EL 94a Practicum
Tips for Faculty, Instructors and Peer Assistants

Course development
- Review the EL Practicum Guidelines for Faculty and the Practicum Syllabus Template.
- Utilize resources from the Experiential Learning and Teaching Office.
  - Browse online resources on the EL website.
  - Meet with Experiential Learning and Teaching staff to discuss course plans and for assistance in practicum development.
- Share practicum syllabus and other relevant information with the EL office.

Registration (see Faculty Guidelines Document)
- Send a course description to Daniel Langenthal so the EL office can advertise the course and keep track of it on our EL listings.
- Complete course information and practicum details on the EL 94a Add Form. The form should be clear and organized, providing all practicum details as required by the form (learning objectives, project description, training and supervision, and reflection assignments). Clearly outlined expectations will increase student understanding and performance, in addition to increased ability to grade appropriately.
- After completing the add form, make copies to distribute to students the first day of class. The information included on page two must be reviewed with students before they sign and submit the forms.
- Remind interested students to attend the EL class sessions during the "shopping period" even if they have not made a final decision. This may save you time scheduling makeup sessions.
- Consider setting a maximum enrollment number, if needed.
- Strongly encourage your students to take their EL94a forms to the registrar's office before the add-drop deadline, and to confirm their enrollment status before leaving the registrar's office. If students miss the deadline, they have to petition their advisor to add the course, which can take extra time or pose a problem for graduating seniors.

Assignments and Final Projects
- Remember, this is a two-credit option and students should be required to complete work that is equivalent to half of a four-credit course. Their time in the field is like the time they have in class, so the out-of-class workload should be comparable to half of the work demanded by a typical four-credit course.
- Reflection should be an integral part of any EL practicum. Assignments should be carefully designed with specific prompts that spark critical dialogue on issues connected to the experience and base course.
  - Reach out to EL staff for assistance with developing effective EL activities and corresponding reflection assignments.
  - Build your learning community from the beginning of the semester in preparation for critical dialogue and student engagement in the learning process. Presenting clear expectations for reflection and designing specific reflection prompts will result in higher quality discussion and written assignments, as well as enhanced learning for students.
  - Set the expectations and norms for productive and respectful class discussion. Practicum courses should involve critical reflection and thoughtful discussion.
about students’ experiences in connection with the course material. Given the propensity for these conversations to elicit personal reactions about controversial subjects, active steps should be taken to establish an open, respectful learning environment.

- CEL, in particular, challenges students to examine complex social issues and engage critically with diverse perspectives. Consider including guidelines for safe dialogue, productive feedback and critical discussion.

- If you have a large project due at the end of the semester, consider moving the due date to the last week of class in order to use exam time for final student presentations. Many courses assign final papers or projects but do not have exams. Moving the due date can ease the pressure on the students and gives them more time to do focused project work. You may want to poll your students early in the semester to find out what works for them.
  - If you do this, be sure to note that the exam period will be used for final presentations when submitting your request in SAGE. Email Andrew Marx to let him know if your finals time will be just for the base course or for both the base course and the EL94a students.

**Community partnerships (if applicable):**

- Work with the Office of Community Service to identify potential partnerships for CEL courses. Meet with organizations early in the course development process in order to discuss potential mutually beneficial projects.

- Once partnerships are identified, subsequent conversations should clarify projects and the details of student involvement. Organizations should be made aware of course learning goals, expectations of students at the practicum sites, weekly time commitment, etc.

- Consider how community partners can be elevated to the status of co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge.
  - Can community partner representatives provide presentations to the class?
  - Can partners influence course content? Maybe agency staff members are aware of articles or other texts that are especially relevant to their work and the course content.
  - If partners are interested, consider having on-site discussions that involve students, agency staff and potentially clients. This can be a wonderful opportunity for students to ask questions and discuss topics they don’t feel comfortable raising during regular volunteer/practicum hours.

- Meet (or communicate) periodically with community partners to ensure open and regular communication. This should enable early identification of issues, such as disconnects between course goals and the project, inconsistent student attendance, changing project needs, or other issues with student participation.

- For community-engaged learning, some professors decide to utilize a contract in order to highlight the importance of community involvement to the course. This contract emphasizes the importance of mutually beneficial partnership among students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Students may sign a document outlining their commitment to a specific organization, which could include:
  - Agreement with determined schedule
  - Adherence to specific social expectations (effective communication with supervisor, punctuality, general professionalism, etc.)
  - Understanding of learning objectives in connection with the practicum project
  - Signature of agreement from agency supervisor
• Signature of agreement from the Office of Community Service
• Understanding of transportation to and from service site

• Consider organizing an end-of-practicum activity to bring closure to the project(s). This could involve student presentations, a photo exhibit or video, public dialogue or town hall meeting, etc.

Grading/Evaluation

• Since the EL practicum requires a separate grade from the 4-credit base course, it is important for the instructor to have an accurate picture of students’ participation in hands-on activities, reflective assignments, and presentations throughout the semester.
  o Use clear rubrics and share them with the students so that expectations for reflective assignments are understood by all.
  o Meet regularly with students, peer assistants, and staff instructors to ensure effective evaluation.

• Have a clear system to track students’ practicum hours. For Community-Engaged Learning courses, consider how partners will be involved in verifying or tracking hours, if at all.

Academic integrity

• Do not assume that students understand how academic honesty policies apply to experiential learning. Lying about participation in experiential learning should be addressed as a form of academic dishonesty. For community-engaged learning practicums, remind students that partner organizations will provide end-of-semester evaluations that include notes on student attendance and that you will be in regular communication with partners throughout the semester.

Wrap-up and post-practicum recommendations

• Encourage students to complete the course evaluation for the practicum, which they should receive in their email from the registrar. Also strongly encourage them to complete the survey from the Experiential Learning Office, which will also arrive via email. These evaluations are opportunities for students to offer feedback, which enables instructors and the EL office to make continuous improvements to the practicum program.

Other tips

• Only 4-credit undergraduate base courses can have an attached practicum.
• Since LATTE sites are created with base courses, it is very difficult to create a LATTE site for a practicum. If you want to use LATTE, consult with LTS early in your course development.
• Hire a TA or invite a student to serve as a peer assistant to assist you with the additional workload. It is a great opportunity for a student who has previously taken the course or the practicum to be in a leadership role.
• Take pictures of students participating in practicum activities and share with the Experiential Learning Office. Consider inviting EL staff to attend practicum events to take pictures and document EL stories.
• There is a fund for Community Engaged Learning courses. Please save all receipts and contact the Office of Experiential Learning and Teaching for potential reimbursement.