



# Impact Academy: Student self-discovery in an innovative co-designed work- integrated learning journey



Dr Simon Thornton, Dr Meg Colasante  
Bachelor of Business (Professional Practice)  
RMIT University, Melbourne

# Quick history

- 2020 lockdowns in Melbourne created the environment for exploration (**as was for us all**) with 40% of internship cancelled
- RMIT Activator (our growth incubator) became the host for virtual internships which were instantly successful
- 2020-2022 saw multiple versions of 'Academy' take place 3,6- and 12-week versions were offered, all linked to credit bearing courses
- With pandemic restrictions now removed, the 12-week standard course has been retained as a core unit the UGRD Four Year Degree....**why?**



# Some students find internships daunting and unachievable. Small, meaningful hurdles grow awareness, confidence and skills.

## Why?

Students need a structure and journey to build awareness, **skills and confidence that is tailored and relevant to them.**

They need small and clear outcomes for how their investment.

We should not offer the one chance!



# Multiple short-term industry experiences work well

## Why?

Data from Northeastern University suggests multiple short industry experiences leave a greater impact on student confidence.

Students who **graduate with 2 to 3 experiences** leave with deep technical competence, **high confidence and breadth of networks**.

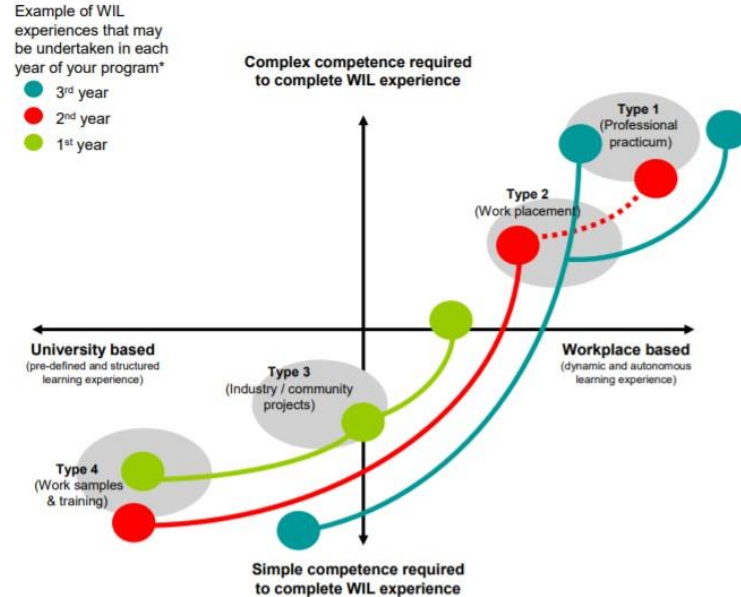


FIGURE 1: The University's WIL Framework

Source: O'Shea (2008).

A Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Framework to Develop Graduate Skills and Attributes in an Australian University's Accounting Program. Raymond Leong, M. Kavanagh  
Published 2013 Sociology Asia-Pacific journal of cooperative education

# Industry Experiences can be **strong emotional life forming moments** in a student journey

## Why?

**Students often go through multiple interviews and need confidence and support to maintain motivation.**

Genuinely recognising these moments with support and recognition will improve student advocacy and belonging.



# Today's Impact Academy?

- A 12-week class-based course for 12 credit point (1 standard course/unit)
- A **supported internship** with business coaching and academic guidance (**incubator** and **consulting**)
- **Front end loaded** - A core unit for students to complete in years 1-2 before future solo internships, flipped finishing school approach
- Built around a challenge where students act as consultants to a **'live'** business problem
- Designed more to test a young person's ability to follow the correct processes, to **do the work** rather than simply respond with an idea

These features largely align to both the “incubator” and “consulting” models of WIL (Kay, et al. 2019), as a direct result of collaborative co-design and co-delivery involving a teaching team of educators and industry experts.





