

Experiential Learning: Investing in Student Skills and Experience Development



Creating Experiential Learning (EL) opportunities that are integrated into a student's degree is an excellent way to provide more inclusive workplace options for students from underrepresented backgrounds to develop skills, experience, and connections. EL in the workplace can take many forms, such as paid internships, project-based learning, simulations, competitions, and applied research projects.

How Experiential Learning Creates Opportunities for Students from Equity-Deserving Communities

Research tells us that students from equity-deserving communities may not have had equitable access to opportunities that help build work experience. This lack of opportunity can be attributed to constraints such as financial means, familial commitments, physical and invisible disabilities, geographic mobility, language barriers, lack of professional connections and systemic bias/racism. Offering EL opportunities integrated into a student's degree makes these experiences more accessible for students balancing curricular, co-curricular, familial, and financial responsibilities and reflects a proactive, employer-driven approach to acting on EDII recruitment practices.

Maximizing the integration of students from equity-deserving communities into the workplace can be accomplished by creating a variety of EL options. While some opportunities might be suitably targeted to students from specific equity-deserving groups, this is not always necessary. By diversifying the EL options available to all students, employers will create more avenues for students from equity-deserving communities to make connections in the workplace and acquire the skills they will need to pursue future career-related opportunities.

Types of Experiential Learning at Queen's

Long-term Paid Internships: Allow students to earn credits while making meaningful contributions your organization. You will have an opportunity to develop a relationship with the student that may lead to future employment.

- **Queen's Undergraduate Internship Program:** A 12-16 month paid internship for students in their third year of undergraduate studies

Course-based EL Opportunities: engage students in shorter term opportunities in your organization.

- **Short-term Internship within a Course:** Take place over one semester, and are connected to the learning objectives of a particular undergraduate or graduate course.

- **Course-based Projects:** Instructors work with an employer to develop a project that meets the need of the employer and the course learning objectives; students work on the project with varying degrees of contact with the employer.
- **Simulations:** Employers collaborate with instructors to design and facilitate a simulation-based exercise, creating a real-world-like environment that creates opportunities for students to connect with experts in the field.
- **Applied Research Projects:** Students work individually or in small groups to complete industry or community-specific research projects.

Helping You Develop Experiential Learning Opportunities

Expanding and diversifying experiential learning opportunities is an investment in student skill development as well as inclusivity in the workplace. Every EL experience is a potential opportunity for a student from an underrepresented group to learn more about industry, community, and workplace culture, while also developing their network for future career development.

To learn more about how you can expand EL opportunities for students from equity-deserving groups, please contact the EL Hub (el.hub@queensu.ca), who will listen to your specific interests and opportunities, and then link you to potential contacts at the university.

References

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