Experiential Learning (EL) Practicum Options

Guidelines for Faculty

Brandeis offers a variety of Experiential Learning (EL) practicum courses in all disciplines that focus on both the theoretical and experiential realms of course topics. These courses enable students to develop skills, knowledge, and values from practical experiences and ongoing reflection. Practicum courses include projects that can involve research, lab work, community-based learning activities, theater, or art. These projects must be relevant to the course material in the base course. Any practicum can be taught as Community-Engaged Learning (CEL), in which activities are carried out in reciprocal partnership with community organizations, generating civic learning and improved understanding of the social issues at hand.

Faculty interested in teaching EL practicums can choose between the following options:

1. **Two-credit EL 94a Pilot Practicum Course**
   A pilot must transition into a formally approved practicum course after being offered up to 3 times within in 3 academic years. See below for registration process.

2. **Two-credit EL Practicum Course, formally approved by Department Chair and the Dean of Arts and Sciences, with a permanent course number**

3. **Six-credit EL Practicum Course**

### Two-Credit EL Practicum Course

The optional two-credit practicum is paired with a 4-credit base course. Students who are currently taking, or have completed, the associated base course in the last academic year can register for the practicum. The practicum course is intended for students who are interested in deepening their engagement with the subject matter.

If the practicum instructor differs from the base course professor, instructors should maintain communication regarding their courses to ensure thoughtful integration between the course content and practicum activities. The practicum option must be listed in the base course syllabus. EL practicums cannot be offered as independent courses.

The EL practicum should include:

1. Hands-on experiences relevant to the base course content that engage students intellectually, creatively, socially, physically, and/or emotionally. Practicum activities should present opportunities to observe, experience, or engage with the theories learned in class.

2. Structured reflection assignments and processes that enable students to think critically about their experiences and make nuanced connections between theory and practice.

3. Unknown outcomes allowing students to learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes.

4. Opportunities for students to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results.
Students enrolled in an EL practicum course are required to:

1. Invest 6 hours per week, which will include class sessions, project work, assignments, and meetings directly related to the practicum project.
2. Attend all the practicum class sessions (recommended length: 50-80 min.)
3. Complete all readings and assignments as directed by the practicum instructor.

Initial registration for EL pilot practicum, EL 94a:

- Faculty members interested in offering a two-credit EL practicum attached to an existing base course must notify the registrar of the practicum.
- To enroll in an EL 94a course, students must complete an EL 94a Add Form in conjunction with the practicum instructor. The form should describe (a) the learning objectives, (b) the practicum project, (c) training and supervision and (d) reflection assignments. The base course must be listed on the EL 94a Add Form and will appear on the student’s transcript as a notation to the EL 94a course.
- Students must submit the EL 94a Add Form in person to the Office of the University Registrar (Kutz 121) before the add deadline at the start of the semester. Student, faculty sponsor and Experiential Learning Director signatures on the form indicate that all have read and understood the guidelines of this document.

Official EL practicum course approval:

- Practicum courses must be open to the entire class. Formally approved courses must have a minimum of 3 students enrolled.
- Any EL94 practicum may run up to 3 times within 3 academic years without being formally approved. This allows faculty members to run pilot programs and experiment with practicum ideas and organization. After this, the EL94 cannot be offered again unless it is formally approved. At any point the faculty member can decide to pursue the course approval.
- After the EL 94a pilot is offered a maximum of 3 times within 3 academic years, the EL practicum must go through official course approval processes. This is the same process as regular course approval, except that the school council chair signature is not required and the faculty member must consult with the Office of Experiential Learning and Teaching.
- Once the practicum course is formally approved, it will be given an official course number, e.g. EL 15-EL 88. Approved courses must have a minimum of 3 students enrolled.
- Once the practicum is approved, if there is a change in the instructor or co/pre-requisite base courses, then the new instructor or faculty member must consult with the Office of Experiential Learning and Teaching.

*Students may not enroll in an EL practicum course as a standalone course. Practicum courses can be taken either concurrently with the base course or within one year after completing the base course. Should a student drop/withdraw from the base class, enrollment in the associated practicum course will be automatically dropped.*
This model recognizes experiential learning as an integral component of the course, using activities coupled with reflection as a driving strategy for student learning. In the six-credit EL course the practicum is required of all students. Faculty have the freedom to design a multi-layered experience whereby students are challenged to broaden their perspectives on practical issues related to the course and strengthen their academic, personal and professional skills.

Faculty members interested in teaching a six-credit EL practicum must complete the course approval process. This is the same process as regular course approval, except that **the faculty member must consult with the Office of Experiential Learning and Teaching**. The six-credit course can be proposed either as a new course or as a modification to an existing four-credit course. When a course is approved as a six-credit course, it will only be offered as a six-credit course.

**Notes:**
There is no limit to the total number of practicums that many count toward the 128 credits required for graduation. Individual academic departments and programs may decide whether or not to count practicum courses toward major or minor requirements.