# Industry-partnered Learning s2 2023

Industry Partner

*Kelly, Mondelez (marketing manager)*

**Industry Challenge Wk 3  
Client Meetings Wk 5, 8  
Presentations Wk 10-11**



Student Teams

*Kathy, Olivia, Tanya, Logan*

**Meet Team Blush**

**Guidance / Facilitation / mentoring across semester**

CoBL WIL teachers

*Simon (multiple iterations)  
Meg (new Sem 2)*

**Design Thinking Wk 2, 4, 6, 8  
Semester-wide support**

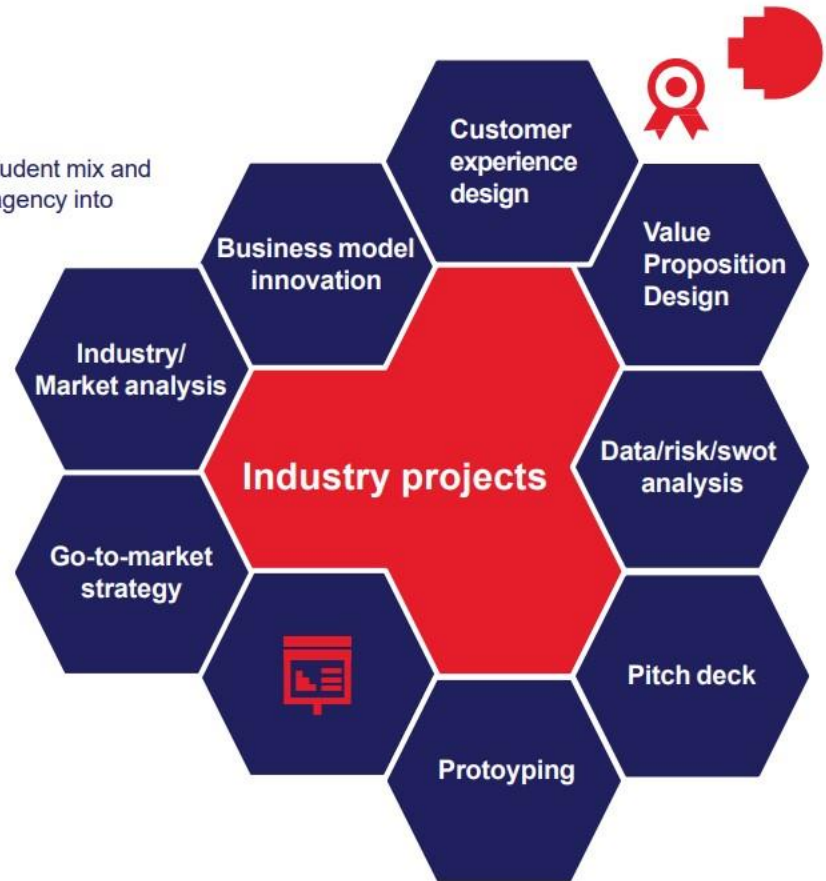
*Daniel (entrepreneur; design thinking)  
Maria (Activator venue support)*

RMT Activator

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# Projects & outcomes

We support Industry to define and develop impact projects tailored to student mix and establish linkages to SDGs. We structure the internal dynamics of the agency into functional teams to own and deliver various aspects of the workplace.

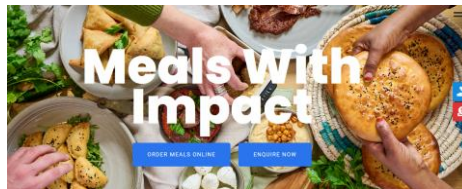




# Partners



A range of commercial and NFP organisations.



# Case Study CAPI



## FINAL DESIGN SOLUTIONS

**WE ARE 100% AUSTRALIAN MADE**

**CAPI MINERAL WATER Sparkling**

**CAPI AUSTRALIA**

**Recycled Recyclable Australia made Australia owned**

**NATURALLY SPARKLING WATER, BOTTLED AT THE SOURCE**

**CAPI Sustainability**

**Our Domestic Freight Company**

**Zero emissions by 2030**

**CAPI bottles**

**100% bottle cap suppliers**

**40% recycled glass**

**25% energy consumption**

**20% reduction in plastic**

**100% recyclable**

**Our carton supplier**

**100% Recyclable**

**I like that it's clearly Australian!**



Team 'Sparkling' show their packaging solutions to the same brief

# Case Study: Impact Academy

Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand planned to introduce a new product category in 2021: Fairtrade certified cut flowers.

This was a new market for Fairtrade, and the organisation wanted to understand:

- local consumer preferences and demand for cut roses
- the competitive landscape
- potential sales channels.

It also wanted to develop a marketing and communications strategy around Fairtrade Cut Flowers.

Fairtrade partnered with Impact Academy, engaging a team of five students. The team conducted survey and other research, preparing a comprehensive report with relevant data and insights. They also identified communication opportunities, including through digital channels.



FAIRTRADE  
AUSTRALIA  
NEW ZEALAND



*“The students gave us a fresh perspective. They were able to apply **cutting edge expertise** to explore areas of potential new growth for Fairtrade.”*

*“They gave us an amazing 48-page report with **solid data on market size and structure.**”*

*“whether you’re not-for-profit or for-profit...**there are constant pressures around resource allocation.** Impact Academy offers a great opportunity to **test the water in a new area**...and gave us a front row seat to tomorrow’s talent.”*

**- Meg Jones, Strategic Partnerships and Strategy,  
Fairtrade ANZ**

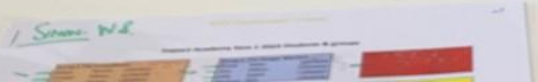
# Industry-partnered Learning s1 2023







***This course has been hugely successful for me personally, both in terms of building my character and in building my professional portfolio. It has affected me in my workplace by boosting my confidence and allowing me to better communicate with those around me.***



***Now reflecting on this course, I can firmly state that I believe it has been a huge success. I thrived in the blended learning style and loved the hands-on experience. I have left this class feeling more confident, more equipped, and more driven to take on both personal and business challenges.***





# Challenges...

- An active course but **core** for all 4-year Business Students so not all students fully engage
- Attendance gaps halts progress and highlights group tensions
- Students seeking the shortcut approach!
- Time and money costs can increase – the flight for WIL!
- Delivery differs each semester, no singular rinse and repeat option
- Collaborative teaching and Uni departments don't always mix

# Information of academics or professionals

- Plan well ahead, typically 3-6 months out
- Gain formal written commitment from partners and confirm the time investment required
- Embrace technology to aid learning and communications
- Invest in the cause, staff time, energy and funding
- Use alumni networks where possible
- Keep assessment individual, academic and reflective
- Be patient with early progress and results
- Make it different/special for the students

# Questions...

# References

Leong, R., & Kavanagh, M. H. (2013). A work-integrated learning (WIL) framework to develop graduate skills and attributes in an Australian university's accounting program. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 14(1). Program. Raymond Leong, M. Kavanagh, Published 2013 Sociology Asia-Pacific journal of cooperative education

Kay, et al. (2019), The emerging future: Innovative models of work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, Special Issue, 2019, 20(4), 401-413

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**Dr Simon Thornton**

Program Director

Bachelor of Business (Professional Practice)

[simon.thornton@rmit.edu.au](mailto:simon.thornton@rmit.edu.au)

