



WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING AT OLDS COLLEGE

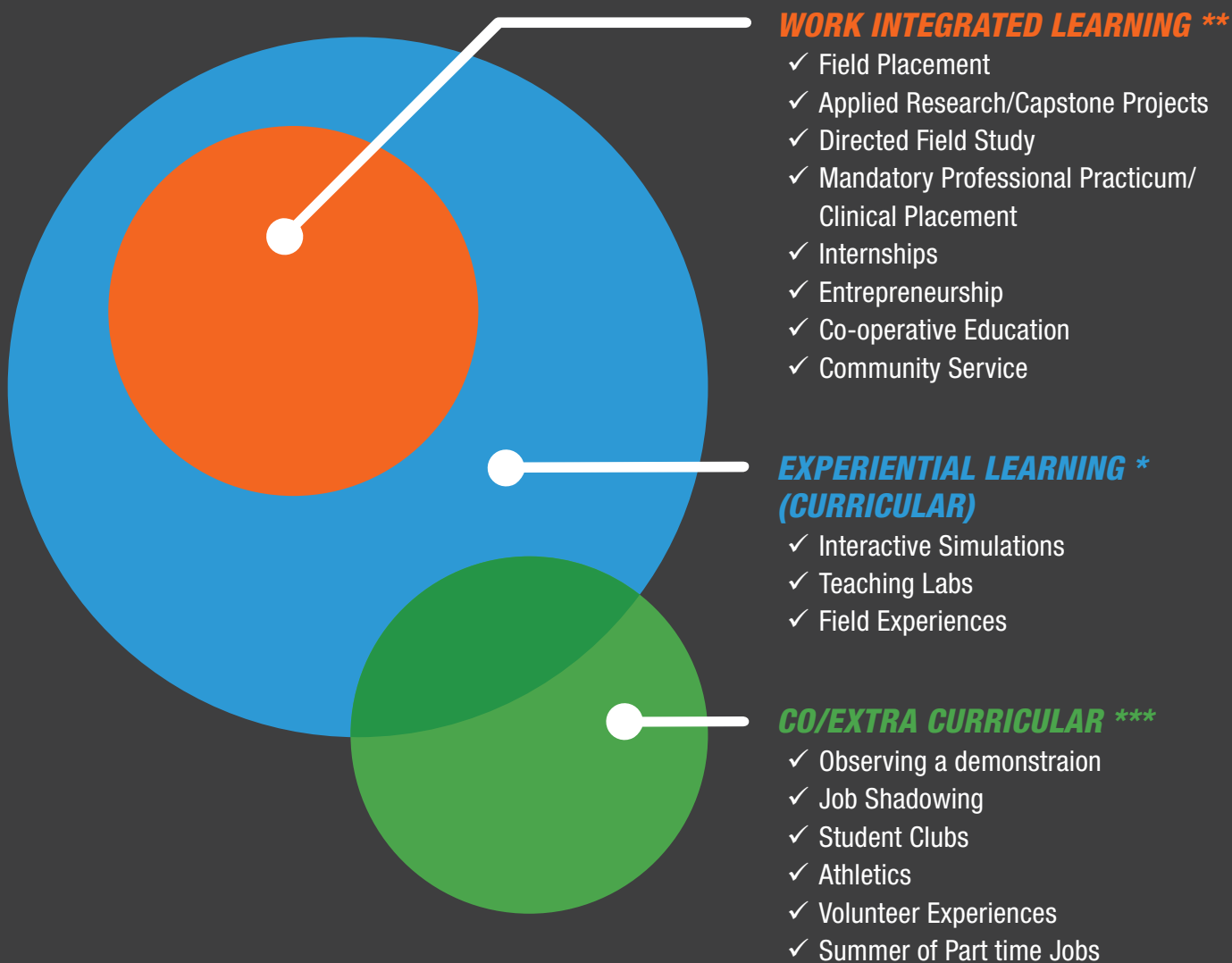


OLDS COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY

PURPOSE

Olds College places high value on experiential, hands-on learning. One of the types of experiential learning embraced by Olds College is work integrated learning (WIL); the intersection and engagement of theoretical and practical learning (Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden, 2010). The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of WIL at Olds College, and to provide a framework for operationalization of WIL across the college.

The following graphic organizer, adapted from Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL), outlines the relationship between WIL and other types of experiential learning.



* Embedded in program or course design

**Embedded in program or course design and includes third party engagement (host - employer, industry, or community partner)

***Student driven, may or may not be program related and is not embedded in program or course design

INSTITUTIONAL WIL GOAL

Olds College will increase the application of work-integrated learning into Olds College programs so that every student will have an opportunity for WIL during their program.

RATIONALE

The Alberta Skills for Jobs Task Force (2020) highlights the importance of a more purposeful skills system. Expansion of work integrated learning in the post-secondary system, across subjects and programs, are key recommendations arising from the task force. Work Integrated Learning is an important provincial priority for the Alberta Adult Learning System. For the full benefits of WIL to be realized, the WIL process must be intentionally designed, implemented, and managed to meet the needs of the three major stakeholders: the student, the post-secondary institution, and the workplace (*Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden, 2010*). The following overview and framework reflects the intentionality and purpose-driven approach to the design and implementation of WIL at Olds College.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES (FROM THE ALBERTA POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS WIL GUIDELINES)

- Institutions should strive to include WIL in all existing and planned (or new) programs of study.
- WIL components are integrated into learning outcomes and should align with applicable institutional policy and practices. The type of WIL attribute should support learning outcomes.
- WIL components involve an agreement that clearly outlines the roles of the institution supervisor, employer, and student and is signed by all three parties.
- Sufficient WIL placements need to be available to ensure student graduation timelines are not delayed.
- Development of WIL components should include criteria for selection of placement sites based on the ability of the employer to provide meaningful learning for the student.

