

# INNOVATION IN WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: WORKING TOWARDS OUR FUTURE

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# Outline

- Innovation within WIL
- Waikato model
- Maximising opportunity
  - Flexibility
  - Alternative models
  - Compromising best practice
  - How to maximise employer relations

# Being innovative, what does it look like?

- Depends on what you mean by innovative.
- Researching best practice and its implementation?
  - Fundamentally important to research our practice
- New learning approaches?
  - Reflecting context, etc.
- Or do we mean maximising opportunity in a challenging economy?

# Waikato model

- Recently significantly modified our model
- Based on our own research findings and the literature
- Prompted by
  - Degree structure changes
  - Student type changed
  - Student numbers changed
  - And the feeling that 'we can do better'.

# Placements in Science & Engineering

- Began in 1974
- For science and engineering students
  - WIL also in education, eCommerce, surveying, management – but outside our scope
- Initially low numbers
- Co-op Unit formed (1988), student numbers vastly increased
- Shift from science dominance to engineering
- Research in WIL
- The restructuring of the WIL programme

# Old Waikato Model

- Two placements
  - 3 month summer placement end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year
  - 9 month summer. A semester placement, end of 3<sup>rd</sup> year
- Run as individual sub-cohorts based around subject major
- Preparation was *ad hoc* and individualistic
- Reflection was minimal
- Assessment was one large report (background, work carried out, reflection)
- Work performance was worth 50%
- Essentially an 'add-on work experience' programme
  - Successful, but no integration, no reflection, no focus on behavioural skills, professional identity development
  - Very focussed on the technical skills

# New Waikato Model

- Research-informed practice
- Same durations in workplace, but new supporting structure
- Attempted to address issue of students learning but not realising they had learnt
  - Lack of constructive reflection
  - Lack of scaffolded learning
  - Lack of integration
- New model took 5 years to fully implement
- Implementation was a learning process on its own

Time	Activity
2 <sup>nd</sup> year B Semester	<b>Preparation for the Professional Workplace</b> CV prep, cover letter, interview technique, OSH, professional behaviour, career identification, technical report writing, reflective techniques
End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year Summer	<b>Placement 1</b> 10 weeks full time, learning objectives, OSH, reflection on specific topics, company overview, technical report, work performance
3 <sup>rd</sup> year A Semester	<b>Reflection of the Professional Experience</b> Reflection on skill development and gaps, oral presentations on the learning, ePortfolio development, prep for 2 <sup>nd</sup> placement
End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> year Summer	<b>Placement 2</b> 10 weeks full time, learning objectives, OSH, company overview, ePortfolio, technical report, work performance
3 <sup>rd</sup> year A semester	<b>Placement 3 – science only</b> 10 weeks full time, learning objectives, reflection, ePortfolio, technical report, work performance

# Outcomes

- Better quality preparation
- More efficient and uniform preparation
  - Was key to success for larger numbers (...and less staff)
  - Did generate some new work
- Allowed individual strengths to be an advantage for the whole group
- Better integration
- Better reflective structure
- Best captures the true intent of the programme
- Gave the programme better prominence
  - But also generated opposition

# Other WIL models

- Sandwich degrees
  - Year long placement in 3<sup>rd</sup> year
  - Surrey University, UK
- Semester based
  - Alternating semesters of placements with on-campus learning
  - University of Waterloo, up to 6 placements occurring over different semesters
- Two week stints
- Part-time
- Uni-based industry project
- There is no one 'perfect' model.
  - It will vary depending on discipline, context, resources, types of student, etc

# Maximising placement opportunity during trying times

- Economy is down, funding going down, staff might go down, ....but student numbers are up
- More students than placements
- Maximising placement opportunities
  - Flexibility
  - Alternative aspects
  - Compromised best practice

