

**Virtu-WIL****Virtu-WIL****Promising Practice**

*Implemented by:*

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)

*Where:*

Canada

*Status:*

Started in April 2021

*Summary:*

Virtu-WIL is an innovative work-integrated learning project led by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), providing healthcare students in nursing, medical laboratory technologies, paramedicine, and sonography with access to new training opportunities through virtual simulations.

## Overview

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is the national and international voice of Canada's largest post-secondary education network. It advocates, builds capacity, and drives knowledge to strengthen Canada's publicly supported colleges, institutes, CEGEPs and polytechnics.

## Description

### Enhancing healthcare education

In collaboration with Simulation Canada and colleges and institutes nationwide, Virtu-WIL enhances healthcare education and offers students innovative work-integrated learning opportunities.

### Partnership

It also creates collaborative partnerships between post-secondary institutions, employers and technology suppliers.

### Open educational resources

Through this innovative project, educators and students across Canada can freely access over 185 simulations as open educational resources (OER) to enhance curriculum and learning in nursing, medical laboratory technology, paramedicine and sonography programmes, a new addition to the project.

## Objectives

Virtu-WIL provides healthcare students in nursing, medical laboratory technologies, paramedicine and sonography access to new, innovative work-integrated learning opportunities through virtual simulations. Virtu-WIL addresses challenges in finding in-person work-integrated learning placements and clinical placements in the healthcare sector, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Virtual simulations as a way of innovative work-integrated learning for healthcare students

The Virtu-WIL project is based on a model of innovation and collaboration of multiple partners from different sectors to enable the creation of accessible and shareable digital learning resources and an impactful work-integrated learning programme for learners. This collaborative model has strengthened the existing simulation community and created new networks within the participating project members and with external stakeholders. By bringing together representation and expertise from the broad post-secondary sector and playing a coordination role, CICan and its partners have multiplied their forces.

## Outcomes and impact

By the end of March 2024, the open educational resources (OER) were viewed by 36,586 educators, students and community members, and 8,832 students gained job-ready skills through Virtu-WIL while being connected with labour market partners. Over 185 simulations are currently available.

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## Challenges

### **Short timeline and high number of project participants**

Managing expectations when multiple stakeholders or groups work simultaneously is challenging. It is advisable to focus on the expectations from the participants, the deliverables and the timelines. The institution offered training on online collaborative tools for better communication and collaboration and developed responsive and personalized support to be provided by the project team.

### **The complexity of building a solid virtual simulation with a rigorous quality assurance process**

Recommendations were made for more mechanisms to ensure comparable levels of quality or depths across projects from different TVET fields, to have a subject matter expert in the project development team to evaluate the fidelity of the final products and to improve the peer review process to ensure reviewers' accountability. These recommendations were integrated in the new development phase of the project as new coaches were added with expertise in all disciplines and an additional key-stakeholder consultation process with three entry points. A more robust sign-off mechanism for the simulations after testing was also integrated.

### **Technological challenges which create accessibility and learning retention issues**

The organization prioritizes virtual simulation platforms that are more accessible and easier to use. CIG developed tutorials on accessing and using the simulations in different formats (how-to videos) and worked with the suppliers to simplify access (i.e. removing the necessity to create an account). The organization also integrated recommendations to educators on the importance of coaching and supporting students in using the platforms.

## Insights

One of the success stories of the Virtu-WIL project is the creation and work of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group. Starting from its inception, the EDI Working Group has identified several learning requirements of the faculty who were authoring the virtual simulation scenarios and has responded with a consensual and flexible approach, recognizing and creating the resources needed by the authors.

Although this approach required adaptability and agility from the members and was challenging because of the lack of time to plan and prepare, the group was in tune with the members' needs and the project provided what was most required. This approach created new ways of embedding EDI in virtual simulations and a work-integrated programme using virtual simulations. The EDI commitment and approach in the Virtu-WIL project is innovative and bound to inspire other initiatives.

## Next steps

The initiative runs until March 2025 with the creation of new virtual simulations in healthcare education and the delivery of the innovative WIL using virtual simulations and connections with employers to more students. An evaluation working group is currently assessing the programme's impact and will continue their work in the next year.

## Learn more

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To learn more about Colleges and Institutes Canada, visit:

<https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/>

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