



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

NEW ZEALAND



Student experience in work-integrated learning

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Background of Work-Integrated Learning

- The term 'work-integrated learning' first appeared mid 1990's, became widely used early 2000's (Zegwaard et al., 2023)
 - First discoverable mention of WIL was from WACE's mission statement
 - Quoted in a paper from a conference in South Africa (Bradford, 1995)
- The concept is not new
 - Co-op started in 1906 (borrowed from Law studies)
 - Sandwich degrees probably around 1840
 - Apprenticeships traced back to Imperial Rome
- Defining elements of WIL:
 - educational approach
 - external partner
 - authentic tasks
 - meaningful purpose

(Zegwaard et al., 2023)



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Why more WIL

Education for the betterment of society

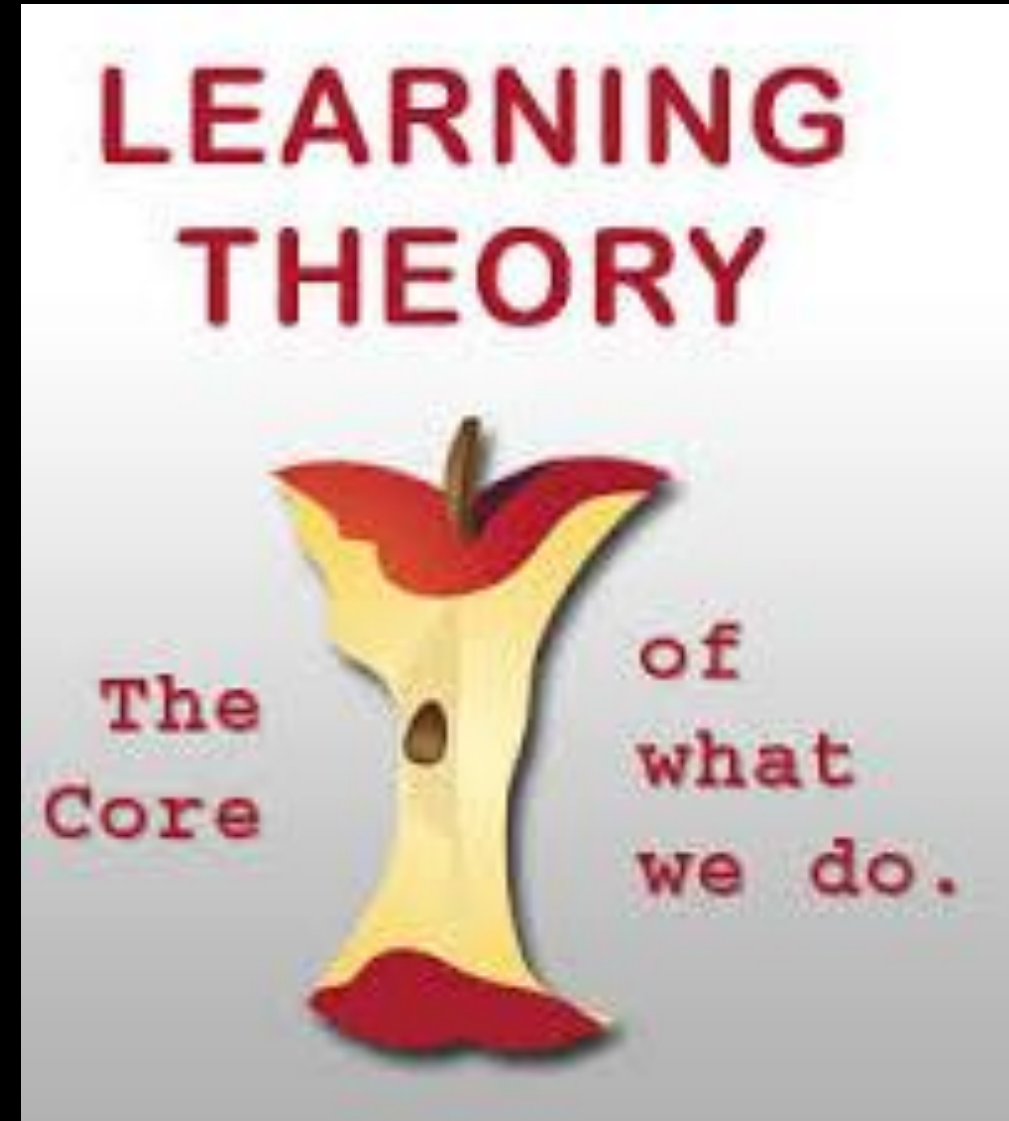
- WIL enhances the student learning experience
- Highly engaging and transformative
- Create critical and creative thinkers

