

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING ELIGIBILITY FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS:

Insights From an Environmental Scan of Ontario
College and University Websites



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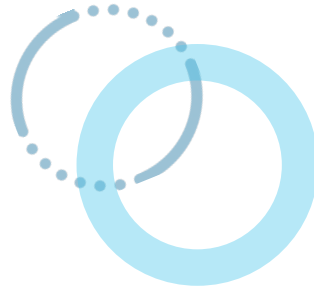


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Executive Summary

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is an important component of the Canadian postsecondary system. There are numerous benefits to students who participate in WIL, such as learning about workplace culture, developing soft and hard skills, and earning more in the job market following graduation. To date, the WIL literature has focused predominantly on “traditional” postsecondary students who directly enter postsecondary studies after high school. Unfortunately, this focus does not explicitly consider transfer students, who have unique personal and academic backgrounds that may impact their eligibility to participate in WIL. Building on recent transfer research suggesting that transfer students can face challenges accessing WIL opportunities, in this report, we examine transfer and WIL information on college and university websites. Since institutional websites are often a starting point for students to learn about transfer, it is important to understand the information they provide students and identify areas of growth to better support transfer.

Data

Using qualitative content analysis of Ontario college (n=24) and university (n=23) websites, we examined the quality of WIL information as it relates to transfer students. We examined the admissions and WIL webpages of all publicly assisted colleges and universities in the province and whether they included information specific to students transferring with previous postsecondary education.

Main Findings

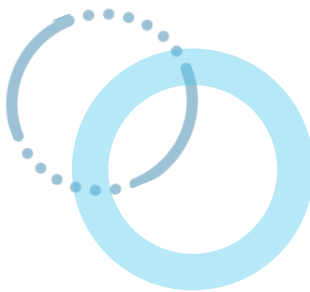
The college and university websites provided limited information about the possibility for transfer students to participate in WIL and often provided transfer admission and WIL information on separate webpages. In terms of distinctions by type of institution, universities showed more possibilities for transfer students to participate in WIL opportunities depending on particular eligibility criteria (e.g. number of transfer credits). On the other hand, colleges advertised a considerable amount of WIL in their programs, but it was less clear how/whether a transfer student would be eligible for such opportunities. The information gaps demonstrated by our findings point to knowledge barriers that transfer students may need to overcome to make informed transfer decisions.

Recommendations for the Sector

Our findings have a number of implications for transfer practices in Ontario. With these findings in mind, we provide the following recommendations for colleges and universities to enhance their support for transfer students interested in WIL:

1. Institutions should regularly review their transfer webpages to ensure that they are accessible to non-institution members. For example, discussing WIL eligibility based on credit weights may be difficult for a student from a different institution to understand.
2. Institutions should reflect on the content currently posted on their websites and on the information that could be added to convey clear WIL eligibility requirements for transfer students.

3. Institutions should ensure that frequently asked question (FAQ) pages reflect the kinds of questions that transfer students have. Alternatively, institutions might consider crafting transfer-specific FAQ pages for WIL.
4. Institutions should consider adding a “co-op transfer student” section to their admissions pages to more seamlessly combine WIL and admission information.
5. Institutions should ensure that transfer and WIL webpages include links to the contact information of individuals or offices on campus that can answer questions about both transfer and WIL.



Introduction

Work-integrated learning (WIL)—in its various forms—can provide meaningful opportunities for postsecondary students to develop professional competencies and establish employment connections. Many jurisdictions have recognized the benefits associated with WIL participation and have undertaken efforts to expand access to WIL (e.g. Afolabi & Medu, 2023), document best practices (e.g. Green et al., 2024), and foster greater inclusion in WIL spaces (e.g. Chatoor & Kaufman, 2023). In the province of Ontario, a government report expressed strong support for WIL, recommending that every postsecondary student complete an experiential opportunity by the time they graduate (The Premier’s Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, 2016). In addition to policy recommendations, a series of government investments, via numerous multimillion-dollar programs, have been made to accelerate the growth of WIL experiences across Canada, including Ontario. Examples of these investments include a federal contribution of \$17.1 million to the Business and Higher Education Roundtable (BHER), which aims to create more than 22,300 national WIL opportunities (Academica Group, 2022; BHER, 2023), and a provincial contribution of \$39.5 million for Mitacs—an organization that builds connections between industry and postsecondary institutions—to develop research internships and upskilling opportunities (Government of Ontario, 2021). These investments reflect a concerted effort to expand WIL in the spirit of “preparing the next generation of talent” in the labour market (Government of Ontario, 2021, para. 2). Concurrent with these investments, a growing expectation exists that colleges and universities must evaluate their programs to align curricula with labour market needs (see Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

