'What Works' to support equity, diversity and inclusion in creative education:

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING AND INTERNSHIPS

Tamsyn Dent
Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London

Kate Shorvon
Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London

Natalie Wreyford
Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London

Dave O'Brien
Department of Art History and Cultural Practices, University of Manchester

Atif Ghani
Academic Enhancement, University of the Arts London

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for government:

• Open-market internships can be a major source of inequality in the creative economy. DCMS and its non-departmental government bodies, such as national Arts Councils, Creative Scotland, and the British Film Institute, should do more to monitor these negative working practices and penalise those companies and organisations that use them. While this relates to industry-based practice, the negative impact of open-market internships on creative and cultural employment creates a barrier to work-integrated learning programmes within higher education.

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

• Systematic monitoring and regulation of work-integrated learning internships are needed, along with clearer policies on diversity. Both of these should be led by HEIs. Advance HE recommended this in 2010, but it has yet to be implemented.

• As part of this, much more detailed knowledge is needed about effective practice for integrating work experiences, of whatever kind, into higher education programmes by HEIs. This is so higher education and industry can share effective practice for supporting equity, diversity and inclusion.

• There is a clear need for improved monitoring of work-integrated learning provision at higher education level and its impact on graduate outcomes. Further qualitative research needs to be conducted by HEIs into the experience and impact of work-integrated learning within higher education on both students and staff.

• This research has identified a skills gap and lack of recognition within higher education for those tasked with designing, implementing, managing and evaluating effective work-integrated learning. This report recommends formal recognition of work-integrated learning programmes by HEIs. This recognition means both academic and professional services staff will have relevant skills training, time and other necessary resources integrated within workloads.

- Based on the literature reviewed as part of the 'What Works' approach, we recommend HEIs and industry work with an independent intermediary organisation to manage the dissemination and monitoring of a work-integrated learning programme.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Work experience, and specifically internships, has become a controversial element of access to employment across the creative economy. Although widely valued – for example, the recent Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) review of evidence on equality in graduate employment and employability rated work experience as one of the most powerful forms of intervention (Ramaiah and Robinson, 2022) – there is criticism on the relationship between internships and equitable access, as addressed within this report.

In the context of access routes to the creative economy, internships have evolved into a normalised pathway for early–career creatives. They have become a normative rite of passage for those wishing to gain direct experience and contacts (Frenette and Dowd, 2020; Brook et al., 2020).

However, over a decade of research on internships has demonstrated that certain sectors have taken advantage of the unpaid labour source that internships provide (Divine et al., 2007; Smith, 2015). This has created a system of hidden access points that are only available to those with the economic capability to support prolonged periods of unpaid work (Perlin, 2012; Brook et al., 2020). This is a key barrier to social mobility within the wider UK employment market (Sutton Trust, 2018) with the creative and cultural sectors identified as one of the worst sectors for adopting exploitative and unregulated internships (Arts Council England, 2011; Frenette, 2013; Allen et al., 2010; Allen 2013; de Peuter and Cohen, 2015).

This report addresses this paradox. It summarises the relevant literature and evidence that demonstrates 'What Works' to facilitate equitable, inclusive and diverse access to creative employment via internships as part of a broader remit of work–integrated learning (WIL).

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

Defining what an internship is can be a difficult task. According to the Trades Union Congress (2022), the word 'intern' is a label that has been applied to any individual undertaking some form of work experience. Writing in 2017, the Institute for Public Policy Research identified that there was no universally agreed definition of an internship nor clear monitoring of the role that interns play in the wider labour market (Roberts 2017).

Internships are not recognised within UK employment law. The official gov.uk information states that an intern can only access basic statutory employment rights if classed as a worker (2023). There is no legislative obligation to class an intern as a worker from the employer's perspective and, unlike volunteers, they are not protected via the Equality Act 2010. In addition, there is no official guidance on how long an internship should last nor how many internships can be undertaken by an individual.

The complexity and ambiguity of internships have led to various interpretations of their value. An important distinction needs to be made between 'open–market internships' and internships that have been undertaken as a form of WIL. WIL internships are usually facilitated through an official learning provider/education institution.

An 'open–market internship' is an internship usually taken after a degree has been completed. It is an internship managed directly between the internee and the organisation where the internship takes place. Open–market internships are distinct from internships that take place as part of an educational course.

Further clarification is necessary to unpack the concept of WIL within education. In the review of the wider literature into internships within education programmes, various terms were used, including work placements, work experience and work-based learning (WBL). There was no clear universal application of a term to a specific mode of practice.

