future talent, and students can interact with mentors. These moments are key for sparking collaborations that may continue long after the conference.

In addition, there may be poster presentations, breakout discussion groups, and expo booths from organizations involved in WIL, all contributing to a rich and varied program. The overall format ensures a balance of informative presentations, lively discussion, and interactive learning – as well as time to mingle and exchange ideas one-on-one. Attendees can customize their experience by attending sessions most relevant to their interests, whether they seek high-level strategy or on-the-ground techniques.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

FIRST DAY: THURSDAY, 17 JULY

08: 00 – 08: 40

Registration & Morning Mingle

08: 40 – 08: 45

Chairperson's Opening Remarks

08: 45 – 09: 30

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Next Big Disruption: Harnessing AI and Human Synergy for the Future of Work

Buckle up, because the next big disruption isn't just tech—it's the cosmic bromance between AI and your brain! Picture generative AI, autonomous gizmos, and decision-boosting tools crashing the work party, redefining your 9-to-5 into a wild, creative jamboree. But with great power comes great... responsibility (and maybe a few awkward moments). How do you prep for a world where your emotional smarts and adaptability are the real MVPs, and tech skills are just the sidekick? Join us to figure out if you're teaming up with AI to rule the future or just trying not to get replaced by a sassy algorithm. Don't miss this chance to rewrite the rom-com of humans, tech, and work!

Prof Arthur Mutambara

09: 30 – 10: 15

Shifting mindsets: Pioneering modern paradigms in integrating industry expertise with academia

Dr Roelien Brink

10: 15 – 10: 45

Coffee/Tea Break

10: 45 – 11: 30

Shaping the future of work-integrated learning A joint venture

- ▶ WIL - a tool for learning in and for a professional life
- ▶ Diversity in WIL - for diverse students and contexts
- ▶ Shaping the future of WIL - towards a skilled and adaptable society

Prof Ulrika Lundh Snis & Kristina Josefsson

11: 30 – 12: 15

Maximising Student Engagement with Career Services

- ▶ Modernising careers service
- ▶ Identifying barriers to student engagement with career services
- ▶ Strategies to support students who may not actively seek career services
- ▶ Encouraging student engagement through technology

Stafford Bomester

12: 15 – 13: 00

Beyond Work-Readiness: Building Human-Centric Capabilities for a Fast-Transitioning Labour Market

- ▶ Transformational competencies in graduates: adaptive resilience, digital fluency, and ethical innovation
- ▶ Lessons from emerging technology adoption (AI, IoT, blockchain) in university ecosystems, including scalable platforms and AI-simulated internships
- ▶ Insights from BRICS into employability and platform work opportunities
- ▶ Human-centred frameworks to meet the demands of the Future of Work, green transitions, and global mobility

Dr Sean Kruger

13: 00 – 14: 00

Networking Lunch

14: 00 – 14: 45

Meeting Labour Market Demands: Integrating In-Demand Skills into the Student Journey

This session explores how higher education can rapidly adapt to shifting workplace demands by embedding essential skills—digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability—throughout students’ academic and co-curricular experiences. Drawing on industry partnerships, curriculum mapping, internships, project-based learning, micro-credentials, and mentorship, the presenter will share case studies that translate emerging skill needs into targeted learning activities. Attendees will leave with actionable frameworks for employer collaboration, course redesign, and outcome measurement to ensure graduates are fully prepared for today’s dynamic labour market.

Anne-Marie Fannon

14: 45 – 15: 15

Global Hustle: Landing jobs in a borderless job market

- ▶ Explore opportunities for remote work, international careers and cultural adaptability
- ▶ Hacking your job search
- ▶ Navigating the gig economy with swagger
- ▶ Crafting a CV that pops like a viral TikTok

Helen Wilsenach

15: 15 – 15: 30

Mid-Afternoon Break

15: 15 – 16: 15

FIRESIDE CHAT

Delivering a world-class international student experience: How can we make good on the promise to support international graduate employability?

International graduates bring diverse skills, perspectives, and cultural insights that enrich the global workforce—but too often face hurdles in transitioning from campus to career. This panel unites university leaders, employers, policymakers, and alumni to address the systemic, cultural, and operational strategies needed to fulfill that promise. Panelists will share evidence-based best practices and policy recommendations, illustrating how institutions and employers can co-create an ecosystem that empowers international alumni to thrive. Attendees will leave equipped with actionable frameworks and partnership models to transform good intentions into measurable employability outcomes.