Although the benefits of WIL for students are well documented (see Finnie & Miyairi, 2017; Jackson & Cook, 2023; Pizarro Milian et al., 2024), existing studies have primarily considered the benefits with respect to direct-entry students—those who graduate high school and immediately enrol in a college or university program. While direct entry routes to postsecondary education are the most common, transfer students make up a substantial portion of the Ontario postsecondary student population (St-Denis et al., 2021; Zarifa et al., 2020).¹ Moreover, Ontario transfer students face many of the challenges noted in the international transfer literature (e.g. Dietrich & Lichtenberger, 2015; Spencer, 2023). These barriers complicate students’ academic success, social integration, and credential progress (Aurini et al., 2024; Davies, 2022; LaCroix et al., 2024; Pizarro Milian et al., 2024). Recently, Aurini et al. (2024) found that participation in WIL is yet another area where transfer students face barriers and that WIL is one of the “hidden costs” of transfer that has been overlooked in the academic and policy literature.

To better understand the challenges that transfer students face when exploring their postsecondary options, we analyzed the quantity and quality of WIL-related information on college and university websites. Research suggests that institutional websites are often one of the starting points for students to gather information about the transfer process (BC Stats, 2006; Henderson & McCloy, 2019; LaCroix & Napierala, 2025). Ideally, college and university websites—the official sources of information on key policies and procedures related to transfer—should communicate comprehensive, accurate, and timely information to help students make decisions. In practice, researchers have noted that institutional websites provide mixed levels of accessibility and

¹ Recent findings suggest that upwards of 48% of Ontario postsecondary students are mobile (Napierala & Hanson, 2025).

usefulness for transfer students (Schudde et al., 2020). Our findings echo these concerns about institutional websites; prospective transfer students may face steep challenges in terms of accessing clear information about their eligibility to pursue WIL opportunities in a new program. With these concerns in mind, this report concludes with some broad recommendations for Ontario's postsecondary sector and some specific improvements that colleges and universities could make to their websites.



Literature Review

Work-integrated learning is “a form of curricular experiential education that formally integrates a student’s academic studies with quality experiences within a workplace or practice setting” (Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada [CEWIL], 2021, para. 1). These opportunities typically involve a combination of in-class studies and practical experiences, with the goal of helping students develop labour market skills, competencies, and contacts. There are many forms of WIL; the most common ones include cooperative education, internships, and work placements. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the different forms of WIL. Notably, WIL forms continue to develop and evolve over time. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the way institutions and organizations offered WIL opportunities, leading to the rise of hybrid and fully remote WIL placements (Bowen, 2020; Dean & Campbell, 2020).

TABLE 1
Forms of Work-Integrated Learning

Form of WIL ^a	Definition
Applied research project ^b	Students participate in research at job sites and/or in workplaces. They often serve as researchers rather than as workers at the site.
Apprenticeship	Students are matched with a journeyperson, who assumes a formal role in mentorship and supervision, and are paid to work in a professional environment. This agreement strikes a balance for the student (typically 80/20) between the work placement with the journeyperson and completing the requisite in-class training.
Co-operative education ^c	Co-op blends work experiences with academic study and involves students alternating between classroom learning and paid work in their professional fields.
Entrepreneurship	Students begin—or work towards—establishing their own businesses. They may receive different forms of support to help turn their ideas into practice (e.g. space, mentorship, or funding).
Field placement	A short-term placement that tends to require intensive and hands-on work in an area related to the student’s field of study.
Internship	Single work opportunities embedded into a program without other forms of WIL. Internships can vary in length (e.g. 12–16 months). Paid or unpaid, these provide students with structured work experience in fields related to their areas of study.
Practicum/clinical placement	These placements occur in programs with required practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. They are generally unpaid and involve students working under the direct supervision of registered professionals.
Service Learning	Working in partnership with a community organization, students help address community needs through the knowledge and skills acquired through their academic disciplines.
Work Experience	Typically involves one or two work experiences at varying points in an academic program. Program structures vary by institution but are a more flexible approach to WIL and fall outside the more structured forms, such as co-op.

