Framework for Experiential Learning

Responsibility: Experiential Learning Committee

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Approved by: Academic Council

1. **Preamble**

This document provides a statement of the value of Experiential Learning at Huron University College. Experiential Learning is valued at Huron as a pedagogical choice that is integrated into broader student experiences both inside and outside of the classroom over the course of the Huron degree. Huron recognizes that Experiential Learning activities support the achievement of work readiness and the employability of Huron graduates.

This document is intended:
  - for faculty, staff, and students at Huron,
  - to renew a shared understanding of Experiential Learning at Huron within the shifting landscape of higher education, and
  - to enable and structure creative possibilities in Experiential Learning.

This document is written by the Experiential Learning Committee at Huron. This committee is responsible for reviewing the framework in accordance with its terms of reference.

2. **Definition**

Experiential Learning (EL) is a broad approach to teaching and learning that situates students as active participants in their learning experience. EL is an intentional pedagogical choice to adopt active learning strategies. The anticipated learning outcomes for students engaged in a breadth and depth of different forms of high-quality EL will vary, but consistently include scholarly skills that directly relate to employability (such as analysis, clear communication, research, and

grasp of social purpose and import of scholarship). The connection between the "real world" and EL opportunities is bidirectional and reciprocal: the former both facilitates student learning and provides a setting for the application of scholarly skills learned in the classroom.

3. Context

EL at Huron takes many forms, curricular and extra-curricular, both inside and outside of the classroom environment, within the variety of programs represented at Huron and the associated pedagogical approaches that these contexts entail. EL opportunities occur at a range of scales or levels of intensity, from fully immersive research experiences, to project components of a single course, one-time field experiences, and active learning opportunities. Existing strengths in EL at Huron include community engaged learning, theological field education, undergraduate research learning, and international field experiences.

In Spring 2019 Western Senate approved a definition of EL including a list of guidelines or principles for quality EL and a typology of curricular and co-curricular EL activities. This move was in response to interest in and prioritization of EL by the provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities in 2017.

This framework document aligns Huron with the new Senate policy and situates Huron within the wider conversation around EL in higher education, while recognizing the unique strengths of a strategically small and community-oriented liberal arts institution. Huron strengths include small class sizes favourable for dialectical and conversation-based active learning strategies and the creation of supportive mentoring relationships between students and faculty.

This document recognizes that a diversity of pedagogical tools is valuable in the broader learning context and that EL is one form of pedagogy that may be used to facilitate student learning at Huron. This framework is intended to offer guidance around EL delivery and quality rather than simply increasing the number of EL experiences for students.

4. Principles of Experiential Learning at Huron

EL at Huron will prepare students with a full range of transferable skills and facilitate students' understanding of how to apply skills in "real world" settings. The following principles are intended to ensure a diversity of high quality EL opportunities that allow for both breadth and depth of skills development.

4.1 Quality Assurance

EL opportunities must provide students with a meaningful and engaged learning experiences, ensuring that students graduate from Huron well-prepared for the application and articulation of the materials and skills they have acquired. This involves the use of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies that support student motivation and active engagement in their own learning, an emphasis on the practical value of the education students are receiving (knowledge,

skills, experience, etc.), and an understanding that students must be able to recognize and articulate the value of their experience by identifying *why* it is meaningful (an understanding to be reached through exercises such as reflection).

This framework emphasizes that quality learning outcomes of EL require support of all parties engaged in the specific EL opportunity from inception to completion, including EL alignment with and connections to program degree outcomes. Support for EL refers not just to monetary resources but also to the administration of EL and learning support services for faculty and students.

4.2 Responsibility and Accountability

The development and maintenance of quality learning experiences requires regular engagement from participants in the learning and a recognition by all parties (students, faculty, community partners, practicum supervisors/mentors, and the institution) of their respective roles and responsibilities in the learning process. These responsibilities include consideration of EL at the individual course level for curricular EL and at the degree program level for both curricular and non-curricular EL. This framework is not intended to exclude any specific learning activities but rather to enhance the quality of EL at Huron.

4.2.1 Institutional Responsibilities (via Experiential Learning Committee):

This framework recognizes that EL pedagogies are intensive commitments for those engaged in the teaching and learning process, and that the creation and maintenance of a culture that values quality over quantity involves the development of resourcing and policies as well as accountability of practice to process. As such, the institution commits to:
   a. developing appropriate resources (financial and human) to support high quality EL at Huron, and
   b. consulting meaningfully with students and faculty regarding revisions to the EL framework and policies at Huron.

4.2.2 Development, Maintenance, and Assessment of EL

This framework recognizes that EL activities require intentionality and planning in order to achieve quality. As such, programs and individual faculty members who engage in EL pedagogy commit to:
   a. understanding and incorporating the principles of EL (see http://experience.uwo.ca/),
   b. incorporating the role of faculty as mentors engaged in the socialization and guidance of students,
   c. developing methods of instruction and assessment including appropriate and timely assessment of learning (i.e. reflections) that aid in students' knowledge integration, retention, and material understanding,
   d. providing opportunities for students to make connections, thereby creating conditions for students to make the experience meaningful, and
   e. communicating to students the student role and commitment in EL (Section 4.2.3).

