


# WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM FOR BUDDHIST HIGHER EDUCATION IN DIGITAL ERA

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## Abstract

Employer demands for graduate skills and competencies continue to evolve in response to globalization and rapid digital technological change. This qualitative study examines the implementation of a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) framework in Buddhist universities aimed at developing ethically grounded and digitally competent graduates for the digital era. The study explores how Buddhist learning principles can be integrated with digital and AI competencies, English communication skills aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and international collaboration within undergraduate WIL programs. Qualitative document analysis was employed to analysis data from institutional policies, curricula, and WIL-related frameworks. The findings indicate that effective WIL implementation in Buddhist higher education requires coherent policy alignment, curriculum integration of workplace practice and digital competencies, and experiential, reflective, and mindfulness-based teaching and learning approaches. Key implementation mechanisms include structured student preparation, dual mentorship involving academics, industry and international partners, multisource assessment, and continuous quality assurance processes. The study further highlights the importance of international collaboration and ethical technology use in enhancing global employability, innovation, and socially responsible entrepreneurship. The findings suggest that the proposed Buddhist university-based WIL framework can preserve the holistic and ethical foundations of Buddhist education respond to labor market demands in the digital era. This study contributes a contextually grounded model for integrating WIL, digital competency development, and Buddhist pedagogy in higher education.

**Keywords:** Buddhist education, Curriculum development, Higher education  
Sustainable development, Work integrated learning

## Introduction

Education is the fundamental for social and economic development within a society, thus the strong relationship between education and human capital development. The skillful workforce is in the critical position for the industries, business and the government bodies for the overall development with their innovations and creations, higher education are the sources of providing these competence graduates (Saari et al., 2021). The Thai government has the ambition of growing in economic and competition in the international market (DEPA, 2018; MOL, 2023), Thai rulers attempt to reform its education system to foster knowledge and employability skills among students for the contribution for the country's ambitious (Hong & Chun, 2021). Thailand prioritized educational reform as the national policy and planned have been carried out since 2011 to develop the nation's human capital development (MOL, 2023). Thus a concern for graduate's employability skills development still remain and having gaps between academic learning and industry demands, consequently students still require to assess special training courses apart from university education to be able to enter the workplace (Khampirat & Pop, 2017). Graduates competencies after they left from university are not satisfied for the employers and the demand for employability skills remain the issue for the policy makers in Thai. Employers reported computer and ICT skills, technical skills, creativity and innovation as the most common skills that graduated need to develop, they also claimed that it is difficult to acquire the qualified skilled workers for all occupation groups (Oo et al., 2021). Therefore, the need to review HEIs' curriculum possible to narrow the gaps between their graduates' skills and employers' expectations. Researchers continuously claimed that Work-integrated learning (WIL) is recognized as the effective educational approach that enable academic knowledge to connect with practical work experience with the aim of helping graduates to develop their employability skills demand by the workforce (Quew-Jones, 2024). The results of the implementation of the WIL programs by the universities around the world in several fields such as medicine, engineering, hospitality and other academic disciplines revealed the significant achievements in term of creativity, innovation and economic development in their regions (Olsson et al., 2020). The previous studies revealed that WIL placements are aim to enhance students' employability to meet industry demands of job-ready professionals (Grantham & Iachizzi, 2024). Several studies been demonstrated WIL as the effective educational approaches for making the transition of students from university to the workplace by equipping necessary skills.

Therefore, integrating WIL into Thai's higher Buddhist education curriculum can connect academic knowledges with real-world work experiences (Bamrungsin & Meinhold,

2023). WIL can support Thai government's goals by providing employability skills among graduates to thrive in the workforce for the contribution into social and economic development. By fostering partnerships between HEIs and industries, WIL can support Thai government's goal of producing graduates equipped with the necessary competencies to thrive in the workforce, ultimately enhancing employability and contributing to economic development. However, integrating WIL into Thai higher Buddhist education curriculum and providing the necessary skills in an ever-changing workforce can be challenges for the policy makers. In addition, introduction of a model in Thai higher Buddhist education that aligns with the country's educational objectives and economic context is ambitious. Therefore, this study explored the case studies of the successful integrating of WIL in higher education by countries and consider the way to integrated WIL curriculum into Thai Buddhist universities, by focusing curriculum design, stakeholder collaboration, and assessment frameworks. The aim is to provide meaningful information for curriculum developers in Thai Buddhist education, in designing learning content that can enhance students' employability skills to meet the industrial demand.

