



APPLIED LEARNING

A Framework for Camosun

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Introduction to the Applied Learning Framework & Model

This framework document outlines Camosun's renewed approach to applied learning. The *Applied Learning Framework* is based on internal feedback from faculty focus groups, the Applied Learning Steering Committee (see Appendix A for membership list), the College's Educational Leadership Team and a literature review. It provides context for the college's focus on Applied Learning as an approach the college is known for. The framework proposes ways we can move forward so that the content and processes in our courses, programs and other learning opportunities continue to be relevant and meaningful as we prepare a new generation of students to live, learn and work in a dynamic, complex and technologically advanced world.

Central to our approach is a focus on solid, learning-centred teaching strategies grounded in the scholarship of experiential education, represented by the *Applied Learning Model* (See Figure 1). The model is a conceptualization of an approach to teaching based on Eight Principles of Experiential Learning by the National Society for Experiential Education. The Applied Learning Model emphasizes excellence in teaching reflection, application and practice.

Figure 1.

Definition

Applied learning refers to the design of significant learning experiences linked directly with course and program content that intentionally develop students' academic, personal & professional skills. The hallmarks of applied learning at Camosun are systems & structures that are flexible and responsive to the unique teaching skills, learning spaces, communication and assessment strategies required to provide authentic, thought-provoking learning experiences that meaningfully contend with current issues facing society, government, business and industry (Kolb, 2015; Dewey, Vygotsky).



Background

In the spring of 2017, under the initiative of the Vice President Education and Vice President Student Experience, forty-plus college faculty and leaders from the Education and Student Experience divisions gathered for a half-day forum to discuss Camosun's diverse array of applied learning opportunities and to explore ways to expand applied learning to students across all schools and departments

The goal was to discuss the concepts and ideas underpinning applied learning and to explore the challenges faced by faculty seeking to engage learners with innovative teaching methods and experiential learning activities.

As a result of the forum a number of activities were identified as starting points for this relaunch. Conducted through the fall and winter, these activities included a review of the theory, principles, and practice of applied learning; completion of a survey of applied learning activities; and a series of interviews with faculty currently using applied learning activities within required and elected courses, and across a program. In addition, student focus groups have been identified and will be scheduled early in 2018 to seek input on their experiences with applied learning.

Why Applied Learning?

Camosun College is where people come for applied learning experiences that lead to successful and meaningful careers. This is how many see us and it's why many students choose to come here. We are key to the region's economic, cultural and social growth and well-being. As a result, we have become a college that helps people build better lives, engages them with community and supports the launch of meaningful and fulfilling work or further education. We provide support for students to explore all of their options.

The challenge for us now is how to continue to do this meaningfully. Technology and labour force data indicate a changed world for traditional models of applied learning with increasing value on experience. Curriculum and programs that link with work and the community enrich students' understanding of what is possible. We need to provide those we serve – most importantly students – with a clear model of what we are good at and what we can offer so that the value of an Applied Learning education from Camosun is better understood. A well-defined model of applied learning will also allow us to continue to meet the demand of students who value traditional forms of applied learning.

While providing a competitive advantage in the job and career market is important, applied learning is also integral to bringing skills, knowledge and problem solving to the external community. A sense of social mindedness and citizenship is also part of this work and includes community based support that enhances student awareness of issues facing our community and help them develop solutions to address these in part.

Camosun has a 25 year track-record of co-op and work placement programs. That leadership, combined with recent innovative applied research opportunities connecting students with small and medium-sized enterprises, puts Camosun in the position to take a fresh look at its current model of applied learning and how it connects us to community, as well as how it furthers student learning and engagement.

A well-defined approach to applied learning will allow us to continue to meet the demand of students who value traditional forms of applied learning, ranging from full co-op programs and internships to apprenticeships and practicums, and at the same time provide opportunity for creativity and innovation in classrooms, providing opportunities to explore social innovation to solve community or industry's real world problems. These experiences help students make meaning of their education.

A Focus on Learning

Camosun has a reputation for providing quality, relevant educational experiences for students to gain the skills and capabilities necessary to contribute to their communities in intelligent, meaningful, and creative ways.

