

APPENDIX K: Experiential Learning Courses

OHIO's Career and Experiential Learning Fee provides funding for services and resources that promote students' engagement in career and civic development, including experiential education activities. Accordingly, in March 2019 the University Curriculum Council passed a resolution recommending how the term "experiential learning" should be applied in the context of curricular and co-curricular activities.

Definition

The following definition applies to all courses entered in OCEAN as employing experiential learning:

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is an approach to education that emphasizes engaged learning through direct experience and reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills, and elucidate values. Experiential learning activities are intentionally designed to develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes through experience related to a field. Experiential learning may occur in curricular and co-curricular settings. Although experiences may vary, experiential learning typically involves:

1. *Engagement.* Learner involvement in the activity is sustained and/or intensive. The experience requires a substantial investment of time and attention to foster deep learning.
2. *Mentorship.* Learner receives regular, meaningful feedback about student work from activity director or supervisor. Feedback supports learner reflection and integration of learning through the activity and goal setting for future learning.
3. *Challenge.* Learner engages in activity that pushes own boundaries beyond the familiar or explores unknown territory for the purpose of developing knowledge and skills.
4. *Ownership.* Learner exercises independent judgment in defining and/or executing the activity. Learner takes ownership of the process and outcomes.
5. *Self or Social Awareness.* Learner reflects on the activity by articulating personal, civic/social, and/or academic learning. Learner identifies and articulates knowledge, values, and attitudes developed through the activity.

Categories

The UCC resolution was amended in April 2020, to include the categories of experiential learning that had been developed for communication with the state and other stakeholders, as follows:

Experiential learning opportunities typically fall into one or more of seven categories:

1. Community engagement. Students are involved in mutually beneficial academic, research, and/or co-curricular partnerships with community partners that foster resilient communities.
2. Creative endeavor. Students innovate in their field, creating new work or new versions/interpretations of existing work.
3. Leadership. Students lead others to meet the goals of a group or organization.
4. Internship. Students are immersed in a company/agency/organization related to their field of study for the purpose of applying classroom learning and exploring career opportunities.
5. Research. Students engage in quantitative or qualitative research to explore questions related to their field of study.
6. Study away. Students are immersed in a culture different from their own, either domestically or internationally.

7. Other. Students engage in experiential learning through another approach other than those previously described.

Distinguishing Experiential Learning from Other Engaged Learning

In evaluating whether a course should be categorized in OCEAN as experiential learning, ICC draws on the experiential learning cycle and on distinctions between different levels and kinds of student engagement and ownership.

Standard Experiential Learning Cycle

In experiential learning, students are guided through a cycle of prefection, action, and reflection.

- **Preflection:** planning, information gathering, and predicting prior to taking action.
- **Action:** active experimentation and engagement in an authentic setting.
- **Reflection:** an intentional process of looking inward and backward to improve the future.

Differentiating Passive, Active, and Experiential Learning

According to Kuh (2008), most experiential learning activities are high impact practices, meaning they catalyze deep student learning and/or personal transformation.



Passive learning is when learners receive information, often in large quantities, without the opportunity for application or quick feedback on their understanding. Retention and ability to use this learning in the future are low. This approach provides low risk, high control for instructors and low risk, low reward for students. Passive learning characterizes traditional lecture courses (Kokcharov, 2015; Verma, 2020).

Active learning occurs when learners are invited to move beyond consumption behaviors (watching, listening, reading) to engage in participatory behaviors such as discussion, demonstration, practice, and play. Active learning typically occurs in controlled classroom environments. Risk is higher for instructors as they can't predict with certainty how students will contribute. Both risk and reward are higher for students as they move into application because there is increased opportunity to be wrong or fail and increased likelihood of retention and ability to use the learning in the future. Active learning characterizes most lab courses (Kokcharov, 2015; Verma, 2020).

Experiential learning occurs when learners consume, apply, and analyze knowledge in *authentic contexts* (see specific categories of experiential learning below). Experiential learning often takes place with external partners; thus, risk is high for both instructors and students because of the potential impact on partners, institutional credibility, and student credibility. Many factors are outside the instructor's and the students' control; this is why adequate prefection is tremendously important. Reward is also high as this type of learning most fully engages higher order thinking, yields high retention, increases the ability to use the learning in the future, and gives context to the learning which increases student motivation to learn (Kokcharov, 2015; Verma, 2020).

How ICC Evaluates a Course for Experiential Learning

ICC considers each of the experiential learning categories according to the experiential learning cycle, the authenticity of the context, and the criteria of engagement, mentorship, challenge, ownership, and self- or social awareness. The following is a guide to what questions ICC asks and common ways that it differentiates between *active* and *experiential* learning. One helpful question to ask about courses that might be experiential learning is, "Would I highlight this course in a job application or a graduate school application?"

Community Engagement

All community engagement courses must include extensive work with a live community partner, and all student work must have at least the potential to be utilized by the partner within the community. Case studies not undertaken on behalf of and for the use of real community organizations do not meet experiential learning criteria as community engagement.

Creative Endeavor

Under most circumstances, lower-division or introductory studio courses or workshops are not experiential learning. While students often challenge their own (limited) boundaries and may take ownership of their work, they are not expected to *innovate in the field* in order to be successful in the course. Upper division courses in which students produce new works for publication or performance, or courses where students are expected to attain a high level of mastery and interpretation in performing existing works may be instances of experiential learning if all phases of the cycle are present.

Leadership

Most academic courses will not count as experiential learning in leadership. The exception is courses that 1) intentionally teach leadership *and also* 2) in which each student enrolled serves as a team or project leader with real consequences for the team.

Internship

All internship courses labeled as experiential learning must include the experiential learning cycle. The most common reason that ICC sends internship courses labeled as experiential learning back for reworking is that *self-and social awareness* and/or *reflection* is not clearly shown in the OCEAN course submission.

Research

This category is very similar to Creative Endeavor. Research methods courses will **not** usually be approved as experiential learning on the principle that these are analogous to introductory studio courses: the student is gaining the skills required to complete a true research experience. Upper-division courses that require students to use advanced research methods learned in another course are more likely to be approved as experiential learning in the research category. Courses combining additional advanced research skills training with an immersive, out-of-classroom context (e.g., extensive use of archives, field research) may count as experiential learning in this category. Because the experience combines elements of Research and "real world" learning to create a high impact experience, such courses might be better categorized as Other if the level of expected research mastery is lower.

Study Away

The comments for Internship apply here, as well.

Other

This is the category for learning activities that fit all the experiential learning criteria but don't fit in any of the six categories above. The most common kind of courses that fits here is field studies, though other courses that involve significant immersion in an authentic context away from campus (similar to Study Away) may also fit.