### Objective of the Study

- (1) To review the WIL frameworks and WIL curriculums globally and analyze their good practices
- (2) To propose the WIL framework for the integrating in Thai's higher Buddhist education curriculum in digital era.

### Literature Review

#### Work-integrated Learning in Higher Education

The concern for the demand of the industry and the competencies of graduates have been raised by several studies and highlighted a gap emerging between student's attributes and what industry requires (Freudenberg et al., 2009). Researchers referred this gap as lack of employment readiness and point out the need to engage industry with students and the curriculum (Laundon et al., 2024). They revealed that adapting curricula to integrate academic knowledge with real life experience allow students for a more holistic educational approach (Peter et al., 2024), by recognizing that this diverse learning experiences can produce skillful employees for the workplace (Ni Loingsigh & Mozzon-McPherson, 2020). The Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada) defined this experiential learning approach to connect student's academic studies with workplace or practice setting (Amarathunga, 2024). The aim is equipping the workforce in response to current and future needs along with the competencies that goes beyond the acquisition of discipline knowledge from the institutions and provide the opportunity with community partners to enhance work readiness (Akimkhanova et al., 2024).

The introduction of WIL in higher education programs can reach the stakeholders' employability goals, therefore this educational approach can provide career opportunities for students (Al-Abri et al., 2024). Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an educational approach for the integration of theory with real work experience within a purposefully designed curriculum (Aderibigbe & Mosia, 2019). The integration of WIL in academic curriculum is key to maximize academic experience that impact on student learning and development of their competence (Srivastava & Haghi, 2023). In order to develop a tailored WIL curriculum, universities and workplaces need to be strongly collaborated to meet their mutual goals (Grantham & Iachizzi, 2024). The findings from the previous studies highlighted redesign and integrated educational curriculum as the way to reduce theory-practice gap (Namadi-Vosoughi et al., 2023). The negotiation of curricula and pedagogies can be enabled by effective corporations between universities and employers to make sure contextualized learning within the work setting (Vijayaraghavan & Chattaraj, 2024).

### Work-integrated Learning Enhance Students Employability Skills

Students can foster sense of ownership from WIL process as they have opportunity to perform their own jobs in the workplace, which can enhance their employability skills (Crawford et al., 2024). Student's participation in their learning can be encouraged by robust curriculum design and pedagogic practices, that reinforced the WIL experience to achieve the transformative learning outcomes (Roberts et al., 2023). Student satisfaction and self-efficacy can be significantly expanding if the programs that are well-structured and unified that lead to well employment readiness (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024). French-based higher-education and research institutions named "Agence universitaire de la francophonie" summarized employability skills as shown in Table 1. Higher education institutions consider these skills when implementing WIL curriculum in their education contexts.

**Table 1** Summary of Employability Skills

Category Skills	Category Skills
Basic competencies	Reading, writing, arithmetic, using several languages and mastering digital tools.
Socioemotional competencies	Recognizing one's own abilities, empathy, flexibility, adaptability, collaboration, communication, and concern for a job well done.
Transferrable competencies	Learning, problem solving, critical, creative and innovative thinking, participation, taking responsibility and initiative, managing one's own work

Source: the Agence universitaire de la francophonie (2021)

