



Partner Perspectives

INTERNSHIPS PROJECT – PARTICIPANTS' REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) connects Macquarie University students with local, regional and international partners to provide mutually beneficial experiential learning opportunities. PACE is at the core of Macquarie University's transformative approach to education. This signature program provides opportunities for all undergraduate students from every discipline to apply classroom learning in practice for academic credit. Students receive support to develop valuable career and life skills through PACE while working with, and making contributions to, industry and community organisations.

PACE would not be possible without the support and engagement of local, regional and international partners from industry, community and government sectors. Since 2011, over 30,000 students have engaged with over 3,400 different organisations through PACE. The *Partner Perspectives research project* was designed to understand how PACE partners are benefiting from PACE and identify the ways partners' experience of the program can be improved.

Over the course of the *Partner Perspectives project*, 55 representatives from PACE partner organisations participated in focus groups or interviews. All but two of these participants also completed a survey. These conversations represent an opportunity for PACE to listen and respond to our partners. Shaping the program with partner feedback will support the University to achieve its 2025 target of providing internship opportunities for students in any undergraduate program.

KEY FINDINGS AND PARTNER INSIGHTS

Key findings from the *Partner Perspectives project*, illustrated with quotes from partners and figures, are summarised here. To maintain confidentiality, participants are identified throughout this report by first name and role only. Depending on participants' preferences, names used are either participants' given names or pseudonyms. Each participant represented a PACE partner organisation. Summary information on the size, industry and sector of each participant's organisation is provided in Appendix 1.

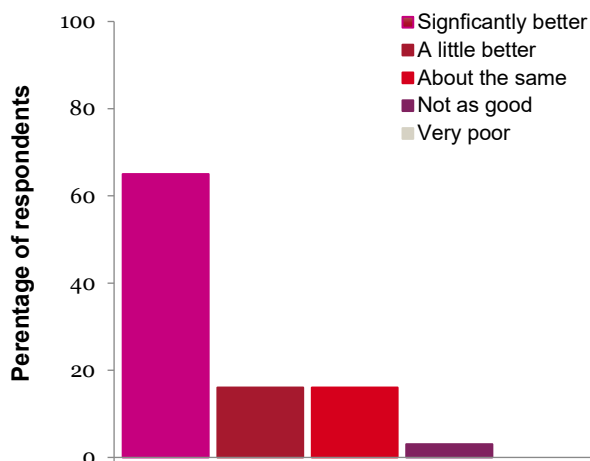
1. Many participants were interested in a deeper level of engagement with Macquarie University following their successful experience with PACE interns.

In terms of the collaboration I think absolutely, being able to establish that relationship with Macquarie University beyond ... PACE ... would be amazing (Samantha, Prevention Programs Administrator).

PACE and internships are really just part of our vision; our goal is to help young people integrate into the community and part of their life. So it meets our mission, vision and it provides us with capacity which we otherwise couldn't either afford or would not be able to access (Martin, CEO).

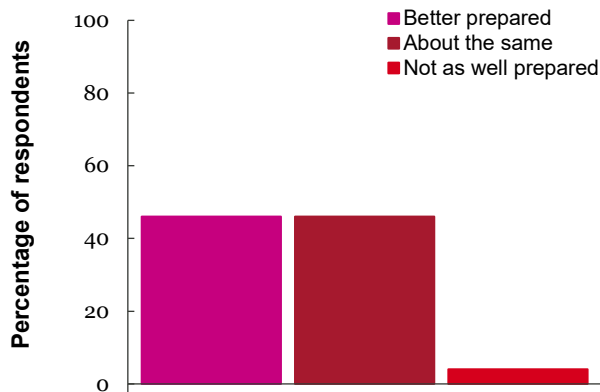
2. Eighty-one percent of participants (n=37) indicated their relationship with Macquarie University is significantly better or a little better than their relationship with other universities. This suggests that PACE adds value to university-partner relationships and emphasises the value of the work of University staff in providing on-going support to partners and students before, during and after placements.

Figure 1: Relationship with Macquarie compared to other universities (n=37)



3. Fifty-five percent of participants (n=53) host interns only from Macquarie University. Reasons given include partner satisfaction with the support they receive from Macquarie University through PACE before, during and after placements.
4. Of the 24 participants who host interns from multiple universities, 96 percent described Macquarie University interns as equally or better prepared than interns from other universities.

