

ELAC Minutes

Friday September 26, 2025

In attendance: Cathy MacDonald, Elizabeth Yeo, Wojciech Tokarz, Nancy Forestell, Jacqueline DeLeebeck, Greg Hadley, Jane MacDonald, Shandra McMaster, Megan Turner, Samantha Read,

Regrets: Aimee MacDonald, Martin Chaisson, Sam Read, Brian MacLean, Jacob Cruchet, Alessandro D'Âquino, Caley Chisholm

Purpose of Meeting

The meeting focused on providing committee members with an overview of current experiential learning initiatives, early environmental scanning work, emerging findings from institutional data collection and literature review activities, and the proposed phased approach for future experiential learning development at StFX.

Website and Committee Resources

The Committee received an overview of the newly established ELAC website. Members noted that the site will serve as a central location for committee resources, project updates, terms of reference, and reference materials related to experiential learning. The website structure was modelled on existing institutional advisory committee sites.

Experiential Learning Inventory and Environmental Scan

The Committee discussed the institution-wide experiential learning survey distributed to Deans and Department Chairs. The survey was designed to identify the breadth and depth of experiential learning opportunities currently occurring across the university and was organized around the experiential learning categories identified within the Nova Scotia Bilateral Agreement.

Members discussed several observations emerging from the survey process, including:

- Significant experiential learning activity already exists across the institution.
- Some experiential learning categories appear unevenly represented across disciplines.
- Laboratory-based learning experiences may not be adequately captured within existing provincial classifications.
- Questions remain regarding the role of undergraduate research and the Research Office within a broader experiential learning framework.
- Future growth in experiential learning will require consideration of institutional resources, faculty support, and sustainable funding models.

The Committee emphasized the importance of developing shared definitions, policies, guidelines, and reflective practices to support consistency while respecting disciplinary differences.

Members also discussed examples from other institutions, including faculty development programs, experiential learning standards, and support structures for international experiences.

Literature Review and Institutional Context

The Committee received an overview of the literature review currently underway. The review includes multiple experiential learning categories and examines recent research related to experiential learning practice, outcomes, implementation models, and institutional supports.

Discussion focused on the importance of evidence-informed decision-making and comprehensive data collection to support future planning and institutional decision-making. Members noted that experiential learning expansion may require both cultural and organizational change and highlighted the value of international and community-based experiences in supporting student growth and development.

Project Plan and Future Development

The Committee discussed the proposed phased approach for experiential learning development at StFX.

Members received updates regarding:

- Organizational changes within the Centre for Experiential Learning.
- Enhancements to existing Co-operative Education programming.
- Development of the Explore initiative.
- Future consideration of co-curricular and non-credit experiential opportunities.
- Development of systems to support experience tracking and data collection.
- Planned consultation activities involving faculty, staff, students, alumni, employers, and community partners.

The Committee noted that consultation and engagement activities will play an important role in informing future phases of development.

Community and Alumni Engagement

Members discussed the potential role of community organizations and alumni in supporting future experiential learning growth. Opportunities for future engagement activities, consultation mechanisms, and relationship development were identified as areas for further consideration.

Institutional Strengths and Opportunities

Members highlighted the significant experiential learning activity already occurring across StFX and expressed support for continued institutional leadership in this area. The Committee noted the importance of building on existing strengths while developing appropriate supports, resources, and structures to sustain future growth.

Key Themes Emerging

- Several themes emerged consistently throughout the discussion:
- Experiential learning activity is already occurring across many areas of the university.
- Future growth will require appropriate resources, coordination, and institutional support.
- Shared definitions, standards, and guiding principles will be important.
- Faculty and staff capacity should remain a key consideration.
- Community, alumni, and employer relationships represent important opportunities for future development.
- Data collection and evidence-informed planning will support future decision-making.

Action Items

- Continue analysis of institutional experiential learning survey results.
- Complete literature review and environmental scan activities.
- Continue development of experiential learning definitions, standards, and framework concepts.
- Advance planning for Phase 2 consultation and engagement activities.
- Continue development of systems and processes to support experiential learning tracking and reporting.

Next Meeting

To be determined.

Minutes Approved