Work-integrated Learning Practice in Ireland

A Typology of Work-integrated Learning Practice in Ireland based on Practitioner Submissions

QQI

INSIGHTS.

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

TABLE OF TABLES

DEFINITION

Work-integrated learning is an umbrella term, encompassing a range of learning activities that may take place on campus, in a workplace setting or online (Zegwaard et al, 2023). Types of work-integrated learning include (but are not limited to) apprenticeships, internships, professional practice placements, traineeships, work experience placements, industry projects and company challenges.

A distinguishing feature of work-integrated learning is that it always involves (but is not limited to) a partnership between the learner, the education provider and a third party external stakeholder (e.g. an employer or placement provider) (Ferns et al, 2024). The external stakeholder provides opportunities for learners to undertake work-related activities that support the achievement of relevant learning outcomes.

In some cases, a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) may also be an important stakeholder in setting requirements for or approving the inclusion of work-integrated learning in a programme of education and training.

2. CONTEXT

In 2024, QQI initiated the development of a new set of topic-specific statutory quality assurance (QA) guidelines on work-integrated learning[1], appointing a project team to undertake the development process and associated activities on its behalf. The production of a typology of work-integrated learning as it is currently practiced in Ireland was identified as a preliminary output to support the development of the guidelines.

To enable this, work-integrated learning practitioners across Ireland's tertiary education sector were invited to contribute by making submissions in response to a targeted survey. The survey was disseminated directly to education and training providers and promoted on social media platforms by QQI, as well as being distributed via the project team's professional networks. Responses were collected across a six-week period, concluding in early November 2024.

The survey requested responses from the individual practitioners (staff involved in planning, coordinating, facilitating or delivering programmes involving work-integrated learning) to questions about the specific characteristics of a single programme that they work with. Individual practitioners were also able to make multiple submissions if they wished to represent more than one programme. The individual responses provide discrete (albeit abridged) examples of practice. Collectively, the survey responses provide an indication of how commonly particular characteristics, such as online or international activity, feature in the landscape of work-integrated learning practice in Ireland. It is emphasised that the survey responses do not represent an exhaustive catalogue of all work-integrated learning nationally. Nonetheless, they provide a valuable indication of the diverse forms of work-integrated learning that currently feature within programmes of education and training across the Irish tertiary sector.

2.1 REPORT STRUCTURE

A profile of the practitioner contributions informing this report is provided directly below. The key findings derived from an overall analysis of the contributions made by practitioners within their submissions are then set out in summary form in section three.

Section four profiles the examples of work-integrated learning represented in the submissions by characteristic. This provides some visibility on the ways in which work-integrated learning is operationalised in both similar and differing ways across further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE). It also offers an indication of the extent of involvement of stakeholders including learners, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) in the design, review or management of programmes of education and training that involve work-integrated learning. Importantly, it provides an insight into the variable roles that external stakeholders (e.g. employers or placement providers) play in work-integrated learning, the ways in which work-integrated learning is assessed, and the extent to which assessment practices are designed to facilitate a diversity of learners. Where relevant, the characteristics evident in

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[1] The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) requires Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to issue guidelines for education providers relating to the establishment of quality assurance (QA) procedures for programmes of education and training, research, and related services. In addition to developing core quality assurance guidelines, which are applicable to all providers, QQI also issues supplementary guidelines for different types of providers (sector-specific guidelines) and for different categories of provision (topic-specific guidelines).

the submissions are considered in respect of the extent to which they reflect (or diverge from) typologies of work-integrated learning that have been proposed in the wider research literature, situating the nationally relevant findings presented in this report in relation to the international context.

Section five contains individual examples of work-integrated learning that are illustrative of the breadth of practice indicated in the submissions contributed by practitioners. These offer a more holistic view of the varied ways in which the characteristics considered in section four configure within individual programmes involving work-integrated learning.

Notably, this report is published concurrently to a thematic analysis of stakeholder perspectives on the quality assurance of work-integrated learning[2], derived from an initial period of stakeholder engagement undertaken by the project team. That report sets out stakeholder perspectives that may usefully be considered in relation to the findings here.

2.2 PRACTITIONER CONTRIBUTIONS

A total of 275 submissions were made. Of these, 183 respondents indicated the organisation they worked for operated within HE. A total of 65 respondents indicated they worked in FET and a further 27 respondents indicated their organisation operated programmes across both FET and HE.

Which sector/s does your organisation operate within?
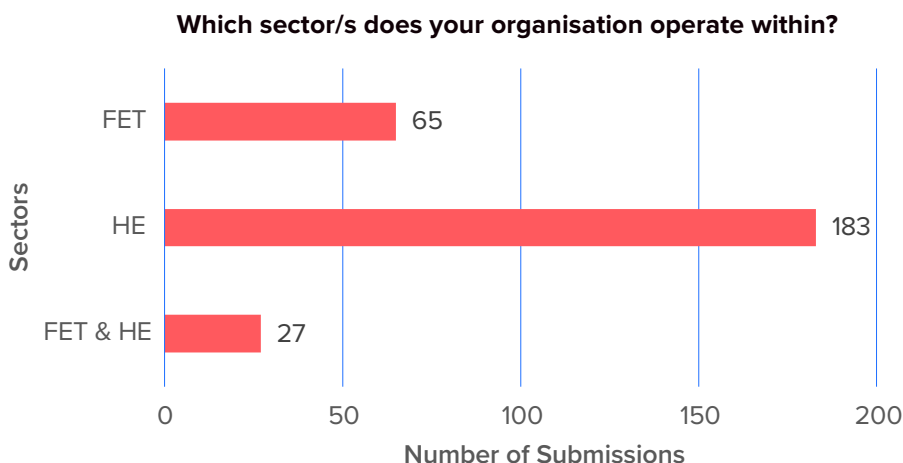
Figure 1: Overall Summary of Submissions by Sector

The majority of respondents identified their organisation type as a university or technological university. An additional 42 submissions were made by practitioners working within education and training boards (ETBs). A total of 26 responses were received from practitioners working within private providers offering QQI awards. A range of other provider types also contributed submissions as indicated in table 1.

Which of the following best describes your organisation?	Response rate
University	108
Technological University	69
Institute of Technology	3
Linked provider of a Designated Awarding Body	6
ETB	42
Other public provider offering QQI awards	21
Private provider offering QQI awards	26
Total	275

Table 1: Submissions Profile by Provider Type

Although 275 submissions were made, it is important to note that a number of submissions were partial, meaning that the respondents did not answer all of the questions within the survey.

To facilitate transparency for the reader, throughout this report the overall number of respondents from providers operating in each sector (FET, HE or FET and HE combined) that provided answers to a particular question is indicated using the abbreviation: (N=).

3. KEY FINDINGS

The key findings summarised in this section are derived from analysis of survey submissions made by work-integrated learning practitioners working across Ireland's FET and HE sectors in late 2024, It is important to note that this analysis therefore draws upon information directly reported by individual practitioners pertaining to specific and localised examples of practice, rather than whole-of-institution perspectives or data[3]. As with any form of research, the findings should also be considered alongside limitations of sample size and distribution.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMMES INVOLVING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The responses submitted by work-integrated learning practitioners indicate that:

- Work-integrated learning in Ireland features in programmes spanning NFQ Levels 3 – 10. Within the responses, a high proportion of that activity is concentrated in programmes leading to awards at NFQ Level 8.

- Programmes involving work-integrated learning with larger cohort sizes (26 – 50, 50 – 100, over 100) are more prevalent in the responses from HE than in responses from FET, where cohort sizes of 10 – 25 are more common. However, in both sectors, cohort sizes of over 100 for programmes involving work-integrated learning are reported.

- In both FET and HE, where it occurs, work-integrated learning *activity*[4] is typically reported to be a required feature of the relevant programmes.

- The estimated proportion of an overall programme that is comprised of work-integrated learning activity is typically lower in responses from HE than in responses from FET.

- Within the majority of programmes, at least some of the work-integrated learning activities are reported to take place in the workplace. Additional activities occur in the classroom or online.

- In a smaller number of programmes in HE, work-integrated learning does not involve any activity located in the workplace.

- Learners in HE are somewhat more likely than those in FET to be able to participate in work-integrated learning activity with an international dimension. However, in both sectors the international dimension is frequently positioned as an option and is typically not integral to the experience of all learners.

- Many HE programmes in principle facilitate learners to engage in international work-integrated learning placements. However, the actual number of learners who pursue this option is frequently noted to be low.

- Where it occurs, international work-integrated learning activity is often enabled through European collaborations within consortia or through partnerships between individual institutions and FET or HE providers.

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3   Provider organisations were invited to respond to a separate and concurrent survey focused on the quality assurance of work-integrated learning, in which whole-of-organisation perspectives are represented.

4   In the context of this report, the term work-integrated learning activity is understood to refer to and incorporate the specific teaching and assessment practices that support and validate work-integrated learning.

3.2 STATED OBJECTIVES OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The submissions made by work-integrated learning practitioners indicate that:

- An emphasis on applied practice and the development and application of professional/ vocational skills via work-integrated learning is evident across both FET and HE.

- Industry- or role-specific knowledge, skills and competencies are typically balanced with a focus on transversal skills in learning outcomes associated with programmes involving work-integrated learning in both sectors.

- In FET, learning outcomes are often more granular than those in HE. FET learning outcomes often (but not always) articulate highly specific industry or role-related skills and competencies.

- Although a focus on career development learning (which enables learners to make better informed choices regarding their future study and career options and to begin to establish professional networks) can be discerned in some HE submissions, FET submissions typically place a more visible emphasis on this as an objective of work-integrated learning activity and/or as an explicit focus within learning outcomes.

3.3 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The submissions made by work-integrated learning practitioners and institutional representatives indicate that:

- Learners are typically somewhat involved in programme development and review activity in both FET and HE. However, no involvement by learners in these processes is reported across a small proportion of responses.

- External stakeholders (e.g. employers or placement providers) are typically involved in programme design and review activities, as well as learner recruitment. The most common area of contribution is in providing feedback to learners during work-integrated learning activity. However, no involvement in these and associated activities is reported across a small proportion of responses.

- Professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) involvement is most visible in relation to programme design and review.

- PSRB accreditations, approvals or recognitions are operationalised in very different ways and are described by practitioners as having variable impacts on learners or graduates, e.g. enabling exemptions from professional examinations or enabling registration to work in a particular occupation.

- Industry bodies that are not PSRBs may also be influential, providing endorsements or other forms of support to programmes of education and training.

- Although formal agreements of some nature are typical, a smaller proportion of submissions from both FET and HE practitioners indicate that work-integrated learning also occurs in some settings in the absence of any form of formal agreement.

3.4 APPROACHES TO WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The submissions made by work-integrated learning practitioners indicate that:

- Work-integrated learning is most commonly described in both FET and HE practitioner submissions as a discrete module of activity (most frequently a placement) occurring within a larger programme of education and training.

- Practitioner submissions indicate that in both FET and HE work-integrated learning is most commonly anchored by experience within a workplace or practice-oriented environment, e.g. placement, internship, work experience or on-the-job learning as part of an apprenticeship.

- In some instances, practitioners articulate a programme-level approach to work-integrated learning, describing a spectrum of activity planned and implemented across different stages of the learner journey. This is more visible in responses from practitioners working in HE settings.

- Apprenticeship programmes, by design, integrate work-integrated learning across the full lifespan of a programme.

3.5 ASSESSMENT OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The submissions made by work-integrated learning practitioners indicate that:

- Reflection and supervisor/mentor evaluations comprise the majority of work-integrated assessment formats in use, with projects and presentations also frequently indicated.

- Although teaching staff typically determine the final grade associated with work-integrated learning, in approximately one third of the overall submissions, employers, workplace-based personnel or specifically appointed assessors are indicated to also contribute.

- Across both FET and HE, there is evidence of divergent understandings of what may be entailed in facilitating the inclusion of diverse learners within assessment strategies. A survey item pertaining to this was interpreted by a substantial proportion of respondents as a reference to disability only. These responses indicated that inclusion was facilitated through the provision of reasonable accommodations in response to declarations made by learners. However, a number of submissions indicated a broader understanding of diversity and articulated a breadth of proactive strategies for facilitating assessment that is inclusive by design.

3.6 DISCUSSION

A number of the findings summarised above reflect established (and sometimes different) norms in FET and HE that transcend the specific context of work-integrated learning. For example, it is well-known that cohort sizes in FET are typically smaller than those in HE in general, and therefore unsurprising that this (generally) is also true in the context of work-integrated learning. It is also unsurprising that, where it occurs, the proportion of work-integrated learning relative to other forms of learning in an overall programme is reported to be greater in FET. This may in part be

attributed to FET programmes being shorter in overall duration or having a smaller (equivalent) credit volume than major awards in HE. Findings that the stated objectives for work-integrated learning across both sectors emphasise the application of theory to practice and include an explicit focus on the development of transversal skills also align with norms in this area of practice. However, the findings also provide a useful evidence base to reflect on practice in areas where knowledge about work-integrated learning practice in Ireland has, to date, been largely anecdotal.

With regard to stakeholder involvement, the findings offer insight into the extent to which learners are contributing to programme development and review activity. Although it is reassuring to see that learners are typically at least somewhat involved in both, a proportion of responses from practitioners indicate there is no involvement from learners in either of these processes. This suggests that there is more work to be done to ensure consistent and meaningful engagement with the learner voice in some settings. The responses also indicate that external stakeholders (e.g. employers or placement providers) are typically perceived by practitioners to contribute to programme development and review as well as (variably) to the planning, design and assessment of work-integrated learning. Nonetheless, a small proportion of responses also indicate there is no involvement from those external stakeholders in programme development and review, or in other aspects of work-integrated learning where some degree of involvement might reasonably be anticipated (for example, in the provision of feedback to learners). In these instances, reflection may be warranted on the part of both providers and their external stakeholders as to what factors may be impeding a fuller contribution from enterprise and industry. Responses pertaining to the involvement, where relevant, of PSRBs and industry bodies in work-integrated learning reflect that diverse arrangements are in place to facilitate the requirements or norms of distinct professional domains. This has implications in terms of the variable (and potentially competing) demands on providers working across multiple disciplines. There is some evidence in the responses that providers also view PSRB requirements as imposing limitations on how assessment is managed for particular programmes. In these cases, provider processes must be sufficiently flexible to interact with a range of different and contextually specific parameters for the design and management of individual programmes.

The indication that in a small proportion of settings, work-integrated learning occurs in the absence of any form of formal agreement between any of the parties involved also warrants reflection. In particular, this needs to be considered in relation to the finding that in the majority of cases, work-integrated learning is reported to be a required element of programmes. This gives rise to a potential concern that in a small number of instances, enrolled learners may be required to engage with an external stakeholder in order to successfully complete programme requirements and may be obliged to do so in the absence of clear parameters surrounding that engagement.

