

International Development Studies

Experiential Learning Handbook

What is Experiential Learning?

The International Development Studies Experiential Learning Program was founded in 2006 to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics and tensions between global and local, theoretical and practical realities of volunteerism in a hands-on setting. While other programs and departments use terms such as “internship,” “volunteer placement” or “co-ops”, the International Development Studies department has adopted the term experiential learning to reflect our innovative approach that combines the interplay between academic and practical skills development of our students. Coursework is combined with volunteer placements, providing students with the academic space to critically reflect upon their experiences. The volunteer placements allow students to work with organizations in Canada or abroad and to gain skills and experience in the fields of community development and international development.

INTD 3118/3119: Experiential Learning Canada

This course combines classroom learning with volunteer work experience in a community organization in Halifax, other parts of Canada or internationally. The pandemic has opened up a number of opportunities for virtual volunteering, including international organisation and Canadian organisations with virtual international placements. Volunteer placements in Halifax can be in-person or virtual, while placements in other parts of Canada or internationally can only be virtual. You are required to volunteer for a minimum of 60 hours (cumulative) between September and mid-April. This works out to approximately 3 hours a week. The volunteer hours are a requirement of the course. Students are not graded on their experience, per se; rather, they are graded on fostering the connection between academic literature and critical reflection of their own personal experiences. In addition to this work, you are required to attend all class meetings, cover assigned readings and complete all academic assignments, as per the syllabus. The course focuses on the themes of community development, public engagement, and the place of volunteerism in society.

Dalhousie’s Co-curricular Record

Students are eligible to have this recognised on their Co-Curricular Record (CCR). It is called “International Development Studies – Experiential Learning Student Volunteer”. To add your position to your CCR you need to log onto myCareer.dal.ca with your Dal netID and password, click Co-Curricular Record and follow the steps. The full explanation will be on Brightspace.

Who can enroll?

The experiential learning program is open to all students at Dalhousie, Kings, and St. Mary’s students who have completed INTD2001 or INTD2002. Permission needs to be obtained from the instructor if you do not have these prerequisites.

How do I enroll?

Students can register for this course like any other course at Dalhousie University. The student must enroll in and complete both INTD3118 and INTD3119 in consecutive terms to receive credit for the course. All 60 hours of volunteering must be completed within the two consecutive semesters to ensure your credit. Partial credit will not be given for a single term.

What preparation do I need for this program?

No formal training or experience is required for enrollment in the program. Each student is expected to locate a placement that best matches their individual skill set, level of experience, and interests. It is the responsibility of the student to find a placement, not the responsibility of the IDS faculty or staff. Students should also do their best to match their personal skills with the needs of the organization. General skills that may be helpful include sensitivity to diverse experiences, the ability to take initiative, flexibility, and general awareness of what it is like to work for a community organization or NGO.

What type of work will I be required to do on my placement?

The type of work that you will be doing depends upon the placement that you acquire. Host organizations may have a specific position with itemized tasks that the volunteer will do, or they may have a more general posting and fit the work to the volunteer's background. It depends on the organization. In the past student, volunteers have been involved in a variety of tasks such as organizing international visitors, preparing public education events, assisting with conferences or workshops, and fundraising activities, working in health care settings, assisting with grant-writing, coordinating food banks and urban gardens, tutoring youth, assisting newcomers with English language skills and community integration, just to name a few.

Students must make their own experiential learning arrangements with host organizations. The IDS department does not do this on your behalf. The process involves four steps:

1. Identifying an organization
2. Submitting an application to the programme and completing all necessary police and security checks.
3. Being accepted by the organization. Depending on the organisation, this step can take some time, especially if police checks are required. Please plan accordingly.
4. Notifying the Experiential Learning Instructor about the placement details.

After reading placement descriptions, be expected to apply individually to the placements as you would for any job, sending along a cover letter and a resume to the contact person listed in the job description. You can apply for as many placements as you want, keeping in mind that most organizations will only have room for one or two students at a particular placement. Once you've identified your preferred volunteer placement, students make individual arrangements with the organization (interviews, hours

available, etc). Some placements require police background checks. The cost of this is roughly \$30. Be sure to obtain a receipt as some organizations reimburse you for this expense.

