Experiential Learning

Expiry: April 30, 2027

1. Facts

1. Experiential learning encompasses both academic and non-academic experiences. These include but are not limited to:
   - Practica
   - Co-ops
   - Internships
   - Placements
   - Work Experience
   - Undergraduate Research
   - Work Abroad
   - Community Service-Learning
   - Student Groups
   - Outdoor Education
   - Field Experience
   - Entrepreneurship
2. Blended/flipped learning and fully online learning are contexts in which online learning can effectively support or develop experiential learning in all its variations.[1]
3. Participation in experiential learning can improve students' perception of their academic experience.[2]
4. Through experiential learning, students can actively participate in a learning experience and reflect on experiential learning.
5. Participation in experiential learning enables students to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical endeavours in many settings inside and outside the classroom.[3]
6. Experiential learning is highly engaging for students and leads to:
   - Better long term memory
   - A deeper understanding of the subject area
   - Development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills
   - Improved communication skills
   - Better management of highly complex situations that cross disciplinary boundaries and subject domains.[4]
7. A Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario study confirmed that University students participating in experiential learning opportunities have lower unemployment rates among full-time job seekers post-graduation.[5]
8. Significant barriers exist towards participating in experiential learning, including but not limited to:
   - institutional barriers such as lack of information, academic program restrictions, student status, unsatisfactory grades, external policy barriers such as credit transfer agreements, counting of credits toward degree and/or general requirements.
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   - financial barriers such as lack of funding for program development, financial support for students, affordable accommodation and available time for paid labour.
   - accessibility barriers regarding the specific needs of students with a disability, including discrimination, invisible barriers, and physical or environmental barriers.[6]
9. Systemic and institutional racism poses an additional barrier for students within Indigenous and other racialized communities where discrimination may limit work-integrated learning opportunities amongst these demographics. There is not only a lack of experiential learning opportunities available for Indigenous and racialized folks, but many of them face discrimination while in the opportunities they do get. [7]
10. The University of Alberta has increased funding dispersion for undergraduate research awards in recent years, but this rise does not sufficiently meet the needs of students. The research stipends provided

remain behind minimum wage increases and do not adequately account for other living expenses. This presents a greater need for additional
investment in research funding for undergraduate students to ensure everyone has adequate access to these opportunities regardless of financial status. [8]

11. There is a lack of opportunity for students to partake in research opportunities and a significant lack of funding to compensate undergraduate students during these positions to sustain themselves throughout their term. This lack of funding further reinstates the lack of accessibility of these opportunities to all students. 9
12. The University of Alberta does not currently have any policy or procedures to protect students who may experience harassment, discrimination, or sexual violence during experiential learning opportunities. 10
13. The University of Alberta Practicum Intervention Policy currently states that students on practicum must conform to
accepted standards of professional, competent and safe practice in their work with patients, clients, and co-workers. However, there is no mention of acceptable standards for supervisors. 11
14. International students have greater difficulty in accessing experiential learning opportunities because of certain restrictions and barriers such as funding, concerns surrounding English proficiency, discrimination, Visa
status, and previous experience lacking recognition when assessing their skills and application. 121314 15

2. Resolutions

1. The Students' Union will advocate for increased experiential learning opportunities for all undergraduate students.
2. The Students' Union will advocate for program requirements that allow all interested undergraduate students to participate in experiential learning opportunities. These opportunities should be provided regardless of academic
background, language, campus affiliation, race, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, ability, age, satisfactory academic
standing, student status, FNMI student status, and international student status.
3. The Students' Union will advocate to the University of Alberta, all levels of government, and other external organizations to ensure increased up-front funding and bursaries for students pursuing domestic or international experiential learning opportunities.
4. The Students' Union will advocate for information on experiential learning to be presented before an offer of acceptance to showcase these opportunities to all students better. This information should include additional cost estimations and be provided in French and English, depending on the program.
5. The Students' Union will advocate for increased coordination between programs offering experiential learning and a consolidated repository to connect students with experiential learning opportunities.
6. The Students' Union will advocate for increased holistic funding16 and opportunities for students to present research at conferences within the country and abroad
7. The Students' Union will advocate for the expansion of the Office of the Ombuds and the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights to cover students during experiential learning terms.
8. The Students Union will advocate for the creation of a University policy on experiential learning that protects students
during these opportunities.
9. The Students' Union will advocate that the University lower the costs associated with experiential learning opportunities and create a clear fee breakdown of the costs related to experiential learning for students.
10. The Students' Union will advocate that the University ensure that location is factored into placement decisions. This includes but is not limited to:
    - providing placements that are accessible by transit.
    - providing placements for FNMI students in locations that have appropriate cultural supports.
11. The Students' Union will advocate for the federal government to decrease barriers for international students who want to
participate in experiential learning opportunities. This includes modifying study permits to allow

international students to
participate in experiential learning opportunities that are integrated into their program of study without requiring a
separate work permit.

12. The Students' Union will advocate for a reduced experiential learning fee to be charged to international students.
13. The Students' Union will advocate for more mental health support specifically for students participating in experiential learning.

3. References

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