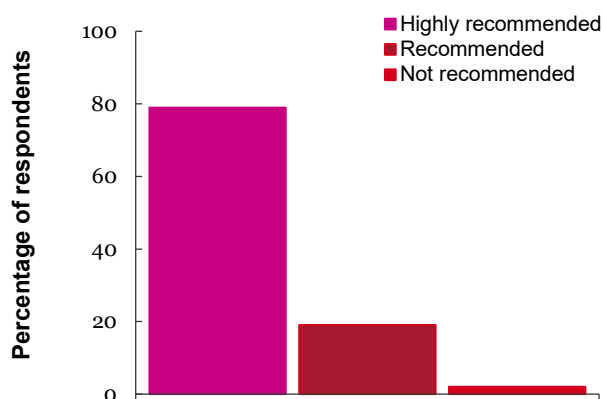
Figure 2: Macquarie students compared to student interns from other universities (n=24)



I think the quality of the students that we're getting from [PACE] overall has been really excellent. We've had three interns come through and each one has just represented themselves beautifully. I think that that is important to us. I don't think all universities are equal. I think the quality of the people that we're getting they've obviously been prepared in a certain extent to... how to conduct themselves ... really good, invested in what they're doing. I just think that that's been really reassuring to us and that's why we want to deepen the partnership and as I say create a calendar of ongoing interns (Cindy, Director Business Transformation)

5. Eighty-nine percent (n=49) of participants perceive that their organisation and student interns benefit equally from PACE placements. This suggests PACE is operating in alignment with the program's enduring principle of 'partnership and reciprocity' which aims to foster mutually beneficial partnerships.
6. Ninety-eight percent of participants (n=52) indicated they would 'recommend' or 'highly recommend' hosting interns from Macquarie University to other organisations.

Figure 3: Would recommend a Macquarie intern to another organisation (n=52)



7. Many participants perceived value in hosting Macquarie University interns as part of an employment pipeline and forty-nine percent (n=49) of participants had offered jobs to their PACE interns. PACE internships give host organisations the opportunity to assess interns' knowledge, skills and cultural fit. A pipeline of potential employees supports efficient and effective recruitment.

I think [for the] future forward ideally if we have a good strong pipeline of interns coming into our business we can actually eliminate some of the steps of going out to find graduates because they then become the pipeline into the graduate program and we don't need to go out to market so much. We also then can assess whether they're a good cultural fit for the company (Maria, Organisational Development Manager).

Sunita (HR Specialist) commented that their organisation has ‘a need to invest to develop a pool of talent that we can tap regularly and then hopefully build our talent and help through our company succession and so on and so forth’.

This is a good way to recruit some fresh talent into the organisation... instead of bringing people from outside of industry we can afford to have people at a junior level and then we can grow them towards more professional or more IT professional services area (Yuri, HR Manager).

- 8. PACE interns bring current disciplinary knowledge, digital literacy and fresh perspectives. Participants perceive these as substantial benefits to their organisations.

I think the benefit for us was having the young minds bringing these new ideas ... they're fearless to do things because they have the energy (Fabiola, Co-Director, Community Education Program).

In my own case, it's actually the digital skills that they bring ... I've got an intern at the moment doing a Twitter strategy for us... [getting that] Twitter thing to work (Ray, Publisher)