^a Adapted from CEWIL (2021) and Nielsen et al. (2022).

^b Sometimes referred to as a community or industry research/project.

^c Two recent additions to this model are innovation co-op and entrepreneurial co-op (see [Georgian College](#)).

WIL Benefits for Students

Studies have found that students reap myriad benefits from WIL participation, both during their experiences and after completion (see Jackson & Cook, 2023). In particular, the professional and employment impacts associated with WIL are well documented. In a recent qualitative study, Dreesha's (2023) participants discussed wide-ranging WIL benefits to their human capital development during their WIL experiences. WIL provided the students with “lower stake” opportunities to learn valuable lessons about workplace culture and tenacity, which helped them make informed career decisions prior to entering the labour market. Because WIL opportunities are typically embedded in actual workplaces, students are able to foster the soft skills that employers are looking for, such as interpersonal communication, presentation skills, and leadership skills (Macpherson & Rizk, 2022).

In addition, a growing body of evidence highlights the economic returns of WIL. Various studies have demonstrated that WIL participation is associated with an earnings premium in the job market, especially for university graduates (Finnie & Miyairi, 2017). For example, Finnie and Miyairi (2017) found that graduates from co-op programs out-earn non-co-op graduates, and that these earning differences may persist well beyond their initial entry into the labour market. In a similar fashion, some researchers have found that while WIL experiences help reduce graduate underemployment,² the economic benefits of WIL are also more pronounced for students who have gone to university. In their study, Pizarro Milian et al. (2021) found that “the returns to WIL participation consistently prove stronger among university graduates” compared to college graduates (p. 12). These findings have remained consistent in later studies using similar quantitative methodologies (see Wyonch & Seward, 2023). In terms of school-to-work transitions, WIL offers students a solid “floor” to insulate them from underemployment and less-permanent forms of work.

Transfer Information and the WIL Gap

Over the last decade, ONCAT has played a pivotal role in improving student mobility across Ontario. Students now have more options than ever to move between postsecondary programs, institutions, and credentials (Davies & Mehta, 2018; St-Denis et al., 2021). Researchers have identified five pathways by which students navigate the Ontario postsecondary sector: college-to-college, college-to-university, university-to-university, university-to-college, and swirling between multiple programs at colleges and universities (Aurini et al., 2024; Zarifa et al., 2020). To assist in these transitions, students utilize various information sources to accumulate knowledge about transferring (Laanan et al., 2010; LaCroix & Napierala, 2025; Moser, 2014). They not only consider perspectives from personal networks (e.g. friends and family) but also access more “official” information sources provided by postsecondary institutions. These sources include institutional webpages, academic counsellors, and transfer advisors, among others (see Rosenberg, 2016). When the information from these sources is congruent and comprehensive, students can make informed decisions about transfer opportunities, develop expectations about the transfer process, and measure those expectations against their experiences while transferring. In contrast, incongruent or missing information can jeopardize

² Underemployment is a multidimensional term (Feldman, 1996) that generally refers to a graduate possessing more formal education than their job requires (for a review, see Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011).

students' ability to evaluate postsecondary options and develop expectations about transferring (Arnold, 2012; Grote et al., 2019). Put simply, the information that postsecondary institutions provide is both influential and essential for transfer students' decision-making processes. For transfer students interested in WIL, the accuracy of information on institutional websites is particularly important, since transfer status may impact their eligibility for WIL opportunities. In a recent longitudinal study, Aurini et al. (2024) found that at some institutions, transfer students were unable to enrol in co-op placements if they entered a program beyond a specific point, such as the first semester. They asserted that the possible ineligibility for co-op is a hidden cost of transfer in Ontario.

To begin addressing the literature gap between student transfer and WIL, we take a sectoral view of the information currently available on postsecondary websites for transfer students who are interested in WIL. Our project was guided by the following research questions:

1. What information is available on institutional websites regarding WIL opportunities for transfer students?
 - a. Does this information suggest that transfer students are eligible (or not) for WIL?
 - b. What does this information reveal about how institutions communicate WIL eligibility for transfer students?
2. How might these websites be improved to support transfer students interested in WIL?



Methodology

To answer the above research questions, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of information posted on the websites of all publicly funded universities (n=23) and colleges (n=24) in Ontario. More specifically, we analyzed information related to transfer admissions and WIL, excluding the voluminous program-specific information on WIL eligibility. As such, we cannot speak to the potential eligibility for individual programs but rather the general policies of the institutions as a whole.