Education to increase productivity

- Employability outcomes!
- Government see employability as a university KPI (Cheng et al., 2021)
 - Economic growth, return on investment
 - Students enrol because they want good careers
- University strategic goals focus on employability and community engagement

WIL underpinned by several learning theories

- Cognitive development theory by Piaget (1985)
- Social culturalism by Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Engestrom, 1999
- Learning through experience by Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984)
- Reflective learning to enhance learning from practice (Schon, 1983; Gibbs, 1988)
- Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977)
- Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

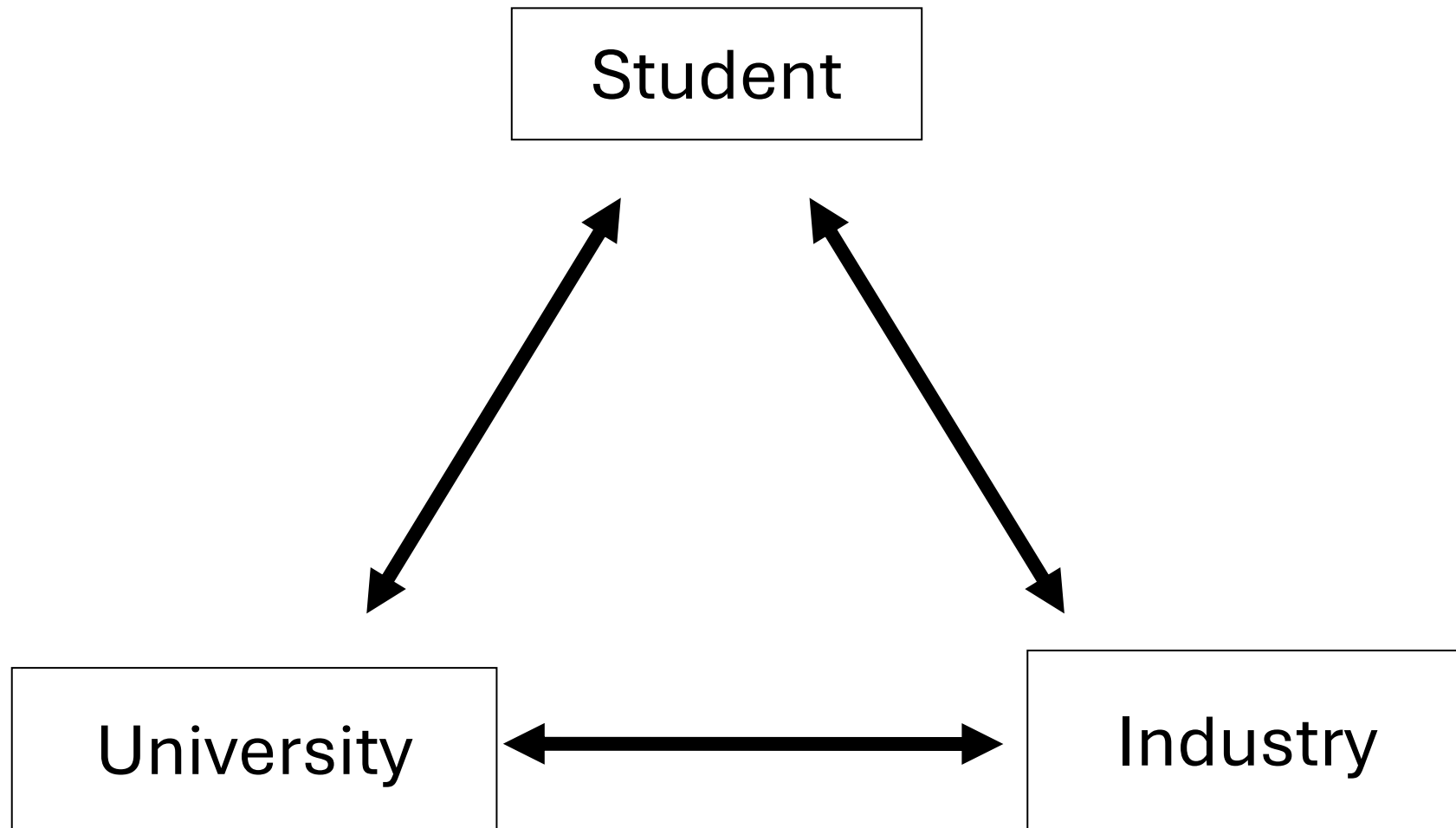




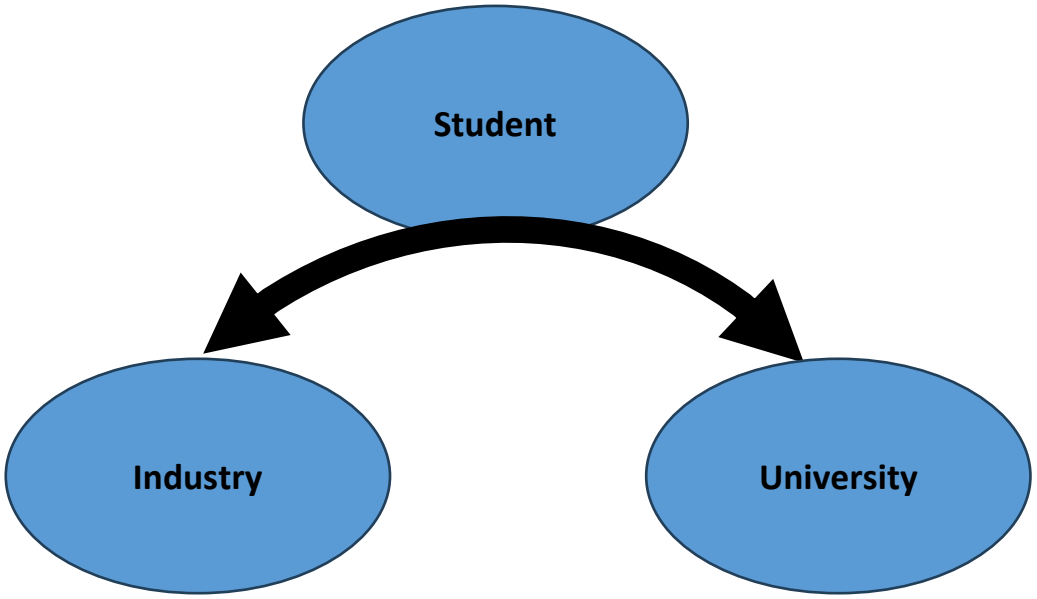
Student experience

- Student experience is broad, diverse, and varied
- WIL literature focused directly on student experience or closely to
 - Also overwhelmingly focused on the positive aspects
- Will focus on lesser explored aspects of student experience
- Where does student experience fit with the relationship of the three stakeholders?

