

Question 2: STRATEGIC COMMITMENT: *UWinnipeg believes that there is no substitute for face-to-face instruction in a classroom setting, and this will remain our predominant method of delivering a high quality educational experience. However, we must also adapt to our changing environment and develop a response by incorporating technology and experiential learning in ways that expand student learning opportunities. HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS? How could we effectively incorporate online and experiential learning into the pedagogical practice of faculty? What kinds of new or enhanced pedagogical supports would faculty require to increase their willingness to use online and experiential modes of learning? What resources would be required?*

Note: The premise of the question links experiential learning (EL) and technology as something other than face to face teaching. While this is likely not the intention of the question, setting it up in contrast to traditional methods is problematic. EL is about how we teach, and the most effective EL is often times intensively face to face.

Here are strategies for supporting the integration of experiential learning into the teaching approach of the university.

Strategy 1: Defining Experiential Learning and resourcing based on intended outcomes

We need to better be able to define what EL is, and what focus EL takes at the university. EL is not simply every off-campus activity. Research, conference engagement, presentations in a community, and internships do not constitute EL simply because they are often co-curricular/extra-curricular. EL is about action-reflection learning cycles that are embedded into how we teach and learn. Currently, EL at UW is happening primarily through field schools, co-op, service-learning opportunities integrated into courses, and practicums.

EL is often stated as having dual outcomes of making students job-ready, as well as focused on *how* we can teach in order to create opportunities for transformative learning. It's worth noting that creating a dichotomy between job ready and critical reflection learning outcomes of EL is counter to the intentions of EL as stated in EL literature. Thomas Deans writes that service learning (and in this case EL) avoids the extremes of both the "ivory tower" university that is out of touch with its environment, and the utilitarian university that is focused solely on job prep. Instead EL is about creating competent, critically reflective, self-aware, socially active, skilled individuals who leave university prepared to professionally and personally engage key issues of the world around us. At UW we need to build the internal capacity to talk about EL in ways that avoid these unhelpful dichotomies.

That being said EL's motivations do have the desired outcomes of job prep and transformative learning. While these two outcomes are ultimately part of the overall banner of student learning, they do require different types of resourcing and support. Here are ways of better achieving these two outcomes.

1. To use EL as an opportunity to prepare students to be job-ready, we need to more systematically recognize students EL experiences. Ways to do this include:
 - Identify EL courses in the course catalogue through an "e" designation next to the course and recognize these experiences on student transcripts

- Co-op, Career Services, and ELN should partner in the creation and sharing of resources/workshops that prep students engaging in EL experience to be able to use their EL experiences in career development
2. The second use of EL is a focus on pedagogy and the desire for more participatory, applied, action-reflection cycles to be built into an approach to teaching. Ways to do this include:
- Create a central depository of resources and support through the EL coordinator for faculty who are interested in developing an EL course/experience around how to best structure those experiences to encourage learning, to know the procedural steps, relevant policies to be aware of, etc. Explore the York Experiential Education Hub as a potential model for doing this at UW.
 - Increase the number of learning events (workshops, seminars, informal gatherings) where EL experiences and best practices can be shared across departments
 - Encourage faculty to use the EL coordinator as needed in making connections with external organizations in the development of EL opportunities
 - Continue to use the EL fund as a means of encouraging EL course development and include this in the yearly operating budget.

Strategy 2: Integrate EL into Faculty Orientations and PD opportunities

Faculty need more pedagogical support. We should work to lower the burden that EL courses can have on faculty by providing (as stated above) a central place for understanding relevant policies, safety concerns/risk assessments, assessing best practices, assessing the impact of EL on student learning, partnership agreements, and fostering connections with organizations in the community who are interested in partnering with UW faculty and students. EL resources and support have largely been held at a departmental level. Creating a central place where faculty can find resources to assist in the development of EL courses would be one way of supporting the integration of EL into teaching. We should also include EL support as part of a new faculty orientation and professional development plan.

Strategy 3: Integrate EL opportunities into course development

There is a large body of research that indicates EL is most effective when there is adequate preparation of the learner prior to service-learning opportunities and time for reflection after. This has been a failing point for many EL programs at peer universities, where EL is lodged within career services and operates in a co-curricular or extra-curricular space that never integrates back into academics. This also lends itself to a criticism that EL lacks rigour.

There are benefits to being last, and this is certainly true for UW's work with EL in terms of how we have staffed EL. UW was smart to place the EL coordinator under the VP-Academic. This creates more space for EL to operate within the academic framework rather than as an extra-curricular activity. These are other ways that EL could be integrated into academics.

- As stated previously, creating an EL designation in the course catalogue would help to integrate EL into courses
- 1.5 credit hour courses could be developed before and after practicums to assist in connecting practicums and service-learning back into theory (action-reflection cycles).
- An EL program could be developed that is similar to other universities where students are able to receive 3 credits for volunteer/work placements in their field, in coordination with mentorship, readings, and writing supported by the EL coordinator and a faculty advisor.

Strategy 4: Miscellaneous Ideas

There are a number of ideas that are either in progress or are underdeveloped that I offer here for consideration.

- Create more opportunities for peer-to-peer university learning. Currently UW, UM, and RRC are in process of created a Manitoba Experiential Learning Network where we can share learning and opportunities between our institutions. There is also opportunity for UW to become more active in national networks focused on service-learning.
- Create an experiential learning hub, such as the one developed by York University, as a way of supporting all aspects of experiential learning on campus (logistics, pedagogy, shared learning, etc...)
- Conduct more focused research on the impacts of EL on the local community, students, faculty following a range of indicators related to learning outcomes, student retention impacts, impacts on community organizations, etc.
- Find ways for EL to support the indigenous course requirement objectives either by departments encouraging the indigenous course requirement as a prerequisite for EL engagement, or by allowing EL opportunities such as relevant practicums to count towards the indigenous course requirement
- Create more mentorship opportunities and support for students engaged in EL activities. Faculty could use the EL coordinator as someone to monitor/mentor student engagement with an external organization, support the student and the organization throughout that process, and follow up with both the student and the organization after the EL activity has completed.
- Create regular learning opportunities/field trips for faculty to learn from other EL activities currently in place.