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Does work integrated learning better psychologically prepare British students for life and work.

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# Does work integrated learning better psychologically prepare British students for life and work?



Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

A photograph of several students walking in a modern building with large glass windows. The students are dressed in casual attire, including hoodies and jackets. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor or well-lit outdoor area.

Lisa Ward

Fiona Purdie

# Today's presentation



- **Background to the study**
  - Joining the international work integrated learning project
  - Placements at the University of Huddersfield
  - What we know from the literature about the psychological effect of WIL
- **Methodology**
  - Design
  - Measures
  - Sample
- **Results**
  - Does WIL influence students psychologically and in what way?
- **Implications**
  - For the academic community
  - For the University of Huddersfield
  - For HEIs nationally and internationally

## An international study...



- Originated at the University of Waterloo (Canada)
- Definition: Co-operative Education, Placements, internships
- The largest Co-operative Education Provider in Canada with 15,000 students.
- WatCACE
- Found out about research at WACE

# An international study...



## Project Partners:

- Assoc Prof Maureen Drysdale, University of Waterloo, Canada
- Dr Kristina Johansen, University West, Sweden,
- Dr Sheri Dressler, University of Central Florida, USA
- Elena Zaitseva, Liverpool John Moores, UK

# Placements at the University of Huddersfield



- 25,000 students
- 2011 fee 'free' placements, from 2012 - £500
- Sandwich Degrees
- Professional Placements
- Big Society Volunteering
- Simulation, Canalside Studios, Penfield

# The Background



## Graduate employment challenges:

- Record numbers of graduates in the UK (Chevalier & Lindley, 2009)
- Increasing difficulty in securing employment post-university (Browne, 2010)
- Higher expectations as a result of tuition fee reforms (Browne, 2010)

**Result:** A challenge to design programs better equipped to enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge & experience that increase employability & lead to more satisfying careers.

**A possible solution? WIL**

# The documented benefits of Work Integrated Learning



## **Occupational/academic benefits (Powell *et al.*, 2008; Bates, 2008):**

- Better careers
- Better salaries
- Better degree outcomes

## **Specific competencies:**

(Costley, 2007; Crebert *et al.*, 2002, Dreuth & Deuth-Fewell, 2002; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; Rickard, 2002)

- Decision making
- Interpersonal and self-management skills
- The application of theoretical knowledge in workplace environments
- Professional networking and behaviour
- Leadership



# The documented benefits of Work Integrated Learning



## Psychological factors:

- A more positive view of chance of gaining employment over specific competencies or occupational advantage (Allen & van der Velden, 2007).
- Self esteem (Crebert *et al.*, 2002)
- Self efficacy (Cuzzi *et al.*, 1996).

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## Research question



Do students who pursue WIL have significantly higher self-concept, self-efficacy, hope, and motivation for study, and significantly lower procrastination, compared to students who pursue a more traditional degree programme?

