

## POLICY CONSULTATION REPORT

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**DATE:** June 1, 2026

**FROM:** Niall O'Halloran, Manager, Policy & Privacy

**SUBJECT:** Policy Consultation Opportunity  
Graduate Experiential Learning Policy

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### **BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:**

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) is responsible for overseeing graduate education across the University. This includes the development of graduate academic policies.

Experiential learning refers to structured activities integrated within an academic program involving the application of disciplinary knowledge and skills in a workplace, research, community, or professional setting. Such activities allow students to apply their learning outside the academic environment, carrying immense value for their course of study and career development.

Recent growth in graduate enrolment, expanded program offerings and diversification, and increased engagement with industry, government, and community partners has increased opportunities for graduate level experiential learning across the institution. However, we currently lack a dedicated policy instrument to guide experiential learning at the graduate level.

Currently, the University has Directives for Co-Operative Education, Internship and Practicum Development (ACD 1599.06). These directives are not specific to graduate programs, and do not include other forms of experiential learning such as entrepreneurial activities, industry research projects, and community-engaged learning. The proposed Graduate Experiential Learning Policy complements the current directives and provides details on a graduate-specific framework that supports a range of experiential learning models while allowing programs to determine the approaches more appropriate to their disciplinary context. The policy outlines the structure, design, and delivery of experiential learning activities, associated unit responsibilities, and fee structure.

### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED POLICY:**

- Defines different forms of experiential learning at the graduate level, including community-engaged learning, co-operative education, entrepreneurial activities, industry research projects, internships, practica, and other structured activities.
- Establishes overall academic and structural expectations for graduate experiential learning, such as defined learning outcomes, compliance with related policy instruments, and required agreements.
- Outlines responsibilities in the development of experiential learning activities, including required consultations.
- Outlines the delivery of graduate experiential learning, including considerations for supervision, student responsibilities, and conditions for continued participation.
- Outlines the fee structure associated with graduate experiential learning.

**HOW TO COMMENT:**

- Community members can provide written comments using the policy feedback form.
- The comment period will be open until 3:00pm on June 15, 2026.
- Comments will be shared with SGPS for consideration in advance of further approvals.

**APPROVAL PATH:**

- Online Consultation
- Graduate Studies Committee recommendation for approval
- Academic Council approval

**SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

- ACD XXXX Graduate Experiential Learning Policy (draft)

# Graduate Experiential Learning Policy

<b>Classification number</b>	ACD XXXX
<b>Framework category</b>	Academic
<b>Approving authority</b>	Academic Council
<b>Policy owner</b>	Dean, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
<b>Approval date</b>	Month XX, 2026
<b>Review date</b>	Month XXXX
<b>Last updated</b>	Month XX, 2026
<b>Supersedes</b>	N/A

## Preamble

Experiential learning provides an opportunity for students to apply specialized knowledge and skills beyond the academic environment. In addition to its educational value in a rapidly evolving labour market, the implementation of structured experiential learning allows the University to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse collective of graduate students.

The successful development and execution of experiential learning at the graduate level is dependent upon:

- Supporting scholarly and professional development and excellence;
- Maintaining academic quality and integrity across Ontario Tech’s graduate programs;
- Enabling graduate programs to incorporate structured experiential learning opportunities appropriate to their disciplinary context;
- Aligning with nationally and/or provincially recognized best practices in work-integrated learning;
- Maintaining clear roles and division of responsibility among stakeholders including academic units and centralized experiential learning operations.

In recognition of these factors, this Policy complements the University's current experiential learning directives and recognizes the distinct academic context of graduate education.

## Purpose

1. The purpose of this Policy is to establish an institutional framework and expectations governing the development, administration, and oversight of experiential learning at the graduate level.

## Definitions

2. For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

**“Academic Units”** refer to the Faculties and the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS).

**“Experiential Learning”** refers to structured activities integrated within a program that involve the application of disciplinary knowledge and skills in a workplace, research, community, or professional setting.

Experiential learning includes established learning outcomes, a defined period (e.g., semester, Work Term) or placement, academic supervision, and formal evaluation as part of a program of study. This may occur through a range of structured models, including but not limited to:

- a. **“Community-Engaged Learning”**, referring to for-credit applied learning activities within a community that have substantial involvement with individuals or organizations external to the University, such as local non-profit groups;
- b. **“Co-operative Education” or “Co-Op”**, referring to arrangements by which one or more paid Work Terms are integrated throughout a student's studies and result in a degree designation upon successful completion of academic and co-op program requirements;
- c. **“Entrepreneurial Activities”**, referring to for-credit development and/or commercialization of products or services including venture creation and related activities;
- d. **“Industry Research Project”**, referring to a for-credit applied research project normally conducted in collaboration with an industry or community partner, including Capstone projects;

- e. **“Internship”**, referring to a for-credit work opportunity which may be paid or unpaid;
- f. **“Practicum”**, referring to a for-credit part-time and/or short-term intensive experience in a workplace setting which is normally unpaid and typically supervised by an experienced licensed or registered professional;
- g. Other structured applied learning experiences as approved by the relevant academic units and governance bodies at the University.

