

# Experiential Learning at UBC Okanagan Task Force Report

*September 2019*

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## BACKGROUND

As outlined in the Aspire Vision, UBC's Strategic Plan and Outlook 2040, UBC Okanagan has a stated commitment to provide transformative learning experiences through a range of pedagogies. Strategy 13 (Practical Learning) of the UBC Strategic Plan identifies the institutional intention to “*expand experiential, work-integrated and extended learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff and alumni*”<sup>1</sup>. In 2018, the Student Academic Success Committee (SASC), at the request of the Deans, undertook an analysis of experiential learning (EL) at UBC Okanagan. As a first step, a small working group of the SASC undertook an environmental (internal and external) scan.

Obtaining a holistic view of the current state at UBC Okanagan proved challenging. The initial focus was on curricular opportunities. Two issues arose. First, there was no agreement about what constitutes EL (no common definition and classification scheme). Second, unless an EL experience was mandated as part of a program (e.g., hours worked as part of a co-op program or required practicum), there was no consistent way of identifying which courses have implemented EL.

The external scan of EL practices revealed that other institutions have faced similar obstacles in advancing their strategic EL priorities. Fortunately, a number of institutions (see Appendix B) have published reports or resources that identify ways to overcome challenges along with best practice resource packages.

In response to the scan, the SAS Committee struck the Experiential Learning Task Force to better understand the forms of EL that are being offered at the UBC Okanagan campus, identify current challenges, and make recommendations regarding how to best support EL. This report summarizes the work done to date by the Experiential Learning Task Force (see Appendix A for the Terms of Reference) and provides preliminary recommendations for consideration. Note that the Task Force focused on undergraduate curricular and co-curricular EL opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/transformative-learning/>

## APPROACH AND WORK TO DATE

The EL Task Force convened for the first time in May 2018 and met regularly through the 2018-19 Academic Year. The SAS Committee provided a working definition of EL which formed the basis of the operational definition (see Box 1, below) that has guided the work of the Task Force.

### **Box 1, Experiential Learning Operational Definition**

*Experiential learning (EL) opportunities have a practical or applied experience at their core, are intentionally linked to a learner's academic degree program, personal development and/or career goals, and integrate reflection. Reflection associated with EL prompts learners to analyze and think critically about their experiences, and express how the experiences help them make sense of their past or create a path for their future.*

*EL opportunities at UBC Okanagan span multiple contexts, and may be included within a course or program (curricular), complement academic outcomes (co-curricular), or independent of a learner's course of study (extra-curricular). Some opportunities are work-integrated (situated in an employment or similar context) whereas others are not. The University supports, monitors, and recognizes these experiential learning opportunities as a transformative pathway that enables students to further enhance their knowledge, professional skills, and values.*

Significant dialogue occurred regarding the overall data gathering approach, should we survey or consult in person? Given the challenge of response rates with surveys and the diverse stakeholders, there was consensus on an approach that led with broad consultation that might surface the forms of EL and current challenges, and then move to survey-based methods as needed for a more comprehensive picture.

To date (effective June 2019), the Task Force has:

- Reviewed and discussed the work of peer institutions and relevant literature.
- Revised the working definition (provided by the SAS Committee) into an operational definition (Box 1) that was then used as a basis for discussion with stakeholders throughout the work of the Task force.
- Reached out to key stakeholders to share goals and review previous efforts to develop an EL framework at UBC Okanagan. This included conversations with the Vancouver campus and Enrolment Services.
- Consulted with faculty members, students, AVP Student portfolio staff, Library, Enrolment Services, Housing, and other relevant units to gather reactions to the proposed EL definition, exemplars of EL and key challenges to implementation.
- Explored avenues for EL data collection and annual reporting with OPAIR and Enrolment Services.
- Presented and gathered feedback at the Experience Learning Conference hosted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning in May 2019
- Formulated this report to share findings to date and recommendations for the SAS committee and Provost to consider.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION

### Faculty Members

After initial consultations with Associate Deans and Curriculum committees for referrals, the Task Force conducted 21 meetings with over 40 faculty members and instructors across all faculties offering undergraduate programs (Table 1). Overall, the EL operational definition presented by the Task Force resonated well with faculty members. Forms of EL reported by faculty members included field trips, Go Global seminars, community service learning (CSL), co-op placements, project-based courses, community- and school-based practica, capstone projects, case competitions, laboratories and tutorials. Significant discussion took place regarding the role and forms of reflection, which evidenced the need for a shared definition and common approach to this pedagogy.

**Table 1. Faculty Members Consultation Summary**

Faculty/School	Number of Faculty
Barber School of Arts and Sciences	11
Faculty of Management	3
School of Nursing	20
Health and Exercise Science	2
School of Engineering	6
Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies	5
School of Education	1

Table 2 provides examples of what was heard from faculty members, grouped under three general themes: barriers, threats and opportunities. All consulted faculty members reported that they value EL as a transformative pedagogy for students while also acknowledging the challenges stemming from offering them. Faculty see a range of opportunities for improving the overall learning environment from physical changes to classrooms to improving students understanding of their own learning. The Task Force learned that there is great enthusiasm in offering EL opportunities across almost all departments.

