

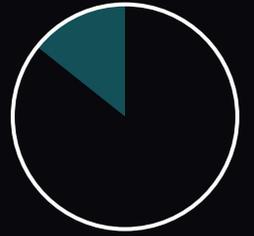
DEFINING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Learn more about work-integrated learning (WIL) options and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Work-integrated learning (WIL) can be incorporated into programs of study in many ways. This quick guide will give you an overview of available WIL options and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The Alberta Post-Secondary Programs department released its Guidelines for Work Integrated Learning in late 2020 and defines WIL as “experiential learning in a workplace setting, including cooperative education, internship, service learning, field placement, mandatory clinical placement, or directed field study” (Alberta Advanced Education, 2020, p.1).

CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



WANT MORE?



The Business and Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) is a Canadian leader in work-integrated learning. Find out more...

<https://www.bher.ca/category/reports/taking-pulse-work-integrated-learning-canada-full-report>

<https://www.bher.ca/>

One of BHER's goals is ensuring that all Canadian post-secondary students benefit from some type of work-integrated learning before they graduate. In fact, BHER's work with the Government of Canada is guided by the goal of creating 44 thousand WIL opportunities for students (Business and Higher Education Roundtable, n.d.). Learn more at bher.ca

DEFINING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Structured Work Experience:

Becoming familiar with the field of work as part of the program of study

Type of WIL	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages	Programs Most Commonly found in
Cooperative Education	Periods of study alternate with work placements (min 30% of program). Typically a paid placement	<p>Structured approach that integrates studies into the field experientially</p> <p>Facilitate entry into the labour market</p> <p>Graduates tend to earn higher salaries in their first years of work</p>	<p>Resource intensive (job placement, operations, faculty roles) for the institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • IT • Engineering • Health • Hospitality • Applied Sciences • Math • Arts • Social Sciences
Internships	Work experience, usually a year or more in length, near the end of the program. Typically a paid placement, but unpaid occurs.	<p>Integration of studies into the workplace</p> <p>Career exploration</p> <p>Perceived employability</p> <p>Facilitate entry into the labour market</p>	<p>Substantial variation in pre-requisites, work conditions, pay, and hours</p> <p>Conflicting research results on the benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Marketing • Social Sciences • Engineering
Mandatory Professional Practice (i.e., clinical placement, practicums, and preceptorships)	Work placements required for professional license. Paid and unpaid.	<p>Integration of studies into the workplace</p> <p>Awareness of career options and increases employability</p> <p>Build specific job skills</p> <p>Move from observer to practitioner</p>	<p>Tend to have a narrow focus on technical skills and inconsistencies in supervision</p> <p>Securing high-quality placements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health sciences • Social work • Accounting • Engineering • Veterinary • Law • Kinesiology
Field Placement	Work related placements that are not required for a professional license. Typically unpaid.	<p>Hands on experience in a workplace</p> <p>On or off campus</p> <p>Broad range of learning outcomes can be accommodated (i.e., learning a specific skill to general learning about the field)</p> <p>Builds inter- and intra-personal skills and self-efficacy</p> <p>Career exploration</p>	<p>Difficult to find sufficient placements</p> <p>Inconsistency in quality of placement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Tourism/hospitality • Community services • Health Sciences • Communications/journalism

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Directed Field Study (DFS)	Comprises the fourth year of study of an applied degree program and provides career preparation in specific fields and industries through a combination of theoretical and experiential learning.	Integration of studies into the workplace Build specific job skills	Unpaid DFS can be a financial burden for learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human services

Institutional Partnerships:

Activities offered by the post-secondary institution that achieve industry or community goals

Type of WIL	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages	Programs Most Commonly found in
Applied Research	Research project, usually with an industry partner, designed to solve a real-world problem. Paid and unpaid.	Solving a real-world problem Produces prototypes for industry research partners Work experience and connections to industry Confidence building	Capstone project design can lead to conflicts between faculty and clients Lack of soft skills in learners, which are critical to the success of the project Significant effort on the part of faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sciences • Environmental studies, Technology • Business • Marketing • Communications
Service Learning	A range of activities that provide benefit to the learning experience and the service provider	Promote civic and academic outcomes Increases civic participation and responsibility Improves sense of efficacy and accomplishment Can develop leadership, problem solving, and communication skills Career exploration	Typical means of assessment (e.g., exams) don't measure the academic improvement through service learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts • Business • Health • Social services • Education • Environmental studies • Social sciences • Global studies • Women's studies • Communications • Engineering

BHER also notes the following as emerging trends in WIL.

Type of WIL	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages	Programs Most Commonly found in
Incubators and Accelerators	Space for aspiring entrepreneurs that provides business assistance. Typically must apply to access the resources	Mentorship from experienced practitioners Funding Builds skills in entrepreneurship	Funding required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Technology
Bootcamps and Hackathons	Short, intensive courses or programs focused on skill development. Usually a private educational opportunity, but movement towards offering as an upskilling or recruitment opportunity in PSE.	In-demand skills learned in a short amount of time Responsive to changes in industry Experiential Mentorship from experienced practitioners Connected to community support networks	High tuition fees Regulated in only BC and Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer science • Engineering • Technology fields
Badges/Co-Curricular Records	A way of documenting the knowledge and skills built in WIL	Authenticates learning outside of the program of study Visible to possible employees Verifiable and portable	Not all fields and employers recognize them yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology • Growing in multiple fields