Learning outcomes that intend to prepare students for engaged citizenship, further education, leadership and employment can be achieved through an applied learning experience. The eight principles of applied learning (National Society for Experiential Education, 2015) in the proposed *Applied Learning Model* (See Figure 1) emphasize excellence in teaching practices. Kenny et al (2017) note that teaching expertise is reflected in a learning mindset focused on both the students' and one's own learning. Brookfield (1995) notes that expert teachers critically reflect on their teaching approaches and practices while Hubball, et al (2005) states that effective teachers question what they do, why they do it, and what works and what doesn't – in light of evidence drawn from existing research and from their own students' learning (p. 1).

Barr & Tagg (1995) state that “expert teachers understand that teaching is about supporting and improving student learning, not an end in itself”. They further maintain that the shift colleges need to make from a focus on teaching to that of the learning paradigm that “...ends the lecture's privileged position, honoring in its place whatever approaches serve best to prompt learning of particular knowledge by particular students”. (p. 12). We propose a focus on the provision of applied learning activities across programs and courses at Camosun. These activities may encompass a project within a course, an entire course, elements of a program or an entire program.

Applied learning offers more than a transmission of knowledge. Content *informs* the learning activity, but the *intentionality* of choosing experiential learning as the teaching method provides the environment for transformational learning to occur. Through participation in quality applied learning activities students gain self-awareness, a deeper understanding of content, and an ability to work collaboratively using problem solving and critical thinking skills and analysis. Educational neuroscientists emphasize that intentional engagement in reflective practice is key to “cementing” learning and enhancing application, transfer, retention, and recall. It does so by facilitating patterning and meaning making, creating multiple pathways to learning, and providing a forum for feedback (Stanchfield, 2013).

Rapid changes in society and industry require of us a more nimble, flexible response from the college than some of our current structures allow.

If the goal is to develop critically thinking, self-motivated, problem-solving individuals who participate actively in their communities, education must mirror the context in which students ultimately will be placed (Itin, 1999; Resnick, 1987).

Reflection of our Values & Alignment with Camosun's Strategic Plan

Indigenization

Camosun is committed to indigenization & reconciliation and believes it provides a foundation for students' success going forward. The applied learning model allows for the indigenization of course content and student engagement processes. Dr. Martin Brokenleg's *Circle of Courage* and Dr. Lorna William's *Lil'wat Principles of Learning* fit under “intention” and “group orientation & training” respectively (see Appendix B). Incorporation of these relational and community-based Indigenous pedagogies ensures the applied learning processes outlined in the model are indigenized. Efforts to

engage in reconciliation are critical and are increasingly required in workplaces and post-secondary environments as the Indigenous population in Canada is the fastest growing demographic.

Intercultural communication

Applied skills in intercultural communication are important as we respond as a nation to record numbers of refugees and immigrants. Applied learning activities that focus on problem solving provide opportunities for faculty, domestic and international students to engage with one another in a respectful and constructive manner.

Enhancing community engagement & civic mindedness

We recognize that with all programs and courses, there is the potential to support and build on real world problems, issues, or questions that help to develop skills required for work, careers, and further education. While providing a competitive advantage in the job and career market is important, applied learning is also integral to students' building a sense of civic-mindedness through community engagement.

The Interaction Lab and Camosun Innovates provide a strong connection to industry and business, and an opportunity for Camosun students to apply their skills, knowledge and theoretical understandings to real world issues. The layout of the Interaction Lab accommodates an applied learning approach based on design thinking and informed by Stanford University's Design School, or d.school. Camosun responds to community needs and requests and our applied research and social innovation projects are demand driven. We believe this has the potential to provide huge value to students but also to the region's economy and social health.

Applied learning includes developing solutions for today's issues. An applied learning approach can offer students the opportunity to apply critical thinking, problem solving skills and technical skills in interdisciplinary and other forms.

Responding to Faculty & Student Feedback

Camosun offers applied learning activities across many programs and this generates excitement for teachers and students alike. There are many different approaches, standards, and criteria used in the development and delivery of applied learning activities. We acknowledge the excellence in teaching that occurs across the college and we believe the applied learning model provides a way to bring consistency across the college in defining, developing and delivering quality learning experiences for Camosun students. Applied learning takes many forms at the college—the many activities can be captured by three main themes—Camosun Works, Camosun Creates, and Camosun Connects.