## Work-Integrated Learning Quality Framework

Work-Integrated Learning quality framework is useful to provide snapshots of WIL programs at points in time and launch and develop processes for quality sustainable WIL programs (Eady et al., 2024). The WIL quality framework can be applied to make sure the effective utilizations of resources being focused toward WIL programming to meet institutes, employer, and student goals (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2024). Smith (2012) proposed a framework for the evaluation of WIL curriculum with six specific domains: (1) authenticity, (2) integrated learning supports, (3) alignment, (4) supervisor access and (5) induction or (6) preparation processes. McRae and Johnston (2016) highlight the instrument's limitation of examines the WIL curricula from the student stakeholder perspective only despite it was found to be valid across multiple types of WIL. They also claimed that it has not connection with the processes involved in developing and offering WIL programs to the desired student outcomes. Later in 2016, Khampirat and Mcrae (2016) developed a quality standards framework for Co-operative and Work-Integrated Education (CWIE) which describes purpose, process, outcome and assessment for key stakeholder groups at three time periods (before, during and after the WIL experience), which led to quality outcomes. In the same year, McRae and Johnston (2016) proposes a Global Work-Integrated Learning Framework. The researcher claimed that the framework design enables users to name their own model and adopt it within the global WIL offerings by identifying key attributes and outcomes of that model or program. In this way, the researchers said that programs can be compared, contrasted, developed and assessed resources shared by virtue of their relationship for sharing key attributes and outcomes, despite countries give their own model. In 2021, the group of researchers from the University of Waterloo developed work-integrated learning quality framework with five sections: (1) concepts and terminology used in the framework; (2) the aims of each of the WIL stakeholder groups; (3) the actions required by each stakeholder to ensure success; (4) the achievements of each of the stakeholder groups; and (5) a continuous improvement process for WIL programs (Table 2).

**Table 2** Work-Integrated Learning Quality Framework

No.	Section	Description
1	concepts and terminology used in the framework	Provides the foundation by defining concepts and terminology that will be used in the framework. It also introduces the five primary stakeholder groups: the students, the host organizations/employers, the educators, the academic institutions and governments.
2	the aims of each of the WIL stakeholder groups	Highlights the literature on the Aims of the five stakeholder groups for participating in or supporting WIL programs, answering the question of “What are the WIL goals for each stakeholder group?”
3	the actions required by each stakeholder to ensure success	Describes the Actions that have been identified in the literature as critical for the quality of WIL programs for the primary stakeholder groups. This section will address the question of “How is success enabled for each of the stakeholder groups?”.
4	the achievements of each of the stakeholder groups	Outlines the expected Achievements answering the question, “What are the outcomes, impacts, measures and key performance indicators that capture achievements for each of the stakeholder groups?”.
5	a continuous improvement process for WIL programs	Synthesizes what has been laid out in Sections 1 to 4 and outlines a continuous improvement process for WIL programs which will “Articulate Aims”, “Accomplish Actions” and “Assess Achievements”.

Source: University of Waterloo (2021)

### Key Successful Factor for Work-integrated Learning Curriculum Developing

Previous researches developed and presented the key success factors in WIL implementation. For example, Rosse and Browne (2013) identify relevant factors and developed the template for WIL curriculum developers. According to the authors, students, program, workplace and discipline are the key factors to consider for the WIL curriculum formulating process. In analyzing the WIL curriculum both theoretically and structurally, Rosse and Browne (2013) identified the twelve common dimensions in the WIL curriculum across disciplines (Table 3) . The authors claimed that these dimensions can be thought of as defining characteristics of the WIL curriculum.

**Table 3** Dimensions of the WIL curriculum by Rosse and Browne (2013)

No.	Dimension	Description
1	Partnership of Actors	The partnership among students, universities/programs, organizations/communities, and industries/professions is fundamental in WIL curriculum design.
2	Learning Across Contexts	WIL involves learning across multiple contexts such as workplaces, communities, and universities. It also includes social knowledge negotiation among people and communities.
3	System of Contextual Factors	The WIL curriculum is influenced by a variety of contextual factors such as industry demands, learning objectives, and institutional goals.
4	Purpose	The overarching statement that defines the intent and goals of the WIL program curriculum. These goals may be revised throughout the curriculum development process to realign with relevant factors.
5	Negotiation of Learning	Negotiation is key in partnerships between students, universities, industries, and communities. This process supports collaboration and shared decision-making to define the purpose, goals, and structure of the WIL experience.
6	WIL Pedagogy	WIL pedagogy integrates classroom, online, and workplace learning to ensure that students are learning, not just working. Reflection is a key pedagogical tool.
7	Format, Scheduling, and Duration	These elements are closely tied to the curriculum model and type of learning goals. They provide structure and time for learning experiences, ensuring alignment with curriculum models and learning objectives.
8	Orientation	Orientation prepares students for the workplace/community. It covers work culture, ethical issues, job roles, and provides support for students' adjustment. It may also include workplace preparation for receiving WIL students.
9	Supervision	Supervision ensures alignment between the program requirements and the student experience. Supervision can take various forms and is provided by either the workplace, university, or both. It includes educational, administrative, and emotional support functions.
10	Assessment and Evaluation	Assessment strategies in WIL include formative assessment (ongoing feedback) and summative evaluation (final

