

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is the process through which students come to learn from experiences in educational and practice settings.

WIL includes the kinds of curriculum and pedagogic practices that can assist, provide, and effectively integrate learning experiences in both educational and practice settings.^a

56%

of graduating students in Canada report having some “work and learning program experience”.^b

The biggest reason identified for **not** participating in a work placement was that no opportunities were available through an academic program (56%).^c

Categories of WIL^d

SYSTEMATIC TRAINING, where most learning is done in the workplace (e.g., *Apprenticeships*).

STRUCTURED WORK EXPERIENCE, where students become familiar with the world of work as part of a university or college program (e.g., *Co-op; Internship; Field experience*).

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS are activities or programs offered by a university designed to achieve specific community or industry goals (e.g., *Applied research projects; Service Learning*).

Common Objectives of WIL:^e

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|---|--|
| 1. Applying, developing, and enhancing knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in a work/ community setting. | 3. Developing specific skills within a real work or community setting. |
| 2. Responding to community needs and culture. | 4. Analyzing and researching specific aspects of the work or community contexts. |

WIL at Canadian Universities:

Work and learning program experience by type^b

ANY EXPERIENCE	56%
Work experience	18%
Co-op	17%
Practicum	15%
Service learning	13%
Internship (paid)	9%
Internship (unpaid)	8%

Why should we pay attention to WIL?

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS^f

- The opportunity to combine theory and practice in a real-world work environment, deepening students’ knowledge and understanding, and enhancing work-related capabilities.
- Introduces students to potential career paths they may not otherwise have known about.
- Increases confidence, personal development, and civic engagement.

BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS^f

- Provides access to a reliable supply of new talent, energy and ideas.
- The opportunity to provide feedback on postsecondary programs.
- Creates a hiring pool of potential employees with specific skills.

SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

- Post-secondary institutions are increasingly being called upon by government, think tanks, community groups, and students to demonstrate that graduates are ready and equipped to enter the job market.
- The Canadian Business / Higher Education Roundtable has set a national goal for WIL that aims to ensure 100% of Canadian post-secondary students benefit from some sort of meaningful work-integrated learning before graduation.^a
- The 2019 federal budget set a target to provide every young Canadian access to a work-integrated learning opportunity within ten years by investing \$798.2 million to create 84,000 new student work placements across the country.^g
- Students want post-secondary programs that provide meaningful practice-based learning opportunities.^h
- Donors and potential donors have expressed an interest in supporting work-integrated learning initiatives.ⁱ

WIL in the broader context

Graduate outcomes tend to focus on two types of skills: specialist skills, which are those that develop through strict alignment between an academic program and future occupation; and generalist skills, which are those that are highly transferable across occupations, such as problem-solving and communication. The learning of both types of skills are enhanced through exposure to experiences outside of a typical classroom setting.

Top three most important projected skills for graduates:^j

Active listening

Speaking

Critical thinking

Most in-demand skills as rated by employers:^k

Collaboration and teamwork

Communication skills

Problem-solving skills

People and relationship-building skills

WIL at UWinnipeg

UWinnipeg offers education grounded in the liberal arts where students are encouraged to learn across disciplines and graduate with an ability to think, reason, and write clearly and independently.

UWinnipeg has a long history of creating instructional environments that value experience; where students are encouraged to actively integrate experience with evolving knowledge as they participate in various kinds of community-based assignments and work. This has meant that we consistently graduate students who are ready to continue confidently engaging in their communities and leading in their workplaces.

Historically, between 44% and 49% of UWinnipeg graduating students report participation in some form of WIL.¹

44%
2009

47%
2012

49%
2015

44%
2018

WIL at UWinnipeg by Type^b

	UWINNIPEG	CANADA	GROUP 1 ^m
Practicum	25%	15%	28%
Work Experience	16%	18%	14%
Service Learning	12%	13%	10%
Internship	12%	17%	12%
Co-op	4%	17%	7%

Survey of UWinnipeg Graduates 2017ⁿ

“To what extent did your experiences at UWinnipeg contribute to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?”

	SOME IMPACT	STRONG IMPACT
Thinking critically	38%	56%
Writing clearly and effectively	37%	51%
Conducting scholarly research	35%	49%
Relating to different people	38%	48%
In-depth knowledge of a field or discipline	42%	47%

Snapshot of Integrated Learning at UWinnipeg

In the Spring of 2019, UWinnipeg began a scan of learning opportunities on our campus that integrate classroom work with community and/or business experience. Opportunities at UWinnipeg for various forms of integrated learning span all of our Faculties and take different forms based on the focus and strengths of various disciplines.