For this report, we apply the term work–integrated learning (WIL) to define the model linked work placement interventions within HE. Following Atkinson, WIL refers to a variety of initiatives where "the theory of the learning is intentionally integrated with the practice of work through specifically designed curriculum, pedagogic practices and student engagement" (Atkinson, 2016: 2).

Although these terms are often used interchangeably, Atkinson distinguishes WBL as integral to the vocational education and training (VET) system that takes place in a work context. In the

glossary (Appendix 5.1), we include a list of relative terms to WIL, demonstrating the complexity of this field. .

Experience of work can give students an advantage in labour markets, whether creative or in other parts of the economy. Currently, those advantages are accessed by those with lots of existing resources and privileges. This is why HE-led WIL, which monitors the selection process and evaluates the effectiveness of such programmes, is key.

From a skills development and employability perspective, WIL programmes within HE are widely regarded as providing individuals with tacit knowledge of a specific labour market. They offer an opportunity to develop real-world insight into a job role, create contacts and provide an access route to employment. They promise the building of so-called 'soft skills' that are learnt through interactions with professionals in the workplace yet also provide student participants with certain protections and accountability not accessible to those undertaking open-market internships.

This distinction is important. As discussed, the vagueness surrounding what an internship is, coupled with the absence of protective legislation, has led to a multitude of interpretations that have contributed to unfair and exploitative practice. Making a distinction between open-market internships and WIL enables targeted, evidence-based policy recommendations.

METHODS

This paper is based on 'What Works' to foster equitable access to employment within the creative economy with a focus on internships as part of a wider shift towards WIL within HE and further education (FE).

As discussed in our introductory paper, this report applied a systematic literature review to the question of 'What Works' to support equity, diversity and inclusion for work-integrated learning and internships in creative education? Search terms were inputted into the Scopus research database with results limited to journal articles published after 1998, the year of New Labour's initial HE reforms (see Table 1).

Table 1

Search terms in Scopus	Number of results (journal articles only)
("What Works" AND internship)	13
(internships AND employment)	554
(what AND works AND apprenticeships AND employment)	37
(apprenticeships AND employment)	640
(widening AND participation) AND (higher AND education)	2707

The research team did an initial review of article abstracts from which relevant literature was divided into specified themes that emerged from the literature. Articles were grouped according to theme rather than discipline or geographical location. Different members of the research team then reviewed each theme, creating summary documents based on the 'What Works' framework.

This paper outlines three main areas of interest that emerged from the review of the literature alongside written evidence submissions, roundtable consultation events and the existing creative industries research expertise of the project team: curriculum design focused on WIL; work-simulated learning; and partnerships with industry and intermediary bodies.

Each theme is explored in turn, drawing on the wider evidence identified through the systematic review of the literature and including case study examples of good practice from contributing organisations. As already outlined, we know from some evidence that integrating an internship within an organisation as part of a WIL educational programme can create an opportunity for skills enhancement. There is also evidence of the positive impact on employability and earnings in terms of graduate outcomes (Margaryan et al., 2022; Krishna and Babu, 2021; Lehmann, 2019), specifically for those undertaking a creative/arts-based degree (Frenette et al., 2015; Frenette and Dowd, 2020). Yet these opportunities are not equally shared or accessible to all, even within the model of HE.

As a result, messaging on the value of internships as part of a WIL model should come with a warning that such programmes can only work if they are designed, managed and monitored effectively. In this report, we first outline what doesn't work in relation to the adoption of internships as part of WIL models in education before outlining models of practice that emerged from the 'What Works' framework.

WORK–INTEGRATED LEARNING: WHAT DOESN'T WORK

The shift towards employability as a key graduate outcome has been widely documented, with attention paid to the importance of producing 'job-ready' graduates (Ashton and Noonan, 2013; Byrom and Aiken, 2014). WIL is an important element of this employability agenda, and much of this framework is based on the concept of 'experiential learning' (Dewey, 1916; Kolb, 1984). This means learning through work as opposed to learning *for* work.

WIL internships provide an opportunity for students to experience a particular workplace during their educational programme. This enables opportunities for reflection and development as part of an accredited learning environment.

It is clear from the literature that a significant number of HE institutions across the UK have implemented some form of WIL programme within their degree structure. However, due to the lack of guidance on how WIL should be both managed and monitored within curriculum design and assessment, the delivery is patchy and ad hoc (Ashton, 2016).