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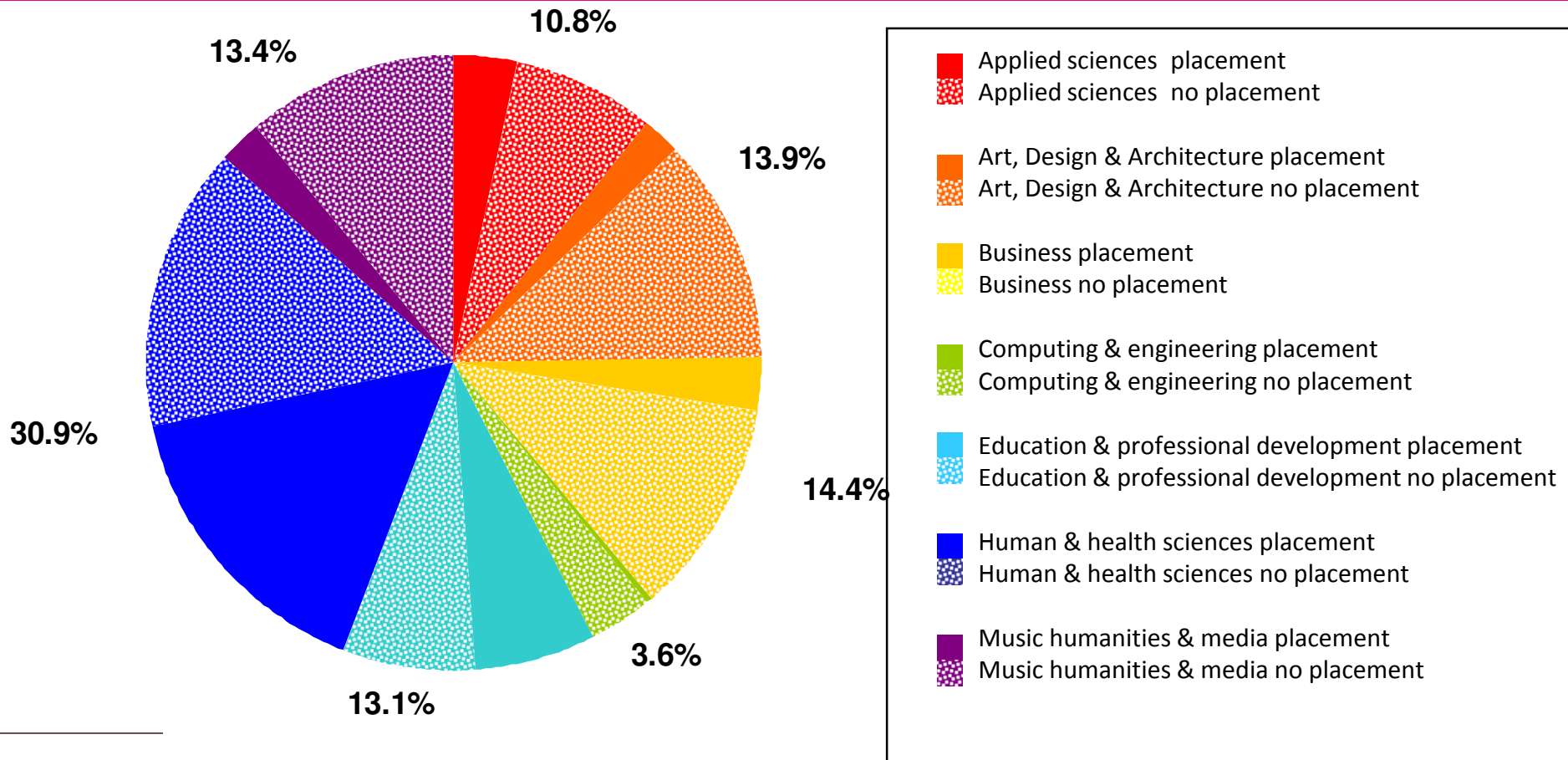
**Questions**

# Sample



- Self selected sample of undergraduate students, from all academic schools at the University of Huddersfield, UK (n=621)
- Placement: 33.3%/ non placement: 66.7%
- Males: 25% / Females: 75% (significantly more females undertake placements)
- Mean age (yrs): 26.5

# Percentage of students per school, by placement participation

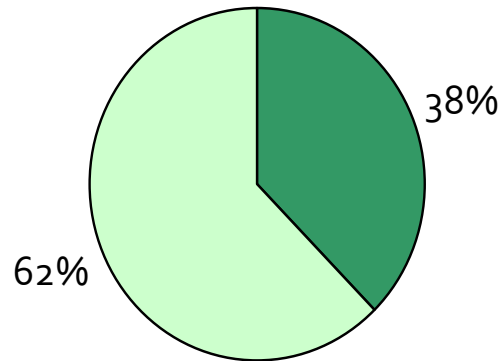


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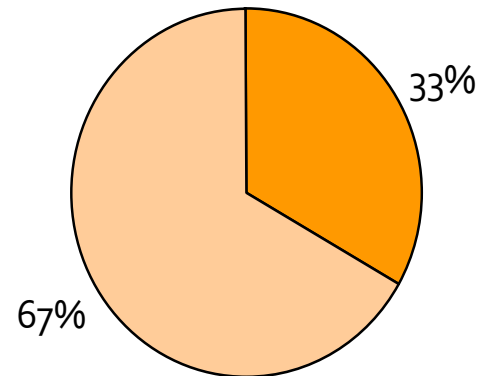
# Proportion of students undertaking work related activity



