

Experiential Learning at Western

Western University recognizes the best student experience includes access to high-quality experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. The university defines experiential learning as follows:

Experiential learning (EL) is an approach that educators use to intentionally connect learners with practical experiences that include guided reflection. EL allows learners to: increase and apply disciplinary knowledge, develop transferable skills, clarify interests and values, strengthen career engagement and employability, and collaborate meaningfully with communities.

Principles of Experiential Learning

In 2017, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) released a checklist of six principles to determine if a course or activity is a form of experiential learning. To support faculty, staff, and students at Western in applying the MTCU principles at our institution, and to promote the delivery of high-quality experiential learning, Western's Experiential Learning Taskforce has developed the following guidelines:

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES PRINCIPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PRINCIPLES AT WESTERN
The student is in a workplace or simulated workplace.	The experience is designed to enable the application of knowledge and skills in a workplace, or realistic workplace scenario.
The student is exposed to authentic demands that improve their employability, interpersonal skills, and transition to the workforce.	The experience is designed to strengthen students' transferable skills, career competencies, and citizenship.
The experience is structured with purposeful and meaningful activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience emphasizes ethical approaches to partnership and student engagement. • The experience includes learning outcomes. • The experience includes active, continuous supervision and mentorship (as appropriate) by the institution (and partner, where applicable).
The student applies university or college program knowledge and/or essential employability skills.	The experience is designed to facilitate reciprocal connections between theory and practice.
The experience includes student self-assessment and evaluation of the student's performance and learning outcomes by the employer and/or university/college.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student engages in guided reflection. • The experience includes formal evaluation of learning outcomes by the institution (and partner, where applicable).
The experience counts toward course credit or credential completion OR is formally recognized by the college or university as meeting the five criteria above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student receives recognition for the experience on a curricular or co-curricular record.

Curricular (For Credit) Experiential Learning Opportunities

NOTE: In order to be experiential learning, the activity must meet all EL principles on Page 1.	
Case based learning	A learning activity that involves groups of students examining a detailed, real life, authentic, or contextualized situation that requires the group to assess, evaluate, and respond with recommendations (e.g., Business 1220E Case Competition).
Community engaged learning	Students engage in a project, developed collaboratively with a community partner, that has mutually beneficial outcomes.
Co-op	Alternating academic study with paid, supervised work terms. The total amount of a co-op is normally at least 30% of the time spent in academic study.
Creative, performance, physical practice	An experience that enables skill development through intensive practice or performance (e.g., studio course, performance-based course, movement modules).
Entrepreneurship	A course that requires a student(s) to create and manage the development of a product or business idea.
Exchange	A program of study whereby partner institutions establish a reciprocal agreement which enables students to register and study at the host partner institution with credit transferred back to the home institution. Program duration is one or two terms, a summer or short-term study period.
Faculty-led study abroad	A structured group learning activity under the supervision of a home-institution faculty member comprised of credit course(s). Educational activities are centered on a portion of learning taking place abroad, outside of the classroom.
Field experience	An individual or group excursion that requires the student(s) to observe or engage in activities outside the traditional classroom (e.g., field trip, field school).
Independent study abroad	A program of study that enables students to register and study at a host institution with credit transferred back to the home institution. Program duration is one or two terms, a summer or short-term study period.
Industry project	A course that involves students working with an external partner on a specific project to propose strategies that address an organizational challenge or idea (e.g., consulting project).
Internship (long-term)	A supervised, paid, full-time work experience extending beyond a single academic term.
Internship (short-term)	A supervised work experience during a single academic term. May be paid or unpaid.
Lab	A distinct course component that includes the self-directed hands-on application of course concepts in a controlled setting.
Practicum (or Placement)	A mandatory, supervised experience in a discipline in which practice-based experience may be required for professional licensure or certification.
Research/Scholarly Creation	A supervised/mentored project extending over a term or short-term study period, during which the student engages in original research or scholarly creation.
Simulation	A learning exercise that mimics/simulates a real-world process or system (e.g., Faculty of Social Science model UN, School of Nursing Clinical Skills Lab, Faculty of Law moot court).

Co-Curricular (Non-Credit) Experiential Learning Opportunities

NOTE: In order to be experiential learning, the activity must meet all EL principles on Page 1.	
Career preparation/Professional development	Intensive work undertaken to explore career interests and develop professional skills (e.g., mentorship, workshop series).
Community engaged learning	Students engage in a non-credit project, developed collaboratively with a community partner, that has mutually beneficial outcomes (e.g., Alternative Spring Break, Western Serves Network).
Entrepreneurship	Engagement in organized activities related to entrepreneurship and innovation (e.g., hack-a-thon, incubator, pitch competition).
Internship (long-term)	A supervised, paid, full-time work experience extending beyond a single academic term.
Internship (short-term)	Paid, supervised work experience during a single academic term.
Living learning community	Residence students live in intentionally-designed learning communities that are framed by shared values, common interests, or academic discipline, and participate in a series of structured learning activities.
On-campus work experience	Paid work experiences offered by a Faculty or administrative unit.
Research assistantships	Paid work experiences offered by the university through which students carry out supervised research-related duties.
Student clubs and associations	Approved or recognized student-led groups based on a shared interest or goal (e.g., Autism Awareness Western, Athletic Clubs).
Student government	Representative bodies of elected students who advocate for constituents, provide leadership and service, facilitate programs, and may potentially oversee student fees (e.g., University Student's Council, Society of Graduate Students, Faculty Councils, Residents' Council).
Student leadership	University-sanctioned opportunities for students to develop their skills while contributing to the Western community (e.g., Orientation Soph, Residence Staff, Leadership & Academic Mentorship Program).
Teaching assistantships	Paid work experiences offered by the university through which graduate students carry out supervised teaching-related duties.
Volunteerism	Students participate in university-sanctioned, unpaid activities or projects with campus or community organizations.
Work study	Paid part-time work experiences offered by the university for eligible students who demonstrate financial need.