

VICE-PROVOST CURRICULUM AND PLANNING REPORT TO SENATE – MARCH 2025

Experiential Learning Essential Components and Typology

The 2025 Bilateral Agreement between the Province of Nova Scotia and publicly funded universities introduces new requirements and increased expectations for reporting on curricular experiential learning. Within the agreement, *Schedule G – Strategic Alignment Actions*, Table 1(a), identifies a specific institutional commitment to “increase the number of academic, for-credit experiential learning and work-integrated learning opportunities available to students.” As part of this commitment, we are required to articulate measurable indicators within our plan. These expectations introduce new requirements for Acadia to document and report on experiential learning in a more systemic and quantifiable way than has previously been required.

The Bilateral Agreement also includes *Schedule J – Provincial Experiential Learning Typology*, which provides a provincial definition of experiential learning along with descriptions of fifteen recognized types of curricular experiential learning. Schedule J establishes a shared provincial reference point that we look to build off in establishing guidelines for Acadia that account for the specific academic context, disciplinary diversity, and pedagogical approaches that characterize experiential learning at Acadia.

The document, ***Curricular Experiential Learning Essential Components and Typology*** represents a first step in responding to these new provincial requirements. The document takes the definition and typology outlined in Schedule J and introduces shared, Acadia-contextualized language through the articulation of essential components of experiential learning and the contextualization of the provincial typology. These guidelines are intended to support a common understanding of curricular experiential learning across the institution while remaining flexible enough to represent disciplinary differences and faculty autonomy in curriculum design and delivery. Following its development, the document was shared with the Academic Planning Committee and the Curriculum Committee (policy/admin) for consultation. Both committees reviewed the document and expressed support. The document will be available on the Academic Program Development, Review, and Planning website to be updated as required.

Establishing shared language and essential components at this stage provides a necessary foundation for future institutional work related to documentation and reporting including course tagging, risk management, and policy work. The guidelines are a first step to strengthening Acadia’s ability to clearly articulate and demonstrate the scope and quality of experiential learning already embedded within academic programs.

Curricular Experiential Learning Essential Components and Typology

Experiential Learning (EL) 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. Through experiential learning, students apply and extend disciplinary knowledge, integrate theory with practice, and engage more actively with course concepts in authentic or applied contexts.

Curricular EL describes experiential learning that is for academic credit and/or serves as an academic program requirement. The use of 'curricular' differentiates this type of EL from extra- or co-curricular EL.

Essential components of curricular experiential learning at Acadia include:

1. **An Intentionally Designed Experience**

Experiential learning requires a deliberately planned experience that offers students meaningful, authentic engagement. The design ensures students actively participate in tasks aligned with the discipline, learning goals, and level of study.

2. **Clearly Articulated Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes provide clarity to students on the essential skills and knowledge they can expect to learn and helps them participate more confidently and purposefully in the experience. Learning outcomes also help ensure that assessment and reflections meaningfully capture the intended learning that matters most in the course.

3. **Guided Reflection**

Reflection occurs before, during, and after the experience and is supported through prompts, facilitation, or structured activities. Guided reflection helps students make meaning of their experience, deepen insight, and identify new skills, attitudes, or perspectives.

4. **Explicit Connections Between Theory and Practice**

Students must be supported in identifying and articulating the connections between their academic learning and the practical, professional, or community context of the

experience. This linkage reinforces the relevance of disciplinary knowledge and strengthens applied understanding.

5. Supervision, Mentorship, Support

Students receive appropriate supervision or mentorship from faculty, staff, or external partners to ensure the experience is safe, ethical, and pedagogically meaningful. Continuous support helps students navigate challenges, maintain engagement, and achieve learning outcomes.

6. Assessment and/or Evaluation of Learning (Including partner feedback, where appropriate)

Evaluation processes ensure the experience meets academic standards and provides meaningful evidence of learning.

7. Recognition with Academic Credit, Either in Full or as a Component of a Course

Curricular experiential learning is formally recognized through course credit or designated course components. This recognition ensures that students' applied learning is validated within the academic program and is clearly reflected in their academic record.

Types of Curricular Experiential Learning

The following typology adapts the provincial Schedule J categories to the Acadia context, and outlines definitions and sample applications.