This is particularly relevant to creative-based HE courses whereby, in some cases, WIL mirrors the open-market model, requiring that students self-organise and self-manage as part of their degree programme. Research suggests that replicating the open-market system within HE reproduces the social inequalities identified across the industry (Allen et al., 2010; Frenette and Dowd, 2020).

A significant number of research articles consulted as part of this review pointed to the workload required to implement a successful WIL internship programme within HE. Writing in the context of Australia, Hewitt (2022) illustrates how HE has become the de facto regulator of all WIL due to a lack of coherent infrastructure. Based on 68 semi-structured interviews with Australian-based HE representatives, the paper highlights how the exponential rise of undergraduates has made management of WIL internships/placements challenging, particularly in relation to securing industry partners and effective governance:

"We would have at least 20,000 [placements] a year… if you don't have an enterprise solution that's consistent and over-time workflowed and systemised, you will die under the level of paperwork that you need to maintain that and people get frustrated and work around it. So, we absolutely have a corporate view around wanting to embed [WIL] in all learning outcomes and people demonstrate components of that but then you need a system to manage it." (Hewitt, 2022: 82)

Other examples from Canada (Brown, 2023), the US (Behn et al., 2012; Holsti et al., 2012) and India (Krishna and Babu, 2021) demonstrate that the creation and coordination of an effective WIL programme within HE requires specific skills and the necessary resources, including time and administrative support, factored into a HE professional's workload.

Unmanaged WIL programmes within HE can act as a deterrent for future creative and cultural workers. They can be discouraged from pursuing a career in the sector due to witnessing unfair power dynamics and an absence of role models.

Research commissioned by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU, now Advance HE) on HE-managed work placements in the creative and cultural sector demonstrated the inequalities faced by students when tasked with finding self-directed, open-market style internships as part of their degree course (Allen et al., 2010; Allen, 2013). The same research found those from marginalised backgrounds linked to race and gender were discouraged from pursuing a career in the creative sector as a result of their WIL experience during HE.

The ECU published a toolkit for HE providers with a series of guidance notes for effective, diverse and equitable access to work placements (Advance HE, 2010). One such recommendation was for systematic monitoring and regulation of WIL internships, along with clearer policies on diversity. So far, this systematic monitoring and regulation of WIL internships has not been introduced across the UK HE sector.

What is learnt in WIL is another crucial issue in the context of potentially negative or unfair experiences of work. If interns

witness or experience models of bad practice, then what can be learnt is that the industry is an unsafe and unwelcoming place. This can act as a deterrent for those who do not see a role for themselves within the sector and lead to wider inequality.

Because the WIL model assumes that what is 'learnt' is free from harm, it does not consider the subjective experiences of creative work (Nisbett and Walmsley, 2016; Coate et al., 2023). We already know that diverse identities can be marginalised or even excluded from the creative economy (Brook et al., 2020). Equitable access to employment through skills development can only take place if it corresponds to a wider shift towards equitable participation and employment across the entire life cycle of employment. This, obviously, includes WIL.

WIL must also create the opportunity to provide feedback on negative experiences to the industry to support meaningful change in working practices. Otherwise, WIL places the impetus on the student to either accept and engage in harmful and unfair employment models or reject creative work altogether.

A further challenge for WIL is competition with the open-market model. Unregulated internships are likely to undermine HE-based WIL interventions. As a result, unregulated internships taken outside of a formal course setting may reproduce the same issues attached to vulnerability, exploitation and widening inequality associated with open-market internships.

Evidence from German and Austrian analysis suggests the length and type of internship, as one form of WIL, matters. Mandatory internships, taken as part of WIL HE courses, are less effective for labour market outcomes than those where students have agency over choosing to take part (Klein and Weiss, 2011; Bittmann and Zorn, 2020). While the mechanisms underpin the different benefits, the findings show that students need some freedom to choose WIL as part of their course and support to find high-quality work experiences.

Finally, a major issue with the inclusion of internships/work placements as part of an HE or FE WIL course can prevent students from undertaking part-time paid work to supplement their income during education. While the balance between full-time study and paid work for living costs is complex, it is important to recognise the trade-offs between WIL engagement for later career success and the immediate needs of part-time paid work. Lack of recognition of these trade-offs may lead to WIL replicating exclusions and barriers for diverse cohorts of students.