We used a qualitative approach to content analysis that focused on the context of the content and reduced textual data to extract meaningful interpretations (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Rather than merely “counting words,” qualitative content analysis focuses on the “informational content” of the data and provides a comprehensive description of phenomena (Forman & Damschroder, 2008; see also Bengtsson, 2016). In this case, the qualitative approach was useful for synthesizing web data and categorizing the data to answer questions about the eligibility of transfer students to participate in WIL. To accomplish this goal, we developed the search strategy outlined in Table 2. This strategy was created based on existing literature on student information search strategies (e.g. Lang & Lopes, 2014; Levitz et al., 2023).

TABLE 2
Search Strategy for Investigating Institutional Websites

Search stage	Process
Step 1	An internet search of each institution using the following search strategy: [X institution] AND transfer AND work-integrated learning OR co-op. ³
Step 2	Search the institution’s admissions webpage for information related to transfer eligibility, specifically in relation to work-integrated learning.
Step 3	Search the institution’s work-integrated learning webpage (if available) for information related to transfer eligibility for work-integrated learning.

Thus, our strategy mirrored the approach and search techniques that transfer students often use to gather information—that is, using search engines to find relevant institutional websites and then searching within those websites to find transfer-specific information (see LaCroix & Napierala, 2025). By beginning broadly and then gradually narrowing our search to both admissions and WIL webpages, we ensured that our data collection captured transfer information that could have otherwise been “hidden” on either admissions- or WIL-specific webpages at each institution.

³ Given that co-op tends to be the predominant form of work-integrated learning at Ontario postsecondary institutions, it was the only specific form of WIL used in the search strategy.

Data Analysis

Using the search strategy presented above, each institution was assigned one of the codes in Table 3. This coding framework was designed to capture the potential for transfer students to participate in WIL opportunities *in general* rather than pinpoint specific instances in which students can or cannot access WIL. As an example, our analysis remained broad, as opposed to creating a matrix of every academic program at each institution and whether WIL was present and eligible for transfer students. In this way, our analysis focused on WIL and transfer at the sectoral level.

TABLE 3
Qualitative Coding Classifications for Institutional Websites

Code	Definition
Not applicable	The institution does not offer WIL for a particular credential tier.
No information	The institution does not have any information on their website about WIL.
Not possible	The institution states that transfer students are not eligible for WIL.
Potentially	Transfer students may be eligible for WIL opportunities. In these cases, the institution offers WIL programming, but it is unclear whether transfer students are eligible for such programming.
Yes, with conditions	Transfer students are eligible for WIL, but the institution has conditions that enable or prevent these opportunities (e.g. level of advanced standing).
Yes, possible	The institution states that transfer students are eligible for WIL.

A total of six codes were developed, encompassing the wide variety of scenarios encountered across all the websites. Given the simple nature of our analytic approach, we opted to use Microsoft Excel instead of more sophisticated data analysis software (e.g. NVivo).⁴ Universities were analyzed at the bachelor's degree level, while colleges were analyzed at the diploma, advanced diploma, and bachelor's degree levels (where offered). Given the analytic scope of this project, the analysis was not fine-grained enough to capture and consider program-level distinctions across institutions.

In addition to applying the coding framework, analytic notes were created for each institution in the sample. These notes recorded the amount of information available for transfer and WIL, where that information was found (e.g. an admissions page or a WIL page), and any other institution-specific details, such as WIL eligibility and supplemental materials (e.g. FAQ documents). These notes were used to assess the consistency of information between webpages. For example, if an admissions page stated that WIL was possible, notes were made about whether the WIL pages had complementary information. We accessed institutional

⁴ Excel is often an overlooked analytic tool for qualitative researchers but provides effective organizational functions to keep track of data, assign code classifications, make analytic notes, and compare themes (Bree & Gallagher, 2016; Meyer & Avery, 2009).

websites via hyperlinks from the Ministry of Colleges and University website.⁵ Four institutional websites were loaded in French⁶; for these cases, we used an AI-powered tool to produce an English-language translation. We appreciate that our analysis may have missed some nuances about the content of any translated website.



⁵ [Ontario Colleges](#) and [Ontario Universities](#).

⁶ Collège Boréal, College La Cité, Université de Hearst, and Université de l'Ontario Français.