No.	Dimension	Description
		performance). The assessment focuses on integrative knowledge and the students' ability to connect theory with practice.
11	Support Mechanisms	Support mechanisms ensure the effectiveness of the WIL program. These include field visits, third-party support, and conflict resolution, provided on a need or just-in-time basis to both students and workplaces/communities.
12	Alignment	Curricular alignment ensures that all aspects of the WIL experience (learning goals, pedagogy, activities, etc.) are aligned and realigned to ensure the overall purpose and learning connections are supported.
13	Digital Competency	Digital competency in the current WIL curriculum focuses on learners' ability to effectively use digital tools, communicate and collaborate online, and apply technology in real workplace contexts. It emphasizes digital literacy, ethical and safe technology use, and problem-solving in digitally mediated environments. These competencies enhance employability and readiness for global and technology-driven workplaces.
14	CEFR	In Buddhist education, CEFR supports the development of ethical and effective English communication skills needed for intercultural dialogue, international collaboration, and global engagement, while respecting principles of mindfulness, right speech, and compassionate communication. It enables Buddhist universities to systematically prepare graduates for global academic, professional, and socially responsible work contexts.

The dimensions stated in Table are important constructs for the development of a WIL program that are interconnected and interdependent in the design process. Curriculum design involves a high-level intentional process of defining what learning is to take place in a program of study. These dimensions support WIL curriculum developers to be interconnected, which will impact and shape student learning, therefore they are performing as a structured way of thinking. Development of a WIL curriculum needs to be well thought out in terms of curriculum and sequencing, flexible design to be implemented in a multiplicity of situations and a diversity of students living the learning experiences in their own unique ways. Rosse and Browne (2013) developed the curriculum design process based on the principles of constructive alignment in the context of the WIL Curriculum framework. The authors claimed that Curriculum development involves three phases: pre-planning, establishing actors' needs and the purpose of the course, and aligning the model(s) and dimensions. The author assured

that these phases provide guidelines to navigate the complexities inherent in the discipline of WIL. Work-integrated learning (WIL) enable positive changes in the field of higher education globally to provide ‘work-ready’ graduates demand by corporate sector and the governments. The growing demand for HEIs to prepare students for future work make them to consider effective curriculum to fulfill the needs. Table 4 presents prior studies that document successful implementation of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) within academic curricula across countries from different regions.

**Table 4** WIL Curriculum implementing case studies

No.	Author and year	Title	WIL Practice/ Implementation	Stakeholder Involvement
1	Bilgin et al. (2022)	Work Integrated Learning in Data Science and a Proposed Assessment Framework	Implemented WIL in data science education through authentic industry problems and proposed an assessment framework.	University faculty and industry partners.
2	Williamson et al. (2021)	Developing WIL Curriculum which Enhances Hospitality Students' Capabilities	Co-created WIL curricula in hospitality by engaging educators, industry, and students to address gaps in work readiness.	Educators, students, and hospitality industry leaders.
3	Srivastava and Haghi (2024)	Embedding WIL at Undergraduate College-Level Curriculum to Enhance Employability Skills Among Students	Integrated WIL into undergraduate curricula to enhance employability, focusing on communication, digital literacy, and workplace practices.	University faculty, students, industry partners.
4	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022)	Enhancing Student Employability: A Mixed-Methods Study into WIL Curricula in Vietnamese Universities	Integrated WIL into Vietnamese curricula by addressing general workplace requirements, communication, ethics, and customer service skills.	University department leaders, industry professionals, and students.

