

Structured Abstract Templates

Best Practice & Topical Issues

Title	
Authors	
Group/Institution	
Background/Program	
Unique Features/Issue	
Discussion/Argument	
Conclusions/Implications	

Examples

Title: The Role of the Placement Coordinator: An Alternative Model

Authors: Chris Eames, Richard K. Coll

Group/Institution: School of Science & Engineering, University of Waikato.

Background: There have been a number of models for the administration of co-op programs reported in the literature. Two types are presented. In one a centralized group independent of academic faculties coordinates all placements but placements are not credit-bearing or 'academic' in nature. In the second model, co-op is devolved to the faculty and administered at the departmental/faculty level.

Program: The Cooperative Education Unit at Waikato University operates a science and technology, and engineering co-op program for the BE and BSc(Technology) degrees. These are four year programs, with requirement of six and 12 months work placements respectively.

Unique Features: The administration of co-op at Waikato is unusual in that it involves joint appointments between science and engineering departments and a centralized cooperative education unit. All staff are qualified in a particular science or engineering discipline, and active teachers/researchers in these disciplines.

Discussion/Argument: We propose that this model of administration for co-op poses several advantages: the fact that co-op placement coordinators are knowledgeable in the subject enhances their credibility with industry; subject specialist are able to strengthen research links with industry; placement coordinators that are also teachers get to know their students better, ensuring a better match of student with employer.

Implications/Issues: The model of co-op administration of co-op at Waikato has unique advantages and may be of application in other contexts. It is, however, a relatively expensive model that relies on EFTS-funding for placements.

Title: The Tension Between Academic Marking and Practical Industry Evaluation: A Discussion of Current Practice

Authors: David Skelton

Group/Institution: Information Technology, Eastern Institute of Technology.

Background: There have been many reports in the literature about the difficulties of assessment in cooperative education. Most often the problem lies in evaluation of student learning for the work placement component part of the program. In particular there is often tension between the 'academic' marking and practical industry evaluation.

Issue: The issue addressed in this paper is the potential for 'tension' between academic marking and practical industry evaluation. Is this tension real, does it matter, if it does exist what can or should we do about it?

Discussion: This paper presents a review of reported current practice of marking of work placements. In it the author attempts to identify aspects of best practice, based on an evaluation of reported current practice.

Conclusions: Analysis of current practice indicates a divide between industry and academic views. There appears to be a natural tension between the processes and priorities of the academic world and pragmatism and priorities of the corporate/industry environment.

Implications: The tension that exists between industry and academia with respect to evaluation of student performance in the workplace necessitates a more cooperative framework for workplace evaluation. Evaluation of student workplace performance should be a multipartite exercise.

Research Template

Title	
Authors	
Group/Institution	
Background/Context	
Aims	
Methods	
Results	
Conclusions/Implications	

Example

Title: Faculty Views on the Influence of Work Placements on Students' Ability to do Graduate Studies

Authors: Karsten Zegwaard, Sue McCurdy, Levinia Paku

Group/Institution: University of Waikato

Background: Much research has been carried out on the benefits of co-op for students, employers, and, to some extent, educational institutes. Research of views by faculty who only have peripheral involvement with co-op is limited.

Context: Research presented is part of a larger, partly completed, research project at the University of Waikato. With research still ongoing, preliminary results will be presented.

Aims: To establish what views faculty members have of co-op, the potential of co-op graduates, and their capability of doing graduate research (e.g., masters, PhD).

Methods: Data were collecting using a survey instrument containing items rated using a 5 point Likert scale. Survey data were thematically analysed and descriptive statistical analyses carried to determine mean responses and degree of variability.

Results: Faculty has mixed views of co-op graduates' potential and capability of doing graduate research. Most respondents indicated they thought placements taught both hard and soft skills, and 84% thought students learnt skills on placement not taught at university (remainder were neither/nor). Some respondents clearly thought the potential of co-op graduates to complete graduate studies was increased by having completed work placements (e.g., increased skills in report writing and research ability). However, despite such positive overall views, some respondents thought work placements did not increase students' ability to do graduate studies, and indicated that they thought co-op graduates were limited to technical support positions, which do not require graduate qualifications.

Conclusions/Implications: Faculty views may have an important influence on faculty selection of students for graduate studies. It also gives an indication of level of acceptance of co-op within the faculty. Further research will be required, in order to gain a better understanding of some of the reasoning behind these faculty views, and perhaps propose possible solutions for areas of concern.