

The student experience of assessment and feedback in work-placement settings across different programs within an Irish university

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Assessment and feedback remain one of the biggest challenges when designing work-integrated learning (WIL) programs. Motivated by the paucity of student-facing research, this study explores the student experiences of assessment and feedback on work-placement modules across a variety of programs within a single university. Two hundred and seventy students from different disciplines who had completed a work-placement module the previous academic year participated by contributing quantitative and qualitative data via a survey. The data reveals that, both within and across programs, participants found assessment divisive. For some, assessment supported employability and the development of key graduate attributes while others reported that the assessment process did not support learning, as it was not relevant, or distracting. The findings reveal a gap between the theory and practice of how authentic assessment is actualized across a range of work-placement modules and carry practical implications for higher education institutions striving to enhance WIL experiences.

Keywords: Authentic assessment, work placement, internship, reflection/reflective practice.

In recent years, the higher education sector has renewed its focus on preparing students to be industry-ready (Goh & King, 2020). Work-integrated learning (WIL), one approach to achieving this goal, can be defined as an “educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students’ discipline of study and/or professional development” (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38). WIL is viewed by universities as a means of enhancing graduate employability (Silva et al., 2018), with employability having a broader conceptualization than developing skills or securing employment (Jackson & Cook, 2023). While WIL can take a variety of forms, the specific focus of this study is on credit-bearing, work-placements or industry internships, defined as that part of an academic program where a student spends a period of their time away from the university, at work in an appropriate industrial or professional setting (Robinson et al., 2016). This specific focus aligns with the professional WIL model, defined by the WIL Curriculum Classification (WILCC) Framework (Dean et al., 2020).

The empirical research exploring assessment in WIL is limited (Bosco & Ferns, 2014; Lasen et al., 2018). This is somewhat surprising given that assessment remains “one of the biggest challenges in designing WIL programs” (Orrell, 2011, p. 9). Authenticity in WIL is influenced by student reflexivity, student capability to judge and monitor the quality of their work, and co-ordination among students, academic, and host-organization partners (Ajjawi et al., 2022). Hence, in practice, the authenticity of WIL is framed by student perceptions. Consequently, this research is motivated by the “paucity of studies” (Boud et al., 2020, p. 1; Nyanjom et al., 2020, p. 300) focusing on the student perspective and the need

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"to look at practices – that is, what actually happens" (Ajjawi et al., 2022, p. 44) so that WIL assessment and feedback practice can be better understood from the student perspective.

ASSESSING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

The complexity of the assessment challenge has been labelled a 'wicked problem' (Canning & Eve, 2020). In WIL contexts this complexity is compounded as learners are often placed in diverse settings, with limited university oversight and assessment is expected to both measure and support a broad range of complex professional competencies, and often involving a large number of assessors (Lasen et al., 2018; Orrell, 2011). While the WIL context is clearly very different, the literature indicates that the assessment process is similar to other modules (Jackson et al., 2017). This is problematic as less relevant assessments can be viewed, by students, as a ticking boxes exercise (Elmholdt et al., 2016). Assessment design is complicated by recommendations that the host-organization supervisor take an active role in the assessment process (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Bosco & Ferns, 2014). Consequently, assessment design is one of the most challenging issues associated with implementing WIL at universities (Orrell, 2011).

Bosco and Ferns (2014) proposed the Authentic Assessment Framework (AAF) as an evidence-based lens to support assessment design in WIL contexts. AAF centers on the four criteria of professional settings, high order cognitive skills, reflexivity, and industry partners. Building on this foundation, Boud et al. (2020) and Ajjawi et al. (2022) identified a number of core principles associated with authentic assessment. Principle 1 states that assessment activities should be worthwhile learning activities and should support the development of independent learners with the capacity to monitor and judge the quality of their own work and learning. This principle resonates with aspects of Bosco and Ferns (2014) criteria relating to higher-order cognitive skills and reflexivity. The second principle emphasizes that assessment focus on achievements while on work-placement and the development of a professional identity. Ajjawi et al. (2020, p. 312) identifies "a lack of shared endeavor and coordination among the key stakeholders – student, university and industry" as the root of many assessment issues in WIL and consequently principle 3 states that WIL assessment needs to be re-framed as a collaboration between students, academic and industry partners. Boud et al. (2020) proposed that assessment needs to reflect the nature of the actual learning undertaken by students while on work-placement and have the capacity to incorporate unplanned and unexpected outcomes as a fourth principle.

While student reports on the overall work-placement experience are usually positive there are indications that their assessment and feedback experience may be less positive. The study by Freestone et al. (2007) reports low scores around clear goals, and concerns around the clarity of assessment expectations were also expressed by Vuoskoski and Poikela (2015). Feedback on performance is also reported to be an issue (Freestone et al., 2007; Lasen et al., 2018; Vuoskoski & Poikela, 2015). Students report a disconnect between the useful learning that happens while on work-placement and the assessment which often does not try to capture what was actually learned and done (Jackson et al., 2017). Ajjawi et al. (2020) reports that students identified work-placement with a range of professional skills related to collaborating and communicating with others, but assessment was constructed as an individualistic endeavor often with a focus on reflective writing. This disconnect and limited relevance has resulted in strong feelings of discontent being reported in some cases, for example, "I hated the assessment. I thought it was pointless" (Ajjawi et al., 2020, p. 311). Studies have revealed student dissatisfaction with the limited influence that the host-organization supervisor has on grading (Bok et al., 2013) and students would prefer if they could be assessed based on what they did and achieved on work-placement (Ajjawi et al., 2020).