FOSTERING EQUITY OF ACCESS, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN THE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL WORKPLACE

Following an extensive systematic literature review of peer-reviewed evidence, three main themes were identified as providing relevant insights: curriculum design focused on WIL; work-simulated learning; and partnerships with industry and intermediary bodies.

It is important to reiterate, along with the other APPG for Creative Diversity reports, that much of the literature reviewed for this topic has been drawn from other sectors that are not related to the creative and cultural industries due to a critical lack of evaluation and evidence on effective practice within this area.

Theme 1: Curriculum design focused on WIL
WIL-focused curriculum design emerged as an effective practice, with good evidence of employability for students. Through our review, evidence was drawn from institutions based in different countries, including Spain, Turkey, the US, Jordan, Australia, Canada and India alongside the UK, and we refer to these studies throughout this section. This demonstrates the global interest in applying and measuring this WIL model within HE.

The review found various approaches to gathering data on the relationship between WIL curriculum design and graduate outcomes. There is little consensus around how to measure graduate outcomes. This makes international comparisons problematic. Methods include comparative surveys undertaken at a specific timeframe following graduation, along with interviews conducted with students, HE and industry-based providers involved in WIL programmes.

The majority of research focused on employability with either no, or very little, reflection on what counts as 'good' or 'valuable' employment. One study (Greer and Waight, 2017) illustrated a distinction between 'employability' and 'career success' from a subjective perspective but did not provide conclusive evidence on how that is measured. There is evidence to suggest (for example, Cord and Clements, 2010) that undertaking an internship as part of an HE degree does increase employability. However, very few studies are disaggregated across characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity or social class.

Thus, there is a need for much more detailed evaluations of WIL interventions and the impact on employability. **There was a paucity of studies providing robust evidence regarding graduate employment outcomes in the creative sector in relation to participation in a WIL course or any comparison of the effectiveness of different learning models.**

Some studies gave clear indications of an increased percentage of success outcomes between cohorts. Other reports focus on student satisfaction outcomes and increased employability. As one report for the University Vocational Awards Centre at the University of Bolton mentions in its introduction (Brennan, 2005), 'employability' is one of a few ubiquitous terms that run the risk of being regarded as meaningless.

One aspect of WIL linked to employability is the development of 'soft' skills. While highly regarded, the concept of soft skills can be problematic if the applied interpretation reinforces a particular persona onto candidates leading to emotional strain on them to perform. This approach to raising employability emphasises becoming a good 'fit' for industry and seeks to homogenise the workforce, which, as previously discussed, can work against marginalised students who do not have relevant role models (Allen et al., 2010).

Morrison (2014) considers how HEIs can help foster a level of engagement among students to relate critically to the idea of transferrable skills and how they impact their understanding of their own employability. This is because "the transferable skills that employers want – particularly the 'soft' skills – come heavily raced, classed and gendered" (p.195).

More useful are programmes that target a specific skills gap. An example from Spain (Castelló et al., 2023) considers a WIL model developed as part of a diploma for chemical engineering graduates. The programme responds to a larger demand for sustainable food systems, driven by climate change. The course was split 50:50 in terms of academic and industry delivery, with a final 250-hour internship in a food company as an official requirement of the diploma. One outcome identified in this model is that it attracted a higher number of female students than male, providing growth in employment for women in engineering.

Another example is from a British digital fashion degree (Ryan, 2020). This WIL comprised a 10-month paid internship undertaken in partnership with a UK HE provider, Arts University Bournemouth.

It was set up to address an industry-specific skills gap. Based on qualitative interviews with graduates, there is evidence that this approach enabled targeted opportunities for those participants. It is also an example of the need for more data on the programme's relationship to broader graduate outcomes.

These examples demonstrate the potential for targeted WIL to facilitate employment opportunities in new labour markets and emerging employment roles. These roles are created through advances in technology and shifts in consumer demand. As such, they are well suited to a dynamic sector such as the creative industries.

Theme 2: Work-simulated learning

Work-simulated learning models are where employment is reproduced or simulated within the education setting. They also cover a range of associated practices, including mentoring schemes, employability modules, HE-based incubators and assignment tasks set by industry. These activities bring practitioners and stakeholders from industry into HE, either as mentors, teachers or assessors or as part of incubators, hubs or labs.

