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The use of problem-solving methodology to develop institutional and curricular change: Work-Integrated Learning as a strategy of Differentiation

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3 The use of problem-solving methodology to develop institutional and curricular change:
4 Work-Integrated Learning as a strategy of Differentiation
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8 Purpose 9

10 Using a Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach, this paper examines whether internships
11 can stand as a viable alternative to Higher Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs) within the UK
12 Higher Education (HE) context. It was a process that was undertaken to identify work-
13 integrated schemes as a part of a curriculum portfolio transformation project.
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16 This presented itself as a strategic avenue capable of fostering a competitive advantage
17 (strategic differentiation), particularly in enhancing graduate employability through a
18 differentiation in pedagogy employing Work-Integrated Learning (WIL).
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23 Design/methodology/approach 24

25 This paper applied a PBL approach comprising of five distinct stages based on the McMaster
26 Five-Point Strategy. This included the Problem Identification, Generating Solutions through
27 a review of relevant literature and a case study, using an evaluation matrix to identify the best
28 solution to Decide a Course of Action, Implementing the Solution and Evaluating the
29 Solution. It presents an institutional and curriculum change project.
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36 Findings 37

38 WIL can offer both strategic differentiation, an organisational distinctiveness within HE and
39 Pedagogical differentiation, such as embedding internships in curriculum. This can be
40 achieved by creating clear guidelines and expected outcome frameworks, bespoke feedback
41 templates and enhanced collaboration, Experiential Learning pedagogy in the curriculum and
42 the inclusion of other forms of WIL to further diversify and create a WIL organisational
43 culture.
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50 Originality 51

52 We present a confluence of the concepts strategic differentiation and pedagogical
53 differentiation using WIL as a conduit. We present this using a PBL evaluative review
54 approach. The paper's distinct contribution manifests in the formulation of three pivotal
55 recommendations.
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60 Practical Implications

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3 Practitioner use of applying problem-solving models for work-integrated curriculum
4 planning.
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8 Keywords: Work-Integrated Learning, Institutional and curricular change, Internships,
9 Problem-based learning, strategic and pedagogic differentiation
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17 **Introduction**

18 In the highly competitive higher education landscape, universities seek ways to stand out and
19 enhance employability. While many aim to offer work-integrated schemes, delivering Higher
20 Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs) is not always feasible. This paper explores viable
21 alternatives through a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach, presenting a practitioner
22 evaluative review of an institutional and curriculum change project. Our unique contribution
23 is highlighted in three essential recommendations for achieving strategic and pedagogical
24 differentiation through embedding Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) effectively.
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31 Therefore, our evaluative review PBL approach (Fogler et al., 2014, p.9), applies five distinct
32 stages based on the McMaster Five-Point Strategy:
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- 34 • Stage 1 – Problem Identification
 - 35 • Stage 2 – Generate Solutions
 - 36 • Stage 3 – Decide a Course of Action
 - 37 • Stage 4 – Implement Solution
 - 38 • Stage 5 – Evaluate Solution
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43 Stage 1 is the project rational and stage 2 explores solutions for the project. Although these
44 were the stages used in the ‘The College’ evaluation that is being explained in the paper, they
45 are a part of the evaluation/methodology for the ‘change/transformation curriculum project’
46 that was undertaken. The project followed a problem-solving model to address what the
47 authors have called ‘strategic differentiation’ (the differing modes of WIL) and the
48 ‘pedagogic differentiation’ (Experiential Learning as a WIL teaching mode). The curriculum
49 project used a literature review of different types of work-integrated learning and an exemplar
50 as a ‘case study’ that was evaluated to inform ‘The College’ change project goals (stage 2).
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Stage 1: Problem Identification

“There are now over 100 universities in England on the register of apprenticeships training providers” (Universities UK, 2019, p.28). Higher apprenticeship starts increased by 6.2% to 112,930 compared to 106,360 in 2021/22 (Gov.UK, 2024). However, due to challenging complex collaborations and investment required, the viability in delivering Higher Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs) is an issue (Qew-Jones, 2023). This was the problem context of our ‘case’ – ‘The College’ (a pseudonym) decided to withdraw as a training provider of HDAs. However, it did still wish to be differentiated by being a Work-Integrated Learning specialist. The problem, therefore, in our case, was the highly competitive landscape within the higher education sector, necessitating a need to differentiate oneself amidst fierce competition.

The problem statement

Organisations need a viable alternative to Higher Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs) within UK Higher Education. Could internships present themselves as a strategic avenue capable of fostering a competitive advantage.

The case – ‘The College’

‘The College’ was a prominent UK boutique business college. ‘The College’ was competitive during 2017 - 2020, working with multinationals such as L’Oreal, IBM and the BBC offering HDAs, averaging 2980 applications per year. With only a 2.2% success rate, unsuccessful HDA applications were offered a place in ‘The College’ full-time degree programmes, amounting to 50% of The College’s full-time student cohort. However, once The College discontinued HDAs, recruiting a full student cohort remained challenging, with a potential annual revenue loss of £4.8 million. Whilst HDAs were no longer a part of the strategic direction of the organisation, to differentiate themselves, being an innovative WIL provider was still core to their values.

