

RETHINKING HIGHER EDUCATION
CURRICULA:
INCREASING IMPACT THROUGH
EXPERIENTIAL, WORK-INTEGRATED, AND
COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING

A WHITE PAPER FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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Introduction

The University of Toronto prides itself on being an academically rigorous institution, one that shapes graduates who are well-equipped to face the challenges of an ever-changing world. The pursuit of this mission leads us constantly to examine the purpose of the education we offer, to reinvent how we teach in response to our evolving understanding of pedagogical practice and the changing needs of students, the Greater Toronto community, and the broader Canadian and global society. Reflecting this focus, President Gertler's Three Priorities for the institution invite us to rethink our current approach to undergraduate education in a way that affirms the enduring value of a broad liberal arts education, but also asks how we might encourage graduates to extract the full benefit of that education (2015, p. 21). While a variety of different strategies may be taken, one such approach that has figured prominently both in emerging academic literature and in recent public conversation is the growing emphasis on student learning that occurs outside the classroom setting, including students' engagement with community and workplace settings.

Since the global economic downturn in 2008, there has been a progressive shift in thinking about the role that universities can and should play in relation to their communities. Some have taken specific interest in the role that universities can play in economic and community development. This can be achieved through the development of civic responsibility in students, the education of leaders in and critics of existing social systems, as well as through direct economic development either by training students to meet the demands of the workplace or by applying research and scholarship to stimulate innovation (Wittman & Crews, 2012). For governments and businesses, this often translates into a request that universities align educational priorities with community needs and yield graduates who possess the skills to meet the demands of the future labour market. An alternative understanding of this purpose, however, imagines the University as builder of cities, nations and global communities, shaping its environment through collaborative engagement.

This white paper proposes that the University of Toronto should grow its experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning offerings, and that this growth would collectively enhance both the student learning experience and the University's ability to support broader community and societal needs. The paper begins by discussing the pedagogical value of learning through experience. From there, this document lays out a vision for re-thinking higher education curricula and defines key terms, before describing how the University might grow its experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning offerings in line with institutional priorities. Quality criteria are established to inform the ways in which this growth might occur. In short, this document outlines a vision for re-thinking education and what experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning mean to the University of Toronto, its students, and community members.

The Value of Learning through Experience

The notion of learning through experience is not new to the University of Toronto. In some disciplines, the use of experience to reinforce theoretical learning is well entrenched and has become the traditional way of educating students. This is especially so in professional programs, where students are trained to develop a specific set of competencies. In other disciplines, the addition of experience to theoretical learning is less common, but still occurs. Outside the classroom, students have been learning through experience with co-curricular, extra-curricular, and work opportunities that can have similar

benefits to those facilitated through academic units (Henry, 2017). Thus what we propose in this white paper is not a radical departure from current approaches to the educational experience at the University of Toronto. Rather, it is a strategic enhancement of successful and well-proven teaching practices, in order to create more deliberate and explicit connections between students' educational experiences in and outside the classroom. The purpose of this strategy is to increase the impact our curricula have on the community and society, to highlight the meaningfulness of such connections to students, and to grow the number and variety of opportunities available to students to make such connections.

Student Impact

The effect of educational approaches grounded in experience on student growth and development is well-established in educational theory. Situativity theory, for example, emphasizes the role that environment and context play in conditioning learning and knowledge (Dunning & Artino, 2011). Students who are presented with similar material in different contexts may assimilate it differently, and community-based activities can be especially valuable in allowing students to master and apply knowledge and competencies in unknown contexts (Dunning & Artino, 2011). Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes that a student's internalization of learning can be accelerated through the use of social and environmental exposure (Owen, 2004). Likewise, Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning emphasizes the holistic growth and development of individuals through their adaptation to experience. Kolb posits that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, highlighting the need for varied student experiences both inside and outside the classroom setting. Further, Boud et al. (1993) suggest that there is little value in detaching learning from experience, as experience is the main facilitator of learning.

