EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
Message from Experiential Learning Team

Welcome to the Faculty of Education! Our Faculty was the first Teacher Education Institution to make Experiential Learning (EL) a compulsory part of its teacher preparation courses. All our EL courses and projects address an issue in teacher education in which “the old paradigm of university-based teacher education… needs to change to one where there is a nonhierarchical interplay between academic, practitioner, and community expertise” (Zeichner, p.89, 2010). Research tells us that while our teachers are technically competent upon graduation, they may not always be as responsive to ill-defined situations and pupils’ needs. We maintain, therefore, that teacher education can no longer afford to focus only on the teaching of classroom strategies and methods without looking beyond our institutional walls to draw on powerful community knowledge.

We aim at re-thinking how teacher education can adapt to a rapidly changing and unpredictable global context while bringing benefits for the teaching profession and our wider community; we seek to promote a third layer of learning in teacher education, making the community outside the university an inter-space for reciprocal knowledge building and the source of multiple learning opportunities for all of you. When joining an EL course or project, students will have the chance to collaborate in inter-disciplinary teams on authentic tasks based around community needs, but which are all linked to education and their personal and professional development as teachers-to-be. We want students to develop into a 21st century teaching force that is resilient, creative, adaptive, culturally-sensitive and alive to the diversity around them. We look forward to working with you all!

Experiential Learning Team
Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong
Aims of Experiential Learning

Aims

- Enhancing students’ learning by connecting theory with experience and thought with action;
- Assisting students to understand the relevance of their respective academic disciplines to the real world;
- Developing a richer context for students’ learning;
- Exposing students to social and global issues; and
- Cultivating students with critical thinking, creativity and problem solving skills.

Without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there’s really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn’t come automatically: it comes through being alive, awake, curious...

— Maxine Greene

Education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process.

— John Dewey
Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of Our Community Partners

The Faculty highly appreciates the commitment of its partners in offering learning opportunities and supervising our student teachers. Each partner is asked to undertake the following tasks:

A Programme design

The design of EL programmes mostly depends on the planning of the partner organisation. EL partners are expected to stipulate the details of the programmes while liaising with the EL team before commencement of the programme application period. Should there be any changes in the programme details, EL partners should inform the EL team at the earliest instance.

B Supervision and coordination

EL partners are expected to designate at least one staff member to act as an EL mentor of the programme in the following areas:

- To communicate with the EL team and university tutors;
- To brief students about the mission, structure and relevant information of the partner institution / organisation;
- To lead overseas and mainland EL programmes; and
- To be the direct contact person to provide advice and assistance to participants throughout the programme period.

C Accommodation and programme fee arrangement

EL partners should provide safe environments for participants to carry out their projects and activities. For overseas and mainland programmes, accommodation is expected to be arranged for participants. All programme fees and necessary charges should be made known to students before commencement of the programme, and no additional charge upon students after commencement of the programme will be allowed.
D Leave approval

Students are not expected to take any leave (personal, study or work-related) during the programme period. Leave application should only be considered under special circumstances, and students should seek endorsement from the EL partner at least one week in advance and inform the EL team.

Failure to follow the above application procedures may result in a student failing the course. No retrospective application for personal leave will be considered.

E Performance assessment

Students’ performance will be assessed by representatives from both the EL partner and the EL team. The assessment criteria will be discussed and agreed upon by both parties prior to the commencement of the project.

F Feedback from partner

EL partners are invited to communicate closely with the EL team about issues relating to the students’ performance whenever necessary.
Experiential Learning Requirements for Students

Undergraduate (UG) Students

Double degree programmes

All incoming UG students for BA&BEd(LangEd)–English, BA&BEd(LangEd)–Chinese and BEd&BSc from the 2019-20 cohort are required to fulfill the requirements of at least one EL activity through a Community-based Professional Practicum (CPP) project before the start of their fourth year. The settings for CPP projects may be local, overseas and in the Mainland. All are aimed at pushing students out of their comfort zones and enabling them to foster skills and values that are relevant to a career in education. Students are required to undertake six credits from education-related EL courses or CPP projects offered by the Faculty of Education before the start of their fourth year.