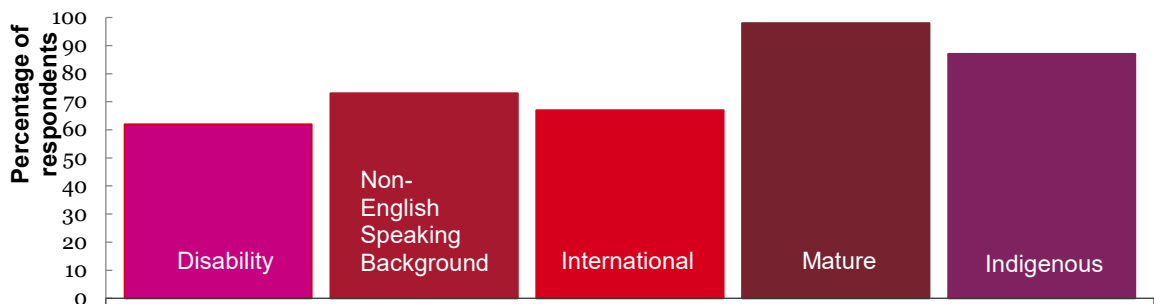
- 9. Participants expressed interest in a range of work placement models and confirmed the value of unpaid internships for all stakeholders. They also provided insights on factors that would support a transition to offering more paid internships. Philanthropic or corporate funding was suggested as an alternative model for funding paid internships in community organisations.
- 10. Most participants indicated interest in hosting interns from diverse backgrounds, and some indicated a need for additional information or support in this area.

[We have] 500 employees [but] if you count people aged between 20 to 35 it's less than 10. We don't have any young talent in the organisation (Yuri, HR Manager).

Fabiola (Co-Director, Community Education Program) noted that large organisations are commonly multi-disciplinary and multi-divisional, with scope to host students with a range of skills and disciplinary backgrounds: ‘So, sometimes you need people from other abilities and other faculties. So, I think PACE should be connected with other PACE faculties to provide these needs for the organisations’.

I think you guys do it really well in the experience that I've had so far. We've obviously got diversity targets that we're trying to meet as a company around more females in IT and engineering ... gender, disability. So having an option to look at interns with that lens would be really helpful (Maria, Organisational Development Manager).

Figure 4: Participants’ interest in hosting interns from diverse backgrounds (n=52)



- 11. Participants offered clear ideas regarding what makes an ideal intern, which is detailed in the next section of this report.

In a perfect experience, ...I would have a clear idea in my mind, and the student would have a clear idea in their mind, of exactly what they would be achieving over the period that they were with us, and that we actually had some outcomes set out on what ... the project might be or the things that they would learn. (Ray, Publisher).

- 12. Although partners were invited as guests of specific Faculties in each phase of the project, analysis of the



PACE partner database reveals that many organisations involved in this project already have relationships with multiple Faculties at Macquarie.

13. Participants reported that planning realistic projects and managing expectations were their main challenges in hosting interns, suggesting an expanded role for University staff in supporting activity design and project management. Smaller organisations, in particular, value assistance from PACE in structuring internships and supervision arrangements.

IDEAL INTERNSHIPS AND IDEAL INTERNS

An essential strategy for establishing an ‘ideal internship experience’ for partner organisations is to support the planning and preparation stage, prior to the commencement of the internship. Appropriate internship preparation and planning can help the student to ‘hit the ground running’ (Catherine, Vanessa, Maria, Marion, Lauren and Cindy) and ‘[engage] from the first instant to get the most out of the experience’ (Yuri, HR Manager). Internships are relatively short-term placements, often with steep learning curves, so internship preparation can play a critical role in shaping the success of a placement.

Partner feedback on the characteristics of ideal internships and ideal interns is summarized in the figure below.

 Ideal internships	 Ideal interns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear outcomes planned • Realistic expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Length of placement ○ Appropriate to skill level • Project design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunities to work individually, in teams and across levels ○ Allows for creativity and initiative • Support for and understanding of PACE across all levels of the organisation • Regular contact with PACE team • Host supervisors receive feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes – motivated, proactive, independent, confident, reliable, curious, flexible, good cultural fit • Values – community engaged, has ‘the right kind of attitude’, wants to contribute • Skills – communication, teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking • Willing to ask questions, discuss opinions • Good self-management skills • Able to receive and act on constructive feedback • Professional behaviour

Some participants indicated that they would benefit from particular kinds of support from PACE teams, such as raising awareness of the program in their organisations. Others noted that not all student placements go to plan. Table 1 provides advice from partners on how best to support students when things go awry, along with tips on how to prevent problems arising in the first place.