**Table 2. Themes emerging from consultation**

Theme	Description	
Barriers to offering EL	Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increasing class sizes including shorter labs</li> <li>● Lack of flexibility with class scheduling</li> <li>● Students' inability to meet with classmates outside of class time</li> </ul>
	Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fixed tables and chairs in classrooms</li> <li>● Lack of equipment in labs to enrich lab experience for the students</li> <li>● Lab space cannot keep up with increasing enrolment</li> </ul>
	Instructional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EL requires more work from the instructors with respect to marking</li> <li>● Lack of support for instructors who would like to take the class off-campus (planning, transportation, funding, liability guidelines, etc.)</li> <li>● Difficulty relating class content to hands-on activities and/or real-life applications for students to experience</li> <li>● Lack of familiarity with EL as a pedagogy and lack of resources for instructors</li> <li>● Difficulty embedding reflection exercises in large classrooms</li> <li>● Difficulty engaging with interdisciplinary projects</li> <li>● EL demands more coaching and guidance from instructors. Students have not developed the ability to work with peers successfully and with community members</li> <li>● Difficulty managing environment of competition and lack of trust among students</li> </ul>
Threats to expanding EL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EL has not been identified as a priority for the department</li> <li>● Change to introduce more EL is too much work</li> <li>● Students do not want to engage, EL requires work and effort</li> <li>● No resources for EL, especially at the undergraduate level</li> <li>● Labs are being cut due to lack of finances</li> <li>● Lack of support and recognition for undergraduate vs. a graduate thesis programs</li> <li>● Lack of understanding of EL among faculty members, how to implement it</li> <li>● No formal collaboration for interdisciplinary work</li> <li>● EL opportunities are not required for program; not a large uptake for optional capstone</li> <li>● Growing class sizes limit ability to engage as meaningfully with community partners</li> <li>● Humanities viewed as 'just essays' so little support from the Faculty</li> </ul>	
Opportunities associated with EL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classrooms that allow for movement and group discussion</li> <li>● Changing assessment practices to highlight the importance of EL instead of final exams</li> <li>● Build reflection exercises in already successful community placements and work</li> <li>● Increased partnerships with community and Okanagan College</li> <li>● Support interdisciplinary projects that expand across programs</li> <li>● Develop an avenue to celebrate EL</li> <li>● Work with co-op to take advantage of other community opportunities that do not fit the co-op model (especially during the summer)</li> <li>● Incorporation of rigorous rubrics to support reflection pieces</li> <li>● Helping students build a portfolio from year 1 to showcase their learning</li> </ul>	

## AVP Students Portfolio

**AVP Students' units** were consulted through a survey and in person consultation in April 2019. Key findings revealed that there are 33 unique positions that employ 336 paid students and 276 volunteer (unpaid) students, for a total of 612 positions annually. Half of those positions offer some type of reflection, but the depth and breadth of the reflection has not been assessed. Program-focused and operational opportunities to improve the student experience in association with EL were identified, including:

1. Deepen student learning through enhanced training and development for students, embedding a guided reflection component and activating learning outcomes
2. Strengthen career-related outcomes for students
3. Realize operational efficiencies/improve communication between the units in the AVP Student portfolio

## Students and Alumni

OPAIR (Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research) conducted a focus group attended by 6 students and alumni to gather their perceptions and experiences with EL opportunities on campus (See Appendix C for complete report). Most participants were not familiar with the term Experiential Learning. The EL operational definition was shared with them and used for the discussion.

Focus group participants identified many of the EL opportunities mentioned by faculty members. They further explained that EL opportunities have helped them increase their self-confidence, overall learning, and sense of responsibility and accountability. They all preferred learning through EL when compared to lectures.

According to the focus group participants, most students learn from their peers what a course is like. Based on these informal discussions, students decide to (or not to) register for specific courses. Such opportunities are then weighed against a variety of perceived barriers: increased workload, increased stress from working with others and/or added responsibility, additional cost from other expenses such as transportation or other associated costs.

Participants' recommendations to enhance current EL opportunities and to communicate them to students are reflected in the recommendations section of this report.

## Other relevant units

The Library, Student Recruitment and Advising, International Student Initiative and Housing and Hospitality Services were also consulted. Key findings from these conversations are:

- Housing and Hospitality Services offer a wide variety of EL opportunities through the training and programming offered in on-campus student residences. Residence Life Managers oversee all EL activities which are highly structured and required for all student employees who work as Residence Advisors (N=67). While offering these opportunities is time consuming and challenging at times, they are highly valued and supported by the management team. Opportunities for growth lie in further collaboration with Faculty members to offer richer EL opportunities for student residents who wish to engage with community-focused projects.