Defining the key concepts

WIL, a multifaceted phenomenon (Patton, 2017), is defined as an umbrella term for a range of intentional approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work (Rowe, 2017) such as placements, internships, service learning, and apprenticeships. Internships, specifically, are usually discipline-specific and occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been completed and prior to graduation, including

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3 Advanced Practice (Cooper et al., 2010; Gerhardt and Annon, 2023). WIL is also recognised
4 as a field of practice and scholarship with unique pedagogical, curricular and practical
5 challenges (Zegwaard et al., 2022/23) with varied goals, meaning learning needs are multi-
6 faceted and effective adoption is complex and challenging (Rowe and Winchester-Seeto,
7 2022) requiring careful scaffolding and support. Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a form of
8 WIL informed by theories related to learning through reflection upon work and is a key
9 approach in UK HDAs (Workman, 2009).

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17 Differentiation in education is a broad term that can be seen as a means of responding to
18 student diversity, taking into account the characteristics and needs of all students, being
19 inclusive, having a universal design for learning, and personal learning strategies (Eikeland,
20 and Ohna, 2022; Putra, 2023; Tomlinson et al., 2003; Sun and Xiao, 2021). This paper
21 suggests embedding WIL creates pedagogical differentiation.

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27 Within strategic management, differentiation entails the deliberate cultivation of
28 distinctiveness by a business, aimed at establishing a competitive edge over rivals, within
29 dimensions valued by its customer base (Porter, 1985). The overarching objective is to
30 strategically showcase these points of divergence, fostering the cultivation of customer
31 loyalty and potentially the ability to command premium prices for its offering. Within
32 sections such as HE, factors like employability are likely to serve as pivotal points of
33 distinction.

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41 This work presents a confluence of these concepts using WIL as a conduit: how an
42 organisation seeks to differentiate themselves in the market based on their own WIL
43 provision, i.e. a university providing high-value internships, leading to higher employability
44 outcomes. However, also therefore, how this emphasis on WIL differentiates the teaching and
45 learning strategies within the classroom.

51 **Stage 2: Generate Solutions**

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53 A thematic template approach for solutions from relevant literature on WIL commenced,
54 including a WIL case study. The review of the relevant literature and case study is aimed at
55 providing viable solutions to the problem identified considering the constraints of cost,
56 feasibility, investment and stakeholder involvement. The themes, therefore, addressed
57 throughout the subsequent literature review are The Types of WIL, The Teaching Modes of

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3 WIL (pedagogical differentiation) and Embedding WIL within a degree course and institution
4 with focused attention on internships (strategic and pedagogical differentiation). The
5 selection of a relevant case study, which served as a focal point for potential solutions,
6 utilised the case study conducted by Eisenstein et al. (2021) “Supervised entrepreneurial
7 WIL”.

13 *The Types of WIL, especially internships*

14
15 WIL is a differentiation in preparing students for work-readiness and/or profession-readiness
16 (Zedwaard et al., 2017). This level of graduate readiness is important because the degree of
17 readiness is seen as a differentiation from other organisations and, thus, a source of
18 competitive advantage (McBeath et al., 2017). Employability is a frequently used term within
19 universities, as universities are expected to provide learning beyond purely academic
20 competencies and instil the knowledge required to succeed in the workplace, and WIL is the
21 approach to deliver this (Marlow et al, 2022). Differentiation through employability is what
22 Mackaway and Chalkley (2022) argue universities differentiate themselves by promoting that
23 every graduate will have a WIL experience as part of their degree, meaning WIL has become
24 an important element in HE and national agendas (Cooper et al., 2010). Employability is
25 understood as being an economic good that advances human capital (Campbell et al., 2022).
26 Unlike non-WIL students (Marlow et al., 2022; McBeath et al., 2017; Rowe and Winchester-
27 Seeto, 2022;), WIL, therefore, offers students the opportunity to develop cultural, social and
28 identity capital needed to position themselves within the labour market (Ajjawi et al., 2022)
29 developing workplace literacies (Cooper et al. 2010).