Table 1: Success factors in supervising PACE students when things don't go to plan

Communicate expectations to all stakeholders	'I think a lot of responsibility can sit at that front end, in terms of the way that we set things up and the information is communicated to them and the outcomes that we're expecting them to deliver. So that frontend stuff I think is extremely important before even they walk through the door because if that's lacking then I think in some respects the onus is on us, if the placement hasn't gone well, eventually hasn't gone well because we just haven't really given them initial stuff that we needed to' (Martin, CEO).
Set realistic expectations	'We're new into [PACE]. So I think our expectations have been too high with a couple of the students that we've had. So we've had to really think about how we're structuring what we want out of [PACE]. I think with any partnership that takes time to develop' (Libby, Director of Approved Provider).
Invest time to increase value	'... the [interns] that struggle a bit, that's what you've got to stretch yourself as an employer, just that extra couple of steps because it doesn't mean that they're a waste of time or anything like that, it just means that they just need a moment of help. It's actually quite satisfying to get someone who's struggling a little bit in the beginning and getting them through to the end of the program and going well, you know, you're different, you've improved' (Martin, CEO).
Identify gaps that could be addressed by PACE units and teams	'There were a couple of instances I had students who were dealing with massive personal crises and I don't know whether they were afraid to mention it or whether they thought they'd just juggle it. I wasn't aware of it actually, no one told me, they didn't tell me. So, it actually reflected really badly on them professionally, it got to the point where they weren't coming in, they weren't letting me know and so I was ready to send them an email saying it's not working. Then I found out that they had family members who were very sick. I didn't think as part of their induction to say that if there is a crisis going on this is how you should approach it. Part of me would like some of that to be managed at a PACE level as well so that students know that if they have stuff that's going on then they can prioritise a family member. That's something I am still dealing with, how I kind of approach the students' (Jane, University Program Manager).

PAID INTERNSHIPS AND ALTERNATIVE INTERNSHIP MODELS

One of the aims of the *Partner Perspectives* project was to explore alternative placement models and identify the characteristics of work placements that add value to partners. Participants were aware of a range of different models including group observation placements, cadetships and industry-based learning placements with students employed full-time for 6-month or year-long internships. Some partners perceived the value in a structured two-part internship, in which the first part would be unpaid and if the student is doing well, the second part may be paid.

The potential for a transition from unpaid internships to other types of work placements was a key issue explored in interviews and focus groups.

- Around one-fifth of project participants' organisations currently offer paid internships
- Only 2 percent (one organisation) consistently offer only paid internships
- Some organisations that do not currently offer paid internships showed tentative interest in doing so in the future
- Forty-four percent of partners indicated no capacity for / interest in a paid internship model

Most of those participants who only offered unpaid internships noted financial constraints as the key reason. Many participants described their motivation for engaging with PACE as initially resource oriented, with PACE internships meeting resource gaps.

A participant from one not-for-profit organisation indicated an openness to exploring alternative sources of revenue to fund paid placements, for example through government grants, corporate funding and/or philanthropic sources.

Participants made a distinction between employment arrangements and other payment arrangements for interns. Alternative payment arrangement suggestions include scholarships or stipends. Some participants who were not able to offer paid internships acknowledged the value of scholarships.

In discussing paid versus unpaid internships:

- Some participants noted unpaid internships offer students opportunities to gain experience, develop skills in the job market, and prove their value as employees
- Some would prefer to allocate funds to securing a position for a person with more experience
- Several participants described the value of unpaid internships for their organisation, acknowledging the value of bringing fresh perspectives into their organisation
- Some participants from private sector organisations described the important role that unpaid interns have played in the development of their organisation
- In hosting interns, partners are paying in kind, through allocating time and resources to student supervision
- Paid internships require funding and also carry an administrative load