# Flexibility

- Allowing placements to happen outside normal parameters
  - Different timing, part-time, different years, split placements, etc, etc
- Is a blessing and a great curse at the same time
  - It will create more placement opportunities
  - It is much harder to keep track
- With great flexibility comes great responsibility and great possibility of mistakes
- Requires on the spur of the moment type thinking
- Better to have a structure that allows options rather than work within a rigorous structure
- Allow retrospective enrolments
  - Capture the experience when it has been completed

# Placements at the end of the degree

- Closely ties industry placement with full-time, graduate employment
- However, minimises integration
- A way of mopping up students who were unsuccessful in getting compulsory placements
  - These students tend to have other issues as well
- If the focus is on the learning, this is not a recommendable model.
  - Rather it is a default model when unsuccessful at obtaining placements

# Service learning

- Community service/volunteerism
- Emphasis on serving the community
- A volunteer-based community project
  - Community event
  - Gully plantation project
  - Development of an info/education pack
- These can largely be generated as needed
- Can (perhaps should be) student group work
- Misses the workplace integration, but still a very valuable learning experience

# Simulations

- Broadly can mean two things
  - Virtual simulations (video screen) of real events, e.g., pilot simulators, armed-police confrontations, surgery
  - Mock settings within university using role-play or socio-dramas, e.g., projects based around mock clients
- The mock/role-play model tends to be used when placing students is too difficult
- However, can be used for mock situations where real-life situation has too much risk
- ....easy to fall into the trap of disengaging with industry and become inward looking

# Work-shadowing

- Student observers (shadows) a professional in the workplace but does not engage in 'real work'.
- Concept common at secondary schooling level
  - University industry field-trips has similar concept
- Purely 'learning by observation'
- Is low-level WIL
  - Arguably is not WIL as there is no meaningful practical tasks involved
- Shadowing is a learning experience, but should not be seen as an alternative to work placements

# University-based placements

- Students who struggle to get placements are sometimes placed at university instead.
- It's not industry experience, but the university is a legitimate workplace.
  - The experience is not the same, often missing enculturation into an industry workplace
- Often unpaid, often special project, often requires calling in a few favours.
  - Once you allow one 'free student', they would like the next one to be free as well.
- The challenge is that the students that miss out on placements may be deemed 'undesirable'.

# University-based industry projects

- 499 projects
- University based project around an industry need
- Requires industry interaction to produce a product
- Industry is a client, placement supervisor is an academic
- Is not co-op but fits in WIL
- Is missing enculturation into a workplace

# Consultancy hub

- A university-based consultancy company
- Industry submit a project to this company
  - Minimal cost to industry
- Project given to a group of selected students
  - These students are 'employed' by the hub.
  - Student interact with industry, complete project, etc (the 'placement' component)
- Is a registered company, protects the university
- Students are 'employed', provides benefits to the student
- Tends to be a good for publicity profile

# Compromised best practice

- What is most important
- Compromising placement
- Compromising institutional commitment/costs
- Compromising employer commitment/costs
- Compromising numbers

# What is most important? What should be retained

- Workplace-based placements
- Focus on the *learning* (through work), not just on *doing work*
- Keep the work relevant, authentic, and meaningful
- Do not compromise on duration of placement
- Must keep maintaining relationships with employers – fundamentally important
- Have quality students
- Full academic scale assessment – it pushes students towards excellence

# Compromising placement

- Reduce number of placements
  - Two instead of four, one instead of two
  - Must then ensure the experience they do have is maximised
- Reduce length of placement
  - I think little is gained by reducing the length but much will be lost by doing so
- Shared placements
  - Two students doing one placement
- University-based industry projects

# Compromising institutional commitment/costs

- Reducing cost of the programme delivery
  1. Shift towards general/professional staff or casual staff
  2. Less visits (but should really do at least one visit)
  3. Less student interaction (compromises how well you know the student – impacts on recommendations)
  4. Shift towards basic work-experience
  5. Reduce assessment requirements
  6. Students find their own placements
- None of the above is recommendable!
  - Point 1 is common
  - The other points severely compromise either the learning or the employer relationship (which then negatively impacts on placement opportunities)