An indication of the extent to which work-integrated learning opportunities in Ireland are facilitated online or are (potentially) international in scope is provided by the findings. Submissions indicate that in addition to workplace or practice-oriented environments, concurrent use of either physical classrooms or online learning environments (or both) to facilitate relevant teaching, learning and assessment activity is common. Moreover, some contributions indicate an increase in the number of learners engaging with work or practice opportunities via remote or hybrid working arrangements. International work-integrated learning opportunities are frequently reported to be available in principle, although actual uptake of these opportunities is indicated to be somewhat limited. In both instances, there are regulatory implications for providers, who must necessarily

have regard to QQI's topic specific [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Learning Programmes](#) and/or relevant and emerging guidance on international dimensions of provision.

The findings also provide some insight into the approaches most commonly taken to the design of work-integrated learning in Ireland. The submissions from practitioners indicate that much work-integrated learning is designed to be anchored by substantial experience in a workplace or practice-oriented environment, for example placement, internship, work-experience or on-the-job learning as part of an apprenticeship (see section 4.5). There is less frequent evidence in the submissions that alternative forms of work-integrated learning such as industry projects, simulations and challenges are occurring and in some instances are embedded by design across the lifespan of programmes. This indicates the relative dominance of these types for work-integrated learning, which are noted to be resource intensive and can lead to learners competing for placement and internship opportunities as well as substantial challenges for equity and inclusion (Waters and Rath, 2022; Mackaway et al, 2024). Reflection on this is warranted in the context of upskilling programmes and provision designed for mature or part-time learners where these formats may be considered less appropriate, as well as the broader implications for the access and widened participation agenda.

Importantly, the findings also offer an insight into how the concept of inclusivity in assessment practice is operationalised in practitioner responses. The finding that diversity is conceptualised (narrowly) in terms of disability in a proportion of responses warrants reflection, as does the implication in those responses that inclusion is facilitated via the provision of reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis in response to disclosures made by individual learners. However, it is noted that many responses (in both FET and HE) articulated proactive and nuanced approaches to facilitating diversity in assessment, which is reassuring. This reflects that learners in many areas across the Irish tertiary sector are benefitting from more proactive approaches to facilitating inclusion and the implementation of practical teaching, learning and assessment strategies that reflect this. Efforts could usefully be made to leverage the expertise that has been developed in this area and facilitate peer learning focused on equity, diversity and inclusion in the context of work-integrated learning.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMMES INVOLVING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

4.1 NFQ LEVELS

Respondents were asked to indicate the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level of the final stages of programmes involving work-integrated learning that they planned, coordinated, facilitated or delivered. When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=167), responses indicate that current work-integrated learning practice in Ireland spans a significant range of levels across the NFQ. Specifically, submissions indicate work-integrated learning occurring in programmes with final stages at NFQ levels 3 – 10, albeit heavily weighted toward NFQ level 8 (81).

What is the NFQ Level of the final stage of the programme in which the work-integrated learning takes place?

Figure 2: Final Stage of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (All Practitioner Submissions)

When responses from practitioners solely working in FET (N=27) are considered, submissions indicate that the final stage of programmes involving work-integrated learning is evenly divided across NFQ Levels 5 and 6 (12 submissions in each instance). However, three practitioners from the FET sector indicated in their submissions that work-integrated learning is also a feature of programmes at NFQ Level 3.

**Final Stage of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning
(FET-only Practitioner Submissions)**
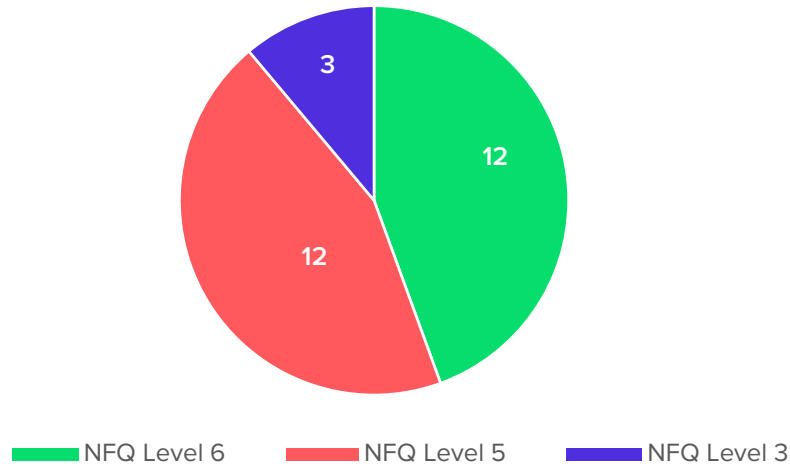
Figure 3: Final Stage of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (FET-only Practitioner Submissions)

When responses from practitioners solely working in HE (N=121) are considered, submissions again indicate that the final stage of programmes involving work-integrated learning is most commonly NFQ Level 8 (indicated in 74 submissions). However, 25 submissions represented work-integrated occurring at postgraduate levels 9 (21 submissions) and 10 (4 submissions). A smaller proportion of submissions from HE also indicate that work-integrated learning is a feature of programmes with a final stage at NFQ Level 7 (15 submissions) or NFQ Level 6 (4 submissions).

**Final Stage of Programmes Involving Work-integrated
Learning (HE-only Practitioner Submissions)**
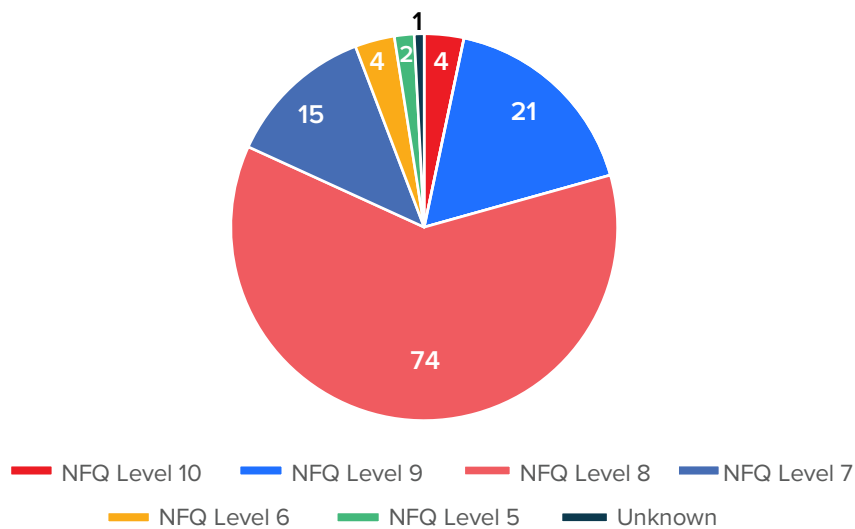
Figure 4: Final Stage of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (HE-only Practitioner Submissions)

A smaller group of submissions (N=19) were provided by practitioners working within organisations delivering programmes of education and training that span both FET and HE. These submissions reflected similar patterns of distribution of the final stage of programmes involving work-integrated learning across the NFQ, with a heavier weighting at NFQ Level 8 (7 submissions) and an equal distribution between NFQ Levels 5 and 6 (3 submissions in each instance). It is emphasised that these numbers reflect the distribution of the NFQ level of the final stages of the programmes in the submissions received but may not be representative of actual distribution in the sector.

4.2 COHORT SIZES

Respondents were asked to indicate the approximate number of learners that enrolled in each intake on the programmes represented in their submissions. When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=167), responses indicate that cohort sizes of 10 – 25 learners (60 submissions) and 26 – 50 learners (44 submissions) were the most common. However, submissions also indicate that work-integrated learning is a feature in programmes featuring larger class sizes of 51 – 100 (26 submissions) and over 100 (24 submissions).

Approximately what number of learners enrol on this programme in each intake?
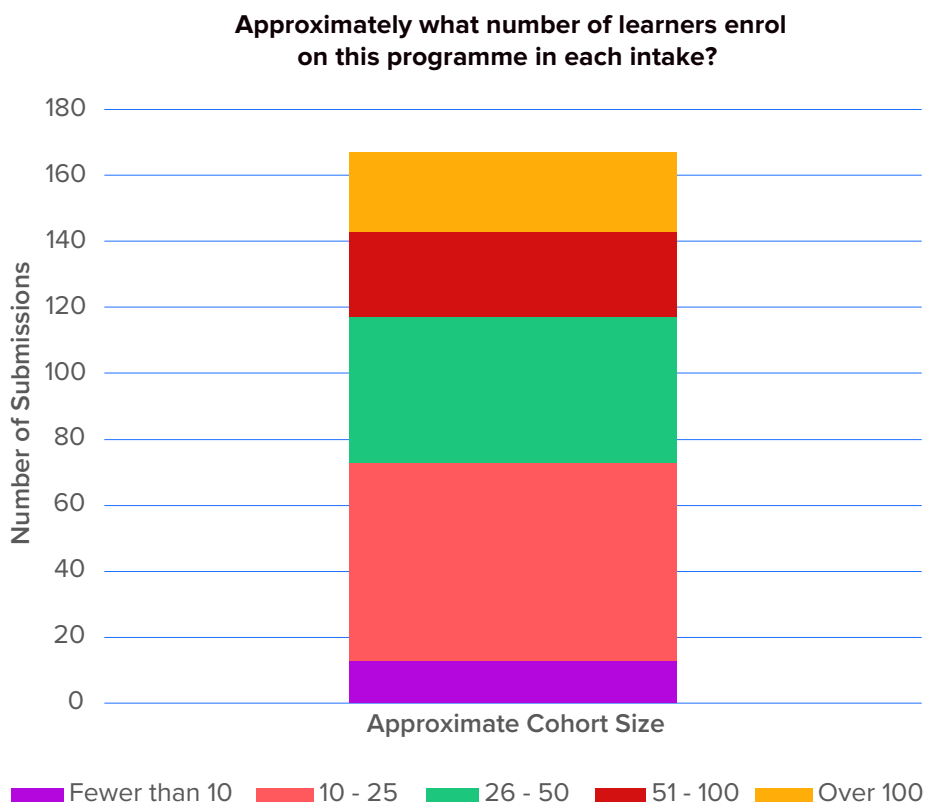
Figure 5: Approximate Cohort Size of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (All Practitioner Submissions)

When responses from practitioners solely working in the HE sector (N=121) are considered, submissions indicate the majority referred to class sizes of 26 or higher (77), with 14 submissions referring to class sizes of over 100.

**Approximately what number of learners enrol on this programme in each intake?
(HE-only Practitioner Submissions)**

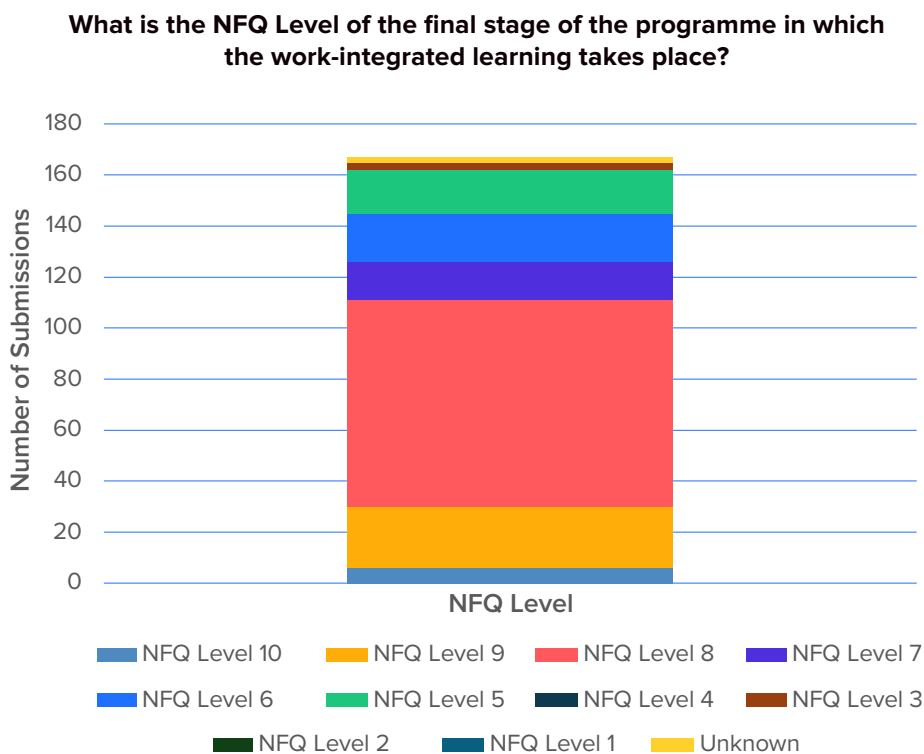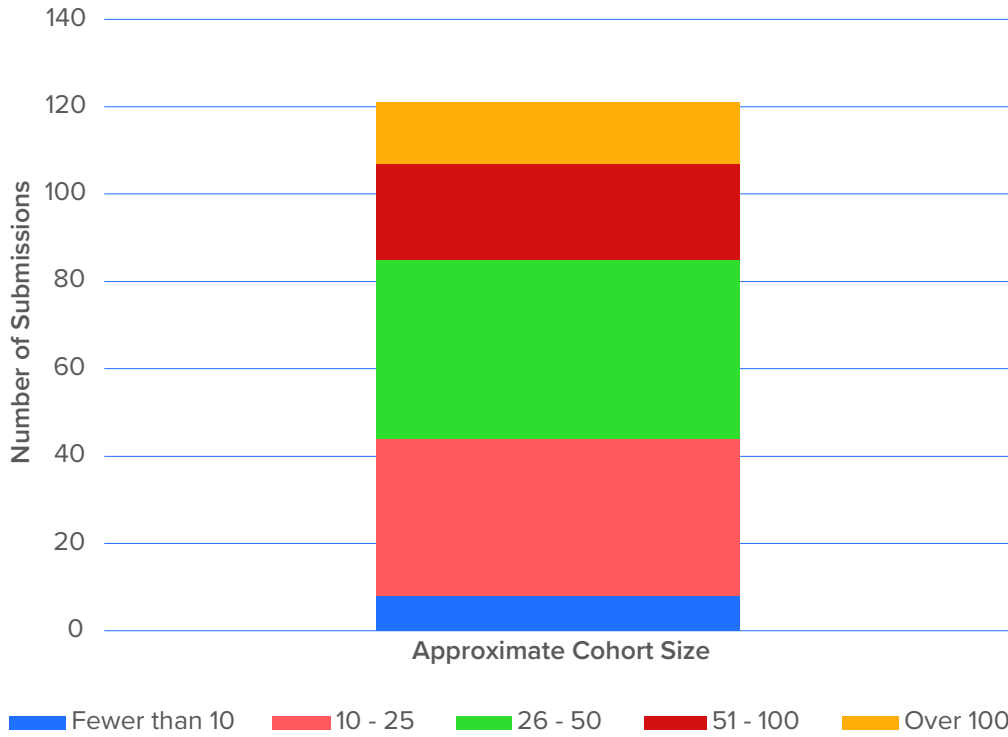*Figure 6: Approximate Cohort Size of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (HE-only Practitioner Submissions)*

When responses from practitioners working in FET (N=27) are considered, submissions indicate that the majority referred to programmes involving work-integrated learning with cohort sizes of 25 or less (N=21). However, 5 submissions pertained to cohort sizes of 100 or more.