Reflective journals are frequently used as an assessment instrument in work-placement settings (Ferns & Moore, 2012) and can enable learners “to go back and revisit that situation and think about the right decisions and what did I do wrong” (Nyanjom et al., 2020, p. 310). However, the student experience varies. In the context of initial teacher education, Buchanan et al. (2022) identified that participants struggled to set relevant and actionable professional goals, to enact those goals while on placement, critically reflect on their practice and to connect university-based assignments to placement practice. Some studies have found that students’ reflections only serve to appease the assessors (Maloney et al., 2013) while others report that student submissions focus on “the description of the experience rather than the learning from reflecting on the experience” (Murphy & O’Mahony, 2023, p. 355). Students recommend that relevance and authenticity can be increased by placing more emphasis on sharing, analyzing and reflecting on something achieved during the internship and how that might impact or shape their future selves (Wilson-Mah, 2019). Feedback on early or draft reflective pieces can have a powerful impact by shifting the focus to reflective, critical and analytic writing (Nyanjom et al., 2020) and hence placement supervisors are key actors in overcoming barriers to critical reflection (Buchanan et al., 2022).

Much of the existing literature is limited by sample size and research instrument. In the systematic review by Lasen et al. (2018) most sample sizes are quite small with the two notable exceptions being the 658 participants in the Levett-Jones et al. (2011) and the study by Jones (2013) which included 168 participants. Many of the mixed-methods studies use routine course evaluation questionnaires or quality assurance instruments to explore the WIL assessment experience (Bok et al., 2013; McNamara, 2013). A more significant limitation is that many studies explored WIL within a single discipline, for example, nursing (Levett-Jones et al., 2011), medical education (Bok et al., 2013; McNamara, 2013), education (Jones, 2013) and law (McNamara, 2013). Hence, this study contributes to the literature by focusing on the under-researched topic of assessment and feedback within work-placement contexts using a bespoke survey, that was completed by 270 students across multiple disciplines not traditionally associated with WIL. In doing so, it answers calls for more student-facing, practice-based research so that assessment and feedback can be “better understood from the student perspective” (Ajjawi et al., 2022, p. 44).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Question

Motivated by the paucity of research, this study explores the following research question:

How do Munster Technological University students experience assessment and feedback while on work-placement?

Research Method

A mixed methods approach was adopted to answer this research question. The argument for mixed methods is partly driven by dissatisfaction with the “limitations of traditional mono-method studies – all very well in their way but unable to address fully the most complex research questions” and the recognition that qualitative and quantitative methods are “nearly always more powerful when used in combination than in isolation” (Gorard & Taylor, 2004, p. 4). The combination can, for example, allow researchers to access a larger sample while also allowing for some in-depth exploration of the research question. Triangulation, through combining different data sources, can furthermore help to reduce bias and act to enhance the trustworthiness of findings (Gorard & Taylor, 2004).

Participants

A strategic objective of Munster Technological University is to equip learners to succeed in the world of work. Therefore, work-placement modules feature as graded modules in most programs and are completed by almost all students within the university. Academic departments and program teams are free to design these modules to enhance their relevance to the discipline learning context, consequently there is considerable variation across programs. Table 1 documents some of this variation. In most, but not all cases, academics within the department are tasked with the responsibility for coordinating the work-placement module along with supervising and assessing students while on work-placement.

Ethical approval (Approval No. MTU22067A) to conduct this study was received from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Participating programs were those where both the Head of Department and academic work-placement coordinator (as primary gatekeepers) volunteered to participate. All students from participating programs that completed placement were invited to participate in February of 2023 and a reminder sent a week later. In total, 270 students completed the survey from 32 programs. Figure 1 illustrates participation by (anonymized) program while Figure 2 presents the participating programs by discipline area and Figure 3 student participation by discipline area. Additional demographic information, for example, age, gender, ethnicity was not collected.

FIGURE 1: Number of participants per program.

