

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Through cooperative education, internships, field experiences, and laboratory research students in many degree programs have the opportunity to expand knowledge and apply theory in real-life situations. All experiential credit courses occur under the direction of an academic instructor and are included in the regular University curriculum. In some cases, such courses are required for majors. All such courses require registration, payment of tuition, carry credit, are listed in the catalog, and include a planned program of activities outlined in the course syllabus. The grading system is the same as the system used for regular courses.

Designated Experiential Education Courses

CSU Pueblo adopted Experiential Education as the focus of its 2017 Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative (HLC QI) and engaged in a number of efforts toward promoting the pedagogy of experiential education campus-wide beginning 2013.

As a result of the QI, CSU Pueblo began recognizing and designating courses with significant experiential education (EE) components. The EE designation may be extended to courses on a permanent, semester-by-semester, or section-by-section basis. EE designated courses include:

1. At least 10 hours of experiential education course work per credit hour earned
2. Discussion of the definition, principles, and purpose of the Experiential Learning Cycle
3. Course objectives and learning outcomes tied to direct experience
4. Structured reflection
5. Activities aligned with experiential education principles
6. Assessment of student learning and effectiveness of the experience

Students in EE designated courses:

1. Conceptualize course material and engage theory with practice through posing questions, solving problems, and constructing meaning,
2. Are encouraged to engage in experimentation, and
3. Demonstrate evidence of knowledge constructed through experiential learning (i.e., portfolios, presentations, projects, performances, displays, etc.).

The Association of Experiential Education (AEE) definition and principles of EE inform the practice at CSU Pueblo. The following is from <http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee> (<http://www.aee.org/what-is-ee/>), with modifications approved by the CSU Pueblo EE Roundtable, September 2015:

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners both in what John Dewey refers to as direct experience and in focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.

Experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle depicts the learning process as including four adaptive learning modes: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active

experimentation (AE). Concrete experiences are the basis for the learners' reflections. The reflections are then assimilated into abstract concepts to be utilized in future contexts. These abstract concepts are then tested actively and serve to inform the learner when he or she is exposed to new experiences. This process is cyclical in nature where learners are exposed to each of the learning modes – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting – in a recursive process that is dependent on the unique experiences and elements to be learned. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.

The principles of experiential education practice are:

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
- Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning.
- Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, and/or physically.
- The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
- Relationships are developed and nurtured: learner to self, learner to others and learner to the world at large.
- The educator and learner may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of experience cannot totally be predicted.
- Opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values.
- The educator's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
- The educator recognizes and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning.
- Educators strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the learner.