

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING BEST PRACTICES

**Office of Experiential and Community Based Learning
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Office of Experiential and Community Based Learning at St. Thomas University



St. Thomas
UNIVERSITY

**Office of Experiential and
Community Based Learning**

PART ONE: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AT ST. THOMAS

What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential learning, sometimes referred to as learning by doing, is more fully conceptualized as learning through reflecting on doing.¹ The Association for Experiential Education² has articulated several principles of effective experiential learning. Experiential learning at St. Thomas University fosters spontaneous, engaged, and collaborative learning opportunities.

- **SPONTANEOUS LEARNING:** *The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning. Opportunities are nurtured for students and instructors to explore and examine their own values. The instructor's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.*
- **ENGAGED LEARNING:** *Throughout the experiential learning process, the student is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning. Students are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic. Relationships are developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world at large.*
- **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING:** *Instructors strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the student. The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes. The instructor and student may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of the experience cannot totally be predicted.*

Does experiential learning have to occur outside of class?

No, St. Thomas University recognizes that experiential learning is a pedagogy to support students' academic success. A successful experiential learning opportunity should be connected to specific learning outcomes, which should be articulated at the program, course, or individual student level. Experiential learning often occurs within allotted class time and is recognized as a part of good teaching. However, to qualify for inclusion in the Certificate in Experiential Learning and Community Engagement, or to receive funding from the FutureNB initiative, it should.

Are there pedagogical resources available to help me get started with experiential learning?

There are several very good online resources that you can link to from STU's Experiential Learning website (www.stu.ca/EL) and you can also visit the Experiential Learning Office and borrow one of our teaching resources.

Who can I talk to for more information about experiential learning opportunities?

The staff at STU's Office of Experiential and Community Based Learning are happy to help: experientialoffice@stu.ca

¹ <https://www.smartsims.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/best-practices-in-experiential-learning.pdf>

² <https://www.aee.org/>

PART TWO: PLANNING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can I incorporate experiential learning in any class?

Yes, all good teaching has an experiential component. Class-based experiential learning that can be completed within the allotted class time does not require specific accommodations for students. Experiential learning projects that require student commitment outside of class time and/or off campus must be restricted to second year and above courses

Do I have to plan experiential learning activities at the beginning of each semester?

While some experiential learning activities develop as a course progresses, projects requiring funding should be planned ahead of time to ensure proper time for the President's Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning to review your proposal. Projects that do not require funding do not need prior approval of the Committee. You are encouraged to incorporate experiential learning activities at any stage of your education plan.

Can I plan experiential learning activities outside of class time?

Yes, you may but you must ensure that students are not penalized for being unable or unwilling to complete experiential learning projects that require them to take part in out of class activities (see synchronous experiential learning below) at pre-determined times. If students are traveling, please review STU's Student Travel and Fieldwork Policy.

What do I need to know about organizing experiential learning activities outside of class?

Out-of-class experiential learning occurs outside of class (and in many cases off campus) and can be either asynchronous (occurring outside of allotted class time and with no mandatory schedule) or synchronous (occurring during allotted class time and/or requiring the participation of all students simultaneously at a predetermined time). It is important that EL activities in one class not overlap with students' commitments in other classes. As such, the following provisions must be adhered to when planning EL activities.

- **For asynchronous (field-based)** experiential learning projects students are required to participate in the project at a time that is compatible with their other commitments and alternate accommodations are not necessary.
- **For synchronous (class-based)** experiential learning projects that occur **entirely within allotted class time**, students are expected to participate in the project as scheduled and alternative accommodations are not necessary.
- **For synchronous (class-based)** experiential learning projects that occur **entirely or partially outside of allotted class time**, alternative assignments for equal point value shall be made available to students who cannot participate due to other commitments.

What do I need to do if travel outside of campus is necessary?

All off campus travel must comply with **STU's Student Travel and Fieldwork Safety Policy** which can be accessed here: <https://www.stu.ca/media/stu/site-content/documents/policies-and-reports/StudentTravelandFieldworkSafety.pdf>

Completed travel documents must be submitted to the Dean of Social Sciences' Office pursuant to the instructions in the Student Travel and Fieldwork Safety Policy. Incomplete travel documents, or documents submitted to the Dean's Office past the deadline, may result in students being unable to participate in off-campus travel for experiential learning.

