

Work Integrated Learning: More Than Enhancing Employability and Graduate Attributes

“The Most Beneficial and Rewarding Part of My University Experience”

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Research undertaken at Massey University
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Published by Ako Aotearoa

PO Box 756

Wellington 6140

January 2018

ISBN 978-0-473-42904-1

Ako
AOTEAROA

An Ako Aotearoa publication. This project output has been funded by Ako Aotearoa through the Regional Project Fund.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has attracted considerable attention as an instrument for enhancing professional practice and developing work-readiness in graduates. It is widely considered as a point of difference in developing graduate employability by enhancing skill outcomes through an authentic learning experience.

The research involved thematic content analysis of students' reflections (n=271) based on their main activities, learning outcomes and overall experiences within a sport management and coaching WIL framework at Massey University, New Zealand. These reflections were examined under the various themes that emerged, including self and professional graduate attributes. Verbatim comments/quotes from the practicum participants underpinned and enriched the various themes that emerged as part of the data gathering process.

Development of T-shaped Professionals

The breadth and depth of WIL activity reinforced the notion of developing 'T-shaped professionals', who are characterised by their deep disciplinary knowledge in at least one area (e.g. event management), and their ability to function as 'adaptive innovators' across boundaries between disciplines (e.g. various business activities). The development of students as 'reflective practitioners' is recognised as a challenging process. The WIL experience provides an ideal environment for encouraging the individual student to develop analytical, systems and critical thinking, and a problem solving mind-set/approach.

Successful project management involves boundary-spanning competencies such as teamwork, communication, organisational perspective and networks. The findings reinforce the importance of a learning process that facilitates leadership and reflective work-based experiences that integrate theory and practice. The findings of this study could be transferred and applied to other fields and disciplines. In particular, it is hoped that tertiary providers may be encouraged to consider WIL as an option for enhancing student learning.

Graduate Attributes

This report also focuses on aspects of added value of WIL and the development of personal and professional graduate attributes. The findings show that the WIL experience reinforced employment decisions and was enjoyed by students. Gratitude for the support and mentoring of workplace and academic supervisors was evident although workplace supervisor gratitude dominated the reflections provided.

Development of self-efficacy, personal attributes involving self-management (self-awareness, self-confidence, time management) and effective communication (particularly oral and digital) were important learning outcomes, along with their development as enterprising individuals. Professional development of a community of practice (networking, increased organisational awareness) and leadership responsibilities were also highlighted. Reference to the graduate attribute's varied greatly both between participants and across themes. While alignment with Massey University's employability characteristics is evident in the practicum's WIL environment, it is acknowledged that the dominance of the various graduate attributes is likely to vary between different qualifications.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank:

Ako Aotearoa (National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) for funding the research project that led to the development of this document and the associated resource.

Massey University sport management and coaching students whose passion and enthusiasm for their work was clearly evident, as was their commitment to make the most out of their Work Integrated Learning (WIL) practicum/internship experiences.

The main activities, learning outcomes and overall experiences described are based on primary data from students' reflections on their sport management and coaching WIL experiences at Massey University, New Zealand. The findings of this study could be transferred and applied to other fields and disciplines. In particular, it is hoped that tertiary providers may be encouraged to consider WIL as an option for enhancing student learning

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: OUTCOMES AND ADDED VALUE

This research project was conducted to develop a resource for students and supervisors: *The Added Value of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)*. The added value aspects, where students' expectations have been exceeded, and other learning outcomes of their sport management and coaching practicum experiences for each of the common themes are listed below:

1. Added value
 - a. Reinforcing employment decisions
 - b. Enjoyment
 - c. Supervisor gratitude
2. Developing self-management
 - a. Self-confidence
 - b. Self-awareness
 - c. Self-sufficiency
3. Developing enterprising individuals
 - a. Achievement
 - b. Innovation and creativity
 - c. Organisational awareness
4. Developing a community of practice
 - a. Networking, e.g. sponsors
 - b. Volunteer and community contribution
 - c. Diversity of participants
5. Developing effective communication
 - a. Oral
 - b. Digital
6. Developing leadership responsibilities
 - a. Teamwork
 - b. Professionalism
7. Developing critical reflection
 - a. Theory and practice

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EMPLOYABILITY

The notion of graduate employability is gaining increasing interest and importance as an essential outcome of many degrees in higher education institutions (Reddan, 2017; Yorke, 2010). Employability has been defined as “a set of achievements – skills understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the work force, the community and the economy” (Yorke, 2004, p. 8). Fleming and Haigh (2017) indicated that students, workplace supervisors and academic supervisors tended to share a perception that the students’ development of employability skills and their acquisition of experience in industry were the primary intended outcomes of WIL programmes. In addition, WIL should also provide opportunities for students to learn to integrate theory and practice, further develop their personal and professional identities, and learn to navigate the important ethical aspects of being a professional.

The Tertiary Education Commission’s (TEC) 2014-2019 strategy also emphasises the importance that graduates gain both transferable skills and specific qualifications that are matched to labour market demand; specifically, to ensure there are better employment outcomes for graduates and investments in education (by students, employers and Government).

Massey University’s strategic plan “Road to 2025” highlights the need “to enable our students to support their life-long learning and develop their preparedness for employment in a global context” and to “actively enhance career and employment outcomes for students by developing a new, integrated approach to applied learning” (Massey University, 2017a). However, practical implications are that while the employability emphasis aligns well with government and university agendas, graduates need to be prepared for complex and dynamic workplaces, and to be future-ready for careers that arguably are yet to exist. Programmes need to reconsider the curriculum learning outcomes that should be an imperative for university education in the twenty-first century (Fleming & Haigh, 2017).

1.2 THE T-GRADUATE

It has been argued that the notion of a T-Graduate (Figure 1) can be cultivated through WIL experiences (Gardner, 2017).

“T-shaped professionals are characterised by their deep disciplinary knowledge in at least one area, an understanding of systems, and their ability to function as “adaptive innovators” and cross the boundaries between disciplines. The two vertical bars of the “T” represent the disciplinary specialisation and the deep understanding of one system. These systems are comprised of interconnected components of people, technology, and services. To understand a system, one must know how it functions from the bottom to top in order to address challenges. The defining characteristic of the “T-shaped professional” is the horizontal stroke, which represents their ability to collaborate across a variety of different disciplines.

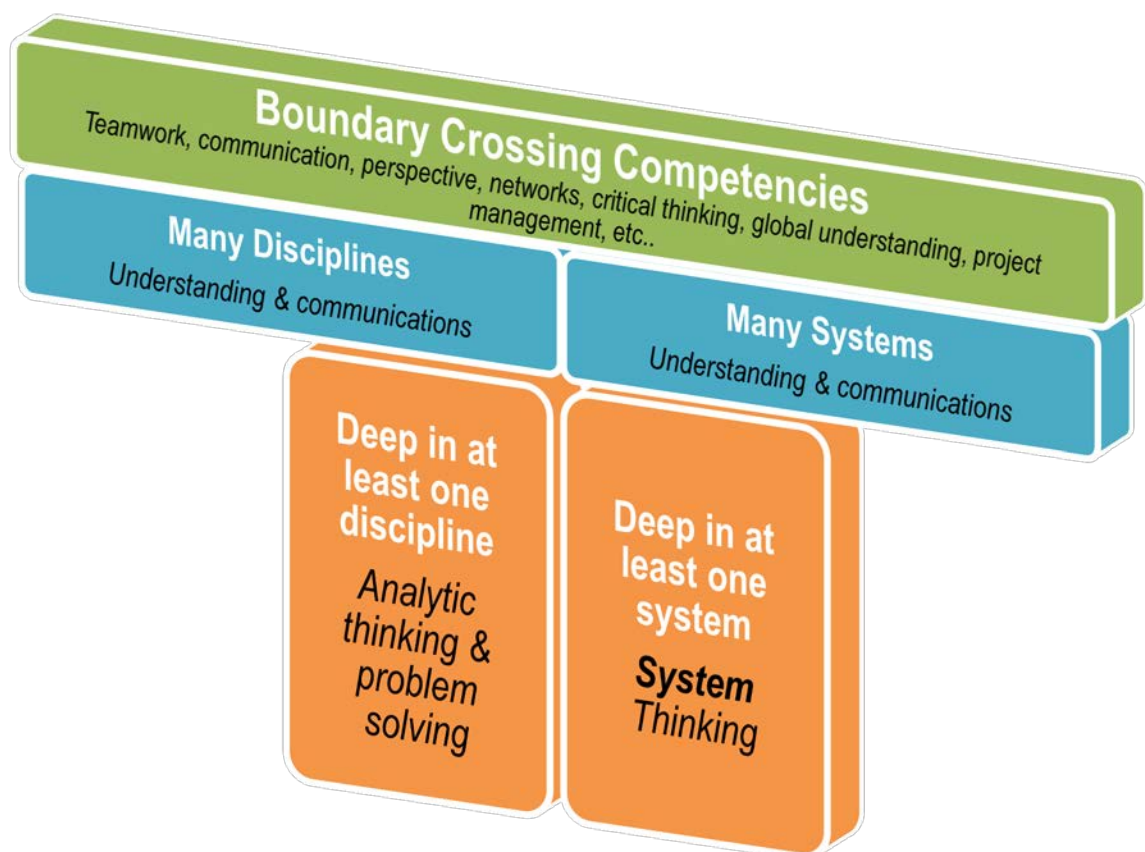


FIGURE 1. THE T-GRADUATE (<http://tsummit.org/t>)

Upon graduation, students should be able to handle information from multiple sources, advance professional relationships across different organisations, contribute innovatively to organisational practices, and communicate with understanding across social, cultural, economic and scientific disciplines. Tomorrow's workers will build their careers in a globally interconnected and constantly changing world with smarter technologies in an effort to effect positive global change (<http://tsummit.org/t>)."

This project will examine the extent to which students' perceptions of the activities involved in the sport management and coaching practicum align with the development of T-Graduates through WIL experiences.