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No.	Author and year	Title	WIL Practice/ Implementation	Stakeholder Involvement
5	Vailasseri et al. (2021)	Embedding Bachelor of Engineering University Education with Enhanced WIL	Embedded WIL into engineering education through a structured framework linked to industry competencies.	Academics, industry experts, and students.

The variety of educational disciplines showcase the implementation of WIL in their curriculum to meet the industry demands for their graduates and the findings from these studies revealed that WIL curriculum have positive outcomes for enhancing student employability and skill development from this educational approach. For instance, Bilgin et al. (2022) conducted the research on the integration of WIL in data science education in Australia and present the importance of authentic industry problems in fostering educational relevance. The authors stated that this initiative, proposed alongside a robust assessment framework, emphasizes collaboration between university faculty and industry partners to prepare students for the complexities of modern job markets. Similarly, the research by Williamson et al. (2021) about the development of WIL curricula within hospitality programs reveals a co-creative process that engages educators, industry leaders, and students.

According to the authors, this collaboration helps bridge gaps in students' work readiness and ensuring that teaching practices are closely aligned with real industry expectations. Notably, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) conducted research in Vietnamese universities by emphasizing the significance of addressing general workplace competencies, including communication and ethics. They explained that involving university leaders, industry professionals, and students in the process creates a strong foundation for improving employability and ensuring that graduates are well prepared to meet labor market demands. Similarly, Vailasseri et al. (2021) study on embedding WIL in engineering education through a structured framework demonstrates a concerted effort to align educational outcomes with industry competencies, fostering collaboration among academics, industry experts, and students. The exploration of Embedded WIL (EWIL) in teacher education programs (Doolan et al., 2019) illustrates another innovative approach, wherein short, regular industry engagement blocks have been implemented to facilitate reflective learning. This model emphasizes the importance of collaboration among university staff, industry partners, and students in enriching the overall educational experience. Finally, the development of on-campus WIL activities within the creative arts curriculum (Fleischmann, 2015) addresses the challenges posed by limited off-campus placement opportunities. By integrating community and industry partners

in this initiative, educators illustrate the adaptability of WIL practices in fostering meaningful industry engagement while enhancing learning opportunities for students.

## Methodology

This research used a qualitative systematic review methodology to propose WIL framework for higher education system in Thai Buddhist education. The study is review, analyze and synthesize existing WIL models from several countries to develop a suitable framework with Thai Buddhist contexts. In this study, we utilize case study approach to examine successful WIL frameworks from other countries in their higher education. We choose the case study method because it can able to provide in-depth insights into complex educational frameworks, from different geographical and economic contexts. Case study method is useful to develop a pattern model of online search behavior (Fidel, 1984). This method helps us to explore the difference approaches of WIL programs implemented in various countries and capture the lessons that can be adapted in Thai Buddhist education setting.

## Data Collection

This study relies on secondary data from previous research papers, academic articles, and reports focusing on WIL implementation. The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee at Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand (EC-67-40).

## Data Analysis

The analysis follows a comparative approach, where the WIL frameworks from different countries are compared and contrasted based on key variables such as stakeholder involvement, curriculum design, and program outcomes. The following steps were involved in the analysis:

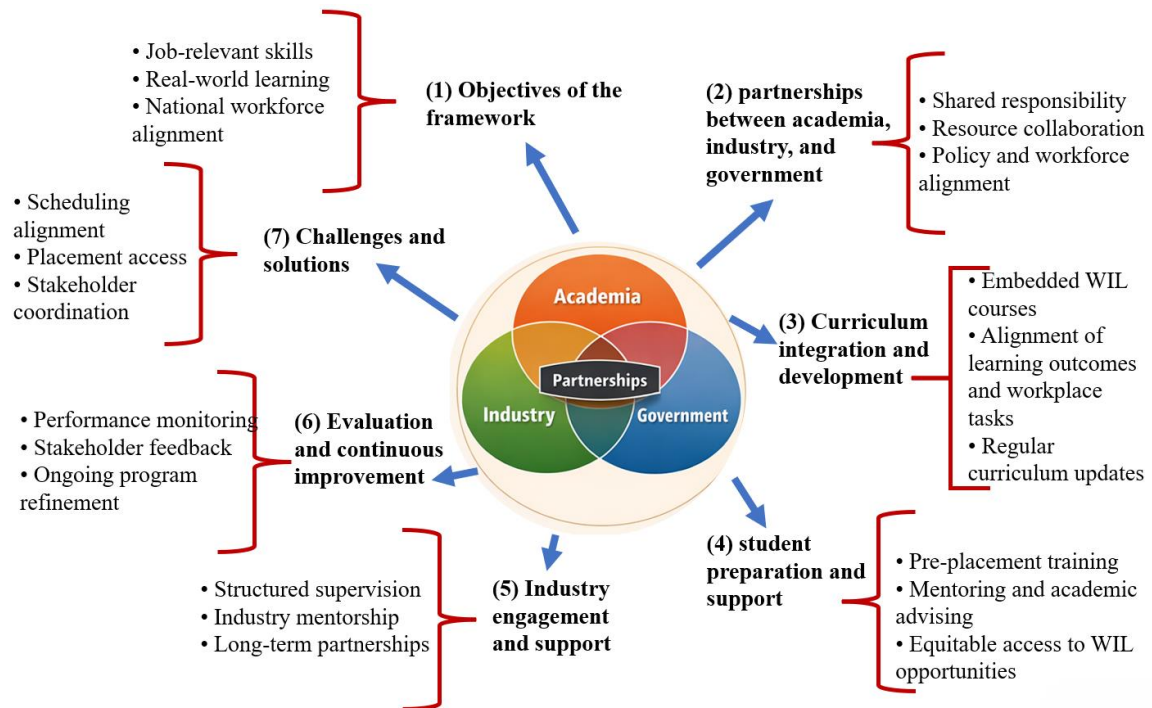
**Synthesis of Best Practices.** Best practices from successful WIL models were extracted and synthesized. This synthesis is used to propose a WIL framework that addresses Thai Buddhist educational and economic context.

**Framework Development.** Based on the analysis, a conceptual WIL framework is developed that aligns with Thai's higher Buddhist education graduate production. The framework includes recommendations for university-industry partnerships, curriculum integration, and assessment methods.

## Results

### Proposed Buddhist university-based WIL framework

The integration of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in Thai's higher Buddhist education is a crucial step to enhance employability, bridge the gap between academia and industry, and foster economic growth. This proposed framework (See Figure 1) outlines seven key strategies for successful implementation, focusing on creating partnerships between educational institutions, industries, and the government of Thai Buddhist education.



**Figure 1** Buddhist university-based Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) framework

#### (1) Objectives of the Framework

- Ensure that university graduates are equipped with relevant skills for the job market.
- Foster collaboration between universities and industries to create real-world learning opportunities.
- Align academic programs with national economic goals to create a skilled workforce.

#### (2) Partnerships between Academia, Industry, and Government

A tripartite collaboration between academia, industry and government is essential for the successful implementation of WIL. The roles of each stakeholder and their responsibilities are listed in the following Table 5.

**Table 5** Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

No.	Stakeholder	Roles and responsibilities
1	Buddhist Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Design and continually update curriculum to integrate practical training, experiential learning, and WIL components that align with industry needs and standards.</li> <li>● Establish partnerships and collaborations with industries to create opportunities for students, ensuring alignment between academic programs and job market demands.</li> <li>● Offer career services, including workshops, resume writing, interview preparation, and networking events that connect students with industry professionals and empower them to pursue WIL opportunities.</li> <li>● Develop methods for assessing student performance during placements, ensuring that students receive constructive feedback for their development and that programs meet educational standards.</li> </ul>
2	Industry partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide students with internship opportunities, mentorship, and hands-on experience.</li> <li>● Facilitate policies and incentives to promote industry involvement in WIL.</li> <li>● Create mentorship opportunities where industry professionals guide students, offering career advice, sharing industry insights, and helping students navigate their educational and professional paths.</li> <li>● Collaborate with academic institutions to co-design curriculum that reflects current industry trends and practices, ensuring that students acquire the skills and knowledge needed for the workforce.</li> <li>● Offer constructive feedback on student performance during internships or work placements, helping students identify strengths and areas for improvement while also providing insights to universities about the effectiveness of their programs.</li> <li>● Join academic advisory boards to provide input on educational strategies, curriculum development, and work placements, ensuring that academic programs remain relevant to industry needs.</li> </ul>

