Models of work-based learning, examples and reflections

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify a number of different models of work-based learning (WBL) in operation at the University of Chester and provides two examples of university-employer partnership where WBL is used as the principal means for bringing about change in the workplace.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is based on the experience of one UK University with significant WBL provision and outlines the evolutionary development of a number of different models of WBL designed to meet the specific needs of employers and individual students.

Findings – The paper reflects on the distinctive contribution of WBL in higher education to bring about change to the culture and working practices of two public organisations, thereby improving performance and developing new ways of working.

Practical implications – It will also consider the impact of WBL on learners often giving them a greater sense of their own identity and professionalism and point to the way in which WBL challenges the university as much as it challenges employer partners.

Social implications – Widening access to higher education and increasing participation in HE.

Originality/value – The identification and description of a number of different models of WBL in operation in the HE sector.

Keywords Organizational change, Higher education, Work-based learning, Models of WBL, WBL partnerships, Work-related learning

Paper type Conceptual paper

Work-based learning (WBL) in higher education

Among the most significant changes which have occurred in UK Higher Education over the past 30 years is the introduction and development of WBL[1] into the university curriculum. While this has not been fully embraced in all universities it is, nevertheless, now recognised as a key way in which the gap between higher education and the world of work can be bridged. UK governments over the past three decades have also recognised this and have found ways of incentivising universities to develop their WBL provision. The latest initiative is the Higher Level Apprenticeship which places the onus on employer representative bodies to lead on the design of the curriculum and to work in partnership with universities for refinement and delivery.

While there is still a need to continue to "market" WBL with businesses and organisations (many of whom still do not have links with universities or appear to know of the possibilities of working with them), many are now cooperating with the HE sector and benefitting from it, especially in the areas of staff development, project development and where there is a perceived need for change management and/or cultural change. Thus, the idea of taking the university into the workplace is one that is

no longer a rare occurrence but an increasingly common one and one that benefits both in terms of growth in knowledge capital and human and social capital (Garnett, 2009).

The business of universities is, of course, about knowledge and learning. University research centres have always been a key way in which higher education works with industry, public service, and many other areas through knowledge transfer. In terms of learning, the emphasis has been on preparing students within the university through undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral and post-doctoral levels of learning and fitting them to enter into full-time employment. The innovation that has occurred through WBL is that the workplace itself becomes the site of learning and the subject of the curriculum. It provides the opportunity for individuals to not only develop themselves professionally but to access the opportunity to gain credit for their learning to contribute towards university qualifications. For businesses and organisations, the opportunity is given to work with the university to advance organisational aims whether they concern the benefits of having a more informed and better qualified workforce, engaging in a more concerted way with project development, or bringing about change within the organisation. The university also benefits through increasing its knowledge capital, improving its widening participation agenda and increasing its student numbers, and providing opportunities for academic staff to engage more with the world outside the university.

Universities, however, need to be flexible and malleable if they are to work successfully with businesses and organisations. They need to be able to demonstrate that they have something of real value to offer and that they can be accommodating in terms of fitting in with the employers' needs. A one size fits all approach may not do. Hence the University of Chester has developed a number of different models for engaging with both individual learners and business sponsored cohorts of learners. It has tried to take the idea of "demand led" provision seriously, working with employers to deliver models of WBL that best suit the needs of the employer partner. While using the generic term, WBL, it does not necessarily envisage just one method for approaching learning in the workplace. It is equally comfortable with the term Work Applied Learning and/or Work-Based Action Learning which may foreground Action Research as a principal approach to learning and problem solving and bringing about change (Abraham, 2012). It also sees a place for more traditional teaching methods where work-related learning (WRL)[2] may be the most efficient means of advancing learning in order to carry out a project or solve a work-based problem. Whether using WBL techniques or more conventional class-room-based teaching methods, the driving force is always the same, namely to take the University into the workplace and, through the learning of individual employees, enable the business or organisation to develop and change in accordance with the demands placed upon it.