**“Placement Host”** refers to an external organization or internal unit that provides an environment in which a graduate student participates in experiential learning.

**“Work Term”** means a defined period (e.g., semester) of structured experiential learning, typically associated with a co-operative education component, during which a graduate student engages in a placement with a Placement Host.

Work Terms are paid engagements, involve an applied learning experience, and are normally full-time.

## Scope and authority

- 3. This Policy applies to structured experiential learning within graduate programs at Ontario Tech University. It establishes a framework and institutional expectations governing the development, administration, and oversight of such activities at the graduate level.
- 4. Structured experiential learning activities involve a defined period of work or placement, established learning outcomes, academic supervision, and formal evaluation as part of a graduate program. They typically involve engagement with external partner organizations, including industry, government, non-profit, or community partners. In some cases, structured experiential learning placements may also be hosted within the university where the experience provides a comparable applied learning environment.
- 5. Applied learning activities which exist outside the definition of experiential learning given in this Policy (e.g., those which are informal or embedded within individual courses or projects without a defined period of work or placement) are governed at the program level and fall outside the scope of this Policy.

6. Academic units are responsible for the design and delivery of graduate experiential learning, including but not limited to the definition and oversight of participation requirements, learning outcomes, and evaluation methods.
7. Administrative units will be consulted in the introduction or modification of graduate experiential learning components and are responsible for supporting their operational coordination and implementation. Administrative units will not determine curriculum, academic assessment, or graduate program requirements.
8. The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, or successor thereof, is the Policy Owner and is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration, and interpretation of this Policy.

## Policy

### 9. **Design and Development of Experiential Learning Activities**

- 9.1. Academic authority for graduate experiential learning rests with academic units.
- 9.2. Faculties and graduate programs are responsible for the academic design of experiential learning activities within their programs.
- 9.3. Graduate programs will ensure that structured experiential learning opportunities:
  - a. Align with program learning outcomes;
  - b. Include appropriate academic supervision;
  - c. Meet the minimum expectations outlined in section 12 of this Policy.
- 9.4. Graduate programs will determine the following for experiential learning program components and activities:
  - a. Whether such components are required or optional;
  - b. The inclusion, structure, and format of components (e.g., co-op, internship, projects, etc.);
  - c. Whether associated periods of work are full- or part-time;
  - d. Learning outcomes and academic requirements;

- e. Methods used to evaluate student learning and progress.
- 9.5. It is recognized that experiential learning activities typically involve engagement with external partner organizations, including industry, government, non-profit, or community partners. The development and maintenance of these partnerships may be supported by administrative units in collaboration with Faculties.
  - 9.6. In some cases, structured experiential learning placements may be hosted within the university where the experience provides a suitable applied learning environment.
  - 9.7. Experiential learning models may vary across programs depending on disciplinary context, degree requirements, and professional expectations.
  - 9.8. In the design, development, and delivery of experiential learning activities, programs should consider domain-specific requirements regarding operations, reporting, and regulatory compliance.

## **10. Consultation During Development**

- 10.1. Graduate programs proposing the introduction of or any modification to structured experiential learning components shall engage in the following consultations:
  - a. With the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) to ensure alignment with graduate policies, procedures, and standards.
  - b. With the Co-operative Education, Experiential Learning and Career Development Office (CEELCD) or equivalent to ensure the availability of appropriate operational support and structures.

## **11. Delivery of Experiential Learning Activities**

- 11.1. Faculties and graduate programs will collaborate with CEELCD (or equivalent) as needed on the shared responsibility of implementing experiential learning program components within the established frameworks for responsibilities at the University, including:
  - a. The development and maintenance of partnerships with external organizations;
  - b. Operational coordination of placements and Work Terms;

- c. Student preparation and career readiness resources;
  - d. Institutional tracking and reporting related to experiential learning participation.
- 11.2. When a graduate student has a designated faculty supervisor, the supervisor may be involved in providing academic oversight of their participation in experiential learning activities and monitor progress in accordance with program requirements.
- 11.3. Graduate students participating in experiential learning activities are responsible for:
- a. Meeting the academic and procedural requirements associated with their experiential learning activities;
  - b. Adhering to university policies and procedures applicable to their participation in experiential learning including (but not limited to) the Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Policy;
  - c. Conducting themselves in a professional manner consistent with the expectations of the placement host and the University.
- 11.4. If the Faculty Dean determines that a student has violated the standard of behaviour appropriate to the expectations and norms of a given experiential learning activity, the student may be immediately suspended from participation at the Dean's discretion pending a review. The outcome of such a review may involve removing the student from the experiential learning activity and should consider the Student Conduct Policy, Respectful Campus Policy, Academic Integrity Policy, and any relevant professional regulations or standards.
- 11.5. SGPS provides institutional oversight of graduate experiential learning to ensure continued alignment with relevant policy instruments.