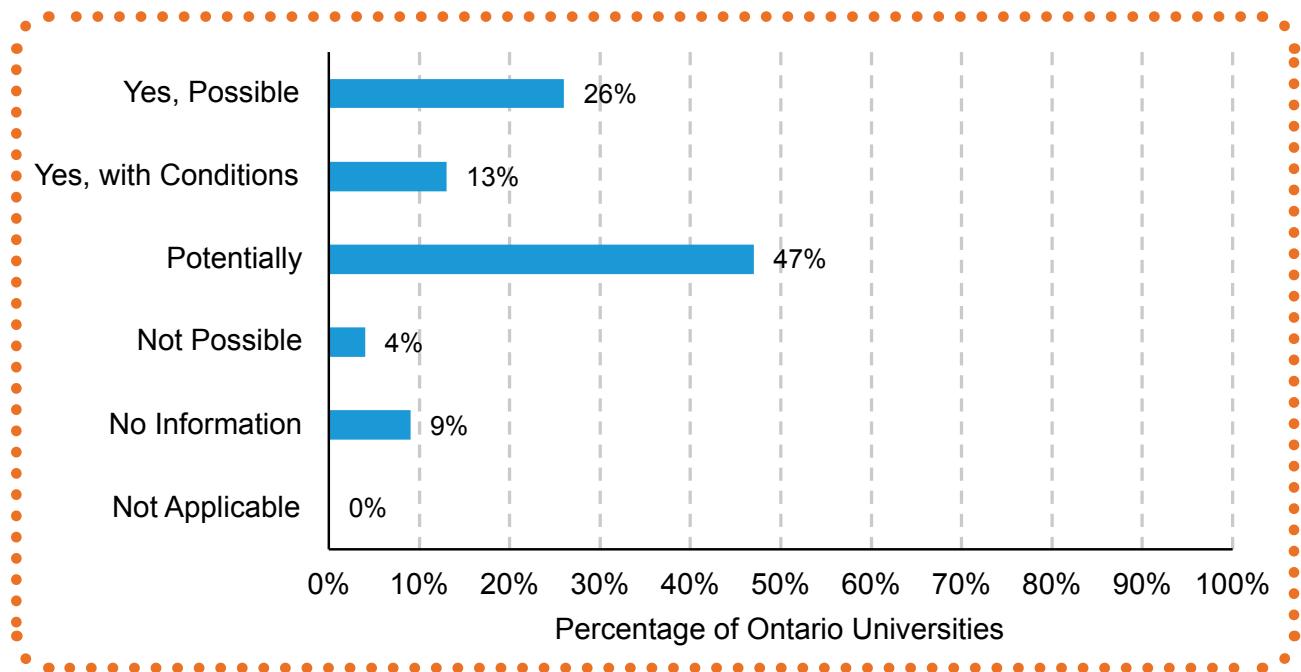
Findings

In general, our analysis found that the institutional websites of most Ontario colleges and universities provided limited information about the possibility for transfer students to participate in WIL opportunities. Moreover, we found that few webpages provided clear information, if any at all, about the connections between transfer and WIL, with most university and college webpages providing WIL and transfer information separately. This separation of information poses a barrier for transfer students looking to explore their options; therefore, we suggest that institutional websites could be improved to more clearly explain the possible connections between transfer and WIL information. Our findings are discussed in greater detail below, as they pertain to universities and colleges.

WIL Prospects for University-Bound Transfer Students

We found that university websites rarely provided specific information about the eligibility of transfer students to participate in WIL. As reflected in Figure 1, the “Potentially” code was the most assigned classification, with 47% of Ontario universities potentially allowing transfer students to participate in WIL.

FIGURE 1
Potential for WIL Access for Students Transferring to University



In terms of communicating WIL eligibility for transfer students, some universities with the “Potentially” code provided clear messaging about how WIL was coordinated with program applications. For example, Carleton University identified a two-step administrative process that permits or prohibits transfer students from entering the co-op program:

Transfer students' academic records are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Once you have received and accepted an offer of admission to Carleton and all possible transfer credits have been awarded, please reach out to us at [email address] to see whether participation may be possible. (Carleton University, 2024)

Many universities with the “Potentially” code did not provide such clear guidance connecting admissions and WIL. Furthermore, we found that there was little consistency in how institutions organized and presented information. Some universities coded as “Potentially” included information on transfer and forms of WIL, such as co-op, but there was limited coordination between their admissions and WIL webpages. In fact, we found numerous instances of conflicting information where an admissions page advertised WIL as an option for transfer students, but the WIL webpage would note that particular forms (e.g. co-op) were predominantly for direct-entry students. In other instances, universities would mention WIL on the transfer admissions webpage as a feature of some programs but would not provide information about how to apply or gain admission to those program streams.

