

Guidance to Departments on Planning for and Approving Experiential Learning during active phases of potential COVID-19 community spread

v. 2 - May 5, 2021 (update to v. 1 from June 21, 2020)

Examples of credit-bearing experiential learning courses include Internships, Practica, Clinical Rotations, Independent Study Plans, Capstone Projects, Senior Design Projects, Dissertation Credits, and the like, wherein undergraduate and graduate students may work for academic credit, with or without pay, at on-campus sites, at off-campus sites with a faculty advisor, or at off-campus host institutions supervised by that institution.

There are two key components of most credit-bearing experiential learning:

- Learning or research in a professional practice-oriented environment. These experiences can be completed with diverse organizations, located on and off-campus.
- Academic component — in which the student's learning and reflection from the experience is guided and evaluated by faculty awarding credit according to course requirements.

Concerns include mitigating the risks to UA students of exposure to COVID-19, as well as mitigating the risk of our students being vectors spreading COVID-19, while maintaining the highest standards of experiential learning. Accordingly, we consider the two components of experiential learning when proposing strategies for experiential learning.

1. The professional practice-oriented environment:

In order to be flexible to all potential situations during risk of COVID-19, we suggest implementing a level-assignment method for determining what documentation and advising is required to support the professional practice-oriented learning experience.

- Level 0: No additional documentation required
 - Fully remote experiences are appropriate to enroll at any stage of public spread of COVID-19 without requiring any documentation other than standard work plans, course permission forms, or other documentation of intended activities and learning outcomes. These should indicate clearly that the experiences will be conducted entirely remotely.
 - Until such time as a medical solution for COVID-19 exists, departments that require internships or other experiential learning for degree completion should be prepared to offer accommodations for alternative zero-risk educational experiences for students whose personal situation requires them to minimize the risk of pursuing that learning in-person.
 - Any department may choose to suspend non-required internship or other non-required experiential learning enrollments until a medical solution to the threat of COVID-19 exists.

- Level 1: Requires Assessment of Recommended COVID-19 Workplace Risk Management Protocols for Credit-bearing Experiential Learning Activities in addition to standard academic work plans
 - In-person experiential learning may be approved by an academic department when the Host Institution satisfactorily indicates that risks can and will be managed through observation of health and safety protocols at the site by completing an Assessment of Recommended COVID-19 Workplace Risk Management Protocol for Credit-bearing Experiential Learning.
 - The instructor responsible for awarding credit or the department head must review the Assessment and determine that it meets criteria for satisfactory management of risk:
 - All answers to conditions that are applicable to the job duties and working arrangements of the student's role should be answered with Yes
 - Any conditions that are not applicable to the job duties or work arrangements of the student are answered N/A or Yes.
 - Credit for an experience should not be approved if any conditions that are applicable to the student's responsibilities are answered No.
 - **UPDATE MAY 5, 2021:** If the Site Supervisor/Representative of the Host Institution is not able to sign the Assessment form but they provide their mitigation guidelines, it is up to the department to assess and determine if the internship shall be approved or not based on the information provided. If it is approved, the student is still required to sign the Assessment form. It is important to annotate on the form that the Host Institution has provided the mitigation guidelines and attached them to the form for department records.
 - The department head or director has final say in any dispute between student and internship coordinator about whether an internship meets conditions to be approved.
 - In considering a student's appeal, consider only the answers to the Assessment in the context of description of a student's duties within the work plan and any supplemental information about that from the site that may help to understand the situation.
 - Appeals related to other rationale are secondary to safety protocol.
 - Remember that COVID-19 response creates the opportunity for units to respond with flexibility in supporting students to meet academic requirements.
 - Students are often able to engage in experiences such as internships, as employees or volunteers with site hosts, without earning academic credit.
 - If an in-person experiential learning course of study is disrupted due to COVID-19, alternative options meeting Level 0 criteria (a remote version of the experience or an alternative educational experience provided by the department), shall be provided to protect the student and the community. The goal is for the student to still be able to progress toward degree completion.

- Level 2: Clinical Placements or Practica Required for certification or licensure, in which protocol included in Assessment of Recommended COVID-19 Workplace Risk Management Protocols cannot be maintained
 - In-person experiential learning in contexts in which the expected protocols in item 2 and 3 of the Assessment for social distancing cannot be maintained (such as clinics, schools, or other public health and safety contexts) AND which are required for certification or licensure in the student’s field of study may be approved.
 - All other items in the Assessment must be agreed to by the site host in order for the placement to be approved. In particular, departments should confirm with site hosts that in addition to their agreement to item 7, who will be responsible for providing and documenting student training with regard to the use of PPE, and who will be responsible (site, student or university) for providing PPE.

In contexts where social distancing cannot be maintained (such as clinics, schools, or other health and safety contexts), students will wear the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by the clinical training site. Students will be specifically trained and assessed in PPE use and safety precautions in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Training will be documented for each student. If appropriate PPE is not available from the site, specific needs must be communicated to the student and University of Arizona supervisor, so that it can be obtained prior to initiating clinical experience.

- In cases where formal contracts or affiliation agreements exist between the University and the site hosting trainees, review of the terms of those agreements may be necessary to incorporate agreements about training and provision of equipment. Departments should contact either Sponsored Projects & Contracting Services or Arizona Health Sciences Contracting as applicable.

2. The academic component of the experiential learning course:

- Instruction related to the academic component of experiential learning course should follow guidelines set forth by the University’s Re-Entry Implementation Planning Team for Teaching and Learning.
- All experiential learning instructors should maintain communication with their course participants and Host Institution Supervisors regarding any future changes in policy that have to do with experiential learning or COVID-19 response.

3. The research component of the experiential learning course:

- Research related to the experiential learning course should follow guidelines set forth by the University’s Research Restart team and your College’s Re-Entry Research Planning Team.
- All graduate students conducting research should maintain communication with their faculty advisor and/or their Research Dean (ADR) and their Host Institution Supervisors or contact, regarding any future changes in policy that have to do with experiential learning or COVID-19 response.