Camosun Works

- Apprenticeship
- Co-op Education
- Internship
- Practicum/Clinical Placement



Camosun Creates

- Applied Research
- Capstone Projects
- Entrepreneurship
- Interdisciplinary Education
- Role-playing
- Art-Poem-Art Experiment



Camosun Connects

- Conference Presentation
- Community Service Learning
- Conference Presentation
- Social Innovation
- International Experiences
- Mentoring or Tutoring
- Student Leadership
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Land-based Education
- Case Study
- Lab
- Debate
- Field Trip

Camosun's Approach – the Applied Learning Model

The Intention of the Model

The model (Figure 1.) is flexible, scalable and consistent and builds upon what the college already offers. It provides a common language for the college to talk about applied learning, and a sound guide for the development of curricular activities, courses and programs grounded in educational theory and current leading practices in applied learning. It incorporates the college's leading curricular practices, guiding principles, concepts and approaches. Measureable learning outcomes guide the development of quality programs and courses.

A key strength of the model is the incorporation of the critical curriculum design elements that meet learning outcomes and ensure faculty lead students through an authentic, thought-provoking learning experience. The model provides structure for design while being flexible enough to allow for discipline/interdisciplinary nuances and to include college values such as indigenization, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability.

The model places learning at the centre and is based on eight principles of applied learning as identified by the National Society for Experiential Education (2015). The eight principles are:

- Intention;
- curriculum preparation and planning;
- authenticity;
- reflection;
- group orientation and training;
- monitoring and continuous improvement;
- assessment and evaluation, and acknowledgement.

Community

The inclusion of community within the model indicates that everything we do has impact beyond the college, and is intrinsically connected to society and industry. It highlights the need to seek out and nurture relationships with people across all sectors of our region and beyond to ensure authenticity, relevance and currency in all that we do.

The Eight Principles of Applied Learning

Camosun has adopted eight key principles on which our development of applied learning will be based (National Society for Experiential Education). These will provide criteria for applied learning experiences and support a framework for development of options.

The first four principles outline the curriculum development process and preparation for an applied learning activity. The process outlined in the table below can be applied to course activities, an applied learning course, or an applied learning program. Cycling through the 4 principles during the curriculum development phase is advised, especially to ensure that the learning activity is grounded in intentional experience. The final four principles outline the student experience.

Eight Principles of Applied Learning

Curriculum Planning	Student Experience
<p>Intentional: All parties must be clear from the outset why experience is the chosen approach to the learning that is to take place and to the knowledge that will be demonstrated, applied or result from it. Intention represents the purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge and, as such, is deeper than the goals, objectives, and activities that define the experience.</p>	<p>Orientation, Training, and Engagement: For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator(s), and to any involved organizational partners, it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate. Once that baseline of knowledge is addressed, ongoing structured development opportunities should also be included to expand the learner’s appreciation of the context and skill requirements of their work.</p>
<p>Curricular Preparedness and Planning: Teachers must ensure they enter the experience with sufficient foundation to support a successful learning experience. They must also focus from the earliest stages of the experience/program on the identified intentions, adhering to them as goals, objectives and activities are defined. The resulting plan should include those intentions and be referred to on a regular basis by all parties. At the same time, it should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations as the experience unfolds.</p>	<p>Monitoring, Reflection and Continuous Improvement: Any learning activity will be dynamic and changing, and the parties involved all bear responsibility for ensuring that the experience, as it is in process, continues to provide the richest learning possible, while affirming the learner. It is important that there be a feedback loop related to learning intentions and quality objectives and that the structure of the experience be sufficiently flexible to permit change in response to what that feedback suggests. While reflection provides input for new hypotheses and knowledge based in documented experience, other strategies for observing progress against intentions and objectives should also be in place. Monitoring and continuous improvement represent the formative evaluation tools.</p>

<p>Authenticity: The experience must have a real world context and/or be useful and meaningful in reference to an applied setting or situation. This means that it should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by or use it, or in response to a real situation.</p>	<p>Assessment and Evaluation: Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes. Assessment is a means to develop and refine the specific learning goals and quality objectives identified during the planning stages of the experience, while evaluation provides comprehensive data about the experiential process as a whole and whether it has met the intentions which suggested it.</p>
<p>Reflection: Reflection is the element that transforms a simple experience to a learning experience. For knowledge to be discovered and internalized the learner must test assumptions and hypotheses about the outcomes of decisions and actions taken, then weigh the outcomes against past learning and future implications. This reflective process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Reflection is also an essential tool for adjusting the experience and measuring outcomes.</p>	<p>Acknowledgment: Recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes and through reporting, documentation and sharing of accomplishments. All parties to the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. Culminating documentation and celebration of learning and impact help provide closure and sustainability to the experience.</p>