16: 15 – 16: 30

Reflections & Chairperson's Closing Remarks

SECOND DAY: FRIDAY, 18 JULY

08: 00 – 08: 40

Registration & Morning Mingle

08: 40 – 08: 45

1st Day Recap & Chairperson's Opening Remarks

08: 45 – 09: 30

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Inclusive Curriculum Design to Scale-up Graduate Outcomes

- ▶ Overview why integrating employability development through the curriculum is important to support a diverse student population
- ▶ Sharing principles for inclusive approaches through the curriculum
- ▶ Providing tools that can support educators to achieve this through teaching & learning i.e. understanding ways of learning, utilising pedagogies for employability, and undertaking employability mapping.

Dr Aranee Manoharan

09: 30 – 10: 15

Mentoring and Coaching as graduate development tools: Converting book smarts into work smarts

In an era where academic excellence must translate into professional effectiveness, "Converting Book Smarts into Work Smarts" presents a strategic framework for bridging the gap between theory and practice. Illustrated with case studies from STEM, business, and the creative arts, attendees will gain practical toolkits—including skills translation templates, partnership models, and reflective practice guides—to ensure graduates emerge not only knowledgeable but workplace-ready. By integrating these strategies, educators and industry partners can collaboratively cultivate professionals who seamlessly convert academic insight into impactful performance.

Dr Charles Cotter

10: 15 – 10: 45

Coffee/Tea Break

10: 45 – 11: 45

FIRESIDE CHAT

Work-integrated learning for inclusion of individuals with disabilities

As higher education and industry strive for equitable access to meaningful employment, WIL offers a powerful pathway to include individuals with disabilities in professional contexts. This panel brings together educators, disability advocates, employers, and WIL coordinators to examine the design, implementation, and impact of inclusive WIL programs. Discussion points include:

- ▶ Strategies for embedding universal design principles and reasonable accommodations into internships, co-ops, and project placements
- ▶ Models of cross-sector collaboration that align institutional resources, employer commitments, and support services to facilitate seamless learning experiences
- ▶ The role of peer mentors, job coaches, and assistive technologies in fostering confidence, skill development, and workplace integration
- ▶ Metrics and qualitative feedback methods for evaluating participant growth, employer satisfaction, and long-term career trajectories

11: 45 – 12: 30

CASE STUDY

Preparing future proof curricula to boost the economy and contribute to social cohesion: A Western Cape, South African perspective

Prof Lalini Reddy

12: 30 – 13: 30

Networking Lunch

13: 30 – 14: 15

Chatting Competencies: From Missing Skills to Mapped Paths

- ▶ Uncovering critical skill deficits through quantitative and qualitative insights
- ▶ Translating identified gaps into interactive, layered frameworks
- ▶ Designing bespoke interventions—courses, coaching, micro-credentials—aligned to each learner's map
- ▶ Tracking progress and refining maps to sustain competency growth

14: 15 – 15: 00

What does the rise of generative AI mean for skills development and experiential learning?

As generative AI rapidly reshapes industries, the way we approach skills development and experiential learning is undergoing a fundamental transformation. This talk will explore how generative AI technologies are revolutionizing the learning landscape. By examining both the opportunities and challenges that AI presents for education, training, and workforce readiness, the talk will showcase innovative approaches to integrating AI into skills development programs and experiential learning initiatives. These examples will highlight how universities, corporations, and governments are preparing individuals for the future of work in a world where AI is a key enabler of both learning and productivity.

Prof Johannes Cronje

15: 00 – 15: 15

Mid-Afternoon Break

15: 15 – 16: 00

Feedback Loops for Curriculum Transformation and Student Success

This session examines how feedback loops can drive curriculum transformation to improve student success. It highlights methods such as surveys, focus groups, and learning analytics to collect insights from students, faculty, and stakeholders. Case studies will demonstrate how feedback has been used to redesign courses, address skill gaps, and promote inclusive learning. Attendees will gain practical strategies to implement feedback mechanisms, align curricula with industry needs, and enhance learning outcomes.

16: 00 – 16: 15

Chairperson’s Recap & Closing remarks

16: 00 – 16: 15

Recap & Chairperson’s Closing Remarks



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Standard Registration Fee is R7,999

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