Approximately what number of learners enrol on this programme in each intake? (FET-only Practitioner Submissions)
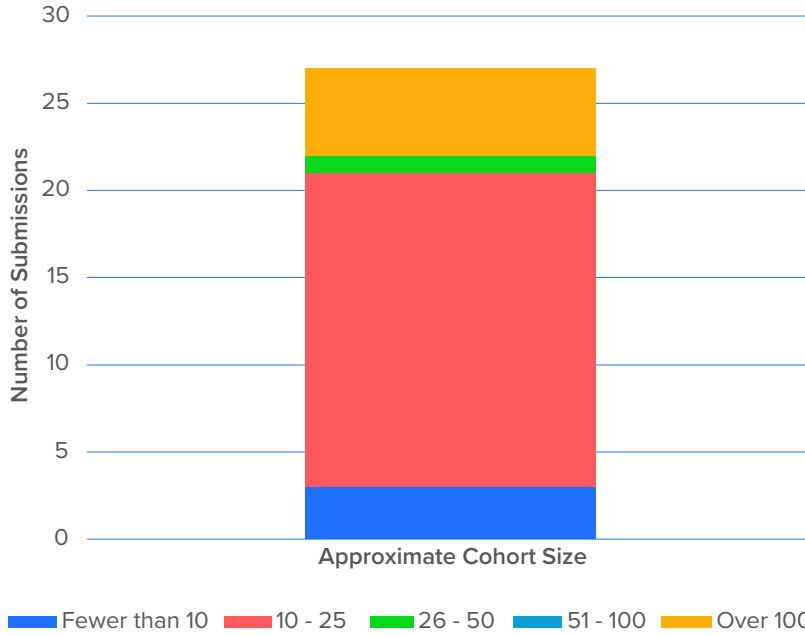
Figure 7: Approximate Cohort Size of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (FET-only Practitioner Submissions)

Submissions (N=19) provided by practitioners working within organisations delivering programmes of education and training that span both FET and HE reflected a mixed distribution of cohort sizes.

Approximately what number of learners enrol on this programme in each intake? (programmes spanning FET & HE)
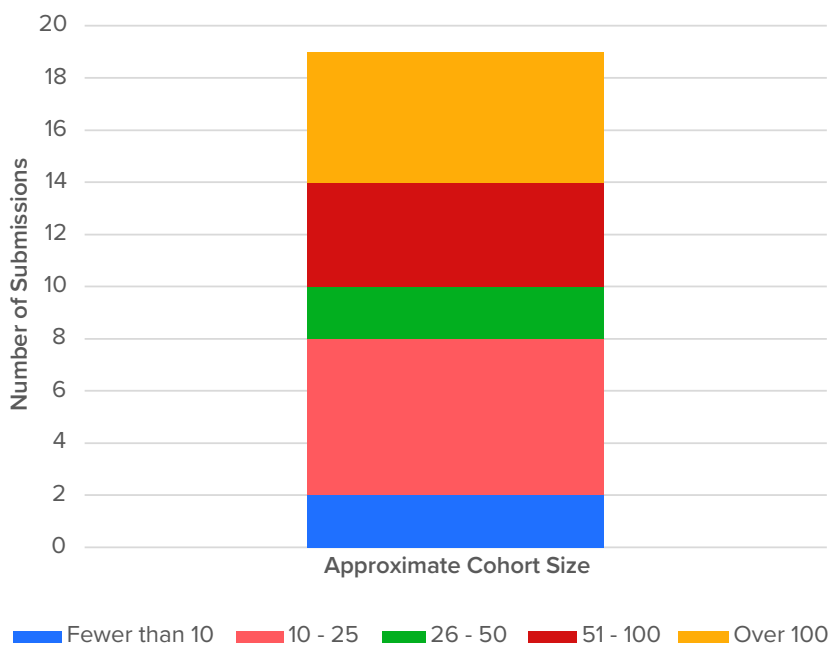
Figure 8: Approximate Cohort Size of Programmes Involving Work-integrated Learning (programmes spanning FET & HE)

4.3 OPTIONAL VERSUS REQUIRED

Respondents were asked to indicate whether work-integrated learning was an optional or required element of the programmes represented in their submissions. When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=167), responses indicate that in the majority of cases work-integrated learning is a required element (137 submissions). Only 24 submissions indicated that work-integrated learning was an optional component, with a further 5 submissions indicating a mix of required and optional work-integrated learning components and 1 submission reflecting the respondent was unsure.

Is work-integrated learning an optional or required part of this programme?
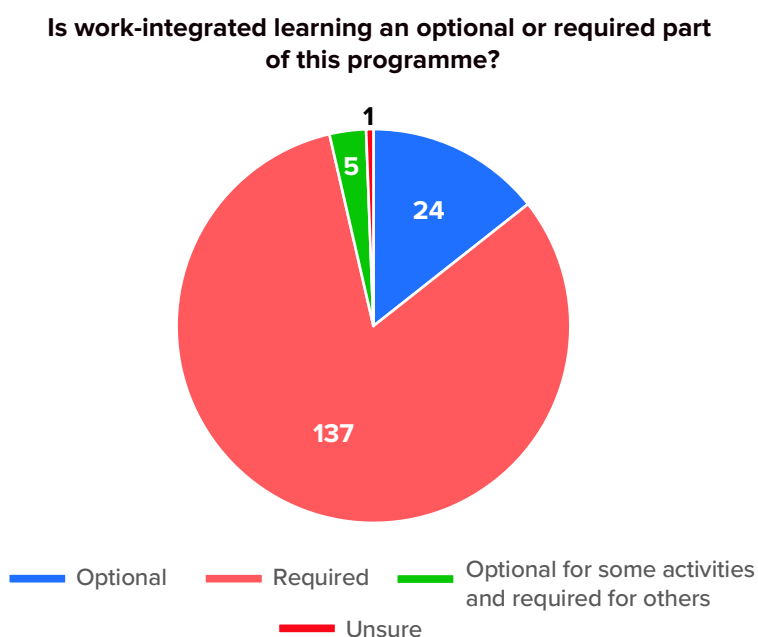
Figure 9: Work-integrated Learning as an Optional versus Required Element of Programmes (All Practitioner Submissions)

These proportions remain relatively consistent when analysed across submissions from HE practitioners (N = 121), FET practitioners (N=27) and practitioners working within organisations delivering programmes of education and training that span both FET and HE (N=19). In all categories the majority of responses refer to instances in which work-integrated learning is required, with 97 (HE), 24 (FET) and 16 (FET & HE) practitioners respectively indicating that work-integrated learning is a required element of the programmes their responses pertain to.

4.4 PROPORTION OF OVERALL PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of the overall programme that was comprised of work-integrated learning activities. When considered across all sectors (N=167) the average estimation was 35%. When responses from practitioners working in HE sector (N=121) are considered, submissions indicate an average estimation of 31%. This is somewhat lower than submissions from practitioners working in the FET sector (N=27), which provided an average

estimation of 45% and the submissions of practitioners working within organisations spanning both sectors (N = 19) which provided an average estimate of 48%. It is noted that a number of submissions were received from providers of apprenticeship programmes. It is cautioned that these submissions form part of the overall aggregate data collected and represented here. The individual examples reproduced from practitioners in submissions in section 5 therefore provide a more nuanced view of the proportion of work-integrated learning activities within overall programmes in different settings.

4.5 LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Concurrent to the collection of responses from practitioners discussed in this report, the project team invited institutional responses to a survey focused on the QA of work-integrated learning involving an external partner. Within this, a question elicited what types of planned and assessed work-integrated learning those organisations delivered. Responses represented institutional perspectives and were received from a total of 91 organisations, of which 54 were FET providers, 29 were HE providers and 8 spanned provision in both FET and HE. Responses for all sectors indicated that among the multiple types utilised across programmes, types of work-integrated learning located in the workplace were common, including professional, clinical, cooperative and work placements, internships, work experience and apprenticeship on-the-job activity.

Submissions indicating 'other' encompassed references to advocacy and mooting, hackathons, field work, entrepreneurship with industry and utilising the learner's own work context as the basis for assessed work as well as references to award types, recognition of prior learning and other processes.

What types of planned and assessed work-integrated learning occur in the academic programmes (e.g. certificate, diploma or degree) your organisation delivers?	Response rate
Simulation, replicating work processes and workplace activities	43
'Live' work projects with employer involvement	29
'Live' case studies with employer involvement	17
Community-based projects with the involvement of relevant organisations	22
Showcases or performances for live audiences	12
Professional or clinical practice placements	30
Cooperative education work placements	10
Internships	18
Work placements	56
Work experience	47
Apprenticeship on-the-job activity	20
Other (please describe in the space provided)	15
Total	**91**

Table 2: Types of Planned and Assessed Work-integrated Learning (Institutional QA Survey Submissions)

Respondents to the practice survey were asked to identify the type of learning environments in which work-integrated learning activities occurred. In addition to selecting all that applied from a list of options, respondents were able to select 'other' and invited to specify an environment or location (see figure 10).

When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=159), the responses reflect that the workplace is a common locus of work-integrated learning activity (121 submissions) within work-integrated learning practice in Ireland. The distribution pattern of responses remains consistent when submissions are filtered to reflect submissions from FET practitioners (N=23), HE practitioners (N=119) and HE and FE combined (N=17).

The practice survey submissions indicate that the activity occurring in the workplace is typically configured with work-integrated learning activity taking place in other environments. For example, filtering of overall responses reflects that among the 121 submissions indicating work-integrated learning activity takes place in the workplace, 69 submissions indicate work-integrated activity additionally takes place on campus, and 55 submissions indicate work-integrated learning activity additionally takes place online.

Where do the teaching, learning and assessment activities associated with the work-integrated learning occur? (submissions filtered by 'in the workplace')
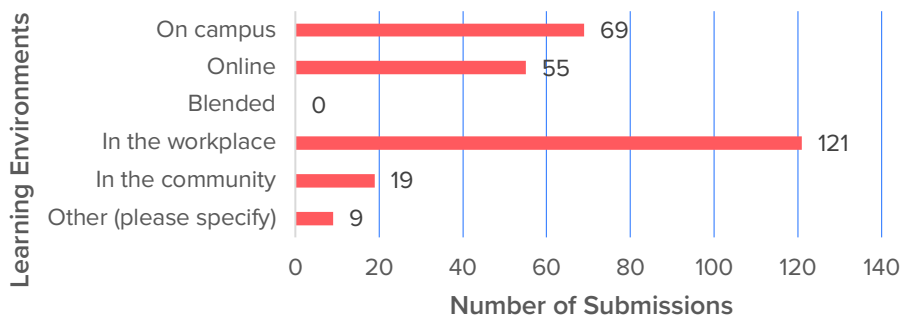
Figure 10: Work-integrated Learning Environments (All Practitioners)

Notably, not all submissions referred to the workplace as a location for work-integrated learning activity. Among 92 submissions indicating that work-integrated learning activity takes place on campus, 23 did not include the workplace as an additional environment. A small number of these (5 submissions) indicated that the relevant activity does not take place either in the workplace or in the community.

The overall open text responses provided under the category of 'other' in several instances provided an indication of the sequencing and organisation of work-integrated learning across multiple settings.

"A hybrid delivery of on-campus, online and in the workplace."

"Both in the workplace (performance) and on campus (experience write-up)."

"The portfolio is completed in the online format however some aspects of assessment

involve visiting learners in placement or engaging with their supervisors via calls"

"The trainees are taught/prepared in class, trained in company and assessed in company and after placement"

"Preparation for work-integrated learning occurs on campus and online. Assessment takes place in the workplace which includes all areas where healthcare is provided, this includes acute hospital or community-based settings as required by the programme validation requirements set out."

"Students working with entrepreneurs have assessment in college."

One answer also provided insight into strategies providers are using to mitigate a reduction in the availability of placement or internship opportunities that are physically situated in the workplace as a result of the trend toward hybrid or remote working.

"Our preference is in the workplace but many now operate hybrid working so work can be split between the workplace and student's homes. Last year we found that many students spent a lot of time in their own homes which decreases the value of the work-related learning activity, so this year we have set up a remote hub on campus for students from all programmes in our School to use as an alternative to a home-based working environment."

Recent research has also indicated that the informal socialisation associated with in-person work is important to learners' development of workplace friendships, and is positively associated with job satisfaction, sense of career development, affective organisational commitment and conversion intentions (Knapp & Drewery 2024). It may be valuable for future research to explore how provider processes (including learner preparation) and employers or external stakeholders could optimise workplace-based forms of work-integrated learning that utilise remote or hybrid working.

4.6 INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A concurrent survey focused on the QA of work-integrated learning elicited institutional responses regarding whether international or global activity was a feature of work-integrated learning occurring within provider organisations. Across all sectors (N=91) 26 submissions indicated that it was, with 18 of these responses provided by HE provider organisations.

Respondents to the practice survey were asked to indicate whether the work-integrated learning which their submissions referred to had an international dimension. Respondents indicating yes were also asked to briefly explain what this entailed. When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=156), the responses are relatively evenly distributed. A total of 73 responded yes and 72 responded no, with a further 11 respondents indicating they were unsure.

Is there an international dimension to the work-integrated learning experience that you have described above?
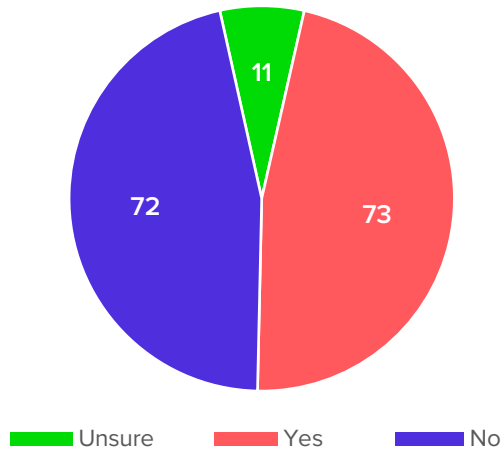
Figure 11: International Opportunities in Work-integrated Learning Practitioner Submissions (All Practitioners)

When filtered by sector, the distribution patterns indicate that an international dimension is a feature of just over half of the submissions from practitioners working in HE settings, with a total of 64 respondents indicating yes (N=118).

Is there an international dimension to the work-integrated learning experience that you have described above? (HE)
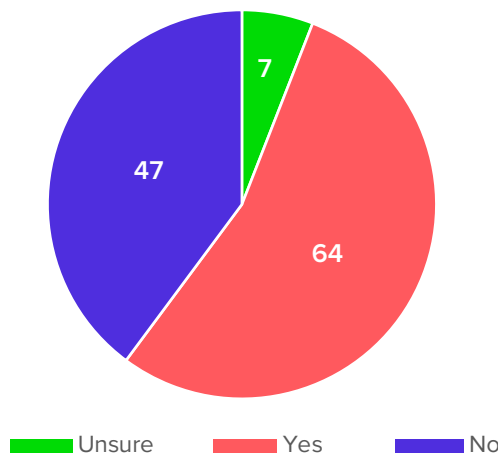
Figure 12: International Opportunities in Work-integrated Learning Practitioner Submissions (HE)

In contrast, submissions from practitioners from the FET sector were less likely to indicate that an international dimension was a feature of the work-integrated learning to which their submission pertained, with only 4 indicating yes (N=22).

