

Work-Based Learning (WBL) in Your Course: What You Need to Know

As you consider enrolling in a course that includes a Work-Based Learning (WBL) component, it's important to understand what this entails and how it can benefit your educational and career journey. Below is a guide to help you know what to expect and how to make the most of this opportunity.

What is Work-Based Learning (WBL)?

Work-Based Learning (WBL) integrates real-world experiences into your academic coursework by connecting students to employer projects. In a WBL course, you won't just learn through lectures and assignments — you'll work directly on challenges or projects provided by businesses or organizations, allowing you to apply classroom knowledge in a practical setting.

Key Aspects of a WBL Course:

- **Real-World Projects:** You'll work on projects directly connected to a company, non-profit, or other employer partner. These projects are carefully selected to align with your course objectives and will be managed through the Riipen platform.
- **Collaboration:** WBL is highly collaborative. You'll have opportunities to interact with professionals in related fields, getting direct feedback and insights that you can't find in textbooks alone.
- **Guidance from Faculty:** Your faculty member will guide you throughout the project, ensuring you stay aligned with course goals while navigating the professional expectations of the employer partner.

How Will You Be Connected to an Employer?

Through the Riipen platform, faculty members identify and curate projects from employer partners that are relevant to your course content. Once you're enrolled in the course, you will be matched with a project that fits the learning objectives of the class. Riipen provides a structured way for you to connect with professionals, work collaboratively, and receive feedback on your work.

What Does This Mean for You?

By enrolling in a WBL course, you are taking an important step in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional application. Here are some key benefits:

- **Develop Practical Skills:** You'll gain hands-on experience with real industry challenges, helping you build practical skills and confidence.
- **Expand Your Professional Network:** You'll interact with employers and professionals, creating valuable connections that may open doors to internships, job opportunities, or future collaborations.
- **Enhance Your Resume:** The project work you complete in these courses is a great way to demonstrate your skills and experience on your resume and in interviews. It shows future employers that you have practical experience applying your learning in a real-world context.
- **Prepare for Your Career:** WBL gives you the chance to explore potential career paths, develop key competencies for the workplace, and refine your career goals before graduation.

Learning More about WBL and Its Value

If you register for a course with a WBL component, you'll have the opportunity to attend a special event specifically for students in these classes. This event will provide deeper insights into the value of Work-Based Learning and how to maximize your experience during the course.

What to Expect in a WBL Course

- **Active Participation:** WBL courses require active involvement, whether working on a team or independently. You'll be expected to manage your time effectively and engage with the project, just as you would in a professional setting.
- **Professionalism:** Since you'll be working directly with an employer, you'll need to approach the project with professionalism — meeting deadlines, communicating clearly, and presenting your work at a high standard.
- **Reflection:** You'll not only complete the project but also reflect on your learning and how the experience connects to your career aspirations. This might include assignments or discussions that ask you to evaluate what you learned through the WBL experience.

How to Get Started

1. **Check the Course Listings:** Courses with a WBL component will be listed as part of the regular registration materials. Be sure to look for any specific notes about WBL in the course descriptions.
2. **Register for a WBL Course:** During the spring semester, your faculty member will introduce the project and connect you with the Riipen platform for your assignment.
3. **Attend the WBL Event:** Make sure to take advantage of the special event for WBL students to learn more about how to succeed in your course and project.

For more information about Work-Based Learning and courses available with this component, please contact Meghan Jester at jester@roanoke.edu.