



TYOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

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This typology of participation activities has been developed to assist practitioners who are designing participation units. The purpose is to provide information about the broad range of activities that are reported in the literature that fall under the umbrella of experience based learning. These include traditional placement, practicum and internship activities, but also others that have been used for many years in Business, Law and IT as group projects and live and static case studies, as well as some that fall into what is described as service learning.

Most academic units or courses will provide learning support in the form of seminars, tutorials, workshops, assessment tasks and the like, but these are not included in this typology, as it only considers the activity itself.

Method

A literature review was undertaken in order to identify the various types of participation activities. In all 255 sources were reviewed, which included academic papers, and vignettes from the Australian Collaborative Education Network website. Sources were distributed amongst the team who read and reviewed each source, recording information on a supplied template. The template was designed to capture the broad range of each activity and information about a number of aspects.

Fields on the template included –

- Type of activity
- Activity is on or off campus
- Degree of community engagement
- Degree of contact with host
- Degree of contact with academic support
- Length of placement
- Mode and structure of activity
- Group or individual activity
- Notes including assessment details etc.

Templates were collated and analysed. Sixteen common variables were identified and are presented in Figure 1.

Identifying the wide variety of participation activities was a key aim of the project. Participation activities as reported in the literature were classified as off campus and on campus activities. There are many examples in the literature of activities which combine both on-campus and off-campus components. For this reason the information was presented as a Venn diagram to show the relationship between the activities with examples of each (see Figure 2).

Variables

Many factors affect the selection and suitability of activities which can be offered. Figure 1 presents key variables, however there may be others –e.g. where the student is positioned in their program (first, second or third year) when undertaking the activity, types of assessment etc. Some types of activities are more common in certain disciplines than others e.g. teaching practicums, sandwich internships for engineering etc. but there can be many variations; whereas a community project with both on and off-campus components which requires students to consult with a community/partner organisation onsite, and then work on-campus in teams to complete the clients work, is a common practice in Business and IT. Both approaches are valid, have different emphases, and may address quite different learning outcomes.

Terminology

The terms used to describe various participation activities (e.g. placement, practicum, work integrated learning, internships, community projects) are not always clear and have been used interchangeably in the literature. Subsequently they do not always indicate the main features of a participation activity. For example fieldwork is not necessarily undertaken off campus – it could be completed on-campus or a combination of both.

For simplification purposes participation activities have been separated into two types: those that occur *predominately off campus*, and those undertaken *predominately on-campus*. There are many variations of activities reported in the literature as demonstrated by the examples provided in Figure 2, with some involving both on and off campus components. Selected case studies with brief descriptions of the activities are offered in Figure 3. Further there are varying degrees of community engagement each activity entails. Generally off campus activities have a higher degree of obvious community engagement, but that does not mean that on-campus activities do not. There are many activities on-campus that can, and do involve a high degree of community engagement.

Models

The master/apprentice model is the most common approach underpinning participation activities across education, nursing and other disciplines. However, there is no evidence that this approach is necessarily the most appropriate for all types of participation activities. The discipline and/or learning outcomes and objectives of a Participation unit may require a different approach. For example group work may be more appropriate than individual work if the activities entail completion of a client project within a specified timeframe. Some professions such as IT and business work predominately in teams and value group/team activities, thus participation activities that incorporate teamwork may be preferred.

Issues

There are a number of issues which some of the variables may exacerbate. For example high competition for placements may mean that alternative activities need be considered, perhaps on-campus, perhaps with more team or group options. Off campus activities requiring completion outside of normal university hours may be a factor for students who have work/family responsibilities, and there may be additional pressures on host organisations to meet curriculum requirements where placements involve a set amount of hours.

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Further reading

The Australian Collaborative Education Network website contains a number of work-integrated learning (WIL) vignettes collected as part of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council national project; *Work Integrated Learning: A national framework for initiatives to support best practice* <http://www.acen.edu.au/vignettes/>

Groenewald, T., Drysdale, M., Chiupka, C., & Johnston, N. (2011). Towards a definition and models of practice for cooperative and work-integrated learning. In R. K. Coll & K. E. Zegwaard (Eds.), *International handbook for cooperative and work-integrated education* (2nd ed., pp. 17-24).