Is there an international dimension to the work-integrated learning experience that you have described above? (FET)

Unsure ■ Yes ■ No
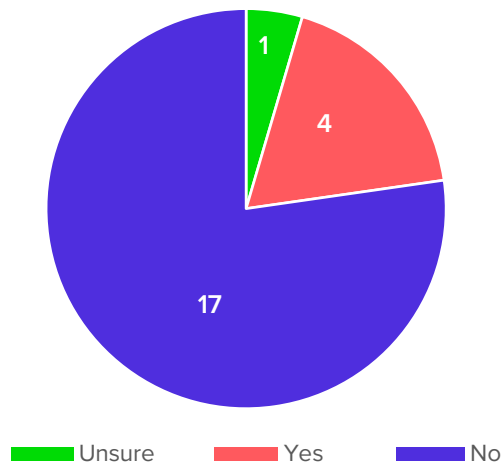
Figure 13: International Opportunities in Work-integrated Learning Practitioner Submissions (FET)

The distribution pattern for responses from practitioners working within organisations spanning both sectors (N = 16) was somewhat intermediate to the HE and FET responses, with 5 submissions indicating yes, 8 indicating no and 3 unsure. Overall, these responses align with the responses received from provider organisations to the QA focused survey referenced at the outset of this section.

Overall open text responses providing more information indicated that the international dimension was most frequently an option for learners to seek an international placement if they wished, rather than being a required component or integral to the experience of all learners. This suggests that although an international opportunity may be available in principle in approximately half of the submissions, the actual proportion of learners engaging in international work-integrated learning may be significantly lower.

> "Some learners attend work placement abroad as part of an Erasmus exchange opportunity or other volunteer abroad and this is considered as part of the total practice placement time."

> "Students have the option of doing placement abroad. Uptake is quite low."

> "We have no restrictions on the placement locations and some students have worked in the UK or Europe. It is not a requirement or even the norm though."

> "If the student secures their own work integrated placement this can be international."

> "There is the provision for international placement in Year 4, but this is limited."

> "The international dimension is just on a case-by-case basis, and it occurs mostly by interaction with international professionals in the workplace. There are, however, a few cases of students who have secured a full placement abroad, and this has been encouraged."

"Subject to application, a small number of learners may complete their work placement abroad."

"Limited though some students source internships abroad"

Several responses indicated that a general Erasmus exchange experience (located within a college or university) was an option that learners could elect to take up as an alternative to an industry work placement. Information on supports or processes for learners engaging in international placements or work-integrated learning was not explicitly sought from practitioners, as the survey items focused on eliciting the characteristics of current practice rather than the quality assurance or supporting structures. Nonetheless, a small number of responses made explicit reference to this.

"Students can go abroad if they secure a placement, but we have no formal arrangements with companies. If a student does find a placement abroad (Europe) then we put them in touch with our International Office to allow for additional financial supports."

"Typically, such placements are availed of by our international students who may wish to undertake a placement close to home. The practice education team ensure the quality of the placement and that it meets the minimum standard for an [institution] placement. We also ensure that the supervisor is regulated by a statutory body equivalent to [PSRB]."

"Students are encouraged to explore international opportunities and the university will work with the learner and employer to ensure all requirements are met and that the standard is comparable to the other national placements offered on the programme."

"Students have the option to undertake their placement abroad, for example, through the Erasmus programme. These international placements are assessed and approved in advance to ensure they meet the necessary academic and professional standards. This provides students with the opportunity to gain valuable global experience while fulfilling the requirements of their placement."

Notably, the importance of engaging with international host organisations supporting work-integrated learning as well as ensuring that students are culturally prepared has been identified in the findings of interview-based research conducted with in-country partners in other jurisdictions (Kosman et al, 2014). Although the practice survey did not directly elicit the information, a number of responses outlined support arrangements for international learners studying in Ireland and participating in work-integrated learning. Although this area may warrant additional future research, the emphasis placed on supports for international learners by practitioners is reassuring given the challenges for international students that have been highlighted in the international literature (Vu et al, 2021; Hay & Fleming, 2024). The significant role of university partnerships and collaborating providers in facilitating opportunities for Irish and international learners and apprentices to benefit from international work-integrated learning experience was cited in multiple responses.

"On occasion, international students will opt to complete their placement in their home country, either with a previous/existing employer or through a contact or network they have themselves."

"Occasionally, international students have done this professional training diploma - they have been based in the EU and have travelled to class days but have done their work-based practice in their home country."

"We are a member of the [European Consortium] so we have international students also taking part"

"...an Erasmus programme which currently offers the opportunity for students across each of the nursing branches to engage with the clinical element of the program in conjunction with our international university partners"

"For the [discipline] Apprenticeship Students are allowed the opportunity through Erasmus Programme to travel to a collaborating provider [institution name] in France to work in a [relevant enterprise] for 2 weeks, gaining valuable experience."

"Visits to other international Universities are undertaken. Visits from other Universities occur with collaborative projects undertaken with both sets of students."

"Instead of working in a company in Ireland, students have the option to pursue an Erasmus research placement. We have an existing cooperation with a university in France and students often elect to take up that placement (accessed through a competitive interview process, as with the standard placements)."

"Erasmus+ traineeship based in University labs in partner University."

4.7 STATED OBJECTIVES OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Respondents were invited to outline the learning outcomes that work-integrated learning activities contributed to within the specific programme to which their responses pertained. Across all sectors, responses to this question were highly variable. When learning outcomes were provided, they were typically programme learning outcomes for the programmes that involved work-integrated learning without differentiation of those that were achieved (or partially achieved) through work-integrated learning activities as opposed to other forms of learning.

In a significant proportion of the submissions, information of a more descriptive nature was provided, for example assessment methods or vocational outcomes and references to the criteria established by PRSBs. Some responses indicated the question was not applicable.

With the exception of the frequency analysis, this section therefore draws predominantly upon the curtailed subset of responses that contained full or partial sets of programme learning outcomes as they are understood in QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (section 17.2.g.).

4.7.1 FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

The project team applied a word frequency analysis to submissions from all sectors pertaining to learning outcomes. This provided a broadly indicative snapshot of the applied nature of learning outcomes relevant to work-integrated learning within the responses. The word cloud below (in

which the text size is larger for words appearing with greater frequency) reflects the emphasis placed throughout the learning outcomes and associated responses on the concept of *practice*.

Figure 14: Word Cloud Generated from Learning Outcomes Responses (All Provider Submissions)

Word	Percentage mentioned	Number of mentions
Practice	65%	109
Professional	43%	72
Skills	43%	71
Apply	37%	61
Demonstrate	36%	60
Develop	36%	60
Use	34%	56
Development	34%	56
Work	32%	54
Learning	31%	52

Table 3: Most Frequently Mentioned Words (All Provider Submissions)

Across all submissions (N=167), the top five most frequently appearing terms in the responses submitted pertaining to learning outcomes are indicated in Table 4.

All Provider Submissions	
1st	Practice (109 instances)
2nd	Professional (72 instances)
3rd	Skills (71 instances)
4th	Apply (61 instances)
5th	Demonstrate/Develop (60 instances)

*Table 4: Most Frequent Words in Responses Pertaining to Learning Outcomes
(All Practitioner Submissions)*

Broken down by practitioner type, the top three most frequently appearing terms according to practitioner type are indicated in Table 5.

	HE (N=121)	FET (N=27)	FET & HE (N=19)
1st	Practice (81 instances)	Range (14 instances)	Skills (24 instances)
2nd	Skills (68 instances)	Practices (8 instances)	Practice (17 instances)
3rd	Professional (66 instances)	Promotes (7 instances)	Understanding (17 instances)

Table 5: Most Frequent Words in Learning Outcomes by Sector

4.7.2 KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCY TYPES

Broad brush and iterative coding strategies were used to facilitate a thematic analysis of the learning outcomes submitted by all sectors. The outcomes of that analysis reflect that for programmes involving work-integrated learning, there is typically a balance between industry- or role-specific knowledge, skills and competencies and more widely relevant transversal skills. However, there are observable differences between FET and HE in relation to the degree of granularity of industry or role skills articulated within learning outcomes and also in the degree of emphasis placed on career development learning.

Higher Education

The learning outcomes submitted by solely HE practitioners (N=121) and relevant submissions from practitioners working within an organisation spanning both sectors (N=19) articulated industry or role-specific knowledge, skills and competencies, for example:

> "Excellence with respect to the theory and practice of flying and the underpinning scientific elements through their aviation training."

> "Practise safely and compassionately, applying the principles of safe moving and handling, fire safety and infection control under the supervision of the Registered Nurse."

> "Execute safely and autonomously, tasks to achieve predetermined outcomes for given farm enterprise."

> "Apply technical knowledge and competencies in a beverage working environment, critically evaluate and reflect on personal skills development and performance."

> "The ability to assess, plan and evaluate actions towards positive outcomes for service users."

These submissions also included learning outcomes explicitly referencing transversal skills. These encompassed (but were not limited to) digital skills, communication, teamwork, problem-solving and reflection. Those which were most explicitly linked to work-integrated learning typically pertained to reflection, for example:

"Reflect on and analyse the learning experience resulting from the work placement."

"Develop their skills as a reflective practitioner and reflect critically on his/her practice so as to inform that practice"

"Engaging in critical reflection on teaching practice."

Relatively few submissions from HE practitioners included learning outcomes that were explicitly oriented to career development learning. An exception to this was a submission by a practitioner working within an organisation spanning both sectors pertaining to a programme with a final stage at NFQ Level 8, which included the following:

"Reflect on their career motivations – and consider career options open to them taking into consideration internal and external motivations and influences"

"Reflect on and analyse their own strengths and weaknesses within the business placement, and their implications for future career development."

A focus on career development learning could occasionally be discerned in more descriptive information provided about HE programmes. For example:

"By the time they graduate, students will have gained significant insight into the industry as well as practical skills that enhance their employability."

Further Education and Training

The learning outcomes submitted by solely FET practitioners (N = 27) also referenced industry- or role-specific knowledge, skills and competencies. However, in most (but not all) instances, learning outcomes of this nature were observably more granular than those submitted by HE practitioners. These often identified very specific sub-skills, for example:

"Assist clients with dressing, grooming, eating, drinking, toileting, continence promotion, mobility and where appropriate, social need."

"Demonstrate the safe use of a broad range of knife skills and butchery techniques, raw food preparation and display of information in line with current legislation."

Transversal skills were also emphasised in the learning outcome submissions relevant to FET, often emphasising reflection.

"Demonstrate a range of interpersonal skills when dealing with clients to include empathy, respect, patience and effective communication skills"

"Engage in critical and reflective practice which promotes personal and professional development and growth."

"Reflect on placement experiences for own personal and professional development."

"Reflect on workplace experiences, to include feedback by supervisors or mentors on personal performance and challenges such as conflict, criticism, meeting new people and learning in relation to quality management."

Learning outcomes submitted by FET practitioners pertaining to work experience modules at NFQ Level 5 were noted to be an exception to this as the learners involved may undertake work experience in a broad range of workplace environments. These exemplars included the most explicit references to career development learning observable across all submissions.

"Explore options for future education, training and employment in light of work experience"

"Examine work organisations and personal career opportunities in a particular vocational area, to include consideration of work-related issues and needs."

"Investigate the different key opportunities and challenges in a range of vocational areas."

Submissions relevant to programmes involving work-integrated learning in the FET sector were also observably more explicit in relation to workplace behaviour, including exercising good judgement and autonomy.

"Participate effectively in work experience, to include observation of good timekeeping, working independently while under general direction, meeting deadlines, personal presentation, communication, adherence to health, safety and other relevant regulations."

"Exercise independence and judgement in the completion of a wide range of work and learning activities."

"Exercise initiative and independence in professional activity in terms of application of knowledge, skills and competence within a retail or wholesale meat preparation environment."

"Demonstrate resourcefulness, autonomy and self-reliance in the workplace, exhibiting accountability for their duties as employees and their learning and development in an educational environment."

4.8 STAKEHOLDER ROLES IN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which learners, employers or external stakeholders and PSRBs were involved in the development or review of the programme to which their submissions referred.

4.8.1 LEARNERS

When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=167), responses indicate that a relatively small number of practitioners perceive learners to be very involved in programme development (14 submissions) or programme review (34 submissions). However, a high proportion of submissions indicate learners are somewhat involved in both. A small proportion of responses indicate that learners are not involved in either programme development (29 submissions) or programme review (10 submissions).

To what extent are learners involved in the following programme activities?
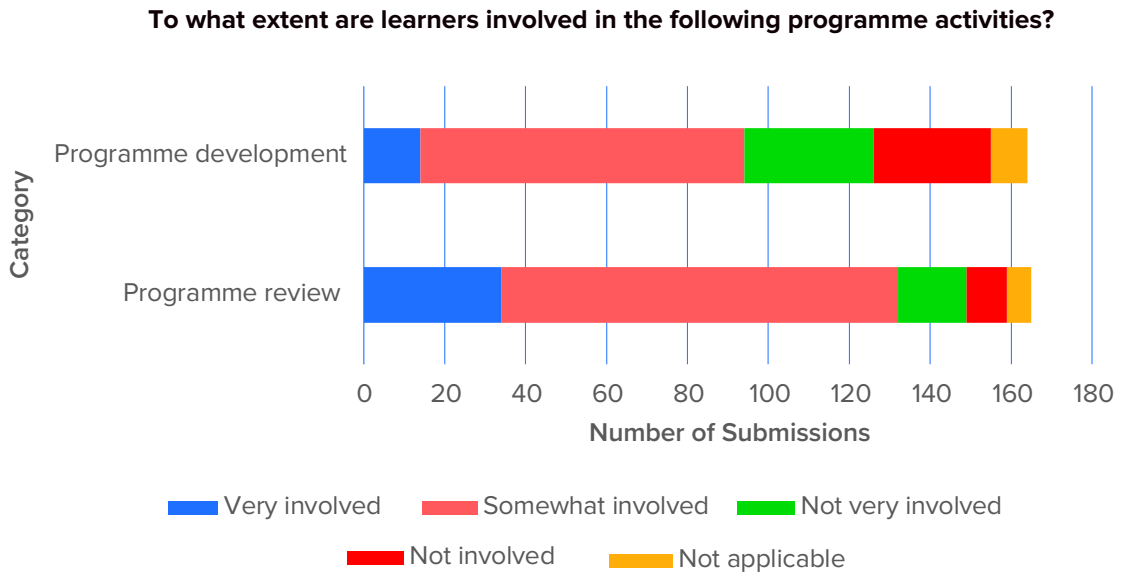
Figure 15: Learner Involvement in Programme Development and Review (All Practitioners)

These distributions remain consistent when submissions are filtered to reflect practitioner perceptions of learner involvement in programme development and review activities in HE and FET respectively.