Supporting these theories, students' connection to their community through service learning, for example, has been reported to improve students' engagement, academic outcomes, and their ability to apply knowledge as demonstrated by their complexity of understanding, problem analysis skills, critical thinking skills, and cognitive development. It has also been reported to improve students' personal development, including personal efficacy, sense of personal identity, spiritual growth and moral development, development of social and civic responsibility, and intra- and interpersonal competence (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler et al., 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Tee & Kalidas, 2016).

Looking specifically at the impact of student engagement in workplace settings, some educators have suggested that exposure to the workplace can help students develop a professional "habitus" by exposing them to the behavioural expectations of that environment (Luke, 2003; Sullivan, 2002). Research on educational experiences outside the classroom, including placements, internships, and co-operative education has reported student benefits, including increasing students' self-awareness of their abilities, increased application of theory in practice, and better professional communication skills. Workplace experiences also provide students with the opportunity to explore potential careers in a low-risk environment, in addition to gaining exposure to workplace protocols, standards of dress, and other professional behaviours (Smith, Ferns, Russell & Cretchley, 2014). Further research suggests that students who have participated in workplace experiences graduate with enhanced employability and higher starting salaries, as well as experiencing more seamless transitions to the workplace (Kramer & Usher, 2011).

Community Impact

The benefits learning through experience can have on communities are most obvious when we consider the impact of community-engaged learning as an example. In this case, the integration of student learning with community experience can affect and shape the needs of citizens, organizations, or community agencies (Butin, 2005; 2010). Embarking on a mutually beneficial experience, the student's experience is shaped by the reflection of classroom learning in the community setting, while the community benefits from the student's contribution to their activities. Communities suggest that they benefit from the scholarship, faculty expertise, and additional resources provided by student service, as well as from enhanced relations with the university (Eyler et al., 2001).

Other benefits from the mentorship and supervision of student experiences reported by workplace organizations include the advantage of having ready access to new personnel for short-term projects, reduced recruiting costs, access to new knowledge and innovation, and the bridging of learning goals between the workplace and the academic institution (CAFCE, 2017).

Societal Impact

Learning through experience has the potential to impact the broader needs of Canadian society. Often noted is the potential benefit of student learning experiences on economic development, with federal and provincial governments widely expressing their desire for a better alignment of student learning with the competencies sought by employers (BHER, 2016; Premier's Expert Panel on the Highly Skilled Workforce, 2016). Student learning practices that occur in the workplace can contribute to economic development directly, in the form of service and economic return, as well as indirectly, through the sharing of training, knowledge mobilization, and the application of scholarship to guide innovation (Wittman & Crews, 2012).

At the federal level, the Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) has suggested ensuring that "100% of Canadian postsecondary students benefit from some form of work-integrated learning prior to graduation" (2016, p. 9). Similarly, the interim report of the Government of Canada's Expert Panel on Youth Employment (2016) also values experiential learning opportunities for students and the "essential skills" development embedded within it, including improved problem solving, communication, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills. In line with the national priorities set for experiential and work-integrated learning, the federal budget tabled in March 2017 includes \$221 million over five years dedicated to the creation of new co-op placements and WIL opportunities.

At the provincial level, the Premier's Expert Panel on the Highly Skilled Workforce recommended that Ontario provide students with increased opportunities to develop valuable competencies by ensuring that "every student has at least one experiential learning opportunity by the time they graduate from post-secondary education" (2016, p. 27). The Ontario government signaled strong support for the Panel's recommendations as a whole, and the Council of Ontario Universities has indicated its willingness to work with the province toward the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

Beyond this government focus on employability, however, learning experiences in the community can also help students develop the attributes expected of good citizens – be they intercultural competency, global fluency, or a sense of social justice. Through community experiences, students can sharpen their

critical edge by observing the systems they study in the classroom up close. The opportunity to examine an issue from the inside can shed new light on relevant considerations and add depth to critique.

Re-thinking Higher Education Curricula

Considering our evolving understanding of student learning and the potential impact of students' learning experiences outside the classroom setting, it is timely to think of higher education curricula as including the learning outcomes and pedagogies that may be achieved both inside and outside the classroom setting. This means considering how students learn through experience within authentic academic curricula and co-curricula.