- Student Recruitment and Advising employs students for three different roles throughout the year (N=16). These roles are closely supported by SRA staff and they expand the unit's capacity to offer campus tours, recruit students from other provinces, and offer successful yield events on campus. While conversations and coaching happens in an ongoing basis as part of the students' engagement with this unit, there are no formalized ways for students to reflect on their learning.
- Through the Commons, the Library, in partnership with the AVP Student Portfolio, has co-located services that support student learning. Students who are hired to work in these services are provided with practical experience that improves their academic skills. Students hired to support writing and language services as peer tutors (12 in 2019) are provided with an extensive training program that includes reflective components; these students have an opportunity to receive a certificate from an external organization (College Reading and Learning Association).

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING INVENTORY PROGRESS

Developing a comprehensive inventory that could serve as a baseline for future years is part of the scope of the Task Force. This work has yet to be completed, as a key challenge to creating an inventory is the lack of an agreed upon set of definitions and categories. Required (curricular) EL is tracked individually by the relevant department/unit for accreditation or regulatory purposes. However, no reporting mechanism for all other forms of EL exists. While the consultation was underway, the Task Force focused on identifying ways to develop an inventory of EL opportunities once a classification was in place. Included in this work were consultations with Enrolment Services and an analysis of course calendar descriptions by keyword (ongoing). Key findings from this work include:

- Program-based, required work placements (e.g., co-op, teaching and health related practicum placements) are identified in our systems and regulatory reporting requirements are commonly in place.
- Many forms of program-based EL, such as field schools and capstone projects can be identified by keyword search in the Calendar. Given that calendar descriptions are not written to explain course pedagogy, such a search does not yield comprehensive results.
- Forms of course-based experiential learning opportunities that are instantiated at the assignment level (where faculty members choose to use EL to achieve course learning outcomes), are very challenging to surface as no consistent information is stored. Moreover, specific EL assignments may not be available in every course offering (e.g., only available in a summer section due to class size, different faculty member teaching a course).
- The Student Information System is capable of assigning attributes to courses, which could be used to identify courses with EL, but there is no consistent definitions table for EL and its categories that can be applied.
- There is a significant challenge with implementing any course attribute system, given the major systems changes underway (IRP).

- There is no central means of identifying non-curricular opportunities for discovery by students or for use in institutional reporting.

The Task Force spent a significant amount of time examining the ways that peer institutions have categorized EL. A number of institutions have well developed definitions and categories that could serve as a foundation for UBC Okanagan. In particular the University of Victoria (see Appendix D) has developed a robust typology for curricular EL that could serve as a strong basis for a UBCO classification. This typology mirrors BCCAT's (British Columbia Council of Admission and Transfer) framework for Experiential Education as well. University of Victoria, along with many other schools, have also developed program specific experiential learning/hands-on learning maps. Three examples of the maps are included in Appendix D.

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings to date, we provide the following preliminary recommendations, grouped by theme. The suggested leads included in the section reflect the person or unit that is believed to be positioned well and has the mandate to advance the recommendation either through direct action or through a follow-up initiative sponsored by the lead.

### Foundational:

1. Formally adopt, through Senate, the first paragraph of the Task Force's operational definition of **experiential learning** campus-wide, acknowledging that the second paragraph is UBCO's aspiration regarding EL.  
*Suggested lead: Provost or Designate*
2. Examine the established categories for experiential education developed by the University of Victoria (Appendix D), drawing upon the Comparative Matrix of Co-operative Education with Other Forms of Work-Integrated Education and Work-Integrated Learning (Appendix E) and other Canadian institutional classifications for reference as needed, to establish an EL typology for UBC Okanagan.  
*Suggested lead: Provost or Designate*

### Support:

3. Create and share a comprehensive EL resource package to support faculty and staff members with planning, implementation and assessment of EL inside and outside the classroom. The recently published, Creative Commons-licensed Experiential Learning Toolkit (<https://www.eltoolkit.ca>) may serve as a good starting point.  
*Suggested lead: Centre for Teaching and Learning*
4. Increase curriculum design and pedagogical support for implementing program/discipline-aligned EL.  
*Suggested lead: Provost-led service assessment*
5. Establish a centrally positioned EL Service Hub to coordinate experiential activities at UBC Okanagan, connecting the units engaged in supporting EL (CTL, Career Services, Co-Op, Community Service Learning, Go Global, Work Study, and faculty-based placement and practicum coordinators). The hub will serve as both an internal (directing faculty, staff and



students to the resources they need) and external connection point for those interested in offering, enhancing, or accessing EL opportunities.

*Suggested lead: Provost and AVP Students service assessment*

#### Recognition:

6. Demonstrate institutional recognition and support of this pedagogy by recognizing EL leaders in the academy (faculty, staff, students, community contributors). This can be done through awards, ceremonies, and/or publications.

*Suggested lead: Provost and AVP Students assessment/partnership*

7. Implement a formal mechanism for recognizing learning associated with EL. Consider a Comprehensive Learning Record that captures the curricular and co-curricular learning experiences of students.