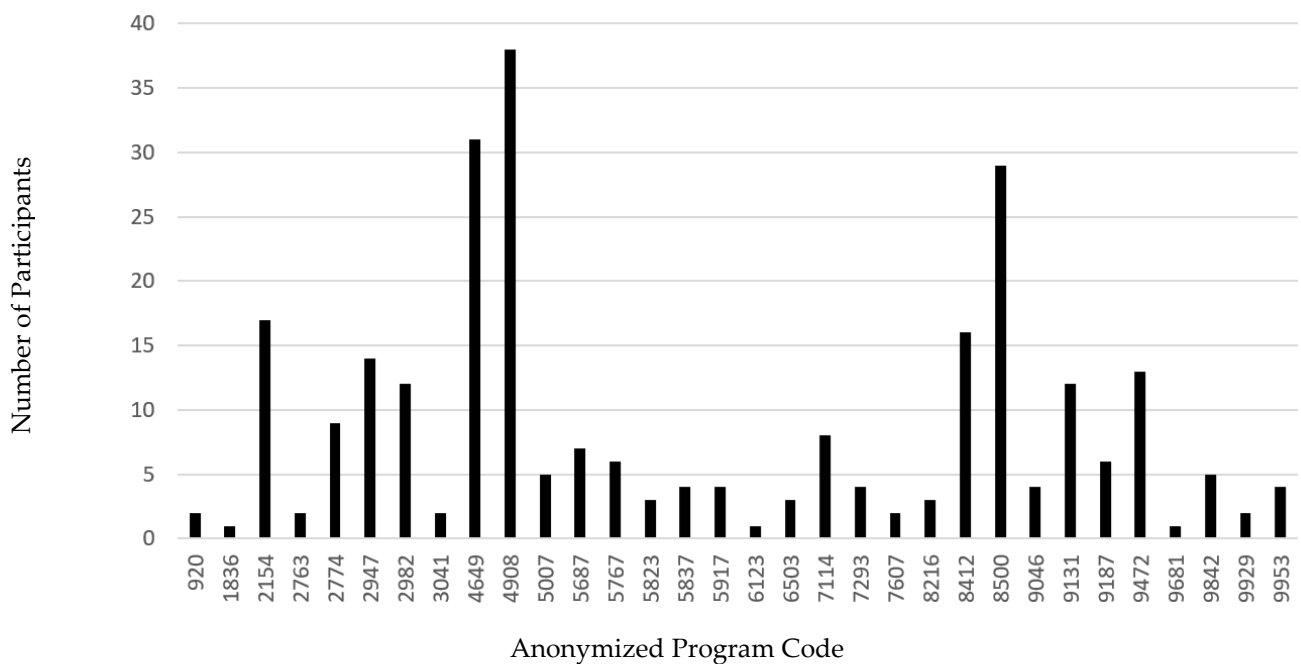


FIGURE 2: Distribution of participating programs by discipline area.

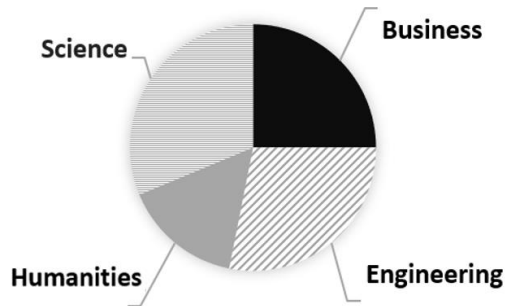


FIGURE 3: Distribution of participants per discipline area.

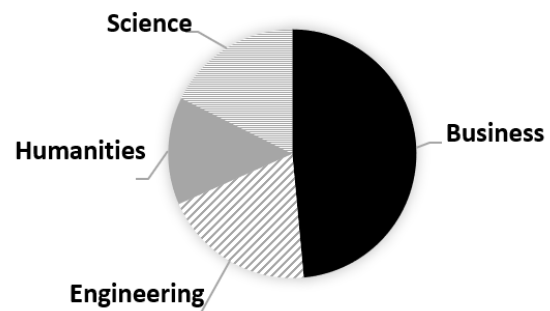


Table 1 presents key assessment details relating to the ten programs presented in Figure 1 that had the most respondents. To preserve anonymity, program codes are not included in this table. As documented in the final row, on average placement accounts for 24 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits and lasts for 12.7 weeks. On average, the host-organization supervisor contributes the largest weighting (37%) to the final grade, followed by reflective journals (23%), final presentations (17%) and final reports (15%).

TABLE 1: Summary assessment details relating to the ten programs that had the most (> 9) respondents.

ECTS Credits	Duration (weeks)	Assessment Breakdown					
		Host-Organization Supervisor	Final Report	Placement Visit	Reflective Journal	Presentation + Q&A	Placement Application
5	6	10	30	0	60	0	0
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
30	15	10	50	10	0	30	0
10	8	20	70	10	0	0	0
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
15	8	30	0	0	50	20	0
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
30	15	50	0	0	20	20	10
24	12.7	37%	15%	2%	23%	17%	6%

Questionnaire Design

The design of the survey instrument began by considering existing instruments, for example, the Placement Evaluation Tool (Cooper et al., 2020), the Work Experience Questionnaire (Freestone et al., 2007) and the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003). A limitation with the existing work-placement questionnaires is that they marginalize the role of assessment and especially feedback. The Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) was designed for traditional academic courses with many questions referencing 'studying' and 'exams'. Furthermore, the contemporary

assessment literature emphasizes acting on feedback (Tai et al., 2018) an idea that is not clearly captured by the AEQ. Hence, the AEQ was used as the basis for the designed questionnaire, but the final instrument was substantially different to better capture the experiential nature of work-placement and contemporary assessment ideas. The final questionnaire consisted of 23 Likert-scale questions (see Figures 4 – 6) and four open-ended questions (see Tables 2 - 4). The on-line questionnaire was piloted with a small group of students and academic staff and the feedback used to adjust both the presentation and wording to enhance usability and clarity.