4.8.2 EMPLOYERS OR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

With respect to employers or external stakeholders, information was sought from practitioners regarding the degree to which they are involved in programme management, learner recruitment and specific teaching, learning and assessment activities. When submissions are considered across all sectors (N=167), responses indicate that the majority of practitioners perceive employers to be somewhat or very involved in programme development (115 submissions) and review activities (123 submissions), as well as learner recruitment (94 submissions).

To what extent are employers involved in the following programme activities?
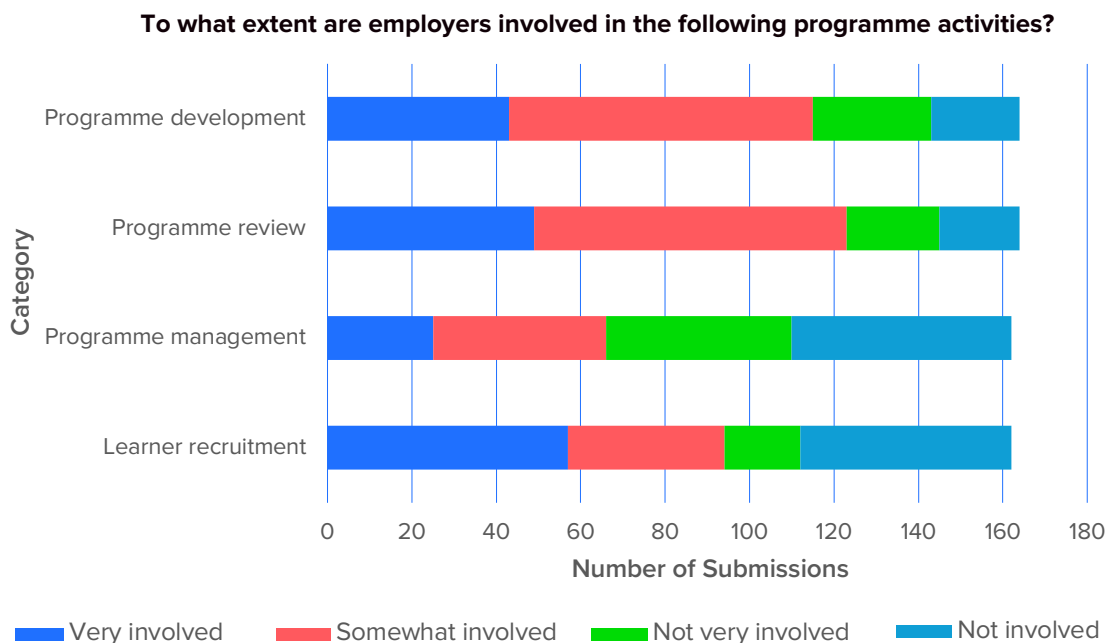
Figure 16: Employer Involvement in Programme Lifecycle (All Practitioners)

These distribution patterns remain consistent when submissions are filtered to reflect practitioner perceptions of employer or external stakeholder involvement in the same activities in both HE and FET respectively.

Practitioners were asked to identify the extent to which employers were involved in designing or planning work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment activities as well as providing feedback to learners (among other aspects of programme delivery). Across all sectors (N=159), responses indicated that employers were most actively involved in providing feedback to learners (79 submissions indicated they are very involved, 48 submissions they are somewhat involved). Proportionately, employers were considered to be much less involved in designing work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment activities (32 submissions very involved, 46 submissions somewhat involved).

4.8.3 PSRBs

Institutional responses to the survey focused on the QA of work-integrated learning that ran concurrent to the practice survey indicate that over half of the responding organisations (N=91) deliver programmes in which work-integrated learning activity is required for the purpose of professional registration or standards. Within this, a significant proportion of HE institutions (N=29) identified this is the case, with 23 responding yes.

Practitioners were invited to identify if the programme involving work-integrated learning to which their response pertained was professionally accredited, and, if yes, to provide some indication of the nature of the accreditation. Although responses were at times ambiguous, submissions across all sectors (N=164) indicated that at least half of the programmes were not accredited or recognised by a PSRB. Information was sought from practitioners regarding the degree to which they are involved in programme design, review and management as well as learner recruitment. Across all sectors (N=164), responses indicate that approximately half of the responding practitioners perceive PSRBs to be somewhat or very involved in programme development

(88 submissions) and review activities (80 submissions). A smaller proportion of practitioners' responses indicate that PSRBs are very or somewhat involved in programme management (54 submissions) or learner recruitment (39 submissions).

If a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) is involved, to what extent do the PSRB requirements inform the following programme activities?
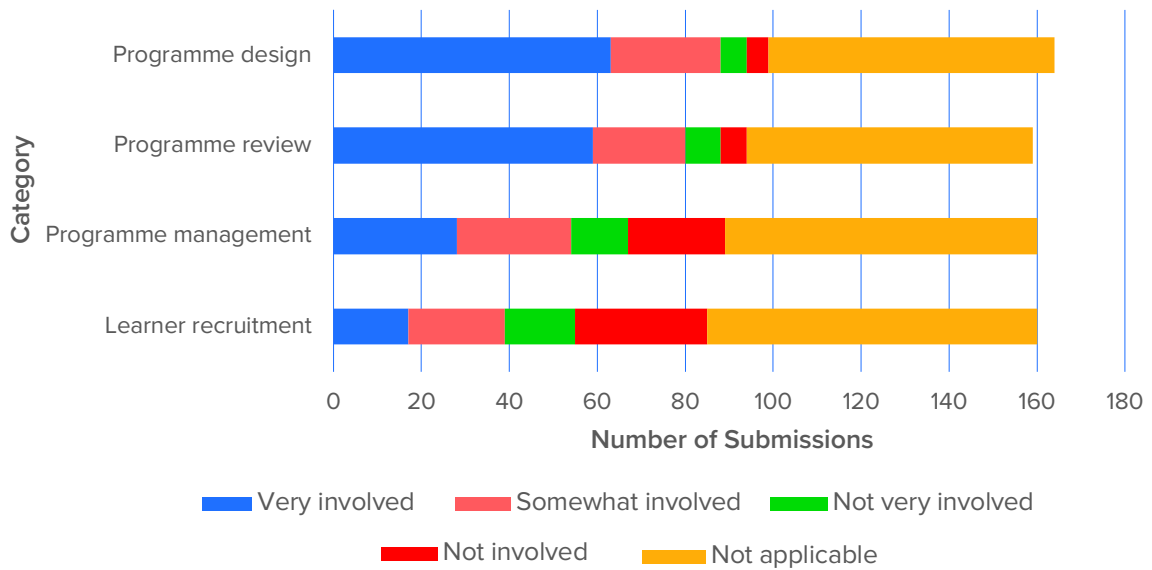
Figure 17: PSRB Involvement in Programme Lifecycle (All Practitioners)

These distribution patterns remain consistent when submissions are filtered to reflect practitioner perceptions of employer or external stakeholder involvement in the same activities in both HE and FET respectively, with a slightly lower involvement across all activities reported by FET practitioners overall.

Among open text responses providing further information about accreditation and recognition, several submissions referred to arrangements enabling graduates to take up professional registration and seek work in a given profession.

> "...allows the successful graduates to register with the regulatory body on graduation and to work in the sector."

> "which allows the successful graduates to work in the [professional] sector as [role] and to register as such."

> "The certificate is recognised by [PSRB] (through the QAB alignment process) which allows successful graduates to work in specific roles in the sector."

> "upon successful completion of the programme graduates are eligible to register as [profession]."

> "The certificate is recognised by the [PSRB] which allows the successful graduates to work in the [sector]."

"Learners can become student members and after graduation can apply for pre-accredited membership and work towards full accreditation."

Responses also indicated arrangements enabling graduates to gain exemptions from professional examinations/programmes.

"...students gain the maximum exemptions available [from professional examinations] following successful completion of the degree."

"The programme is accredited by [PSRB] UK, which allows the successful graduates to be exempt from some exams for professional qualification."

Practitioner responses indicated that pathways to obtaining accreditation by PSRBs vary across different sectors and can involve risks and dependencies, particularly for initial cohorts that may enrol pre-accreditation of the programme.

"the earliest we can apply for [professional area] Accreditation is 2026/27 once our first cohort have graduated. However, the programme management team have engaged closely with [PSRB] Registrar and accreditation team throughout the design, development and implementation process to date."

"The programme is also professionally validated by the [PSRB] to fulfil the statutory requirements."

"The programme is accredited by the university and it was developed to align with professional body requirements and standards - the professional body recognises the university accreditation. There was a formal initial validation and accreditation process which involved an expert review panel appointed by the university - so programme development was strongly influenced by national and international industry standards"

"For [subject major], their degree is recognised by [PSRB] so they can register with them before they can work in the public service. As for two [other subject majors] there is no parallel recognising body for them."

"academically accredited by QQI and professionally validated by [PSRB], the professional body, which allows graduates to work as [profession]."

"This is a new programme and has not undergone professional accreditation. However, the other [discipline area] programmes in the School are accredited by the [PSRB] and it is expected that this programme will be accredited at the next renewal."

Some responses indicated a variable understanding among practitioners of what constitutes professional accreditation versus other forms of recognition, validation or approval. Responses referenced, for example, school-level accreditations such as Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and European Foundation for Management Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), government agencies such as QQI and SOLAS, the universities in which programmes were delivered and (within this) the academic council. In other instances, practitioners noted less formal recognition from industry stakeholders relevant to the programmes their responses pertained to.

"not professionally accredited as such, but it is recognised and endorsed by one of our main stakeholders, the industry body"

4.8.4 STAKEHOLDER AGREEMENTS

Across all submissions (N=167), a high proportion of the responses indicated that some form of formal agreement was in place between two or more of the stakeholders involved in work-integrated learning. Where further detail was provided, this reflected a diversity of approaches, ranging from signed contracts between two or three of the parties involved to more general memorandums of understanding between employers and institutions. Codes of conduct and policy documents were also referred to.

"A three-part contract is signed between the learner, the placement provider and the college which describe the roles and responsibilities of each party. These are further detailed in the Work Placement manuals for the Learner, the Placement Provider and the Placement Tutor."

"Written agreements are between the education provider and the employer. The learner signs a formal contract with the employer for placement."

"Student Code of Conduct/Memorandum of Understanding between HEI and Healthcare Partner Service/Contracts of employment between students and practice placement."

"Service Level Agreements and Joint Controller Agreements for Colleges, Employer Memorandum of Understanding, Data Protection Statements"

"There is a signed agreement between the employer and [HEI] setting out the responsibilities of both parties. There is a Placement Policy and Procedure document which describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of all 3 parties which employers receive and agree to abide by. Students also receive this document and it is understood that they must abide by it but they do not formally sign to that effect."

Within HE practitioner submissions (N=121), a total of 10 responses indicated that no formal agreement was in place surrounding the work-integrated learning activity and a further 13 practitioners indicated that they were unsure if formal agreements were required. Further responses to this question referred to provision of information to learners and other stakeholders regarding roles and expectations (for example, within handbooks or manuals), but did not clarify whether or not any formal agreements existed alongside these resources.

"Both the education provider and the learner have clear defined roles and responsibilities, the placement is not an employer but the placement mentor or organisation will have a defined role and responsibilities for the placement."

"There is a formal guidance document in place that sets out learning outcomes to be achieved by the [learner] during their work placement."

"Guidelines are provided for Workplace Mentors and Workplace Assessors outlining their role in supporting the learner during the Work Placement. Guidelines are also provided to learners on what tasks/activities need to be completed while on Work Placement."

Within FET practitioner responses (N=27), one response indicated that no formal agreement was in place and one response indicated that the question was not applicable. As per responses from HE practitioners exemplified above, a number of further responses indicated sources of information for learners and other stakeholders, but did not clarify whether or not formal agreements existed. These patterns were also consistent among submissions from practitioners working within organisations spanning both sectors (N = 19).

4.9 APPROACHES TO WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Respondents were asked to provide open text descriptions of the work-integrated learning in the programme to which their response pertained (including how it was assessed). Responses (N=159) varied significantly in detail. However, across the full suite of responses work-integrated learning situated (at least in part) in workplace and practice-oriented settings dominated (see also section 4.5). This finding, although unsurprising, is significant as these forms of work-integrated learning are known to be resource intensive, challenging to operate at scale and involve particular challenges associated with equity (Jackson & Dean, 2021; Waters & Rath, 2022; Hay & Fleming, 2024). The word cloud below (in which the text size is larger for words appearing with greater frequency) is indicative of this, and also the emphasis placed throughout the responses on mentoring and supervision in those environments.

Figure 18: Word Cloud Generated from Open Text Descriptions of Work-integrated Learning (All Practitioner Responses)

Word	Percentage mentioned	Number of mentions
Students	113%	180
Placement	92%	146
Work	62%	99
Work placement	51%	81
Learning	47%	75
Programme	43%	69
Module	41%	65
Learner	34%	54
Experience	34%	54
Assessment	32%	51

Table 6: Most Frequently Mentioned Words (All Practitioner Responses)

For the most part, practitioners outlined a discrete module, component or activity within a programme that entailed work-integrated learning.

> "This is a work placement during which learners are mentored and supervised by a professional in an industry setting. The assessment is done through a written technical report capturing the learning outcomes achieved and through oral presentation of achievements to an academic assessor who visits the learners at their place of work. This visit from the academic assessor ensures that the learners are on track or have achieved the required learning outcomes."

> "This industry project involves the distribution of an advertising and integrated marketing communications brief (prepared by the lecturer in conjunction with the industry partner) and requires students to work in project groups. Students assess the brief, undertake appropriate market research and design and develop an integrated marketing communications campaign for the partner organization. Groups pitch their campaign ideas to industry partners and showcase the experiential elements of their campaign in the [student centre] to the industry partner and wider [university] community. A detailed report is also submitted outlining same. The assessment is made up of three parts: 1. Presentation 2. Experiential Showcase 3. Report."

> "Learners spend 2 weeks (or the QQI required no. of hours for their particular level of programme) with employers. At the end of the placement the employer fills out an assessment form/Work placement Review outlining the learners' work ethic, example, time management, personal and interpersonal skills, areas of competence, areas for improvement and suitability to the particular work area etc."

> "This is a work placement during which learners are mentored and supervised by a professional in an industry setting and gain occupational skills and competency that is used to demonstrate learning outcomes."

Although less common in the submissions, some practitioner responses also reflected a programme-level approach to work-integrated learning. In these responses, the planning of work-integrated learning across a spectrum of activities and requiring a diversity of outputs from learners across the programme lifespan is discernible.

> "The programme uses a number of industry/sector-related projects and reflection assignments which are linked to the learner's use and application of new theories and skillsets, to their role in the workplace. This is captured through a variety of projects, presentations and reflective reports."

> "We have multiple work-integrated learning practices within this degree ranging from light touch to heavy touch. Examples range from industry mentoring, module development, module delivery, student led industry-based podcasts, site visits and Challenge Based Learning (heavy industry involvement)."