1.3 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Graduate attributes are the generic skills, qualities and understandings that students develop throughout their tertiary study (Precision Consultancy, 2007). That publication and a more recent analysis of 36 of 40 listed universities on the Australian Universities website identified the four most common graduate attributes across the higher education sector (Hall, Pascoe & Charity, 2017); namely, communication, global citizenship, discipline specific knowledge and lifelong learning. Communication and global citizenship are also included within Massey University's employability characteristics (2017b), along with three others; enterprise, self-management and exercising leadership. Broad definitions of these five attributes follow:

- **Self-management:** working independently, taking responsibility for personal actions such as planning and organisation, having the confidence and self-awareness to plan and realise goals and ambitions, and being adaptive to respond to changing situations
- **Enterprise:** a combination of individuality, creativity, and leadership that enables a culture of innovation, risk taking, and opportunism, enabling entrepreneurship and facilitating knowledge transfer.
- **Global Citizenship:** engaging ethically and efficiently in the professional context and also understanding and engaging with diverse communities and cultures in a global context.
- **Information Literacy:** the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand, and to communicate that information effectively through oral, written, or visual methods in order to inform, motivate, and effect change.
- **Exercising leadership:** ability to work confidently and collaboratively with a group of people, and as a leader when necessary, including encouraging and motivating team members toward a shared vision to achieve goals.

This project will examine the extent to which students' views of the learning outcomes derived from the sport management and coaching practicum align with Massey's stated graduate attributes.

1.4 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

WIL has attracted considerable attention as an instrument for enhancing professional practice and developing work-readiness in graduates. It is widely considered as a point of difference in developing graduate employability by enhancing skill outcomes (Jackson, 2013). However, Bandaranaike and Willison (2015, p. 223) concluded that:

“WIL competency is largely directed at delivering knowledge based cognitive skills with little emphasis on affective skills despite employers emphasising the need for greater affective skills in the workplace and greater emotional work-readiness as a pathway for building work-readiness capacity.”

Whilst the focus of both the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and University strategies have focused increasingly on developing work ready graduates, the WIL experience can be more than just increasing graduate attributes and employability. We argue that these WIL experiences challenge students to push their comfort zones, developing greater personal self-awareness and enhanced professional career readiness by engaging in a wide range of activities. Students describe developing a broad range of skills and experiences and learning outcomes that prepared them much better for employment after graduating.

1.4.1 Work-Integrated-Learning and sport

WIL and sport are natural curriculum partners, given the applied and vocational nature of the various contexts (Agnew, Pill & Orrell, 2017; Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). Graduate feedback has indicated that to enhance employability in the sport and recreation industry, WIL programmes need to be designed so that students are provided with opportunities to facilitate the development of various competencies (Fleming & Ferkins, 2006; Fleming, Martin, Hughes & Zinn, 2009; Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma & Coll, 2010).

“In this context, attributes that are highly valued include the ability and willingness to learn, enthusiastic participation (passion for sport), use of initiative/self-sufficiency, and personal organisational skills. Success in this industry relies on relationship building/developing professional networks as well as teamwork and cooperation” (Martin, 2013, p. 131).

WIL programmes seek to provide graduates with a comprehensive industry skill set desired by potential employers (Fleming et al., 2009), and for success in the workplace (Bell, Crebert, Patrick, Bates & Cragolini, 2003). The evidence provided in this project regarding the development of attributes such as oral and written communication skills, self-confidence, and customer relationship management, demonstrates again the broad range of learning experiences and opportunities possible from the practicum experience.

1.4.2 Work-Integrated-Learning resource

This research project and the associated publication are aimed at any tertiary provider either offering or considering WIL as an option for enhancing student learning. *'The Added Value of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)'* focuses on practical information for students, lecturers, and employers and is based on the following themes derived from students' reflections of their practicum experiences. Understanding students' perceptions helps to inform and change teaching practice through increased focus on specific graduate attributes and a broader range of added value aspects of WIL programmes. The resource for students and supervisors, *The Added Value of WIL*, will complement the four previously published Ako Aotearoa WIL resources (see *How to Make the Most of WIL for Students, Academic and Workplace Supervisors*, Martin & Hughes, 2009; and *WIL: A Template for Good Practice*, Martin, Rees & Edwards, 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 THE PROJECT

This project's aims were to enhance the engagement of WIL students and facilitation of educators to influence critical aspects of the learning outcomes by examining students' reflections of their Sport Management and Coaching practicum from three perspectives:

- The key tasks
- Learning outcomes
- Overall experience

In this case study we undertook a Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of all the available students' post-practicum reflections (n= 271) from those who had undertaken Massey's sport management and coaching practicum from 2007 to 2016. ¹ The Word documents all followed a similar structure that included sections relating to key tasks, learning outcomes and overall experience reflections. The documents were not part of any course assessment. They were collated to provide detail of practicum placements and learning outcomes for future students to reference. The fact that all of the available documents were available for inclusion in the project strengthened the power of the analysis. A low risk ethics application was approved. Students who participated in the practicum were enrolled in either a Bachelor of Sport and Exercise (58%; Major in Management & Coaching), a Bachelor of Business Studies (36%; Major in Sport Business Management) or another qualification (6%).

2.1.1 *The sport management and coaching practicum*

The practicum is a compulsory full year course, where students are based at a sport organisation and work on a specified project for a minimum of 180 hours. A learning contract is negotiated between the student, the supervisor within the organisation and the academic supervisor responsible for coordinating the practicum at the University. This contract provides a "detailed overview of the practicum, including expectations, responsibilities and

¹ 299 students had participated in the practicum over this period however only 271 of the post-practicum reflections were available for analysis.

assessment” (Martin & Leberman, 2005, p. 19). Reflective practice is the primary pedagogy employed to integrate knowledge in WIL settings (Coll et al., 2009). Students keep a reflective journal composed of a brief synopsis (diary type format) outlining “the duties performed, work behaviour and reflections on all activities that take place throughout the practicum experience” (Fleming & Martin, 2007, p. 117). The journal entails more than just listing experiences. It includes revisiting feelings and re-evaluating the experience, as suggested by Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993). Schön’s (1983) notion of the ‘reflective practitioner’ is particularly applicable to the WIL process. He argued that reflective practice is a learned skill most effectively introduced through an experiential component (Schön, 1987; 1991).

2.1.2 Data analysis

Individual student’s documents were uploaded into Nvivo11 and coded separately. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) involved searching for common themes based on the model of analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). A theme or node² hierarchy was created by aggregating and merging to align with higher level nodes. The key tasks section was essentially a tally of the range of activities that the students undertook. Practicum participants described undertaking more than one activity, on average more than four. Each activity was included in the overall tally undertaken over the period of analysis. The learning outcomes section and the overall experience section were combined for coding because, in many instances, the students did not respond as though they were separate sections. That content was coded in the first instance in a deductive manner against the five Massey employability characteristics (enterprise, global citizenship, information literacy, self-management and exercising leadership). If additional themes emerged from the coding analysis these were also included in an inductive manner as new themes.

2.1.3 Credibility and dependability

Various quality assurance activities were deployed across the project to ensure the credibility and dependability of the thematic analysis. These include:

² The term node is used with NVivo to denote a theme or subtheme.

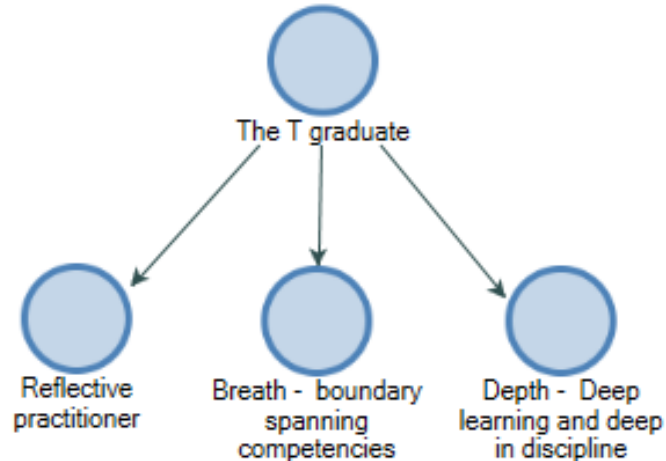
1. An independent coder who provided an objective view of the data which minimised any potential for coding bias by anyone closely associated with the programme.
2. Use of NVivo 11, Computerised Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) permitted the orderly creation of nodes that could then be grouped and sub-grouped into themes.
3. The inclusion of demographic variables that provided a modest level of further analysis and cross checking of participant responses.
4. Reflexivity through peer reviewing the process, coding structures and the themes developed throughout the process.

3. RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The results section of this report consists of a brief summary of the breadth and depth of activities undertaken by students, followed by a more comprehensive analysis and report of the themes described, including any alignment with Massey's employability characteristics. According to the TCA, the participants described a broad range of activities through learning outcomes that were both curricular and co-curricular in nature.

With only a few weeks to go in tertiary study, I am excited about gaining employment in the New Zealand Sports Industry, and feel that the practicum has enabled me to enter the industry prepared and ready for an exciting and stimulating role.

Student feedback supports the development of a T-graduate (Gardner, 2017) who has a depth of understanding and boundary spanning capabilities. The findings from the 'Reflective Practitioner' theme will be discussed in 3.9 Critical Reflection.



This experience has given me a valuable opportunity to test my capabilities working in a sport industry setting. I have been involved in many different aspects of sport management where I have gained and also found new skills. Time management has been a critical factor for staying on top of things; balancing work and personal life is so challenging.

My experience has allowed me to get a practical understanding of what is required to be successful in sport management. The practicum allowed me to experience strategic planning, marketing, human resource management, and event management in a hard working environment.

Having been exposed to these industries first hand has now given me a greater understanding of how they operate and also how important each industry is to one another. Having formed close working relationships with businesses in other industries will be a useful resource for my future.

My confidence grew as I became familiar with the environment and I was able to implement theoretical skills such as project management, event management, and financial management; whilst developing new skills such as designing a workshop resource.

I have valued this opportunity and have developed my communication, planning, conflict management and risk management skills.

There are so many elements that are incorporated in sport and we have to understand these elements for our events/organisations to be successful, and for our people using our services to be happy.