*Suggested lead: Provost or designate in partnership with AVP Students, engaging Enrolment Services & Senate as needed and required*

#### Tracking/Inventory (builds from recommendation 1):

8. Create data definitions based on the agreed upon EL classification that can be used as attributes in association with credit and non-credit EL learning opportunities (learning activities).

*Suggested lead: OPAIR*

9. Implement the attributes at the course and section level in the Student Information System. Separate tracking may be needed for co-curricular.

*Suggested Lead: Enrolment Services, in consultation with the IRP Steering Committee*

10. Develop EL participation reports based on course enrolments and types of EL. Over time, develop impact measures to include in the reports (will require alumni engagement).

*Suggested Lead: OPAIR*

## NEXT STEPS

After discussion with the Provost, the Task Force plans to focus on the following:

1. Create a digital resource to showcase Experiential Learning at UBCO from students' perspective (October-November, 2019).
2. Work with the Student Academic Success Committee to work towards gaining Senate's approval of the first paragraph of the EL definition used to date by the Task Force (see table 1), along with a typology for UBC Okanagan.
3. Upon Senate's approval of the EL definition and typology, the Task Force will engage with AVP Students to create a proposal for a co-curricular/comprehensive learning record.
4. Create a comprehensive list of already existing EL opportunities at UBCO to help students navigate and choose the opportunities that best fit their career/personal goals.
5. Work with an academic program to identify EL opportunities available for students throughout the curriculum. This project can serve as an example for other academic programs who wish to compile and share EL-related information to students, faculty and staff (see UVIC's example in attachment D).

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TASK FORCE TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Experiential Learning Working Definition

*Learning opportunities that have a practical or applied experience at their core, meaningfully integrate the process of reflection, and are intentionally linked to the learner's academic degree program, personal development and/or career goals.*

*The University supports, monitors, and recognizes these learning opportunities as a transformative pathway that enables students to further enhance their knowledge, professional skills and values (Modified from BCCAT, 2017).*

The working definition above, developed through a working group of the **Student Academic Success Committee**, forms the starting point for the work of the Experiential Learning Task Force. We expect this definition to evolve as to reflect the planned community consultations.

### Task Force Sponsor

- Patricia Lasserre, Associate Provost, Enrolment and Academic Programs

### Reporting

- The Task Force reports to the Student Academic Success Committee

### Purpose (Why)

- To facilitate a shared understanding of what experiential learning means/looks like in the UBC Okanagan context.
- Strengthen UBC Okanagan's capacity to offer experiential learning as one of the campus' signature transformative learning experiences (as envisioned in the UBC Strategic Plan: Shaping UBC's Next Century).
- Accurately inform students, faculty, and staff about the experiential learning opportunities offered at UBC Okanagan.
- Demonstrate the impact of experiential learning on the student learning experience through accepted, recognized measures.

### Objectives (What to Accomplish)

- Agree upon a common definition of experiential learning and its associated categories that is meaningful to the UBC Okanagan context and may be used to track activity and measure progress with respect to UBC's transformative learning goals.
- Establish an accurate and clear inventory of experiential learning opportunities offered through the UBC Okanagan Campus.
- Design a process for annually updating the inventory for future and ongoing reporting.
- Develop a set of recommendations on how to make experiential learning a success at UBC Okanagan.

## ***Experiential Learning Task Force ToR, continued***

### **Scope (Breadth of work)**

- Validate the working definition of experiential learning through consultation with the UBC Okanagan community. Refine the definition and categories as necessary to capture diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches.
- Document the current examples of experiential learning in as comprehensive a manner as possible. The inventory created will serve as a baseline for future years.
- Design an annual reporting process for experiential learning that communicates what UBC Okanagan is doing with respect to experiential learning and the impact of experiential learning on the UBC Okanagan learning experience.
- Identify what needs to put in place in order to ensure that students engaging in experiential learning opportunities, and instructors, administrators and faculties offering experiential learning opportunities can be successful.
- Update the Student Academic Success Committee monthly.

### **Task Force Composition**

Implementation of a new plan to report on experiential learning requires the support and participation of the campus' academic and non-academic portfolios. In recognition of the challenges that a large task force would bring, a high commitment to consultation will underpin the task force's approach throughout the entirety of the process with the wider community. Subgroups may be formed with members added as needed. Co-Chairs will initially be drawn from the Provost and AVP Students Portfolio.

