**THIS IS HOW I TEACH**

Integrating Experiential Learning In a Course

Integrating experiential learning (EL) in your course is perhaps one of the most rewarding ways of engaging students in educationally purposeful learning activities. If you are new to EL or if you’d like to simply check out our structured approach to it, the following guide will help you work though some of the key issues of getting EL meaningfully into your class and assessing the work of your students.

We are happy to assist you with developing or refining your own EL approach for your own course (course development, setting intentional EL learning goals, assignment design, reflection activity ideas and tools and more).

The following are suggested steps:

Step 0: Getting Orienting

Step 1: Structuring and Designing Your Course

Step 2: Planning for Reflection

Step 3: Assessing Your Course

**Step 0: Getting Oriented**

There’s no definitive checklist to determine if you’re ready to integrate experiential learning into your course, but here are some key questions to help you assess

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Comments** |
| Does my course have learning objectives that can be supported by doing activities inside or outside of class? |  |
| Do I have a solid grasp of the types of experiences that support the acquisition, practice, application or demonstration of these learning objectives (e.g. simulation, case study, lab experiment, industry project, performance, etc.)? |  |
| If I wish to have students working in settings outside the university, do I have a working knowledge of the places and people they would be working with?  |  |

\* If you answered ‘no’ or are unsure about the above, please contact teaching@concordia.ca for advice on how to meaningfully link your course learning objectives with various types of EL activities.

\*\*If the EL activity identified involves a company or a community partner, provide the name and contact information below; otherwise the EL Office will assist you in finding the appropriate channels. All partners should preferably sign an agreement prior to the EL activity.

**Company/Community Partner: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Contact Information (if available): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Step 1: Structuring and Designing Your Course**

Please consider the following important elements when designing EL into your course:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Comments** |
| Define the course learning objectives\* and how you will assess whether or not these objectives are met. Then design the EL activity that will help the students develop and practice the learning objective(s) so they are able to successfully demonstrate their learning on the assessment. See Table 1 for reference. |  |
| How do the learning objectives linked to EL activities emerge from or link to the other learning objectives in your course? (*e.g.*, will EL activities be used to apply knowledge acquired from readings and lectures?) |  |
| What types of student work will demonstrate successful learning and/or distinguish it from unsuccessful learning? |  |
| What types of feedback will help the students learn? How will students know how well (or not) their learning is progressing before the formal assessment while they still have time to improve?  |  |
| Describe expectations of the EL activity (time commitment, etc.), including how the activity will be supervised. For example, schedule brief check-in meetings periodically, provide constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement throughout the experience, ensure students know how and when their performance will be evaluated, and define expectations and the consequences for failing to meet expectations. |  |

\*Please consult the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Guidelines for more information at Concordia.ca/el

**Table 1: EL Learning Goals**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Goal**This is what I want to learn | **Method**This is how I plan to learn it | **Motivation**This is why I want to learn it | **Reflection**This is how I show I’ve learned it |
| I will learn X.  | I will learn X by doing Y. | I want to learn X so that I can do Z. | I know I have learned X because I can now do ABC. |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Step 2: Planning for Reflection\***

When planning an EL course, identify different points at which reflection can be incorporated throughout the course. Some key points to keep in mind are:

* Reflection should take place more than once. Regular opportunities for reflection are effective.
* Reflection should encourage students to question, challenge and interpret what they are learning.
* Reflection should be directly connected to course content.

To help ensure the quality of student reflections, you’ll need to provide considerable structure by giving certain prompts to respond to, questions to answer, particularly linked to course learning objectives.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Comments** |
| How often will reflective activities take place? |  |
| What reflective activities will you use to encourage students to question, challenge and interpret what they are learning? |  |
| How are reflective activities connected to course content? |  |

\*Please consult the Reflection Guidelines for more information at Concordia.ca/el

**Step 3: Assessment and Evaluation of Experiential Learning\***

It is important to assess the impact of EL. Students should be asked to provide work that allows you to distinguish whether and to what extent the course learning objectives have been met. It is also important to assess only what you have supported students in acquiring.

**Assessment and Evaluation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **Expectations** | **Assessment Method\*** | **Desired Performance Criteria** |
| **Connecting concrete experience with academic concepts** | Students can meaningfully synthesize connections between concepts and application, which allows for a deeper understanding of the area of study and for a developing a broader perspective. |  |  |
| **Application**  | Student can properly apply academic concepts to the concrete experience and develop solutions to a problem effectively, with the ability to aptly describe specific methods used from their field of study that are required to complete the activity. |  |  |
| **Communication skills** | Student can effectively communicate knowledge, skills and results, demonstrating understanding of how concrete experience links to academic concepts. |  |  |
| **Reflection and self-evaluation** | Student can meaningfully reflect on the experience by: thinking critically about the activity that was undertaken, how the experience evoked any emotional response, and how the learning was achieved through the process itself. |  |  |

\*Please consult the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Guidelines for more information at Concordia.ca/el

There are different ways to assess EL. Please select how you will assess your EL activity:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment method** | **Comments** |
| Maintenance of a learning journal or a portfolio |  |
| Reflection on critical incidents  |  |
| Presentation on what has been learnt  |  |
| Analysis of strengths/weaknesses and related action planning  |  |
| Essay or report on what has been learnt (preferably with references to excerpts from reflective writing)  |  |
| Short answer questions of a ‘why’ or ‘explain’ nature |  |
| A project that develops ideas further (group or individual)  |  |
| Self-evaluation of a task performed  |  |
| An article (e.g. for a newspaper) explaining something in the workplace  |  |
| Recommendation for improvement of some practice |  |
| An interview of the learner as a potential worker in the workplace  |  |
| A story that involves thinking about learning in the placement  |  |
| An oral exam  |  |
| An identification of and rationale for projects that could be done in the workplace. |  |
| Other |  |

 *Source: Moon, J.A. (2004). A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice. New York: Routledge Falmer.*