

Experiential Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) Meeting

Date: Friday, March 6, 2026

Time: 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Location: Teams

Attendance: Cathy MacDonald, Megan Turner, Jane MacDonald, Martin Chisson, Shandra MacMaster, Jacqueline De Leebeeck, Sam Read, Angie Kolen, Eileen Alma, Wojciech Tokarz, Nancy Forestell, Mark Fuller, Alessandra D'Aquino

Regrets: Elizabeth Yeo, Jacob Cruchet, Jonathan Hood, Greg Hadley

Purpose of Meeting

The meeting focused on project updates related to the Experiential Learning Strategy, Framework development, consultation findings, Orbis implementation, quality assurance considerations, and future institutional planning.

1. Welcome

The meeting opened with a land acknowledgement recognizing Mi'kma'ki as the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people and acknowledging the longstanding presence and contributions of African Nova Scotian communities. The agenda was reviewed and approved.

2. Experiential Learning Project Updates

Phase 2 – Gaps and Opportunities

Consultations with students, faculty, alumni, advancement staff, and campus partners are nearing completion. Employer and community partner consultations are ongoing.

Key insights have been gathered regarding:

- Barriers to student participation
- Opportunities to expand experiential learning (EL)
- Institutional supports needed for sustainable growth

Findings are being consolidated into a Community Consultation Overview Report to inform the development of the institutional strategy.

Phase 3 – Strategy Development

Work has begun on drafting a Five-Year Experiential Learning Strategy, informed by consultation findings. Additional consultations will occur as the strategy develops. The committee noted that expanding EL will require dedicated staffing, operational funding, and institutional investment.

Phase 4 – Experiential Learning Framework

The Experiential Learning Framework (Version 12) has been drafted and circulated. The framework:

- Provides institutional structure and definitions for experiential learning
- Establishes administrative and quality standards
- Supports faculty engagement without mandating pedagogy

Academic components will proceed through governance approval processes, including Joint Committee on Studies and Senate.

Phase 5 – Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation mechanisms are under development. Government reporting requirements are already defined, with the next report due June 2026.

3. Experiential Learning System (Orbis)

Funding has been secured through the institutional IT strategy to support the first year of Orbis implementation (approximately \$120,500).

The initial rollout will focus on meeting provincial reporting and implementation requirements through:

- Co-operative Education
- Service Learning

The platform will enable the institution to:

- Centralize experiential learning activities
- Improve tracking and reporting
- Support risk management and compliance
- Potentially develop a centralized catalogue of experiential learning opportunities.

The Registrar's Office is also exploring the addition of a course-level experiential learning identifier in the academic calendar.

4. Visioning Session Findings

A campus visioning session held on February 6, 2026 engaged approximately 40–44 participants.

Key themes included:

- Improving access, equity, and inclusion in experiential learning
- Developing scaffolded learning pathways across students' academic programs
- Strengthening mentorship opportunities
- Supporting students in translating experiential learning into career competencies
- Addressing faculty workload considerations
- Building sustainable community and employer partnerships
- Improving visibility and access to experiential opportunities

A centralized system and catalogue of opportunities were identified as important future developments.

5. Quality Assurance

Quality assurance discussions focused on administrative and safety processes, not academic evaluation.

Potential areas of coordination include:

- Tracking student placements and off-campus activities
- Managing police and vulnerable sector checks
- Ensuring appropriate training for students working with vulnerable populations
- Supporting institutional risk management and compliance

6. Experiential Learning Website

The ELAC website will be expanded to better showcase experiential learning opportunities.

Members recommended including:

- Student testimonials
- Employer and community partner perspectives
- Examples of experiential learning across faculties and departments
- Multimedia content and storytelling
- Representation of diverse student experiences

The website will also support recruitment and public awareness of experiential learning opportunities at the institution.

7. Strategic Considerations

The committee discussed potential long-term participation goals for experiential learning. While no formal targets have been established, members emphasized the importance of increasing opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning throughout their programs.

Sustainable growth will require institutional commitment, resources, and coordinated infrastructure.

Key Themes Emerging

The Committee identified several recurring themes throughout the discussion:

- Significant progress has been made across consultation, framework development, and system implementation activities.
- Institutional coordination, infrastructure, and support will be important to sustain future experiential learning growth.
- Visibility and access remain important priorities for students.
- Faculty engagement and academic governance processes will continue to play a central role in future development.
- Data collection, reporting, quality assurance, and evaluation will support institutional planning and accountability
- Future growth will require ongoing investment in staffing, systems, and institutional support.

8. Action Items

Action	Lead
Finalize Community Consultation Report	Project Team
Continue development of Five-Year EL Strategy	Project Team
Refine EL Framework and prepare for governance review	Project Team
Begin Orbis implementation planning and staffing	Institutional Leadership / Project Team
Work with Registrar to introduce EL course identifier	Project Team / Registrar
Expand ELAC website with testimonials and examples	Project Team
Continue consultations with campus and external partners	Project Team

The meeting concluded at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: April 24, 2026, 1:30pm to 3:30pm