3	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Actively engage in learning opportunities by participating in internships and co-op programs.</li><li>● Provide feedback on their experiences to improve WIL programs.</li><li>● Take responsibility for their own professional development, including seeking opportunities and developing skills relevant to their field.</li></ul>
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### **(3) curriculum integration and development**

- Embed WIL components (internships, practicums, service learning, project-based learning) into core and elective courses.
- Align learning outcomes, assessment methods, and workplace tasks to ensure coherence between academic and industry expectations.
- Regularly review and update curriculum content based on labor market trends and industry feedback.

### **(4) student preparation and support**

- Provide pre-placement training on workplace skills, professional ethics, communication, and career readiness.
- Offer academic advising, mentoring, and ongoing support throughout the WIL experience.
- Ensure equitable access to WIL opportunities through clear guidelines and structured placement processes.

### **(5) industry engagement and support**

- Establish clear expectations and structured roles for industry supervisors and mentors.
- Provide guidance and resources to industry partners to support effective student supervision and learning.
- Strengthen long-term partnerships through regular communication, joint planning, and shared evaluation of outcomes.

### **(6) evaluation and continuous improvement**

- Monitor student performance, learning outcomes, and employability indicators using systematic assessment tools.
- Collect feedback from students, academic staff, and industry partners to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Use evaluation findings to refine curriculum design, partnerships, and support mechanisms on an ongoing basis.

## (7) challenges and solutions

- Address mismatches between academic schedules and industry timelines through flexible program design.
- Mitigate unequal access to placements by expanding industry networks and leveraging digital or community-based WIL options.
- Strengthen stakeholder coordination through clear communication channels, defined roles, and policy support.

## Implementation of the Buddhist university-based WIL framework

The implementation of the Buddhist university-based Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) framework can be summarized as seven levels as follows:

(1) the policy level - universities embed WIL, Buddhist learning principles, digital-AI competencies, and international collaboration into institutional strategies and graduate attributes;

(2) the curriculum level - programs integrate disciplinary knowledge with workplace learning, CEFR-aligned communication skills, digital literacy, ethical technology use, and career-entrepreneurship pathways;

(3) teaching and learning level - experiential, reflective, and technology-enhanced approaches are applied, incorporating mindfulness, problem-based learning, and international or virtual collaboration;

(4) student preparation and support level - structured pre-placement training develops digital skills, intercultural communication, teamwork, professional ethics, and career readiness;

(5) mentorship and partnerships level - dual supervision by academics, industry and international mentors, and ethical role models supports holistic learning;

(6) assessment level - multisource evaluation combines academic performance, employer feedback, CEFR outcomes, digital competency indicators, and reflective practice; and

(7) quality assurance and improvement level - continuous review based on stakeholder feedback, graduate outcomes, and international standards ensures alignment with the digital era and Buddhist approaches to holistic graduate development (See in Figure 2).

