



L@W

Learning *at* Work

UVAC support for

**Negotiated modules and programmes
for business, professional and personal development**

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Background

‘Learning at Work’ is the term we have given to negotiated and bespoke modules and programmes designed to support individuals and organisations through work-based learning.

We tested some initial ideas with people involved in this type of provision at seven institutions.

We are now presenting and testing a more developed concept as an area that UVAC is aiming to take forward.



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Introduction

This session will outline how we see 'L@W', and identify some possible areas where we can help.

The structure is:

- 'Learning at Work' structure and applications
- *Discussion – concepts, practices and applications*
- **What UVAC can do to help**
- *Discussion – needs and wants.*



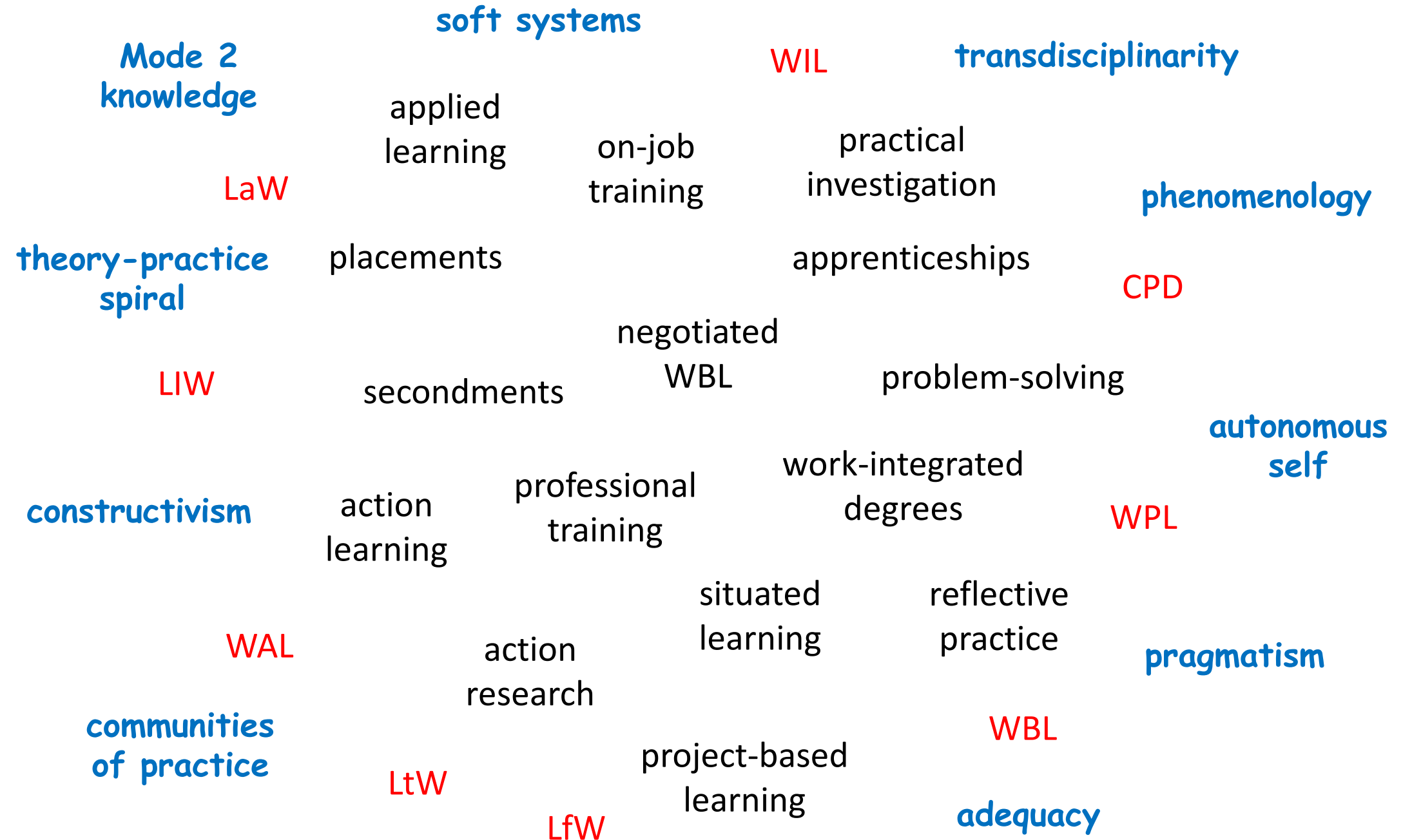
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Work-based learning ...

