STUDENTS hungry for business experience are being matched with local companies as part of a new partnership between Flinders University and Business SA.

The Flinders Work Integrated Learning program is seeking more opportunities to place students in the corporate sector, building on success within a wide range of industries.

Program manager Ceri Macleod says she hopes the new relationship with Business SA will increase the number and diversity of student placements. “We hope to raise awareness of work-integrated learning – and placements particularly – within the business community,” Ms Macleod says. “We also want to make the process of contacting the university, to inquire about and organise placements, as straightforward as possible.”

The aim is to complement the skills and knowledge acquired at university with experience in the workplace. Placements are scheduled to fit annual course structures and may run from one to 20 weeks. Student availability can be discussed and agreed with the partner university. “It’s a mutually beneficial activity,” Ms Macleod says. “Businesses can work very closely with the university. “They get a resource, in the form of a student who could be a future employee, and they’re helping the profession for the future.”

Business SA chief operating officer Brett Mahoney says the concept of work-ready graduates is attractive to industry. “We encourage the business community to support this initiative and identify opportunities where a student can take part in this program through providing valuable assistance in their workplace,” he says. “It’s a win-win scenario for both students and businesses, and it also provides employers with a look at the skills and suitability of students before they finish their studies, with possible avenues for future employment.”

Adelaide-based IT services firm Comunet has employed five placement students as permanent employees in the past seven years. It has a total workforce of 35. Managing director Paul Lewin likes to employ graduates for their skills and fresh ideas. “It takes a bit of time and resource but the people we get, after a period of time, they’re well integrated with the business,” he says. “We keep developing them further and further and let them keep extending themselves in what they do.”

They include Simon Anderson, 21, who works as a software developer. “It’s good to see what you’ve done is used by people, your clients,” he says. “That’s quite a good feeling, helping and learning all the time.”

WIN/WIN

Benefits for employers:
- Recruitment pathway
- Flexible options
- Partnerships with universities
- Workplace-ready graduates
- Return on investment
- Fresh ideas and approaches

Benefits for students:
- Apply theory and skills
- Experience the workforce
- Ticket to future employment
Software developer Simon Anderson took part in Flinders University’s Work Integrated Learning program.