



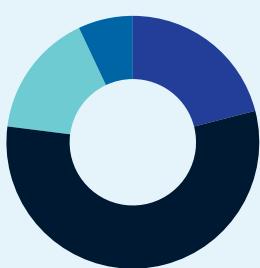
Australia's National  
Science Agency

# Virtual Work Experience Program Pilot

As part of the National Career Education Strategy, CSIRO and the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business collaborated to pilot the delivery of innovative work experience opportunities for high school students using online collaboration tools. The program brought students from across Australia together virtually to work in small groups to take on STEM-based work experience projects with industry experts. Students gained valuable experience in STEM and new ways of working, while developing crucial life skills, such as teamwork, communication, negotiation and resilience.

Replicating the way CSIRO staff work every day, 57 Virtual Work Experience Program (VWEP) students were placed in groups of up to six and worked with their industry supervisor and student team members using collaboration platforms and video conferencing. The program tested two different contact working models and offered students STEM-based work experience in one project from 15 STEM disciplines of interest.

## Students



- 14 years (21%)
- 15 years (56%)
- 16 years (16%)
- 17 years (7%)

Students co-located with other students

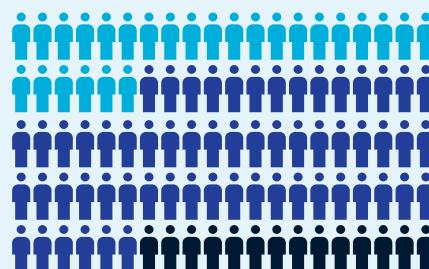


Not co-located with other students  
i.e. online collaboration only



**26%**

of students identified  
as gifted and talented



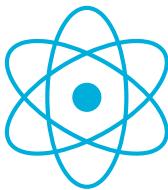
Student locations:

**26%** from **major capital cities**

**60%** from **regional areas**

**14%** from **remote areas**

## STEM projects

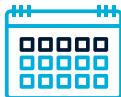


**15**

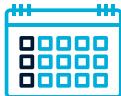
different projects  
across different  
STEM disciplines

including meteorology, astronomy,  
oceanography, agriculture, manufacturing,  
health, energy and computer science.

## Two models of working



**each day** over a  
one-week block (70%)



or **one-day-per-week**  
for five weeks (30%)

**17**

highly qualified STEM  
professionals supervised  
student groups.

(2 BoM and 15 CSIRO)

12 with PhDs



An average of  
**3.35**  
**students**  
per supervisor

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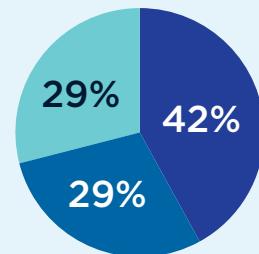
## Program outcomes

A rigorous evaluation process was completed as part of the program pilot. These findings demonstrated the value of Virtual Work Experience in providing STEM-based opportunities for students, particularly in regional and remote areas of Australia.

**Mean**  
student satisfaction score  
**of 4.4 out of 5**



Without VWEP



- 42% would have done STEM related work elsewhere
- 29% would have done work experience in a non-STEM field
- 29% would have undertaken no work experience at all.

**63%**

Without VWEP, **63%** of regional and remote students would not have been able to do STEM-related work experience.

**Increased**

life skills across teamwork, communication, negotiation and resilience.

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