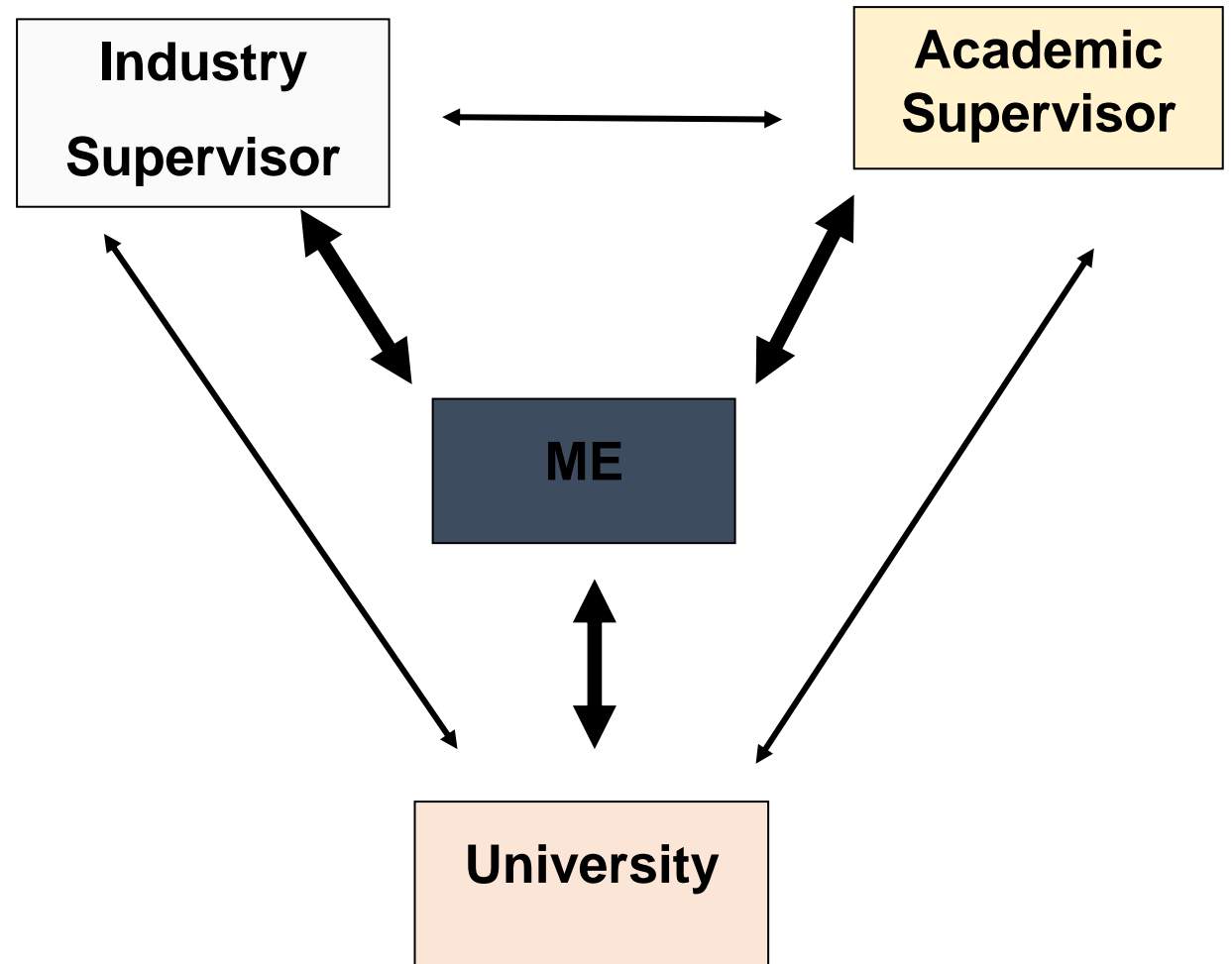
Nature of the relationship



Academic supervisors' views



Students' views



Benefits of WIL for students

Student experiences through WIL provides:

- **Employability outcomes** (Jackson & Cook, 2023)
- **Career clarification** (Jackson, 2015)
- **Academic outcomes** (Tanaka & Carlson, 2012)
- **Social capital, human capital, cultural capital, identity capital, psychological capital** (Jackson & Cooke, 2023)
- **Applying taught knowledge to a relevant practical context** (Wang & Calvano, 2018)
- **Insights to professional behaviour, professional ethics, moral citizenship** (Smith et al., 2009)
- **Extending learning professional skills to being a professional** (Jackson, 2017)