- “all and any learning that is situated in the workplace or arises directly out of workplace concerns”

(Lester & Costley 2010).

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The concept

‘Learning at Work’ is a way of describing a broad approach that can be implemented in different ways.

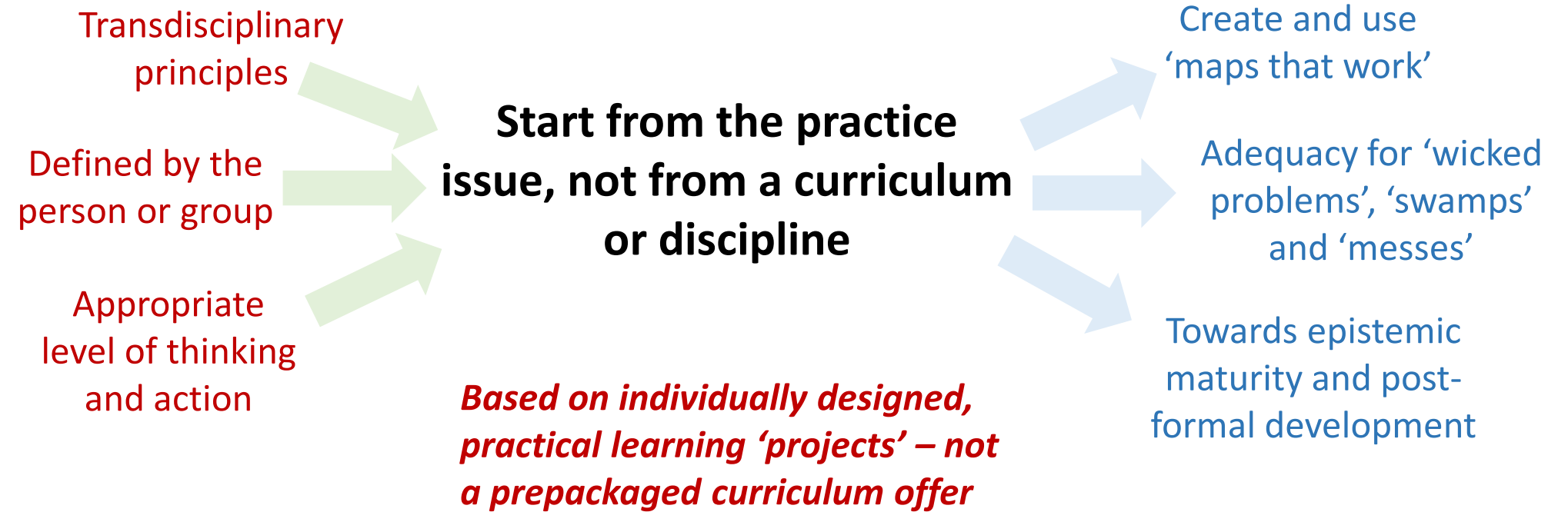
Principles underpinning L@W include:

- the learner as a motivated and independent actor
- learning as situated in a context and a community of practice
- interdependence of theory and practice
- transdisciplinarity, i.e. starting from the context of action rather than an academic discipline or professional field
- adequacy, i.e. supporting action that is effective and appropriate.

L@W should be straightforward and manageable – financially, for staff and employers, and for learners.