Note: Laboratory-based learning is a foundational and essential component of teaching and learning at Acadia, particularly in programs where hands-on, discipline-specific practice is central to student learning. While laboratories are experiential in nature, they are not identified as a reportable category within the Provincial Experiential Learning Typology (Schedule J) and therefore are not included in this framework. This exclusion reflects the scope of the provincial reporting requirements rather than their academic importance or value to student learning at Acadia.

Experiential Learning Type	Schedule J Criteria	Acadia Interpretation
Community and Industry Research Project	Students are engaged in research that occurs primarily in or associated with workplaces, includes: consulting projects, design projects, community-based research projects. The concept of workplace should be broadly understood:	Students conduct research in or associated with a workplace or other "place of impact" outside academia, applying disciplinary knowledge to challenges beyond the classroom.

	<p>the corporation, small business, start-up, government department, not-for-profit, international organization, hospital or clinic, community garden, stage, writer's nook, museum are all examples of workplaces. To be very flexible, the idea of a 'place of impact' can be considered alongside a workplace – a place beyond academia in which a student hopes to impact or influence.</p>	<p>Structured reflection and research formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Community Service Learning	<p>Students work in partnership with a community-based organization to apply their disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the organization that helps strengthen communities. CSL is intended to benefit the service provider (the student) and the recipient (the community partner) while maintaining a focus on learning.</p>	<p>Students partner with a community organization to apply disciplinary knowledge to a community-identified challenge.</p> <p>Students receive feedback from the community-based organization, and structured reflection and community contributions are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Co-Operative Education (CO-OP)	<p>Co-op consists of alternating academic terms and paid work terms. Co-op internship consists of several co-op work terms back-to-back.</p> <p>In both models, work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study. The number of required work terms varies by program; however, the time spent in work terms must be at least 30% of the time spent in academic study for programs over 2 years in length and 25% of time for programs 2 years and shorter in length.</p>	<p>Co-op is a degree designation in approved programs that includes academic study and paid, discipline-related work terms as outlined in the Academic Calendar.</p> <p>Students work performance is assessed by their supervisor, and final reflective assignment is assessed by faculty.</p> <p>The Co-op Program is administered centrally with the support of Career and Experiential Learning.</p>
Creative Performance and Production	<p>As part of a course or academic program requirement, students produce, manage, curate or participate in a dramatic, artistic, literary, dance or musical performance, exhibit or publication for an audience (virtual, live).</p>	<p>Students produce, manage, curate or participate in a dramatic, artistic, literary, dance or musical performance, exhibit or publication for an audience (virtual, live).</p> <p>Structured reflection and product and/or process are assessed by faculty.</p>
Entrepreneurship	<p>Students engage in the early-stage development of business start-ups and/or advance external ideas that address real-world needs for academic credit.</p>	<p>Students engage in the early-stage development of business start-ups and/or advance external ideas that address real-world needs.</p> <p>Structured reflection and entrepreneurial deliverables (e.g., business models, prototypes, pitches) are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Externship	<p>This type of EL is intended to serve as category for CEL experiences that</p>	<p>Students engage part-time in a structured, paid or unpaid workplace or</p>