A Pedagogical Model for Increasing Impact through Community Engagement

The University of Toronto's teaching mission outlines the institution's goal to "strive to ensure that its graduates are educated in the broadest sense of the term, with the ability to think clearly, judge objectively, and contribute constructively to society." In line with this, we might consider higher education curricula more broadly, as they relate to learning through experience, as the deliberate integration of disciplinary outcomes with community engagement and competency development. In this model, the integration of disciplinary outcomes with some form of community engagement becomes the expectation. This is not a new concept, and many examples of this integration are already practiced across the University at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The intention is that through this approach to designing higher education curricula, this integration may be more clearly articulated. As well, through the deliberate augmentation of students' integration of disciplinary outcomes with community engagement and competency development, the student learning experience and the impact of students and the University in supporting greater community and societal needs would be collectively enhanced.

Figure 1. A Pedagogical Model for Increasing Impact through Community Engagement



- *Disciplinary outcomes* include knowledge and competencies that students are expected to learn and that are particular to their area(s) of study.
- *Community engagement* includes student interaction with stakeholders, such as community members inside or outside the University, agencies or employers for the purpose of providing students with the opportunity to learn through experience and exposing them to how classroom ideas take shape in the world.

- *Competency development* includes the development of learning competences (e.g., learning how to learn), technology competencies (e.g., computer software), and transferable competencies (e.g., critical thinking, leadership, communication, teamwork, global fluency, intercultural competency, or attitudes about social responsibility and social justice). This development of general competencies is embedded within the integration of disciplinary outcomes with community engagement. It requires students to be aware of and reflect on the competencies they are already developing, that they make this implicit learning explicit.

Current pedagogical practices that may be used to achieve this integration of disciplinary outcomes with community engagement and competency development include examples of experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning.

Defining Experiential, Work-integrated, and Community-Engaged Learning

This section creates a foundation for further discussion by defining experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning.

Experiential Learning Defined

Experiential learning is a theory of learning that conceptualizes the process of learning by doing and may be used to inform the design and delivery of a wide range of educational activities. Experiential activities occur in a variety of settings both inside and outside the classroom. Activities that are grounded in experiential learning theory are called experiential learning pedagogies or experiential learning activities.

Six Core Tenets of Experiential Learning Theory

Drawing on David A. Kolb's (1984) influential theory, experiential learning is understood to be "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Building upon earlier theories on learning through experience (Dewey, 1938; Lewin, 1951; Piaget, 1978), Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT) is founded on six core tenets (Kolb & Kolb, 2005):

1. Learning is a process.
2. Learning is grounded in experience.
3. Learning involves mastery of all four learning modes.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaption.
5. Learning occurs when an individual interacts with their environment.
6. Knowledge is created through learning.

Experiential Learning Cycle

More specifically, in looking at how students learn through experience, Kolb's (1984) cycle of learning outlines four learning modes:

- *Hands-on experience*: Direct engagement in an experience and a student's associated subjective feelings
- *Reflection*: A student's thoughtful observation and description of the experience from multiple perspectives

- *Critical analysis*: The application of logic, concepts, and theory to an experience
- *Experimentation*: Implementing new ideas that result from the experience, and creating practical applications for these ideas

The identification of an activity as “experiential learning” is dependent on achieving the four learning modes outlined above. Activities that can be structured to align with the principles of experiential learning include but are not limited to:

Table 1. Examples of Experiential Learning Activities

Field-based Experiences	Co/Extra-curricular Experiences	Classroom Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement • Practicum • Co-op • Internship • Professional experience year • Community-based research • Service learning course • Field trip • Research/project course • Study abroad • International exchange • Presenting at a research conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student leadership • Council and committee membership • Athletics and recreation • Learning communities • Career development activities • Hackathons • Work study • Writing for a campus newspaper • Peer mentoring • Campus volunteering • Donships • 48 Hour film challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-playing • Case study • Simulation • Student presentation • Lab • Debate • Project-based group work • Entrepreneurial activity • Guest lecture with an application focus

Work-integrated Learning Defined

In contrast to the above, work-integrated learning is understood to be the pedagogical practice whereby students come to learn from the integration of experiences in education and workplace settings (Billett, 2009). While there are several working definitions of WIL (BHER, 2016; Billett, 2009; Patrick, Peach & Pocknee, 2009; Academica Group Inc., 2011), the main definitional criteria include the following:

1. Participation in workplace activities
2. Connection with academic curriculum
3. Integrated learning

Participation in Workplace Activities

There are many forms of structured work experience in which a student may take part. These range along a continuum from project implementation (e.g., research project, project-based consulting, entrepreneurial developments) to work participation, in which students participate in the day-to-day activities of a real-world workplace (Stirling et al., 2016). The authenticity of the WIL experience is measured from low to high, considering both the alignment to real-world tasks and the proximity to current workplace settings (Bosco & Ferns, 2014). The full range of these experiences constitutes participation in workplace activity.