> "Industry project where learners work from a brief in a simulated work environment with a company on both a group and individual basis. Also work placement for 12 weeks [where] learners are working for a company with a mentor and liaising with course supervisor."

> "The programme uses a number of industry/sector-related projects and reflection assignments which are linked to the learner's use and application of new theories and skillsets, to their role in the workplace. This is captured through a variety of projects, presentations and reflective reports."

Fuller exemplars of work-integrated practice are reproduced from practitioner submissions in section 5. The exemplars provide a more holistic view of the varied ways in which work-integrated learning is configured to serve the needs of specific contexts, learners and (in some cases) professional requirements within individual programmes.

4.10 ASSESSMENT OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Respondents were invited to indicate the nature of the assessment evidence that contributed to the grade for work-integrated learning activity. Across all sectors (N=144), responses indicated that reflection was the most common form of assessment (122 submissions), followed by workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations (110 submissions), project deliverables such as reports (87 submissions) and presentations (76 submissions).

What types of assessment evidence contribute to the grade for the teaching, learning and assessment activities?
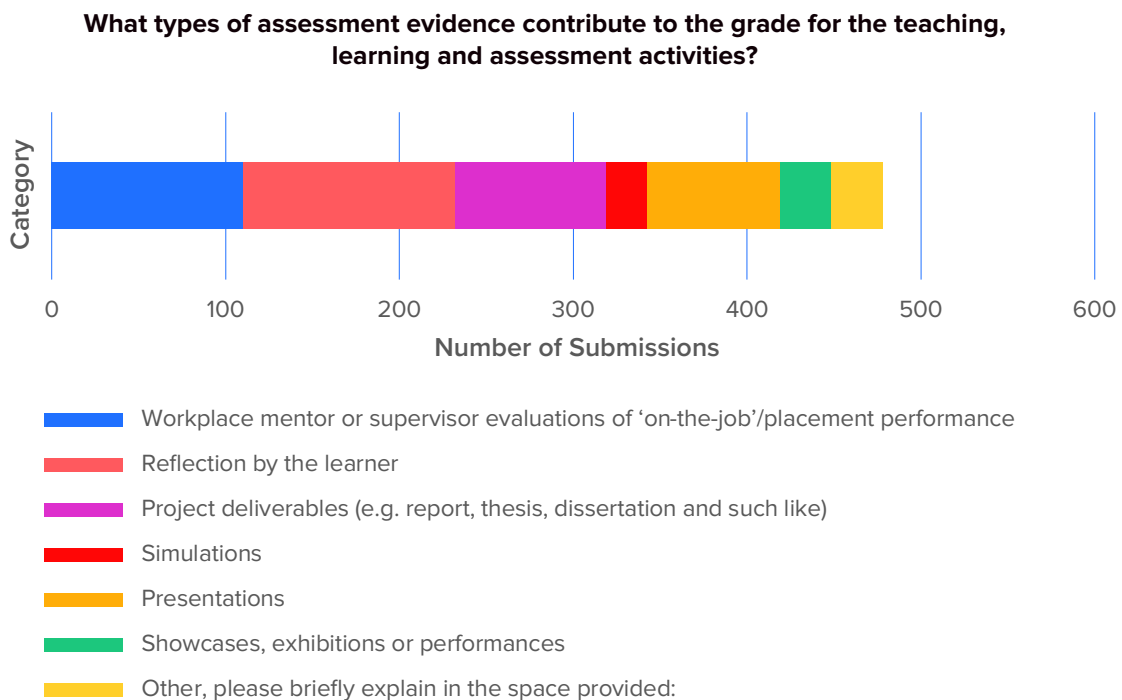
Figure 19: Forms of Assessment Evidence in Work-integrated Learning (All Practitioner Responses)

When responses were filtered by sector, this distribution pattern was consistent across responses from practitioners working in or across FET and HE settings. Although submissions indicated simulations, showcases, exhibitions and performances are proportionately less frequent, practitioner responses indicated these forms of assessment are in use across all sectors. Open text responses identified workplace visits by tutors or academic supervisors and clinical demonstrations. They also emphasised the completion of varied and cumulative tasks utilising varied media and within digital portfolios.

> "Student led podcasts, [virtual reality] experiences/assessment, vlogs, hackathons/sprints."

> "Student work is captured in an e-portfolio which contains observations and specific tasks."

> "ePortfolio that contains examples of the learner's work. Reflections and a description of how they have been able to apply learning from the programme to the workplace."

> "Professional E-Portfolio which includes 10 case studies from the 5 core areas of environmental Health. The E-portfolio also includes completion of matrices indicating the breadth of their experience gained in placement, a reflective report and professional interview. The case studies demonstrate the depth of experience gained."

The need to align assessment practices with the complex contexts associated with work-integrated learning is discussed across the international literature (see for example, Ajjawi et al, 2019). In the Irish HE context, O'Mahoney et al (2024) have reported on survey-based research, collecting responses from 270 students across 32 programmes within a technological university. Participants in the research indicated mixed views on the assessment process associated with work placements. While some learners associated reflective assignments in particular with

the development of self-awareness, others reported that the workload was too heavy, or that the reflections were not relevant or helpful. This indicates that reflection on what constitutes a reasonable workload as well as the careful alignment of assessment with relevant learning outcomes are important considerations in the design of programmes involving work-integrated learning.

Respondents were also asked to identify who was involved in determining the final grade associated with the work-integrated teaching, learning and assessment activity and how the grade or result was recorded. Across responses from all sectors (N=122), practitioners consistently indicated that teaching staff of the institution most frequently held responsibility for this (122 submissions).

Who determines the final grade associated with the assessment of the teaching, learning and assessment activities?
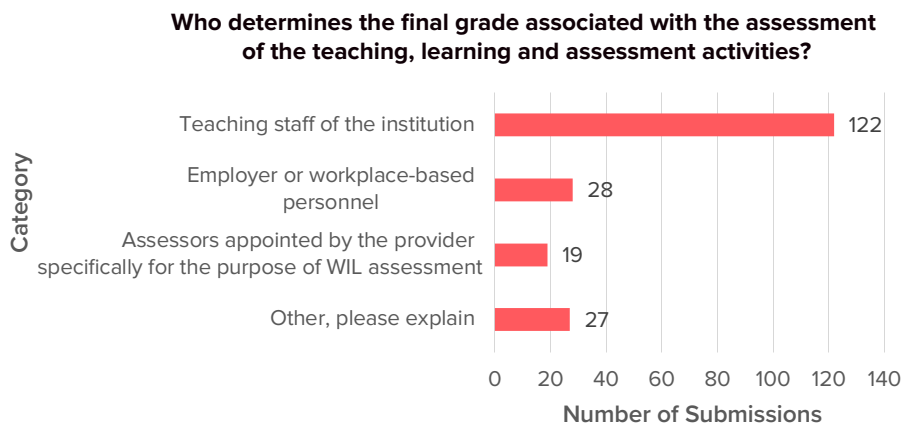
Figure 20: Stakeholder Involvement in Determining Grades Associated with Work-integrated Learning (All Practitioner Responses)

However, shared responsibility for determining grades was also reflected in the responses. Several practitioner submissions identified that employer or work-based personnel (28 submissions) and assessors appointed by the provider for this purpose (19 submissions) played a role in determining learners' grades. Open text responses reinforced this and provided further insights into how the contributions from mentors, supervisors and other stakeholders are obtained and to what forms of assessment they apply.

> "…work-integrated assessment briefs involve a skills demonstration component, which must be performed in the workplace. The mentor sheet signed by the mentor, serves as evidence that the required skills have been successfully demonstrated to a satisfactory level."

> "A tripartite meeting takes place with the monitor, the learner and the provider during the visit. At this meeting, the required mandatory tasks are checked for completion."

> "Feedback is also sought from service users, other social workers in the agency and other agencies that the student has contact with."

> "Grades are mostly determined by teaching staff but external supervisor consultant reports are required to attest to the standard of the work-based work of the learner and consideration of this contributes to the grade achieved for the professional practice element of the programme. These reports are not done by employers but are done by qualified

supervisor consultants contracted for this purpose (the supervisor consultant may also be employed in the same organisation as the learner but this is not a requirement)."

"Assessor in this context is the pharmacist in the workplace who has been trained to undertake the assessment."

"The work based clinical practice placements are assessed by mentors and preceptors in the clinical practice setting. Students are deemed either competent or not yet competent in their clinical practice."

"Interview with academic tutor, student and workplace supervisor/line manager."

"Each workplace supervisor will complete a report where they will assess the candidate's participation in the workplace while on work placement. Each candidate will be assessed on timekeeping; working independently; ability to take direction; ability to meet deadlines; personal presentation; communications with supervisors; clients (if relevant), and fellow workers; acceptance of direction/criticism, adherence to health and safety; and interest in the work. The skills demonstration (evidenced by the supervisor's report, is worth 25% of the assessment for this course."

The finding that workplace mentors and supervisors play a role in determining learner grades in a proportion of the submissions is potentially significant when considered in relation to evidence gathered elsewhere noting that stakeholders perceive challenges associated with this. O'Neill (2024) used a participatory research and action approach to investigate the challenges associated with authenticity and consistency in work-integrated learning. Students, educators and practitioners (employer/workplace personnel) participated in a series of workshops intended to explore challenges and gain insights for optimising the balance between authenticity and consistency. Although the role of the practitioners was seen as very valuable, participants viewed consistency as being a proportionately higher challenge in the context of off-campus work placements primarily assessed by a practitioner (O'Neill, 2024, p.626).

4.10.1 INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Respondents were invited to indicate in an open text response how the assessment of the work-integrated learning to which their submissions pertained facilitated the inclusion of a diversity of learners. The responses across all sectors (N=144) diverged thematically into two main categories, with distribution patterns similar across responses from FET (27 submissions) and HE (110 submissions) practitioners as well as those working in organisations spanning both sectors (13 submissions).

In the first broad category are responses that operationalise inclusion almost exclusively in relation to disability and equity. These refer, for the most part, to the provision of reasonable accommodations in response to declarations made by learners in alignment with QA procedures.

"They are encouraged to disclose any challenges they may have. Students who disclose challenges are advised to register with the student support services and apply for reasonable accommodations. Such accommodations are facilitated where possible."

"Reasonable accommodations are provided for any apprentice who requires it."

"In order to ensure inclusion of a diversity of learners, reasonable accommodations are available to learners with a recognised learning/physical disability. Additional care is also taken when placing inexperienced learners."

"Our QA Manual outlines our procedures for 'compassionate consideration' and 'reasonable adjustment'. We also have a section on 'learner supports' and 'Supports for Learners who have English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)'."

"Reasonable accommodations and supports are provided for students who may have disclosed a disability or who may have special requirements in the workplace. Placement Office staff cooperate closely with the staff from the Access and Disability Office as well as Placement Providers in order to mitigate any potential workplace issues for students with disabilities going out on placement."

"Reasonable accommodations are identified on an individual basis for learners who self declare the need for support."

Some responses referred to the role employers play in facilitating learners with additional support needs. It is noted that these responses did not specify how disclosures were communicated to employers or by whom.

"Employers are given notice if any learners have particular requirements or supports, and students will only do placements at sites that can facilitate these requests."

"Employers are made aware of any particular learning supports required by students in advance of the placement. It is imperative that employers can facilitate these requirements to support the learning of the student."

"Students who have reasonable accommodations are facilitated by tutors on their clinical site. The tutor can put in place strategies to help the learning such as additional time during assessment."

"The assessment relies mostly on the workplace mentor/supervisor/line-manager and therefore it reflects the EDI strategy of the specific company."

A number of responses indicating the question was not applicable were submitted, alongside responses in which the use of strategies to facilitate inclusion of diverse learners were difficult to discern.

"There is already diversity on the course. Assessment is based on work performance."

"Each pupil is graded on the level of performance of the skills demonstrated as well as a written portfolio."

The second broad category of responses operationalised inclusion more broadly and outlined responses that align with contemporary perspectives on equity, access and inclusion in work-integrated learning. These articulate what have been characterised in the literature as "practical, actionable strategies that address barriers with a significant focus on pedagogy" (Mackaway et al, 2024). A number of responses in this category referenced universal design for learning (UDL) and

flexibility or adaptiveness in approach. Some explicitly referenced the needs of mature learners in full-time employment, international learners and other cohorts.

"The assessment strategy is designed to be inclusive of the diverse range of learners who will complete it. There are a range of evidence types including written assignments, journals, presentations etc. used to capture the required evidence. Where possible the brief allows learners to design their own activities (within the parameters of the assessment brief) allowing for a diverse range of topics to be explored, this further ensures learners can adapt if required due to their own specific learning needs. Detailed personalised feedback is provided for learners which fosters individuality and inclusivity. Flexible arrangements for carrying out placement are afforded to the learners – it is not prescribed how and when the hours must be carried out which offers learners a flexible approach to planning their placement around their own specific needs. This also facilitates the workplaces in being able to schedule hours which best work for their needs also. Learners and workplace supervisors are provided with clear instructions and guidelines as well as dedicated support staff if required."

"We offer a range of assessments that are dynamic and tech rich which are designed to reflect learning outcomes and allow learners to perform to their strengths and abilities."

"The lecturers on this programme are adaptable, flexible, and responsive to the needs of all learners. The small class size also allows for adaptation of assessment strategies and instruments, when required, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Head of Department."

"All assessment briefs are written through a UDL lens."

"By offering flexible formats for reflective journals—either analogue, digital, or a combination—students can choose methods that suit their learning styles. The focus on reflective writing encourages deeper learning, allowing students the opportunity to critically engage with their unique experiences. Additionally, the Pass/Fail grading system minimises pressure, enabling learners to focus on personal and professional growth rather than solely on academic performance. This approach supports a broad spectrum of abilities, ensuring all students can successfully participate."

"Universal Design for Learning is built into the delivery of the modules and preparation of students for the assessment (e.g., oral and written formative feedback, peer support)."

"A range of assessment modes (practical, reflection, project, etc.) ensure each student has opportunities to showcase their skills."

"Where students are already in fulltime employment and cannot conduct a review of their fulltime work place, an alternative project is set by the programme chair."

"Learners can make choices about the pieces they include in their portfolios. Currently the reflections are all done in the written form but it is possible to include audio recordings as an alternative. The VLE is designed to meet the needs of all learners, including those who are visually impaired."

"Using Multiple means of engagement with the learner and applying alternative assessment strategies to ensure it facilitates the learner's needs."

Some responses referenced the need to adhere to PSRB requirements.

"The assessment is a pass/fail depending on whether the learner meets the competencies. This assessment is limited by the provisions of the legislation which underpins the [discipline] programme."

"Across all aspects of the [discipline] programme including on placement students are assessed using a range of sources including but not limited to role play, written work, presentations to their social work team. Students can also meet with the disability service and ensure they have an opportunity for reasonable accommodations to be in place. However, ultimately students must demonstrate their capacity to meet the 83 [PSRB] standards of Proficiency in order to be deemed fit for professional registration."