	<p>currently are described using words such as Apprenticeship, Internship, Practicum or Placement differently than the typology definition intends. Often these CEL experiences have learners engaging part-time with a workplace as part of a single academic course. The experience is structured and has opportunities for feedback to the learner. It can be paid or unpaid.</p>	<p>professional setting linked to a single academic course, applying disciplinary knowledge to tasks under the guidance of a supervisor.</p> <p>Students receive feedback from the workplace supervisor, and structured reflection and course-related assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Field Trips, Field Courses and Field Schools	<p>Structured, for-credit group learning experiences which take place outside the traditional classroom. Teaching focuses topics which are enhanced by the academic, cultural, or environmental resources of the field course location. Can be domestic or international. In some cases, the entire course is outside the traditional classroom, in other cases the field element sits alongside classroom learning. Finally, a field course might also describe a scenario where a concrete experience that would usually take place outside of the traditional classroom is brought into the classroom to enhance learning.</p>	<p>Students participate in structured group learning experiences that take place outside the traditional classroom (or bring typically field-based experiences into the classroom), using the academic, cultural or environmental resources of the field setting to deepen understanding of course topics.</p> <p>Structured reflection and field-based assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Field Placement	<p>Provides students with an intensive part-time/short term intensive hands-on practical experience in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements may not require supervision of a registered or licensed professional and the completed work experience hours are not required for professional certification. Field placements account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, clinic, practicum, and internship.</p>	<p>Students engage in an intensive part-time or short-term hands-on experience in a setting relevant to their field of study, applying disciplinary knowledge to authentic tasks under the guidance of a workplace supervisor (not necessarily a regulated professional).</p> <p>Students receive feedback from the workplace supervisor, and structured reflection and course-related assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Internship	<p>Usually offers one discipline-specific, supervised, structured paid or unpaid, and for academic credit work experience or practice placement. Internships may occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been completed and prior to graduation. Internships can be of any length but are typically 12 to 16 months long.</p>	<p>Students engage in a supervised, structured, discipline-specific work experience or practice placement that is paid or unpaid and 12–16 months in length.</p> <p>Students receive feedback from the workplace supervisor, and structured reflection and internship-related assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Land-Based Learning	<p>Land-based learning is education, community and skills building or training that takes place outdoors in particular places of local significance, often on</p>	<p>Land-based learning is education, community and skills building or training that takes place outdoors in particular places of local significance, often on</p>

	<p>traditional Indigenous territories. The importance of building relationships and the bonding that occur on the land is emphasized, both with participants and educators as well as relationships with non-human relations.</p>	<p>traditional Indigenous territories. The importance of building relationships and the bonding that occur on the land is emphasized, both with participants and educators as well as relationships with non-human relations.</p> <p>Structured reflection and land-based assignments are formally assessed by faculty, often developed in collaboration with community partners where appropriate.</p>
Professional Practicum/Clinical Placement	<p>Involves work experience under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional (e.g., preceptor) in any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Practica are generally unpaid and, as the work is done in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload.</p>	<p>Students engage in supervised, practice-based work experience in a setting where a registered or licensed professional oversees their day-to-day work as part of a program that requires practice hours for professional licensure or certification. Placements are generally unpaid, and students contribute to service or care without holding an independent workload or caseload.</p> <p>Students receive ongoing feedback from the on-site registered or licensed professional, while a university practicum supervisor conducts check-ins/visits and completes formal assessment of defined practice competencies and any required reflective or placement-related assignments.</p>
Simulation	<p>As part of a course or academic program requirement, students adopt a character and represent this role within an approximation of the real world as part of the learning process.</p>	<p>Students participate in a structured, facilitated learning activity in which they adopt a role or character within an approximation of a real-world context to apply disciplinary knowledge, practice decision-making, and respond to complex scenarios.</p> <p>Structured reflection and simulation-related assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
Undergraduate Experiential Research	<p>Student works to conduct a systematic and in-depth examination of a question / problem by applying the research traditions of their discipline. This form of EL provides students with an opportunity to consider a career in research. The knowledge translation (communication of</p>	<p>Students conduct a systematic, in-depth investigation of a question or problem using the research traditions of their discipline, under the supervision of a faculty member or research mentor. The experience includes opportunities to</p>

	<p>findings) element of research, which is applicable to many workplaces, should be part of the experience.</p>	<p>communicate findings to audiences beyond the classroom.</p> <p>Structured reflection and research outputs (e.g., proposals, reports, posters, presentations) are formally assessed by faculty.</p>
<p>Work Experience</p>	<p>Intersperses one or two work terms (typically full-time) into an academic program, where work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study and/or career goals. This term is generally used as an alternative to co-operative education when students engage in a single work-term (as opposed to alternating work-terms).</p>	<p>Students complete one or two full-time work terms during their academic program in a workplace setting related to their field of study and/or career goals. These stand-alone work terms are integrated into the program but do not form a separate co-op degree pathway.</p> <p>Students' work performance is assessed by the workplace supervisor, and structured reflection and any work-term assignments are formally assessed by faculty.</p>