# Designing Work-Integrated Learning Courses

## What is Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)?

**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. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and includes the development of learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency, and life-long learning (CEWIL, 2018).

*Experiential Learning (EL) is an umbrella term that includes many experiences that prepare students to thrive in the workplace. Work-Integrated Learning is a specific subset of EL experiences that include the involvement of a host organization.*

In order to be classified as WIL or experiential learning, the experience must meet all of the requirements in the [MCU’s experiential learning checklist](https://www.algonquincollege.com/el/files/2019/05/A05-Experiential-Learning-Checklist-FINAL-Sept-5-EN.pdf):

1. The student is in a workplace or simulated workplace.
2. The student is exposed to authentic demands that improve their employability, interpersonal skills, and the transition to the workforce.
3. The experience is structured with purposeful and meaningful activities.
4. The student applies university or college program knowledge or essential employability skills.
5. The experience includes self-assessment and evaluation of the student’s performance and learning outcomes by the employer and/or university/college.
6. The experience counts towards course credit or credential completion OR is formally recognized by the college or university as meeting the five criteria above.

## Key Questions when Designing WIL Course Curriculum

1. Does the experience planned meet the requirements of the [MCU’s experiential learning checklist](MCU’s%20experiential%20learning%20checklist:)?
2. Does the experience involve an industry partner?
3. What type of WIL is being designed? Ensure that the WIL type aligns with Algonquin’s [WIL Typology](https://www.algonquincollege.com/el/wil-categories/).
4. How much control do faculty have over the experience?
   1. Project-based WIL: in general, more specific learning outcomes can be achieved as the parameter of the project and the role of the employer partner can be more clearly defined.
   2. Placement-based WIL: how similar can/will the placements be for each student? The more similar the experience, the more specific the learning outcomes can be.
5. How many WIL opportunities are in the program? If there is more than one, consider what added value will come from the subsequent experience(s):
   1. Breadth: a subsequent experience in a different area and/or with a different type of employer.
   2. Depth: a similar experience with more responsibility and deeper learning and application of learning.
6. What skills will students have at the time of the WIL experience?
7. How will opportunities be provided for the development and practice of self-reflection?
8. When will students be prepared for the WIL experience? Is there time allotted in the WIL course itself, or is this covered in previous or concurrent course(s)?

## Integrating WIL into a Program

Consider the placement of the WIL course in the program of study. Students develop knowledge and skills in prior courses and continue to do so in courses that occur concurrently or consecutively. Remember that experiences are being designed for current students not graduates, so the work experience needs to be designed for students to demonstrate the skills they have at the time of the WIL experience, not skills and learning that are developed later in the program.

Consider how students can apply their WIL experience in subsequent courses. Ideally students will have opportunities to use their classroom knowledge in their WIL experiences and to use their WIL experiences in their subsequent classes.

## Course Learning Requirements (CLRs) and Embedded Knowledge and Skills (EKSs)

Navigate to the Learning and Teaching Services (LTS) website for general information on [how to write CLRs and EKSs](https://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/writing-clrs-eks/).

When writing CLRs and EKSs for WIL courses, consider following outcomes:

* Core vocational learning that students can apply in their WIL experience,
* Essential Employability or Professional Skills, and
* Self-reflection.

### Core Vocational Learning

Depending on how much control you have over student experiences, CLRs and EKSs addressing core content might need to be very broad to accommodate the different kinds of experiences students will have. In general, WIL experiences offer students opportunities to strengthen their understanding of concepts they have already learned about through application and reflect on their experience. **WIL opportunities do not usually introduce new core learning**. Consider looking at CLRs and EKSs from other courses in the program and adjusting them with new verbs associated with the application of learning.

### Professional Skills

WIL offers students opportunities to apply professional skills that will contribute to their employability. For some credential types, the provincial Essential Employability Skills are a set of program outcomes that the WIL course may support. In others, professional skills may be explicit program outcomes or valuable assets outside of the program outcomes. In any case, the CLRs and EKSs can identify the specific professional skills students developing in their WIL course.

Higgs’ (2012) Standards for Professional and Practice-Based Education provide some ideas on how professional skills can be addressed in CLRs and EKSs.

#### Dimension 1 – Professionalism and Citizenship

* **Capabilities and attributes:** accountability; trustworthiness; social inclusion; commitment to quality; global perspective of practice; financial responsibility; social and environmental sustainability; being a reflective practitioner and lifelong learner

#### Dimension 2 – Professional Judgement

* **Capabilities and attributes:** critical reflection; flexibility; adaptability; problem-solving; creativity; ethical decision-making; lawful practice

#### Dimension 3 – Communication and Interactions

* **Capabilities and attributes:** professional communication; supportive communication; cultural competence; confidentiality; teamwork; collegiality; collaboration

#### Dimension 4 – Information Literacy

* **Capabilities and attributes:** accessing new information; judging information; synthesizing information from multiple sources; producing reports and multimedia presentations

#### Professional Competence and Work Readiness

* **Capabilities and attributes:** accessing new information; judging information; synthesizing information from multiple sources; producing reports and multimedia presentations

### Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a key component of the experiential learning cycle and must be included in order to be classified as WIL or Experiential Learning by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. It is thus important to include CLRs and EKSs that develop and provide opportunities to practice self-reflection.