We also found that the affirmative codes—“Yes, possible” and “Yes, with conditions”—were quite prevalent. When combined, these codes indicated that just under 40% of Ontario universities provided information suggesting that transfer students were eligible for WIL opportunities. In the Ontario postsecondary context, degree programs offered at universities typically require more years of study than the diploma and certificate programs commonly offered at colleges. The longer program duration at universities may provide more opportunities for transfer students to schedule WIL along with their coursework at their destination institution. Of the university websites we analyzed, 13% provided conditions for WIL eligibility. For example, Brock University stated, “In order to meet degree and co-op requirements, transfer credit is limited to 5.0 credits or the equivalent of one academic year” (Brock University, 2024, co-op section). Likewise, Wilfrid Laurier University noted that students with “more than 7.5 credits at the end of year one” were ineligible for co-op “as [they] are too far along in [their] studies” (Wilfrid Laurier University, 2024, para. 7). In these instances, the amount of advanced standing a transfer student has determines their eligibility for WIL. The timing and process of how individual institutions award transfer credits may negatively impact transfer students’ ability to make informed decisions. For example, if an institution awards transfer credits after admission,⁷ a transfer student would need to wait until after they enrol to find out about their eligibility for WIL. This concern is not merely hypothetical; recent research has shown that students transferring to university may be excluded from WIL opportunities based on their transfer credits and advanced standing (Aurini et al., 2024).

WIL Prospects for College-Bound Transfer Students

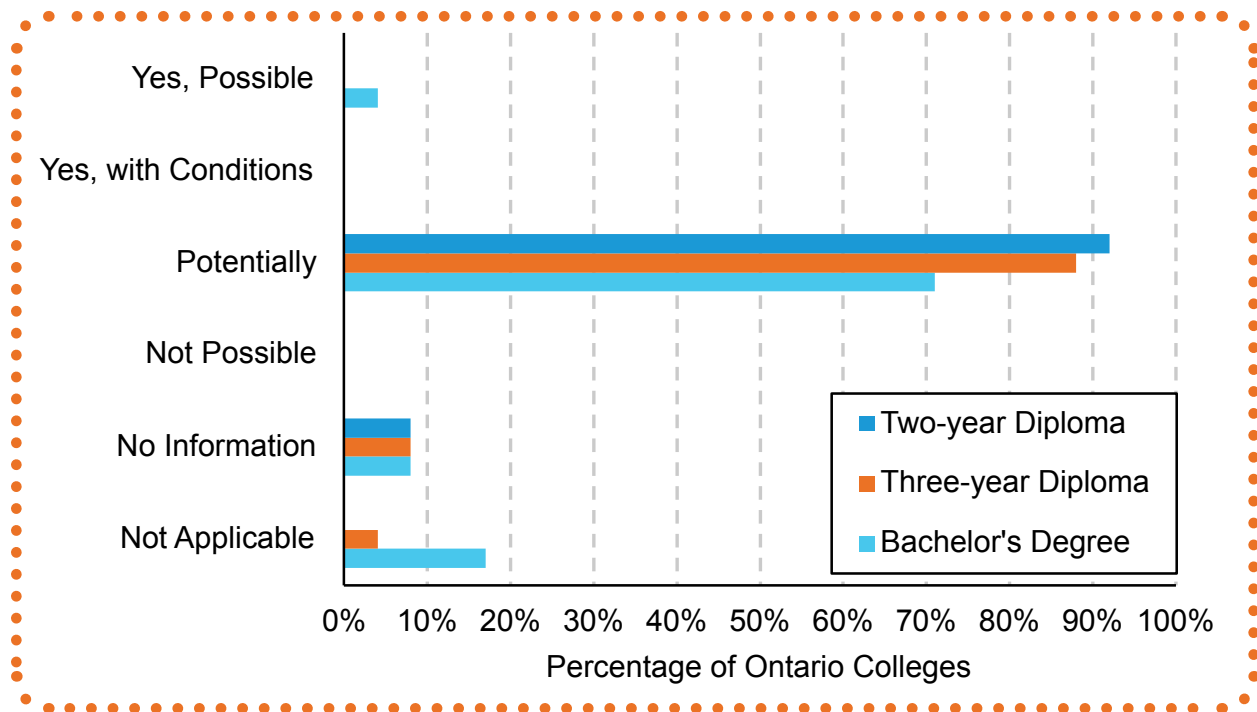
Ontario colleges have historically emphasized vocational education and training, often with WIL opportunities. Nevertheless, we found that college webpages about admissions and WIL, much like those for universities, tended to provide disconnected or incomplete information. Students looking to research options and make decisions would be hard pressed to find the information they needed from institutional websites alone. As shown in Figure 2, the “Potentially” code was—by