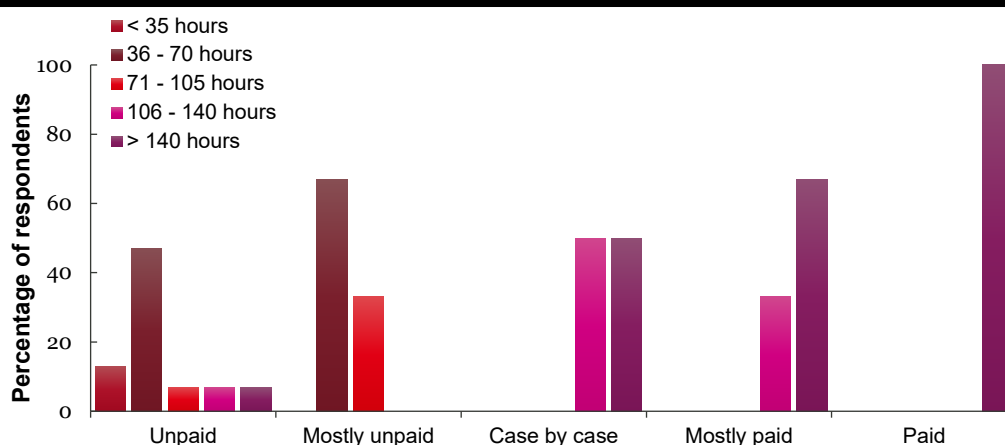
Based on this sample of partners, the private sector offers most potential for paid internships. There appears to be some additional potential for expansion within the public sector, although this finding may reflect the high number of University stakeholders in that part of the sample. The presence of, and potential for, paid internships in the not-for profit sector is much more limited, with tighter budget restrictions and a reliance on charitable donations and volunteer staff.

Further insights into paid versus unpaid internships were provided by some participants:

- Participants from large private sector companies noted that if a business justification could be made then a transition to paid internships was foreseeable
- One participant described a shift within their organisation to paid internships and the benefits that resulted from this
- One participant noted the importance of ‘acknowledging hard work’ undertaken by interns through payment, but also the value for an organisation, in particular in attracting and retaining interns. Framed this way, paid internships are seen as a strategic long-term investment, rather than an expense
- Another participant framed paid interns as a potential cost saving when compared to the cost of external contractors

It is important to recognise organisational factors that can lead to a transition to paid internships, such as a champion within the organisation. When asked about their preferences for length of placement and payment structure, participants preference for paid placements increased relative to the length of placements, as shown in Figure 4. Participants felt that interns would make more valuable contributions through longer placements, as these allow more time for induction and training, enabling students to make more substantial contributions to their host organisation. This aligns with the enduring PACE principle of mutual benefit.

Figure 4: Paid internships and participants' preferred work hours for interns (n=53)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY FROM PACE PARTNERS

The following list of recommendations from PACE partners provide the University with opportunities to improve the PACE program and ensure consistency across Faculties and fields of work.

1. Continue to ensure that the PACE curriculum:
 - a. Prepares students to demonstrate initiative while ensuring that they are prepared to follow instructions and ask appropriate questions
 - b. Promotes the value of lifelong learning, including the value of learning from experience and responding to feedback
 - c. Helps students understand the value of networking and provides opportunities to practice different kinds of networking in low-risk situations
 - d. Prepares students to make a substantive contribution to their host organisation.
2. Share best practice examples across PACE teams to ensure partners receive consistent, high quality support to plan for internships and supervise interns.
3. Develop mechanisms to improve the experience of activity development, such as having one point of contact within PACE for a given partner, and replicate activity development workshops, such as those offered for PSY399 and SOC301.
4. Ensure alignment between partner needs and expectations, and student needs, capabilities and expectations.
5. Consider options for further collaboration with PACE partners on intern selection processes and standards, including learning from current partner practices.
6. Ensure that strategies for dealing with personal challenges on placement are included in all PACE student orientation sessions.
7. Improve processes for partner debriefing on PACE activities, including mechanisms to provide student feedback to partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PACE PARTNERS

The following list of recommendations from partners is focused on partner activities. The recommendations acknowledge different levels of awareness of and engagement with PACE among HR staff, senior leaders and individual host supervisors in partner organisations.

1. Foster support for and understanding of internships at different levels of your organisation.
2. Design placement activities for success. For example, align activities with organisational needs and student capabilities. Build in opportunities for interns to work individually, with teams and across levels of the organisation. Keep expectations realistic with regard to timing, duration and payment.
3. Promote the value of learning through the experience to host supervisors and interns.
4. Allow time and other resources to provide ongoing support, guidance and feedback to interns.
5. Consider hosting diverse interns: Indigenous and international students, students with disabilities and mature age students bring value to organisations.
6. Consider developing structured, long-term and paid internships that can form part of a human resource planning strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

A large volume of actionable data emerged from conversations and surveys throughout the *Partner Perspectives project*. This information will help the University improve support for, and relationships with, our partners well beyond the individual participants in the project.