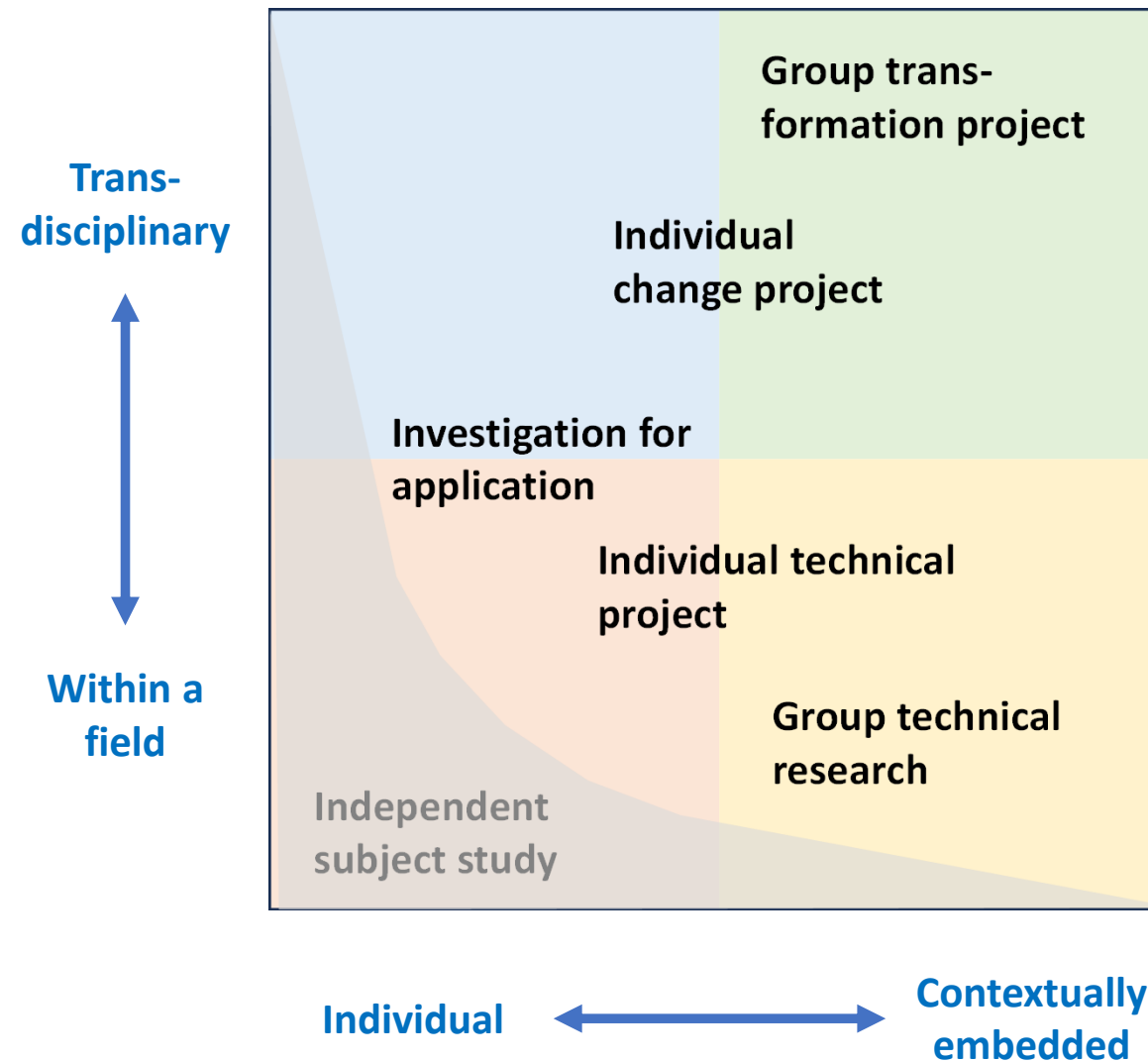
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Some principles



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Some dimensions





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A note of caution

WBL has been described as a 'disturbing practice' (Boud), a challenge to the discipline-based structures of the university (Garnett), and 'creatively disruptive' (Bravenboer)

Emphasises 'realisation systems' or 'co-creation' rather than the 'delivery systems' that institutions are traditionally comfortable with (Lester)

Can be resource-intensive and expensive

Tendency to be reabsorbed into faculty structures and diluted (O'Reilly)

But – there are ways to make it work (e.g. Talbot, Perrin & Meakin)



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Modules and programmes


Our conception is based around negotiated **modules** that are tailored to individuals and groups to address business, professional and personal development needs.

Modules can stand alone as 'micro-credentials' or solutions to specific workplace needs. They can also fit into a larger **programme** – e.g. a 'professional practice' or 'executive' qualification, a top-up degree, a short programme designed around business needs, an apprenticeship, a full-time degree with placement elements.