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43 The ubiquity of internships has elevated their significance, with some companies now
44 deeming them essential prerequisites for graduate employment (Rook, 2016). Research has
45 highlighted both larger companies (Zhu, 2021) and start-ups (Lantu et al., 2022) can benefit
46 when well-organised, wide ranging across departments with the opportunity to make a
47 significant contribution, increasing confidence. The implementation of internships requires
48 the investment of three key stakeholders: the university, students and employers. Zhu, (2021)
49 and Lantu et al., (2022) discussed the mutual benefit for each stakeholder. The student
50 enhances their understanding of the workplace, improving future job prospects and
51 universities should see improvement in the quality of student work. Talent screening can be
52 streamlined as employers can evaluate an intern’s work ethic, skillset and company cultural
53 fit, allowing future applications to be fast-tracked (Fennelly and Haire, 2019; Rook, 2016).
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5 Internships, favoured by 'The College', are a significant time commitment, raising the
6 question of how universities can ensure students gain from the programme (Ramsgaard and
7 Østergaard, 2018). The answer is clear guidelines to be laid out between students and
8 employers (Hagen, 2015). These must be confirmed prior to employment, alongside an
9 agreement for regular evaluation and feedback from both parties. This feedback is crucial for
10 all stakeholders, ensuring expected performance levels, resolves issues and completion
11 feedback motivates students and evaluates the quality of the program for companies
12 (Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018).
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20 *WIL As A Teaching Mode*

21 WIL is a key pedagogical strategy (Rowe et al, 2022), requiring WIL pedagogies (Patton,
22 2017). To ensure rich learning from work experience, learning can be reinforced through
23 scaffolded learning augmenting and enriching reflective practice and personal and
24 professional development (Rowe and Winchester-Seeto, 2022). Scaffolding and
25 differentiation are important because if students are given too great a challenge as novices,
26 learning and motivation are hampered (Ambrose et al., 2010). Therefore, and importantly for
27 this study, it is clear that WIL pedagogies addressing career readiness are a pedagogical
28 differentiation that the HE sector can utilise to their benefit.
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37 Inclusion, equity and access are therefore important and justify WIL pedagogical
38 differentiation. Mackaway and Chalkey (2022, p.229) list those who may be in danger of
39 exclusion in WIL opportunities: students with low socio-economic background, remote
40 students, indigenous students, international students and students with care responsibilities.
41 Patton (2017) adds that confidence and well-being strongly influence the ability of the
42 student to engage and maximise the learning from practice experience. These challenges are
43 acknowledged by Eikeland, and Ohna (2022) when they refer to the expectations of the UN
44 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education
45 and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations, 2017, p. 7). Pedagogical
46 differentiation is a didactic approach that attempts to ensure educational justice (Lindner and
47 Schwab, 2020; Putra, 2023; Tomlinson et al., 2003). This means differentiation could include
48 peer learning, peer review, written prompts and formative feedback. Workman (2009)
49 referring to WBL, emphasises the positive contribution to learning from feedback.
50 Scaffolding such support increases motivation and flow – the state of consciousness in which
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3 a person is totally engaged in and experiencing a task (Ambrose et al., 2010, p.133). The
4 immersive environment drives participants to synthesise and assimilate the information
5 available to produce viable solutions, giving them a true sense of how workplace challenges
6 are overcome (Kolb, 2015). Kolb (2015) asserts that Experiential Learning (EL), linked to
7 the founders and the traditions of Kurt Lewin, John Dewey and Jean Piaget, offers the
8 foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process and thus links to
9 many WIL tenets.
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17 Bell and Bell (2016) showcased EL in a UK university. Students, across disciplines, crafted
18 business plans and pitched to industry professionals. Feedback bolstered their confidence and
19 fostered teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. Engaging in EL throughout
20 higher education enhances students' skillsets and workplace competence (Roberts, 2019).
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26 Controversially Kijinski, (2018) disputes the increasing demand for EL, arguing that students
27 join undergraduate education to develop their academic knowledge. Extracting them from
28 this environment reduces the time spent absorbing vital information. Additionally, when
29 considering the application of Kolb's theory, it is important to mould the concept to suit
30 relevant situations. There are aspects of the theory that are flawed; reflective exercises were
31 not considered and were later found to have profound impacts on the overall experience
32 (Dickson and Gray, 2006). This has been a recurring opinion from many established
33 academics. Perusso, (2019) states the importance of self-reflection in any form of WIL to
34 ensure the programme's core outcomes are understood by students. Questioning them on
35 factors such as what they have learned, how they've developed, and areas for improvement is
36 essential in consolidating their learning and understanding the value of the experience.
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46 EL fundamentally contributes to skills development, both within the workplace and HE. As
47 with internships, reflection is critically important, and guided reflection exercises must be
48 conducted for students to fully understand the benefits of the experience. Therefore, when
49 considering EL as an overlapping concept to WIL as a teaching mode, it is clear that there are
50 opportunities to embrace it as a form of pedagogical strategy that can differentiate themselves
51 from the rest of the market.
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58 *Embedding WIL, especially internships*
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3 WIL is an attractive strategy: professional accreditation; learning enhancement; career
4 selection, confirmation and development; social service, workforce development, knowledge
5 transfer and the enhancement of university and industry partnerships (Cooper et al., 2010).