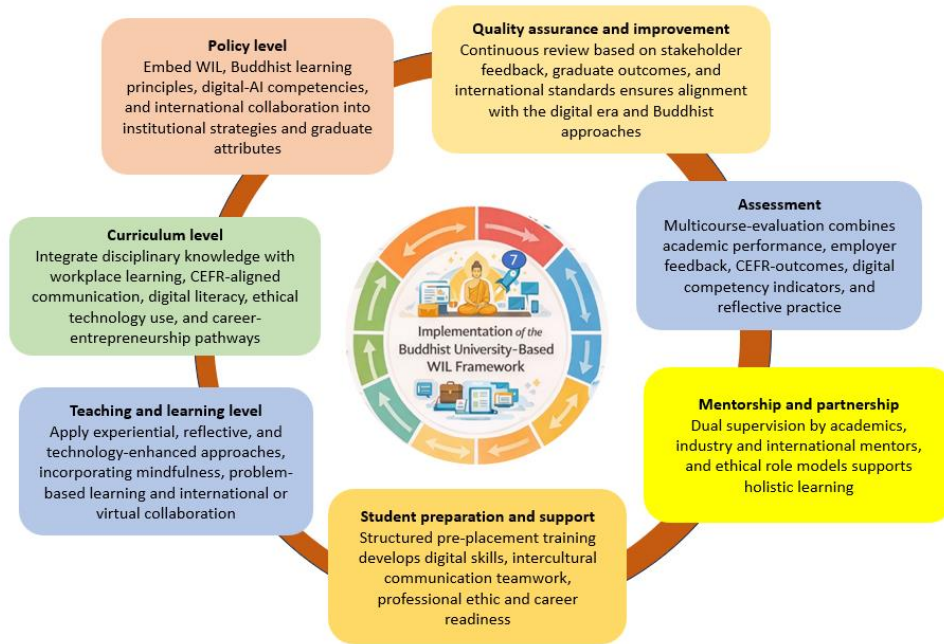


Figure 2 Implementation levels of the Buddhist university-based WIL framework

## Discussion

This paper proposed the WIL framework in the undergraduate curriculum in Thai Buddhist education as an educational approach to foster employability skills among students (Bamrungsin & Meinhold, 2023). In the context of Buddhist education, learning is traditionally grounded in holistic development, emphasizing not only technical knowledge but also ethical conduct, mindfulness, social responsibility, and compassion. Integrating WIL within Buddhist higher education therefore aligns academic learning with Buddhist principles that encourage the application of knowledge for the benefit of society and the cultivation of right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Previous studies suggest that WIL curricula commonly consist of at least five core sections (Phraudomtheerakun et al., 2022): (1) concepts and terminology used in the framework; (2) the aims of each of the WIL stakeholder groups; (3) the actions required by each stakeholder to ensure success; (4) the achievements of each of the stakeholder groups; and (5) a continuous improvement process for WIL programs. Consistent with this, we developed the WIL framework for Thai Buddhist education comprising seven sections: (1) objectives of the framework; (2) partnerships between academia, industry, and government; (3) curriculum integration and development; (4) student preparation and support; (5) industry engagement and support; (6) evaluation and continuous improvement; and (7) challenges and solutions.

By embedding WIL within a Buddhist educational context, the framework extends beyond employability outcomes to support moral reasoning, workplace ethics, and socially responsible professional behavior. The proposed framework can serve as a practical guide for

curriculum designers, educators, industry partners, and policymakers. Moreover, the WIL framework functions as a structural support that coordinates implementation, facilitates stakeholder collaboration, and enables continuous refinement of WIL practices (Bamrungsin, 2017, 2022). Thus, the framework's is applicable and effectiveness in fostering graduate employability, and consistent with the core values and educational philosophy of Thai Buddhist higher education.

## Conclusion

The proposed Buddhist university-based WIL framework consists of seven components grounded in Buddhist learning and responsive to the demands of the digital era, with a strong emphasis on international collaboration. By bringing together curriculum design, student preparation, industry engagement, and continuous evaluation, the framework links academic learning more closely with real workplace expectations. The framework also supports holistic student development grounded in Buddhist ethical values. Collaboration among universities, industry, and government strengthens the framework's ability to improve graduate employability and support economic development. It also encourages professional practices that are socially responsible and aligned with Buddhist values. In addition, the framework provides a flexible and scalable model for Buddhist higher education institutions. It supports the development of graduates who are technically capable, ethically grounded, and prepared to engage in a global and increasingly digital labor market.

## Limits of the Current Study

The proposed WIL framework is primarily applicable to the context of Thai higher Buddhist education and may not fully capture the diverse needs of all institutions or disciplines. External factors such as economic conditions, labor market changes, and evolving industry demands may also influence its implementation and effectiveness, while limited existing benchmarks may complicate evaluation. Nevertheless, higher Buddhist education institutions and government bodies should recognize the value of WIL in benefiting institutions, students, and employers and in contributing to national economic and socio-economic development.

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