Guidelines for Designating Experiential and Community-Based Learning at IUPUI

For a variety of reasons, not the least of which are the needs to report our activities more accurately and to have consistent thresholds and campus standards for different types of instruction, IUPUI has developed a standard nomenclature that makes meaningful distinctions among different types of experiential and community-based instruction. This nomenclature will enable us to adopt both a consistent naming structure across departments and schools and minimal standards for noting experiential and community-based instruction on transcripts and other formal documents issued by the IUPUI.

The following guidelines apply to any transcript notation that is designated by a course title and number. For reporting purposes, only those activities included within the categories of experiential learning and community-based instruction below will be officially reported. Accordingly, academic units will need to develop appropriate procedures and practices to record student learning experiences on transcripts by enrolling students in appropriate courses with appropriate designations as described below.

Identifying which experiential learning occurs substantially in the community will allow us to fulfill several institutional assessment goals:

- Build on the work of our Civic Engagement Self Study.
- Develop student civic engagement benchmarks consistent with the recommendations of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation’s Committee on Engagement. The CIC consists of the chief academic officers of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago.
- Begin building evidence that demonstrates our adherence to North Central Association’s new accreditation criteria, particularly Criterion 5, Engagement and Service.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is defined as formal, supervised learning experiences that rely substantially on students’ applying through direct experience the knowledge and information acquired through reading, simulations or electronic exercises, faculty instruction, or other modes of learning directly within the context and duration of the course. Consequently, experiential learning entails the integration of

- **knowledge**—the concepts, facts, and information acquired through formal learning and past experience;
- **activity**—the application of knowledge to a “real world” setting; and
- **reflection**—the analysis and synthesis of knowledge and activity to create new knowledge.

Experiential learning may occur on campus, in the community, or both. Although many co-curricular student activities can also be categorized as experiential learning, this document applies only to those activities that are linked to students’ academic coursework.

The intent of this statement of nomenclature is to permit IUPUI academic units, faculty, and students to understand and to record these types of learning and, further, to identify which are based substantially in the community, either in off-campus settings or applied
to off-campus situations. In making decisions about the classification of experiential learning, judgment of individual faculty and approval of the academic department will be required. These guidelines have been developed to provide assistance in this process, and to ensure reasonable consistency across the campus. The recognized categories of experiential learning are specified below.

**Credit or Non-credit**

The academic transcript provides a record of a student’s performance at the university. As such, it must present information in a manner that is meaningful and intelligible to someone outside of the university, including other institutions and employers, among others.

While the academic transcript typically records performance in a traditional semester-based course presentation (department, course number, course title, credits, and grade), non-course transcript notes may be used. Current examples of these are completion of an honors curriculum and completion of a significant undergraduate research experience.

Faculty of each unit retain full authority for creating courses, for assessing learning, and for determining credit. Any course that awards credit must be offered in accord with applicable Indiana University policy regarding the authority to offer credit instruction; however, the faculty of a unit, upon approval of the department chair and dean, may delegate to appropriate administrative officers (e.g. internship directors) who may not have faculty appointments, responsibility for supervising non-credit experiential learning noted on students’ transcripts.

The process for noting experiential and community-based learning on transcripts described below presumes two levels: non-credit and credit. A non-credit transcript notation signifies that the experience was a legitimate learning experience that had a minimal threshold level of academic engagement while meeting two additional criteria: (1) faculty supervision, and (2) reflective components through which the student and the supervising faculty member or internship director assess the experience as learning. Reflective components include, but are not limited to, written and/or oral analyses that link experiential learning experience with course goals and concepts.

The second transcript notation would assign credit and meet three criteria: (1) faculty supervision, (2) reflective components through which the student and supervising faculty member or internship director assess the experience as learning, and (3) learning achievements significant enough to warrant credit--from one credit hour to whatever limit the faculty of the unit awarding credit permit for a single course. In both instances, a student must be formally enrolled in a course. Only internships that are noted on the student’s academic record will be counted for purposes of reporting internships at IUPUI.

At both levels, other distinctions are possible contingent on the assessment of the supervising faculty member or the internship director. One such distinction would be whether the experiential learning component of a course is an individual student option, with or without credit, or whether it is required of all students in the course. In all instances, the unit faculty determine the standards for credit and how much, but the nomenclature and classifications described below define the minimum criteria by which the university will acknowledge the experience as a formal learning experience.

**Categories of Experiential Learning**
The following list provides definitions of the types of experiential learning courses that will be tracked on transcripts and other official documents issued by IUPUI through the Office of the Registrar. Most of these definitions have been adapted from established, nationally referenced sources (see references section below).

All courses listed on the transcript must meet the criteria noted above.

**Clinical education:** Entails the practice of learned didactic and experiential skills, most frequently in health care and legal settings, under the supervision of a credentialed practitioner.

**Cooperative education:** Special program offered by a department or school in which students alternate work and study, usually spending a number of weeks in study (typically full-time) and a number of weeks in employment away from campus (typically full-time). Alternatively, cooperative education may occur when students simultaneously attend classes part-time and work part-time during consecutive school semesters in an intentionally planned and coordinated way. Students receive academic credit for cooperative education when the experiences meet the criteria for credit (i.e., faculty supervision, reflective components, evidence of learning).

**Field work:** Supervised student research or practice carried out away from the institution and in direct contact with the people, natural phenomena, or other entities being studied; especially frequent in fields including anthropology, archaeology, sociology, social work, earth sciences, and environmental studies.

**Internship:** Sustained work experience in a student’s field of interest assessed by a faculty member and supervised by an employer who is not the faculty member. Work can be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid, on-campus or off-campus. The design of the internship determines whether or not the student may earn academic credit or have a formal transcript notation.

**Practicum:** A course or student exercise involving practical experience in a work setting (whether paid or unpaid) as well as theoretical study, including supervised experience as part of professional preservice education.

**Service learning:** A course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and (c) an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

**Student teaching:** A student in preprofessional and preservice teacher education who is gaining required and evaluated experience in supervised teaching.

**Study abroad:** Students earn academic credit for coursework that occurs outside of one of the fifty states or the District of Columbia.

**Identifying Attributes of Experiential Learning in Community Settings**
In order to more fully track the richness and variations of students’ experiential learning on their transcripts and to identify which of the experiences occurred substantially in the community, IUPUI will also identify appropriate courses with the following designations.
One or more of the following formal designators may be applied to any course in the categories noted above.

**Community-based research:** This includes, but is not limited to, field work, e.g., courses in which students complete research in which they collect data in a community setting and/or share findings with community entities in a service-learning course or an internship.

**Service-learning:** Courses in which students participate in service learning as defined above.

**Community:** Courses in which students spend a significant amount, e.g., one-third, of their time in a community setting in ways that contribute to learning objectives of the course.

**Immersion:** Courses in which students are immersed in a culture different from one’s own while extending the study of the course content. Such courses include, but are not limited to, courses taken as part of a study abroad experience. They may also include field work, practica, internships, and all other categories defined above, provided such experiences involve immersion in a culture different from that of the student.

**Internal Tracking and Reporting**
IUPUI will identify courses in such a way that allows for consistent tracking and reporting of enrollments in courses using the categories and attributes listed above.

**References**


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**Four Proposed Transcript Notes to be available:**

- Community Based Research
- Immersion in Different Culture
- Significant Time in Community Setting
- Organized Community Service Activity