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Negotiated modules

Negotiated modules – normally 20-60 credit size (think project/dissertation) – are the fundamental building-blocks of L@W.



negotiated
module

Modules are typically written as ‘shells’ or ‘templates’, allowing groups and individuals to negotiate how they will apply them in their work situations.



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Negotiated modules

Modules aim to address a business or professional development need. Modules could be built around things such as:


- managing and implementing change
- a practice or process improvement project
- a technical investigation or development project
- an action learning or action research process
- reflection on previous practice.

Modules can use a written learning agreement, or something less formal akin to the process of agreeing a project or dissertation topic with a tutor.

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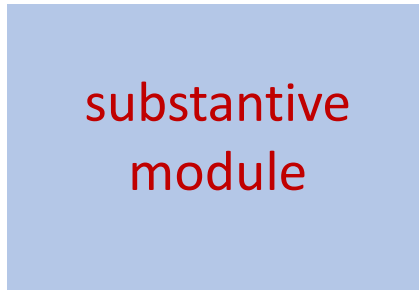
Supporting modules

A L@W programme can include other modules (that could be smaller), such as:



process
module

‘process’ modules such as ‘learning to learn’, reflection, project planning or practical research methods



substantive
module

substantive modules such as managing change, process improvement or field-specific topics.

Ideally these should be assessed through activities negotiated by the individual/group and located in their work context.



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Programmes

The following slides show how L@W modules can fit into full programmes.

The aim is to illustrate, not be prescriptive.



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Work-integrated degrees and apprenticeships

L@W negotiated modules can form an integral part of a structured programme, such as a full-time degree, integrated on/off job degree, or an apprenticeship.

Modules could for instance be designed to:


- integrate work placements and experience into the academic credit for a full-time degree
- support project and placement work throughout a degree (not just at the end)
- support integration, a project, or a placement with another employer in an apprenticeship.

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Short programmes

Short programmes can be developed using L@W principles to meet specific employer needs.

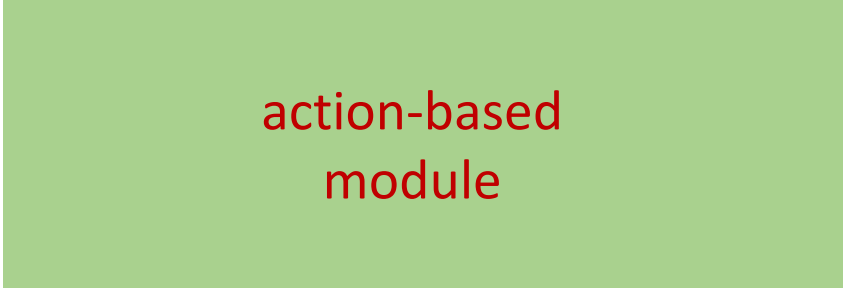
An example could be:



in-house
module



online
process
module



action-based
module

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CPD and micro-credentials

L@W modules can form ‘micro-credentials’, for instance for ongoing professional development.



