

UWSP's General Education Program Experiential Learning

Students benefit from opportunities to learn by reflecting on experiences beyond their typical classroom activities and by applying the knowledge and skills they gain from traditional courses in new settings. To this end, students are required to complete an Experiential Learning requirement as part of UWSP's new General Education Program (GEP).

To fulfill this requirement, students will:

- Complete an approved experiential learning project.
- Reflect on the experiential learning activity in order to gain further understanding of their university education, and an enhanced sense of one's personal responsibility as a member of a larger community. (Note: "Community" in this context is defined as any of the various on- or off-campus departments, units, or organizations with whom students might work to complete their Experiential Learning requirement.)

Experiential learning is a broad concept, including many types of active, hands-on learning opportunities. It is an example of a "high-impact teaching practice" that has been shown to enhance a student's comprehension of course material, to enable students to see connections between theory and practice, to aid in student retention, and to develop a student's sense of responsibility for their education. Moreover, experiential learning provides students with an experience that aids in the development of leadership skills and responsible citizenship.

Experiential learning is the synthesis of a hands-on experience with some relevant aspect of a student's university education. This synthesis of experience with learning takes place in the context of a structured reflection activity. An appropriate reflection activity will vary depending on the experiential learning activity and the intended learning outcomes.

In some cases, students can satisfy this requirement by completing a structured, credit-bearing course that has been proposed by an academic department and approved by the General Education Committee. Departments proposing the credit-bearing course or experience will use their best judgment when determining the number of hours required, as well as the type of reflection required of students. In other cases, however, students may elect to satisfy this requirement by completing an Experiential Learning Activity (ELA).

What follows are some general guidelines for proposing Experiential Learning (XL) courses, and also the Experiential Learning Activity (ELA).

Guidelines for Experiential Learning Courses (XL)

Please refer to the GEP Course Application form for Experiential Learning. In short, this application form will prompt you to identify your course learning outcomes and explain how your course learning outcomes align with the outcomes for Experiential Learning. In addition to this, you will be asked to identify the key experiential learning components that will be part of the course and how student learning will be assessed. An important part of assessing student learning is to identify a meaningful and appropriate reflection activity. The GEP Course Application form for Experiential Learning prompts you to provide this information.

Guidelines for an Experiential Learning Activity (ELA)

Students may elect to satisfy the Experiential Learning requirement by engaging in an “Experiential Learning Activity” (ELA). These ELAs are approved by individual faculty or academic staff members who agree to serve as an “ELA Mentor” for the student. Depending on the type of ELA, examples of appropriate Mentors could be a faculty member with whom a student arranges an independent study or collaborates on undergraduate research or a creative performance, a student organization advisor, a residence hall director, an academic advisor, a Student Affairs academic staff member who supervises one of the activities listed in the following examples of ELAs. Students will complete a reflection activity that synthesizes the student’s experience with an enhanced understanding of responsible citizenship, leadership, and/or the scholarly aims of a discipline. Students can complete this experiential learning requirement by engaging in at least one of the following types of Experiential Learning Activities:

1. Independent Studies, Undergraduate Research, and Creative Performances:

Students can complete an ELA by engaging in an appropriate discipline-specific, credit-bearing independent study, research project, or creative performance in conjunction with a faculty supervisor or academic advisor.

See the following for examples:

- <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/research/symposium/>
- <http://www.uwsp.edu/cls/subpages/ResearchSymposium/index.aspx>
- Participation in one of the many art, dance, music or theater opportunities offered in the College of Fine Arts and Communication or the Stevens Point area community.

2. Community Service Projects:

Students can complete an ELA by engaging in a community service project.

Examples include:

- A Foreign Language major volunteers to tutor for a local literacy council.
- A Women’s Studies minor volunteers for Sexual Assault Victim Services.
- An English or Communication major volunteers to put together a newsletter for a local community group.

3. Student Leadership Experiences:

Students can complete an ELA by participating as leaders in Student Government, holding officer positions in student organizations recognized by the Student Involvement and Employment Office (SIEO) , or participating in Residence Hall activities. Students must do more than just attend meetings as an organization member or hall resident, however. Students must hold an officer position or some other position that has significant responsibilities.