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8 However, WIL can only be a pedagogical strategy if intentionally embedded within curricula,
9 thus providing students with meaningful exposure and connectivity to the real or near-real
10 world of work (Marlow et al., 2022). The challenge as Dean et al. (2022) argue is that often
11 this transpires merely as pockets of practice throughout the university. Rowe et al. (2022) add
12 that resourcing and building staff capacity are fundamental if WIL is to be embedded and
13 effectively delivered. Cooper et al. (2010, p.29) confirms listing the following WIL
14 requirements:

- 15 • curriculum design and development;
- 16 • staff capability, induction, support and engagement;
- 17 • student preparation, support and protection;
- 18 • engagement with, and utilization of, organisational enablers that facilitate and
19 support the placement of students in host organisations;
- 20 • delineation of partnerships with host organisations and communities.

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32 With UCAS offering over 4,000 business degrees (UCAS, 2021), altering a standard business
33 degrees with WIL would distinguish an institution and its graduates in the crowded HE
34 marketplace (Martin & Rees, 2021). However, scholars have noted the need for well-
35 resourced, supportive senior leadership (Dean et al., 2022). For example, Australia is a
36 leading light in the implementation of WIL throughout HE determining teaching methods as
37 critical factors in its effectiveness (Xia et al., 2014).

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45 Scaffolding theory dictates that progressive withdrawal of support is integral in bridging the
46 gap between academic theory and practical workplace learning (Ashman and Rochford,
47 2020). In Van de Pol et al., (2015)'s work in authentic classroom environments they found
48 teacher engagement and style greatly affected the outcomes but students benefitted from
49 independent working, gaining experience using their initiative to overcome real-world
50 problems. Internships occur during or after level 5, whereas scaffolding requires early
51 integration (Ashman and Rochford, 2020). This major restructuring can be problematic but is
52 essential and well-established in the UK due to the bridge scaffolding offers between
53 education and the workplace.
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3 WIL concepts like industry-based group projects, work simulations, and entrepreneurial
4 activities all contribute to this skill generation (Gerhardt, 2019). However, challenges do exist
5 due to the complexities of WIL pedagogy and delivery (Rowe et al., 2022). For example,
6 some academics are resistant to the introduction of employability in curricula (Daubney,
7 2022), reporting it would threaten 'academic rigour' as employability is not academic
8 knowledge. Whilst resistance is problematic, Daubney (2022) noted this was largely down to
9 confusion around the definition of employability.

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12 Embedding WIL within a degree course should lead to upskilled, confident, work-ready
13 graduates. Many forms of embedded WIL can be introduced into the classroom including EL,
14 project-based learning, real-time industry challenges, and guest speakers from industry.
15 Theory suggests the early introduction of WIL increases student retention as student
16 confidence grows from day one. The adoption of a new degree incorporating WIL at its heart,
17 would not only strategically reposition the university, but it would also offer an innovative
18 product creating a valuable point of difference.

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31 *The Case study: Supervised entrepreneurial WIL, University of Toronto (Eisenstein et al.,*
32 *2021)*

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34 This case study analyses the implementation of WIL at the University of Toronto. Adopting a
35 supervised entrepreneurial WIL (eWIL) model, this course ran for 12 weeks and students
36 completed 100 hours working within a start-up business alongside academic study. A
37 significant amount of WIL research has focused on entrepreneurial activities, something
38 difficult to teach in a purely academic context. The case study highlighted how immersion in
39 real-world environments helped students develop professional personal skills while also
40 educating them in key business concepts; value proposition and business canvas models. EL
41 frameworks informed in-class activities, and self-reflection was a key aspect of the scheme,
42 and assessments applied more formative and summative critical reflection, with meetings,
43 presentations and a final report allowing for a presentation of their unique work based
44 experiences.

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55 Overall, students found their WIL experience positive, with an appreciation of the real-world
56 environment insightful, gaining greater awareness of potential career avenues. This research
57 demonstrates WIL can be a powerful tool for career-driven undergraduates looking to
58 confirm the suitability of their chosen industry.
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Stage 3: Decide a Course of Actions

The review of relevant literature and the case study (Stage 2) provided viable solutions to the identified problem (Stage 1), namely, working with industry partners, implementing internships, implementing Experiential Learning, and embedding WIL in the curriculum. In order to ascertain the most viable solution to decide a course of action, a scoring matrix to evaluate each potential solution was undertaken in Table 1 indicating through citations where the solutions come from within the literature and case study.

It is important to note a limitation of the evaluation matrix. It assesses individual solutions as standalone entities, potentially overlooking the viability of hybrid solutions comprising two or more elements. Additionally, while we strive for objectivity in our scoring process, it is worth acknowledging that subjective elements of cost, feasibility, resources, investment and stakeholder involvement may influence the scoring despite being informed by the literature review.