History of WBL at Chester

WBL was introduced into the University of Chester undergraduate curriculum some 35 years ago as a four-week work placement on a pass/fail basis. In 1990 the University received some government funding to develop a model of WBL for undergraduates on non-vocational degree programmes enabling them to access academic credit for their learning through work (Department of Employment, 1993). The underpinning idea for the original model was the maintenance of a dialogue between the students' learning experiences in the workplace and the more theoretical understandings of the university in order to develop the skills of reflective practice. (This was facilitated by four days per week in the placement and one day per week in the university over an

eight-week period.) For example, students would bring back observations about the different ways in which senior staff in the placement organisation managed and led. This would lead to seminars on styles of leadership and management where students would be introduced to theoretical perspectives and encouraged to reflect on their experiences in the light of the ideas, models and concepts of others. Other topics for consideration would emerge on a weekly basis. While this model operated well during the pilot stage it was difficult to integrate it into the systems of the University, to allow students the freedom to undertake placements at a distance from the University, and to satisfy employers who preferred students to be full-time in the workplace. Nevertheless, this principle of reflective practice remained and remains today as the basis of the model of learning through WBL.

In order to work within the constraints of the University and to meet employer and student expectations, what had become known as the Support Programme (the one day per week in the University) was front-loaded as a week within the University of tutor-led work-shops and seminars introducing students to a whole range of ideas that should prove useful to them during their work placement. This start to the placement period is still used today. It draws on social psychology to aid the students' understanding about themselves and others, about team roles, and about the development of negotiating skills. It may draw on theories within the field of business and management to aid the students' understanding of how organisations work and are managed and led but, above all, it seeks to develop in students an understanding of critical reflection and what it is to be a reflective practitioner, and generally to help them to develop their employability skills and to enhance their prospects of gaining worthwhile employment at the end of their degree studies (Major, 2005).

The opportunity to undertake accredited WBL as part of a full-time undergraduate degree programme is a distinctive feature of the Chester offer and the model of placement learning established during the pilot phase continues to this day, enabling some 1,200-1,500 undergraduates each year to gain academic credit towards their level five studies.

From this understanding of WBL and, to some extent, as a result of student demand (especially part-time master degree students, some of whom expressed the view that, while they mostly enjoyed the programmes they were on, the content was determined for them and it did not always prove relevant to their professional learning needs, and attendance at the University for teaching sessions were not always scheduled at times convenient to them), further developments in WBL were considered. Students had asked why it was that, as mature adults and professionals, they could not be offered learning opportunities which gave them more control over the time, place and context for their learning.

At the same time there was also a move on the part of a small number of other universities to offer more flexible forms of learning through WBL for people in full-time employment. Through links with Middlesex University who had begun to develop their WBL provision in this direction, Chester developed a WBL framework and programmes which it named Work-Based and Integrative Studies (WBIS). The aim of this initiative was to enable mature students to have more flexible learning opportunities, giving them the power to negotiate with the University the content of their programme driven by their own perceived personal and professional learning needs. While the aim was to facilitate experiential learning through WBL it maintained the opportunity for students to elect to integrate more traditional forms of University-based study through the selection of modules from across the range of the University's

module portfolio, assuming that those selected made for a coherent programme and that the student had the necessary prerequisites to undertake the study (hence the use of "Integrative" within the WBIS framework title).

The WBIS framework and programmes was validated in 1998 and provided for the full range of undergraduate and postgraduate academic qualifications from the Certificate in HE through to full master awards.

To accommodate the development of WBL, and as a result of some further pump-priming government funding, and success in securing a number of contracts, the Centre for Work-Related Studies (CWRS) was established by the University in the year 2000. This became the principal hub for much of the University's outreach activities with its influence also extending within the University itself where other departments began to develop their own programmes based on WBIS in order to facilitate their engagement with employers within their own spheres of expertise and practice. The number of students currently engaged on WBIS and its off-shoots in other Faculties is in the region of 2,000 making the University of Chester one of the largest centres of WBL provision in the UK HE sector (White, 2014). With a strong academic team, the Centre launched in 2008 its Postgraduate Certificate in WBL facilitation principally intended for employer partners delivering in-house education and training, for Further Education College tutors delivering Foundation Degrees and other University accredited qualifications, as well as being available for academic staff from other universities and those interested in developing their understanding and expertise in the field of WBL (Major *et al.*, 2011).

Models of WBL
Since introducing WBIS to the Chester curriculum, a number of different models of WBL have been developed enabling the Centre to work with individual learners and businesses and organisations wishing to offer professional development opportunities to their employees. These can be categorised as follows:

- the individual model;
- the distance learning model;
- the in-house model;
- the integrated model; and
- the co-delivery model.