## **12. Minimum Academic and Structural Expectations**

- 12.1. Graduate experiential learning must include:
- a. Clearly defined learning outcomes appropriate to graduate-level study;
  - b. Academic oversight by (a) qualified graduate faculty member(s) and/or graduate program director or designate(s);

- c. Mechanisms for monitoring student progress and evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes;
- d. Clearly defined roles and expectations for the student, program, and placement host;
- e. Appropriate documentation or agreements with placement hosts where required;
- f. Compliance with Ontario Tech policies and procedures where applicable, including but not limited to the Health and Safety Policy, Academic Integrity Policy, Research Ethics Policy, Intellectual Property Policy, and Student International Travel Policy.

12.2. Additional structural requirements for specific experiential learning models may be established through appropriate procedures or program level guidelines in consultation with SGPS and CEELCD (or equivalent).

12.3. Participation in experiential learning activities is subject to minimum eligibility requirements. Graduate students must:

- a. Maintain clear academic standing;
- b. Not have a history of academic misconduct in their graduate program at the University. Students may request a waiver of this requirement from the Faculty Dean or designate;
- c. Meet any additional requirements established by the graduate program (e.g., minimum CGPA, prerequisites).

12.4. If minimum eligibility requirements are not continuously met, graduate students may be removed from participation in experiential learning activities.

12.5. Graduate programs may establish additional requirements in consultation with SGPS and CEELCD (or equivalent) for participation in experiential learning, including expectations regarding duration, eligibility criteria, program progression, minimum grade point average (GPA), academic standing, and compensation, in accordance with program level guidelines, institutional policies, and nationally and/or provincially recognized best practices where applicable.

12.6. The design and delivery of graduate experiential learning activities should be informed by nationally and/or provincially recognized best practices for work-integrated learning, including principles established by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL), where appropriate.

### **13. Tuition and Fees**

13.1. Normally, students continue to pay all tuition and fees associated with their regular course of study during participation in graduate experiential learning activities.

- a. Normally, students currently participating in a Work Term do not pay tuition nor ancillary fees. Students participating in a Work Term while simultaneously completing one or more academic courses will pay any corresponding tuition and ancillary fees.
- b. International students participating in a Work Term will continue to pay fees associated with the mandatory Universal Health Insurance Plan (UHIP).

13.2. All applicable tuition and fees associated with experiential learning components will be communicated to current and future students by the Registrar's Office.

13.3. Graduate students may be required to pay a one-time entrance fee for co-operative education components. Payment of the entrance fee ensures access to preparatory material, workshops, and ongoing support resources as applicable.

- a. When students apply directly to the co-op stream of a graduate program, the entrance fee will normally be charged on entry to the program.
- b. When students declare their participation in co-op after enrollment in a graduate program, the entrance fee will normally be charged at the time of declaration.

13.4. Students will pay a work term fee for each Work Term as applicable.

13.5. Withdrawal or registration changes in a student's program or associated courses and any applicable fee changes will be considered according to the provisions outlined in the Registration and Course Selection Policy.

- 13.6. The amounts of the entrance fee, work term fee, and any other fees associated with experiential learning are subject to change at the discretion of the Tuition Working Group and Ancillary Fee Committee, subject to the approval of the Board of Governors.

## **Monitoring and review**

14. This Policy will be reviewed as necessary and at least every three years. The Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, or successor thereof, is responsible to monitor and review this Policy.

## **Relevant legislation**

15. This section intentionally left blank.

## **Related policies, procedures & documents**

16. Directives for Co-Operative Education, Internship and Practicum Development
- Grading System, Research Progress, and Academic Standing Policy (Graduate)
  - Registration and Course Selection Policy
  - Academic Integrity Policy
  - Student Conduct Policy
  - Respectful Campus Policy
  - Health and Safety Policy
  - Intellectual Property Policy
  - Research Ethics Policy
  - Student International Travel Policy
  - CEWIL Canada Co-operative Education accreditation standards (external)