Therefore, through the analysis of the literature review and case study posited (cf. row 2 in table 1), potential solutions have presented themselves that The College could implement to differentiate itself and produce desirable graduates. To evaluate these solutions, the commonly used evaluation criteria will be used, also confirmed from the review of the literature and case study: cost, feasibility, resources, investment and stakeholder involvement. The evaluation matrix can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table I: Evaluation Matrix

	Working with industry partners	Internships	Experiential Learning	Embedding WIL	Scoring
Literature and case study	Cooper et al., 2010; Eisenstein et al., 2021; Lantu et al., 2021; Zhu, 2021	Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018; Rook, 2016; Tickle, 2014	Bell and Bell, 2016; Eisenstein et al., 2021; Rowe and Winchester-Seeto,	Eisenstein et al., 2021; Rowe et al., 2022; Zedwaard et al., 2017	
Cost	2 = low cost	2 = low cost	3 = medium cost	4 = high cost	1 = very low cost
Ashman and Rochford, 2020; Xia et al., 2014	The College is connected with many industry partners. They have competent teams in place to manage these relationships. The cost will mainly be the	These have been already implemented meaning the solution does not require an implementation, instead it's simply looking at how the restructure of	The main cost will be the teacher training.	This strategy will require several costs: - hiring experts to train tutors - human resources required to restructure the curriculum	5 = very high cost

	contractual and legal requirements needed.	schemes can be made to create more beneficial outcomes. The largest cost will be staff time.		- trialling the implementation	
Feasibility Marlow et al., 2022; McBeath et al., 2017	2 = high feasibility Working with industry partners will require demand and reciprocation from industry.	1 = very high feasibility These schemes are already running requiring only minor restructuring.	3 = medium feasibility Once teachers are training this should be relatively easy to implement.	3 = medium feasibility The College is a career focused institution needing to diversity/differentiate its product to increase its competitive advantage in a saturated market.	1 = very high feasibility 5 = very low feasibility
Resources Ambrose et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2022	3 = medium resources Establishing partnerships with another company is time consuming.	2 = low resources The College will need to produce clear guidelines and work closely with companies to ensure an excellent student experience.	3 = medium resources Additional human resources will be required as well as expert advice to ensure effective implementation. Regular monitoring through feedback.	4 = high resources Restructuring is time consuming as it includes new content, new assessments, and new appropriate pedagogical differentiation.	1 = low resources required 5 = high number of resources required
Investment Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018	3 = medium investment Internal resources need to be moved to resources and staff development.	3 = medium investment Companies providing internships would require investment, especially if these are paid (recommended).	2 = low investment Working with professional/consultants to enable a restructure will be required.	3.5 = medium/high investment Investment by companies depends on the extent by which The College would integrate industries into the degree.	1 = low investment 5 = high investment
Stakeholder Involvement Lantu et al., 2021; Zhu, 2021	3 = medium involvement This would involve The College B2B team who manage relationships with industry partners.	4 = high involvement These include: - B2B team to initiate agreements - Careers team to oversee effective student outcomes - industry partners offering internships, and creating schemes - student and staff buy-in	3 = medium involvement This would require funding commitments from shareholders. The correct staff to deliver WIL focused content.	3 = high involvement Tutors must support and deliver WIL focused pedagogy. Market demand must be created for a WIL scheme. Authentic assessments must be WIL focused. Regular monitoring.	1 = low involvement 5 = high involvement
Score	13	12	14	18.5	5 = low complexity 25 = high complexity

Figure 1 below illustrates the complexity of implementing each solution (x-axis) in relation to its impact (y-axis).

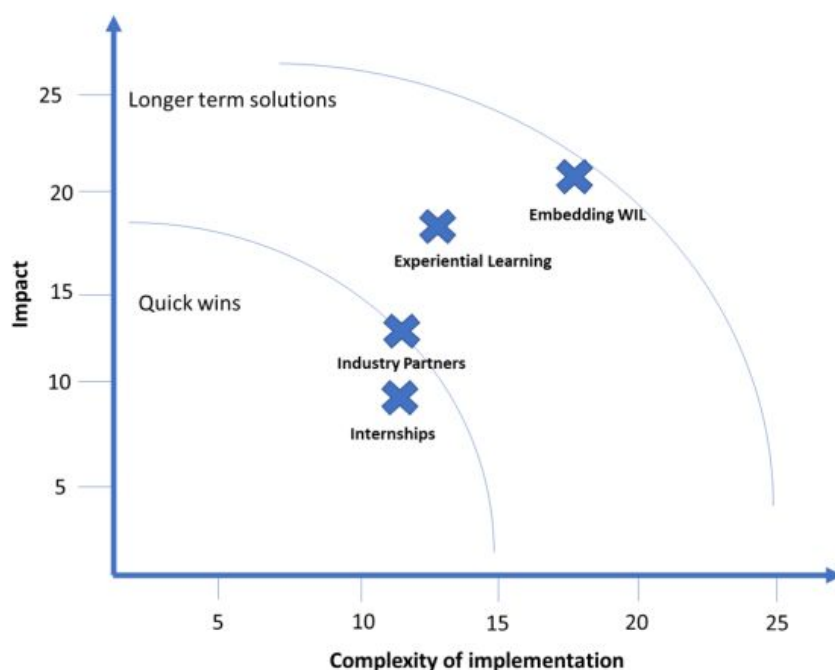


Figure 1: Implementation Visualisation (author generated)