The Victoria University website contains a useful definition of participation type activities, supported by case studies <http://tls.vu.edu.au/portal/site/liwc/whatisliwc.aspx>

Figure 1. Key variables affecting the selection of suitable participation activities

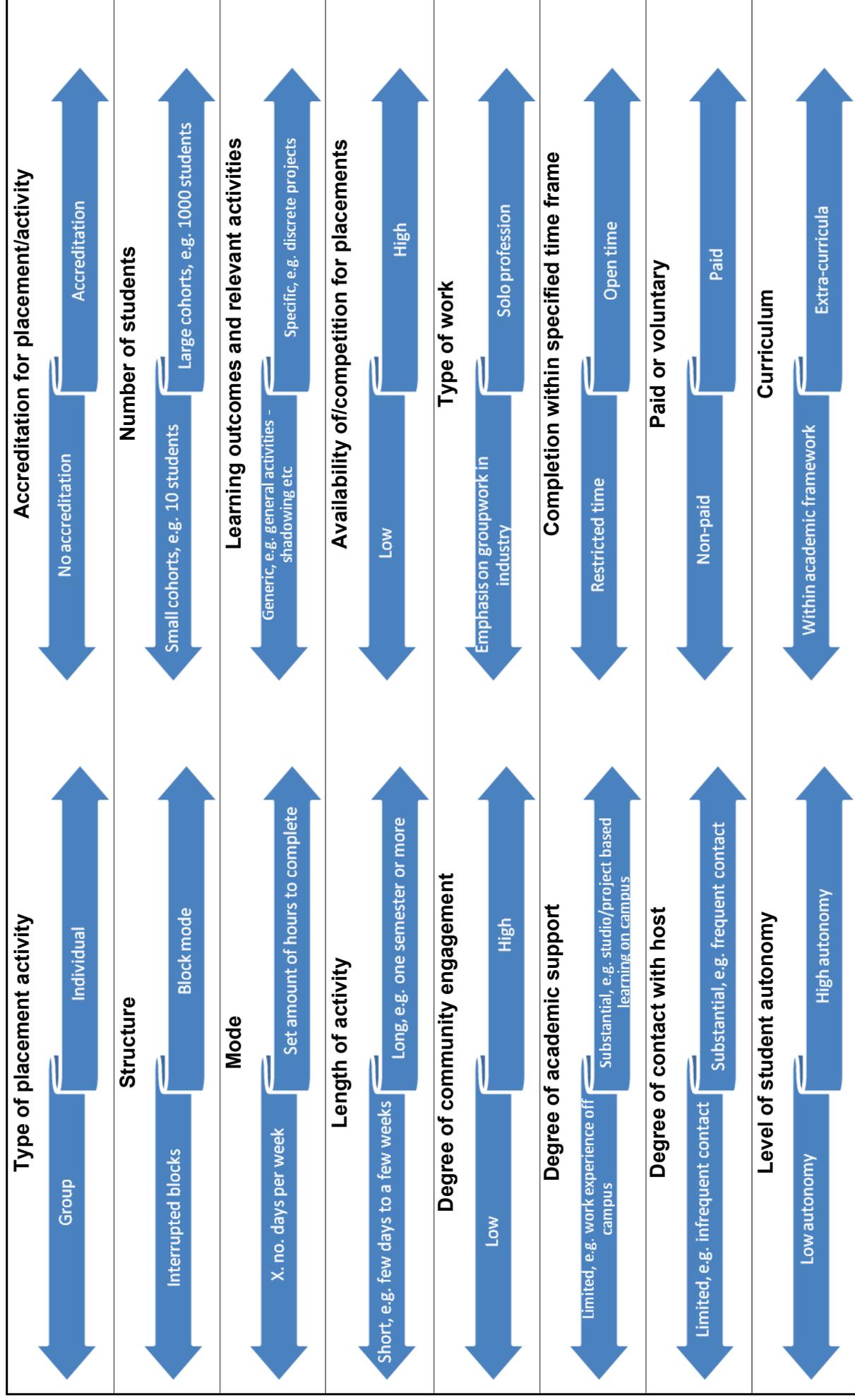
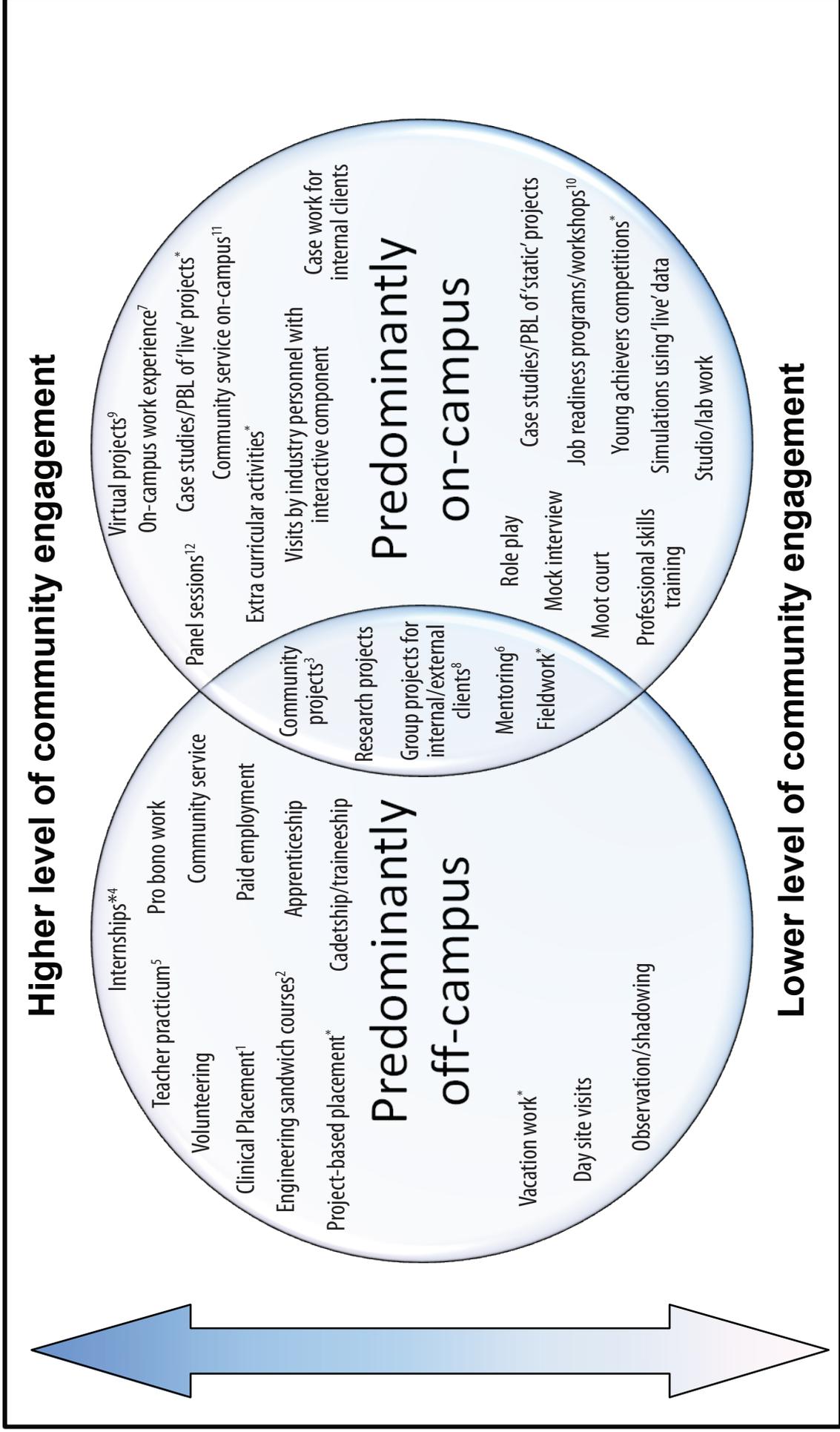