See the following for examples:

- <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuorg/sga/>
- <https://mypoint.uwsp.edu/SIEO/SIEO004/SIEO004.aspx>
- <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/sieo/index.asp>
- <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuorg/rha/>

4. Professional Development through Paid or Unpaid Work Experiences or Internships:

Students can complete an ELA in paid or unpaid work experiences and summer internships.

Examples include:

- A student (in any major) who plans to work in human resources sets up a job shadow with a retail store manager where she/he has a part-time job.
- A student completes a non-course-based internship.
- A History major or Anthropology minor works as a guide in a museum during the summer.

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) Expectations & Responsibilities Checklist (draft)

For Students:

1. Check to make sure that your major has not already designated an experience or activity required for your major that satisfies the Experiential Learning requirement.
2. If not, discuss ELA options with your academic advisor.
3. Ask an appropriate UWSP faculty or staff member to serve as your ELA Mentor.
4. Complete I- IV of the ELA Plan Form.
5. Meet with your ELA Mentor to discuss your ELA Plan Form.
 - a. Determine whether the activity is appropriate to achieve the learning outcomes for Experiential Learning.
 - b. If not, work with your ELA Mentor to modify activity or choose a different one.
 - c. Agree on an appropriate reflection type (section V).
 - d. Agree on scheduled meeting dates and times as well as the reflection due date (section VI).
 - e. Sign and date the ELA Plan form.
6. Meet with your ELA Mentor as agreed upon in section VI of the ELA Plan form to discuss how the ELA is going. Use the questions in the ELA Reflection Guide to guide your discussion(s).
7. Request that your ELA Mentor assess your progress.
 - a. If you successfully complete the ELA, your Mentor will indicate completion of the ELA requirement to the Records & Registration office for entry in to your record.
 - b. If not, at your ELA Mentor's discretion, you may reapply to use the same ELA with the same Mentor with the suggested modifications, or your ELA Mentor can request that you choose a new ELA project and/or Mentor.

For Faculty and Staff ELA Mentors:

1. Complete ELA Mentor training.
2. Meet with student and discuss her/his ELA Plan form.
 - a. Determine whether the activity is appropriate to achieve the learning outcomes for Experiential Learning.
 - b. If not, work with student to modify activity or choose a different one.
 - c. Agree on an appropriate reflection type (section V).
 - d. Agree on scheduled meeting dates and times as well as the reflection due date (section VI).
 - e. Sign and date the ELA Plan Form.
3. Meet with student as agreed upon in section VI of the ELA Plan form to discuss how the ELA is going. Use the questions in the ELA Reflection Guide to guide your discussion(s).
4. Using the ELA Assessment Rubric, determine whether student has completed the Experiential Learning requirement.
 - a. If yes, indicate completion of the ELA requirement to the Records & Registration office for entry in to the student's official record.
 - b. If not, at your discretion, student may reapply to use the same ELA with suggested modifications, or you can request that the student choose a new ELA project and/or Mentor.

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) Planning Form (draft)

Students: You must submit your completed ELA Plan Form to your ELA Mentor BEFORE you begin your ELA.

I. Student Information

Name _____ ID# _____
Major(s)/Minor(s) _____

II. ELA Mentor Information

Name _____
Department/Unit _____
Completed the ELA Mentor Training: Yes No

III. Experiential Learning Activity Information (check one and fill out corresponding information)

- Independent Study, Undergraduate Research, and Creative Performance**
Type of activity: _____
Supervisor, if not ELA mentor _____
- Community Service Project**
Type of activity: _____
Supervisor, if not ELA mentor _____
- Student Leadership Experience**
Type of activity: _____
Supervisor, if not ELA mentor _____
- Professional Development through Paid or Unpaid Work Experiences or Internships**
Type of activity: _____
Supervisor, if not ELA mentor _____

IV. ELA Planning

Describe your Experiential Learning Activity.

Describe your position and responsibilities.

How many hours do you expect to spend on this activity? (note: minimum 16 hours total required)

Describe the orientation and supervision you will receive for this activity.