## CLR and EKS Examples

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Core Vocational Learning** | **Professional Skills** | **Reflection** |
| CLR: Contribute to a work environment in ways that align with the needs of the organization.  EKS 1: Use proactive strategies to ensure workplace performance and expectations are met.  EKS 2: Complete tasks according to industry standards and expectations.  EKS 3: Outline personal learning goals in collaboration with faculty and industry partner(s). | CLR: Collaborate, as a member of a working team, to achieve team goals and objectives.  EKS 1: Participate in team situations in a respectful and collaborative manner.  EKS 2: Contribute to the achievement of team goals through the completion of assigned tasks and responsibilities. | CLR: Reflect on how experiences in the field support the progression towards one’s professional goals.  EKS 1: Reflect on workplace experience in support of professional development and lifelong learning.  EKS 2: Reflect on transferable skills that apply to future experiences.   EKS 3: Recognize lessons learned that guide future decision-making. |
| CLR: Apply concepts, principles and skills learned in the academic environment to a real-world context  EKS 1: Integrate theoretical concepts with practical experience in the workplace.EKS 2: Identify skills relevant to specific industry contexts. | CLR: Use critical thinking to analyze situations, solve problems, and make decisions  EKS 1: Participate in decision-making situations in a respectful and collaborative manner.  EKS 2: Apply problem-solving skills within an industry context. | CLR: Describe how experiential learning informs the professional development process.  EKS 1: Identify learning that occurred during work experience.  EKS 2: Reflect on connections between workplace learning and academic goals.  EKS 3: Identify opportunities to apply learning through active experimentation. |
| CLR: Complete all work in compliance with safety, legal, and ethical regulations and standards.  EKS 1: Identify relevant regulations and standards.  EKS 2:Apply relevant regulations and standards to tasks and activities.  EKS3: Identify barriers and limitations to performing work safely, legally and ethically. | CLR: Apply project management and leadership skills to support the timely completion of an industry project.  EKS 1: Create a project plan to meet stakeholder goals.  EKS 2: Coordinate individual and team activities towards the completion of a project.  EKS2: Use time management skills to complete tasks within identified timelines. | CLR: Reflect on the influence of personal values, beliefs and behaviours on workplace interactions.  EKS 1: Identify personal values, beliefs and behaviours that can influence professional interactions.  EKS 2: Reflect on the development of interpersonal communications skills during industry experience. |
| *CLRs reflecting specific industry requirements can be added; contact Learning and Teaching Services for support.* | CLR: Implement self-care strategies to enhance professional practice.  EKS 1: Identify strategies and resources to support self-care.  EKS 2: Identify barriers and limitations to self-care strategies within an industry context.  EKS 3: Identify responses to inappropriate working conditions. | CLR: Reflect on personal performance in the work experience.  EKS 1: Describe skills, strengths and opportunities for improvement identified through work experience.  EKS 2: Explain future learning objectives and career goals. |

In general, when selecting verbs for CLRs, consider terms that address the experiential nature of WIL. Consider verbs that allow student to apply knowledge, analyze situations, and reflect on their experiences.

## Facilitating Quality Placement Experiences

While faculty may have less capacity to dictate day-to-day activities in WIL courses, it is still possible to develop processes, activities, and assignments to facilitate valuable learning experiences for students and good working relationships with employers.

**Within Placements:** Establishing expectations and workplace goals for both employers and learners helps to manage expectations and create a quality learning experience. This can be achieved through an initial assignment where students work with employer partners to design a workplace learning plan that meets the needs of both parties.

**Within Projects:** Creating a framework and a series of steps with associated assessments that students will follow regardless of industry partner could assist ensuring that students have quality, relevant experiences. Some examples of steps and assessments could include:

1. Gathering and documenting requirements
2. Creating a project plan
3. Providing regular status updates
4. Submitting a final report
5. Reflecting on the experience

## Assessments

When creating assessments for Work-Integrated Learning, keep the following in mind:

* WIL experiences generally involve three different parties contributing to assessments (faculty member, student, and workplace supervisor).
* Assessment needs to be broad enough to accommodate the variety of experiences students may have had with at their workplace.
* All WIL courses should include a self-reflection component.

Both formative assessment (which is used during the learning process to provide feedback on learning-in-process) and summative assessment (which use used at the end of the learning process to evaluate student learning against a standard or benchmark) should be included in Work-Integrated Learning courses. A sample assessment continuum including the three parties, self-reflection activities and formative and summative assessment, is identified below.

### Self-Reflection Assessments

Reflection activities can come in various different formats. Designing within a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, choice should be provided to students in the selection of which medium to use for their reflection. Reflection mediums include:

* Journals
* Portfolios
* Presentations
* Discussions
* Papers
* Videos
* Poems
* Illustrations
* Etc.

### Self-Reflection Models

There are various models available to guide self-reflection questions and activities, two of which are highlighted below.

**The DEAL Model (Ash & Clayton, 2009)**

1. Describe the experience objectively and with detail

2. Examination the experience you had against the goals you had identified for the experience

3. Articulate Learning: What did you learn and how will you apply it to future experiences

**What, So What, Now What (Rolfe et al., 2001)**

Rolfe et al. (2001) suggest using three simple questions to frame reflection:

* **What?:** e.g. What happened, what did I do, what did others do, what were some good and bad things that happened, etc.
* **So What?:** e.g. Why did I do what I did? What did I learn? What would I have done differently?
* **Now What?:** e.g. Based on what was already reflected on, what are next steps, what are plans for the future?

Find more about these and other reflection models on the [eltoolkit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dvy3Hh1ECAUuG3JrFACmN9QwRYP8SIHWDi-xe5pavuM/edit).

## Additional Resources:

* [Algonquin College Experiential Learning Website](http://www.algonquincollege.com/el)
* [LTS Course Development Resources](https://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/course-development/)
* [Experiential Learning Toolkit](file:///C:\Users\brownj1\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\DAEKYLPL\eltoolkit.ca)
* [A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning (HECQO)](https://heqco.ca/pub/a-practical-guide-for-work-integrated-learning-effective-practices-to-enhance-the-educational-quality-of-structured-work-experiences-offered-through-colleges-and-universities/)

## References

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