Flinders University has expanded its innovative Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program in a move that could offer new opportunities for the mining sector.

Students gain hands-on business experience and companies have access to extra skills and resources under the WIL program which has just been expanded to include a collaboration with Business SA.

Flinders University WIL Program Manager, Ms Ceri Macleod, said the goal of the WIL program was to complement the skills and knowledge acquired by students at Flinders with workplace experience to produce 'work ready' graduates.

"Students can link theory and practice, gain a feel for their chosen profession by experiencing it first hand, and then draw on that experience as they complete their studies," Ms Macleod said.

"Placements can range from short stints of days at a time to a block of some weeks, depending on the subject area," she said.

Ms Macleod said study areas that might generate placements relevant to the mining sector ranged from a number of aspects of engineering to the environment, groundwater and accounting.

She said the benefits for employers included securing a dedicated resource to complete specific tasks or set up a new project and having the opportunity to give a potential recruit a trial without an obligation to hire.

"Students also bring ideas and new skills to companies and the Adelaide-based IT services firm Comunet, a long-time supporter of WIL, is a case in point. It has engaged five placement students as permanent employees over the past seven years," Ms Macleod said.

In 2003 when Damien Coyle commenced his WIL placement at Comunet as part of a Bachelor of Innovation and Enterprise degree at Flinders University, he was the only person at the company trained in software development.

"Soon after my placement we had a customer ask us to develop a passenger booking system. We rapidly needed more developers to assist with the work and from there our aviation expertise expanded," Mr Coyle said.

The product that Mr Coyle and his team created, Air Maestro, is a web-based application specifically designed for small to medium aviation companies that records and monitors safety and compliance for their operations – a system that has now been sold around Australia and overseas.

Ms Macleod said the benefits for students ranged from developing a practical awareness of workplace culture and expectations and enhancing communication and teamwork skills to gaining an appreciation of a chosen profession and developing practical skills to reflect upon in future studies.

Mining companies and firms that service the sector are encouraged to explore the potential for a WIL placement with Flinders University. Further information can be found at: www.flinders.edu.au/wil