# Compromising institutional commitment/costs cont...

- More efficient programmes
  - Stream line preparation programmes
  - Reduce one-to-one contact, encourage mass-contact
  - Software matching of student to employer
- Better databasing programmes
- Employer 'specialists'.
  - Marketing educated
  - PR type staff
- Require minimal grade entry for WIL programme
  - E.g., an 'honours group'
  - But some of the struggling students stand to gain most from WIL

# Compromising employer commitment/costs

- Remove requirement for students to be paid
  - But students have real costs associated with the placement!
  - Ethical issue: if the student makes a real contribution to the workplace, should they not be recognised in a real way.
- Preselect students
- Better prepared students (less investment required)
- Reduce placement requirements (e.g., project requirements)

# Numbers: Alternative exit degrees

- If placements compulsory, have an alternative degree exist alongside
- E.g., Engineering students graduating with a BSc major in applied engineering rather than BE/BE(hons).
- Addresses the issue of students not able to graduate due to lack of placements
  - And often there are other issues around these students
- Negative perception.....the 'drop-out degree'

# Numbers: Restricting enrolments

- The tough question.....if there is not enough placements does that mean the current market is oversupplied?
- If so, should student enrolments be restricted
  - But universities will never do this, current funding models not geared towards such thinking
  - Government intervention? However, governments avoid meddling at this level
- Student market may respond
  - E.g., NZ primary teacher oversupply now reflected by dramatic drop in primary teaching degrees

# Compromising or maximising?

- Compromising best practice, even though possible, should be second choice not first choice.
- Is a very negative way to addressing an issue
  - Can generate a worsening situation
  - However, universities may impose such compromise purely by reducing funding to WIL
- First focus should be on maximising opportunity not compromising practice.

# Key focus: Maximising opportunity!!

- Invest in your WIL programmes.
  - Good quality staff – invest in them
  - Plenty of staff
  - Good resources
  - Step up the programme (profile, quality, benefits)
  - MUST focus on relationship building!
- Programme flexibility
  - It generates more work, but it generates more opportunities
- Help the employer
  - Offer access to expert, host student partially on campus, university equipment
- Be explicit about the benefits to the employer
  - Have no shame, brag about the benefits
- Lobby. Keep WIL on the professional associations agendas
- Ensure good product!

# What does our future hold?

- Anyone's guess.....but lets be positive
- WIL is on the political agenda
- WIL is on the industrial agenda
- WIL transforms students
- The economy will swing back – it usually does
- ....the question, will future WIL programmes and tertiary education be funded as it is now?
  - Probably not in the near future
- WIL must at least move to more cost effective models
- In the future, universities will eventually change dramatically
  - Must ensure that WIL remains an important, if not fundamental, component of the future university

# Some valuable resources

- **International handbook for cooperative and work-integrated education** (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011). (<http://www.waceinc.org/handbook.html>) US\$80 which includes postage
- **HERSDA guide: Work integrated learning in the curriculum** (Ferns, 2014)
- **Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice** (Cooper, et al., 2010)
- **The WIL [Work Integrated Learning] report: A national scoping study** (Patrick et al., 2009) (<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/44065/1/WIL-Report-grants-project-jan09.pdf>)
- **Work-integrated learning: Good practice guide** (Windberg, et al., 2011) ([http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/communityengagement/documents/Higher\\_Education\\_Monitor\\_12.pdf](http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/communityengagement/documents/Higher_Education_Monitor_12.pdf))
- **ASET good practise guide for work-based and placement learning in higher education** (Wilson, et al., 2013) (<http://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-2014.pdf>)
- **How to make the most of WIL** (series; Martin & Hughes, 2011) (<http://akoaootea.ac.nz/topics/workplace-learning>)
- **Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education** ([www.apjce.org](http://www.apjce.org)) Free access