Influence on study choices

- Career clarification (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011)
 - Students can have poorly developed, even stereotypic ideas of a career.
- Study direction clarification
 - Changing study choices
 - Changing degree major
- Graduate study choices (Zegwaard & McCurdy, 2014)
- Career self-management
 - Estimated, 5-7 career changes (World Economic Forum, 2023)
 - Average of 12 jobs by 55 years
 - 60% of workers in the US considering changing job

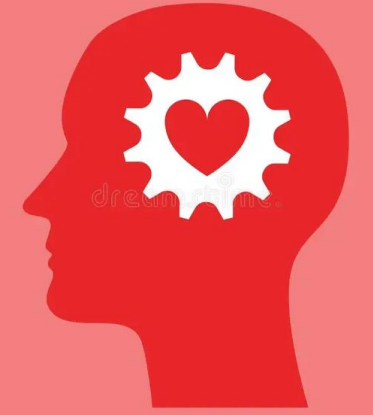




Authenticity

- Student value the applied nature of learning (Aprile et al., 2023)
- But do they value the *authentic nature* of the learning?
- Work placements cause stress for students
 - Work peers and supervisors a source of stress (Zegwaard & Adams-Hutcheson, in press)
- Some stress may be helpful (Herman et al., 2015)
 - Deci's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012)
- Bootcamp and engineering projects (Kovalsky & Zegwaard, 2021)
- How to allow students to make 'safe' mistakes
 - Concept of failing forward

Reality check: The complexity of the workplace



- Students can have idealistic views of:
 - How the workplace functions
 - Their possible impact on the workplace
- Students' professional identity development and ethical behaviour (Campbell & Zegwaard, 2015)
- Students less likely to speak against unethical behaviour after a work placement ($p < .05$)
- Workplaces are complex:
 - Power differentials, expectations, norms of behaviour (good and bad)
 - What is ethical and not ethical is not black and white
- Reality check

| Stressors | Slight to severe stress | Moderate to severe stress |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Any source | 100% | 83.4% |
| Financial | 84.2% | 67.1% |
| Physical health | 93.8% | 52.1% |
| Health of or needing to care for a family member | 89.0% | 33.6% |
| Work colleagues and supervisors | 93.8% | 30.1% |

| Stressors | Slight to severe stress | Moderate to severe stress |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| COVID-19 | 87.7% | 25.3% |
| State of the world | 87.7% | 24.7% |
| Student peers | 87.0% | 15.1% |
| Living away from home | 83.6% | 14.4% |
| Other | 7.5% | 6.8% |



Wellbeing: paid vs unpaid



- Payment made no difference on the meaningfulness of placements (Milne & Caldicott, 2016), unless students experienced both (McHugh, 2017)
- Interns on unpaid placements experience significant financial stress (Gair & Baglow, 2018; Hemy et al., 2016;)
- Unpaid work placements
 - Unpaid interns feel less supported by hosts ($p < .001$)
 - Thought support from all sources were more important ($p < .001$)
 - Less satisfied about wellbeing ($p < .01$)
 - Greater financial stress ($p < .001$)
 - Greater stress about the health of or caring for a family member ($p < .05$)

| Financial stress during placement caused stress | Paid | Unpaid | Diff |
|--|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Yes (1-10) | 73% | 100% | 27% |
| Moderate to severe (5-10) | 24% | 80% | 56% |

| Did you need support for wellbeing during placement? | Paid | Unpaid |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| Probably or definitely needed support for my wellbeing | 26% | 27% |

| Prob or def needed support, did you find it? | Yes | No | Unsure |
|---|------------|------------|---------------|
| Unpaid (n=18), did you find this support | 17% | 67% | 17% |
| Paid (n=12), did you find this support | 33% | 50% | 17% |