Connection with Academic Curriculum

In work-integrated learning, students partake in the work experience at the same time as they are enrolled in an academic program. The WIL experience must be tied to the student’s broader academic

curriculum and field of study, cultivating deep learning, independent synthesis, and/or application of experiences in both the academic and workplace settings. Approaches to connecting WIL within the curriculum of academic programs include cohesive, scaffolding, and targeted approaches, among others (Campbell, Russell & Higgs, 2014; Stirling et al. 2016).

Integrated Learning

Learning is facilitated in partnership between the academic institution and the workplace, and through a student’s engagement in both settings. WIL is then achieved through the integration of the work experience with classroom learning (Billett, 2009). It provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned in class in a workplace setting, and in turn to enhance classroom learning with lessons learned in the workplace. Learning outcomes may be academic and/or career-related (e.g., discipline-specific competencies, technology competencies, learning competencies, transferable competencies, competencies of employability, etc.).

As with any other pedagogy, in order to achieve integrated learning, the delivery of WIL should be grounded in learning theory. Activity theory (Vygotsky, 1978), situativity theory (Dunning & Artino, 2011), situated learning theory (Anderson, Reder & Simon, 1996), and workplace pedagogy (Billett, 1996; 2002) are all theoretical frameworks that may be used to inform the quality of student learning and development through WIL. Perhaps the most commonly used theory to ground the design and delivery of WIL is experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), which may explain why the terms “work-integrated learning” and “experiential learning” are often used interchangeably.

To be considered WIL, an experience should fulfill the three criteria described above. Activities that can be structured to align with the principles of WIL include but are not limited to:

Table 2. Examples of Work-integrated Learning Activities

Work-integrated Learning Activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-op • Placement • Practicum • Internship • Professional experience year • Independent or applied research project • Field experience • Community-engaged learning project • Service learning course • Incubator and accelerator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research/teaching assistantship • Knowledge mobilization activity with workplace/community • Science to society project • Research/project-based consulting • Entrepreneurial development • Other activities that are demonstrably linked to a specific engagement with a workplace or community agency and that meet the above criteria

Community-engaged Learning Defined

Community-engaged learning (CEL) broadly refers to activities in which students contribute to meaningful projects within a community for the purpose of addresses existing needs of individuals, agencies or organizations that are not currently being met, as well as enhancing student learning and development. Combining learning goals and community service, CEL provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their social and civic responsibilities. Community-engaged learning can also be experiential learning if it is grounded in experiential learning theory. While some consider community-

engaged learning to be a form of work-integrated learning when the concept of the workplace is broadened to include various community settings (Academica Group Inc., 2011), others argue that the purpose of CEL is fundamentally different from that of WIL in that students engaged in CEL respond to needs identified by the community partner (Furco, 1996). Community-engaged learning differs from other forms of experiential or work-integrated learning by its intent to benefit equally the provider and the recipient of the service, as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring (Furco, 2010).

Like both experiential and work-integrated learning, community-engaged learning may be academic and credit-bearing or co-curricular and non-credit bearing. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) define academic community-engaged learning as an “educational experience that allows students to (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 112). Academic CEL therefore occurs within the context of a course and provides students with an opportunity to observe the material they are studying in the broader community and bring their community experience back to the classroom. Students learn about the context in which service is provided, as well as about how this relates to their role as citizens. When occurring as part of an academic course, the community engagement is often referred to as “service learning.”

Models of Community Engagement

Butin (2005; 2010) has developed four models of community engagement that may be applied to both academic and co-curricular community engagement. These models are not independent from one another, but rather overlapping and complementary (Butin, 2005).