What do you expect to learn from the proposed activity?

How does this activity either relate to the subject matter of a course, to your major or minor, or to the 4th program outcome of the GEP: "Students will apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems"?

How will this activity help you develop or enhance your sense of personal responsibility as a member of the larger community you are working with?

V. Reflection Information (check at least one)

- written reflection (1 page minimum)
- one-on-one interview (15 minutes minimum)
- small group discussion (30 minutes minimum)
- oral presentation (15 minutes minimum)
- media presentation (15 minutes minimum)
- journal (5 pages minimum)
- other ELA mentor-approved reflection (describe below)

VI. Student/Mentor Meeting and Activity Completion Information

Scheduled meeting date(s) and time(s):

Reflection due date: _____

VII. Approval Signatures:

The following signatures of agreement and approval must be secured **BEFORE** the student begins the Experiential Learning Activity.

I have reviewed this student's proposed Experiential Learning Activity and approve it as meeting the UWSP General Education Program Experiential Learning requirement.

I agree to work in collaboration with the student, to monitor the student for the duration of the ELA, and to assess the chosen reflection activity from section V. I agree to provide notification of successful completion of the ELA to the UWSP Records and Registration office.

Faculty/Staff ELA Mentor _____ **Date** _____

Print Name _____ **Phone** _____

I agree to complete this activity by the date agreed in section VI and to work in collaboration with my ELA Mentor. If not, I may reapply for the ELA at the discretion of the ELA Mentor.

Student Signature _____ **Date** _____

Print Name _____ **Student ID #** _____

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) Reflection Guide (draft)

Experiential learning is the synthesis of a hands-on experience with some relevant aspect of your university education. This synthesis of experience with learning takes place in the context of a structured reflection activity. The learning outcome for the UWSP General Education Program Experiential Learning requirement is to “reflect on the Experiential Learning Activity in order to gain further understanding of one’s university education, and an enhanced sense of one’s personal responsibility as a member of a larger community.”

Note: “Community” in this context is defined as any of the various on- or off-campus departments, units, or organizations with whom students might work to complete their ELA.

Regardless of which type of reflection you choose: written reflection, one-on-one interview, small group discussion, oral presentation, media presentation, journal, or some other method of reflection decided upon by you and your ELA mentor, the questions below are to help guide you in your reflection.

- What did you learn about the people in the community you worked with and their similarities or differences to you?
- How were you able to contribute to the goals of the community you worked with?
- What do you feel was your main contribution to the community you worked with?
- What did you learn during your ELA that enhanced your learning gained in the classroom?
- As a result of your ELA, describe how you practiced and improved on one or more of the following:

skills
oral and/or written communication
listening
critical thinking
problem-solving
organizational/interpersonal
leadership
teamwork
computer literacy

characteristics
work ethic
attention to detail
initiative/motivation
honesty/integrity
flexibility/adaptability
self-confidence

- What impact did your ELA have on your everyday life?
- What insights did you gain through your ELA that might assist you in your future career or in selecting a career?
- What did your activity teach you about community involvement, citizenship and civic responsibility?
- What is the relationship of your ELA to the “real world”?
- What was the most difficult part of your experience?
- If you were to start at the beginning of this ELA again, what would you do differently the second time around?

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA)

Assessment Rubric (draft)

Student Name _____ ID # _____

ELA Requirements	Yes + comments	No + comments
The ELA was completed while student was enrolled at UWSP.		
The student submitted an approved ELA Plan form before beginning the activity.		
The ELA meets the 16 hour minimum.		
The reflection meets minimum requirements as stated in section V of the ELA Plan form.		
The student demonstrates in the reflection piece that she/he has an enhanced sense of her/his personal responsibility as a member of a larger community.		

The above student has successfully completed the Experiential Learning Requirement of the UWSP General Education Program.

Faculty/Staff ELA Mentor Signature _____ Date _____

Mentors must retain a copy of the ELA rubric for their own records and future General Education Program assessment purposes and give a copy of the completed ELA Rubric to the student. Mentors must report the completion of the ELA to Registration and Records.