However, further, working with industry partners is instrumental for each of these WIL solutions; consequently, this has also been mapped on the graph. The following section provides the course of actions to implement the most viable solution: embedding WIL within undergraduate courses and will be presented as

- The types of WIL - a quick win
- The teaching modes of WIL - the benefits of EL (pedagogical differentiation)
- Embedding WIL – the long game (strategic differentiation)

The Types of WIL – A Quick Win

Correctly designed internships, provided by committed employers can benefit a student's career prospects and industry awareness, which could translate to a Quick Win. The College does offer a 'Guaranteed Internship Scheme' as a unique selling point for their degree programmes. However, the offering has caused confusion and disappointment among some students in the past. One student review stated "...don't fall for the guaranteed internship scheme, it's complete garbage. You get fast tracked to 'interviews' at ... start-ups that most likely won't survive" (WhatUni, 2020).

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3 As The College already runs an internship scheme, simple restructuring is required rather
4 than implementing a new scheme. Consequently, the evaluation matrix identified this
5 solution to be a ‘quick win’, the least complex to implement but with the lowest impact.
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7 Internships are a common form of WIL within universities, so they will not be enough to
8 make The College offering stand out (Murray, 2018). Without diversification, The College
9 will not increase its brand awareness or market share, meaning enrolment rates are unlikely to
10 increase.
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17 Since the COVID-19 pandemic, internship opportunities have decreased by 29% (Inman,
18 2020) and have inevitably become highly competitive. Additionally, in contrast to Lantu et al.
19 (2022) student review of start-ups, The College’s ‘Start-ups in Residence’ scheme offers
20 young businesses a free workspace, mentors and PR coverage, these close relationships
21 represent an untapped portfolio of businesses that future students can exploit to gain
22 internship experience.
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29 *The Teaching Modes of WIL – The Benefits of EL*

30 EL offers considerable benefits, tested in both the workplace and HE environments,
31 particularly with increased confidence, teamwork, communication and problem-solving. The
32 College focuses on its industry days, adopting EL by inviting multinational industry partners
33 to present students with real-world challenges. Students work in teams to find solutions and
34 present them back to the industry partners. These generally receive positive feedback,
35 however some note “workshops were few and far between....often unrelated to my course or
36 fully booked” (EDU, 2020).
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44 Given the infrequency, not every student benefits. An alternative to these extracurricular
45 activities could be introducing EL into the classroom. The College could leverage the
46 relationships developed through the ‘Start-ups in Residence’ scheme by involving the
47 entrepreneurs in EL. Exposing students to the multiple challenges companies face in their
48 early development will give invaluable workplace insights, provide opportunities to see their
49 suggestions actioned in a real business, boosting motivation and retention (Amabile and
50 Kramer, 2011).
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58 As Figure 1 demonstrates, this solution will be more complex to implement due to the
59 increased cost and resources required. The curriculum would need to be restructured to
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3 accommodate this new learning style and mode but EL could provide a further strategic
4 differentiation. The largest investment will be academic training. Teacher training is
5 fundamental in providing high-quality EL. Self-reflection is a largely neglected concept in
6 HE (Husebø et al., 2015). Training teachers to effectively use reflective models should ensure
7 higher standards.
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13 *Embedding WIL – The Long Game*

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15 A dynamic solution ensuring universities stay current is to embed WIL within undergraduate
16 degrees which is seen as the most transformative, but timely. The HE market is actively
17 looking to shift towards a model with greater incorporation of practical experience. The
18 College has the advantage of agility. It can transform its offering to meet market demands
19 much faster than large, well-established competitors. The College would be inviting higher
20 risk – entering an existing market with a new product means companies must overcome
21 challenges that have not been faced before (Suarez and Lanzolla, 2005). The College could
22 have a significant early-mover advantage and increased brand awareness.
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31 Key points of difference could be the course design, teaching style and assessments. Practical
32 experience and reflective exercises will be key to ensure students understand the purpose of
33 the activities and consolidate their learning. Theoretical examinations are generally
34 unsuitable for assessing WIL, so the assessment criteria must be adapted accordingly.
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40 Embedding WIL would be part of a longer-term strategy for The College. If successfully
41 implemented and a clear demand for WIL degrees is identified, The College could enjoy the
42 reputational accolades innovation brings. Early implementation of scaffolding significantly
43 enhances student retention—a crucial benefit for The College, which faces a dropout rate
44 three times higher than the national average (Hillman, 2021). Gerhardt (2019) underscores
45 the significance of confidence in WIL teaching, highlighting the advantage of The College's
46 lecturers as experienced industry professionals.
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53 However, challenges lie in the logistical complexities and time commitments associated with
54 this approach (Scott, 2014). Implementing this strategy aims to restructure The College's
55 degree programs, repositioning the institution in the HE market. Such a transformation
56 necessitates support from various stakeholders, including academic staff, educational support
57 professionals, executive board members, and QAA responsible for final course approval
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(Roekel, 2013). Notably, this complex approach incurs higher costs, particularly in human resources.