Individual model
This is the standard delivery model where a learner enrols on a negotiated WBL programme and has his/her learning facilitated by a University tutor. The usual starting point is the self-review and negotiation of learning module which has a part diagnostic function ensuring that the learner enters a programme at the appropriate level and is working towards an achievable award. A module introducing learners to WBL study (skills and approaches to WBL) is also offered prior to the commencement of the negotiated programme. The programme itself may include taught modules from the wide range of subjects on offer across the University, assuming that the learner meets the necessary prerequisites for the module and that the modules chosen are cognisant with the overall aim of the programme and provide for a coherent learning pathway. The CWRS also has a wide range of pre-validated work-related

learning modules at its disposal. However, the principal focus on the majority of negotiated programmes is what the Centre calls Negotiated Experiential Learning Modules through which WBL tasks and projects are undertaken. If they wish, learners are able to take the Exit Review and Forward Planning Module as the last in their programme of study. Looking back on previous learning and looking forward to new learning reflects the spirit of Lifelong Learning and aids the process of continuous personal and professional improvement.

Distance learning model
By definition, WBL is almost inevitably also distance learning in that the site of learning is the workplace rather than the University. However, "distance" is a relative concept and while, with the individual model as described above, learners may live within a reasonable travelling distance of the University and, therefore, be able to visit for tutorials and attendance at lectures (should Taught modules be included in their individually negotiated programmes), those living some distance from the University or those who are European or International students, may require the full distance learning model. Given that the Centre can deliver all of its core modules (e.g. self-review and negotiation of learning, skills and approaches to WBL, etc.) through distance learning and that it also has many of its own Taught WRL modules for delivery on-line, and that Negotiated modules can be discussed and agreed through face-to-face meetings on Skype or FaceTime and through the use of e-mails and telephone, distance is overcome and learners can, in principle, be based anywhere in the world.

In-house model
The in-house model is similar to the individual model as described above but, in this case, the University provides a learning facilitator who works off-site and as part of the learning and development team within a large business or organisation. Learners are likely to be on individually negotiated programmes facilitated exclusively by the University though the learning undertaken will be negotiated with both the learner and the employer. In some cases, employers may request a rolling programme of taught modules that reflect business needs and objectives. Through this model, the Centre is able to take the University into the workplace and, in so doing, help to break down barriers between higher education and industry and help to change the perceptions of individuals as to what university study entails.

Integrated model
This is where, through a formal contract, the University effectively seconds a tutor/ learning facilitator to a business or organisation to work as part of an in-house learning and development team. The early stages of such an arrangement are likely to be about consultancy in the area of staff development with a view to facilitating change within the organisation. The result may be the joint design and joint delivery of a training programme which may or may not carry academic credit depending on the decisions of the organisation. As implied, this model is normally only employed on a long-term arrangement and in cases where both parties have analysed thoroughly the costs, risks and advantages of such a partnership arrangement.

Co-delivery model
This is where a business or organisation wishes to deliver its own programme of learning and has appropriately academically qualified staff able to teach at HE level. The content of a programme is interrogated by a University tutor, negotiated with the deliverer to ensure level and learning outcomes are appropriate and presented within the University's modular framework accompanied by a clear rationale for the programme and a written report from an external adviser with expertise in the negotiated curriculum. It is then presented to an Approval Panel (typically consisting of a senior Quality representative as Chair, senior representatives of Registry and Finance, the PVC for External Affairs or his/her nominee, an external consultant and in-house academic representation) established by the University especially for the authorisation of WBIS programmes, with academic staff of the Centre and representatives of the organisation present to answer questions.

Once approved, the staff of the organisation responsible for delivery is required to undertake a training programme provided by the University. This is a quality measure focussing on the facilitation of learning through WBL and the assessment of learners using the assessment strategies and criteria approved by the University. Once the organisation's delivery-staff have been through this process they are made Associate Tutors of the University. This is a formal HR process which effectively contracts the deliverers to the University on an unpaid basis ultimately giving the University the right to have them removed as members of the delivery team should they not be fulfilling their duties appropriately (the UK QAA requires that universities have measures in place to enable them to "reach out and control"). Responsibility for the delivery of the programme is then handed over to the partner organisation with support from the University. First marking of assignments is undertaken by the deliverer with the University in the role of second marker and retaining full control over marks submitted to Awards Boards. A link tutor maintains regular contact with the organisation and the University has full responsibility for quality assurance (Talbot *et al.*, 2014).

This is the model used most frequently by the University when working with businesses and organisations (Table I).