The sport industry is very diverse, where those working within it are often involved in many different departments and find themselves switching between different roles quite often.

3.1 BREADTH: BOUNDARY SPANNING COMPETENCIES

The breadth of activities described by the participants can be grouped into four main areas:

- organising events
- team organisation
- coaching
- business activities

Where participants described either organising events or business activities, they frequently described many sub-activities that have been coded separately. Those who coached or organised teams tended to not describe such variety. Organising events was the dominant activity. Others listed included:

- financial or budgeting responsibility
- supervision
- web design

These were not a major part of the overall curriculum and may not have been expected outcomes from such a placement. However, this list of activities demonstrates the emergence of a wide range of graduate attributes, both curricular and co-curricular in nature. These activities are discussed in detail later, and in Appendix 1.

I think that the skills that one acquires from taking part in the practicum paper are priceless. It equips you with the skills necessary to step outside of your comfort zone and to step up and rise to any challenges that come your way.

Students highlighted learning from multiple tasks undertaken with different stakeholders, the range of responsibilities, and variety of skills, that have the potential to transfer to other disciplines and roles.

This practicum project will also be helpful to my previous workplace, because what I observed and experienced taught me a lot about how to be proactive and active everyday: By doing simple exercises that dramatically cater and foster enjoyment, tasks completed, staff satisfaction, good and strong relationship and friendship between staff members and their managers.

This practicum involved many tasks with high responsibilities such as marketing, promotion, management, sponsorship/partnership liaison, and budgeting.

During my practicum I developed a number of different skills, many surrounding financial planning, in particular the importance of budgeting.

The most frequent sub-task described was “organising an event” (18%; n=218) followed by Administration of events (13%; n= 156), event promotion (11%; n = 125) and logistics (9%; n = 111). The least frequent tasks described included supervision (n= 8; 0.7%) and referee support (n=6; 0.5%). An interesting feature of the event organisation theme were the number of instances where students were required to undertake compliance activities (n=33; 3%) as part of their placements which included risk management, health and safety planning, traffic management, event rule management, convening judicial activities and security operations. A few also described being involved with the important community-based activities of sponsorship (7%) and volunteers (6%). It may be argued that placement students get some of those jobs that fulltime staff find tiresome, awkward or lack knowledge? For example, database management or other online activities (2.4%; n=28).

The main business activity sub-task was merely called business activities (6%; n = 75). This theme included modest number of instances for each, but a very broad range of activities such as management assistance, planning activities and organising people, mystery shoppers, strategic management, and project management. Other business activity sub-tasks that could be coded included research activities (4%; n=47) such as the collection and analysis of data, analysing feedback, briefing activities and reporting activities. A small number of also students (n=30) described being involved with budgetary or other financial activities.

The breadth of tasks reflects the complex and diverse nature of activities; from the management of 'grass-roots' activities such as coaching a team through to complex business activities such as database management (which isn't taught in the degree), to organising the various compliance activities e.g. risk management, health and safety and traffic management, through to volunteer, sponsorship and financial organisation. Some students even described highly specialised tasks of supervising others or recruiting staff.

3.2 DEPTH: DISCIPLINE AND SYSTEM KNOWLEDGE

Students have reflected on developing a depth of understanding and a range of competencies in the area of event management, but also across various business activities. The following responses highlight this development.

Event management

The event has helped me to clarify and apply the skills required to host a successful event.

I have gained a much more practical understanding of the tasks involved in managing tournaments, and in reflecting on learning experiences.

I have learnt a lot about organising an event and the need to pay attention to every detail when planning for an event.

Setting up peripheral elements of an event were crucial to the event operating successfully. Many tasks involved ensuring operational and quality service aspects of events were met.

I now have a better understanding on how events are run and a new appreciation of the time and effort that is put into events in general.

I was able to gain a better understanding with what was involved in putting together a sports event, particularly of this size as there was a lot more to it than I first thought.

Business activity

I have also improved my understanding in areas such as promotion, marketing, publicity and sponsorship.

It involved many tasks with high responsibilities such as marketing, promotion, management, sponsorship/partnership liaison, and budgeting.

I have also learnt a lot about what it takes to start a project from scratch, such as how

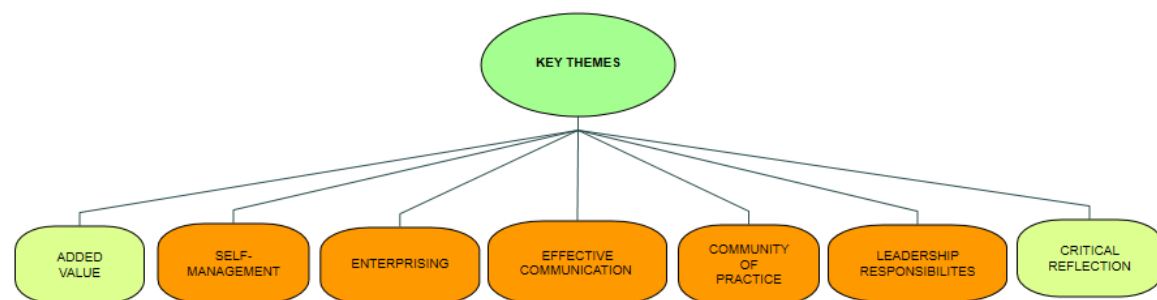
best to engage local organisations, including sporting groups; create a public presentation to share ideas, and how design concepts and funding options can affect the feasibility of a project.

My role was one that challenged me through out. I have taken a great deal from my experiences; learning in, through and about a diverse range of managerial, promotional and leadership activities. The aforementioned includes human resource management, event management, risk management, contract management, design projects and so on.

3.3 ADDED VALUE

The key themes derived from the TCA include aspects of *added value*, and broadly follow the five Massey employability characteristics.

I have formed a number of social networks, determined my strengths and improved my weaknesses from being in new environments, obtaining various responsibilities and learning through my supervisor's knowledge and experience.



However, some needed a slight adjustment and a seventh theme, *critical reflection*, emerged from the analysis. From the students' reflections, we were able to identify that the WIL process involved developing specific attributes: *self-management, enterprising individuals, a community of practice, effective communication, and leadership responsibilities*. These attributes when melded together define an optimal WIL outcome through the tripartite partnership between the employer, the supervisor, and the student. These themes are all discussed in more detail throughout this results section. Detailed definitions and coding structure are included in Appendix 2.

Done well, WIL benefits each stakeholder within the tripartite relationship. Many students set up employment opportunities whilst on WIL placements due to the development of a range of additional competencies or work-based knowledge that are not as easy to learn through conventional means. The workplace benefits by having a student on placement, as they bring new skills and innovative ideas, along with providing assistance and expertise for ongoing related projects (Martin & Hughes, 2009).

3.3.1 Enthusiastic participation

These work experiences reinforce the students' commitment to their roles, passion for sport and pursuing a career in the industry. Enthusiastic participation has also been highlighted by sport management graduates as an important attribute for employability (Fleming et al., 2009), and the students have also noted their passion to be involved in the future.

It requires a lot of passion for the sport and I found this passion within myself, taking on a lot more responsibilities than I initially wanted. It reinforced that I have a passion and drive for this industry and provided me learning experiences.

Overall, the experience was very enjoyable and confirmed my commitment and passion for the sport management industry.

It has given me insight on how much goes on within an event and has also reinforced the passion and drive I have for this industry.

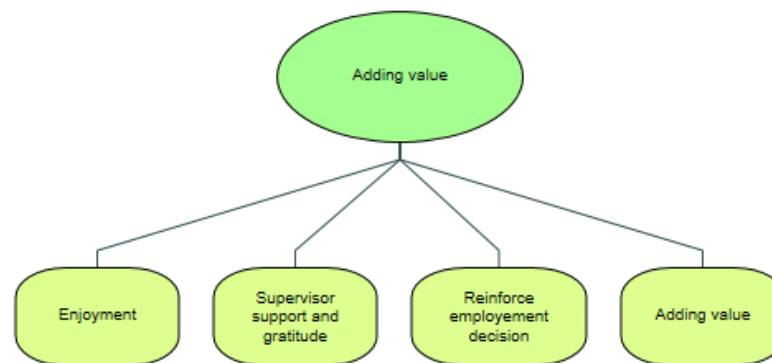
One student also highlighted to other potential students the importance of being passionate about their involvement in the sport industry.

Without a passion for sport and personal improvement, you will struggle in the sporting industry. Without passion, you will not be willing to work hard to achieve certain objectives for the organisation. Without the willingness to achieve personal improvement, your own development will suffer.

Overall this has been an amazing experience and I would recommend this practicum to anyone who is passionate about the sporting industry.

Comments relating to the 'Added Value' theme were one of the most frequently cited (21%). These comments describe benefits where students' expectations have been exceeded, such as enjoyment and reinforcing employment decisions, as well as expressions of gratitude to both the academic and employment supervisor or organisation.

My practicum experience has been the highlight of my university studies, and I believe this role has truly equipped me with the necessary skills and knowledge to confidently pursue a career in the sporting and marketing industries.



This practicum has allowed me to grow as an individual and gain the necessary skills required to add value to any organisation in the sports industry I may be a part of in the future.

The majority of students were able to express the view that they had added value to their placement organisation through their experiences, skills and attributes; as well as adding value to themselves in terms of the skill learning, enjoyment and networks developed during their WIL placement.

I am now confident that I can add value to any organisation in the sport management and coaching industry from my experiences and look forward to entering into the workforce.

The potential to make a difference for the organisation and local businesses to make meaningful relations.

This practicum experience has been inspirational and provided me with skills, knowledge and direction for future sport management roles.

This practicum has been by far the most challenging and most rewarding paper.

The added value of these experiences in terms of students' future careers is highlighted by the following quotes.

A successful practicum placement can have a significant influence on future prospective employment

It is a privilege to be afforded the chance to work within a sporting organisation, take the chance with two hands and make the most of it, this will be the most influential aspect of your university life, but only if you let it!

I have found it hard at times due to my inexperience but this is what the practicum is all about, gaining experience, learning from people in the sport industry and learning from mistakes so that you know what is expected when you go into the sport industry and start your career.