Stage 4: Implement Solution

Embedding WIL in degree programs offers numerous long-term benefits, notably positioning 'The College' uniquely in a competitive market. Early adoption often secures substantial market share and sets industry benchmarks. Successful implementation could establish a reputation for highly employable graduates, elevating the institution's prestige and desirability of its degrees.

Short Term

Internships:

- (1) Creating clear guidelines and expected outcome frameworks with the assistance of the careers department and forming clear guidelines between students and employers
- (2) Bespoke feedback templates should be formed for employers and students to form a clear structure for monitoring progress, problems and programme quality
- (3) Enhance collaboration with the fledgling companies in their 'Start-ups in Residence scheme'. If implemented, these steps will ensure high standards of internship provision and full student and employer engagement, allowing for The College to clearly differentiate compared to its competitors

Medium Term

EL:

- (1) increased industry days to determine student take up and response
- (2) include EL in the curriculum so the entire cohort benefits, producing graduates with broader skill sets and extensive real-world experiences, forming a clear competitive advantage
- (3) implement consistent teaching training in WIL, creating a WIL organisational culture

Long Term

Embedding WIL:

- (1) the creation of a new BA(hons) Business Management with WIL degree programme, offering EL, industry and work-based projects
- (2) agile structures and processes to implement new forms of WIL to reflect market changes

Stage 5: Evaluate Solution

To ensure an effective solution was presented for 'The College' it is essential to evaluate. This was achieved by continuing the PBL approach (Fogler et al. (2014, p.255), forming an evaluation of the solution as a process, applying an adapted version of the Five P's, as seen in Table 2 below.

Table II: Adapted Five P's (author generated)

The Five P's			
	Description	Pedagogical Differentiation	Strategic Differentiation
Purpose	Does the Course of Actions solve the problem?	Yes. Embedding WIL as EL allows an enhanced experienced of learning integrated in actual work. Rowe et al., 2022	Yes. The College already has viable WIL alternatives to HDAs that can be further developed and offer a different value proposition. Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018
Pride	Does the solution offer differentiation?	Yes (see above) Zedwaard et al., 2017	Yes (see above) Rook, 2016
Patience	Are the time-scales realistic?	Yes. WIL conferences were hosted by 'The College' with the involvement of staff and students to begin to create a WIL organisational culture. Bell and Bell, 2016	Yes. A new suite of modules started to be developed for working students, non-working students with WIL embedded and entrepreneurialism. Eisenstein et al., 2021
Persistence	Is there buy in?	Yes. There was no staff turnover at this time. Rowe and Winchester-Seeto, 2022	Yes. Industry partners were active in the development of a new suite of modules. Cooper et al., 2010
Perspective	Does this align with the institutions ideals and beliefs?	Yes. 'The College' began to recruit WIL specialists.	Yes. 'The College' kept student numbers around 1000 to aid agility and their brand as a boutique provider. Marlow et al., 2022

This paper, therefore, has showcased the effectiveness of a problem-based solution and evaluation framework for curricular transformation, driving both strategic and pedagogical innovation in Higher Education through comprehensive problem analysis, informed decision-making, strategic implementation and evaluation. This approach not only advances the academic discourse on WIL but also offers practical insights for organisations seeking to embed WIL, thereby achieving strategic differentiation in a competitive market. By showcasing the potential for embedding WIL across an institution, the paper highlights the confluence of strategic and pedagogical differentiation. Our unique contribution is encapsulated in the three pivotal recommendations, emphasising the enhancement of institutional distinctiveness and graduate employability.

Future research could seek to expand the findings across contexts, particularly internationally to see if our recommendations are applicable alongside considering other variables in addition to the cost, feasibility, resources, investment and stakeholder involvement.

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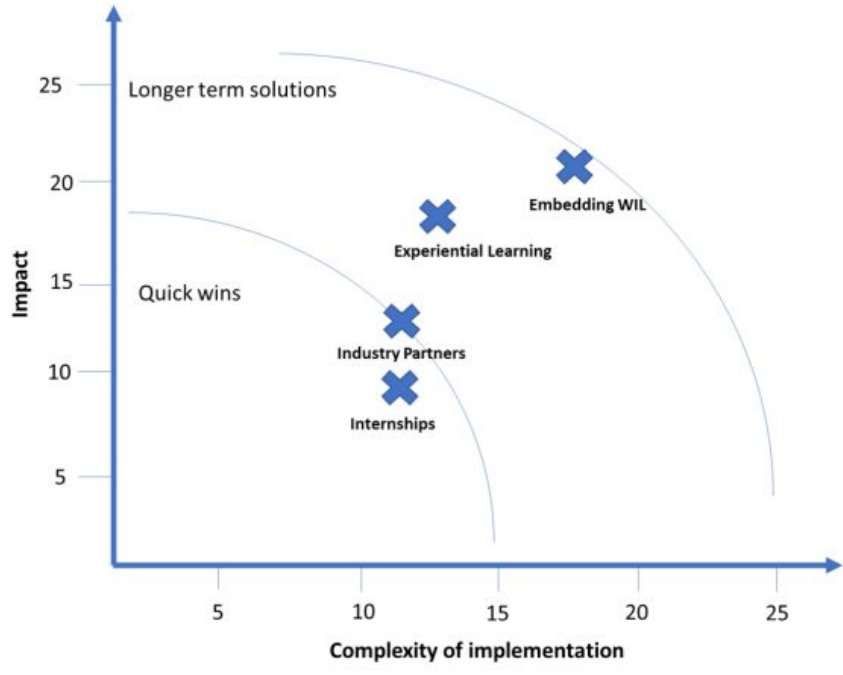


