

Criteria for EL Activities at NMC

The following criteria should guide the development of experiential learning opportunities at NMC.

1. The experience is structured, intentional, and authentic.

All parties must be clear from the outset why experiential learning is the chosen approach to the learning that is to take place and to the knowledge that will be demonstrated or applied. The activity must be well structured with a purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge. The experience must have a real-world context and/or be useful and meaningful in reference to an applied setting or situation. The learning activities are designed with learners in mind.

2. The experience requires preparation, orientation, and training.

All participants (learners, instructors, community partners) must ensure that they enter the experience with sufficient foundation and orientation to support a successful experience. From the outset, participants will focus on the desired outcomes, adhering to them as they define the goals, objectives and activities. The resulting plan should include those desired outcomes and be referred to on a regular basis by all parties. At the same time, it should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations as the experience unfolds. Ongoing opportunities should be included to expand the learner's appreciation of the content, the learning context and the skills required of the experience.

3. The experience must include monitoring and continuous improvement.

The experience should ensure the richest learning possible while also supporting the learner. There must be a feedback loop related to desired outcomes. The structure of the experience must be sufficiently flexible to permit changes in response to what that feedback suggests. Strategies for observing progress against desired outcomes should also be in place.

4. The experience requires structured reflection and acknowledgement.

Reflection is the element that transforms experience into learning. For knowledge to be discovered and internalized the learner must test assumptions and hypotheses about the outcomes of decisions and actions taken then weigh the outcomes against past learning and future implications. This reflective process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds.

Recognition of learning and impact occurs throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes and through reporting, documentation and sharing of accomplishments. Participants should be included in the recognition and celebration of progress and accomplishment.

5. The experience must be assessed and evaluated.

Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial desired goals. Activities will be assessed as a means to develop and refine the specific learning outcomes identified during the planning stages of the experience. Activities may also be evaluated to provide comprehensive data about the experience and process.

These criteria were developed based on the National Society for Experiential Education's Eight Principles of Good Practice for all Experiential Learning Activities (<http://www.nsee.org/8-principles>), Nova Southeastern University's ExEL Criteria, and the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Last Revised: 02/01/2019.