Next steps:

Consultation on the principles and definition

Consultation on the framework

Development of a two year plan based on the above

Appendix A: Applied Learning Steering Committee

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Appendix B: Indigenization

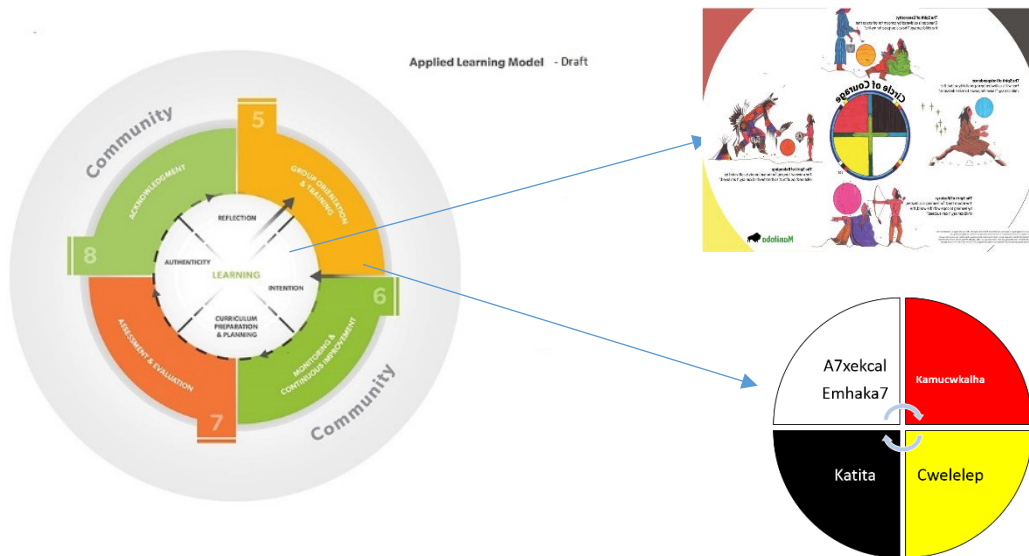
Indigenization is a process we value at the college. The following diagram outlines how Martin Brokenleg’s Circle of Courage fits into the *Intention* sector of the Applied Learning Model. Faculty can incorporate belonging, mastery, independence and generosity into any applied learning activity.

Belonging: The universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust...

Mastery: the inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world we can succeed.

Independence: free will is cultivated by responsibility leading to empowerment to make decisions

Generosity: character is cultivated by concern for others



Lorna William’s has generously shared the 6 principles of learning from the Lil’wat Nation. The Lil’wat Principles of Learning augment the 8 principles of applied learning by focusing attention on the relationship of the learner to: themselves and their learning process; the other learners in the course; the community of learners; and to the common group purpose. They can be incorporated to the applied learning experience under the *Orientation and Training* sector. This indigenizes the learning process and provides a philosophical structure to the activity that considers the needs of the individual learner as well as those of the group.

- In the learning process and in the relationship between the learner and any facilitator(s) of learning, there is a mutual responsibility.
- All parties are empowered to achieve the principles which follow. Yet, at the same time, the facilitator(s) of learning are expected to take the lead in ensuring both the quality of the learning experience and of the work produced, and in supporting the learner to use the principles, which underlie the pedagogy of experiential education.

Appendix C: Lil'wat Principles of Learning

Kamúcwkalha - acknowledging the felt energy indicating group attunement and the emergence of a common group purpose.

Celhcelh - each person being responsible for their own and others learning, always seeking learning opportunities.

Kat'il'a - seeking spaces of stillness and quietness amidst our busyness and quest for knowledge.

A7xekcal - valuing our own expertise and considering how it helps the entire community beyond ourselves.

Cwelelep - recognizing the need to sometimes be in a place of dissonance and uncertainty, so as to be open to new learning.

Emhaka7 - encouraging each of us to do the best we can at each task given to us.

(Lorna Williams, 2008)

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