- Students (2, one undergraduate student and one graduate student)
- Faculty Members (minimum of 2)
- Student Development and Advising (1)
- Co-op Office (1)
- Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research (1)
- Centre for Teaching and Learning (1)
- Provost Office representatives (2)

### **Members, 2018-19**

- Bernard Momer (Associate Professor, Associate Dean, IKBSAS)
- Manuela Reekie (Senior Instructor, Assistant Director, School of Nursing, FHSD)
- Michelle Lowton (Director, Student Development and Advising), Co-Chair
- Kristi Carter (Associate Director, Academic Programs, FoM)
- Stephanie McKeown (Director, Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research)
- Peter Newbury (Director, CTL, Senior Advisor, Learning Initiatives)
- Laura Prada (Manager, Curriculum and Academic Programs, Office of the Provost)
- Michelle Lamberson (Director, Flexible Learning Special Projects, Office of the Provost), Co-Chair

## APPENDIX B. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN SUMMARY

### Examples from Canadian educational institutions

#### **Brock**

<https://brocku.ca/ccee/experiential-education/>

Experiential education engages students in first-hand experiences in order to develop skills, clarify values, contribute to local and global communities, and make learning come alive. Twenty different types of experiential opportunities are built into the University's courses — from labs and simulations to practicums and internships. [Learn more](#) about the types of experiential learning opportunities built into courses at Brock.

#### **Carleton University**

<https://carleton.ca/experientialeducation/what-is-experiential-education/>

“Experiential learning is the application of theory and academic content to real-world experiences, either within the classroom, within the community, or within the workplace, which advances program or course-based learning outcomes that are specifically focused on employability skills. Experiential learning requires the student to not only engage in the experience activity, but also requires them to reflect upon their learning and how their skills learned through their academic studies can be applied beyond the classroom. Workplace experiences such as co-op and internships placements are only one form of experiential learning opportunities that can be provided to students. Such opportunities are typically divided into three categories – course focused, community focused, and work focused – giving students hands-on experiences not only in the classroom, but also in the community and the workplace” (*Strategic Transformation Group on Employability, Carleton University*).

#### **EL Toolkit**

<https://www.eltoolkit.ca>

An experiential learning toolkit that was developed by Niagara College Canada, in partnership with Brock University, Georgia College, and Kyle Mackie, with funding from the Government of Ontario. The EL Toolkit is a website that provides information, examples, and templates for designing, delivering, facilitating, and evaluating experiential learning (EL) in post-secondary education. It has a Creative Commons License, which allows it to be adapted for use in other contexts.

#### **Ryerson University**

<https://www.ryerson.ca/experiential/>

In the words of Lewis and Williams (1994, p.5):

“In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.”

The first theories of experiential learning arose in the mid-nineteenth century as attempts to move away from traditional formal education, where teachers simply presented students with abstract concepts, and toward an immersive method of instruction. Students would “learn by doing,” applying knowledge to experience in order to develop skills or new ways of thinking (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 6).

Lewis, L. H. and Williams, C. J. (1994), *Experiential learning: Past and present. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1994: 5-16. doi:10.1002/ace.36719946203

### **University of Toronto, Mississauga Campus**

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/experience/experiential-education-unit>

Experiential learning opportunities have been growing in number and scope at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, and encompass many types of practical learning, or "learning by doing." Experiential learning can be paid (cooperative) or unpaid, and can take the form of community service, internship or practicum placement, or project research. Experiences take place in outside agencies or in various on-campus research settings, with faculty and/or community-based supervision. Learning is accomplished both by hands-on work and reflection.

### **University of Victoria**

<https://www.uvic.ca/current-students/home/planning/experiential/index.php>

Definition of Experiential Education: "Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities." (Association for Experiential Education). Their "Key Aspects of Experiential Education" resonate with the operational definition used by the UBCO Task Force: Experience, Curriculum integration, Student Outcomes and Reflection

### **University of Waterloo**

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/experiential-learning>

Drawing on Kolb's learning cycle, many universities have developed their own definitions of experiential learning. The University of Waterloo emphasizes the "intentional and reflective learning from experience" component. **Simon Fraser University** has developed a more extended definition: "the strategic, active engagement of students in opportunities to learn through doing, and reflection on those activities, which empowers them to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical endeavours in a multitude of settings inside and outside of the classroom."

### **Western University**

[http://experience.uwo.ca/about/principles\\_and\\_definitions.html](http://experience.uwo.ca/about/principles_and_definitions.html)

Experiential learning is an approach that educators use to intentionally connect learners with practical experiences that include authentic and focused reflection. Experiential learning allows learners to:

- Increase and apply disciplinary knowledge
- Develop transferable skills
- Clarify interests and values
- Strengthen employability
- Collaborate meaningfully with communities

### **York University**

<https://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources/experiential-education/>

Experiential Education is the application of theory to a concrete experience, either within the

classroom, within the community or within the workplace, which advances the learning outcomes of a course or program. It requires students to reflect upon their learning. Ideal facilitation of experiential learning involves preparation and placement of students into contextual environments where they can practically apply knowledge and skills gained at the university, and subsequently to engage students in meaningful reflection upon these authentic experiences.