DEFINITIONS {def·i·ni·tions}

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING / Olds College adopts the following definition (based on the Co-Operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) definition and the Alberta Post-Secondary Programs (2020) definition):

Work-integrated learning is a model and process of curricular experiential education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting and meets all of the criteria listed below. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization (which may be the post-secondary institution), and a student. WIL can be included at the course or program level and includes the development of learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency and life-long learning.

CRITERIA

For an experience to be considered WIL at Olds College, it must be defined within one of the categories listed below and be inclusive of all of the following criteria:

- ✓ Is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a program of study, counting towards course credit or credential completion, approved under the Programs of Study Regulation of the Post-secondary Learning Act;
- ✓ Be part of the approved curriculum with explicit, clear course outcomes and assessment;
- ✓ Be inclusive of substantive involvement of a host organization along with the college and the learner. The institution, the employer and the student have a common understanding of the work, the terms of the work, the learning outcomes, and the extent of supervision before the WIL begins;
- ✓ Be an authentic experience related to the program of study and improves the student's employability, interpersonal skills, and transition to the workplace;
- ✓ Be inclusive of learner self-reflection and self-assessment, and assessment of the learner's performance and learner outcomes by the employer and the college;
- ✓ Be an opportunity available to all students.

HOST / An employer/organization/sponsor who is hosting a learner for a WIL experience at their site of work. At Olds College, a number of work sites would qualify as a host for WIL. A host is an organization, institution, government entity, agency, company, professional services provider, non-profit association, agricultural enterprise, small business, or mentor that enters into an agreement with a post-secondary institution to provide practical application of learning outcomes for a student as per the approved program.

WIL CATEGORIES AT OLDS COLLEGE

FIELD PLACEMENT / Provides students with an intensive, part-time/short term hands-on practical experience in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements may not require supervision of a registered or licensed professional and the completed work hours are not required for professional certification. Field placements may be paid or unpaid. Field placements account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, clinical, and internship.

APPLIED RESEARCH AND CAPSTONE PROJECTS / Engage learners in Olds College program-specific applied research or projects that occur primarily with host organizations, including the college. It includes consulting projects, design projects, and community-based projects. To be considered a WIL experience, learners take on real-world projects, with host organizations as the client, and the learners acting as service providers. The project must comprise a significant portion of the course.

DIRECTED FIELD STUDY / Comprises the fourth year of a program of study in an applied degree program. A Directed Field Study is eight months in length. Normally, students in a Directed Field Study receive remuneration, but placements may also be unpaid.

MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICUM/CLINICAL PLACEMENT / Involves work experience under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional (i.e. preceptor) in any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Practicum placements are generally unpaid and, as the work is done in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload.

INTERNSHIPS / Usually one discipline-specific (typically full time), supervised, structured, paid or unpaid, for academic credit or practice placement. Internships may occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been completed and prior to graduation. Internships can be of any length. The length of the internship is defined in the WIL Agreement.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP / Allows a student to leverage resources, space, mentorship and/or funding to engage in the early-stage development of business start-ups and/or to advance external ideas that address real-world needs for academic credit. A host in this category would be the mentor/s identified in the WIL agreement.

DEFINITIONS {def-i-ni-tions}

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION / A program which alternates periods of academic study with periods of work experience in appropriate fields of business, industry, government, social services, and the professions in accordance with the following criteria:

- ✓ Each work term is developed in partnership with the employer and approved by Olds College.
- ✓ The learner is engaged in productive work for which the learner receives remuneration.
- ✓ The co-op curriculum supports learner learning goals, personal evaluation, and reflection.
- ✓ The learner's performance in the workplace is supervised and evaluated by the employer.
- ✓ Both work and academic terms are full-time and follow a formalized sequence. The total amount of co-op work experience is normally at least 30 percent of the time spent in academic study. For programs of two years or less the total amount may be a minimum of 25 percent. A work term is defined as a minimum of 12 weeks and/or 420 hours full-time paid experience.
- ✓ Co-op program begins and ends on an academic term.
- ✓ The learner completing multiple work terms is normally exposed to the work environment during more than one season of the year.
- ✓ The learner's progress during their work term is monitored by the program instructor.

COMMUNITY SERVICE / Integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. The distinguishing characteristics of community service learning is its reciprocal and balanced emphasis on both the student's learning and addressing real needs in the community.

OUT OF SCOPE

APPRENTICESHIP / A program of training in a designated trade that offers formal instruction in addition to on the job training, and is governed by a contract of apprenticeship that is registered under the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. Currently, Apprenticeship is out of scope for WIL in Alberta because it falls under the guidelines of Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training.

TABLE 1 / Olds College WIL Categories Summary Chart

CATEGORY	SUPERVISION	ASSESSMENT*	PAID	UNPAID	NOTES
Field Placement	✓ Olds College Faculty	✓ Olds College Faculty	✓	✓	May include supervision at the host site, but not required.
Applied Research and Capstone Projects	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓	✓	Includes consulting projects, design projects, and community-based projects. Project must comprise a significant portion of the course.
Directed Field Study	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓	✓	
Mandatory Professional Practicum /Clinical Placement	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Preceptor (experienced, registered, or licensed professional) at Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Preceptor (experienced, registered, or licensed professional) at Host Site		✓	In any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Work is done in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload
Internships	✓ Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty	✓	✓	
Entrepreneurship	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty	✓	✓	
Co-operative Education	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓ Olds College Faculty ✓ Host Site	✓		
Community Service	✓ Olds College Faculty	✓ Olds College Faculty		✓	

*The host may provide an assessment but the grade/final evaluation is ultimately determined by the instructor.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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