

What is the Experiential Learning Program?

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.

Classes and Registration

INTD 3107: Experiential Learning Canada

The Canadian component of experiential learning combines classroom learning with volunteer work experience in a community organization in Halifax or other parts of Canada. You are required to volunteer for a minimum of 60 hours (cumulative) between September and April. This works out to approximately 2.5 hours a week. The volunteer hours are a requisite for 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 occasional class meetings, cover assigned readings and complete three academic assignments (a mid-term report, a reflective paper, and an academic paper). The Canadian component of experiential learning focuses on the themes of community development, public engagement, and the place of volunteerism in society.

INTD 3109: Experiential Learning—International

The International component of the experiential learning combines international volunteer experience with academic requirements. The international component of experiential learning focuses on the broad theme of “global citizenship” and critically explores the idea of ‘voluntourism.’ Students are required to volunteer for a minimum of 3 weeks at a particular placement overseas, with exception given to students completing volunteer placements in Canada’s Arctic regions. In addition to your placement, you are required to complete class readings, three assignments and to participate when the class meets. The three academic assignments include a portfolio, academic, and reflections paper.

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Students from INT3109 meet in seminars from September to December alongside students in INTD3107. The curriculum during this semester reflects the ethical challenges of volunteerism in society, and does not specifically speak to the Canadian context. Students from INTD3109 are welcome to sit on seminars that continue into the Winter Term, but all required participation takes place between September and December. The book "Globetrotting or Global Citizenship" (2013) *University of Toronto Press*, connects the academic content between the domestic and international experiential learning opportunities.

Who can enroll in the program?

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. Students participating in programs such as Canada World Youth can also get academic credit through the Experiential Learning Abroad program after they complete their placements.

How do I enroll?

Students can register for this course like any other course at Dalhousie University. Students taking this course as part of their studies at another university will be required to enroll (temporarily) at Dalhousie University in order to register for the course.

For Experiential Learning Canada the student must enroll in the consecutive X/Y classes in order to receive their full credit. All 60 hours must be completed within the two consecutive semesters to ensure your credit

What preparation do I need for this program?

No formal training or particular level of 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?

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The type of work that you will be doing depends upon the placement that you acquire. Host organizations are able to list a specific position with itemized tasks that the volunteer will do, or they can list a more general posting and fit the work to the volunteer's background. It totally 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, coordinating food banks and urban gardens, 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
4. Notifying the Experiential Learning Coordinator about the placement details.

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

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). Many placements require police background checks. The cost of this is roughly \$30. Be sure to obtain a receipt as many 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 in order 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. After a placement has been filled, the host organization will notify the successful applicant. Once you find out where you will be volunteering, complete the form provided at the back of the syllabus. 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 they feel that you are willing to give commitments well beyond an 8-month period.

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 student assistant or 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. If you are enrolled in the Canadian section of the course, you should begin the work on securing your placement in late July or early August with an expected start date for early September. For the Canadian section, placements must be secured (and placement forms submitted to the instructor) by September 23rd.

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're all set. Be sure that your organization can guarantee 60 hours for your time between September and April.

Can I complete the whole course in one semester?

For INTD3109, yes! Providing that at the end of the Fall Term you submit all of your written material, you're all set.

For INTD3107, no. It is not recommended that students attempt a 60 volunteer placement in one semester. Moreover, the INTD3107 seminars run the full year and attendance is mandatory. For INTD 3109, the

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.

Are internships or paid employment also considered?

Not a chance. 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 \$75 per student that applies to all students in both Experiential Learning programs. This money is used to administer the Experiential Learning Program, facilitate communication with hosting organizations, and it provides information and resources to students to keep track of placements and volunteers.

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

Students that plan to undertake the Experiential Learning Abroad course are expected to plan for any associated costs with their time abroad.

Is there any funding available for travel and accommodation for placements abroad?

The department of International Development Studies does not offer additional funding for student placements abroad. Students are encouraged to seek out their own funding for travel and for work abroad. The Dalhousie International Student and Exchange Services Office has an international travel fund – SWIF. Information and an application can be found here (<http://internationalstudentservices.dal.ca/fundingopportunities.htm>)

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

Please contact the course instructor, Professor Huish :huish@dal.ca (494.2979).

RECENT PLACEMENT SITES:

Spryfield Elementry

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

Turning Leaf / The Art of Living

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Turning-Leaf-Centre/146614668694658>

Veith House

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

Discovery Centre

<http://www.discoverycentre.ns.ca/>

ISIS

<http://www.isisns.ca/>

NSPiRG

<http://www.nspirg.org/>

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

Capital Health

<http://www.capitalhealth.org/>

The Canadian Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.ca/nova%20scotia/about%20us/contact%20us.aspx>

POSSIBLE PLACEMENT SITES

Atlantic Council for International Cooperation www.acic-caci.org 902-431-2311

Clean Nova Scotia www.clean.ns.ca 902-420-3474

AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia www.acns.ns.ca 902-425-4882

Dalhousie Integrated Sustainability Initiative sustaindal@canada.com

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre www.hilc.ns.ca 902-443-2937

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre www.avaloncentre.ca/sane.htm 902-422-4240

World University Services of Canada www.wusc.ca

Halifax Coalition Against Poverty (HCAP) www.hfxcap.ca/ 902-444-5060

Frontier College <http://www.frontiercollege.ca/> 902-425-1517

OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST

UNICEF www.unicef.ca 902-422-6000

Ecology Action Centre www.ecologyaction.ca 902-429-2202

Nova Scotia-Gambia Association www.novascotiagambia.ca 902-423-1360

Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (ACEWH) www.acewh.dal.ca 902-494-7849

Canadian Crossroads International www.cciorg.ca 902-422-2933

Canadian Red Cross www.redcross.ca 902-424-1419

Development and Peace (CCODP) www.devp.org 902-422-8428

YMCA Halifax-Dartmouth www.ymcahrm.ns.ca 902-457-9622

The Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility (CESR) (at Dalhousie)
cesr.dsu.dal.ca/ 902-441-6756

Halifax Member of Parliament Megan Leslie has frequent newsletters that list volunteer placements around the HRM. To sign up to her newsletters email her: Megan.Leslie.C1@parl.gc.ca