Job simulations within the education environment are a good example. While the literature has little that fits within a formal 'What Works' framework, there is evidence that job simulations can create innovative partnerships between HE institutions and employers. **There is also evidence that job simulations can reach students for whom other types of internships and WIL might not be appropriate due to barriers such as the need to undertake paid part-time work to support academic participation.**

Jaffar et al. (2010) reported on a partnership that simulated a typical IT business/enterprise, including devices, types of programmes used and business situations. Students suggested they gained insights into the world of business from the programme, but there was no detailed evaluation to demonstrate effective sustainable impact on diversity.

Similar models have been introduced in the US. Marquardson (2022) refers to the integration of an outpost cyber security company based within a university campus to provide students with work experience opportunities. Again, the evaluation did not fit a formal 'What Works' approach, but the paper provides some

lessons on how job simulation schemes can be effective.

Programmes need to tailor training and assessment levels to students' pre-existing work experiences. Programmes must also ensure the balance of incentives works between the employer/partner and the academic institution. In Marquardson's example, the host university paid the participating students, which facilitated employer engagement. In turn, this meant there were questions about long-term financial sustainability and thus this needs to be ensured early in future programmes. More regular contact with students was also needed, rather than leaving them to complete the full job simulation. Finally, making sure the host has the right technical capacities and legal frameworks in advance of the partnership is essential.
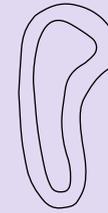
These recommendations have echoes of good widening participation (WP) practice as discussed in our other report. Moreover, tailored training and assessment, the need for more regular contact and setting the right incentives between employer and educational institution are vital to successful apprenticeships, too.

WIL has been used for journalism programmes. Valencia-Forrester's (2020) paper includes a summary of different WIL and WBL models with details on whether these were industry or university-led. It then assesses the impact across industry exposure, student agency, accessibility and staff workload. From this analysis, traditional internships struggle to offer student agency and accessibility, two aspects that are vital to fostering diversity in creative industries.

Traditional internships do offer high levels of industry exposure and are relatively low intensity for academic staff. In contrast, simulation-based models, including pop-up newsrooms, online simulations, event and advocacy-based journalism WIL, and flipped classrooms were more effective. While all these approaches are much more demanding in terms of staff time, their potential effectiveness to deliver greater accessibility is striking. As our work on WP has shown, proper resourcing is central to the success of diversity initiatives. The same is true for WIL to avoid replicating the failures of open-market internships.

Evaluations of work-simulated learning programmes are still an emerging area, particularly for courses related to creative industries. As such, 'What Works' type evaluation of these interventions is limited. As this is an under-researched area, a key

recommendation is to strengthen knowledge of work-integrated learning programmes facilitated through HE institution-industry partnerships as an opportunity for EDI-driven WIL models.

CASE STUDY: WORK SIMULATION ON BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY'S BA IN MEDIA PRODUCTION, CLIENT & AUDIENCE MODULE

Bournemouth University has included the Client & Audience module as part of the second-year BA (Hons) Media Production course since 2014. Students are organised into small project-focused teams – seven students per group – and tasked with developing a media solution to a communications challenge put to them by an external organisation.

Each project group operates like a small production company/agency, allocating themselves roles such as Account Manager, Creative Director and Project Manager. Dr Richard Wallis, who designed the original module, stated:

"We work mainly with organisations based in the Dorset region from a wide range of sectors, from industry to charities, healthcare initiatives and local authorities. As aspiring media producers, it's essential that students learn how to respond to the requirements of a third party and manage that relationship – media production doesn't happen in a vacuum."

The first meeting with clients is held at the university's Executive Business Centre and includes students hosting their clients over lunch. Clients describe their work to the students and outline the challenges at the heart of the brief they are giving them. As a way of minimising risk, each client is allocated two groups that work independently of each other. Following the first client meeting, each group then works intensively to creatively address the specific brief they have been given within a seven-week timeframe. Dr Wallis explains:

"The entire process, from the selection of clients to the delivery of the products, is carefully managed by the university. Clients understand that our primary role is to provide a safe space for students to learn. The point of this kind of project-based learning is that students must be allowed to make mistakes along the way."

The module culminates in a formal public presentation of

student work, and while there is feedback from the client as part of this process, tutors' assessment of projects is based not only on the quality of the work produced but on the overall management of the project, effective management of the client relationship and the written and verbal presentation of their ideas.