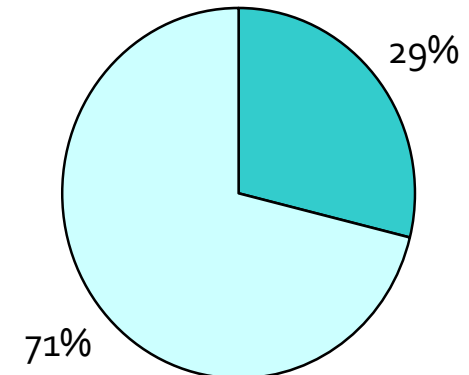
Current part time work



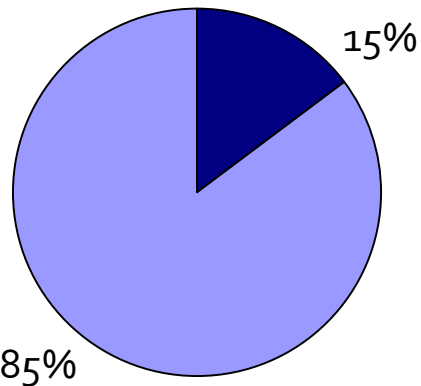
Placement



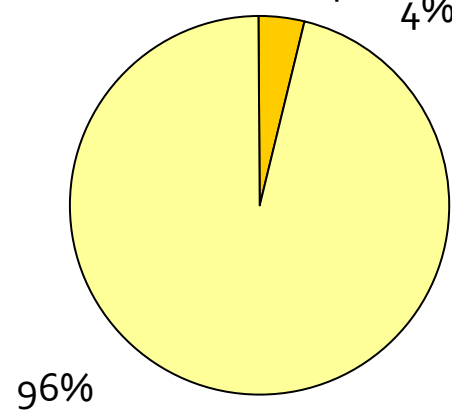
Voluntary work



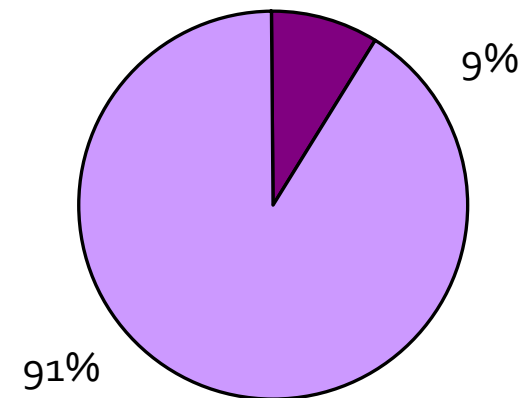
Relevant previous work



Internship



Experiential learning



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- Cross-sectional analysis
- Measures, demographic and educational data were collected from participants at the end of their academic year.
- Chosen to accommodate the varied placement programmes available at the University of Huddersfield

# Measures



**Trait Hope Scale** (*THS*: Snyder *et al.*, 1991), which measures hopes and goals

**Procrastination Assessment Scale – Students** (*PASS*: Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), which measures the postponement of goals and tasks.

**Self-Description Questionnaire III** (*SDQ-III*: Marsh & O’Neill, 1984)., which measures a set of learned perceptions, beliefs and opinions that individuals hold about themselves.

**College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale** (*CASES*: Owen & Froman, 1988), which measures the degree of competence participants believe they have in various academic settings.

**Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire** (*MSLQ*: Pintrich *et al.*, 1993), which assesses motivation and learning strategies by University students.