Data Analysis

Textual responses (e.g., Disagree) were automatically converted to a numeric scale and for each question the percentage of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed was calculated. This percentage is labelled as Student Agreement (%) in Figures 4 - 6. The inductive content analysis approach advocated by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) was used to analyze responses to the open-ended questions. The response to each open-ended question was coded separately by identifying meaningful segments and assigning codes to those segments (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Relationships between these codes were then explored and used to create the categories presented in Tables 2 – 4. This process was completed independently by the first two authors and the resulting codes and categories compared, discussed and agreed.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Figures 4, 5, and 6 present results relating to the overall placement assessment experience (Figure 4), the clarity of assessment expectations while on placement (Figure 5) and the feedback experience before and during placement (Figure 6).

FIGURE 4: Participants overall placement assessment experience.

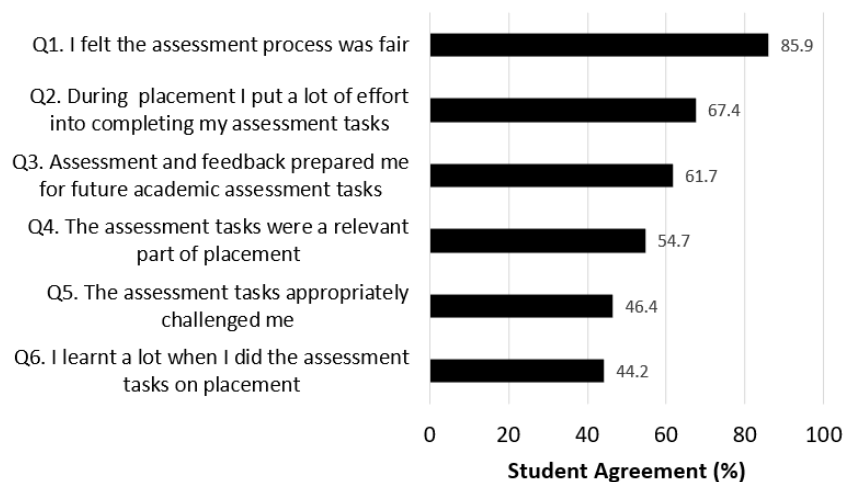


FIGURE 5: Clarity of the placement assessment expectations while on placement.

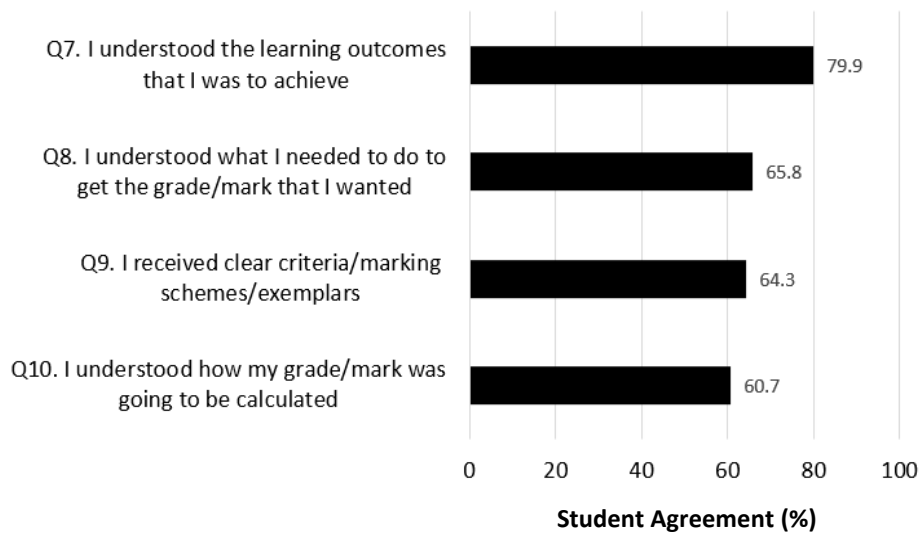
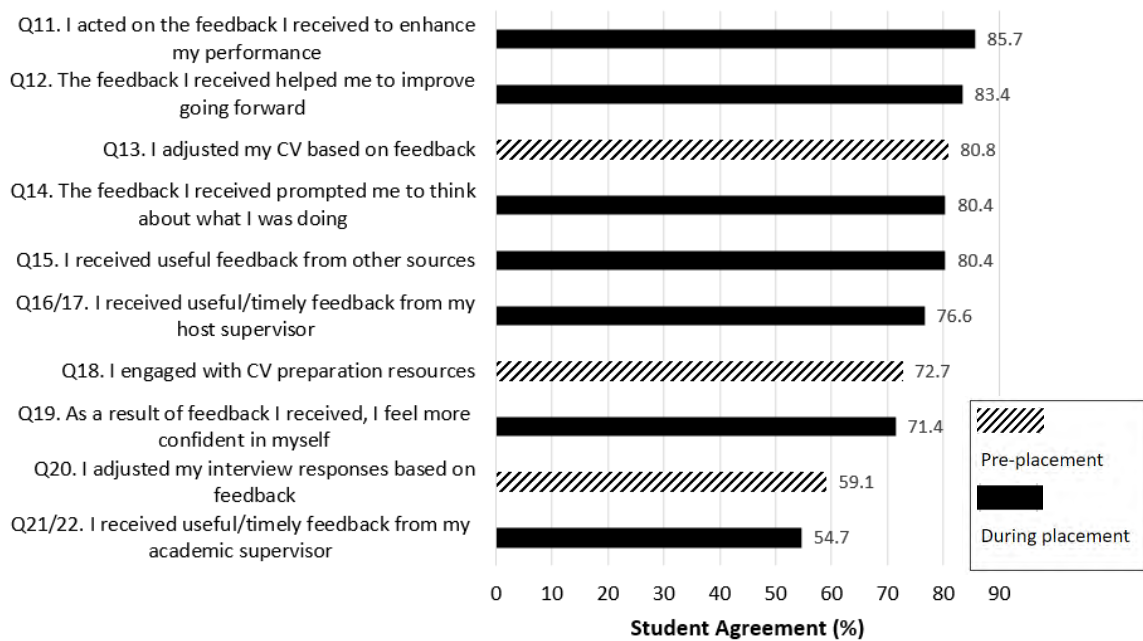