<u>4.2.3</u>   Student Professionalism and Responsibilities

This framework recognizes that students who engage in EL become active participants in their own learning. As such, students who participate in EL at Huron commit to:
   a. participating in self-evaluation and reflection under guided instruction, incorporating openness to change and seeking feedback as required,
   b. collaborating and developing respectful relationships with peers, faculty, and community partners,
   c. recognizing that EL can be challenging, and
   d. following ethical principles and professional standards during the EL opportunity.

<u>4.3</u> <u>Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in EL</u>

An institutional commitment to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is foundational to a successful framework for EL.

A commitment to equity entails identifying and addressing systemic barriers experienced within the post-secondary environment. These barriers may be based on socio-economic status, and have been experienced by groups including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), persons with disabilities, members of visible minority/racialized groups and members of LGBTQ2+ communities.

Recognition of diversity includes both social/demographic difference and physical and cognitive differences, as well as understanding that multiple lines of difference intersect to shape individual experience.

Inclusive practices recognize and value difference. Understanding EL pedagogy as necessarily inclusive emphasizes an ongoing process of changing systems and prioritizing partnership and collaboration with a diversity of perspectives.

Faculty, staff, and students engaged in EL at Huron commit to learning about EDI principles and actively incorporating strategies to promote accessibility and inclusion within the scope of their role in EL, whether pedagogy, policy, or practice.

5. Policy Considerations

<u>5.1</u> <u>Mapping EL</u>

Intentionality in adopting EL pedagogical strategies at the course and program level is a key component of quality in EL. Mapping is intended to promote quality and inform student decision-making, not to increase the number of EL offerings.

For students, mapping EL offerings contributes to accessibility, establishes meaningful connections between diverse curricular and co-curricular offerings, promotes clear communication of opportunities and their learning outcomes, supports informed student

decision-making and degree planning, and provides a means of recognizing student EL participation.

At the institutional level, mapping EL will facilitate programmatic awareness of associated policies (travel, research ethics, student privacy, etc.) and will inform ongoing conversations around policy needs, faculty professional development, faculty and student workload in EL, areas of overlap in degree mapping and program planning across academic units, and effective resourcing of EL at Huron.

Practically, mapping EL requires the identification of opportunities based on a shared understanding of quality EL among committees responsible for curriculum and student experience. EL offerings should be aligned with Senate best practices and typology guidelines and include an indication of the intensity of the EL opportunity (for example, some marker of breadth/depth). The mapping process will be continually be refined and updated as the understanding of EL at Huron evolves.

5.2 Accessibility

EL activities often have specific requirements for participation. These requirements may be related to foundational knowledge or experience, and it is the responsibility of the institution (faculty/staff) to provide appropriate training for the experience if required. Other requirements may be related to physical access, such as in cases in which the experience/activity occurs off campus. Huron recognizes the responsibility to provide equal access to learning opportunities to all students as per the Western Senate policies on student accommodation. (See https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Specific EL requirements of a course must be clearly communicated to students, ideally at time of course registration and at the start of the course (via student support services, program advising, calendar notation, etc.). If EL is part of a degree program requirement (i.e., not elective), alternative options for completion of the requirement must also be considered and provided in order to fulfill the duty to accommodate all students regardless of disability or other non-physical barriers.

Financial costs to participation in EL must also be considered and communicated to students in advance. Alternative sources of funding for students with financial need must be clearly identified and funding sources must clearly stipulate criteria and process for student access to funds.

5.3 Resourcing

EL pedagogical choices at the course and program level require specific human and financial resources. EL opportunities involving community engagement, knowledge mobilization, and travel incur costs for students and faculty including, but not limited to, poster printing, police checks, transportation, accommodation, guest speaker honorariums, research assistance, catering, and event or location entrance fees. The institution is responsible

for developing and communicating EL funding policies in order to ensure consistency in student and faculty expectations and accessibility in student learning opportunities.

Funding models for curricular EL must be tied to mapping (Section 5.1) and adherence to principles of EL (Section 4) and include mechanisms to support faculty innovation, and student financial need.

5.4 Assessment

High quality EL includes assessments related to student learning reflections and additionally must provide students with opportunities for integration, retention, and material understanding. The development of EL must include consideration of the intentions of inclusion of EL in the context of the course or student experience (e.g., is the experience intended to reinforce application of knowledge? How does EL in the specific context align with course learning objectives and programmatic learning objectives?). It is the responsibility of the course instructor and the program delivering EL to ensure that assessment of EL meets minimum requirements for student accessibility and that any foundational preparation required by students to participate in EL are provided in a timely and appropriate manner.

Degree, program, and course level learning outcomes as required by Western Senate academic policies must be considered in the development of EL assessments, as must the requirements of external accrediting agencies where relevant (e.g. ATS).