What sorts of accommodations do I need to make for my students?

All STU's regular accommodations procedures apply. Additionally, if your experiential learning projects extend beyond your allotted class time, you must ensure that students have the opportunity to complete alternative assignments if they cannot attend yours.

Can my experiential learning project require that students miss time in other classes?

No, you cannot require that students skip other classes to complete projects for your class.

How do I register my course for the Experiential Learning Certificate?

Prior to the beginning of each semester, you will receive an email asking you to register your courses that meet the requirements for the certificate. If your course(s) meet the following qualifications, they should be registered on the list:

- Has a component that occurs **outside of the classroom**, and
- the outside of the classroom component **actively engages with the community**, and
- the course includes assignments and exercises that require **reflection** on how the learning activities occurring outside the classroom relate to the theoretical frameworks being taught in the course.

To ensure the most accurate list possible, you will have to register each course that has a qualifying experiential learning component and you will have to register the same course every time you teach it. To register your courses now, you can follow the link below.

[COURSE SUBMISSION: CERTIFICATE IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT](#)

PART THREE: THE FACULTY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GRANT

What types of activities can be funded by the Faculty Experiential Learning Grant?

The Faculty Experiential Learning Grant funds many course-based experiential learning projects that have an off-campus component. It is important that your application clearly indicate that your proposed project is an integral part of your class syllabus and that the off-campus experiential learning activity includes assignments and exercises that require reflection on how the learning activities occurring outside the classroom relate to the theoretical frameworks being taught in the course. It is also expected that a detailed budget will accompany all successful applications.

What makes a successful Faculty Experiential Learning Grant proposal?

Successful applications must provide students with tangible opportunities to engage with the community outside of class and off campus. To be eligible for funding, applicants should demonstrate how the opportunity will engage students with a partner in a mutually beneficial relationship.

How do I apply for this funding?

You are encouraged to contact the Manager of the Office of Experiential Learning at: experientialoffice@stu.ca, whenever you are considering seeking funding for an experiential learning project.

Who evaluates my Faculty Experiential Learning Grant application?

Funding Proposals submitted through STU's Faculty Experiential Learning Grant are reviewed by the President's Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning. Grants are reviewed at each meeting of the Advisory Committee, which meets regularly throughout the academic year.

What are some examples of successful projects funded by the Faculty Experiential Learning Grant?

Activities including field trips and off-campus training for students are examples of projects that have been successfully funded through the Faculty Experiential Learning Grant. For specific guidance, please contact the Office of Experiential and Community Based Learning.

PART FOUR: FutureNB

What is FutureNB?

FutureNB is the Government of New Brunswick's experiential learning initiative and contains several student-facing and faculty-facing funding initiatives to increase student capacity through experiential learning in the province of New Brunswick. You may visit FutureNB's website for more information.

What are the key academic principles guiding the FutureReadyNB initiative?

The goal of FutureNB is to position New Brunswick as a place where students and employers have access to rich learning opportunities and new ways to collaborate with one another. This is accomplished by:

- Providing students with on-the-job experiences with provincial employers prior to graduation from high school or university.
- Strengthening the job readiness of students in positions related to their field of study.
- Supporting growth, recruitment, and talent retention for New Brunswick employers.
- Helping remove financial barriers to labour market participation and hiring.

What funding is available for faculty through FutureReadyNB?

In partnership with the Province of New Brunswick's Department of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL), the Office of Experiential and Community Based Learning administers two faculty-oriented funds for experiential learning.

- **FutureNB Faculty Incentive Fund:** These projects are initiated by a faculty member with the support of a community partner. Incentive Fund projects bring students from a specific class together with community partners to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that tie class themes together with community needs. Faculty members act to facilitators in Incentive Fund projects.
- **FutureNB Community Partner Fund:** These projects are initiated by community organizations, usually in collaboration with faculty members, to activate student participation in addressing a specific outcome for the organization while providing experiential learning activities for students involved. These projects are not necessarily tied to a specific course. Faculty members serve as the liaison between the community organization and the academic institution in Community Partner projects.