Competencies are the qualities or extent to which the students develop the necessary ability or knowledge to do something successfully. Essentially WIL provides opportunities to enable individuals to apply academic theory to the 'real world', with individuals able to test the extent of their skills linked to interpersonal attributes. A particular strength of the WIL experience is the ability to enhance those 'soft skills' that could not be learnt in the classroom (Fleming, Martin, Hughes & Zinn, 2009). The following quotes highlight that these WIL experiences are about both personal and professional development.

I have been provided with plenty of professional development and self-management opportunities which have increased my enjoyment in the role and equipped me with valuable sport management skills.

I have learnt so much about the sporting event management world and how it all works, [the sport] as an organisation, as well as learning just as much about myself throughout the process.

I have learnt an incredible amount about both myself, the sport industry, and how the theory learnt in class applies to the everyday operations of a sporting organisation.

3.3.2 Student satisfaction

Students frequently reported that they enjoyed taking part in the practicum experience. The opportunity to participate in an authentic learning experience with real activities and outcomes clearly resulted in stimulating, enjoyable and rewarding experiences.

I have also learned that I really enjoy being in this industry. Being put into a real organisation helped me learn more about who I am as a person and that I would really enjoy working/managing in sport.

I was very unsure of whether I would enjoy having a career in sport management but now I realise that this is what I would like to do.

Overall, it has been a fun learning experience for me, an experience that I will always reflect back to as a direction of where I am going in the future.

Not only was the experience enjoyable for the students, it was also a valuable learning opportunity.

Was very enjoyable through the people I met and worked with, the things I learnt, challenges I faced and obstacles that were overcome. Was very time consuming but rewarding.

The practicum experience is one that I won't forget and I will take the skills I have learnt in my practicum with me into my future.

The practicum experience has been the most enjoyable and practical aspect of my university degree and I look forward to using the skills I have learnt for the rest of my working career.

The practicum has been indispensable to tertiary study as it has allowed me to understand the realities of the softer skills required for day-to-day sport event work, which is perhaps not taught within textbooks, such as attitude, mind-set, perseverance, personal contacts, local industry knowledge.

However, one student did note that although the WIL experience had been enjoyable, they no longer saw it as a future career choice. This is a useful finding and an honest reflection of an experience that should still prove worthwhile, as the skills learnt should be able to be transferred across other fields.

Unfortunately, although I have thoroughly enjoyed working in the sports industry I have come to realise that the sports management career isn't for me.

3.3.3 Supervisor support and gratitude

The value of both supervisor and academic support was noted. They were recognised as important mentors who undertake professional guidance, give direction and care, but also provide insight and encourage independence for the students to learn and develop a range of skills. The dominance of comments about the workplace supervision as opposed to the academic supervisor reflect a change in the relationship, representing a departure from the standard academic environment and into the workforce.

Workplace supervisor

All of the staff were so easy to get to know, and I felt that through trying to present myself in a professional manner, I gained the respect from them early on.

They gave me direction when it was needed and there were always rewards at the end of the day.

Also they have been really good in the fact they have had a hands off approach, which has allowed me to experience many different things and improve many of the skills and tools required in putting together an event.

Most supervision was distant and created the opportunity for me to work to my own preference and make my own decisions which has been brilliant as I haven't been able to rely on somebody else to teach me.

My [practicum] was an exciting, challenging and rewarding experience. The environment that was provided by my supervisor, and the entire organisation made for a great learning experience that I believe has set me up well for the working world.

I found this practicum a great help in terms of building my self-belief as I became less and less dependent on my supervisor. They allowed me the latitude to grow my independence with this role, becoming more of a 'mentor' in the end.

Academic supervisor

They have been a great support throughout the experience and have certainly made being a distance learner a little easier. Their easy but fair approach to the uniqueness of my situation has been great and I couldn't hope for any more in a paper administrator.

They have made this practicum process as smooth as possible for me. They have worked really hard to assist me and my academic needs wherever they can.

3.3.4 Reinforce employment decisions

Many students were able to reflect on the view that the practicum reinforced sport management as a career choice.

Overall my practicum experience has been an extremely enjoyable one. It has opened my eyes to the fact that working in a sporting organisation is definitely what I want to do in the future.

Although it has been stressful at times trying to balance other commitments, the experience has given me the skills, knowledge, confidence and understanding that this is the type of work I want to pursue with my future career.

Importantly I got a good opportunity to work within the industry in the exact role I one day would like to take up and at the same time learnt the ins and outs of many other jobs I'll be applying for when I finish.

Students having the opportunity to learn and apply skills in their chosen industry has been particularly valuable for students, as noted in the following quotes.

From this practicum I learnt that the sport industry is definitely the industry I want to work in. I learned valuable event management aspects such as planning, sponsorship and volunteer coordination.

I have made a big step up this year in actually getting out there and putting concepts to work. It has been good to learn more about the sporting industry, as this is the industry which I want to be a part of in the future.

Whether it be learning and creating ways to improve the match day experience, to learning how to sell a membership or even how to execute a sports event, I have learnt and experienced essential concepts that will set me up for a long career in the industry.

3.4 SELF-MANAGEMENT

Comments about self-management were the most frequently reported (31%; n=700). Focus on aspects of personal development comprised three self-management sub-themes, namely self-sufficiency, self-confidence and self-awareness. The most frequently described of the three was self-sufficiency (68%).

Passion ultimately gives you the drive to perform all tasks to the absolute best of your abilities, and the experience helps you to bring forth new ideas or initiatives that will set you one step ahead of the rest.

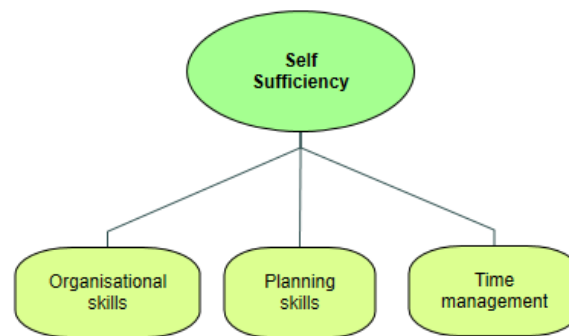


It has given me the opportunity to grow as a person, improving my confidence and time management.

The students were able to reflect easily about themselves and the various skills developed through WIL. They seemed to manage this more comfortably and more frequently than reflecting in a broader sense about other aspects of their experience. Demonstrating the ability to self-manage through planning and event organisation is clearly a feature of sports management placements.

3.4.1 Self-sufficiency

Self-sufficiency: An individual's application of skills such as organisational, planning and time management.



The opportunity to become more self-sufficient, through the deployment of organisational and planning skills, was frequently reported. In particular, the participants reported an increasing awareness of the many event management challenges and their ability to solve them through the deployment of taught skills.

Event planning has ups and downs and challenges but there is always a solution to a problem or another way of doing something.

How to plan and resolve issues and problems, through delegation and decision making were examples of many of the specific activities that they became aware of through the placement activity.

I learned that no matter how large the task, with the correct planning and implementation, anything can be achieved.

This helped greatly, especially when chairing meetings, briefings, and having to delegate tasks to staff. Working as part of this team was greatly rewarding.

The importance of good time-management skills often poses a particular challenge for students and was one of the skills learned during the placement. Focusing on important tasks rather than urgent ones, prioritising and having a diary for deadlines are examples of strategies put in place, as illustrated by the following typical student responses.

Personally, I have struggled with time management and this has been a major area for development. I have learnt skills and strategies that help improve this area, such as prioritisation and this is going to be largely beneficial when I move into the workforce.

Time management has been vitally important throughout my final year at university. I have had to ensure that I have made time for study, assignments, paid employment, social activities, as well as my commitment to the practicum.

I have also noticed that my time management skills have improved by always turning up to meetings on time, not overloading myself, and developing a diary to make sure I don't forget anything important I have to do.

The importance of time management from an operations point of view enables us to meet not only the expectations set by ourselves but also the expectations of our stakeholders to be punctual and professional.

I learnt that by setting a plan early and making these deadlines at the start it makes it a lot easier to manage my time and meet these deadlines.

I have learnt that writing lists and prioritising the list is important for me to make sure I complete the tasks. Also identifying the most important tasks and completing them first keeps everyone happy.

I also found that having good time management and planning skills can help you succeed with a task and make things a lot easier. It was definitely hard improving these skills, but in the end they worked out to be important.

Other findings

Beyond those themes the respondents also recognised and reported the need for technical skills necessary for the placements as well as management skills and teamwork.

It enabled me to develop a range of skills that I now regard as highly useful for coaching teams in the future.

Improvement of practical skills including survey writing and design, survey response collection, presentation design and execution and report writing.

Along the way I have learnt valuable management skills that will benefit me in my future career within the Sport Management industry.

Working within the team was a fantastic opportunity I looked forward to each week. They were very accommodating and welcoming to me and it wasn't long till I felt like a member of the team.

3.4.2 Self-confidence

Self-confidence: Gaining confidence through independent responsibility.



Following the TCA, self-confidence i.e. gaining confidence through independence, was reported less frequently than self-sufficiency; however, it is still an important theme. Gaining confidence through individual action further enhances independent responsibility. The opportunities for students to develop through WIL exceed the possibilities of classroom-based learning. By being open minded, observing, listening, asking questions, reflecting and requesting feedback, students can help this process supported by their supervisor's positive reinforcement, criticism and feedback (Martin & Hughes, 2009). The following are typical student responses highlighting their increasing self-confidence across a range of tasks and competencies.

Through this experience I have gained many new skills, the one that stands out for me is my confidence. This confidence has seen me grow as an individual, making tasks I found challenging at the beginning, such as phone calls and meetings, a more enjoyable achievable experience. I have learnt that I am effective communicator.

I have gained a great deal of confidence in how I interact with people, how to make judgement calls under pressure. Ultimately I now have a lot more faith in my own abilities and find it enjoyable to adopt roles and experiences which place me outside of my comfort zone.