Figure 2. Selected examples* of potential participation activities

[Note: these activities may or may not meet the criteria for participation units; they have been listed to provide an overview of some of the possibilities that are reported in the literature]



* Specific examples of activities with a numerical value attached are provided in Figure 3 / *Depending on the activity this might be high or low community engagement

Figure 3. Examples of participation activities in Australian universities*

Predominantly off-campus (and onsite)	Predominantly on-campus (and offsite)
<p>1. CSU Health Studies Placements A group of occupational therapy and speech pathology students undertake a five-week full time fieldwork placement in a school for children with hearing impairments in a small town near Saigon.</p>	<p>7. QUT Radio station Students in their final year of radio and television journalism work on QUT radio. They are responsible for all aspects of the station, they must find and produce their own news stories.</p>
<p>2. Griffith Industry Affiliates Program Engineering students spend the first semester of their final year in a project-based placement.</p>	<p>8. Shopfront at UTS Shopfront acts as the gateway for community groups to engage with UTS. Students work together in groups on projects for community partners.</p>
<p>3. ICT Program at University of Ballarat Information and Communication Technology students work with a client from the local community. This could be working on software development for a local club or charity.</p>	<p>9. Virtual Law Placements/Projects at QUT Law students complete an online work placement with a real world client. The project is completed within an agreed time frame, students are able to complete the program in their own time. Using the virtual placement framework means that the organisation could be national or international.</p>
<p>4. QUT Law Intern Program Students complete an internship in various government agencies under the supervision of a government lawyer. The internship takes place one day per week over a 12 week period for a minimum of 5 hours each day.</p>	<p>10. Careers in Curriculum at Swinburne University Students are taught about writing resumes and interview techniques. During the course students must be beginning the job seeking process.</p>
<p>5. CDU Teacher Education Professional Experience Education students engage in weekly visits to a school followed by a block placement. They stay with the same school and mentor for the entire year, which allows for a more holistic involvement in the school community.</p>	<p>11. Sudanese Swim Program at VU Over five weeks groups of physical education students provide swimming, aquatics activity and water safety coaching to Sudanese migrant students.</p>
<p>6. Music Mentoring at VU Students across different disciplines including music, community engagement, social justice and creative arts act as mentors to high school students at risk of discontinuing education.</p>	<p>12. Law Panel Sessions at Macquarie On-campus themed panel sessions comprised of industry, government, non-government organisations and academics who work with students on a group project.</p>

* All examples are sourced from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) website <http://www.acen.edu.au/vignettes/> with the exception of no. 12