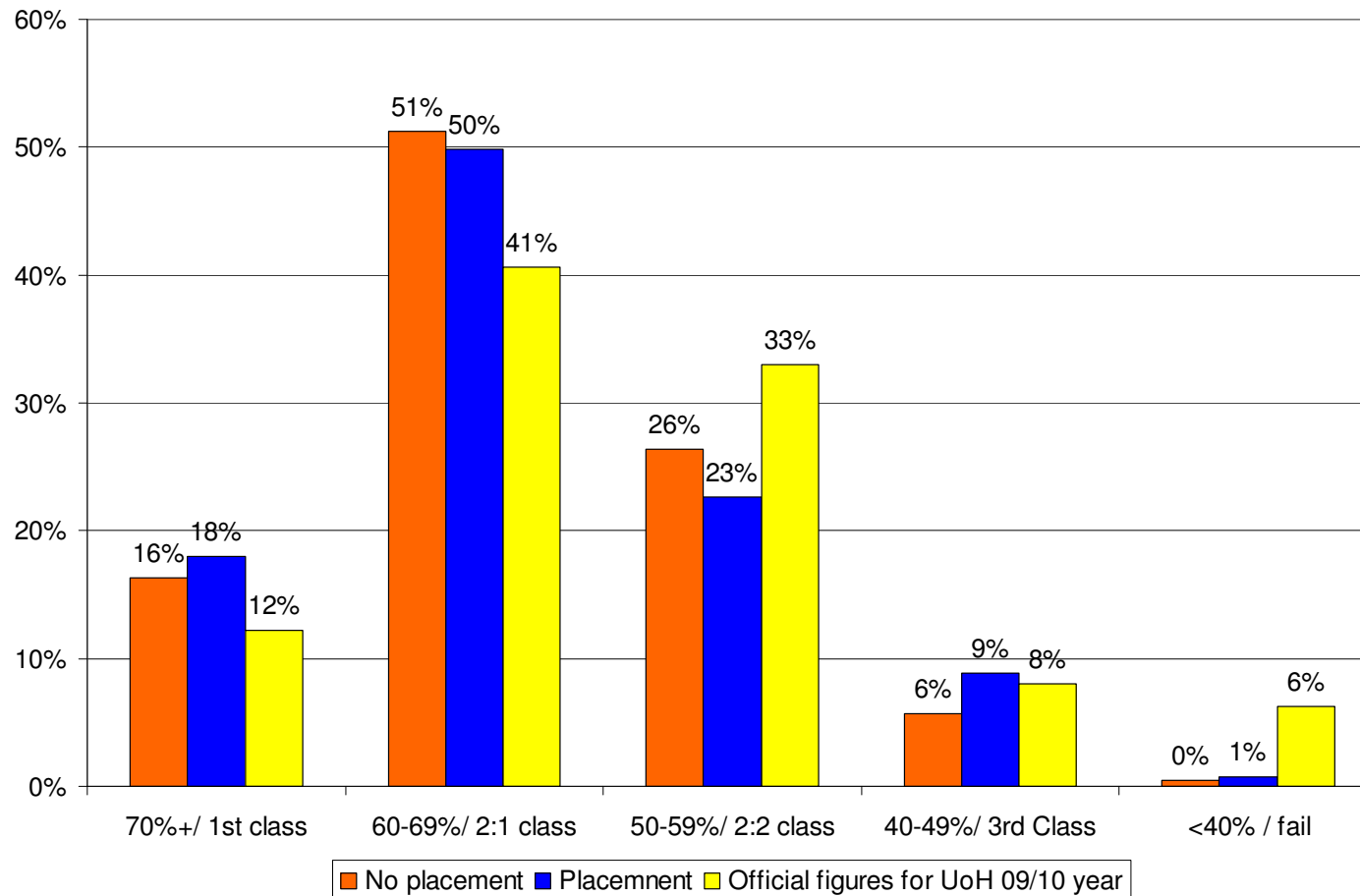
A range of demographic, educational and occupational information was also collected