⁷ Post-admission transfer credit evaluations have been a noted barrier for seamless transfer in Ontario (see Higher Education Strategy Associates, 2021).

far—the most commonly assigned classification for the colleges that we analyzed. The “Potentially” code was applied not only to webpages stating that transfer students may be assessed on a case-by-case basis (as in the above example at Carleton University) but also in the absence of any statements prohibiting transfer and WIL. If a college did not definitively exclude transfer students from the WIL eligibility requirements, it was coded “Potentially,” since a transfer student *might* be able to participate in WIL. Thus, Figure 2 should be interpreted with caution, as it does not necessarily mean that transfer students *can* engage in WIL.

FIGURE 2

Potential for WIL Access for Students Transferring to College



We found that no college webpages included information about both transfer admissions and WIL opportunities. Instead, information about each topic was covered on its own separate webpage. For transfer students to gain a full picture of their eligibility for WIL, they would therefore need to conduct searches on the transfer admissions webpage and the college's WIL webpage.

With respect to admissions, we found that all colleges had webpages with information specifically for transfer students. These webpages were similar across institutions and contained information about the transfer process, how to apply, important deadlines, and how to request evaluation of transfer credits. Absent from most of these webpages was a connection to the college's WIL programming. While many colleges offer WIL opportunities in their programs, we found it extremely difficult to locate definitive statements about whether transfer students were eligible for such opportunities.

WIL webpages tended to describe the different forms of WIL offered at the college, along with lists of programs with WIL components and instructions for enrolling in WIL. Although this information is undoubtedly valuable for postsecondary students, the content was tailored to

direct-entry students and, in some cases, international students. However, information for transfer students with previous postsecondary experiences was typically missing. Unlike the above-noted university examples, no college webpages clearly indicated whether transfer-specific considerations, like transfer credits or advanced standing, would impact WIL eligibility. Two colleges had WIL webpages with FAQ sections to inform students about the logistics of WIL, such as how work placements were assigned or whether students were insured while on the job. There were no questions about eligibility for students with pre-existing credentials or partially completed credentials. Thus, these FAQ pages would likely answer only some of the questions that a transfer student would have. Further complicating the search process, not all colleges had WIL webpages, leaving an information gap that transfer students would need to fill by accessing other information sources (e.g. advisors or admissions offices). A notable exception to these findings was Fanshawe College, which provided a webpage for transfer students seeking WIL opportunities for honours degrees.⁸ This webpage stood out as a model that other colleges might consider to improve the quality of their information for transfer students interested in WIL.

One interpretation of these findings is that colleges may implicitly allow transfer students to pursue WIL programming, given that it is a foundational element of many programs. As such, colleges may not see a need to provide separate WIL information for transfer students, since there may not be transfer-specific eligibility requirements, as we found for universities. However, as previous transfer research has demonstrated, students and administrators do not always “see” transfers in the same way (Lang & Lopes, 2014). The significance of these findings relates to the ease of information access for transfer students and how they make sense of the available information. The disconnect between transfer admissions and WIL webpages means that prospective transfer students would likely need to reach out to college staff to discuss their eligibility in order to make informed decisions.



⁸ A caveat of this finding is that this information was only provided for degree applicants.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

As a reminder, this study focused on the information available on institutional websites related to admissions, WIL, and transfer students. Thus, our findings and recommendations relate to the quality and clarity of how that information is communicated to prospective students—*not* whether these institutions offer WIL programs or how they are embedded in academic programs. We acknowledge that transfer admissions and WIL programming are often administered via separate units at colleges and universities and that the organizational complexity of postsecondary institutions can pose challenges for coordinating how information is communicated to students. We also recognize that websites are designed with user experience in mind. Given the myriad programs and transfer pathways offered by colleges and universities, website designers might have strategically decided not to overcrowd webpages with information about every specific applicant type, policy exception, etc.