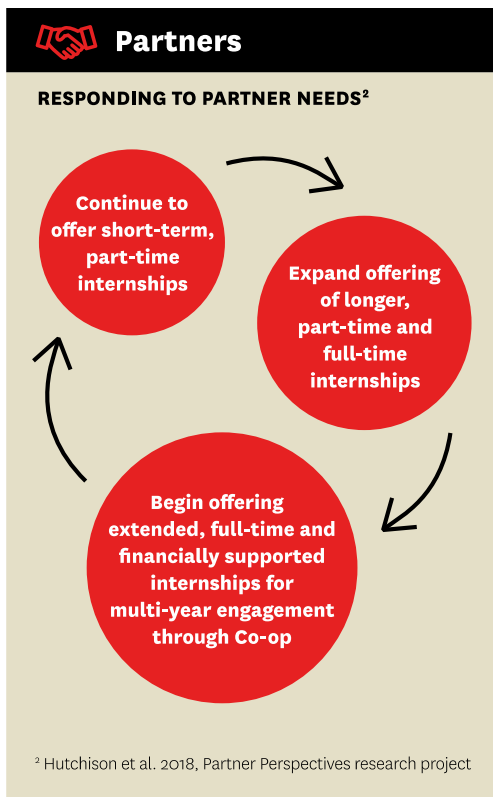
This project has enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of PACE partner relationships and identify opportunities for further partner collaboration and development. PACE partners have given strong endorsement to many aspects of their engagement with PACE including: their relationships with Macquarie, high levels of satisfaction with PACE interns, and a willingness to recommend PACE interns to others.

When the *Partner Perspectives* research project began in 2016, the *Internships Project* was considering different internship models that could be developed to advance the aim of Macquarie University's Learning and Teaching Strategic Framework 2015-2020 'to provide all undergraduate students with the opportunity to complete an internship by 2025'. The *Partner Perspectives project* provides excellent insights into how these opportunities can be explored and realized more fully. Many of these opportunities have subsequently been developed as outlined in the following section.

RESPONDING TO PARTNER NEEDS

PACE offers partners a broad range of options for mutually beneficial placements for undergraduate students across all disciplines. PACE responds to partner needs through a range of internship options that are both complementary and evolving in nature.

The findings from this project provide valuable partner perspectives on planning ideal internships and their expectations of interns. These insights will help us build on the solid foundation of PACE through ongoing co-creation of curriculum with partners, students and other University stakeholders.



OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

At the time this study was conducted, PACE had connections with 2,411 partners: 1,690 partners from the private sector; 193 from the public sector and 428 from the not-for-profit sector. In this project, we wanted to engage with partners who had hosted a PACE student in 2015-2016 and so we sent 350 invitations to these partners. The invitation response rate was approximately 15 percent (n=55). Representatives of organisations that partner with four Faculties (Business and Economics, Science and Engineering, Human Sciences and Arts) contributed to the project. Since that time, a new Faculty, Medicine and Health Sciences, has become part of PACE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the generous participation of PACE partners whose contributions have directly informed the *Partner Perspectives project* and this report.

CONTACT US

For further information about the Partner Perspectives project, please contact our Associate Director Co-op and Internships (PACE):