Many placements are very flexible to the needs of the volunteer and most organizations have left the job description partially vague on purpose to accommodate a wider range of backgrounds and personalities, so be up-front with your interests, likes/dislikes and any particular skills you might have. The host organization will notify the successful applicant. Once you find out where you will be volunteering, complete the form provided by the instructor on Brightspace. All placements must be arranged by mid-September, although some organizations may want you to start earlier and this will also be noted in the job description. Also, it can be your advantage to view your placement as something that will go beyond the timeline of this course. Some organizations, such as the Red Cross, will be more interested in bringing you on if you are willing to give a commitment beyond a 7-8 month period.

You may have already identified an organization for which you would like to volunteer. If so, please notify the experiential learning instructor of the contact information for that organization so we can keep their contact details in our database.

When searching for a placement, it is important to follow your own interests. This will be the best situation for both you and for the organization. Most organizations will have a website with more general information. Otherwise, do not hesitate to contact the organization for more information – in most cases they will be happy to provide you with a pamphlet or to speak with you about their priorities. Some good questions to ask include: what is their mandate, what have they achieved in the past, what are they working on right now and where are they hoping to go in the future? If the organization seems of interest to you, look into the details of their volunteer placements – Have they hosted volunteers in the past? If so, for what type of work is expected? Is there a minimum time frame? What sort of experience is needed? Are references or background (police) checks required?

For additional information or advice about with placements, feel free to contact the course instructor anytime.

When should I try to secure a placement?

You should secure your placement as early as possible. Often times, there are background checks that need to be completed prior to volunteering with an organization and these take time. You should begin the work on securing your placement in late July or early August with an expected start date for early September. For INTD3118/3119, placements must be secured (and placement forms submitted to the instructor) by the time indicated in the syllabus.

Can I use a volunteer position that I already have?

Yes. If you are currently volunteering with an organization, inform them of your participation in the course. Complete the information form found in the syllabus, and you are all set. Be sure that your organization can guarantee 60 hours for your time between September and mid-April.

Am I evaluated on my performance as a volunteer?

No. Your entire grade is based on your academic engagement with your peers, instructor, and the quality of written assignments. The volunteer placement is the basic entry requirement for the course; it is not an evaluation criteria. The instructor will check-in with the organisation monthly.

Are internships or paid employment also considered?

No. The goal of this exercise is to engage in the process of volunteering, and not merely in engaging in extra-curricular pursuits.

Fees and Funding

Are there any costs involved in the program?

There is an auxiliary fee of \$25 per student that applies to all students in INTD3118/3119. This money is used to administer the Experiential Learning Program, facilitate communication with hosting organizations.

Students are also expected to pay regular course fees to Dalhousie University and to purchase required readings materials, when indicated in the course syllabus.

What do I do if I have further questions regarding the program?

Please contact the course instructor, Theresa Ulicki ulickit@dal.ca

RECENT PLACEMENT SITES:

In Halifax:

Immigrant Services Association of NS (ISANS) <https://isans.ca>

Rainbow Refugee Association of NS (RRANS) <http://www.rainbowrefugeens.com/>

Mobile Food Market <https://www.mobilefoodmarket.ca/>

Chebucto Connections volunteer@chebuctoconnections.ca

Adsum House <https://adsumforwomen.org/>

Spryfield Elementry <http://www.cses.ednet.ns.ca/>

Veith House <http://www.veithhouse.ns.ca/>

Ecology Action Centre www.ecologyaction.ca

Nova Scotia-Gambia Association www.novascotiagambia.ca

Canadian Red Cross www.redcross.ca

Development and Peace – Caritas Canada (CCODP) Adah Ogbe aogbe@devp.org

YMCA Halifax-Dartmouth www.ymcahrm.ns.ca

NSPiRG <https://www.nspirg.ca/> info@nspirg.ca

Girl Guides of Canada <http://www.girlguides.ns.ca/>

Oxfam <http://www.oxfam.ca/who-we-are/regional-offices/maritimes>

ACIC http://www.acic-caci.org/opp_intern.html

The Canadian Cancer Society <http://www.cancer.ca/nova%20scotia/about%20ous/contact%20ous.aspx>

Atlantic Council for International Cooperation www.acic-caci.org

Clean Nova Scotia www.clean.ns.ca

AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia www.acns.ns.ca

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre www.avaloncentre.ca/sane.htm

Frontier College <http://www.frontiercollege.ca/>

Volunteer NS www.volunteers.ca

International volunteering:

UNICEF www.unicef.ca

Canadian Crossroads International <https://cintl.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/e-volunteers/>

International Bureau for Children’s Rights www.ibcr.org/en/get-involved/volunteering

Youth Challenge International <https://www.yci.org/>

CUSO <https://cusointernational.org>