Overall, our findings suggest that most colleges and universities in Ontario would bolster their support for transfer students by improving the clarity and relevance of the WIL-related information they communicate via their websites. Compared to students who apply directly from high school, transfer students have more varied academic, professional, and personal backgrounds; in many cases, they require individualized assessments for admission and advanced standing. At present, most institutional websites, with some notable exceptions, do not provide prospective transfer students with enough information about WIL for them to make informed transfer decisions. Rather, the vague—and even conflicting—information that is available would require students to consult other sources of information, such as transfer advisors, to fill in knowledge gaps. The lack of tailored information and institutional support is a pervasive finding across transfer research, with ultimately negative consequences for student success (e.g. Luckai et al., 2015; Percival et al., 2016). As noted by BC Stat's (2005) report on transfer student experiences, “Developing and promoting transfer materials that students are most likely to use should make a difference in transfer success” (p. 55). With the documented importance of institutional websites in mind, we offer the following high-level recommendations to enhance the communication of information about WIL and transfers:

1. Institutions could revise their transfer webpages to use plain language that communicates clear information to audiences who might be less familiar with postsecondary policies and practices. For example, transfer students coming from other schools might not have experience with the institution's specific system for weighting credits (e.g. 1.0, 3.0, or 5.0). Because this information can be an important factor in the determination of WIL eligibility, prospective transfer students may require additional context to fully understand their options. Moreover, if institutions are interested in improving the accessibility of their websites, we encourage them to consult examples that currently provide robust transfer-related information, such as those we reviewed from Carleton University and Wilfrid Laurier University.
2. Colleges and universities could consider communicating clearer information about WIL eligibility for transfer students. For instance, institutional websites could include (a) details about WIL programs and their admission criteria (b) links to relevant and transfer-specific areas of WIL webpages. This recommendation will help bridge the gaps between the web pages of different units and address any policy areas that may otherwise be deemed implicit by the institution.

3. Colleges and universities could ensure that FAQ webpages consider a broader student base than direct-entry students. Alternatively, institutions might consider creating transfer-specific FAQ webpages that provide detailed information about admissions and WIL eligibility.
4. Colleges and universities could consider adding a “co-op transfer student” section to their admissions webpages. Our study identified a notable omission from all transfer and WIL webpages: information about previous WIL experiences that a transfer student may have already completed. For example, could a student transferring from one university co-op program receive transfer credits at their destination school?
5. Colleges and universities could ensure that transfer and WIL webpages include links to the contact information of individuals or offices on campus that can answer questions about both transfer and WIL. This recommendation will allow students to quickly find information and ask questions. In addition, it will reduce the frequent burden of requiring transfer students to cobble together information from different personnel on campus.

These recommendations highlight different areas for institutions to improve their communication with transfer students. For some institutions, these recommendations may simply involve revising their existing webpages. In other cases, institutions may want to review their broader program structures to better understand whether current policies inadvertently impose eligibility barriers for transfer students who want to access WIL opportunities. Given that institutional websites are among the most commonly used sources of information for transfer students (BC Stats, 2006; Henderson & McCloy, 2019; LaCroix & Napierala, 2025), it is important they communicate as much accurate information as possible to ensure that students can make informed decisions. Otherwise, transfer students could arrive at their new institutions with misaligned expectations; plus, they may discover unforeseen barriers to accessing WIL opportunities—with potential implications for critical skill development and labour market preparedness.

Certainly, these recommendations will be more salient for some institutions than others. We also acknowledge that these recommendations cannot be shouldered by single transfer advisors or WIL professionals. Fully embracing these recommendations will require intra-institutional collaboration, likely across many organizational units (e.g. transfer admissions, career offices, and experiential learning hubs) to ensure that information development is collaborative and complementary.

We are just beginning to scratch the surface of this topic and believe there is considerable work to be done to better support transfer students interested in WIL opportunities. For example, it is possible that adding program-level considerations will shed further light on WIL eligibility and help nuance our findings. Surely, other researchers and transfer professionals will have additional questions in this area that may be addressed through other research methodologies, such as interviews or surveys. We hope our findings serve as a catalyst for future research on transfer and WIL, helping students make informed decisions about their postsecondary and career options.

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