Examples of the integrated model and the in-house model
The examples have been chosen to indicate the depth and sustainable nature of the work undertaken with two organisations both concerned to offer professional development opportunities to their respective staff and to bring about positive change in the organisations and to address organisational aims and priorities.

	Individual	Distance L	In-house	Integrated	Co-delivery
University facilitated	/	/	/		
Employer facilitated					/
Shared facilitation				/	
Individually negotiated programme	/	/	/		
Cohort negotiated programme				/	/
Off campus delivery			/	/	/
Assessment (university marking)	/	/	/		
Assessment (shared marking)				/	
Assessment (employer first marker/university second marker)					/
University responsible for all marks	/	/	/	/	/

Table I.
Summary table showing main characteristics of the models

Example 1: the integrated model
The first example follows the pattern of the integrated model referred to above. The University responded to an invitation to tender for work with an agency of a large government department. The agency in question had responsibility for the distribution of benefits for disabled people and their carers and the key function of a group of 1,500 employees was to make decisions about the eligibility of applicants and the amount of benefit awarded. For a number of years this process had not run smoothly with many decisions being challenged by applicants and taken to tribunals where a significant number of decisions were overturned. Audit officers refused to engage further with the service because of constant failure to implement recommendations and the matter was raised in parliamentary committee. Thus, a decision was taken to bring in a partner to work with the agency in order to improve the performance of the decision makers (DMs) and the University of Chester was selected and given a three-year contract. A significant factor in awarding the contract to the University seems to have been the fact that, at interview, rather than telling the agency what needed to be done and how the University had the expertise to do it, the Chester team acknowledged the difficulties the agency faced, admitted that they had no ready-made solution to their problems, but offered to work with them to try to improve the situation. This seemed to resonate with the agency which was not looking for someone to relieve them of the responsibility to get things right but for a partner who would work with them offering advice and insight into the problems they faced and helping them to find a way forward for themselves.

It was agreed at the outset that cultural change was essential and the first thing that was undertaken was a review of the existing training programme DMs had to undertake after appointment. This consisted of a six-week lecture programme where trainee DMs attended from 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. each day, receiving information from doctors about a whole range of medical conditions and their effects, from lawyers about legal matters, from civil servants, from expert DMs, and so on. At the end of this they were deemed to be trained and ready to take on a full case load without further interventions.

Without doubt, decision making of the sort that was required is a complex matter. Prior to civil servants being appointed to do the task, it had been done by medical doctors specially trained for the role. However, an early decision was made that practically all of the information disseminated during the six-week block training could be made available on-line and accessible to DMs as and when they needed particular knowledge of a medical condition or a legal matter. Given the attention span of an audience, plus the huge amount of information made available to them, it was agreed that lectures were probably not the most effective way of ensuring a sound basis for decision making.

After much debate, it was considered that a training programme should be devised that built on the knowledge and expertise of the workforce and aimed to focus on sharpening the DMs considerative and deliberative skills and thinking processes, especially developing in them more advanced capabilities in critical thinking and critical reflection as well as developing a greater empathetic awareness through direct contact with applicants (a move that had previously been resisted). The training programme consisted of attendance at a number of workshops, together with a programme of WBL. It was also agreed that team working should be introduced with particularly complex cases coming under the scrutiny of more than one DM. (Prior to this each DM was regarded as working directly on behalf of the government minister responsible for the department with no interventions.)

The overall aim was to develop a set of standards and to ensure that DMs had the capability to work to them, constantly seeing themselves as learners and professionals working within a community of practice. DMs were assessed in the context of real-life decision making, which required them to present cases and justify their decisions to their assessors demonstrating the process by which they had arrived at a decision. The majority of DMs qualified with a University Professional Certificate (60 credits at level 4) in Professionalism in Decision Making and Appeals (Table II).

While the aim was to hand over the delivery of the training programme to the agency learning and development team at the end of three years, so much progress was being made through the partnering of University and Business that it was decided that an extension to the contract should be requested. This was granted for a further two years and then, despite the collapse of world financial markets and the on-set of austerity government, two further one-year contracts were granted and the work continued until the government decided to sell off the agency to a private contractor.

This was profoundly disappointing given the huge improvements that had been made in respect of the original reasons for engaging the University in the first place. Evidence showed that far fewer cases were going to tribunal and for the majority of those the original decisions were upheld. There was also a feeling amongst the DMs themselves that they were now professionally and academically qualified to fulfil their role and this gave them a greater pride in their work and greater self-satisfaction.