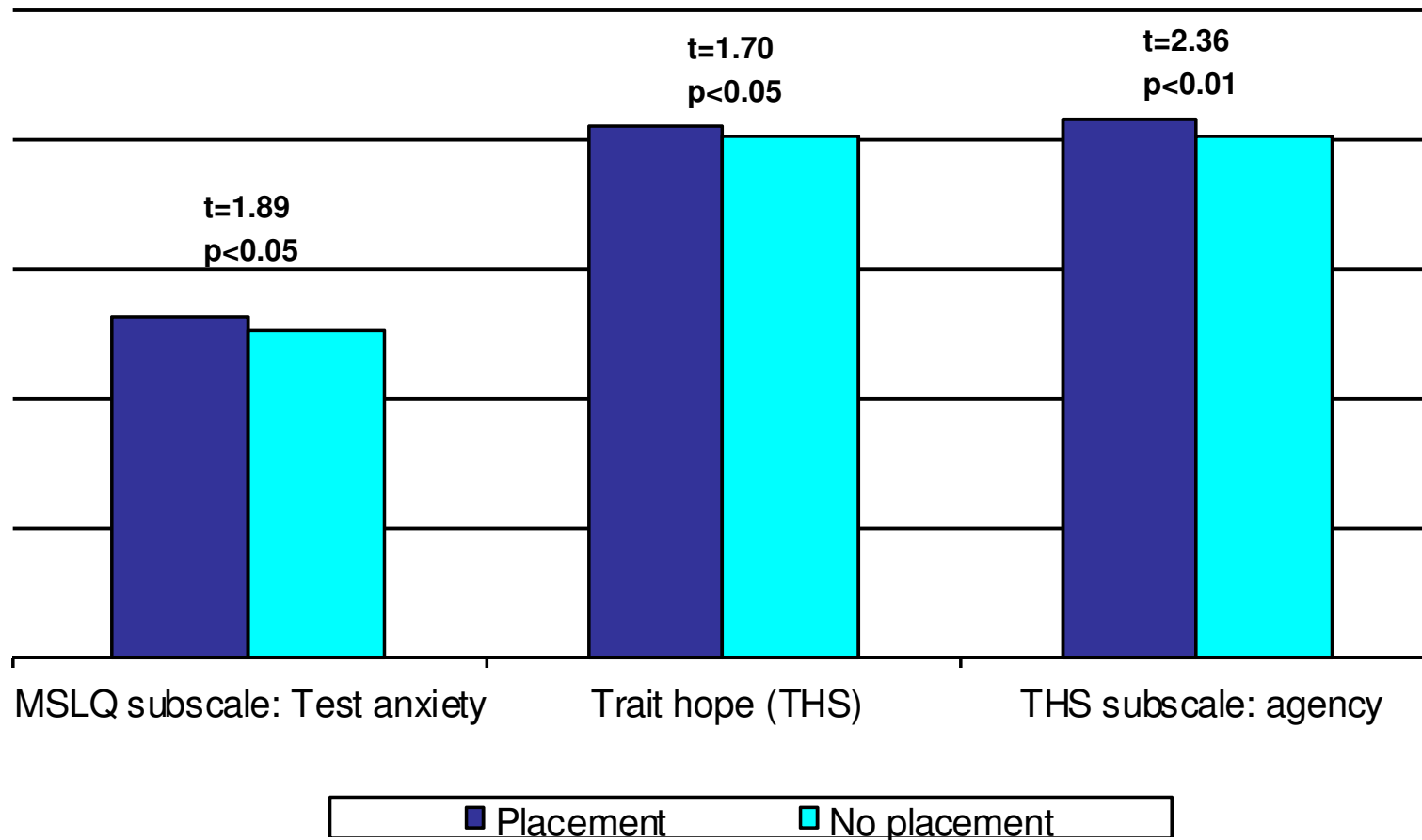
**Questions**

# Academic achievement reported by placement and non-placement students



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# Mean results by placement participation



# Theoretical implications



- Our findings suggest that cognitions & emotions are most affected by WIL
- Findings are consistent with previous evidence to suggest that an improvement in confidence is a key outcome of WIL (Cope, 2000; Ward, 2009).
- Lack of significant differences in measures relating to learning behaviours, e.g. procrastination, learning strategies, or in academic achievement were found, contrary to existing literature (Powell *et al.*, 2008).

## **Why might this be?**

The specificity of the experiential differences between placement and non-placement students.

# Practical implications

For the University of Huddersfield and beyond



- Models of graduate employability suggest that self-confidence and self esteem are key facilitators of later employment (Dacre Pool & Sewell 2007).
- Changes in HE landscape with higher fees from 2012
  - Will two year degrees become the norm?
  - How can work related elements be better integrated into courses?
  - Will student stake on even more part-time jobs to pay for education?
  - Will employers still expect work experience?

# Limitations and directions for future research



- Main limitation: the use of a cross-sectional design.
- Precluded understanding whether differences are a result of WIL or whether students who participate in WIL are different prior to commencing placement.
- Future studies employing a pre-post design are indicated
- Longitudinal studies documenting occupational outcomes of WIL vs non WIL students

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## Next Steps



- Secured funding for qualitative research. ‘The more the merrier?: a qualitative examination of the contribution of multiple work integrated learning experiences to student learning, personal development and preparation for employment.’
- Looking for ongoing collaborations with our research partners.

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# Conclusion



Our findings suggest that work integrated learning has a much more wide reaching influence than simply moulding better students. It's effect is one of a more hopeful and confident adult, better equipped emotionally to face the challenges of the employment market and life beyond.



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# Up Coming Presentations



- Impact Upon Teaching and Learning – **University of Huddersfield, Teaching and Learning Committee, September.**
- ‘In the right placement at the right time? An investigation of the psychological outcomes of placement learning’ **International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011), Istanbul, October.**
- ‘Learning beyond the lecture room: Do placements help students learn about themselves and for themselves?’ **Psychology of Education Conference, Preston, November.**



**Questions**

Thank you for your time  
and attention

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