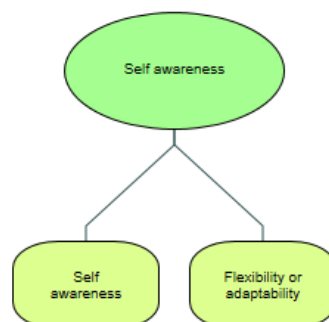
I have learnt a great deal about myself this year, not all of it has been positive, but the confidence I have gained in my public speaking, planning and time management have been invaluable and will put me in good stead for my move into the workforce and has definitely aided me in my development.

Working has provided me with the resources and motivation to grow professionally as a person and have the confidence to take on new challenges no matter what they may be.

I gained a lot of confidence knowing that I am able to help run a successful event and create relationships with others.

3.4.3 Self-awareness

Self-awareness: Awareness through being flexible/adaptable



Students also highlighted their own self-awareness, both personally and professionally through being flexible/adaptable.

I found this practicum extremely beneficial to my development as an overall person in the sport sector. I have been able to progress in key areas such as communication, leadership, planning and organisation.

It has allowed me to understand my strengths and weaknesses and how I can work to improve these.

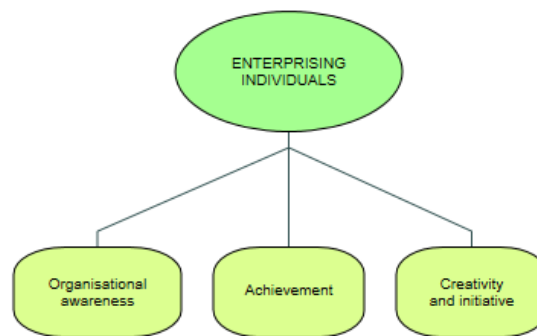
My practicum has been an ongoing pursuit of pushing me out of my comfort zone and trying to develop current and new management skills that will set us apart from others.

This practicum has allowed me to grow as an individual and gain the necessary skills required to add value to any organisation in the sports industry I may be a part of in the future.

I learnt the importance of being self-driven and motivated when in a managerial role.

3.5 ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS

Organisations are in need of enterprising young people who are ready to undertake projects of importance or difficulty, and are energetic in carrying out such roles. These individuals are characterised by imagination or initiative. The following are the sub themes developed from the TCA: organisational awareness, achievement, creativity and initiative.



3.5.1 Organisational awareness

Understanding the structure of sports organisations; how they operate, and discovering their place in our communities was clearly a significant outcome for many of these students. The organisational structures, operations, responsibilities and tensions all help contextualise the placement in a way that was not previously understood by many students. Such industry and business knowledge has been highlighted elsewhere as an important graduate competency (Fleming et al., 2009).

In doing my practicum [my] impression of how hard you have to work in the sport industry went up as from the outside it seems a glamorous job compared to many others but behind the scenes there is a lot more work that goes on that is not seen by the normal person.

Another thing I also noticed about the sport industry is how things can change last minute and there is nothing you can do about it.

Working [in this environment] opened my eyes to the challenges New Zealand faces with developing lesser profile sports with very limited resources.

I have learnt how a regional sports trust operates, and the services that it provides to the community. The organisation provides many different aspects of sport in the community. Staff are passionate about sport, and their jobs, and this reflects the positive work atmosphere.

I have come to appreciate, and now possess knowledge of, the sheer scale of major events and the level of detail that one must consider at all times when managing them. Also that a lot of this business is not about creating headlines, it is about all the little details that have to come together for any project to succeed and flourish. It is about the hard work that has to be put in before any competition, tournament, or programme so that during the event there is nothing to worry about and you can kick back and enjoy the hard work you put in.

This practicum has allowed me to gain a real appreciation for the sport business industry, including many of the challenges that fall within non-profit organisational operations.

3.5.2 Achievement

According to the TCA, participants claim a significant sense of achievement through completing the projects undertaken. They describe this rewarding experience as a result of being exposed to learning opportunities, pushing comfort zones, and achieving a range of tasks and successful outcomes, as indicated by the following typical responses.

My experience of the practicum has been amazing, stressful, challenging and worthwhile and has given me a great first experience to the sport industry. I have learnt a huge amount about event planning, communication, working with people and putting in hard work for a successful outcome.

All in all, seeing countless hours of planning coming together on match day makes this role one that can be very rewarding; it will hence be one that I will treasure forever on a professional and personnel level.

It has allowed me to achieve tasks I thought were once out of my comfort zone such as making phone calls to sponsors and staff and contributing in meetings, therefore making a more enjoyable experience.

When managing a project, the ability to adapt and change when it is required, may be something that needs to happen to ensure a successful outcome.

3.5.3 Creativity and initiative

The following comments illustrate how students were encouraged to be proactive, professional, demonstrate initiative and be flexible.

Being proactive with all practical work is more beneficial than being reactive.

Most of my work was done by myself, so it was important for me to be independent and to use initiative when it was needed.

Reasonably high levels of responsibility given allowed personal initiative and skills to be implemented.

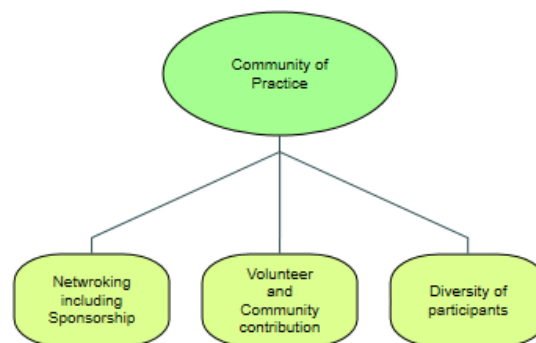
It is important to be flexible within the sporting industry and be able to recognise the differing behavioural and management styles that are appropriate to each role that exists within it. This is particularly so within a sport trust which encompasses so many different approaches to sport and active living.

When managing a project, the ability to adapt and change when it is required may be something that needs to happen to ensure a successful outcome.

3.6 COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Community of Practice theme involved engaging with diverse communities and cultures (9%). These spanned the following sub-themes; networking (e.g. sponsors), volunteer and community contributions, and diversity of participants. The importance of developing a community of practice, particularly in the sport industry was highlighted by students' feedback. Wenger, McDermott, Snyder and William (2002) reinforced social participation where the individual is an active participant in the practices of social communities, and in the construction of their identity through these communities.

It has allowed me to operate within a legitimate sport organisation, gain an understanding of a sport management environment, develop network opportunities, and gain general work experience and skills that I can take with me as I finish my degree and move into the work force.



It has given me both contacts and great working relationships that will be highly useful in future as I pursue a career in the sport management industry.

3.6.1 Networking

The development of important industry contacts, relationships and professional networks (e.g. sponsors) is a particularly valuable outcome of the practicum placement, a finding also highlighted by other research (Fleming et al., 2009).

This industry is about building and maintaining quality relationships with those involved and affected by management decisions.

The importance of networking must not be underestimated. I have created a vast network of teachers, sporting co-ordinators and volunteers, as well as called on my personal sporting contacts from outside of the sport to help on a number of issues.

I have also gained significant networks throughout my practicum experience within the community which will allow me to advance my career in the sport management industry.

The sport industry, particularly event management, is vastly reliant on external partnerships. This enforced the importance of developing positive mutually beneficial relationships. From sponsorship, to liaising with stakeholders, clear communication will assist in conveying the appropriate messages.

3.6.2 Volunteer and community contribution

The value of engaging and frequently depending on both sponsors and volunteers, was an important learning outcome for these students given that sport organisations in New Zealand are largely non-profit, community-based and receive minimal funding.

The amount of time and effort that goes into planning and running these types of events is amazing. They would not be as successful without all of the help from volunteers and sponsors throughout.

I had always had a good understanding of volunteers and what positive impacts they have on a sport, but it's not until you witness them first hand volunteering their time to your own event is when you really appreciate them even more.

Working with people who volunteer their time gives insight into how motivating, frustrating, enthusiastic, testing and yet inspiring people can be to work with, and how I interact with them all will have an effect on the outcome.

3.6.3 Diversity of participants

The students formed networks and relationships with a variety of stakeholders. This was of particular importance in developing a broader community of practice.

The challenges of working with a variety of stakeholders at all levels created many learning opportunities – from volunteer staff at competitions to some of the most influential people in NZ and global sport.

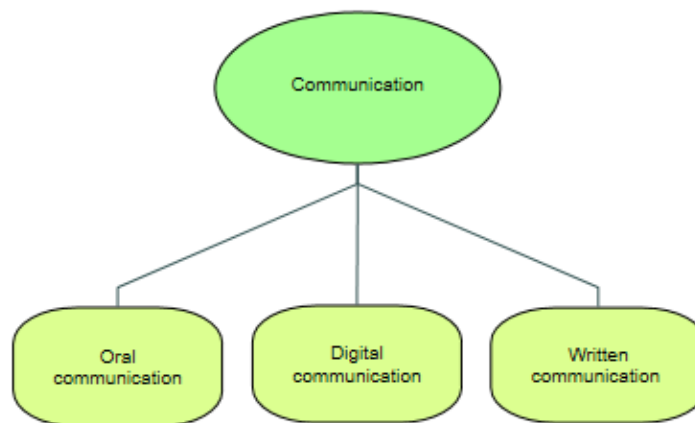
This practicum offered me the opportunity to network with different people in the Industry from CEOs to New Zealand and [Regional] Board members who could be valuable contacts in the future. This was the best paper I studied at [University].

Developing a large range of contacts through networking with people from both within and outside of the sports industry has helped me to gain a great base of solid connections for when I start my career.

3.7 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The ability to develop communication skills can begin very early in the practicum with many students required to make their own pitch to prospective employers. Communication can be oral, non-verbal (gestures, kinaesthetic) and written. Listening, asking questions, public speaking and preparing documents are all aspects of good communication (Martin & Hughes, 2009). Effective communication is an important competency for graduates (Fleming et al., 2009), and the range of opportunities to improve communication throughout their WIL experiences was evident in these student reflections.

I feel the most important aspect that I learnt from my practicum experience is the importance of effective communication.