As a matter of interest, the company that took over the agency was relieved of its contract following a large number of complaints about delays in decision making and the poor quality of the decisions. The company that replaced it has also discovered the challenges involved in taking on this responsibility.

In summary, it was agreed by both partners that the training programme had achieved a number of key developments. For example, it had brought about cultural

Pre-WBL development programme	WBL development programme
Attendance at a 6-week block training programme including knowledge about a range of medical conditions, legal matters associated with benefits and civil service processes and procedures	Attendance at a series of half-day workshops designed to develop critical thinking and critical reflection supported by a database on medical conditions, legal matters associated with benefits and civil service processes and procedures (to be accessed on a need-to-know basis)
	A programme of WBL using real-life case studies to tease out the issues for consideration. Tutor supported to develop skills of reflective practice
Individual working and decision making	Team working and joint decision making especially on complex cases
No direct contact with clients	Direct contact to be made with client where necessary for clarification of circumstances, etc.
No formal assessment of competence	Formal assessment of competence mainly through dialogic assessment with a University tutor and an expert decision maker questioning and challenging decisions taken and requiring evidence for those decisions
Limited sense of professional nature of role	Greater sense of professionalism through formal process of assessment and academic award

Table II.
Chart showing comparison of pre-WBL development programme with the WBL development programme

change within the organisation and it had put learning at the heart of the business. Various monitoring and evaluation exercises were carried out by the agency during the seven years of the contract and these showed vast improvement in the quality of decisions, fewer cases going to tribunals and, of those that did, fewer original decisions being overturned. A key development for the DMs themselves was that they felt that the role had become thoroughly professionalised and given them a status comparable to that of other professions (Perrin *et al.*, 2009).

Example 2: the in-house model
This follows the pattern of the in-house model described above. The Centre has been working with a large hospital in the North West of England for more than 15 years offering in-service, non-clinical, professional development opportunities for all staff including managers, administrators, nurses, midwives and, at times, doctors and surgeons. The opportunity came about when the Centre was approached by the manager in charge of education and training at the hospital. She had heard about the WBIS framework and thought it an ideal complement to their existing programme. The Centre agreed to a University WBL tutor joining the hospital education and training team on the basis of two to three days per week (depending on work-load) and were given a contract that allowed them to draw down fee income on the basis of an agreed number of module enrolments. This model (with some variations) continues today despite changes in management and budget cuts.

Essentially, with this model, the Centre works with individual learners, though each year a programme of Taught Work-Related Learning modules is agreed with the hospital so that the organisation's needs, as well as individual learning needs, are being addressed and hopefully met. For example, the list below shows some of the most frequent requests coming from the employer as well as the learners.

List showing some of the most popular modules delivered to hospital staff:

- communication skills;
- effective workplace teams;
- stress and stress management;
- negotiation skills;
- transition and change management; and
- strategies for building effective workplace leadership.

The majority of learners also take the following:

- self-review and negotiation of learning (introductory);
- skills and approaches to WBL (preparatory);
- negotiated experiential learning modules (work-based learning projects and tasks); and
- exit review and forward planning (final module of a programme including providing a plan for further learning).

Over the years, the Centre has developed a bank of literally hundreds of WRL modules, the majority of which reflect the nature of the businesses and organisations it has been working with and the demands and complexities of daily working life. Such modules include Conflict Resolution, Organisational Structure, Culture and Change, Leading

People Through Change, Team Building and Leadership, and Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. Some modules, such as Action Learning Facilitation, are designed to provide a skill base for learners to form groups to solve their own workplace problems and issues.

An interesting coincidental factor is that some of these WRL modules bring together hospital staff from all walks of life. This offers interest from the point of view of group dynamics because many different cultures appear to operate within the one organisation and, to some extent, a silo mentally exists which means that the various professional groupings interact mainly exclusively. The typical delivery model for a module is a two-day workshop followed by an agreed period of WBL/experiential learning with negotiated learning outcomes leading to the completion of an assignment. Workshop sessions bring together hospital staff from all walks of life in a common cause and this really does have the impact of breaking down perceived barriers to communication between the various professional groupings.

These Taught WRL modules are widely advertised among staff who can apply for them (usually after consultation with their line manager) and use them as part of their individually negotiated programme of WBL supported by the in-house University tutor working as part of the organisation's learning and development team. University tutors with relevant expertise are brought in to run the workshops and mark assignments.