- *Technical*: Focuses on pedagogical effectiveness and innovation
- *Cultural*: Emphasizes the meaning of the program for the individuals and institutions involved
- *Political*: Empowers marginalized groups in society with historically disempowered voices
- *Anti-foundational*: Focuses on how community engagement creates, sustains, and/or disrupts norms, stereotypes, and simplistic views of the world

The “Four Rs” of Community Engagement

In addition to the four models of community engagement, a set of criteria known as the “4 Rs” upholds community-engaged learning as legitimate, ethical, and useful (Butin, 2010).

- *Respect*: The activity is mindful of the context and people being served
- *Reciprocity*: The service is mutually beneficial to both the student and the community organization
- *Relevance*: The activity is linked to the content of the student’s curriculum
- *Reflection*: Opportunities for student reflection provide context and meaning to the experience and necessary support for learning.

To be considered community-engaged learning, an experience should fulfill the criteria described above. Activities that can be structured to align with the principles of community-engaged learning include but are not limited to:

Table 3. Examples of Community-engaged Learning Activities

Academic Activities	Co-Curricular Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service learning course • Service learning placement/practicum/internship • Community-engaged research/scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community day events and discussions • Alternative reading week • Community action projects • Community tutoring • Community volunteering

A Common Term: Integrated Learning Experiences (ILEs)

Despite some key differences, experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning all provide students with the ability to bridge theoretical and practical learning and to observe how the material they have learned in class takes shape in the world. For this reason, as well as for ease of reference, this paper uses “integrated learning experiences” (ILEs) as an umbrella term to include examples of experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning that integrate disciplinary outcomes with community engagement and competency development as described above.

Figure 2. The Role of ILEs in the Pedagogical Model



ILEs refer to activities that meet *all three* of the following criteria:

1. *Community engagement*: Students engage with community and/or workplace stakeholders, members, agencies or organizations from the University and/or larger communities (local, provincial, national, global) for the mutually beneficial achievement of educational and community goals in a context of partnership and reciprocity.
2. *Integration with disciplinary outcomes*: Students apply disciplinary learning to hands-on practice with community stakeholders, and/or use practical experience to inform further study and disciplinary-specific objectives.
3. *Competency development*: Students develop general competencies through the integration of disciplinary outcomes with community engagement. These might include learning competencies (e.g., learning how to learn), technology competencies (e.g., computer software), and/or transferable competencies (e.g., critical thinking, leadership, communication, teamwork, global

fluency, intercultural competencies, or attitudes about social responsibility and social justice). Students should be aware of the competencies they are developing.

To be considered an ILE, an experience should fulfill the three criteria described above. Activities that can be structured to align with the definition of ILEs include but are not limited to:

Table 4. Examples of ILEs

Integrated Learning Experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-op • Placement • Practicum • Internship • Professional experience year • Independent or applied research project • Field experience • Community-engaged learning project • Community-engaged research/scholarship • Service learning course • Community event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge mobilization activity with workplace/community • Science to society project • Research/project-based consulting • Incubator and accelerator • Research/teaching assistantship • Entrepreneurial development • Community action project • Other activities that are demonstrably linked to a specific engagement with community and that meet the above criteria

ILEs can be grounded in any one of the pedagogies of experiential learning, work-integrated learning, and/or community-engaged learning. ILEs must be assessed, and may or may not be credit-bearing.

Integrated Learning Experiences at the University of Toronto

ILEs can play an important role in enhancing the educational experiences of students at the University of Toronto. However, any growth of ILEs should occur in a manner that is strategic, thoughtful, and maximizes these benefits. This section describes how the institution might manage an expansion in ILEs, while the next section provides guidance on ensuring the quality of ILEs at the University.