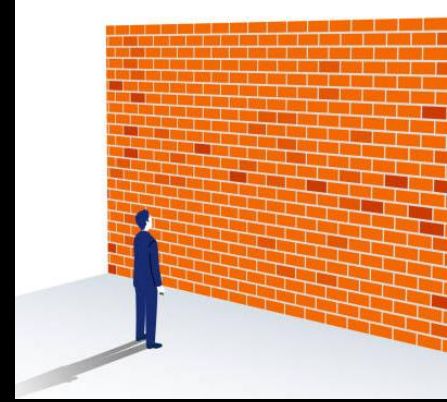
Wellbeing cont...

- For many students, the WIL experience is stressful
- Unpaid placements cause:
 - Significant financial stress
 - Negatively impacts wellbeing
 - Greater struggle with managing stress
 - Greater need for support
 - Less likely to find support
- Scope of unpaid placements: Australia social work = \$100 million/year
- Some remuneration is helpful
- To improve the student experience
 - Accessible support structures
 - Resilience preparation
 - Students staying connected with friends and family
 - Placements near family
 - Reduce unremunerated placements
 - Design unpaid placements so students can have paid part-time work
- Need to challenge the practice of unpaid placements



Student experiencing barriers to access

- Equitable access to Higher Education long been debated (Kelly, 2010)
- Equity long been identified as a challenge for WIL (Orrell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008)
 - Student experience access differently (Jackson et al., 2023)
- Level of support
 - Half of students with disabilities and a third with mental health disabilities opt out of WIL (Gatto et al., 2021)
- Minimum GPA requirements
 - Academic performance is not a great measure of workplace performance
 - With the right preparation, low GPA students perform as well as high GPA students (Melis-De Lamper & Benner, 2024)
- Find your own placement model (Harrison & Ip, 2013)
 - Argued it reflects reality
 - Great for those with good social capital
 - Difficult for first-in-family students, internationals, remote regions, minority groups



Improving the student experience

- Ensure quality experiences
 - Much recent work (Campbell & Pretti, 2023, Campbell et al., 2019; McRae et al., 2017; Stirling et al., 2016; WACE, 2024)
 - Constantly reviewing and refining
- Well-resourced programmes
- Quality assessment practice. Assessment for and as learning
 - Authentic assessment
 - Connect the assessment to what the student is doing
- Equitable access to WIL
- To explore 'not positive' side of student experiences
 - However, 'not enjoyable' does not mean a bad learning experience
- Student voice in programme (re)design
 - Listen to our students
 - Listen to our external stakeholders
- Consult the literature
- Continuously research and consume research of student experiences
 - As society and technology changes, so does the student experience
 - Research-informed good practice



IMPROVEMENT

Diversifying models of WIL

- There is no “one right” model
- Diverse practice along a spectrum
- Placement form of WIL is high impact
- Non-placement WIL is easier to scale up

- Diverse practice across the institution creates institutional resilience
 - Easier to switch to different practice
 - COVID evidenced the need to be able to switch quickly

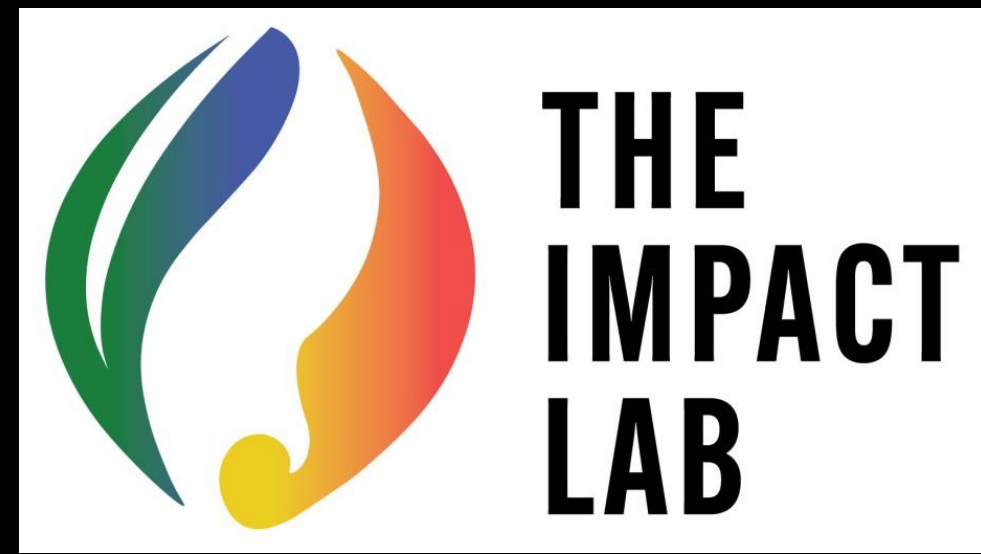
Example: Multidisciplinary projects (The Impact Lab)