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AFTERWORD

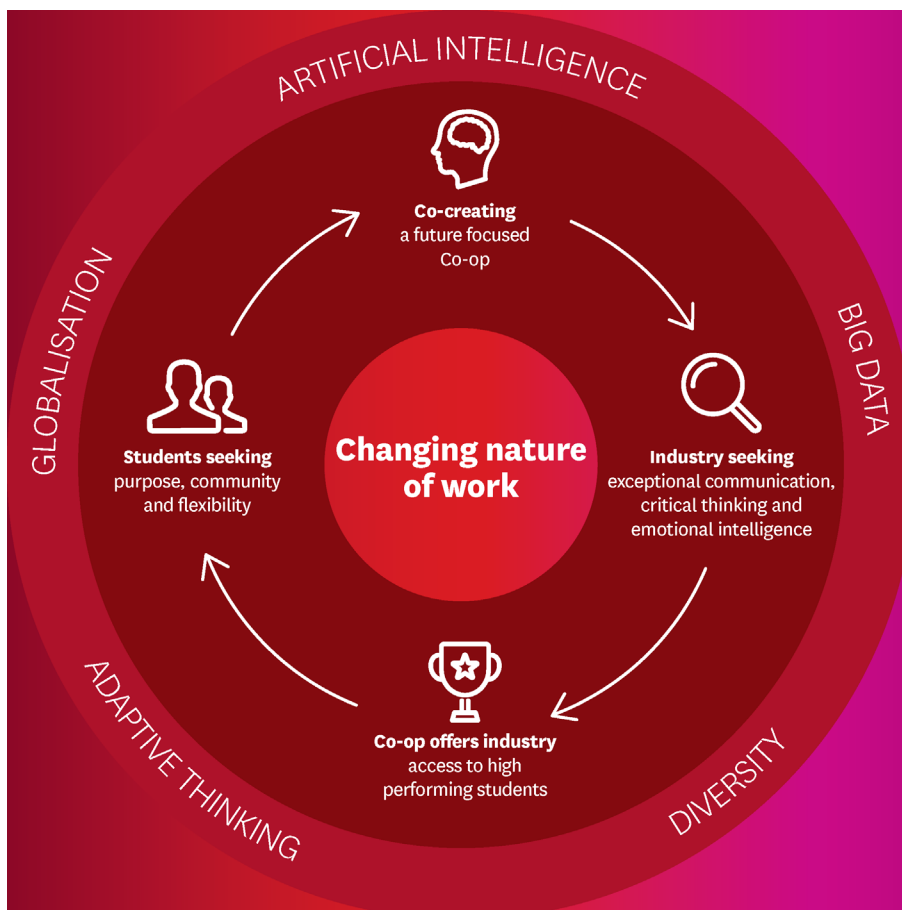
Since its inception in late 2015, the *Internships Project* has worked on separate and related activities to identify additional opportunities to support students' employability.

In late 2016, the Internships Project team worked with an interdisciplinary team across the University to scope and design a cooperative education program (Co-op) at Macquarie.¹

As a result of this University-wide collaboration to develop Co-op programs at Macquarie, an Actuarial Studies Co-op was launched in 2018, an Accounting Co-op will launch in 2019, and plans are under development for roll out to further disciplines in the future. These Co-op programs provide employers with the opportunity to bring high-achieving students into their organisation, gain fresh perspectives and foster students' career development.

In July 2017, feedback about plans for an Accounting Co-op was collected from industry at a Business Leaders Roundtable Luncheon. We heard from industry about the changing nature of work and the need for Co-op to respond to this environment. As a result of this feedback, a Co-op concept diagram was developed to represent both Macquarie's Actuarial Studies and Accounting Co-op programs as a solution to the changing needs of industry.

CO-OP MODEL



¹ Co-op courses offer a mode of study that alternates periods in the classroom and periods in the workplace. Students participate in one three month and two six-month placements as a requirement of their four-year course, and are remunerated for doing so through a scholarship or wages. The Co-op courses combine a discipline degree with the Bachelor of Professional Practice.

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS, ORGANISATIONS AND INDUSTRIES

PARTICIPANT ID	NAME	ROLE IN ORGANISATION (ORG.)	ORG. SIZE BY EMPLOYEES: SMALL (1-4), SME (5-200), LARGE (>200)	SECTOR (PRIVATE, PUBLIC, NOT-FOR PROFIT)	INDUSTRY
P01	Fabiola	Co-director, Community Education Program	Small	Government	Education
P02	Karen	Founder and Director	Small	Private	Education
P03	Colleen	HR Development	Large	Private	Financial services
P04	Catherine	HR Associate	Large	Private	Healthcare and research
P05	Chloe	Co-founder and Director	Large	Private	High tech
P06	Linda	HR Manager	Large	Private	Travel
P07	Ben	Centre Manager	Small	Not for Profit	Social services
P08	Menaka	IT Business Relationship Manager	Large	Private	Pharmaceutical
P09	Daisy	People Services Manager	Large	Not for Profit	Healthcare
P10	Barbara	Head of University Office	Large	Government	Education
P11	Max	Marketing and Business Development Consultant	SME	Private	Manufacturing and electronics
P12	Yuri	HR Manager	Large	Private	Electronics

