

Experiential Learning (EL) In Planning Education

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Benefits of Experiential Learning

- Skill development – both hard and soft skills
- Reflection and self-assessment occur
- Academia develops connections to the community
- Students gain experience and knowledge of actual practice, increasing their employability
- Allows for different learning styles
- Those students whose undergraduate education incorporated experiential learning are more likely to continue their education in postgraduate programs

Sources: Kolb 1984; Barnett 1995; Cantor 1995; Boud 1999

Experiential Learning is not Problem-free



Baldwin
2000

- How to Assess Students

Davys &
Beddoe
2000

- Supervision

Baum
1997;
Niebanck
1998

- Who Plans and Organises Experience

Ellis 1995

- Compatibility with Program

Ellis 1995;
Roakes &
Norris-Tirrel
2000; Petkus
2000

- Fair Workload for Students

Overall Project Aims



- ❖ To improve relevance of planning education in meeting new professional demands
- ❖ To develop an integrated package of activities, assessment and evaluation resources to support planning educators in delivery of best practice experiential learning:
 - Activities vary in terms of complexity along a continuum from guest lectures to workplace practicums;
 - Qualitative and quantitative evaluation will test the effectiveness of the framework and resources in improving student learning outcomes.
- ❖ Build a planning knowledge network (online resources)

Project Team



Johanna Rosier & Claudia Baldwin (USC) Joint Project Leaders



Christine Slade
Project Manager (USC)



Project Partners from Planning Programs

- Trevor Budge – La Trobe University
- Eddo Coiacetto – Griffith University
- Michael Lockwood – University of Tasmania
- Tim Perkins – Edith Cowan University



Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
Representative: Cathy Towers
– changes to accreditation criteria

Context

- ❖ Project leaders and project manager are all interested in experiential learning
- ❖ Recent reports and studies identify several issues for planning educators:
 - New skills and creative qualities needed – many best delivered through “experiential learning”.
 - Very little cross institutional support for learning from colleagues about best practice.



Continuum of Experiential Learning – first cut

Predominantly university -based	Predominantly work-place -based		
Brief encounters	Studio-project-based work with a client and/or community	Structured work practicum	Work experience
Guest speakers Field trip to tribunal or site	Simulated development of project at a real site Track development application of Council Work on project for a client	Work placement under supervision of planning professional combined with classroom (peer and university staff) learning e.g. one day/week or holiday	Under direction of a planning professional e.g. sandwich year, semester, or number of days

Step One: USC Pilot Evaluation Survey



Step Two: Define Planning Principles

	Brief encounters	Studio-project-based work	Structured work practicum	Work experience
Purposeful	Whether it is a game, role play, guest, simulated exercise, speaker, design or research project – the purpose of the experiential activity needs to be explained within the context of the overall course or program requirements (CU 2009, Jones et al 2009a). Clear goals and expectations need to be established.			

Other Principles: Student-centred; the application of theory/classroom knowledge; the ‘real world’ context; guided practice; reflection; evaluation; and community-university partnerships.

References: CU(Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences) 2009, *Experiential Learning Report*, viewed 2 September 2009, <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/cals/teaching/eir/report.cfm>

Jones, M, Jackson, J Coiacetto, E, Budge, T, Coote, M Steele W, Gall, S & Kennedy, M 2009a, *Generating Academic Standards in Planning Practice Education: Final report to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council*



Step Three: Describe Current Practice

Task Description	No. Courses Using Task (n=104)	No. Courses Assessing Task (n=104)
Guest Speakers	76	34
Field Trips	39	31
Studio Project-based	19	18
Simulated Development at Real Site	34	32
Track Development Application	16	11
Role Play	24	21
Work on Project for Client	15	12
Informal Work Experience	10	5
Regional or International Field Studies	8	5
Formal Work Placement	13	11

Assessment Types & Evaluation Tools Used

Task Description	Assessment Types	Evaluation Tools
Guest Speakers	Exams, group projects, assignments, mini essays, online discussion, reflection	Formative for future assessment tasks
Field Trips	Reflective journal, formal report, group presentation, assignment	Formative, summative, graded, pass/fail, hurdle task
Studio Project-based	Report, group assignment, reflective part, display, strategy framework, presentation	Graded, pass/fail
Simulated Development at Real Site	Group project, reports, presentation to professionals, prepare strategies, essay	Graded, pass/fail, formative
Track Development Application	Part final assignment, Ministerial briefing paper, development application report	Graded, pass/fail
Role Play	Peer/group assessment, presentation, participation, reflection.	Graded, pass/fail, formative, mandatory activity
Work on Project for Client	Assignment, project report, presentation	Graded, pass/fail
Informal Work Experience	Reflective piece, presentation.	Graded
Regional or International Field Studies	Project report, assignment, presentation	Graded
Formal Work Placement	Presentation, poster, journal article, supervisor assessment, participation, exam, reflective journal	Graded, hurdle task, pass/fail

Is a Guest lecture Experiential Learning?