## Examples from United States educational institutions

### Haas School of Business, University of California Berkeley

[http://haas.berkeley.edu/Undergrad/current/students/experiential\\_learning.html](http://haas.berkeley.edu/Undergrad/current/students/experiential_learning.html)

The Haas Undergraduate Program Office is proud to offer our undergraduate students the ability to gain practical skills through the Experiential Learning Program workshops, which are conducted throughout the academic year. Open to Haas undergraduate majors only, these non-credit workshops provide opportunities to enhance the students' personal growth beyond the classroom setting. Workshops usually focus on one topic of general interest and are conducted by professional facilitators during 1 or 2 weekend days.

### University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

<https://4h.tennessee.edu/Pages/experientiallearning.aspx>

The American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey once said, “Experiential learning takes place when a person is involved in an activity, looks back and evaluates it, determines what was useful or important to remember and uses this information to perform another activity.” Experiential learning is learning through reflection on doing, which is often contrasted with rote or didactic learning. Experiential learning focuses on the learning process for the individual. Because of the direct involvement the learner makes discoveries and experiments with knowledge firsthand, instead of hearing or reading about others’ experiences.

### The University of Texas at Austin

<https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/experiential-learning>

Experiential learning is any learning that supports students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems or authentic situations where the instructor directs and facilitates learning (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). The crux of the learning occurs during the reflective process where students assess their decisions in the light of natural consequences, mistakes, and successes.

*Wurdinger, S. D., & Carlson, J. (2010). Teaching for experiential learning: Five approaches that work. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Education*



## Examples from domestic and international organizations

### A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning by HEQCO

[http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO\\_WIL\\_Guide\\_ENG\\_ACC.pdf](http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO_WIL_Guide_ENG_ACC.pdf)

- Experimental education is the philosophical process that guides the development of structural and functional learning experiences
- Experiential learning refers to the specific techniques or mechanisms that an individual can implement to acquire knowledge
- Work-integrated learning is a broad term that encompasses various learning opportunities centred on the integration of academic learning and practical application in a chosen work environment

### Association for Co-operative Education BC/Yukon

<http://co-op.bc.ca/about-ace/acce/>

Recently, the ACCE-WIL-BC worked on a comprehensive matrix of work-integrated education and learning. The objective of this matrix is to develop clarity, common understanding and shared language around these forms of work-integrated experiences across institutions in BC.

### Association for Experiential Education

<http://www.aee.org/>

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.

### BCCAT Experiential Education

<http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/expeducation.pdf>

This report provides a snapshot of the state of experiential education (EE) in BC higher education and identifies examples of practice as well as challenges. Twelve BC Transfer System member institutions and over 70 educators and administrators provided their insights on EE through a series of institutional conversations. *"Experiential Education (EE) Programs, have experience at their core, and are intentionally linked to the learner's academic and professional goals, and are directed and monitored by the institutions so as to develop the learner's knowledge, skills, and values."*

### UNESCO

[http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_d/mod20.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod20.html)

At the heart of all learning is the way we process our experiences, especially our critical reflections on our experiences. This module introduces experiential education as a key approach to student-centred learning for a sustainable future.

Experiential learning engages students in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making in contexts that are personally relevant to them. This approach to learning also involves making opportunities for debriefing and consolidation of ideas and skills through feedback, reflection, and the application of the ideas and skills to new situations.

## APPENDIX C: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING STUDENT FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY FROM OKANAGAN PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

May 2019

### INTRODUCTION

The Experiential Learning Task Force asked the Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research department (OPAIR) to help solicit feedback from students with regards to Experiential Learning (EL) at UBC's Okanagan Campus. On May 24, 2019, OPAIR led one focus group, with 6 UBCO students and alumni from the Psychology, Biology, Human Kinetics, Computer Science, and Management programs. The focus group lasted around one hour and thirty minutes. The level of engagement was very high. The focus group discussion centred around three main topics: knowledge and definition of EL, EL opportunities in the classroom, and EL opportunities outside the classroom. The discussion was recorded, and notes were taken during the session. Appendix A contains the framework for the discussion, however it was not followed prescriptively.

### KEY FINDINGS

The discussion started with what participants understood of EL, the type of activities that came to their mind when thinking about EL, and the differences with other more traditional learning styles.

#### **Experiential Learning descriptions**

- Most were not familiar with the term as an undergraduate, and some participants expressed they were still not sure of what it meant, even though they had just recently heard of it in conversations during the past year
- Among the type of activities mentioned as EL by the participants: field trips (e.g., traveling to Barcelona to take a Spanish course), case competitions, practicums, co-ops, mock debates and discussions
- Compared to traditional lecture learning, participants expressed:
  - EL as a more applied/hands on experience that helps in getting a better understanding of a topic
  - Involves more doing as opposed to hearing how to do it
  - More real feedback as opposed to test/exam type of feedback
  - Bigger confidence boost (e.g., from dealing with clients as opposed to a grade achievement)
  - Get a chance to make mistakes and learn from them as opposed to lecture/class learning
  - More chances to learn what one would like to do in the future
  - Bigger sense of responsibility and accountability compared to lectures (e.g., the responsibility of dealing with a client as opposed to choosing to attend a class and listening to a lecture)
  - EL is more fun than lecture learning

After this, we read the Experiential Learning handout and followed the discussion based on those definitions.