The most important thing I have learnt from this practicum is how essential good communication and strong relationships is with people not only in the sport industry but also within the community.

3.7.1 Effective communication skills

General comments about improvements dominated this overall communication theme without being specific about how that communication took place. Students recognised the improvements to their overall effectiveness through the importance of good communication using a variety of means across a range of audiences.

I learnt about communicating with different types of people and often you have to change the way you communicate to suit the different people or situation.

I have learnt that communication is one of the most essential skills to have and hone in the sports industry. On a near daily basis, I was required to communicate clearly to a diverse range of people.

The importance of professional interpersonal communication, effective public speaking, sponsorship management and planning of events are among the important aspects of marketing in the sports business industry that I have been exposed to.

However, communication also needs to be effectively utilised

Communication has been the biggest theory being put into practise and it has really stood out when it is not used effectively.

3.7.2 Oral communication

The students frequently described improvements they had made to their oral communication. This new found skill was developed, for example, pitching to employers, attending meetings and conducting business by telephone. As cited elsewhere, the WIL experience provides the opportunity to develop a broader network of contacts and liaise with a range of different industry stakeholders (Martin & Hughes, 2009).

By being able to communicate with a number of different individuals on a daily basis allowed me to put myself out of my comfort zone and challenge myself to do things that I would not necessarily do. I learnt that, as a sport manager, it is vital that you are able to effectively communicate with people, either by phone or email, and I feel that this is something that I have achieved throughout my practicum experience.

You must quickly develop excellent interpersonal skills. You need to be able to effectively communicate your thoughts, feelings and ideas and develop relationships with people.

Communication is a key element of being an efficient sports manager. Installing clear, formal communication with all parties (coaches, players, sponsors, fellow employees, etc.) is crucial to develop collaboration.

Becoming more confident in a variety of oral communication settings and with a range of stakeholders has been particularly highlighted.

I have become more confident in presenting to the class and more confident when talking to sponsors. I'm not scared of asking questions which I think is to do with taking responsibility and thinking "this is my practicum and I'm in charge" so I have the confidence to talk to people as if I am the boss.

By dealing with people both face to face and across the phone through marketing and sponsorship negotiations, I have also gained a lot more confidence in the area of personal communication.

3.7.3 Digital communication

A variety of digital communication activities were described by students. An interesting feature of this type of communication is that the activities or the use of tools would not have been taught within the curriculum, yet the employer through allocation of online tasks assumed a high degree of capability with such things e.g. website development, database management and management of other technical computer programmes. Many participants took on these technical challenges and performed more than adequately. Types of online communication included:

- Web pages: *Create web pages within an organisation's homepage.*
- Computer programmes:
 - *Excel, Project Management and Accounting software Xero*
- Social media: *To promote the organisation and event*
- Database management
 - *Sports Administration Software: e.g. Goalnet, New Zealand Football and Fifa's online database*

Using the Tournament Maker application presented me with an opportunity to use the latest sport management technology, this gave me an insight into where the industry is heading in terms of using information systems wherever possible.

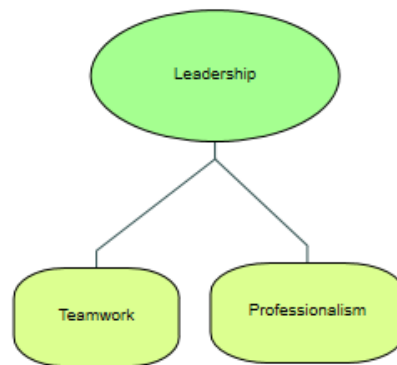
I have noticed that in this technological era with the great advantage of the internet, smart phones and other innovations to engage in online purchasing, research and relations are largely the way of the future. In order to remain competitive companies must be able to utilise this new media and technological advances so that consumers are able to purchase and research products in a new generation fashion.

3.7.4 Written communication

Interestingly very few comments were made about written communication, although the students were required to complete weekly reflective journals and final practicum evaluation reports.

3.8 LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Although a very important aspect of the practicum experience, leadership was one of the least described skills (8%), despite most describing leadership roles in the activities in which they participated. Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick and Cragolini's (2007) findings highlighted the importance of teamwork, students being given responsibility, and collaborative learning as the most important factors graduate reported for effective WIL outcomes. These current findings, whilst noting the responsibility of their roles, indicate that the students have not reflected on the leadership aspects. Greater facilitation by educators/supervisors could enhance this connection and learning outcome.



I have developed my leadership skills to a level where I can efficiently lead a wide variety of different people ranging from highly experienced adults to young children with no experience in volunteering.

Students were given and assumed a range of formal and informal leadership responsibilities across a variety of other tasks, as indicated by the following statements.

I have been given great responsibility which has given me an opportunity to develop my leadership and communication skills.

I have a better understanding of what makes a good leader and how critical this is to make for an effective and cohesive team.

New knowledge developed regarding leadership, leadership styles and organisational outcomes related to these styles.

One example of leadership responsibilities was the management of volunteers.

A big challenge for this practicum was to train the staff not only in what to do but also for them to have the motivation to succeed.

Volunteer supervision will give me an opportunity to develop my management skills and further develop my communication skills.

Another example of leadership became apparent through exposure to budgeting and financial planning of sports events.

The importance of financial management in large scale sporting events and the 'bottom line's' impact on all final decisions.

During my practicum I developed a number of different skills, many surrounding financial planning, in particular the importance of budgeting.

One specific example of leadership was participation in regulatory compliance responsibilities such as health and safety, risk management, disciplinary committees or other organisational or procedural activities. Health and safety responsibilities and risk management were two areas that were frequently undertaken by placement students. Students did not however translate those into leadership activities.

Developing risk management and contingency plans to ensure that if anything was to go wrong during the tournament we had plans in place as to how we would control them.

There were a lot of things I had to learn; contractual obligations (to council), stadium maintenance (particularly court surfaces), behavioural management, risk management, and sport and community programming.

The various levels of leadership responsibility provided the opportunity to manage and delegate to others, as noted by the following student responses.

I have furthered my delegation skills and learnt the art of prioritising which tasks should be handled immediately, by myself, senior staff members or by a volunteer.

I learnt about the importance and great help that delegation can provide, and the importance of utilising resources and research to achieve a goal more effectively and efficiently.

The practicum has helped me to refine operational planning and understand when it is necessary to delegate responsibility rather than shoulder the work load on your own.

3.8.1 Teamwork

On-campus activities provide the opportunity to form teams with complementary capabilities that closely resemble the real world environment through working with others in a group. Off-campus employers value staff that work collaboratively and enthusiastically as part of a project team. Giving students a chance to work on specific projects in groups or teams prior to the WIL experience, provides them with opportunities to develop skills that will enhance project work in the workplace. Experiencing working within such structures is a particular strength of the WIL approach (Patrick et al., 2008), as illustrated by the following student responses.

[I learnt] the value of a positive team culture and how important this is to the development of a team. When this is implemented correctly and expectations and values are at the heart of a team, the results will follow.

3.8.2 Professionalism

Recognising that they need to maintain high standards, a good work ethic and a professional attitude, all helped to inspire and lead others and enhanced the overall enjoyment and experience of the placement. Fleming et al. (2009) highlighted that being in the workplace provides opportunity to learn about professional ethics and demonstrate standards which support the culture of an organisation where employees are expected to be honest, trustworthy, courteous and conscientious.

It is a small team with tight budgets just like most other sporting organisations. It is a team environment that is easy going and looks out for each other. It is an organisation that is always challenging itself to expand and develop the game. The staff endeavour to live by their values, passionate, professional, integrity, unified team and welcoming.

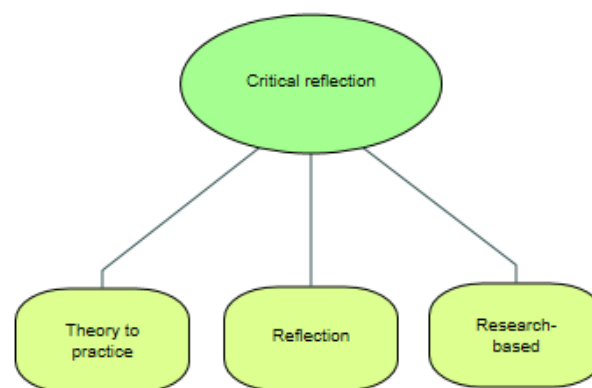
Professionalism needs to be portrayed through every aspect of the working environment and how to effectively deal with problems that occur.

I have enjoyed my time in [an environment], it is a whole new level of professionalism and I have learnt much about client satisfaction and event organisation from my supervisor and other employees.

3.9 CRITICAL REFLECTION

A small number of participants (7%) were able to consider the reflective aspects of activities and putting learned theory into practice. Some even described undertaking research. This additional theme that emerged from the data that was not one of the Massey employability characteristics. It is encouraging to receive this insightful feedback from student experiences.

The reflective practitioner model has shown me the link between what I have learnt and experienced in the past, and how completing other subjects has a direct bearing on the decisions that I make today



3.9.1 *The reflective practitioner*

Student feedback highlighted that the reflective process encouraged critical, analytical and systems thinking.

The reflective practitioner model has shown me the link between what I have learnt and experienced in the past, and how completing other subjects has a direct bearing on the decisions that I make today.

The environment I am working in and the varied nature of the tasks that I have been fortunate to be involved in has provided me with ample opportunities to reflect on how effect management theories can be applied to achieve progress and effect change.

In the sport industry it takes persistence, patience and communication with people to organise any aspect of an event. Volunteers are heavily relied on to make an event successful.

Applying theory and different principles to a practical situation has made me appreciate why some things happen and how by using theory and principles you can control some processes.

Throughout my practicum experience many difficulties arose. I was able to find a way to get around these difficulties by problem solving and communicating.

One student reflected on the challenges of the practicum, but that perseverance has helped them long term.

If I am being truly honest, the practicum on a personal level has been a struggle and very rarely enjoyable. Despite working in a sport I love, motivation has been hard to find throughout. However, I have strived to take all I can from the experience and sticking with it has provided me with the tools I will need in whatever career I choose to follow after this.