"Client & Audience was a really hands-on module," recalls Nathan Miller, videographer at US management consultancy Oliver Wyman and a recent Bournemouth graduate. *"For a lot of us, this was our first time working for a client – an invaluable experience that gave us insight into work in a real-world environment."*

It seems to work for clients, too. *"It was a great opportunity to engage with students and see the breadth of their efforts at the end of the seven-week period,"* said recent participant Gareth Owens of Dorset Community Foundation. Kate Hibbitt of HealthBus, another participant, agrees: *"The work created was outstanding. I was so impressed with their ideas, delivery and professionalism."*

Theme 3: Partnerships with industry and intermediary bodies
Almost every aspect of WIL requires strong partnerships between HE and industry. These partnerships can be facilitated in a range of different ways, from ad hoc relationships with individual staff, local or regional HE and sector industrial strategies to formal intermediary organisations with responsibility for brokering WIL connections.

A study from Germany (Postiglione and Tang, 2019) referred to the German HE dual VET (vocational education and training) model (sometimes referred to as TVET: technical-vocational education and training). This is an integrated HE institution-industry collaborative model that supports extensive dialogue and cooperation between vocational education and industrial enterprises. Students spend time at a vocational school after completing their HE studies in order to immerse themselves in industry and real-world challenges and thus receive a two-phase qualification: a university degree followed by 18 months of practical training in vocational schools (Fürstenau et al., 2014). The system combines WIL with WBL in that students are based both in the classroom and in the workplace, hence the 'dual' system.

A key indicator of cooperation in Germany is that technical-

vocational training funds, venues, facilities and trained instructors are provided almost entirely by enterprises. Enterprises enter into training contracts with students and provide financial support through a training allowance. To prevent exploitation, the behaviours of enterprises and VET institutions are constrained by elaborate legislation related to the dual VET system. There are also specific types of regulations for different industries that specify the obligations of enterprises, qualifications of trainers and procedure of training. The government acts as a bridge between enterprise and vocational schools and shares some expenses with employers.

The government has a key role between VET institutions and employers. It sets up the legal framework and delegates the authority to all relevant groups, including local chambers of commerce, employers, labour unions and related government departments. It also ensures equality of access, irrespective of prior qualifications. This is an example of the importance of intermediaries for WIL. Intermediary bodies can serve as a bridge between HE and industry, to manage and evaluate internships and work placements.

The term 'creative intermediaries' (Jakob and van Heur, 2015; Dent et al., 2023) is a recent re-articulation of the intermediary concept within creative industries research (Negus, 2002). Part of this term covers a range of organisations, including unions, guilds and support networks that connect creatives to work rather than audiences.

Intermediary organisations are strong and well-represented in the non-profit sector of the creative economy. The literature (Espada-Chavarria et al., 2021) suggests that working with an intermediary body to manage an internship programme acknowledges the amount of time and labour required to facilitate effective and safe placements.

Various models of intermediaries emerged from the wider literature, including libraries (McCarl, 2021); bespoke centres such as the BioHealth Informatics Research Center, Indiana University and Pudue University Indianapolis; and regional development agencies such as the partnership between the Queens Economic Development Corporation and Queens College City University New York for a graphic design internship programme (Weinstein, 2015).

Creating WIL models between HE providers and the industry

for emerging employment opportunities also creates the possibility for research collaboration and reflection. Evidence on increasing employment opportunities for normatively marginalised communities, such as university students with disabilities, enables reflection to develop more inclusive hiring practices (Espada–Chavarria et al., 2021).

There is an argument for increased diversity across all workplaces, particularly since the pandemic. Businesses now use technology to support different working practices, such as working from home or remote working and collective offices (Felstead and Jewson, 2012). Despite the fact that "stereotypical views of the workplace as a large office or production site need rethinking" (Pegg and Candell, 2016), there is still relatively little in the literature about the ways these changes in the physical spaces of the workplace support development skills and worker identities. This presents an opportunity to develop targeted support for internships within small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

SMEs face particular difficulties hosting internships due to the fragility of organisational support and the availability of sufficient staff numbers (Walmsley et al., 2012). Smaller organisations often report a lack of confidence in their ability to manage and guide the development of a student intern (Caddell et al., 2014) and this is a particular issue for SMEs within creative and cultural sectors. One model that could both support students with particular access barriers and address the issues of internship provision across SMEs is remote working internship programmes using virtual learning environments (VLEs). While further research needs to be conducted in this area, increasing VLEs in HEI–led WIL could take pressure off SMEs where funding and resources are constraints.