In summary, this particular arrangement has achieved a number of key things. For example, the organisation considers that it helps them to address their business objectives and to improve staff performance. It also considers that it helps to facilitate change within the organisation and provides an important means of professional development for hospital staff. As previously mentioned it also helps to break down the silo mentality that appears to exist between the various professional groupings and, thus, improve communications.

From the perspective of the University, it widens access to and increases participation in HE (especially for non-graduate nurses, midwives and administrators and some managers) and it helps to produce a more rounded and engaged workforce through the development of key areas such as critical thinking, critical reflection including critical self-reflection and critical action all susceptible to growth and development through programmes of WBL.

Reflections

In both of the examples considered, WBL is used as the principal means for bringing about change in the workplace. This raises the important issue as to what is the distinctive contribution of this form of learning that helps to bring about change to the culture and working practices of organisations, thereby improving performance and developing new ways of working. Some preliminary thoughts are to do with the practice-based nature of WBL and the way in which it identifies alternative ways of doing things (that is what education does, namely it helps us to see things from more than one perspective). WBL also offers a form of learning that is immediately relevant to professional and working life, and it does not automatically provide the learner with theoretical answers to questions they have not asked, leaving them to work out both the questions and the answers for themselves. If working practices start to change as a result of WBL, this is the beginning of a change in culture (e.g. from individual to team working – that is a cultural shift).

Both the examples considered also yielded information about the impact WBL has on individuals raising the issue as to what is it about this way of learning that so often gives learners a greater sense of their own identity and professionalism. Again, some

preliminary thoughts are that it offers a form of education that starts from and builds on to what people know (it does not start from the premise of what they do not know), for example the Chester Self-Review module, and the incorporation of credit for prior learning. Identifying what you do and what you know, and seeing how others value this, can be a very self-affirming process. WBL also puts people in charge of their own learning and allows them to work in areas that are immediately relevant to them and their learning needs. It also combines both epistemology and ontology (through growth in knowledge and self-knowledge via critical thinking, critical reflection, critical self-reflection, and critical action) which, in turn, help to define graduateness (Major, 2002).

In examples such as those given, it is the case that WBL also challenges higher education and the businesses and organisations themselves. For example, university systems are generally speaking not geared up for WBL. Their comfort zone is full-time undergraduates on three- or four-year degree courses. Universities also tend to get very nervous about quality issues when engaging in partnerships of any sort and can become preoccupied with ensuring that their processes and procedures are so robust that external agencies could not possibly find fault and bring adverse publicity on their heads. There is also the interesting issue of the colonisation of knowledge outside of their expertise and control and how to deal with this to ensure maintenance of standards and full quality assurance.

From personal observations and conversations with employers over time, it would seem that for them the challenges may include issues to do with blending learning with work (after all, education is not their main concern), and how to provide a supportive environment for learning. It may also challenge the ability of businesses and organisations to cope with independent thinkers, all holding views about how to do things differently (WBL can be subversive in that it may challenge accepted conventions). Sometimes it may require a leap of faith (can a non-specialist organisation really assist my specialist business?).

Conclusion
The aim of this paper has been to show how one institution of higher education is forging links with the world of business and responding to the claim that university-level learning so often fails to meet the expectations of employers in terms of graduate skills and capabilities. It is also, hopefully, showing how responding to the not unreasonable expectations of government that universities have a role to play in supporting the societies and economies of the communities they serve, is possible. In particular, the paper has tried to show the importance of listening carefully to the requirements of prospective employer partners in order to respond more precisely to meeting their needs rather than presenting them with an inflexible offer. For the majority of employers the university is not the first place they will turn to if they are facing change and feel they need external help and support. Through the means of WBL, it is possible to modify the thinking of employers and their understanding and expectations of what universities have to offer them especially at times when they are facing change and uncertainty.

Notes
1. Work-based learning is defined here as fully accredited, negotiated, modules or programmes of planned learning through work delivered by higher education providers. It allows for informal learning where that learning is carefully identified and evidenced and assessed for credit for prior experiential learning as part of a planned programme of work-based learning, and where that prior learning is deemed to be relevant to, and congruent with, the planned

outcomes of study. This definition implies that students are assessed using explicit assessment criteria against agreed learning outcomes and requires evidence of learning such that equals any other subject or field of study within the higher education curriculum.

2. Work-related learning is defined here as modules or programmes of study where aims, learning outcomes and content are designed to support the development of knowledge and understanding of matters directly related to the work context but which are taught through workshops, seminars and lectures in the more conventional environment of a class-room.

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