3.9.2 Integrating theory into practice

Putting theory into practice took experiences learned in class and turned them into authentic learning activities. This helped make sense of such class-based activities by providing context and real-world experience.

Hosting an event makes the skills learnt at university relevant. Helping organise the Secondary School Sports Awards allowed me to observe and experience theory in practise.

This practicum experience has been the biggest learning curve in my university studies and being able to put theory into practice was so important in developing a sound knowledge of event management.

The value of applying theory to practice and the transfer of learning is reinforced by the following student insights.

I learnt that throughout my time at university I have gained the theoretical knowledge required for a career in event management within the sports industry. I also believe I have the capabilities to manage other types of events. I have also learnt that I am able to transfer this theoretical knowledge into practical work and event management planning.

Most benefit has come through reflecting on such occasions and seeing how I can adapt the theory or my own actions to be most efficient.

I learnt how to apply the knowledge in theory about sport management into practice first hand. It has been a very enriching journey where I have learned to work on my strengths and improve on my weaknesses.

The practicum was a great opportunity to learn how concepts and theories that we have learnt in the class room are applied in the daily work of the sporting industry.

3.9.3 Reflective practice

Closely aligned to the application of theory was the ability to be reflective practitioners. While some struggled to reflect on many of the activities and actions they participated in, others were able to apply such reasoning to their practicum experience. Part of the reflection related to the way they applied themselves to the tasks, another aspect of reflection was the way they evaluated or received feedback on the outcome of their tasks. This was often done in conjunction with their workplace supervisors.

I discovered by looking at the practicum in another way I was able to set myself objectives that would challenge me as a manager.

I received both critical and positive feedback throughout, with most people telling me I have done an excellent job if not one of the best.

3.9.4 Research based

Undertaking research was an infrequent aspect of the practicum activity. However, a number of participants did appreciate the opportunity to apply such theory in the workplace. The range of research projects included surveys, SWOT analysis, data collection and analysis and even case studies. Such activities, although not specifically included within the curriculum for the degree, reflect the positive way that students adapt to the unpredictability of a placement and through their self-confidence and support, how they adapt to the circumstances to problem solve.

Researching fan engagement surveys and reports, to create a volunteer scheme based on these results.

Consistent with modern business strategies all my tasks involved firstly a SWOT analysis, i.e. analysing the organisations Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

This project included collating information from current members to gauge current practices at their clubs.

3.9.5 Self-efficacy

The development of self-efficacy has been highlighted as an important outcome in the process of work integrated learning (Freudenberg, Cameron & Brimble, 2011; Fleming et al., 2009; Reddan, 2015, 2016; Subramaniam & Freudenberg, 2007). In a broader sense Bandura (1988) defined self-efficacy as belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task, which can play a major role on how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges. Aspects of self-development were highlighted as the most common outcome of this current study. The following typical comments illustrate increased self-efficacy and the focus on self-development throughout the WIL experience, which is a catalyst for both personal and professional change and development.

Another major component of the learning aspect was what I was able to learn about myself. At first I was tentative, apprehensive and unconfident in my abilities. However, as time progressed and my knowledge base increased I began to believe in myself and my abilities a lot more. I became more independent in my duties, more confident in what I was saying, and was able to use my initiative to get projects started/finished.

This experience has taught me about resilience, perseverance, and hard work, which could be the cornerstone of a successful manager.

4. CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS

4.1 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: DEVELOPING THE T-GRADUATE

The **Breadth** and **Depth** of WIL activity reinforced the notion of developing ‘T-shaped professionals’, who are characterised by their deep disciplinary knowledge in at least one area (e.g. event management), and their ability to function as ‘adaptive innovators’ across boundaries between disciplines (e.g. various business activities). Their development as a **Reflective Practitioner** requires analytical, systems and critical thinking to solve problems. Successful project management involves the development of **Self-efficacy** and boundary spanning competencies such as teamwork, communication, organisational perspective and networks.

It is expected that the findings of this study can be transferred and applied within other WIL contexts i.e. by any tertiary provider either offering or considering WIL as an option for enhancing student learning. The resource, ‘*The Added Value of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)*’, focuses on practical information for students, lecturers, and employers.

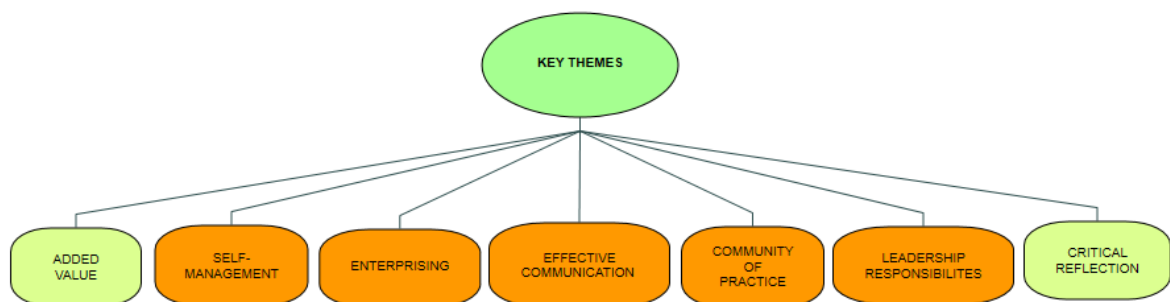
Now to end on a quote that has motivated me throughout this practicum:

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do”.

4.2 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: OUTCOMES AND ADDED VALUE

The most beneficial and rewarding part of my university experience

This project involved the analysis of all available student reflections from 10 years' worth of placement experience (2007-2016) from the sport management and coaching practicum (N = 271). The comments were coded deductively initially against Massey's five graduate characteristics. There was close alignment with some but not all of those characteristics.



Self-Management is clearly the most common theme from the students' reflection. i.e. What I did and what I learnt and the skills I used to do that. Tangible activities are often easier for students to describe and report than intangible, for example, organising an event (easy) versus leading people (hard). Students are more likely to be able to reflect about themselves rather than reflecting more broadly on things that extend beyond themselves.

Clearly evident was the development of **Enterprising Individuals** who demonstrated innovation, creativity and organisational awareness through achievement of a variety of tasks and projects.

Effective Communication emerged as a theme with oral communication dominating the comments followed by digital communication then written communication. While a great deal is done to assist written communication, practising and improving oral communication across the curricula does not seem to receive the same level of attention. It was encouraging to see that these students did get the opportunity to practise this underrated skill.

A characteristic that emerged from the analysis was **Community of Practice**, which aligned with the Massey global citizen although not in as broad a sense. These students often described a strong sense of community linked to the non-profit, community-based, volunteer nature of sport in New Zealand. We would contend however that this didn't necessarily make them global citizens. An opportunity for further research would be to determine the extent to which some of the longer standing graduates are able to describe a broader understanding of global citizenship through the use of structured interviews. **Leadership Responsibilities** was the least reported characteristic, which was a somewhat surprising finding because all of these participants reported doing leadership during their practicum.

The inductive element of the coding unearthed two new themes; one we called **Added Value**, and the other **Critical Reflection**. A key aspect of added value is their perceived contribution coupled with enjoyment of the experience. An overwhelming feature of many of the placements was enjoyment of the experience, gratitude and thankfulness coupled with reaffirming their likely employment pathway in the future. One participant summed this up using a very common Maori proverb.

What has driven me the most in the practicum can be described by this Māori proverb:

“He aha te mea nui? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata”

“What is the most important thing? It is people, it is people, it is people”

Increasingly, the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experience is providing a point of difference for students in enhancing their employability from tertiary education institutions. Overall, specific alignment with Massey University's employability characteristics is noted through this curricular WIL activity, but the outcome is likely to be subtly different for each qualification. We argue that the development of attributes such as a global citizen and life-long learning are also likely to be attributes developed later in a career rather than as a graduate. The enterprise of these students is evident in the added value of the experience, where their expectations have been exceeded.

4.3 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The *breadth* and *depth* of WIL activity ‘future proofs’ graduates in developing ‘T-shaped professionals.’ It is important that WIL opportunities provide a variety of such learning experiences.

The development of graduates as *reflective practitioners* is enhanced through the WIL process that requires analytical, systems and critical thinking to solve problems. The reflective WIL process also enhances *self-efficacy* and boundary spanning competencies such as teamwork, communication, organisational perspective and networks.

The key graduate attributes of *self-management, enterprising individuals, a community of practice, effective communication, and leadership responsibilities* when melded together define an optimal WIL outcome through the tripartite partnership between the employer, the supervisor, and the student.

The importance of teamwork, students being given responsibility, and collaborative learning have previously been highlighted as the most important factors graduate reported for effective WIL outcomes (Crebert et al, 2007). However, these current findings, whilst noting the responsibility of their roles, indicate that the students have not reflected specifically on the leadership aspects. Presumably reflecting on leadership was a challenge. Greater facilitation by educators/supervisors could enhance this connection and learning outcome. Students clearly need more exposure to the various attributes or activities that underpin leadership.

Critical reflection does not come easy to some people, as also noted by Boud et al. (1993). The findings reinforce the importance of a learning process that facilitates leadership and reflective work-based experiences that link theory to practice. It was a credit to some that they were able to reflect in this way as they looked back on their placement experience. Like leadership, critical reflection is one of those characteristics that could be improved on.

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6. APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX 1: CODING

The main tasks undertaken by the participants have been coded in a descriptive manner (Richards. 1999) In many instances sub-tasks (16) were described by students who either undertook an event organisation placement or those who did some sort of business activity (Figure 2). The job titles provided by the participants at the onset were not included in this coding as they did not, in many instances, describe the actual activities undertaken. Overall there were 1186 separate tasks or sub-tasks coded across all the participants from 2007 to 2016 (Figure 3), which equates to 4.4 actual tasks or sub-tasks per person. The most frequent main task overall related to 'Organising events' (71%; n = 841/1186) followed by 'Business Activities' (21%; n = 252), 'Coaching' (6%; n = 74) and 'Team Organisation' (1.6%; n= 19).

