

# Experiential Learning

## What is it?

- Experiential learning is the application of theory and academic content to real-world experiences within the classroom, the community or the workplace.
- It may be undertaken independently or in teams.
- It advances learning outcomes and encourages reflection and application of skills and knowledge in contexts that prepare students for the workplace and civil society.

## Why is it important?

- Research shows that experiential learning contributes to student engagement, deeper learning, improved academic outcomes and enhanced work and life skills.
- In September 2017, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) issued its “Guiding Principles for Experiential Learning (EL)” indicating their commitment to “ensuring that every student has at least one EL activity by the time they graduate from a publicly funded postsecondary institution.”

## Carleton guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed in order to identify which Carleton courses include experiential learning. This information will be incorporated into the CourseLeaf Curriculum Management System and compared to registration data to assess students’ experiential learning.

In order to be recognized in CourseLeaf as including experiential learning, course activities must satisfy the following criteria:

1. The activity must meet the requirements of MAESD’s Experiential Learning Checklist (see below).
2. The experiential learning activity must be significant. This means that the activity is an integral part of the course but the course may also have elements that are more traditional. A portion of the student’s assessment in the course relies on engagement in the experiential learning activity.
3. The experiential learning activity is a continuing element of the course. It is not dependent on which instructor teaches the course.
4. The experiential learning activity can be categorized into one of the 12 types listed below. For the purposes of reporting, only one dominant type of experiential learning may be recorded for each course.

## MAESD’s experiential learning checklist

1. The student is in a workplace or simulated workplace.
2. The student is exposed to authentic demands that improve their employability, interpersonal skills, and transition to the workforce.
3. The experience is structured with purposeful and meaningful activities.
4. The student applies university or college program knowledge and/or essential employability skills.
5. The experience includes student self-assessment and evaluation of the student’s performance and learning outcomes by the employer and/or university/college.
6. The experience counts towards course credit or credential completion OR is formally recognized by the college or university as meeting the five criteria above.



# Experiential Learning

## Definitions

*Please note: Capstone courses should be categorized according to the dominant type of experiential learning.*

### **Applied research project**

Involves, as a major course component, a process of substantial discovery, synthesis, and/or application of information to solving a particular problem in an original way. The research process can be undertaken independently or in teams.

### **Campus entrepreneurship/incubators**

Students cultivate, organize and/or manage a business, social enterprise or creative idea from development through implementation.

### **Case studies**

Provides an opportunity for students to apply their learning to real-life scenarios by working through complex, ambiguous real-world problems. Learners are encouraged to work out their own approach to defining, analyzing and solving the challenge.

### **Co-op**

Co-operative education links an academic program with progressive discipline-related work experience and brings substantial, unique benefits to students, employers and the university. Students obtain valuable paid work experience during their course of study that directly relates their classroom learning to relevant employer needs and practices.

### **Field experience**

Field experiences may be directed or mediated by the instructor and include a range of time-intensive endeavours that require varying levels of student interaction. For example, field experiences include short-term field trips, fieldwork, and observational activities, such as classroom observations or attending a performance. Field experiences may or may not involve student interaction with members of the external community. Field experiences account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, practica and internships.

### **Industry/community research projects**

Students work on a project that has been developed through collaboration with a community partner or organization in order to identify and analyze issues or opportunities and develop solutions. This can take place in the community or the classroom. Not only must the collaboration satisfy the student learning outcomes of the course but it must also satisfy the needs of the partner.

### **Interactive simulations**

Students engage with academic content through content-specific activities such as simulations, demonstrations, archival or design work and/or role-plays. Activities are designed to simulate "real life" situations.

## **Internships**

Internships refer to work assignments that are part of academic programs and allow students to apply and expand their knowledge and skills in a work-related, professional environment. Internships can be part-time or full-time jobs, for which the student may receive reimbursement. Students may submit a final work report. Students' work is evaluated based on predetermined learning goals set by all stakeholders involved.

## **Labs**

Provides hands-on application of course concepts in a controlled environment, including activities such as observing, measuring, testing, and experimenting. Labs may be scientific or technological in nature; however, other types of labs may also qualify, such as language labs.

## **Performance-based learning**

Involves an individual or team-produced dramatic, artistic, or musical performance, exhibit or display that is prepared for an audience. This activity constitutes an integral component of the course.

## **Practica or placements (including clinical placements)**

Placements and practica provide the opportunity for students to apply theories and concepts they have learned to a supervised practice-related environment and provide relevant reflections of such work. Usually these are linked to professional programs. Students are generally not paid for their work, but they receive credit and are evaluated. Placements/practica often include ongoing classroom instruction. This includes clinical placements.

## **Service learning**

Integrates unpaid community service that addresses community needs into a credit-bearing course with an explicit educational framework that includes student reflection on the experience.

\*These definitions have been informed by the work of colleagues at Brock University, Northern Illinois University, Ryerson University, University of Victoria and York University

## **Questions?**

If you require further information, please contact the Office of the Vice-Provost:

[ovpavpa@carleton.ca](mailto:ovpavpa@carleton.ca)

613-520-2600 ext. 8703