FIGURE 6: Participants' experience of feedback pre-placement and during placement.



Qualitative Results

Tables 2 to 4 present the qualitative analysis for each of the four open-ended questions. Of the 270 responses only 38 (14.1%) stated that they felt the grading process was not fair and subsequently responded to the open-ended question Q26. Responses to Q26 tended to mirror responses to Q25 (Table 4). For example, lack of support was a common response to Q26 and recommendations for more support a frequent suggestion for Q25. Consequently, similar categories were identified and for brevity are combined in Table 4. They are accounted for separately in the frequency column with the first number (e.g., 34 for the category Support) representing the frequency of appearance in response to Q25

and the second number (e.g., 9 for the category Support) represents the frequency of appearance for Q26. Figure 7 then graphically summarizes the main findings from the qualitative analysis with a total of 183 codes recorded for the *largely positive* category and 190 codes associated with the *challenges* category.

TABLE 2: Qualitative analysis of responses to Q23 'In what way(s) did the assessment process that you experienced during placement support your learning?'

Category	Freq.	Representative example quotes from participants
Graduate Attributes and Professional Development	79	It allowed me to reflect on things that I had difficulty with and identify how I could improve on them going forward. It also allowed me to reflect on my communication methods, which ones worked well and didn't work well. It made me see how far I had progressed and made me aware of the amount of new knowledge gained. It was also useful learning for me in other areas outside of college (in work, for example) as reflecting helps me to become more self-aware. Preparing and presenting my presentation about my placement helped me develop my presenting skills and confidence. Having goals and planning how I was going to achieve those goals. I learned to appreciate factors like good teamwork and leadership in my workplace.
Did not support learning	44	I learned on the job. The assessments didn't help with that. I feel that it wasn't beneficial for me I was just writing what the supervisors wanted to hear. The weekly reflections weren't relevant. It didn't. N/A
Keeping track of progress	17	It was a good way to track what you had done. Kept a great diary on what I had done in the work placement day to day. I found the weekly journals very useful for tracking progress and work done.

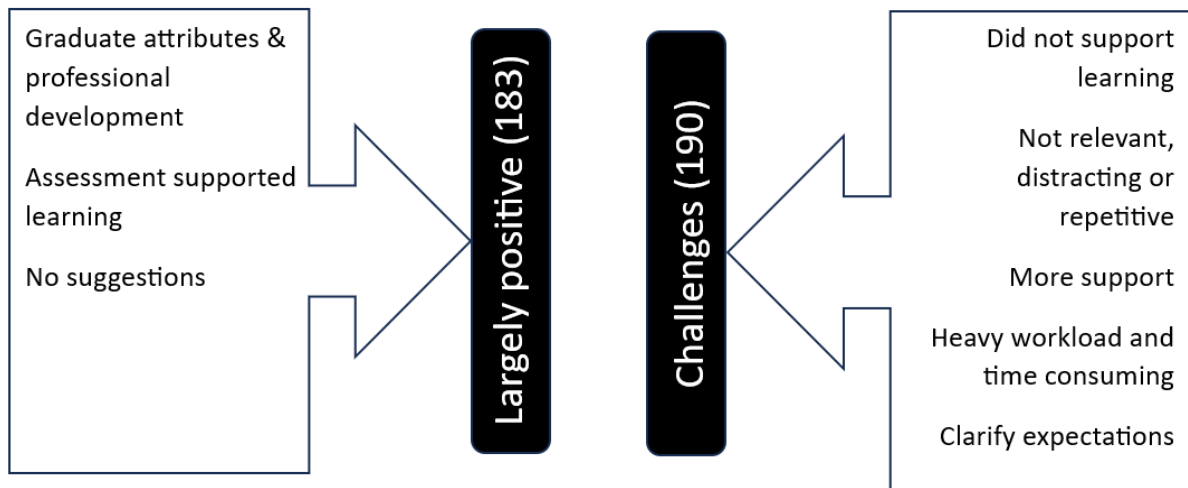
TABLE 3: Qualitative analysis of responses to Q24 'In what way(s) did the assessment process that you experienced during placement hinder or detract from your learning?'

