

Guidelines for the FFC Experiential Learning (EL) Requirement

Rationale for the Experiential Learning (EL) Requirement

The goal of this requirement is to ensure that students make connections between their classroom learning and a substantive experience outside the traditional classroom. In so doing, students will be expected to deepen their understanding through the integration of their academic learning with experientially-based work. By connecting theory and practice, students develop new skills and extend their knowledge and training to unfamiliar tasks and situations beyond the classroom environment. Employers increasingly expect students to have multiple substantive out-of-class learning experiences, so it is necessary for all students to have at least one of these experiences.

Criteria for Experiential Learning (EL) Designation

The Experiential Learning requirement is fulfilled in two parts: first, undergoing an appropriate experience; second, producing a written reflection based upon the experience.

The designated experience must provide students with experiential learning outside of a traditional classroom. These include the following:

1. Pre-approved, credit-based options (minimum of 1.0 credit):
 - a. Course with an EL tag
 - b. For-credit internship
 - c. Approved off-campus study
 - d. Senior thesis
 - e. Independent research or creative project
 - f. For-credit summer research
 - g. Fractional experiential credits that sum to 1.0 credit

2. Non-Credit Options that Require Approval
 - a. Non-credit experiential project
 - b. Retroactive experiential project

In the written reflection (completed after the end of the experience) students must submit a written reflection (500-word minimum) that adheres to the following guidelines:

- Summarize the project and evaluate how it applied skills that they gained in the classroom.
- Explain how the project added new skills to their competencies.
- Articulate how they will describe to a prospective employer, graduate school, or other audience the ways in which this experience contributed to and enhanced their education.

Guidelines for FFC Designation: Experiential Learning (EL)

Approved experiential learning opportunities will be approximately equivalent to the workload of one Lake Forest course (a minimum of 150 hours).

For all non-course EL options, students must:

1. complete a minimum of 150 hours of experientially-focused activities.
 - a. Travel time in itself does not count toward the total time for the experientially-focused activities.
2. have a supervisor (faculty member, internship supervisor, director of global engagement, etc.) who will judge whether the requirement has been fulfilled.
 - a. The supervisor should assist students with setting specific learning goals for their experience.
 - b. The supervisor determines whether a student satisfies the EL requirement, based upon the student's completion of experience and suitable written reflection.
3. submit the written reflection, which will not be graded. Instead, the supervisor may ask the student to revise the reflection until it meets expectations and appropriately fulfills the requirement.
 - a. See the [FFC-EL FAQ Guide](#) for specifics.

For a graded course with an EL tag, the course must:

1. devote a minimum of 14 hours (at least 1/3 of the total class time for a semester-length course) to experientially-focused activities outside of a traditional classroom for each student. The remainder of the course and course activities count towards the overall 150-hour minimum.
2. ensure that at least 25% of the course grade must be based upon experientially-focused activities outside of a traditional classroom.
 - a. These activities will not simply bring students outside the classroom; rather, they will allow students to apply knowledge and build hands-on skills in a new context. Accordingly, whereas multiple field trips to off-campus venues undoubtedly enrich instruction, those alone would not be sufficient to gain the experiential learning tag for a course.
 - b. Examples of three courses that could serve as models for the experiential learning tag are found at the end of this document.
3. allow students to integrate classroom learning with the experientially-focused activities. Instructors may choose to include a variety of activities beyond the culminating reflection to help students process the value of their experience. These could include:
 - a. Journals with specific prompts
 - b. Participation in mock interviews allowing students to practice articulating the value of their experience
 - c. Conducting informational interviews of previous participants in a given experience to explore how others honed and used skills