The submissions indicate that much intentional and proactive work to facilitate inclusion of diversity is evident across both FET and HE. Importantly, this includes work to facilitate learners who may be excluded for socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic or geographic reasons and who may be managing caring or work responsibilities as well as learners with disabilities. However, the responses also indicate that this is not universally the case and that the concept of inclusion is variably, and often narrowly, interpreted by the practitioners responding to this survey. This includes a relatively high proportion of responses indicating compliance-oriented environments in which 'diversity' is operationalised solely as disability and accommodated in response to a formal declaration by the learner.

The challenges associated with realising equity and inclusion in the context of work-integrated learning are not unique to the Irish context. Both the local and international research literature indicate that students with disabilities may experience disadvantage in the context of work-integrated learning, particularly in relation to sourcing and staying on placements (Waters & Rath, 2022; Dean et al, 2023). The literature also reflects that equity and inclusion surrounding placements and internships is challenging for cohorts including (but not limited to) international learners, learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds, regional and remote learners, learners with financial and family responsibilities, and learners with intersecting identities (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation) and circumstances (Dean et al, 2023; Mackaway et al, 2024). The submissions by practitioners considered here indicate that ongoing work is needed to ensure inclusion is conceptualised and realised in broad and consistent ways across the sector. However, they also indicate that there are significant opportunities to enable this through peer learning opportunities, given the indications provided that well-developed approaches and nuanced approaches to facilitating inclusion are also in operation.

5. EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

In this section, examples of work-integrated learning have been reproduced based on submissions by practitioners working across the Irish tertiary sector. The examples contain variable levels of detail as they are based on the submissions provided. Nonetheless, they indicate the range of practices in operation represented in the submissions overall.

The examples are labelled in accordance with how they are described in the submissions they are extracted from. Wherever possible[5], they replicate the exact wording used in open-text responses throughout those submissions. This is supplemented by additional information provided in response to multiple choice survey items pertaining to, for example, external stakeholder involvement and forms of assessment evidence, reflected in more generalised language.

The variance and relative fluidity of terminology used throughout the submissions is reflected in the extracts. For example, the term 'placement' is used in submissions that describe work-integrated learning facilitated at NFQ Levels 3 to 10, which may be unpaid or paid, optional or required, in a workplace or virtual, and of durations (where specified) from an (estimated) 2 weeks up to 81 weeks. Notably, although terms such as placement and internship are used within existing policy documentation[6], neither QQI, its antecedent agencies, SOLAS or the Higher Education Authority (HEA) provide definitions of these or other types of work-integrated learning, with the exception of statutory apprenticeship programmes[7]. This means that the terminology adopted by education and training providers and practitioners may frequently derive from local vocational or disciplinary norms or potentially be adopted from other sources, such as institutional or practitioner engagement with international communities of practice and membership organisations for work-integrated learning[8].

A number of quality frameworks established by national and international organisations in other jurisdictions propose typologies of work-integrated learning. For example, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) propose nine types of work-integrated learning, including community and industry research and projects, community service learning and entrepreneurship, among others. CEWIL maintains a national database, drawing upon data from more than fifty tertiary institutions (made available via a national directory) to inform its activities, including the typology. Nonetheless, as per the submissions from practitioners in Ireland that inform this report, CEWIL uses terminology fluidly, with definitions acknowledging the variability in characteristics associated with each 'type'. See, for example, the CEWIL definition of internships below:

> "What are Internships?
>
> Offers usually one discipline-specific, supervised, structured paid or unpaid, and for academic credit work experience or practice placement. Internships may occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been completed and prior to graduation. Internships can be of any length but are typically 12 to 16 months long."

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5   Identifiable information, including the names of institutions, professional bodies or specific professions has been removed from the submissions.

6   See, for example, QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (2017).

7   See QQI's Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes.

8   Influential international communities of practice include the World Association of Cooperative and Work-integrated Education (WACE), the Work Based Learning and Placement Learning Association UK (ASET) or Work Integrated Learning Australia (formerly Australian Collaborative Education Network) among others.

Retrieved from: cewilcanada.ca

Across the literature, typologies for work-integrated learning are frequently proposed at higher levels of abstraction. For example, Jackson and Dean (2022) have undertaken a large scale study on the impact of work-integrated learning using three broad types: work-based, non-workplace and global. A different, but similarly high-level approach has been proposed by Kaider et al (2017), who have proposed a typology of work-integrated learning activities and assessments utilising two axes: authenticity (the extent to which learners work on problems, processes and projects they may encounter in their professions) and proximity (the extent to which experiences occur in real workplaces and professional contexts, enabling learners to interact with practitioners or community members).

A common framework for considering quality and enhancement in work-integrated learning entails consideration of the ideal conditions surrounding three stages of activity: those that should occur 'pre' or before activity with an external stakeholder, those that should occur during, and those that should occur 'post' or after the activity has concluded (see Ferns et al, 2024 and Rowe & Winchester-Seeto, 2021 among multiple other publications). The global work-integrated learning quality framework published by the World Association of Cooperative and Work-integrated Education (WACE) in 2024 maps these stages to the roles of the three essential stakeholders in work-integrated learning, characterised as the institution, host organisation and student.

The examples extracted from the submissions made by Irish practitioners to inform this report, and subsequent development of a new set of topic-specific statutory quality assurance (QA) guidelines on work-integrated learning reference a breadth of well-established and more recently emerging types of work-integrated learning. These range from work experience and placement to projects, simulations, hackathons and sprints. They also reflect the non-discrete nature of these activities, demonstrating, for example, that projects may occur within apprenticeships or simulations may be embedded within placements. This indicates that quality assurance guidelines developed for the Irish tertiary sector to encourage good practice and enhancement in this domain will need to be framed flexibly to ensure that they are both representative of the current breadth of practice and serve as an enabler of ongoing and future innovation.

5.1 WORK EXPERIENCE IN FET (LEVEL 3)

Work experience within a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 3			
Optional/ Required	Optional for some activities and required for others.	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	10-25		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Work Experience module incorporated into personal safety, listening and speaking.		
Description	This is a work placement where learners get to discover the day-to-day duties of the role, learn new skills and are mentored and supervised by a staff member. Learning activities take place on campus, in the workplace and in the community.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes mentor or supervisor evaluations of performance, reflection by the learner and simulations. Multiple means of engagement are used and alternative assessment strategies are applied to meet learners' needs. Grading is conducted by assessors appointed by the provider specifically for the purpose. The learner is awarded a pass/fail or equivalent.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Not very involved in programme development or review; not involved in programme management or learner recruitment. Somewhat involved in the design and planning of activities, provision of feedback to learners and setting criteria for/conducting assessments. Very involved in reviewing feedback from learners.		
Formal Agreements	Agreements in place for roles, times, days, responsibilities and supports required.		

5.2 CAPSTONE PROJECT IN FET APPRENTICESHIP (LEVEL 5)

Capstone project in apprenticeship programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 5			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Erasmus exchange with French school available on overall programme.
Cohort Size	10-25		
Professional Accreditation	Endorsed by industry body but not professionally accredited.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Apprentices at a minimum must demonstrate accumulated learning through reflections for specific core modules, demonstrate competencies to industry standards, prepare displays and discuss marketing steps to promote the selected products.		
Description	The 'Showcase' project is an industry project whereby students work as a team to build a proposed pop-up fictional shop concept, which includes a basic proposed business plan and a themed retail display. Apprentices then have to present to representatives from the programme team, consortia, employers and mentors and are asked questions.		
Assessment and Grading	This is a group project at the end of the programme. The class work as a team/s to generate and develop a fictional shop concept and themed retail display with innovative product ideas. This assessment is conducted over the course of the module. The project specification contains five parts and is conducted as a continuous assessment. The team must together assign team roles and work cohesively as a team. Assessment evidence includes project deliverables, simulations, presentations and showcase or exhibition. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution. The learner is awarded a pass/fail or equivalent.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in programme design, programme review, learner recruitment and providing feedback to learners. Somewhat involved in designing activities, teaching, setting criteria for assessments and reviewing feedback from learners. Not very involved in programme management. Not involved in conducting or grading assessments.		
Formal Agreements	There are agreements in place for all stakeholders. The roles and responsibilities are set out in the SOLAS Apprenticeship Code of Practice and in the relevant QA Manual.		

5.3 WORKPLACE PROJECT IN FET (LEVEL 5)

Workplace project in programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 5			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	10-25		
Professional Accreditation	Not linked to any professional body.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Learners must be able to employ and apply lean manufacturing principles learned to the benefit of the workplace organisation, including conducting specific tasks and calculations.		
Description	The learner achievement is supported through training and individual mentoring support. Teaching, learning and assessment activities occur online. Learners undertake eight tasks based on making observations and improvements in the learners' own workplace and submit evidence in a written format.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations, reflection, project deliverables and presentations. Learners submit assignments online; however, alternative arrangements are made if this presents a difficulty for the learner. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institutions and assessors appointed by the provider specifically for the purpose of work-integrated learning assessment. The learner is assigned a letter grade or numerical score.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Somewhat involved in programme design and programme review. Very involved in learner recruitment. Not involved/not very involved in designing activities, teaching, setting criteria for assessments and reviewing feedback from learners, conducting or grading assessments.		
Formal Agreements	The QA system sets out the roles and responsibilities for the education provider. A business relationship is built with the employer who sponsors their employees to attend the training. The learners (employees) are provided with an induction at which expectations and supports are explained.		

5.4 PROJECT AND SUBSEQUENT PLACEMENT IN FET (LEVEL 6)

Project and subsequent placement in a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 6			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	10-25		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes were not provided.		
Description	The programme involves an industry project where learners work from a brief in a simulated work environment with a company on both a group and individual basis. There is also work placement for 12 weeks where learners are working for a company with a mentor and liaising with a course supervisor.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations, reflection and project deliverables. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution. The learner is assigned a letter grade or numerical score.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in providing feedback to learners during teaching, learning and assessment activities as well as somewhat involved in designing and planning activities, setting criteria for assessments and reviewing feedback from learners. Somewhat involved in programme development and review. Not involved in learner recruitment.		
Formal Agreements	Only informal agreements are in place.		

5.5 WORK PLACEMENT PREPARATION AND PLACEMENT MODULES IN TERTIARY (FET TO HE) PROGRAMME (LEVEL 6)

Work placement preparation and placement modules in programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 6			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	10 - 25		
Professional Accreditation	None		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Learners will develop specialist skills in the use of technologies in modern workplaces as well as skills to support lifelong learning, reflection, self-management and self-awareness.		
Description	Two-thirds of the program is delivered through college-based modules, which incorporate experiential learning from the workplace. These modules primarily use integrated lectures, class discussions, applied theory, and assessment briefs to support teaching and learning. The remaining third of the program is dedicated to a Work Placement module. To address the challenge of completing assessments for a module without class contact hours, students receive support through a dedicated college-based module (5 ECTS) called Work Placement Preparation (WPP). This WPP module serves as a bridge between the teacher and students while they are on their work placement, providing guidance on learning objectives and assessments. Additionally, the Work Placement module is supported by assessment briefs integrated with other college-based modules, specifically those focused on business and digital skills, which provide theoretical foundations applicable in the workplace.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations, reflection, project deliverables, simulations and presentations. All assessment briefs are written using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution but supported by workplace mentors who will sign off on feedback given and standards reached for various skills demonstrated in the work placement. The learner is assigned a grade of unsuccessful, pass, merit or distinction.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in programme development, programme review and learner recruitment. Somewhat involved in designing activities, teaching, setting criteria for assessments, providing feedback to learners and reviewing feedback from learners, conducting or grading assessments.		
Formal Agreements	Memorandums of agreement are in place that set out the roles and responsibilities of the joint educational providers, learners and employers.		

5.6 APPRENTICESHIP IN FET (LEVEL 6)

Apprenticeship programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 6			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	Over 100		
Professional Accreditation	The certificate is recognised by a professional body which allows the successful graduates to work in the sector in specified roles.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Discipline- and profession-specific knowledge, skills and competencies. Familiarity with regulatory, technological and employment perspectives as well as economic, social and environmental issues. Transversal skills including (but not limited to) communication, problem-solving, teamwork, supervision and leadership.		
Description	All briefs are created by the educational provider and typically require learners to apply or demonstrate their understanding of relevant theories or knowledge related to their work - the workplace is the key learning environment. However, in addition to the above, some modules (50%) are specifically 'work-integrated modules'.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment briefs for these specific work-integrated modules (which make up 50% of the modules) include mentor sheets that must be submitted with the completed assignments. The work-integrated assessment briefs involve a skills demonstration component, which must be performed in the workplace. The mentor sheet, signed by the mentor, serves as evidence that the required skills have been successfully demonstrated to a satisfactory level. Assessment evidence also includes reflection by the learner, project deliverables, simulations, presentations and skills demonstrations. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution. Learners are assigned a numerical score and achieve a grade of distinction, merit, pass or unsuccessful.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in programme design, programme review and providing feedback to learners. Somewhat involved in programme management, learner recruitment, setting criteria for assessments and reviewing feedback from learners. Not involved in planning activities, conducting or grading assessments.		
Formal Agreements	Clear quality assurance procedures are set out for the programme that define the roles of stakeholders as well as the governance structure of the programme (Programme Board role, Consortium Steering Group role, Coordinating Provider role, Collaborating Provider role).		

5.7 PLACEMENT IN HE (LEVEL 7)

Placement in programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 7			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Students are encouraged to explore international opportunities. The provider will work with the learner and employer to ensure all requirements are met and that the standard is comparable to the other national placements offered on the programme.
Cohort Size	26-50		
Professional Accreditation	Recognised by a professional body which allows the successful graduates to gain exemptions from professional exams/modules following completion of the full programme.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	1. Demonstrate an ability to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in the university into practice in the workplace. 2. Engage in problem solving strategies and show initiative in the workplace. 3. Work creatively and constructively on given tasks in an efficient manner. 4. Develop professional skills and soft skills in the workplace.		
Description	This is a 12-week work placement during which there is a placement visit from a representative of the provider (work placement mentor). During the visit, the work placement mentor will talk to both the employer and learner. The learner has to complete a work placement preparatory module, and they have to ensure that all forms in the work placement booklet are signed off by the employer and work placement mentor/supervisor. The provider works closely with employers to ensure that there is a good relationship and that both the learner and employer gain from the experience. Employers also visit the provider in advance of the placement and give guest talks to prospective students. This helps to develop the relationship between all the stakeholders. Activity takes place on campus, online, in the workplace and in the community.		
Assessment and Grading	This work placement includes a variety of assessment methods including two reflective journals which should include details of soft skills gained and learning outcomes achieved. Additional assessment evidence includes project deliverables and workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution and by employer or workplace-based personnel. Learners are assigned a pass/fail or equivalent.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Somewhat involved in programme design, programme review and learner recruitment. Not very involved in programme management. Very involved in designing and planning teaching, learning and assessment activities, conducting assessments and providing feedback to learners. Somewhat involved in grading assessments and reviewing feedback from learners.		