Category	Freq.	Representative example quotes from participants
Assessment supported learning	72	The assessment process neither hindered nor detracted from my placement. I do not feel that it hindered or detracted from my learning. N/A.
Not relevant, distracting or repetitive	40	Pointless, extra work. Wasting time while I could have been focusing on work. ... the weekly reflections weren't reflective of the work we were doing. It was work that benefited nobody, not me my employer it was only something for the lecturer to correct. ...and not all the questions were relevant to my placement, so it was hard to come up with answers. Weekly based reflection can become irritating when working on multi week projects as it can often feel like unnecessary repetition.
Heavy workload	32	I found the weekly journals time consuming while working. I had to take time out of my day to finish it at the end as my work took priority. Sometimes I had to take time off work to complete certain elements of the assessment process which took me out of the learning environment. Working 9-5, not including travel to and from the workplace, proved to be challenging while completing a large number of written reports due to the assessments. I was working 9-5 Monday to Friday and 10-4 on Saturdays so it was hard to fit in time to get the [assessment] work done.

TABLE 4: Qualitative analysis of responses to Q25 'What suggestions would you make to enhance the work placement assessment process?' and Q26 'Tell us more about why you think your placement was not fairly marked?'

Category	Freq.	Representative example quotes from participants
Assessment Focus	48 + 6	<p>Have the work you produced graded.</p> <p>This should all be based on the tasks you complete in placement.</p> <p>I would suggest that for the weekly reflections focusing more on the student and the work they are doing and how they can better themselves in what they are doing.</p> <p>More relevant reflections throughout the weeks.</p> <p>I'd do a 5 Min video log each week and students can showcase what they learned.</p> <p>Possibly an in-class presentation or discussion on the placement would be much better.</p> <p>Give a list of prompts for reflections and allow students to pick ones that are relevant.</p> <p>Maybe have a larger pool of questions to choose from and allow students to choose accordingly.</p>
No suggestions	35	<p>I think the process was really good and got me ready for work after college.</p> <p>Nothing I don't think, it may be quite good as it is.</p> <p>I can't really think of anything better than the logbook.</p> <p>N/A.</p>
Support	34 + 9	<p>Was given a document for recording tasks and that was all.</p> <p>No feedback was given on assignments.</p> <p>When we asked for more, we got nothing.</p> <p>More feedback is needed from college staff and work placement host.</p> <p>More communication between the student and the college.</p> <p>More on site visits from placement coordinator.</p> <p>If at all possible, more communication between the classmates, so they can give each other tips/assistance they might find helpful.</p>
Clarify expectations	19 + 6	<p>I didn't feel I was provided with enough information from Munster Technological University with regards to what was expected.</p> <p>Improvement in communicating with students of what is required to be included on their assessment.</p> <p>Clearly explain what the different assessments are and give examples of appropriate answers to the assessments.</p> <p>It felt like guess work for some assignments.</p> <p>Perhaps a clearer assessment framework to ensure that the appropriate rework is done.</p>

FIGURE 7: Summary of qualitative coding.



Analysis at the Program Level

The quantitative and qualitative data were also analyzed at the program level to determine if the student experience varied across programs. For each program, the number of codes corresponding to the largely positive category and the challenges category were determined. The difference between both generates an indication as to whether participants were broadly satisfied with their assessment experience on that program or not. As participation numbers varied across programs, this difference was then normalized by dividing by the total number of codes for each program. This normalized difference is presented in Figure 8. To interpret Figure 8, the positive bar for the program 2774 implies that there were 17% more largely positive codes than challenges codes. Quantitatively, the average Student Agreement (%) statistic for all 23 Likert-scale questions was computed for the entire data set and the same average was computed for each program. The difference between both the University and program average is presented in Figure 9. In this case, considering the program 2774 the average Student Agreement (%) was 6% lower than the institutional average.

FIGURE 8: Qualitative analysis by program.