- Run by WIL Central
 - Staff support from the Divisions
 - Team mentors from across the university
 - All disciplines eligible
- Multidisciplinary projects, based around the UN SDG
- Multidisciplinary teams
- Two modes of delivery
 1. Individual group projects
 - Each group has their own project
 - Project is well defined
 - Likely each project has a different stakeholder
 2. Competition mode
 - One problem proposition
 - One stakeholder
 - Many possible outcomes/solution
 - Best outcome/solution wins



Example: Multidisciplinary projects (The Impact Lab)

- Inner City Community Garden
- Tauranga Campus Transport Project
- Info app for bike tours
- Alternative transportation options for new suburbs
- Trees at the meteor
- PET strapping upcycling
- Wellbeing hub
- Kīngitanga Day Event
- Carless Wednesday challenge
- Actional manufacturing waste re-use project

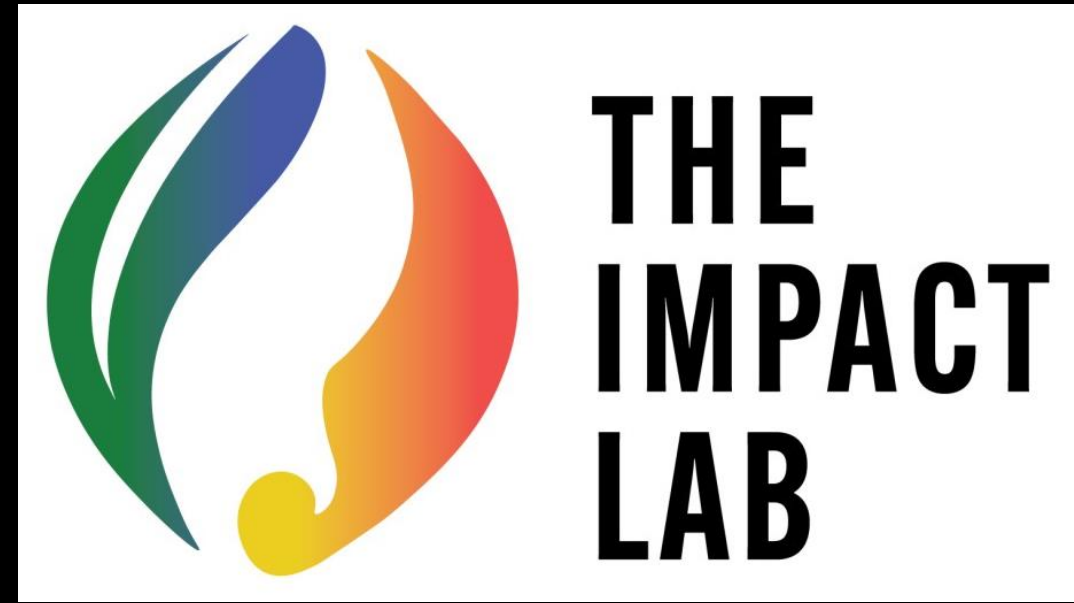


Example: Multidisciplinary projects (The Impact Lab)