- Kolb's EL model critiques theoretical courses that do not:
 - Value prior knowledge and experience (Healey & Jenkins 2000:187)
 - Prepare students for the experience, reflect on experience and apply to wide course aspects (Jenkins 1997, cited in Healey & Jenkins 2000: 187)
- A guest lecture can be part of the overall EL experience in planning:
 - Needs planning and incorporation into curriculum
 - Can be used as formative assessment – some already using
 - Guest lecture part of transition from non-EL to EL (Illeris 2007:93)
 - Preference for incremental experiential progression (Billet 2011: 15)

References:

- Billet, S 2011 , *Curriculum and pedagogic bases for effectively integrating practice-based experiences*, Final Report Australian Learning & Teaching Council.
- Healey, M & Jenkins, A 2000, 'Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Its Application in Geography in Higher Education', *Journal of Geography*, Vol. 99, No. 5, viewed 13 April 2012, Taylor & Francis database.
- Illeris, K 2007, 'What Do We Actually Mean by Experiential Learning?', *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 6, No. 84, viewed 15 February 2012, Sage Publications.

Guest Lectures in Planning Education

- In an applied discipline, such as Planning, guest lectures are a transition activity.
- In our survey the 76 Guest Lectures topic areas are:
 - Planning practice - Law/court procedure; development assessment; and strategic planning process.
 - Environmental Impact Assessment
 - Specific Issues in specific locations (field trips)



What is the Next Step?

All Partner researchers are refining one or two principles and integrating them into course delivery and curriculum.

In addition, project team members are:

1. Trialling the pilot framework of learning tasks and assessment in their own planning program over the next two semesters.
2. Applying the evaluation tools developed at USC.
3. Developing case studies and resources specialising in those types of learning activity that were trialled in their universities.
4. Debating how these resources will be translated into PIA program accreditation criteria.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN PLANNING EDUCATION



University of the
Sunshine Coast
The best of both worlds

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WHAT IS THIS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT ABOUT?

The University of the Sunshine Coast is partnering with La Trobe, Edith Cowan and Griffith Universities, the University of Tasmania and the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) as an Australian Learning and Development grant for research into experiential learning in planning education over the next two years. The project addresses academic standards and the preparation and provision of student learning, particularly in practice settings.

Experiential learning includes activities classified as fieldwork, such as visits, practice, outdoors, engagement, experiential education, and workplace or work-integrated learning. Student outcomes learning experiences through exposure to real planning issues and practice both inside and outside of the classroom. The project recognises that students learn about real world experiences from a wide range of activities including field trips, guest lectures, site visits and longer studies among others.

How can this project enhance teaching practice and student learning?

The two year project will develop an integrated package of resources to support delivery of good practice experiential learning in Australian tertiary planning education, which will in turn contribute to improved student learning outcomes. The package will include sample student experiential learning tasks, assessment tools, case studies and debriefing tools. This package will be a resource for all planning schools that want to improve or try different styles of experiential learning than those already being applied.



Christine Slade and David Longman at the Australian Learning and Development Conference 2011

Who are the team members?

Dr Christine Slade and
David Paul Stephens, University of the
Sunshine Coast (Project Leaders)

Dr Erika Chalko, Edith Cowan

Dr Michael Lambson, University of Tasmania

David Paul Stephens, La Trobe University

Dr Thea Haines, Edith Cowan University

Dr Cathy Stone, Planning Institute of
Australia

Dr Christine Slade, Project Officer, University
of the Sunshine Coast

What has the project team done so far?

In the last six weeks - We have undertaken a survey of all accredited Australian and New Zealand university planning schools to determine the extent to which experiential learning is used through different activities, any tools and techniques used in planning these experiential learning tasks, and the extent to which experiential learning is evaluated as part of the program. This baseline data will be used to gauge the current use and practice of experiential learning in planning schools.

We conducted a series of three planning educators that responded to the survey so far. The feedback indicates that many educators are already enthusiastic about experiential learning. In fact there are still some gaps in the survey. If you wish to be part of the project and have a real voice through feedback, please contact Christine Slade directly @usc.edu.au for a copy of the survey to be sent to you.

Applying principles for course development - The project team is seeking a set of principles of best practice experiential learning and using this information to map changes in their own courses during Semester 1, 2012 and Semester 1, 2013.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

We will present the results of the baseline survey at the September 2012 AICAPL conference held at La Trobe University in Bendigo.

The team is also developing a website in which we will place our research, updates, learning materials and references as information becomes available over the next two years. The website may also provide an opportunity for practice-based learning exchanges.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION Please contact Christine Slade, email: cslade@usc.edu.au

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. Feedback in this project does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

For a copy of our newsletter or further information about the project contact:

Christine Slade
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