1. UWinnipeg has a strong Co-op Program with over 400 industry partners (e.g., Manitoba Hydro, City of Winnipeg, Statistics Canada, RBC). This program is open to students from the **Departments of Economics, Business Administration, and Applied Computer Science** who receive full-time, paid employment in a field directly related to their academic studies.

2. The **Department of Rhetoric, Writing and Communications** offers writing internships where students are placed in an organization off campus, and contribute their writing skills to creating and editing documents, responding to the needs of the organization.

3. In our **Faculty of Education**, every student participates in work-integrated learning through their teaching practicum requirement and a mandatory service learning course that provides students with first-hand experience making an immediate impact in the inner-city community.

4. Students in our **Forest Ecology** program are required to take an intensive two-week field course designed to give students field survival and basic forestry skills.

5. Students in 3rd and 4th year **Geography** courses often work on 4-6 week projects that are defined by industry and/or community partners (e.g. Parks Canada). In these situations, students are functioning as “consultants” working on a project defined by the client.

6. The **Department of Classics** offers an experiential learning course in Classical Archaeology where students gain practical experience in museums, laboratories, archaeological and historical sites, and actively participate in excavations.

7. Students in our **Athletic Therapy** program work with a variety of community sport teams as well as with Wesmen teams on campus.

Supplemental Notes

- a. Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) (2016). Taking the Pulse of Work-integrated Learning in Canada. Retrieved from <http://bher.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/BHER-Academica-report-full.pdf>
The term “work-integrated learning” has been used interchangeably with other, similar terms (e.g., experiential learning, work-based learning, co-operative education, practicum, field education). However, many of these terms are also used to describe specific types of work-integrated learning. This inconsistency can create confusion among employers and students over objectives and expectations and highlights the need for a consistent, broad definition of WIL.
- b. Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC). (2018). Graduating student survey. “Work and learning program experience” includes co-ops, practicums, service learning, and paid and unpaid internships. 32 Canadian universities participated in the survey (n = 14,760).
- c. Abacus Data. (2018). Employment transitions: Study of 1000 Canadians aged 18 to 29.

- Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/casaacae/pages/2620/attachments/original/1530649297/Employment_Transitions_Poll_2018.pdf?1530649297
- d. Sattler, P. (2011). Work-Integrated learning in Ontario's postsecondary sector. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
- e. Rosse, S. & Brown, N. (2013). Developing the field of work integrated learning in higher education: A curricular approach. Retrieved from Canadian Association for Co-operative Education site: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2368953.
- f. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. (2016). A practical guide for work-integrated learning: Effective practices to enhance the educational quality of structured work experiences offered through colleges and universities. Retrieved from <http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/Research/ResPub/Pages/A-Practical-Guide-for-Work-integrated-Learning.aspx>
- g. <https://budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/chap-01-en.html>

- h. Abacus Data. (2016). Work integrated learning and post-secondary education: What students think. Retrieved from <http://bher.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/What-students-think.pdf>
This survey of 1,000 Canadian post-secondary undergraduate students and recent graduates assessed the perceptions and attitudes students have on WIL programs and post-secondary education. It concluded that students overwhelmingly favour post-secondary programs that provide meaningful practice-based learning opportunities. 89% of current students and recent graduates support more work-integrated learning in their programs and 88% think that students who graduate with degrees that offer WIL have an advantage when it comes to finding a job.
- i. The University of Winnipeg Foundation.
- j. Usher, A. & Florizone, R. (2018). The future of work and learning. The Chronicle Herald. Retrieved from <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/business/commentary-the-future-of-work-and-learning-243765/>

- k. Hewitt, A. (2016). Developing Canada's future workforce: A survey of large private-sector employers. Business Council of Canada. Retrieved from <https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/publications/skillsurvey/>
- l. Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC). (2009, 2012, 2015, 2018). Graduating student survey.
- m. “Group 1” consists of universities that offer primarily undergraduate studies and that have smaller student populations. There were 16 universities in this group in the 2018 CUSC Graduating Student Survey (n = 3,531).
- n. UWinnipeg Survey of Graduates. (2017). During the fall of 2017, UWinnipeg contracted Prairie Research Associates, Inc. (PRA) to conduct a survey of UWinnipeg students who had graduated with an undergraduate degree in 2015. 1465 graduates were contacted, with 625 completing the survey for a response rate of 43%.