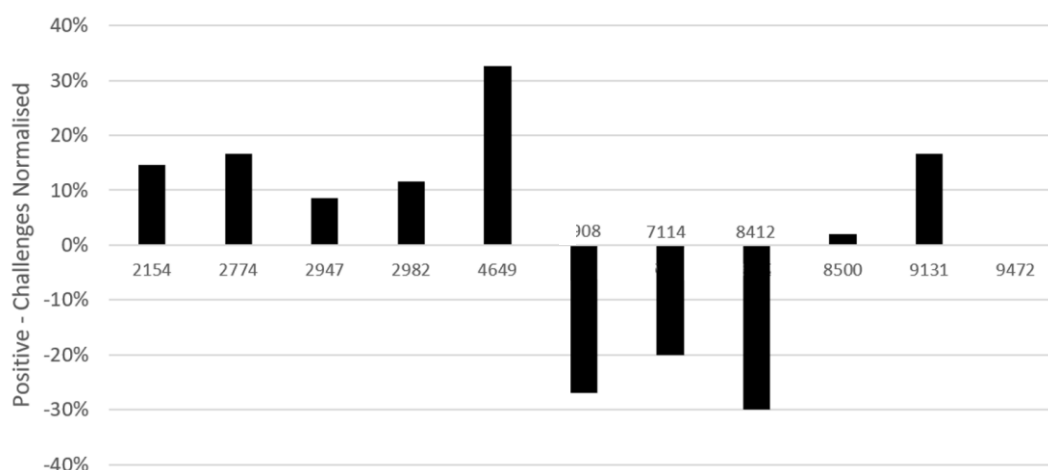
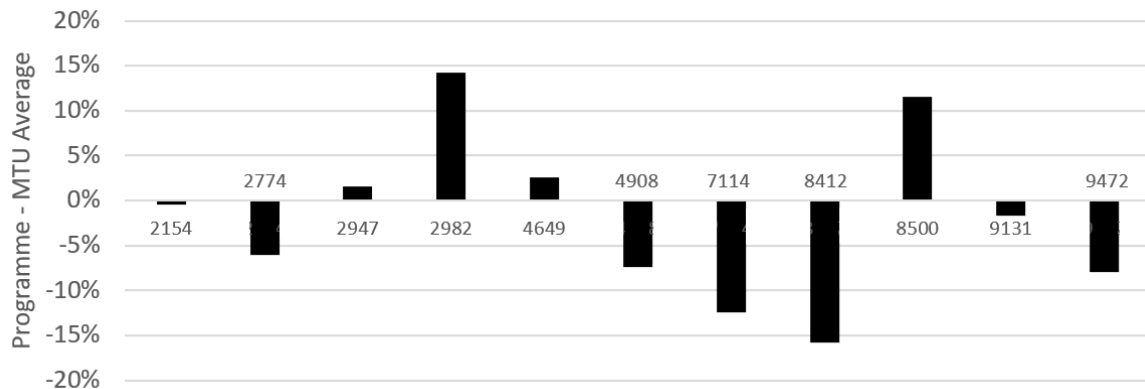


FIGURE 9: Quantitative analysis by program.



DISCUSSION

In this section the recent theoretical frameworks of Boud et al. (2020) and Ajjawi et al. (2022) are used to reflect on the findings and draw out some implications for assessment practice. Principle 1 implies that assessment activities “should be worthwhile learning activities in their own right and not just be measures of the achievement of learning outcomes” (Boud et al., 2020, p. 2). While Table 3 indicates that, for some participants, assessment supported learning and the development of graduate attributes (Table 2), this type of learning is not what is implied by Principle 1. Principle 1 is focused on leveraging the potential of assessment to support learners to become more independent and to develop skills related to evaluative judgement (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Boud et al., 2020). There is little evidence of this potential being actualized in the collected data. Rather, students’ descriptions of feedback, for example, “getting feedback from placement supervisor” and “feedback given to me directly” suggest dependence rather than independence. Participants response to the relevance of assessment tasks (Q4), the challenge associated with them (Q5) and the learning derived from them (Q6) is lukewarm. Similarly, Table 2 reveals that for many, the purpose of assessment was “to track what you had done.” These descriptions contrast with the recommendation by Ajjawi et al. (2022) that assessment is positioned to develop “students’ evaluative judgment as an explicit goal of assessment activities” (p. 39).

The extent to which assessment encouraged participants to gather evidence of work-placement achievements (Principle 2) is contested. The qualitative analysis reveals that for some participants the assessment process helped develop a range of graduate attributes and aided their professional development (Table 2). The reflective assignments were frequently associated with the capacity to “identify how I could improve” and “become more self-aware” by these participants. Figure 6 suggests that the feedback these participants received helped to enhance their performance with most participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that feedback prompted them to think about what they were doing and helped them to improve and enhanced their confidence. Considering the extent of this professional learning and achievement, it is perhaps not surprising that, when asked to identify ways to enhance the assessment process, these participants responded with “I thought it was very good” and “I think the process was really good.”

Unfortunately, this was not a unanimous perspective and other participants reported that assessment did not support learning, that the assessments were distracting, not relevant or repetitive, that they needed more support, that the workload was too heavy and that they were unclear what they were

supposed to do for the assignments. Participants reported that they were “just writing what the supervisors wanted to hear.” Some participants felt that the “weekly reflections weren’t relevant” and while acknowledging that they were “meant to get me to reflect, but it felt more like just work to be graded.” There was a clear sense that some participants were “learning more from the placement itself”. Some participants also reported that the weekly nature of the reflections “was tough to complete while also working long hours on placement.”

Principle 2 also states that assessment should help develop professional identity. Participants portrayal of their professional identity was focused on professional knowledge or skills developed during work-placement. Tomlinson and Jackson (2021) argue that professional identity also includes social and cultural capital dimensions and involves the development of self-authorship or professional self-efficacy, that is, trust in one’s own internal voice and work-based confidence. While Q19 indicates that participants’ confidence grew, the other dimensions were absent from participants’ data.

