Recognising the transformative value of workplace learning, Engineers Australia requires that students of accredited engineering programmes are exposed to engineering practice. Traditionally, students have undertaken placements in industry. However these are often difficult to secure. Furthermore the quality is unreliable, and placements are usually taken only after three years of engineering study.

Virtual work integrated learning offers an alternative to traditional placements. With virtual work integrated learning there are opportunities to provide more diverse experiences than in a single traditional placement, to more students, from their first year of studies.

We will present pilot virtual learning modules. In the first module, students learn about safety in design using virtual reality. The virtual reality environment represents a crane on a truck – an environment identified by Safe Work Australia as being involved in fatalities. In the second module students learn about communication in engineering workplaces using interactive scenarios in a simulated environment. Initial testing will be reported, along with plans for engaging students in authentic reflection with practitioners following activities in the virtual reality environment or the simulated environment.

Victor Zhang and Joel Gray are acknowledged for their research on which this builds. Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. The views in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.