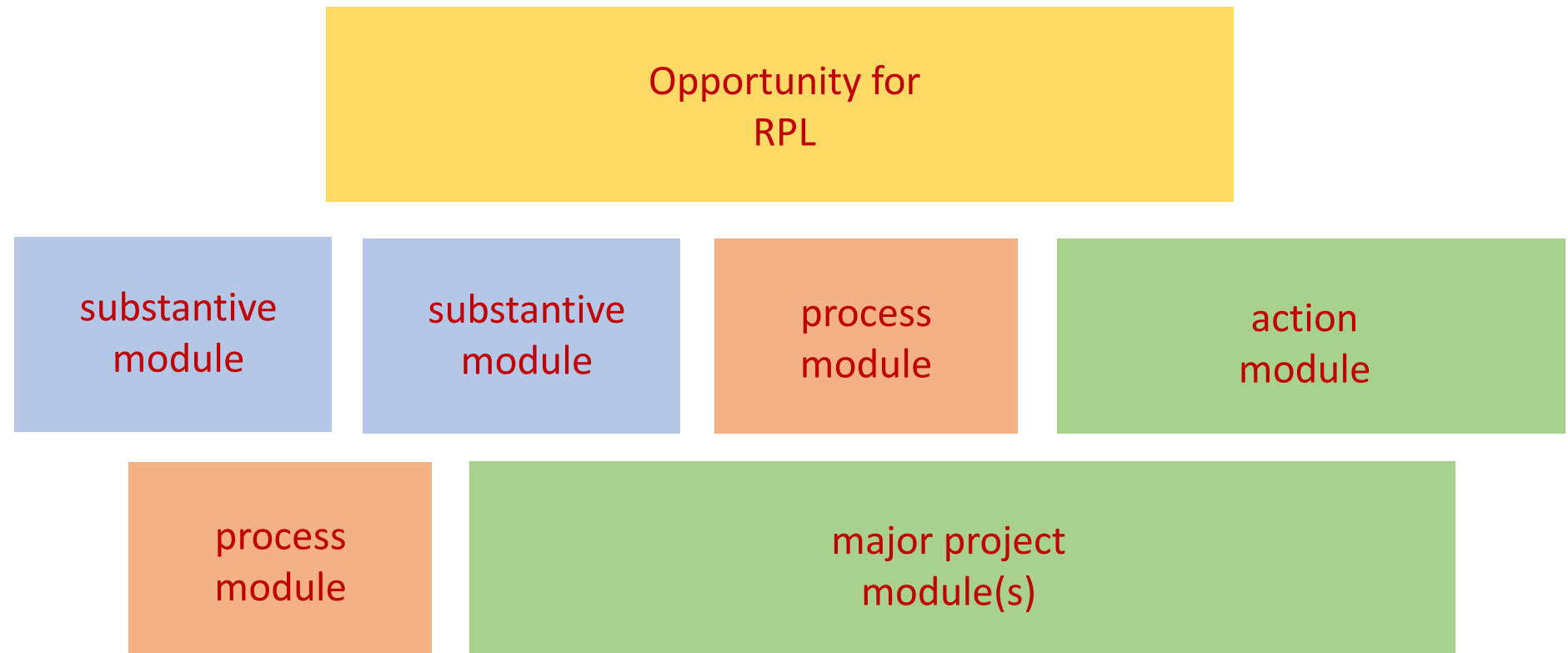
Learners who want to progress to a full qualification might need a structure such as:



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Long programmes

Longer programmes can be developed using L@W principles, for instance as a top-up to a full degree, or an executive/CPD Master's or PGDip. It is usually easier to provide a structure that is then negotiated and applied in context, for instance:



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Fully negotiated programmes

Fully-negotiated individual programmes are the most resource-intensive way of approaching L@W. Learners need to be highly self-directed and have a clear idea of what they want to achieve and how they will go about it.

A negotiated programme will typically have:

- A **framework learning agreement**, that ensures that the programme is coherent, and also allows negotiation of (often substantial) RPL
- A facility to **incorporate learning from varied sources** – e.g. existing modules, external and non-accredited courses, and independent learning
- **Process and planning** modules
- Substantial **action-based/project** modules.



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Key elements

Some key elements of L@W are:

- **integration** of theory and practice
- **recognition of previous learning** – for access (at the beginning) and as an integral part of the programme (possibly later on)
- **negotiation** – learning agreements or less formally
- **workplace projects and activities** for learning
- **collaboration with employers** – potentially at strategic, programme design and implementation level
- understanding and working with **levels, credit and (internal) coherence.**



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QUESTIONS

Does the presentation fit with your experience or idea of 'Learning at Work'?

Have we missed anything important out?



UVAC support

What can UVAC do?

Types of offering include:

- introductory and conceptual resources
- practical resources (templates, checklists etc)
- digital resources
- online courses
- bespoke face-to-face inputs
- advocacy – within institutions and with DfE/SE etc



UVAC support

Areas

Priority areas might include:

- an introductory/conceptual publication with summaries for institutional/faculty leaders and policymakers/funding bodies
- online sessions with materials and short guides – introduction/principles, tutors, mentors, funding
- face-to-face sessions and consultancy
- possibly more specific sessions – e.g. RPL, negotiation, integrating learning, programme co-design
- case-studies, including costing
- customisable genAI resources for tutors and learners.



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QUESTIONS

Are the proposed areas the right ones?

Have we missed anything important out?

What would your department/faculty/institution be interested in?