Assessment

All groups have the same assessment, even if doing different projects

- Professional profile (individual, 15%)
 - CV, cover letter, LinkedIn
- Project plan (group, 15%)
- Midpoint update (individual, 15%)
- Oral presentation (group, 20%)
- Final report (group, 25%)
- Project contribution (individual, 10%)



General future directions

- World is changing fast - higher education must also
- Future of higher education needs:
 - More learning through doing
 - Learning *within* the changing world, less *alongside* the changing world
 - More blurring between working and learning
 - Ability to source information, discern quality and reliability
 - Less knowledge transfer, more synthesizing and applying knowledge
- Student experiences need to prepare them for the future workplace
 - Embrace artificial intelligence
- Student learning experiences need to be more applied and more authentic
 - More learning 'within' the changing world rather than 'alongside'
- Universities need to become dynamic and agile
 - Flexible curriculum



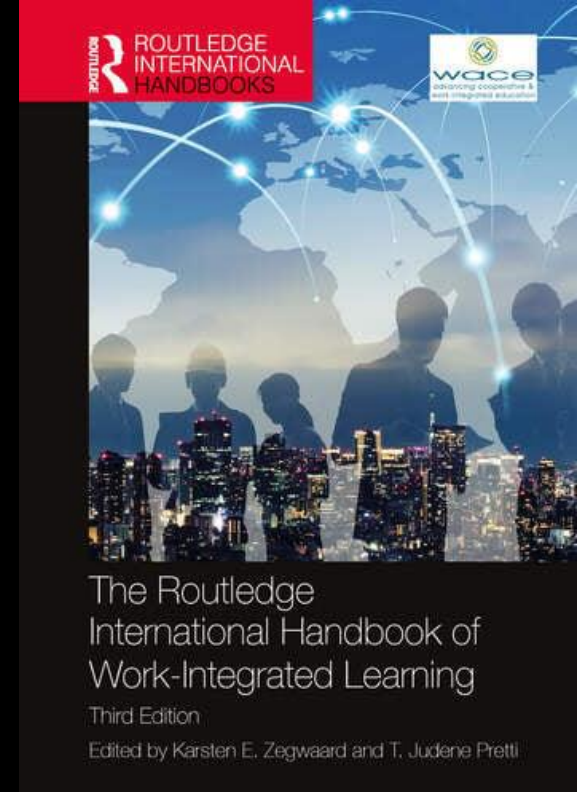
An open book with text on the pages, resting on a stack of other books. The pages are aged and yellowed. The text is dense and appears to be a classic literary work. The book is open to a page with a large block of text. The background is a light, textured surface.

LITERATURE

The Routledge International Handbook of Work-Integrated Learning (3rd ed.)

- Compilation of established knowledge and critical discussion of the practice of WIL
- A 'go to first' book for WIL practitioners, educators, and researchers
- 37 chapters, 96 authors, 644 pages
- Five sections:
 - 1) *defining and theoretical background*,
 - 2) *benefits*,
 - 3) *models of WIL*,
 - 4) *developing and managing WIL*, and
 - 5) *topical issues*
- Available in hardback and eBook – paperback/softback later this year.
- www.routledge.com/9780367741761
- University libraries likely to have ebook access already

Currently about
USD\$55 (eB)
\$315 (HB)



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International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning

ISSN: 2538-1032

www.ijwil.org

- Central journal for WIL, commenced 24 years ago
- More than 600 published articles
- Open access, double blind reviewed, 50-member international review board
- Indexed on Scopus, EBSCO, ERIC, DOAJ, Cabells, ESCI
- Q2 journal (71 percentile)
- Special issues:
 - Assessment
 - Employability
 - Research methods
 - Impact of COVID (double special issue)
 - Cultural perspectives
 - Equity, inclusion and access
 - WIL and wellbeing (*to be published start of 2025*)

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Resources: Books and good practice reports

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Any Questions?



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