P13	Rebecca	Deputy CEO & Head of Fundraising	Small	Not for Profit	Financial services
P14	Tina	Business Strategist	Large	Private	Financial services
P15	Ray	Publisher	SME	Private	Business consulting
P16	Vanessa	University Program Manager	Large	Government	Education
P17	Justin	Co-director, Community Education Program	Small	Government	Education
P18	Margaret	Campus Relationship Manager	Large	Private	Business consulting
P19	Lyndal	Head of Group Finance	Small	Private	Healthcare
P20	Sunita	HR Specialist	Small	Private	Energy management
P21	Robin	Coordinator	SME	Government	Public service
P22	Hong	CEO	Small	Private	High tech
P23	Maria	Organisational Development Manager	Large	Private	Telecommunications
P24	Penny	Welfare Officer	Large	Government	Healthcare
P25	Donna	Clinical Psychologist	Small	Private	Healthcare
P26	Jenny	Director of Nursing	Large	Private	Healthcare

P27	Libby	Approved Provider Director	Small	Private	Education
P28	Name withheld	Project Officer	Large	Government	Social services
P29	Martin	CEO	SME	Not for Profit	Youth development
P30	Name withheld	Program Leader	Large	Private	Telecommunications
P31	Jane	University Program Manager	Large	Government	Education
P32	Wendy	Director/Lecturer	Small	Not for Profit	Education
P33	Norma	National Operations Manager	SME	Not for Profit	Youth development
P34	Terri	Department Manager	Large	Private	Healthcare
P35	Richard	Deputy Laboratory Manager / Head Microbiology	Large	Private	Healthcare
P36	Geraldine	CEO	Small	Not for Profit	Social services
P37	Mandy	Education/Quality Manager	SME	Private	Healthcare
P38	Carla	Honorary Secretary	Small	Not for Profit	Social services
P39	Samantha	Prevention Programs Administrator	SME	Private	Healthcare and research
P40	Cathy	Senior Program Manager	Small	Private	Healthcare

P41	Assmaah	Program Operations Manager	SME	Not for Profit	Social services
P42	Marion	Owner	Small	Private	Media
P43	Lauren	General Manager	SME	Private	Publishing
P44	Name withheld	Senior Associate	Small	Private	Archaeology
P45	Sarah	Program Coordinator	SME	Partnership	Environmental services
P46	Ruth	Director, University Office	Large	Government	Education
P47	Matilda	Program Manager	Small	Private	Social services
P48	John	University Campus Security Manager	Large	Government	Education
P49	Natalie	Producer	SME	Partnership	Media
P50	Andrew	Program Manager	Large	Government	Healthcare
P51	Cindy	Director, Business Transformation	Large	Private	Business consulting
P52	Alex	Director, Pscyhologist and Behaviour Analyst	SME	Private	Healthcare
P53	Katherine	Senior Research Psychologist	SME	Government	Healthcare and research
P54	Jade	Team Leader	Large	Not for profit	Youth development
P55	Jacki	Owner and Director	SME	Private	Professional training



Macquarie University is a vibrant hub of intellectual thinkers, all working towards a brighter future for our communities and our planet.

A PLACE OF INSPIRATION

Macquarie is uniquely located in the heart of Australia's largest high-tech precinct, a thriving locale which is predicted to double in size in the next 20 years to become the fourth largest CBD in Australia.

Our campus spans 126 hectares, with open green space that gives our community the freedom to think and grow. We are home to fantastic facilities with excellent transport links to the city and suburbs, supported by an on-campus train station.

RENOWNED FOR EXCELLENCE

We are ranked among the top two per cent of universities in the world, and with a 5-star QS rating, we are renowned for producing graduates that are among the most sought after professionals in the world.

A PROUD TRADITION OF DISCOVERY

Our enviable research efforts are brought to life by renowned researchers whose audacious solutions to issues of global significance are benefiting the world we live in.

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES

Our pioneering approach to teaching and learning is built around a connected learning community: our students are considered partners and co-creators in their learning experience.