Until 2014, the typical number of tasks was 4.0. However, since 2014 there has been an increase in the level of detail in the reflective journals and an increase in the number of tasks described. This is not meant to suggest that the scale of the placements has increased but is more likely to show an increased level of content in the reflective journals in recent years (Table 1). 7 people undertook 10 or more separate tasks (all recent students 2011 to 2016). None of the earlier students described tasks to the same extent. The highest number of subtasks (14) was by a person who coached numerous groups as well as organised different events and also undertook multiple business activities. Ironically this student did not provide a great deal of reflective learning outcomes.

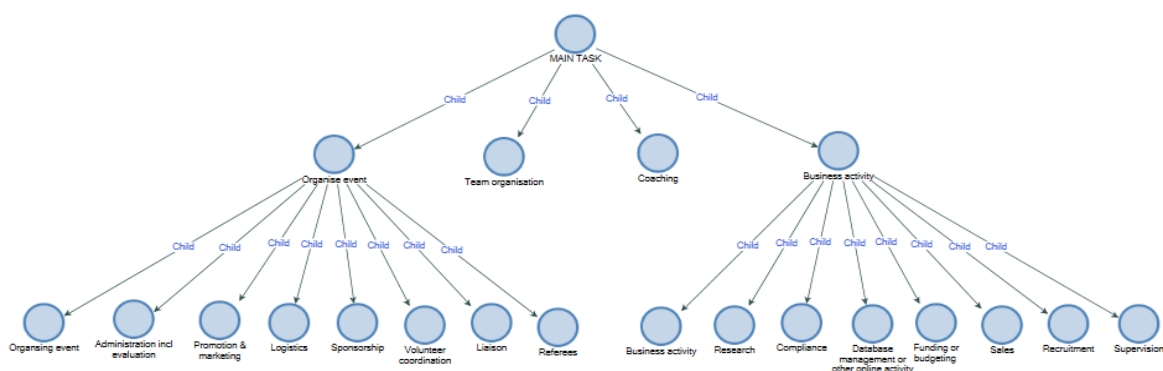


FIGURE 2. MAIN TASKS: CODING STRUCTURE

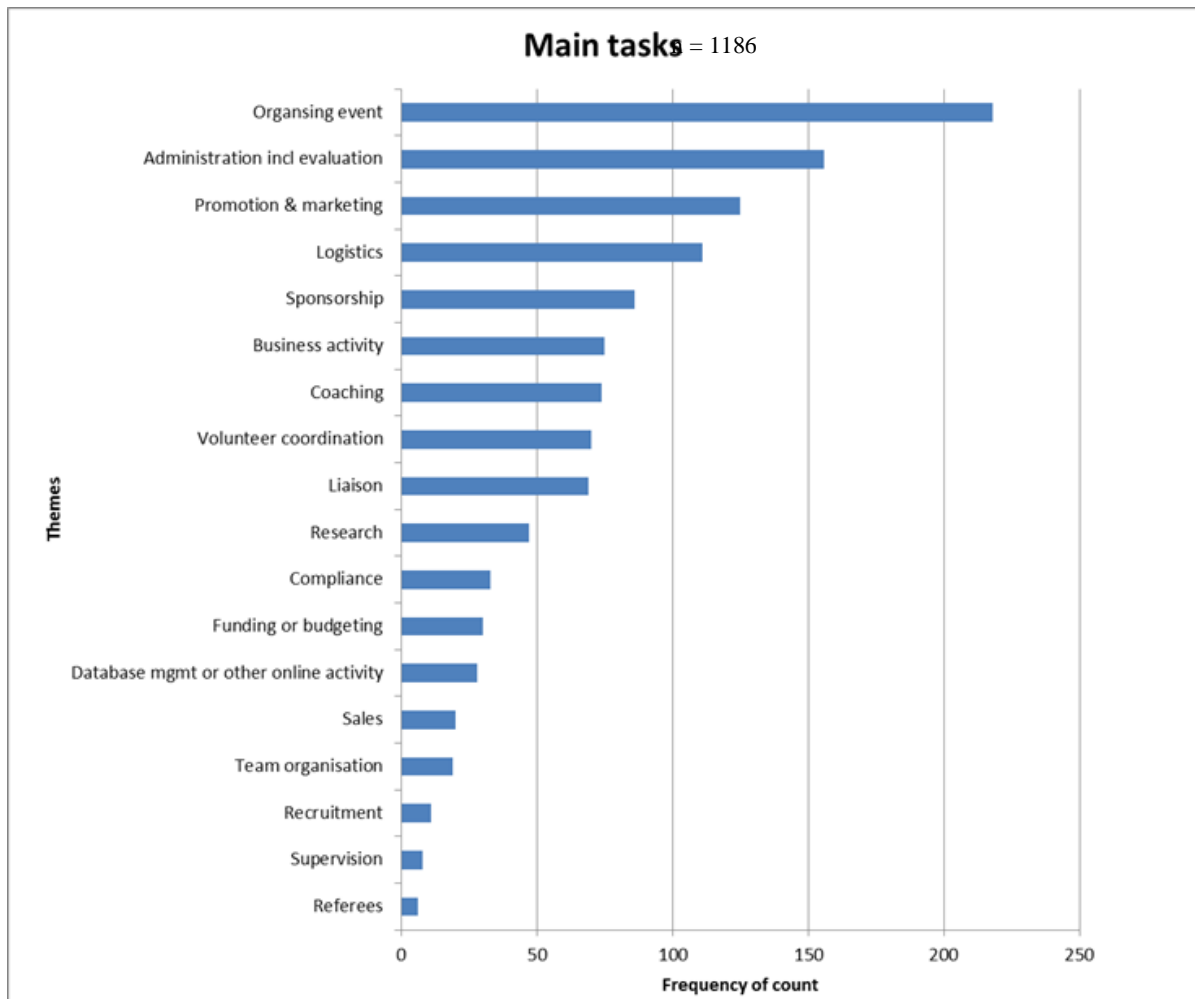


FIGURE 3. MAIN TASKS: FREQUENCY OF COUNT

TABLE 1. CODING FREQUENCY BY YEAR

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Task count	73	69	112	92	152	166	103	188	148	83	1186
Student count (n)	12	17	27	26	30	43	29	40	30	17	271
Tasks/student	6.1	4.1	4.1	3.5	5.1	3.9	3.6	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.4

7.2 APPENDIX 2. THE CODING FRAMEWORK

Name	Description	References	total	%
SELF MANAGEMENT	Working independently, taking responsibility, planning organisation confidence and self awareness. Being adaptive to respond to changing situations.	700	700	31
Self-sufficiency	An individuals application of skills i.e. teamwork, management, time management, skills development, decision making or planning.	480		
Organisational skills	Organising skills through event organisation and planning	144		
Planning skills	Broad range of planning skills also includes patience, passion and delegation.	134		
Time management	Learning how to balance study with placement or self time management in the workplace generally.	67		
Technical skills	Learning the technical aspects of sports management or science including structuring training sessions and coaching processes,	53		
Management skills	Management skills development. Includes staff management and supervision.	43		
Decision making	Decision making, problem solving and turning ideas into actions, includes making decisions about facilities management	39		
Self-confidence	Gaining confidence through independent responsibility	124		
Confidence	Gaining confidence through individual actions.	84		
Independent responsibility	Learning how to make one's own decisions. Includes needing to be assertive and proactive.	40		
Self-awareness	Self-awareness through being flexible and adaptable	96		
Self-awareness	Self-awareness	59		
Flexibility or adaptability	Learned the need to be both flexible and adaptable	37		
ADDING VALUE	Benefit to ones self through enjoyment, achievement, mediated through academic and placement supervisor.	461	461	21
Enjoyment	Placement enjoyable experience	156		
Supervisor relationship gratitude	Comments about the supervisor student relationship	127		
Reinforce employment decision	Reinforce the decision to follow this employment path	113		
Adding value	Adding value to the organisation or to the individual through innovation or creativity	42		
Academic supervisor gratitude	Any comments specifically about the academic supervisor	23		
ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS	Individuality, creativity, innovation, risk taking and opportunism.	315	315	14
Organisational awareness	Developing an awareness of the organisation, its people and the role it plays.	160		
Achievement	Achieving, making a contribution	125		
Research-based	Undertaking research for a project or initiative	25		
Innovative and creative	Using innovating or creative thinking to solve problem	5		
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	Identify, locate, evaluate and communicate through oral written or other visual methods to inform motivate and effect change. Developed from the main tasks described plus any overall comments	249	249	11
Communication generally	General comments about communication not specifically included in other nodes. Including event communication and promotion	147		
Oral communication	Oral communication including speaking meeting attendance, interviews	64		
Digital communication	Any form of online communication including database management, social media, email, facebook and web pages	34		
Written communication	Any acknowledgement of the awareness and or use of written communications	4		
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE	Engaging ethically and efficiently with diverse communities and cultures. Includes volunteers in the not-for-profit sector, organisational awareness and networking.	201	201	9
Networking	Networking and other relationship building	65		
Sponsorship	Any aspect of sponsorship generation or liaison	49		
Volunteer contributions	Any activity relating to the contribution that volunteers make to our communities	38		
Diversity of participants	Working with different groups and different ages	31		
Contribution sport plays in the community	The contribution that sport plays	18		
LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	Ability to work confidently and collaboratively with a group of people, encouraging, motivating team members towards a shared vision. Includes risk management activities, health and safety, financial responsibilities and customer relationship management	174	174	8
Regulatory responsibilities	Managing the compliance activities relating to events includes H&S, risk management, policy development and ethics.	38		
Leadership	Demonstrating leadership through activity management and other opportunity	37		
Team work	Benefits of working with others in the group	37		
Financial responsibility	Financial responsibilities	21		
Professionalism	Maintaining high standards and professional attitude	21		
Customer Relationship Management	Any aspect of customer service or support	11		
Motivation, inspire	Motivating others	9		
CRITICAL REFLECTION	Ability to consider and reflect often based in the application of theory to practice	124	124	6
Theory to practice	Any reference about applying theory to practice	77		
Reflection	Evaluation or monitoring progress of activities or evaluation effectiveness	47		
			2224	