As with work–simulated programmes, research on intermediary bodies highlights the importance of proper resourcing for programmes. **Time and effort are needed to create an effective and safe internship programme. This impacts intermediaries' workloads and resources, as well as individual academics' workloads** (Atkinson, 2016). The case study example below offers an example of a strong commitment to effective, partnership–led WIL delivery between Northumbria University and local creative and cultural organisations based in the North East.

CASE STUDY: NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY'S EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Northumbria University collaborates with several organisations based within the North East, including New Writing North and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. Professor Katy Shaw, director of university partnerships at Northumbria University, described their approach to effective partnerships:

"The way in which we approach partnership working at Northumbria is that it is a stylistic trait of our delivery. It's at the core of our strategy, how we think of ourselves both as an institution but also how we think about our civic role, responsibility and engagement and how it can reach into our aims around widening participation."

Public engagement was identified as one of the pillars of their partnership model alongside teaching, learning and research, and impact and knowledge exchange. A key strength of the Northumbria model is the provision of financial support for internships both during HE and after graduation. Professor Shaw explains:

"With New Writing North, for example, we have a digital marketing internship that is ring–fenced for our students and our graduates. So once they've graduated, if they want to have a safe space to test a career in that, they can."

Shaw explained that through partnerships, students can experience different sections of the industry they might not have even known existed.

The award–winning collaboration with the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, BALTIC x NU, is a case in point. Northumbria University has been working with the Gateshead gallery for 10 years, with a shared vision to support creative talent development, 'place–making', public engagement and artistic excellence.

The partnership co–delivers teaching and learning, research and impact activities to engage students and the public in key debates in the discipline. The MA in Fine Art offered by the BALTIC x NU partnership offers a research–rich environment with an internationally renowned faculty of artists, curators and writers. It not only provides valuable work–related experience but looks towards the future of cultural work as diverse, networked and socially transformative. Speaking about the importance of relationship building through partnership, Professor Shaw outlines:

"Baltic is… surrounded by a lot of working-class communities that have intergenerational worklessness, as well as immigrant communities and asylum communities, so we were all interested in thinking about how we diversify audiences but also diversify the art workforce itself. By developing a new MFA in Contemporary Arts, we've been able to make an impact by tackling big externally funded projects together, offering collaborative doctoral awards and co-curating exhibitions."

As stated in the 'what doesn't work' section, research indicates WIL is not recognised within HE employment structures as a factor of academic staff job descriptions and therefore not applicable with regards to promotion and progression (Hewitt and Grenfell, 2022; Brown, 2023). As such, it has relied on individuals within HE to create and manage a WIL model based on their own available resources, contributing to ad hoc and patchy dissemination of best practice. Moreover, this lack of resourcing means there is no single evaluative framework for judging outcomes or making comparisons.

Where there are examples of positive practice, there is a lack of consensus on managing and evaluating WIL. This is coupled with the absence of legislative protection for interns. The result is a knowledge and welfare gap, irrespective of the current policy emphasis on employability.

A system to manage WIL would enable the positive elements of WIL, particularly those that level the playing field when compared to open-market internships. The intermediary model provides a coherent system of internship management and dissemination, working as a bridge but in collaboration with the HE provider and industry organisation.

In the US, the Native American Research Internship (NARI) programme is a very effective scheme within biomedicine (Holsti et al., 2021). To address the multiple health crises American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations are facing, the National Institutes of Health fund 10-week, paid summer research internships. They respect and support Native culture while providing hands-on basic, translational or clinical research opportunities to attract more AI/AN medical students.

AI/AN programme coordinators administer the NARI programme. Mentors include women and people from other underrepresented groups. They all possess a cultural curiosity to learn from the NARI students and an ability to provide a supportive research environment. Given the small number of AI/AN scientists and clinicians, it is not always possible to match students with an AI/AN research mentor.

Those involved in the scheme have their work recognised: faculty mentors are not paid, but participation in the programme is valued in promotion and tenure decisions. Although the American tenure system differs from the British HE framework, key elements indicate an approach to designing a high-quality internship system that uses funding and resources from external stakeholders and supports academic staff so they can facilitate such initiatives.

Another example of effective practice emerged from a paper on DFN Project SEARCH – a transition-to-work programme for school-aged students with learning disabilities (Riesen et al., 2022). Originating in the US, DFN Project SEARCH brings together businesses, secondary schools and adult services agencies (i.e. vocational rehabilitation, intellectual and developmental disability agencies) to create intern partnerships to prepare students with disabilities for competitive integrated employment. Their model was set up using existing employment legislation, which in the US context relates to the Fair Labor Standards Act. DFN Project SEARCH has now evolved into an international franchise.