5.4.1 Supervision

At times, EL opportunities involve independent student work (e.g. a placement) under the supervision of someone other than a course instructor (such as a community partner). This experience can provide a rich learning environment for the student. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of the program or course instructor to ensure that a written Placement/Learning Agreement is in place indicating to both the student and the supervisor clear and realistic expectations as to the nature of the supervision and the work to be accomplished.

5.4.2 Community Awareness

Some types of EL, such as community-engaged learning or community-based learning, involve students working with a range of community partners, whether individuals or organizations. It is the responsibility of the program or course instructor to ensure that students entering these environments and relationships have an awareness of the community context, power dynamics, and the student/faculty/institutional position within these relationships. See also Section 5.6. Student awareness and articulation of their own position is a key learning opportunity made possible through EL.

5.4.3 Alternative arrangements

At times EL pedagogical choices involve elements (such as conference attendance, partner meetings, field experiences) which may—or at times must—occur outside of regularly scheduled

course times and classroom locations set by the Registrar's Office. Such opportunities can have valuable learning outcomes for students but can at the same time pose barriers to accessibility. It is the responsibility of the program or course instructor to communicate out of class elements in advance on the course outline, and to provide reasonable alternate arrangements for students wherever possible.

5.5 Research Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research

Many forms of EL involve student research projects. Huron is a leader in approaches to undergraduate research-learning. EL opportunities may also dovetail with faculty research interests (including, but not limited to, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning [SoTL]) and may bring together in novel ways faculty teaching and student research.

Responsibility for incorporation of instruction on ethical practices in research occurs at the program and course level. Programs and course instructors are responsible for ensuring that independent and course-based student research involving human participants (through surveys, interviews, participant observation, community engagement, etc.) abides by existing policies and processes of the Huron Research Ethics Board (REB), with program chairs responsible for approval of course-level research protocols.

Faculty members training students as researchers must be aware of, and draw student attention to, the Responsible Conduct of Research policy, and offer students ongoing guidance around navigating the issues raised by this policy.

The REB is responsible for the ongoing development of research ethics policies and processes, for promoting faculty and student awareness of research ethics and the particular issues arising in EL, SoTL, and undergraduate research-learning contexts, and for providing ongoing guidance to faculty and students on navigating ethical issues in research.

5.6 EL and the TRC

EL at Huron must be shaped alongside considerations of the colonial past and present of the institution and the responsibility of all Canadian institutions of higher education to respond to the TRC Calls to Action in order to advance reconciliation.

As best practice, EL opportunities intended to engage students with Indigenous communities, context, and knowledge should emphasize mutually beneficial ties and shared authority. Faculty members must consider the potential for and necessity of long term relationship-building and co-creation of EL (including defining outcomes and ownership of results), and how Huron's institutional context informs perception and reception of such EL opportunities. Policy implications for research ethics (Section 5.5) and student awareness of community contexts (Section 5.4.2) must also be incorporated in meaningful ways.

More broadly, EL opportunities should be designed with the learning outcomes of a diversity of student participants, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, in mind. Likewise,

EL policy and administrative oversight must consider the working environment created for a diversity of faculty and staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

5.7 Student Privacy

EL frequently generates opportunities to promote innovative teaching and learning approaches at Huron. This may occur through coverage of activities via institutional social media, by generating or encouraging a broad in-person audience for student work, or otherwise using student photos, videos, creative work, feedback, or other content for promotional purposes, whether formal or informal, by faculty or staff. In such promotional efforts, respect for student privacy within the teaching and learning environment must be the primary concern.

The institution is responsible for developing relevant policies and processes relating to student privacy as required. Course instructors are responsible for ensuring student awareness, and for obtaining ongoing student consent in a manner that includes thoughtful consideration of power dynamics at work. When participation in promotional efforts is an essential part of the course expectations or learning outcomes this should be made clear in advance on the course outline, and alternate arrangements created where possible (Section 5.4). If it is not part of the course expectations reasonable accommodation must be made for students to opt out for any reason. Student "take down" requests should be welcomed and respected. Course instructors must consider student privacy before releasing student information to external partners.

5.8 Off Campus Travel

Some EL opportunities such as field experiences involve student and faculty travel off-campus, whether local, regional or international. Travel considerations include costs (Section 5.2) and accessibility (Section 5.1). The institution is additionally responsible for safety and liability concerns, with clarity as to relevant policy and process for both students and faculty well in advance of travel opportunities. These processes should be aligned across curricular EL, internships, and volunteering.

5.9 Research Data Management and Intellectual Property

Student projects are generated within the context of EL. These projects may be substantive, and incorporate original research, creative output, and collaborative contributions including co-productions with faculty, community partners, and fellow students. Such projects raise questions concerning intellectual property and the appropriate management and storage of research data (Section 5.5). Within these contexts, supervising faculty members are responsible for clearly communicating rights and responsibilities to students and community partners, and the institution is responsible for developing relevant policies and effectively resourcing infrastructure to support these requirements.