#### **Examples of Experiential Learning opportunities in the classroom**

- Faculty of Management (FoM) has multiple EL opportunities, with some involving a periodic reflection assignment such as final reports – e.g., business simulations, case projects. They had an EL activity almost once a week

- The 360 Live Case competition from FoM is one such EL opportunity for Management undergrads. It involves students working in teams to propose business solutions to specific real company issues. This makes students apply classroom knowledge to real world scenarios. It is also a competition for what team has the best solution for the company
- A laboratory techniques in exercise psychology for the Human Kinetics Program that included learning techniques for empathy with different populations; students would sit in a circle and discuss, for example, how different populations might feel intimidated at the doctor or in a fitness setting
- An Indigenous cultural safety course that included visits to a reserve and interactions with the community and the elders; this course had a no notes policy
- Lab sections were considered to involve some sort of EL component; other Biology courses did not have many EL opportunities (and no co-ops were available when the student was enrolled); in some cases, Grad students would ask for volunteers to help with a real life lab, and these would give some EL experience to the students (although not always related to their career path)
- Computer science also had few EL opportunities, with courses mostly divided between lectures and labs; for a computer science course, students had to present in front of the class as if they were presenting to investors and pitching why their product was good
- Similarly, Psychology did not have many EL opportunities; students that know professors might have an opportunity of more hands on projects with them

#### **Learning about EL opportunities in courses**

- Participants mentioned how they learned about EL opportunities, before registering in a course, via word of mouth from other students that had already taken the course
- Others said they learned about the EL components once they had started the course; in some cases via the course outline and in others through the instructor (e.g., during the first day of class)
- In other cases, for EL opportunities not strictly connected to the course, students had learned through graduate teaching assistants or instructors offering opportunities to participate in hands on projects (both as part of the research team and as a participant in a study)
- When debating between what courses to take, one participant would ask instructors about the type of activities they would do in class: discussions (considered EL) vs slides presentations
- One participant preferred smaller cohorts when choosing courses and connected this to having better discussion experiences
- Some students would contact instructors and academic advisors to inquire about what they had done in past courses; this would be difficult with a new instructor
- In a forensic psychology course, one professor happened to be involved in a trial and students were informally invited to attend (not as part of the course)

#### **Choosing EL opportunities**

- One participant chose an EL opportunity based on the relatability to future career interests – e.g., academic advising due to interest in higher education opportunities
- Choosing something where they felt supported as opposed to a position where there might not be as much support, feedback, and professional development
- Other participants cannot recall a course where the professor would give students a choice between different EL options

### **Positive aspects of EL**

- Some of the positive aspects of EL were listed in the EL descriptions section, including: better understanding of a topic, real/practical feedback, confidence boost, chance to make and learn from one's mistakes, opportunity to learn about potential career paths, sense of responsibility and accountability, and overall more fun than lecture learning
- When considered as a middle point between a lecture presentation and a full co-op experience, EL opportunities are seen as beneficial in that they give the student the possibility to gain some hands on experience and learn about a topic without fully committing to a co-op
- When done early enough (e.g., before a co-op), EL activities can help in deciding what path to choose when making a bigger commitment (co-op or job)
- FoM's Live Case helped one participant to better learn the course's topics, and this was reflected in a better final exam grade (as compared to their mid-term grade)
- Helps create a sense of community and sense of purpose – social connections in campus, responsibility, and identity
- Adds more to one's degree – in terms of practical experience outside of the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom
- Improves sense of direction – for one's career path and development as an individual
- Can make professors seem more approachable – helps break the barrier between professor and student

### **Barriers & challenges for participating in EL**

- One participant mentioned how an EL focused lab course was known to be overloaded with work, so some students that knew that (via students word of mouth) chose not to take it. The student mentioned how this lab required as much work as a lecture course, and so decided not to take it
- Some students did not like certain EL activities because they caused anxiety and stress beyond what was expected in a regular course; e.g., students felt pressure when being judged by how they would dress, talk, and present a topic
- One participant described feeling sick thinking about presenting and feeling the time-pressure – this had impact in their mental health and caused anxiety issues; at this point, they felt they lost the learning from the EL activity due to having to deal with the anxiety/health concerns
- Participants felt it can be difficult working together with other students they did not know (e.g., Live Case groups were formed based on the grades each student got in their midterms) – some students might have different goals and work more/less to achieve a mark
- Transportation and expenses: e.g., one Live Case group proposed to meet at 11 pm to continue working but one of the groups members lived far from campus and did not drive and was not willing to pay a cab
- 1-year co-ops add more time to the degree: extra tuition (and other) costs
- Not all professors are aware of the hands on opportunities offered at the university (e.g., Thrive Week)
- Faculty are not aware of or use tools (social media, job board) that could help promote EL activities