Other programmes

Students in other programmes are strongly encouraged to participate in optional EL projects throughout their period of studies.

Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Students

Full-time students

PGDE full-time non-language major students are required to undertake EL in Semester 1 of the programme. The experiential placement normally lasts for five to six weeks. Students can either enrol in an EL project offered by the Faculty of Education, or nominate their own project (which must be approved by the Faculty's EL team first). Please note that Chinese and English majors have their immersion programmes at this time.

Part-time students

EL is optional for PGDE part-time students to enrol as an elective course. Students will be asked to apply for an EL project by end of Semester 1 in their first year of studies. EL may take the form of professional learning experiences in or outside Hong Kong.
Experiential Learning at Undergraduate Level

LOCAL
OVERSEAS
Experiential Learning at Postgraduate Level

Since 2016 we have established over 40 EL projects at postgraduate level and here are some examples:
The Global Reach of Experiential Learning of the Faculty of Education

Our Community Partners since 2016

Experiential Learning Opportunities in the Faculty of Education

Local EL  http://el.edu.hku.hk/opportunities/local/

Overseas EL  http://el.edu.hku.hk/opportunities/overseas/

PGDE full-time EL block  http://el.edu.hku.hk/opportunities/pgdefull-time-el-block/
Sharing from Students

Undergraduates

"Although this was an elective EL course, different in many ways from my core teaching pedagogy and language education courses, I saw it very much as a coherent extension of my teacher training, because collaboratively planning a five-lesson curriculum required putting into practice the use of skills and knowledge gained throughout my five years at HKU. More than anything, however, I believe I will carry the lessons and experiences on resilience with me into my own classrooms… Value education is becoming increasingly important in schools, and I look forward to finding different methods and materials to incorporate the teaching of skills like empathy and resilience in my everyday classes."

"This trip really changed my mind about teaching and education. Initially, I think I am just going to be an ordinary kindergarten teacher, I couldn’t see the things that I do can have a huge impact on children’s personal growth and development. However, the history of massive killing in Cambodia gave me an insight. When I saw the photos of the victims, I could feel their hopelessness and sorrow. Education can help us to identify what is right or wrong and remind us to protect the core value which is being eroded. Therefore, the things that I do for kids have meanings. I promise myself that as an early childhood educator, I do have responsibility to nurture the next generation, teaching them to become a better person."

Melitta Von Pflug
BA&BEd(LangEd)-ENG

Yennis Lau
BSc(ACD)
This experience certainly helps me gain immeasurable amount of knowledge and skills. As we have prepared for around half year since September, I think our hard work paid off and we have learnt more than we could ask for. This is an extraordinary chance of learning real-life techniques of handling special situations. Even though unlike most of the classmates, I will be a speech therapist in the future, this enables me to know how to better communicate with children and make the learning materials more attention-grabbing. Therefore, I feel really lucky and glad that I have joined this course.

This programme inspired me a lot about what creativity is. The game that required students to give quick response to some weird scenario showed me how ‘unbounded’ could creativity be. Moreover, it was impressive that students could really construct a straw bridge that could successfully transport a tennis ball in seven minutes... It was amazing to witness how students solve this problem. It proved that students were capable of solving problems by themselves.
After the EL period, I found the project had contributed to my personal and social development, it also brought me to break through my comfort zone! During this EL block, I not only came into contact with different children and parents, but also learnt the skills of communicating with them by observing the game trainer. I believe these skills can be applied in my future career.

The execution of the activity provided me with various insights on how I could make use of such classroom in community programme in my future teachings, both from the way of executing it, and from the feedback of the participants. Moreover, it also gave me practical outcomes on how one single set of teaching materials could be adapted to different targeted participants, satisfying their corresponding needs.

The experiential learning has highly broadened my experience, especially in a different context away from classrooms. Yet, all these experiences could be linked back to classroom settings. There were always unexpected incidents happening which had affected the execution of what we planned. This is in fact also happening during classroom settings, where there will be many sudden incidents, like non-working technical tools, under / overestimation of students’ abilities, sudden cancellation of class, emotional burst of students...