CASE STUDY: DFN PROJECT SEARCH

DFN Project SEARCH is a one-year, transition-to-work internship for students with a learning disability and/or autism. The organisation was originally set up in the US in 1996 to address the need for diverse recruitment in the healthcare sector. It has now grown to an international franchise, facilitating partnerships between education providers and businesses to deliver an evidence-based and quality-assured internship programme.

DFN Project SEARCH acts as an intermediary that sits between the education provider and the employer. It provides a clear accountability framework between the intern and the employer and manages the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

The UK-based DFN Project SEARCH currently has 114

partnerships with employers from across the public and private sectors. The largest partnership is with NHS England, alongside partnerships with local authorities, HEIs, pharmaceuticals and estates management sectors. It has around 1,000 students on its internship programme every year. On average, 70 per cent of the young people graduate from their programme into employment, with 60 per cent in full-time paid employment.

A key element of the model is the attention to measuring impacts. This ability to deliver a programme and provide the necessary evaluation for all stakeholders, both students and providers, feeds into their future planning and ambition.

Claire Cookson, CEO, told the APPG:

"We are doing this to change lives and we are not going to cut corners. Our work is driven by our evaluative data and our ambition is to develop further. While we are pleased with our 70 per cent result, we want to find out what has happened to the other 30 per cent and our ambition is to facilitate 100 per cent of our young people into employment. The reason that this model works is because this is all we do. Our focus is on facilitative effective internship. We have the model and resources that we know work, and we can continue to monitor and develop it."

The DFN Project SEARCH UK has recently been awarded a UK government contract as part of a consortium working in partnership with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and British Association of Supported Employment (BASE) to increase the number of supported internships to 4,500 per year by March 2025. As part of the commission, they have tested the Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework.

As such, they are part of a shift towards the effective management and facilitation of internship opportunities. This management provides a clear accountability framework to protect the rights of all who participate and is driven by a commitment to social inclusion in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

During the 2023 House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry *At Risk: Our Creative Future*, witnesses and members gave voice to the perception that there is a mismatch between the education system and the needs of creative businesses. Whatever the validity of this perception, WIL within the context of degrees is one way of addressing these concerns.

At the same time, WIL provides a way of levelling the playing field between the unregulated world of open-market internships that underpin many of the hiring practices driving the lack of diversity in the creative industries, and the needs of the fast-paced, project-to-project, risk management needs of the creative sector.

However, there are still major challenges to understanding 'What Works' to support equity, diversity and inclusion in WIL for creative HE. The research base, as we have demonstrated, is still underdeveloped.

There is some data on gender with regards to WIL initiatives and access to certain professionals, but this is limited. There is very little on other forms of exclusion nor is there much on the intersectional nature of exclusions within the workplace and how to mitigate these exclusions through WIL.

Much of the research linked to this area is based on student surveys or employability alumni data. There is little robust evidence on the design process for WIL, the impact of different WIL models and alumni experiences. As Ramaiah and Robinson (2022) note, much more 'What Works' evidence is needed, including better data collection, a more concrete theory of change and much, much more testing and sharing of best practice across the sector.

The employability framework associated with WIL has not sufficiently addressed questions of equity, diversity and inclusion. There are ongoing issues of poor working conditions and practices in the creative economy. Challenging the creative sector to deliver 'good work' (Carey et al., 2023) is a key part of current government policy (DCMS, 2023).

These two issues suggest the need for a WIL curriculum designed to foster inclusive workplaces at its centre, rather than adapting to the ongoing issues of the creative economy's poor working practices. This task, alongside the need to attract industry

partners and generate better engagement from the industry with WIL, could be achieved by showing high-quality examples of effective practice.

To share effective practice, resources are needed. These include high-quality What Works research on WIL in creative HE, as well as resources to support HE, intermediary and industry staff engaged in WIL. There is also, in the context of ongoing inequalities in the creative economy, the ethical issue for HE in terms of sending students to WIL and staff conducting research.

WIL is one aspect of the work experience that is seen as essential to enter the creative sector. It is part of HE-based provision. There are also other work experience-based routes that offer formal qualifications as an alternative to HE (WBL or the VET model). Our next paper looks at the UK's system of creative apprenticeships, examining their role in equity, diversity and inclusion for the creative economy.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 5.1: Glossary of terms and acronyms from the Scopus spreadsheet