

Experiential Learning: How to use a Learning Plan

What is a learning plan in the context of Experiential Learning?

A learning plan, or learning contract, is an individualized document that allows each student to document their personal learning outcomes for an experiential learning opportunity. The learning plan encourages students to make connections between course learning outcomes, personal learning goals and the tasks performed during the experience.

Why use a learning plan when facilitating Experiential Learning?

A learning plan acts as an important tool for tracking learning outcomes specific to the experiential learning opportunity. When developed in partnership between students, faculty and site supervisors (when applicable), the learning plan ensures that everyone involved in the experiential learning opportunity is clear on what the student is expected to learn, how they will learn it, and how achievement of those specific learning outcomes will be assessed. Learning plans also improve student engagement by increasing ownership of their own learning, enhancing self-directed learning skills and creating a starting place for reflective conversations.

What makes an effective learning plan?

- Learning outcomes that are clear, measurable, and realistic
- Specific tasks that will be used to achieve the learning outcomes
- Methods and timeframes for assessment of the identified learning outcomes
- Opportunities for feedback (from instructor/supervisor to students, between students, and from student to instructor/supervisor)
- Ability to make ongoing modification of tasks and plans in relation to the changing context of the experience and available resources

Who plays what roles when developing and implementing learning plans?

Instructor

- Assist students in determining which course/program-level learning outcomes are to be achieved through the experience
- Guide students in making connections between personal learning goals and program/course learning outcomes
- Use feedback and coaching to guide them towards writing clear, measurable and realistic learning outcomes on the learning plan
- Assist students in determining the best methods for assessing achievement of learning outcomes (i.e. supervisor/instructor feedback; peer feedback during discussions; class assignments; performance evaluations)
- Schedule time for students to share and reflect upon their learning plan with peers, instructors and/or site supervisors before, during and after the experience

Student

- Write learning outcomes that reflect course/program-level learning outcomes that align with personal learning goals
- Discuss the various activities/tasks to be performed during the experiential learning opportunity with faculty and/or site supervisors to ensure learning outcomes align with performance expectations during the experience
- Identify how the learning outcome will be assessed and any resources or additional supports required

Site Supervisor (if applicable)

- Schedule time to review the learning plan with the student at the beginning of the experience
- Ensure the identified learning outcomes align with the student's role
- Contribute to the development of the learning plan by identifying key tasks or activities that create opportunities for the student to achieve the identified learning outcomes
- Make suggestions for ways that student can assess achievement of learning outcomes
- Schedule time with the student to discuss and reflect upon student learning/performance in relation to the identified learning outcomes

Sample Learning Plan

Applicable Course Learning Outcomes:

Learning Outcomes (LO): What do I intend to learn?	Rationale: Why is this learning outcome important?	Learning Activities/Tasks: How will I best learn this? Which learning activities/tasks during the experience will help me meet this learning outcome?	Assessment Criteria: How will my learning be assessed? How will I know that I've achieved my learning outcome?	Support/Resources Required: What additional resources or supports are there?
<i>TIP: Write learning outcomes that are clear, measurable and realistic; ensure learning outcomes reflect student's personal learning goals while also being connected to the course/program level learning outcomes.</i>	<i>TIP: Encourage students to draw connections between learning objectives and career, values, long-term goals</i>	<i>TIP: Include specific tasks that will be used to achieve the learning outcomes</i>	<i>TIP: Include method and timeframe for self, peer and/or instructor/supervisor assessment</i>	<i>TIP: Encourage students to draw connections between learning objectives and career, values, long-term goals</i>
LO: 1				
LO: 2				
LO: 3				
LO: 4				

Adapted from HEQCO, "A Practical Guide for Work Integrated Learning (2016)

References

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