Principle 3 states that WIL assessment is a collaboration between students, academics and industry partners. Table 1 demonstrates that, on average, the host-organization supervisor awarded 37% of the marks for placement. This contrasts with other reports where the host-organization supervisor contributes little to the formal grading process (Ferns & Zegwaard, 2014; Jackson et al., 2017; Lasen et al., 2018). The host-organization also played a significant informal role with almost 77% of participants reporting that they received useful and timely feedback from the host-organization supervisor. Perhaps because of this input, almost 86% of participants report that they believed the assessment process was fair. However, in our data there was no evidence that assessment involved a “three-way negotiation between the key stakeholders” (Ajjawi et al., 2022, p. 42).

Principle 4 recommends that assessment reflects the nature of the actual learning undertaken by individual students (Boud et al., 2020). Here again the data is contested (Figure 7). In principle, the contribution that the host-organization supervisor makes to the final grade should provide opportunities for the actual work that was undertaken to be rewarded. To enhance the assessment of work-placement, participants are recommending having “the work you produced graded” and that reflective journals include “a larger pool of questions to choose from.” These suggestions would enable the assessment process “to incorporate unplanned and unexpected learning outcomes” (Boud et al., 2020, p. 2).

Figure 7 showcases that participants’ perceptions of the assessment process are quite polarized. Figures 8 and 9 reveal that the way in which assessment is actualized within individual work-placement settings is contributing to some of this polarization. These figures demonstrate, for example, that participants are largely satisfied with assessment and feedback practices within the programs labelled 4649, 2982 and 8500 and less satisfied with practices in the programs labelled 4908, 7114 and 8412. However, even within these programs there is evidence of individual variation. Within the program 2982 for example, some participants reported positively on their assessment and feedback experience with responses like it “helped my understanding of my job and what I was to learn”; “I was able to reflect on my learning” and it “helped me think through what I was seeing and doing.” Other individuals however claimed that they found that the assessment process “distracted you from doing work,” that you “shouldn’t have to make up information just to fill your word count and to tick a box” and that “it is just another job to do after a day of work.” Further research is necessary to fully understand these individual and contrasting experiences.

Recommendations to Enhance Work-Placement

This section contains some suggested recommendations to enhance work-placement programs within Munster Technological University which may also apply to other higher education settings. However, it is acknowledged that different institutions may implement work-placement in different ways and, therefore, these recommendations may not apply to all. To help embed Principle 1, including a formal learning outcome that requires learners to make judgements about the quality of their work and learning in each work-placement module, is recommended. This new learning outcome could then be addressed by embedding self-assessment and peer-reviews as part of the assessment elements. This implies developing a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and standards (Tai et al., 2018). The assessment requirement for reflections needs to be focused on developing critical thinking rather than logging a description of work activities. The weekly requirement should be reconsidered to allow students more time to reflect. Reflections should support students to develop their professional identity by reflecting on the changes they see in themselves and their possible future roles in the workplace. Feedback from supervisors needs to re-focus on calibrating students' evaluative judgement.

Incorporating elements of choice so that assessments are more focused on students and what they are doing might simultaneously allow students to portray their achievements and help address the perceived lack of relevance reported by some participants. Furthermore, there is scope for reflections to include broader dimensions of professional identity. To better address Principle 3, it is proposed that host-organizations be involved in the design of the work-placement modules and explore the use of learning contracts. Given the significant influence of the host-organization in grading, it is important to ensure the student has a positive experience by enhancing the assessment and feedback literacy and skillset of host-organization supervisors. There is also a need to enhance the assessment and feedback literacy of students and academic supervisors (Carless & Winstone, 2023; Little et al., 2024; Molloy et al., 2020). However, as highlighted by Dean et al. (2023) the challenges experienced by the placement supervisors in academia, for example, workload and limited recognition, may act to limit the extent to which these recommendations can be enacted.

Limitations

A limitation is that data was drawn from a single University which impacts the potential to generalize. Data was collected via a single data source, a self-reporting questionnaire, and reliability may be impacted by sources of bias, for example, social-desirability bias. However, the broad levels of consistency found between participants quantitative and qualitative responses helps to increase the trustworthiness of the data.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the student perspective, coupled with limited prior research, provided the motivation to collect empirical data and explore how students at the university experienced assessment and feedback while on work-placement. The breadth of programs, the loosely coupled nature of work-placement and the contribution of the host-organization supervisor to the grading process all contribute to the novelty of this study. Participants perceived assessment to be fair but divisive with some reporting that it supported the development of graduate attributes while others report that assessment was not relevant. Considering that the host-organization supervisors contribute, on average, 37% to the final grade, this perceived lack of relevance is somewhat surprising. Application of the theoretical frameworks proposed by Boud et al. (2020) and Ajjawi et al. (2022) revealed a distinct theory-practice gap. Areas for enhancement include a greater focus on evaluative judgement, more choice, a broader

interpretation of professional identity and a collaborative approach to assessment design and implementation while on WIL placement. It is anticipated that these findings have implications for other institutions. More generally, there is a need for additional research to better understand work-placement assessment from the student perspective and enhance assessments' potential to shape learning.

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