Formal Agreements	A work placement handbook is issued to each student. This handbook includes several forms that must be completed by the student, employer and work placement supervisor (education provider). One of these forms is a general agreement setting out the key responsibilities of the student and the employer. Sample forms include the following content:
	The student must:
	• Return the work placement contract, signed by both the student and the work placement representative to the work placement co-ordinator prior to commencing work placement.
	• Sign and return the work placement learning contract to the work placement co-ordinator prior to commencement of work placement.
	• Complete 12 weeks of work placement in a position and organisation agreed by the work placement co-ordinator.
	The work placement provider must:
	• Appoint a suitable mentor within the organisation to supervise the student whilst on work placement.
	• Pay (if applicable) the student the amount agreed.
	• Be available for correspondence with the work placement supervisor (provider) and provide information on the student's performance which will be included in the student's assessment.
	• Endeavour to ensure that the student is gaining relevant work experience as agreed (with provider).
	• Contact the work placement supervisor as soon as possible if any problems are encountered by the student or the work placement provider.

5.8 MULTIPLE PLACEMENTS IN HE (LEVEL 7)

Multiple placements in programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 7			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	No
Cohort Size	26-50		
Professional Accreditation	Recognised by a professional body which allows the successful graduates to register and work in the sector.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	On successful completion of this programme, the learner will possess a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the theory, paradigms, practice, policy, and research that informs (profession) practice. In addition to achieving the educational standards set down by the QQI Award Standards for (discipline), the learner will acquire the specialised knowledge as specified by (professional body) to register as a (role) professional.		
Description	There are two placements (one in Year 2, of 390 hours minimum and one in Year 3, of 420 hours minimum) during which learners are mentored and supervised by a professional in a (professional area) setting. The supervisor who receives training from (provider) together with a practice education lecturer (qualified professional) from (provider) assesses the performance of the student against the 80 proficiencies set out for (role) practice by the profession. Students are also assessed on prescribed written work. Activity takes place on campus and in the workplace.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes reflection by the learner, workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations and project deliverables. Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution. The placement modules are assessed on a pass/fail basis and do not contribute to student grades.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Somewhat involved in programme design, programme review and learner recruitment. Not very involved in programme management. Very involved in designing and planning teaching, learning and assessment activities, conducting assessments and providing feedback to learners. Somewhat involved in grading assessments and reviewing feedback from learners.		
Formal Agreements	There is a signed agreement between the employer and (provider) setting out the responsibilities of both parties. There is a Placement Policy and Procedure document which describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of all three parties which employers receive and agree to abide by. Students also receive this document and it is understood that they must abide by it but they do not formally sign to that effect.		

5.9 MULTIPLE PRACTICE PLACEMENTS IN HE (LEVEL 8)

Multiple practice placements within a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 8			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Some learners attend work placement abroad as part of an Erasmus exchange opportunity or other volunteering abroad and this is considered as part of the total practice placement time.
Cohort Size	51-100		
Professional Accreditation	Accredited by professional body which allows successful graduates to register with the regulatory body on graduation and work in the sector.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Discipline- and profession-specific knowledge, skills and competencies as well as transversal skills including (but not limited to) communication, teamwork, self-awareness and reflective practice.		
Description	This is a programme which entails six workplace-oriented modules with linked learning outcomes. The modules are practice placements during which learners are mentored and supervised by a registered (professional) in a (professional) setting. The placement generally ranges from three to nine weeks at a time in any one area. Activities take place on campus, online, in the workplace and in the community.		
Assessment and Grading	The assessment is in the form of 'achieved competence' or 'not achieved competence' using a national competence assessment document (pass/fail or equivalent). The determination on achievement of competence is made by the trained preceptor who is a registered (professional) and is linked to the learner for the duration of the placement. Assessment evidence includes preceptor evaluations, reflection by the learner, project deliverables, simulations and presentations. The final grade is determined by teaching staff of the institution and learners are assigned a letter grade or numerical score. Broad assessment strategies are used to maximise inclusion of diverse learners and reasonable accommodations are identified on an individual basis for learners who self-declare the need for support.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in programme design, review and management. Somewhat involved in learner recruitment. Somewhat involved in designing and planning teaching, learning and assessment activities as well as providing feedback to learners, conducting assessments and reviewing feedback from learners. Very involved in grading the assessments.		
Formal Agreements	There are formal agreements in place between the education provider, the learners and the placement providers, or employers when in year 4 of the programme. These formal agreements are in the form of individual memorandums of understanding, policies and procedures, and individual guideline documents.		

5.10 PROGRAMME APPROACH (LEVEL 8)

Programme approach leading to an award at NFQ Level 8			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Yes Erasmus and European university consortium
Cohort Size	51-100		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Work-integrated learning contributions are heavily embedded in multiple modules across years of this degree. The learning outcomes are related to knowledge, skill and competence. Positioned at the intersection of challenge and opportunity, the degree is designed to future proof graduates with the competencies and skills required to leverage digitalisation, address societal challenges and provide unique value to organisations. Through practice-led and experiential teaching, students are exposed to emerging and innovative technologies, practical ideas and live cases that reflect the realities of contemporary work. Work-integrated learning outcomes are one element of this approach.		
Description	There are multiple work-integrated learning practices within this degree ranging from light touch to heavy touch. Examples range from industry mentoring, module development, module delivery, student-led industry-based podcasts, site visits and challenge-based learning (heavy industry involvement).		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment strategy includes reflection by the learner, workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations, project deliverables (including student-led podcasts, virtual reality experiences/assessment, vlogs, hackathons and sprints). Grading is conducted by teaching staff of the institution. Learners are assigned a letter grade or numerical score.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in programme development, designing teaching, learning and assessment activities and providing feedback to learners. Somewhat involved in setting criteria for, conducting and grading assessments as well as programme review, management and learner recruitment.		
Formal Agreements	Formal contracts are in place. Programme structures and module descriptors are available. Programme/module guidelines provided. Responsibilities and requirements of students is outlined. Ask for employer and industry is clearly outlined.		

5.11 PAID LONG-TERM PLACEMENT (LEVEL 8)

| Paid long-term placement leading to an award at NFQ Level 8			
Optional/ Required	Optional	**International Opportunity**	Yes Erasmus and European university consortium
Cohort Size	26-50		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	• Demonstrate technical specialised expertise and proficiency in a range of tools used to address complex global environmental challenges and offer solutions to real world problems. • Use and apply theoretical knowledge and specialised skills and tools to conduct professional or advanced technical activity on complex global environmental and climate change issues. • Develop and utilise research skills to conduct practical field-based research; develop and justify project proposals, incorporate and manipulate real-world data from industry, gather and analyse field data, interpret results and communicate research findings (oral and written) as part of projects specifically related to climate/environmental sustainability. • Demonstrate an ability to work in diverse teams as part of group projects/assessments across all years of learning, negotiating workload, understanding and managing team dynamics, implementing project management, coordinating team outputs and responding to issues collectively as they arise. • Demonstrate the ability to adapt and be guided by emerging situations, and to suggestions from mentors. • Demonstrate personal autonomy and responsibility through independent learning and assessments across all years of the programme. • Communicate information, ideas, hacks, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences through a variety of media.		

Description	A flagship work placement programme. It is an accredited module (60 ECTS credits) and a highly valued part of student learning at (provider). It is an optional element for students in their 3rd year. The duration of the programme is between 9-12 months depending on employer needs. It provides an opportunity for employers to benefit from the talents and skills of students. The programme has a strong track record of providing work placements in many large organisations to date. For students, it provides an opportunity of a paid work placement in addition to gaining valuable experience, developing skills and enhancing employability. Students must obtain a minimum of a 2.1 grade in year 1 of their programme to apply. As it is a fully accredited 60 ECTS credit component of the degree programme, if taken, a student subsequently graduates with 240 ECTS credits. Students are required to have demonstrated engagement and cooperation with the entire process during the 9-12 month work placement. Activities take place online and in the workplace.
Assessment and Grading	Assessment comprises the following elements and students must "pass" all elements, with the grade being a "pass" or "fail". • Academic tutor visit – interim assessment on site to meet with student and their line manager separately. • Completion by student of reflection report (~2,000 words). • Employer evaluation of the student's performance.
External Stakeholder Involvement	Somewhat involved in programme review. Not involved in programme development, management or learner recruitment. Not involved in designing or planning teaching, learning and assessment activities; or setting criteria for, or grading, assessments. Very involved in conducting assessments and providing feedback to learners during activities.
Formal Agreements	Where a student chooses to undertake the work placement in year 3 of their studies, formal agreements are in place for all stakeholders, including (provider), the student and the employer.

5.12 PROJECT IN HE (LEVEL 8)

On-campus project within a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 8			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Not Applicable
Cohort Size	Over 100		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	A specific learning outcome: Prepare an advertising and promotions campaign.		
Description	This industry project involves the distribution of an advertising and integrated marketing communications brief (prepared by the lecturer in conjunction with the industry partner) and requires students to work in project groups. Students assess the brief, undertake appropriate market research and design, and develop an integrated marketing communications campaign for the partner organisation. Groups pitch their campaign ideas to industry partners and showcase the experiential elements of their campaign in the [student centre] to the industry partner and wider [university] community. A detailed report is also submitted outlining same.		
Assessment and Grading	The assessment is made up of three parts: 1. Presentation 2. Experiential Showcase 3. Report Graded by teaching staff of the institution. Learners are assigned a letter grade or numerical score.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Somewhat involved in designing teaching, learning and assessment activities, providing feedback to learners, setting criteria for and conducting assessments as well as programme development, management and review. Not involved in learner recruitment.		
Formal Agreements	No agreements in place.		

5.13 PLACEMENT IN HE (LEVEL 10)

Placement within a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 10			
Optional/ Required	Required	**International Opportunity**	Yes, students can undertake placement abroad
Cohort Size	Fewer than 10		
Professional Accreditation	Not applicable.		
Focus of Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes at Level 10 relate to the discovery and development of new knowledge and skills through original research, or original application of existing knowledge, and the delivery of findings at the frontiers of knowledge and application that are of publishable standard in peer-reviewed literature or by equivalent peer review through performance or exhibition. Further outcomes at this level relate to specialist skills and transferable skills required for management roles, such as the abilities to critique and develop organisational structures and initiate change.		
Description	This is a work placement during which learners are mentored and supervised by a professional in an industry setting for a period of 12 weeks. The role and expected outcomes are agreed prior to the placement. The learner maintains a reflection journal and would normally do a final presentation for the employer. The learner can claim credit for the work placement.		
Assessment and Grading	Assessment evidence includes workplace mentor or supervisor evaluations. Grades are determined by teaching staff of the institution (learners are formally assessed by their PhD supervisor as part of the placement module assessment). Learners are assigned a letter grade or numerical score.		
External Stakeholder Involvement	Very involved in teaching, learning and assessment activities as well as programme development, review and management. Not involved in designing or planning activities, setting criteria or grading assessments. Somewhat involved in providing feedback to learners and conducting assessments. Not very involved in programme development, review, management or learner recruitment.		
Formal Agreements	For paid industry placements the contract is between the learner and employer. For unpaid, it is a tri-partite agreement signed by the university on behalf of the education provider and learner with the employer.		
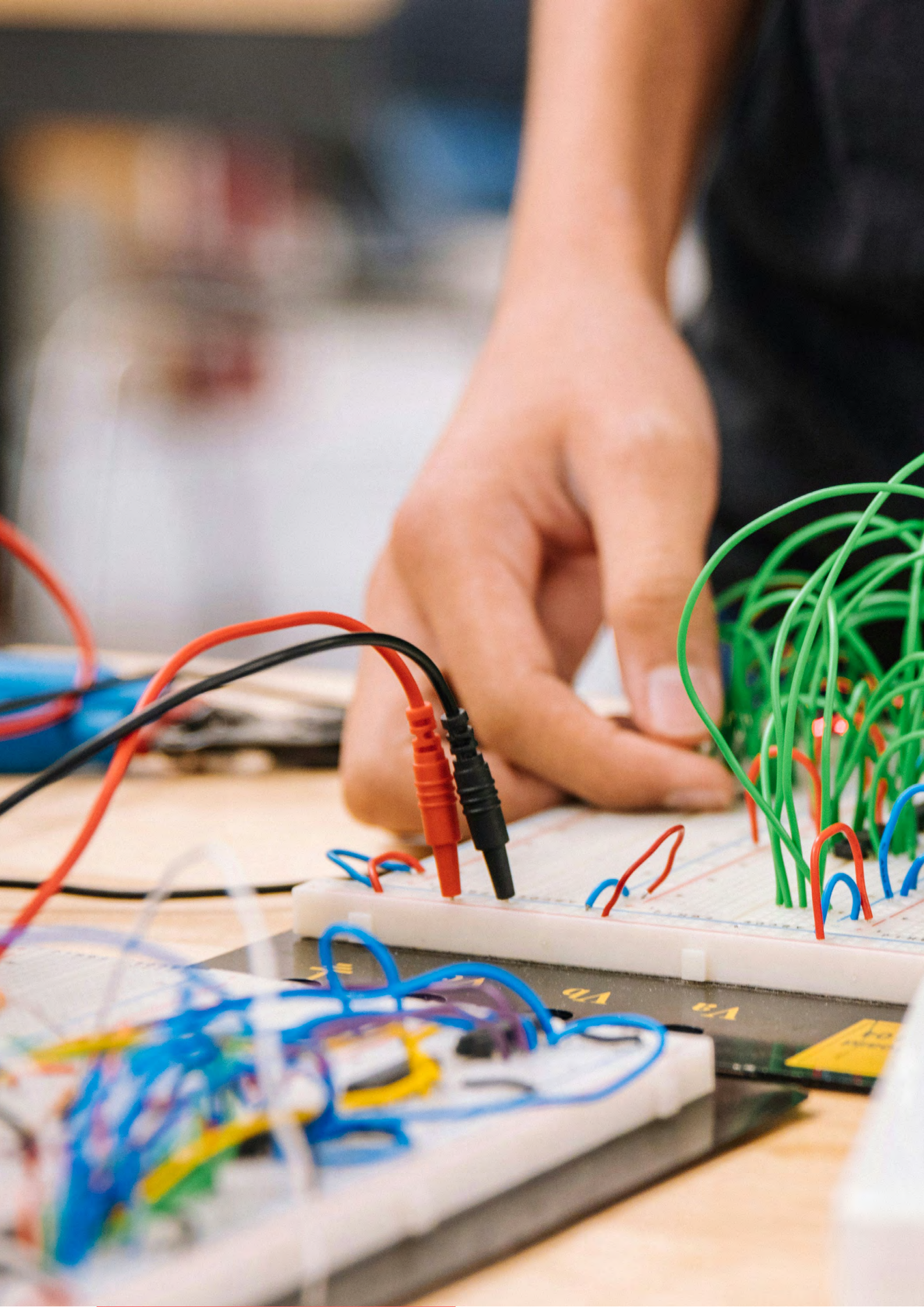
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