- d. Attending presentations by alumni or employers who address the potential career applications of particular skills
4. collect the written reflection, which will not be graded. Instead it will be evaluated as either complete or incomplete once it has satisfied the aforementioned guidelines.
 - a. The instructor may ask the student to revise the reflection until it meets expectations and fulfills the requirement.
 - b. The instructor may assign an incomplete in the course until the written reflection has been submitted and approved.
 - c. See the [FFC-EL FAQ Guide](#) for specifics.
5. be approved for the EL tag through either the New Course Proposal (NCP) process or the Course Change Request (CCR) process, both of which are governed by the Curricular Policies Committee (CPC). Both the NCP and CCR forms ask faculty to respond to the following prompts:
 - a. Will the course include experientially-focused activities outside of a traditional classroom requiring an amount of time equivalent to at least 1/3 of the total class time for a semester-length course for each student (a minimum of 14 hours)? (Time commitment excludes travel time).
 - b. How will the experience build upon the student's completed classroom work?
 - c. What new skills/competencies can students expect to gain through this course? (Please summarize skills students will gain and how these may relate to their other academic experiences and to post-graduate outcomes.)
 - d. How will the instructor integrate the required written reflection into the course experience? (Please explain how students will develop their capability to describe the value of this course to a target audience (employer, graduate school, etc.)

Once approved by CPC, the course will begin carrying the new EL tag in the following academic year because the College Catalog can only be updated annually (e.g., if approved by CPC 2021-2022, the new tag will become active for 2022-2023).

In rare situations, a Course Change Request (CCR) can lead to a “tag transition issue” where a course is being taught with new tags in mind, but the new tags won’t actually take effect until the following academic year. In such cases, a student who prefers that their records reflect the new (not-yet-official) tags can submit an individual appeal to the Academic Appeals Board (AAB) for this exception.

Assessment of the FFC Experiential Learning (EL) Requirement

Each year, all written reflections will be sent to a common email address for archiving (FFC_reflection@lakeforest.edu). In the year when the EL requirement is assessed, the Assessment Committee will conduct a blind review of a sample of the stored EL written reflections using a standardized assessment rubric based on the written reflection guidelines.

Sample Courses with EL Tags

BIOL 384: Plant Biology

Course description: This course aims to provide a thorough knowledge and understanding of land and aquatic plants, photosynthetic protists and fungi, including: molecular biology; chemical organization and genetics; structures and functions of plant cells, tissues, and organs; principles of systematic botany, nomenclature, and classification; evolutionary relationships among the major groups; and the relationship between plants and their environments. An emphasis on hands-on experimentation will allow students to design experiments, analyze data, and present their results. Three 50-minute lectures and one 3-hour lab per week are required. Prerequisites: BIOL 220, and either BIOL 221 or Junior status. Cross-listed as: ES 384

Rationale for EL tag: In this course, students complete mini internships at the Chicago Botanical Garden (CBG), devoting 16 hours on site at the CBG over a four-week period. Students work closely with on-site mentors at the CBG who are either PhD-level scientists running research programs at the CBG or their graduate students from the Northwestern graduate program in Plant Biology and Conservation.

EDUC 304: Elementary Fieldwork and Seminar

Course description: Half-day pre-student teaching fieldwork practicum in the elementary school. Elementary licensure candidates complete 150 hours of supervised classroom observation and participation. Placements are arranged by the Education Department and supervised by faculty within the Education Department on a biweekly basis. Placement in a multicultural setting with a focus on instructional strategies for English language learners (ELLs) is required. This course must be taken concurrently with Education 303. Prerequisites: Education 210 and licensure candidate status.⁴

Rationale for EL tag: In this course, students complete 150 hours of supervised classroom observation.

CHEM 321: Physical Chemistry II

Course description: The course explores the energy, dynamic behavior, and properties of large groups of molecules. Content includes the behavior of non-ideal gases, the kinetic theory of gases, thermodynamics, chemical kinetics, and reaction-rate theory. The laboratory focuses on kinetics and thermodynamics with a culminating independent project-based experience. Prerequisite: CHEM 221 and MATH 111 or MATH 116. Prerequisite or co-requisite: PHYS 111 or PHYS 121.

Rationale for EL tag: In this course, students develop independent projects that are similar to project they might work while employed as a professional chemist in industry.