### **Examples of good practices in EL**

- EL experiences are improved when having support from faculty: some practicum supervisors would give their phone numbers and promptly reply to text message questions

- FoM would cancel classes during the one week that Live Case is being held, as to help students focus and not be as overwhelmed
- Before going into client interactions, some practicums would offer a workshop on motivational interviewing
- Shadowing supervisors during a session with a client; then the supervisor would shadow the student; and finally the student would do the session on their own
- Also for practicums, having weekly meetings to check on how everything is going with the clients

#### **Examples of good courses/instructors using EL**

- Food Systems Management (4<sup>th</sup> year level BIOL-MGMT class) / Nathan Pelletier – discussion based, real life examples; no pressure to memorize theory or take notes.
- Empathy class (Human Kinetics)/ Mary Young – final exam was to record a conversation as one would have with a client
- Indigenous Cultural Safety / Donna Kurtz – out of the usual and very emotional life experience. One feels different after having that experience and after talking with the elders.
- Mgmt360 /Svan Lembke (and David Walker’s class) – good business simulations
- ECON class / Julien Picault – students had to write a media story on economic topics and then submit it to a local newspaper; one student got her article published in the newspaper

#### **Other EL opportunities outside courses/program – examples, benefits, and barriers**

- Teaching tech to seniors – connecting students to the community
- Grad student’s lab – learned via an email from the professor, but the lab was extracurricular
- Other on campus opportunities that helped develop leadership and communication skills through the Student Experience Office
- Learned about academic advising (for 1<sup>st</sup> year students) through social media and was interested because wanted to explore careers in the university; treated as academic advisors for 1<sup>st</sup> year students (not treated as students); gained confidence and useful for professional development
- Some professors might mention an opportunity during class occasionally (e.g., to teach practical computer skills to adults)
- One of the barriers to participate in extracurricular EL opportunities is the risk of not taking care of one’s health due to overworking or not focusing enough in one’s course load due to over volunteering
- If it is not a paid job, and has no impact in one’s degree, it can be harder to commit
- Another barrier might be if a professor mentions an opportunity during class, but the student is not confident enough to approach the professor and inquire about it

#### **Best ways for UBCO to communicate about EL opportunities**

- Post opportunities in Canvas: link it to 101 for all new students to see – embed it into something students are already taking
- Mention them at the beginning of lectures
- All participants agreed that adding a line to SSC would be useful, and even more if students could filter by EL/non-EL courses
- Talk about EL during faculty orientations and/or professor introductions
- One participant mentioned how in another university, professors would introduce themselves and pitch their courses; this could also be used for EL opportunities

### **Recommendations from participants**

- In order to include EL in SSC, Canvas, etc, a first step would be to have a basic description so students understand the basics of what EL means
- Adding a code (such as LEC, LAB) to EL-focused courses
- Having student comments/feedback/testimonials after the course is taken (via an official/legitimized tool) – consider how to handle bias
- Spread EL activities earlier in the programs; doing the EL as a previous step to committing to a co-op
- Go to companies and talk with practitioners (e.g., Kelowna’s tech companies for the computer science courses)
- Have courses with various topics implement EL - e.g., one participant recalled an entomology course having a bug collection activity, but not being interested in insects as a topic; would have liked to have that type of field work in other classes, on other topics
- Consider accessibility: many EL focused courses are offered only during the summer, and not all students can afford to stay in Kelowna to take them
- Have enough support and positive reinforcement from faculty (to help deal with anxiety, fear, and overall health concerns resulting from the EL activity)
- Offer a variety of experiences that might fit different personality types (e.g., not everyone might feel as comfortable presenting a Live Case with all that it entails)
- Post EL opportunities in the UBC job board even if they are not paid – UBC recognizing that students have done these

## APPENDIX D: UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA “WHAT IS HANDS-ON LEARNING”.

### What is hands-on learning?

From the University of Victoria this publication provides a definition of hands on learning, along with a glossary of types of hands on learning opportunities (e.g., clinic, community service learning, consulting project, etc.)

<https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/assets/docs/experiential-maps/What-is-hands-on-learning.pdf>

### Program map examples, University of Victoria

The University of Victoria has developed a series of program maps for their academic programs. These maps identify the types of experiences (Co-op, course based, field experience, etc.), describe each and show how they fit into the academic program context. Students are able to see the scope of hands-on experiences and where they are positioned in their program journey. All listed here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/hands-on-learning/program/index.php>

### Specific Examples of Experiential Course Maps:

- [https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/assets/docs/experiential-maps/socialsciences/ExperientialEducation\\_POLI.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/assets/docs/experiential-maps/socialsciences/ExperientialEducation_POLI.pdf)
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**APPENDIX E: THE ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL FOR CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION AND WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (ACCE-WIL): THE COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF WORK-INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND LEARNING?**

Source: [https://co-op.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ACCE\\_Matrix.pdf](https://co-op.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ACCE_Matrix.pdf)



## APPENDIX F: KEY SOURCES

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