Well-planned teaching schedules would be affected, and we teachers then have to think of ways to compensate - to think of what students should do for underrun classes, as well as how the progress of learning could be chased for overrun classes.
Feedback from Community Partners

Mr. Gary Wong
Registered Social Worker / Team Leader, Children & Family Team
Financial Education Centre, Hong Kong Family Welfare Society

It is our pleasure to cooperate with the EL Team in the Faculty of Education, HKU and offer EL placements to its PGDE students. Since the majority of our services is outreaching programmes to all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, understanding the financial education needs and interests of students is always the utmost important task for us. The PGDE students not only contributed their power to our centre, but also their professional knowledge and skills on teaching students. They integrated their intelligence into our existing programmes and added on some creative ideas, we treasure their contribution very much. Last but not least, we are happy to know that internship students from our centre did really absorb our rationale on financial education and implemented it in their workplace.

Mr. Enoch Chan
Assistant Programme Secretary
Wu Kwai Sha Youth Leadership & Wholistic Development Centre,
Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong

I was once a PGDE student at the HKU and decided to complete my EL internship at YMCA. During the internship, YMCA provided me with a lot of opportunities to bring the ideas in my mind to reality in the form of different innovative camps and classes. During my time of working with the pupils, I developed crucial and valuable skills in critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, communication, as well as leadership and team work capabilities. These experiences can be further implemented into school settings and helped me a lot throughout my teaching career. From my own experience, I can testify to the benefits of this programme as all means of developing invaluable skills and widening your thinking. Furthermore, I am honoured to be one of the supervisors of this programme now.
Ms. Rachel Wong  
Service Supervisor  
Service Management Office, Hong Chi Association

The PGDE students from the Faculty of Education in HKU joined us in their experiential learning in three aspects. The student-teachers integrated their knowledge and skills into practices through observing and assisting class teachers in daily normal classes. They enhanced their communication skills with their working partners and experienced how preschool teachers interact with parents.

This experiential learning also helped raise students’ awareness of the needs of young exceptional children and their families. Through supporting community programmes, they showed a good model of how to support children and families in need. We hope we can facilitate the personal growth of these student-teachers and create an inclusive environment in the community with them.

Ms. Emily Chan  
Public Education Department  
World Vision Hong Kong

The Global Citizenship Programme, with new experiential workshops carefully designed and tested, has now been conducted successfully in various schools. With knowledge and experience in education, these students also gave helpful comments to the enhancement of our educational services. It was great to have these students involved in our school talks and promotional activities as well. Glad to have these students helping in our ministry!
Ms. Pat Huang  
Global Education Officer  
Service Civil International - Hong Kong China

We are very pleased to have HKU student teachers who went the extra miles to do their experiential learning project with us in Sri Lanka during their summer holiday. They carried out fantastic workshops and teamwork games. Their interaction with kids have given them confidence in speaking English, and making connections with people from the outside world. Despite challenges, it is a learning experience how the student teachers adapt to different cultures, solve problems and cater for the diversity. It is amazing how people from different cultures do things together and build positive relationships.

We would like to thank the EL team for the great partnership and the PGDE students for their dedication. We hope this valuable yet challenging learning journey will stay with our future educators in the face of the fast-changing world.
Experiential Learning Team’s Work and Achievements

Book Publication


Achievements

- **Finalist of the University Grants Committee (UGC) Teaching Award 2020**

  The Panel was greatly impressed by the team's work to embed community-based experiential learning into the teacher education curriculum, as an integral part of the process of 'becoming' a teacher. The scale of the work was impressive, across 16 credit-bearing courses, and the approaches such as removing grades and grading as a pass-fail, demonstrated innovation in the curricular approach. The Panel commends the dissemination of the work and its evaluation in the literature, and recognises the external validation of its impact at the Reimagine Education Awards is a significant achievement.

- **Gold Award 2020 in the Presence Learning and Teaching Category at the QS Reimagine Education Awards (The Oscars of Education)**

- **Outstanding Conference Submission Award for the paper ‘Hearing the community voice in the process of teacher education and experiential learning’ American Educational Research Association (AERA), Toronto, 2019**

- **University Outstanding Teaching Award (Team) 2017-18, HKU**

- **Faculty Outstanding Teaching Award (Team) 2017-18, Faculty of Education, HKU**