

Interview

Collaboration between industry and Swinburne University to deliver the next generation of international trade professionals.

Following the breakthrough in gaining recognition of customs broker and freight forwarder occupations through the Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) section within Australian Bureau of Statistics, Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) is embarking on the next steps in addressing a shortage of entrants into the international trade sector.



Caroline Zalai (Director FTA) recently spoke with Dr Jill Bamforth (Academic Director Work Integrated Learning, Swinburne University) about a collaborative approach between FTA and one of Australia's most respected universities to introduce well-credentialed students to the industry.

1. Caroline Zalai - It is evident that Swinburne University does more than educate its students and importantly help them start a career using their practical and academic qualifications. Can you please explain the goals of the university?

Yes, two of Swinburne's four strategic goals focus on ensuring we prepare our students for the workforce through industry experience and helping them position themselves to secure ongoing employment. This means helping students build core discipline knowledge and industry relevant transferable skills to help them successfully transition into industry.

2. Caroline Zalai - Do your workplace programs focus on undergraduate students or postgraduate students?

The School of Business, Law and Entrepreneurship, of which I am a part, are committed and passionate about providing work focused programs and opportunities to engage with industry for both our undergraduate and postgraduate students.

3. Caroline Zalai - How do you support your students to ensure they are equipped to take on a workplace program?

Our courses are co-created with industry partners and provide multiple opportunities for students to apply their

learning to industry-based problems, opportunities and projects. In addition, our Careers and Employability team provide a range of resources and support to ensure students understand what it means to be a professional and how to present their best professional self. For example, in the post graduate space we work closely with industry hosts and post graduate students prior to industry engagement. This allows us to better align student and industry needs and expectations.

4. Caroline Zalai - What courses and disciplines complement the supply chain and can these skills assist in placing students having these disciplines within an industry placement program?

Our degree courses cover a range of discipline areas that directly support the supply chain industry such as project and operations management, strategy and change management, people management, financial management and data management. We develop students' capabilities in key areas such as analytical and critical thinking, innovation, creativity, resilience and problem-solving. We also help students develop their professional skills in communication, teamwork, and digital literacies. This helps us to easily place our students in industry placement programs requiring Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Business and Management, Business analytics and analysis, Supply Chain, Business information systems and Innovation & Entrepreneurship capabilities thereby benefitting their organisation.

5. Caroline Zalai - In practical terms, how do industry provided projects and internships work and what time period applies?

Potential industry hosts (i.e. your members) have the opportunity to provide students with either class-based projects or industry work experience on a particular project during our semesters, which last for 12 weeks.

- Class based projects allow industry to develop a project brief covering an opportunity they want to explore or a problem they want to solve. The students then work on this in class, presenting their findings to the industry sponsor at the end of the semester. This carries no cost to the industry.

- The internship program offers part time project-based industry experience to students in their study (discipline) area (e.g. supply chain). The industry host may offer a paid or unpaid industry experience.

Potential industry hosts are then matched to students (individually or groups).

6. Caroline Zalai - Does the university assist in making full-time placements?

Yes, Swinburne University offers the opportunity to recruit and provide full time paid employment to an undergraduate student for a year in their study (discipline) area. Our experience shows most of these students are offered ongoing employment opportunities upon placement completion.

7. Caroline Zalai - Are these placements available for both domestic and international students?

Yes, we recognise staff shortages in many industries and the necessity to provide a rich and diverse student group. A focus on just domestic students would deprive our industry hosts of access to students with multilingual skills, prior international work experience, and knowledge of different cultures and ways of doing business.

8. Caroline Zalai - What has been your experience and advantages in placing international students?

International students invest heavily, both financially and personally, to come to Australia to study. This makes them 'more hungry' for the Australian work experience than domestic students who have more choice. This often translates to greater commitment to industry hosts that provide enriching experiences. In addition,

the Australian Government provides graduating Masters students with a 3 year work visa removing that cost to industry.

9. Caroline Zalai - Have you had any organisations from our industry take on a student before and what was the feedback?

Many of our undergraduate and postgraduate students have found their career through our extensive industry network. For example, Swinburne University has partnered with a leading international logistics and freight management company, CEVA, to co-create and co-deliver its Master of Supply Chain Innovation course in an Australian-first collaboration. Swinburne University and CEVA have also recently established a formal scholarship and graduate program for students graduating with a Bachelor of Business in Logistics & Supply Chain Management. This shows that industry leaders have the appetite to work with Swinburne to co-design and co-deliver educational programs that best support industry.

10. Caroline Zalai - How does industry collaboration in co-creating and co-delivering educational programs or courses work?

Industry collaboration involves working with Swinburne University and our students to ensure our offerings align with what is happening in industry. Industry collaboration can take many forms. For example, it could be as simple as designing a class-based project of organisational interest for our students. Or it could be sharing your experience and expertise on a topic being studied e.g. what types of operational problems do you regularly face and how you resolve them. At the other end you could be invited to sit on advisory boards helping to guide the content and approach specific courses take. To find out more please contact me.

11. Caroline Zalai - How do prospective employers apply to be part of the program and where can members find further information?

Prospective employers can lodge their interest in the program by contacting me (Jill Bamforth) at cbamforth@swin.edu.au.

Thank you for giving Swinburne the opportunity to deepen our relationship by connecting your members with our students so we can collaborate to build a meaningful pipeline of talent and opportunities.

FTA is excited to be working with Swinburne University in piloting these programs via focus groups and communicating opportunities via a broader member function which will be announced soon. We encourage members to support this important initiative.

“ We develop students’ capabilities in key areas such as analytical and critical thinking, innovation, creativity, resilience and problem-solving. ”