Figure 1

Skills and Work-Based Learning

Table I: Evaluation Matrix (author generated)

	Working with industry partners	Internships	Experiential Learning	Embedding WIL	Scoring
Literature and case study	Cooper et al., 2010; Eisenstein et al., 2021; Lantu et al., 2021; Zhu, 2021	Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018; Rook, 2016; Tickle, 2014	Bell and Bell, 2016; Eisenstein et al., 2021; Rowe and Winchester-Seeto, 2022	Eisenstein et al., 2021; Rowe et al., 2022; Zedwaard et al., 2017	
Cost Ashman and Rochford, 2020; Xia et al., 2014	2 = low cost The College is connected with many industry partners. They have competent teams in place to manage these relationships. The cost will mainly be the contractual and legal requirements needed.	2 = low cost These have been already implemented meaning the solution does not require an implementation, instead it's simply looking at how the restructure of schemes can be made to create more beneficial outcomes. The largest cost will be staff time.	3 = medium cost The main cost will be the teacher training.	4 = high cost This strategy will require several costs: - hiring experts to train tutors - human resources required to restructure the curriculum - trialling the implementation	1 = very low cost 5 = very high cost
Feasibility Marlow et al., 2022; McBeath et al., 2017	2 = high feasibility Working with industry partners will require demand and reciprocation from industry.	1 = very high feasibility These schemes are already running requiring only minor restructuring.	3 = medium feasibility Once teachers are training this should be relatively easy to implement.	3 = medium feasibility The College is a career focused institution needing to diversity/differentiate its product to increase its competitive advantage in a saturated market.	1 = very high feasibility 5 = very low feasibility
Resources Ambrose et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2022	3 = medium resources Establishing partnerships with another company is time consuming.	2 = low resources The College will need to produce clear guidelines and work closely with companies to ensure an excellent student experience.	3 = medium resources Additional human resources will be required as well as expert advice to ensure effective implementation. Regular monitoring through feedback.	4 = high resources Restructuring is time consuming as it includes new content, new assessments, and new appropriate pedagogical differentiation.	1 = low resources required 5 = high number of resources required
Investment Ramsgaard and Østergaard, 2018	3 = medium investment Internal resources need to be moved to resources and staff development.	3 = medium investment Companies providing internships would require investment, especially if these are paid (recommended).	2 = low investment Working with professional/consultants to enable a restructure will be required.	3.5 = medium/high investment Investment by companies depends on the extent by which The College would integrate industries into the degree.	1 = low investment 5 = high investment
Stakeholder Involvement Lantu et al., 2021; Zhu, 2021	3 = medium involvement This would involve The College B2B team who	4 = high involvement These include: - B2B team to initiate agreements	3 = medium involvement This would require funding commitments from shareholders. The	3 = high involvement Tutors must support and deliver WIL focused pedagogy. Market demand must be created	1 = low involvement 5 = high involvement

	manage relationships with industry partners.	- Careers team to oversee effective student outcomes - industry partners offering internships, and creating schemes - student and staff buy-in	correct staff to deliver WIL focused content.	for a WIL scheme. Authentic assessments must be WIL focused. Regular monitoring.	
Score	13	12	14	18.5	5 = low complexity 25 = high complexity

Table II: Adapted Five P's (author generated)

The Five P's			
	Description	Pedagogical Differentiation	Strategic Differentiation
Purpose	Does the Course of Actions solve the problem?	Yes. Embedding WIL as EL allows an enhanced experienced of learning integrated in actual work.	Yes. The College already has viable WIL alternatives to HDAs that can be further developed and offer a different value proposition.
Pride	Does the solution offer differentiation?	Yes (see above)	Yes (see above)
Patience	Are the time-scales realistic?	Yes. WIL conferences were hosted by 'The College' with the involvement of staff and students to begin to create a WIL organisational culture.	Yes. A new suite of modules started to be developed for working students, non-working students with WIL embedded and entrepreneurialism.
Persistence	Is there buy in?	Yes. There was no staff turnover at this time.	Yes. Industry partners were active in the development of a new suite of modules.
Perspective	Does this align with the institutions ideals and beliefs?	Yes. 'The College' began to recruit WIL specialists.	Yes. 'The College' kept student numbers around 1000 to aid agility and their brand as a boutique provider.