Who evaluates my FutureNB applications?

FutureNB Faculty Incentive Fund applications are submitted by individual faculty members to the Office of Experiential Learning who will provide initial consultation on the application. When the application is complete, it will be brought to the President's Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning for internal review and revision. Applications that are successful in this internal review will be forwarded to the Provincial Steering Committee for final assessment. The Provincial Steering Committee will meet several times a year to review applications from all institutions. Internal due dates will reflect the meeting schedule of the external committee.

FutureNB Community Partner Grants are submitted directly to the Provincial FutureNB Steering Committee by the community partner.

What are some examples of projects successfully funded through FutureReadyNB's Faculty Incentive and Community Partner Grants?

- **Faculty Incentive Fund:** A book publishing project in a FNAR class that provided students with the opportunity to work directly with local artists, publishers, and editors to create a professional quality retrospective book on a locally-based and nationally-recognized artist – the first book length examination of this artist's work
- **Faculty Incentive Fund:** A course stipend to offer ENVS 4006 – an experiential learning-based work study course previously not offered at STU that provided students with the opportunity to work off campus with environmental groups, gaining valuable real world experience that related to central debates in the field of Environmental Studies.
- **Community Partner Fund:** A joint program between the Downtown Health Clinic and the School of Social Work to establish New Brunswick's first interdisciplinary treatment program for addressing eating disorders.

PART FIVE: FutureWabanaki

What is FutureWabanaki?

St. Thomas University has received funding from the provincial government through FutureWabanaki to support experiential learning opportunities, various projects and/or courses **that relate to Indigenous culture and language**. These projects and/or courses must have an Indigenous culture and language background and help to improve, educate and properly inform non-Indigenous and Indigenous students.

This funding is available to students, faculty, and staff at St. Thomas University to fund experiential learning opportunities **on- and off-campus**. Applications that fall under the Culture & Language/Project category and must be applied for by the student, faculty or staff member, then approved by the Indigenous Experiential Learning Working Group.

Who are the members of the Indigenous Experiential Work Group?

The Indigenous Experiential Learning Working Group consists of the following members:

- Office of Experiential & Community Based Learning Manager
- Indigenous Student Services Coordinator
- Indigenous Experiential Learning Coordinator

What are the guidelines for the Indigenous Experiential Learning Fund?

Funding will be decided upon by the members of this Indigenous Experiential Learning Working Group. They will determine if they can fund all or some of the projects and/or courses which have been submitted.

What do I need to do to adhere to best practices for Indigenous Experiential Learning at STU?

Once funding has been approved, applicants must adhere to these practices:

- Keep in close contact with at least one of the Indigenous Experiential Learning Working Group members and give weekly/bi-weekly updates on project and/or course as it is being created.
- Seek consultation before integrating Indigenous class outlines, projects, guest speakers, or anything included in project and/or course, to ensure cultural sensitivity is considered and proper measures are in place regarding honorariums, gifts and other culturally relative processes occur.
- Provide receipts, invoices and any financial statements or information upon request to ensure accountability.

What are some examples of successful Indigenous experiential learning at STU?

Some examples of Projects that have been already approved or considered include:

- **Traditional Basket Making Workshop:**
A student brought a basket-maker who has been making traditional baskets in his community for decades. 20 students received historical and cultural background information on the process and were able to take home the basket that they built themselves during the workshop.
- **Reconciliation Module:**
To be brought and taught at the university: In order to enhance the understanding of Indigenous culture, a request to bring this knowledge to faculty members who teach Indigenous students in any of their courses. This will hopefully create a more understanding and culturally aware environment.
- **Indigenous Mental Health Research:**
Our student counsellor conducted a series of interviews throughout the year with Indigenous students in order to gather information about the specific challenges they face while at university, in order to improve the services we provide and to better accommodate their unique experiences.

QUESTIONS, FEEDBACK, AND COMMENTS:

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