1. Expansion of ILEs at the University of Toronto should be aligned with the University's strengths, objectives, and existing institutional priorities.
 - a. The University of Toronto is widely recognized as Ontario's leading research institution. ILEs aligned with this focus might include, among others, independent or applied research projects, community-engaged research and scholarship, research assistantships, or knowledge mobilization in the community. This guideline need not require that every opportunity involve research. The focus on research might instead be observed, for example, in the empirical basis supporting the design or structure of an opportunity, in the evidence-based evaluation of ILEs, or in the learning outcomes and activities of the experience itself.
 - b. One of the President's priorities for the University is to strengthen and deepen key international partnerships, and the University of Toronto is also recognized as a prime hiring ground for international companies in search of thought leaders. Therefore, ILEs that provide students with international experience and that build relationships with international employers would also be a suggested area for growth consistent with institutional priorities.

- c. Each Faculty possesses unique strengths and experience in the delivery of various ILEs. A focus on institutional priorities should also recognize that each Faculty might have different foci with respect to the growth of their opportunities. Where possible, however, it is advised that Faculties work in concert to strengthen the institution as a whole.
2. The University recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to ILEs for interested students and of integrating underrepresented student groups and student populations that face barriers to participation.
 - a. It is important to consider the unique needs of diverse student populations in the provision of ILEs, including equitable access to resources, information, and opportunities to practice.
 - b. Support should be provided to students at all stages of ILEs, including before, during, and after the experience.
 - c. Collaboration with relevant student support and learning services is encouraged to assist in the creation of individualized learning and accommodation plans for ILEs, as relevant to a student's needs.
3. Since educational excellence is paramount in the provision of all opportunities at the University of Toronto, ILEs across undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs should always be pedagogically sound and provide high-quality education.
 - a. Recognizing that the value of ILEs is in its pedagogical grounding, attention should be paid to ensure excellence in programming through considerations of authenticity, alignment of classroom and community learning activities, assessment and evaluation, learning support, partnership, and theoretical grounding.
 - b. In order to maintain academic rigour, academic units should consider the progression of ILEs across the undergraduate and graduate curricula in their fields to ensure that they are best positioned to complement other curricular components. This consideration of progression may include scaffolding of learning outcomes, number or length of opportunities, breadth and depth of ILEs, desirability of opportunities, and/or the degree of authenticity of the experience.
 - c. Where possible, solutions to growth and implementation of ILEs developed at the level of the academic unit are preferable, and the University will work to facilitate these solutions to the extent possible.
 - d. Students should be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their experience and receive feedback. This reflection and feedback should also build students' ability to connect the community experience with disciplinary outcomes and think about and describe the competencies they developed during the experience.
4. Student participation in various ILEs should be tracked by the institution, and these records should be made available for students to observe their own progression. This could also include tracking of student reflection about their experiences, and the associated competencies developed. This tracking should apply equally to relevant curricular and co-curricular activities.
5. The University recognizes the need for appropriate administrative support and training for units and community members who engage in ILEs, including students, staff, faculty, and teaching assistants.

6. The University recognizes the need to establish formal agreements with community partners to develop appropriate policies and procedures concerning standards for student supervision while on site, health and safety requirements, human rights and equity laws, discrimination, harassment, workplace violence, liability, indemnification, insurance, privacy and confidentiality, ethics, intellectual property, and any other relevant considerations to safeguard the quality of the student learning experience.

Creating Quality Integrated Learning Experiences

The value of ILEs lies not in what they are, but in what they do and how they do it: ILEs integrate theory and practice to enhance student learning in carefully chosen, authentic activities that contextualize learning and support the transfer of competencies from the classroom to an authentic community environment, and vice versa. The assessment of learning and competency development is thus critical to effective ILEs, along with students' iterative reflections on what they are doing and how it relates to their learning.

The quality of ILEs will have a bearing on their ability to actualize the potential for impact described above. While the hallmarks of quality can differ somewhat based on the context and the type of ILE, the following may serve as guiding quality criteria for ILE delivery at the University of Toronto:

Quality Criteria	Description
Authenticity	The experience should be meaningful, with appropriate levels of student autonomy and responsibility. The student should make a valuable contribution to the community or workplace organization. The degree of authenticity can be assessed based on the proximity of the student activities to the community setting and the similarity of student activities to the real-world tasks of the community.
Alignment of Classroom and Community Learning Activities	The experience should align with the student's academic and life goals, broadly defined. It is paramount that students develop intentional learning outcomes and a plan to achieve them. Learning outcomes should be tied to the student's academic program of study, as well as their goals for competency development (e.g., discipline-specific competencies, technology competencies, transferable competencies, learning competencies, essential skills). The connection of theory and practice is achieved through deliberately designed curricular and community activities that facilitate the transfer of learning between academic and community settings in alignment with the learning outcomes set.
Assessment and Evaluation	Ongoing assessment of student learning and competence is important for a high-quality ILE. This includes both formative and summative assessments relative to the intended learning outcomes, along with the provision of constructive feedback to students. Evaluation of the administration of the ILEs is also important to ensure quality student development.
Learning Support	Supporting student learning in ILEs includes the provision of administrative, social, psychological, and learning supports before, during, and after the community experience. The availability of support services at both the academic institution and the community organization should be made explicit to students as a part of the ILE. Examples of learning supports include: orientations, mentorship, community/workplace supervision, educational supervision,

counselling, training opportunities, accessibility services, health and wellness services, management of health and safety, insurance coverage, conflict management, debriefing.

Partnership	The quality of ILEs is influenced by the partnership between the stakeholders involved. The development and maintenance of partnerships between academic and community organizations influences the preparation and organization of students and community supervisors for the ILE. Students also play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of the practice and directing their own learning and engagement within the community experience. Academic deans, directors, faculty, staff, sessional instructors, and teaching assistants in both the academic and community settings all contribute to the development and delivery of ILEs that are purposefully designed and tied to the intended learning outcomes. Partnership development and maintenance is a shared responsibility. It includes establishing, maintaining, and troubleshooting relationships with community partners, keeping records, maintaining contact, addressing ethical issues related to placements, and ensuring mutual respect, relevance and reciprocity.
Theoretical Grounding	ILEs should be structured deliberately and grounded in student learning theory. This theoretical grounding provides a conceptual framework to maximize quality through intentional design, effective delivery, supportive resources, and appropriate assessment of student learning.

Adapted from Butin, 2010; Smith & Worsfold, 2015; Stirling et al., 2016

Conclusion

The current climate presents the University of Toronto with an unrivaled opportunity to enrich the breadth of its offerings to students by growing its integrated learning experiences, including its experiential, work-integrated, and community-engaged learning offerings. This growth would collectively enhance both the student learning experience and the University's ability to support broader community and societal needs.

To support this growth, this white paper closes with the following recommendations.

RETHINKING HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA

Recommendations

- 1) Expansion of integrated learning experiences (ILEs) at the University of Toronto should be aligned with the University's strengths, objectives, and existing institutional priorities.
- 2) Educational quality should be paramount in the provision of all ILEs.
 - ILEs should be structured deliberately and grounded in student learning theory.
 - The experience should align with the student's academic and life goals, broadly defined.
 - The experience should be authentic and meaningful, with appropriate levels of student autonomy and responsibility.
 - Student learning and competency development should be assessed throughout the experience, including both formative and summative assessments relative to the intended learning outcomes.
- 3) Where possible, solutions to the growth and implementation of ILEs developed at the level of the academic unit are preferable.
 - Academic units should work in concert to identify strengths, priorities, and areas of growth that would strengthen the institution as a whole.
 - In order to maintain academic rigour, academic units should consider the progression of ILEs across their curricula.
 - The University should ensure equitable access to ILEs and integrate underrepresented student groups and student populations that face barriers to participation.
- 4) The University should improve its infrastructure for cataloguing ILE opportunities and for tracking student participation in them.
 - The University should identify and track existing ILEs across the three campuses. Among other things, a catalogue could be used to identify opportunities for growth.
 - Institutional tracking of ILEs should be made available for students to identify prospective ILE opportunities.
 - Where possible, the University should seek opportunities to develop shared tracking services across campuses, Faculties, academic units, and co-curricular programming.
- 5) The University should mobilize existing resource across the three campuses to provide administrative support for ILEs.
 - This should include best practice training and resources for units and community members who engage in ILEs, including students, staff, faculty, and teaching assistants.
 - The institution should provide students with administrative, social, psychological, and learning supports before, during, and after the ILE. The availability of support services should be made explicit to students.
 - The institution should support community partnerships for the provision of ILEs, including support of partnership agreements and the agreed upon elements therein.

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