

# Experiential Learning Syllabus

## Department of Biology

Biol/ Mari 3800 Fall 2024, Winter 2025, & Summer 2025

*Dalhousie University acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.*

*Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.*

### Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Lara Gibson Course Administrator	ldgibson@dal.ca	By appointment

### Your chosen supervisor

The student is responsible for finding their own supervisor.

When you are considering who to approach as a supervisor, think about your long-term goals and the type of work you would like to do in the future. What skills do you need to make yourself attractive to future employers? Which supervisor will teach you and allow you to practice these skills?

### Course Description

Experiential Learning recognizes the learning experience relevant to the program outside the scheduled curriculum. Students are responsible for drafting a learning agreement with the course coordinator and supervisor to specify learning outcomes, activities designed to accomplish these outcomes, a quantifiable assessment strategy and a timetable.

NOTES: To register in this course, a student must first find a suitable supervisor and sign a learning agreement between the course coordinator, the student and the supervisor.

### *Course Prerequisites and requirements*

To take the class you must:

- be completing a Biology or Marine Biology major or minor,
- have earned a minimum of 30 credit hours,
- have completed six classes (3 credits) above the first year level, and
- have a cumulative GPA of 2.4.

If you meet these criteria, there are a couple of steps you need to take to register for this class.

- Find a supervisor you intend to volunteer with. You cannot be paid for the work you complete during this class. You also cannot complete these skills as part of a co-op work term, or class project in another class.
- Submit a learning agreement to the course administrator.

When volunteering with an outside organization you should allow extra time to process your application as skills may need to be reviewed by the Biology Departments Curriculum Committee.

Notes:

1) There is a tuition charge for this class. Keep this in mind if you intend to volunteer with an organization that requires you to pay to volunteer.

2) A learning agreement does not need to be submitted if working with the Aquatron. In this case a list of students will be sent to the course coordinator at the start of each academic term and students will be enrolled at that time.

### *Course Exclusions*

Scheduled courses at a learning institution, study that would qualify for a Special Topics course, an Honours project, co-op work terms and paid work.

## Course Structure

The experiential learning class is meant to be a way for you to get credit for skills you are learning outside of the typical curriculum.

You can take this class as either Biology 3800 or Marine Biology 3800, depending on your major and the project you are doing. In both cases the class is graded as Pass or Fail, and is GPA neutral if assigned a PASS grade. With a PASS grade the class counts towards your earned hours but not towards your GPA calculation. For both biology and marine biology majors this class counts as a class at the 3000 level.

A volunteer position needs to be arranged prior to registration in the class. The volunteer position can be with someone inside the department or with an outside organization. When considering a volunteer position, you should keep in mind that you cannot be paid for your position and that the skills you are learning should be biology focused.

When thinking about who you should approach to be your supervisor, think about what your future goals, and the type of work you would like to pursue after the completion of your degree. What skills would make you an attractive candidate in the future? Once you have identified several skills you want to learn, think about who could teach you these skills.

The next steps after arranging a supervisor would be to complete the learning agreement with your supervisor. Your supervisor is whoever will be teaching you the skills and evaluating your performance of these skills at the end of the course. They do not need to be professors, but they must have extensive experience in doing the skill they intend to teach you. If you are volunteering in a research lab you may be taught by several different members of the lab, and in each case they should have a minimum of 1 year of experience in the skill they are overseeing.

To pass the course you must complete a minimum of three skills. The list of skills cannot include certificates offered by outside organizations. Further literature searching is not an acceptable skill, as you are expected to learn and practice this skill as part of your regular academic program.

In Part I of the learning agreement form, you would provide contact information for both yourself and your supervisor.

In Part II you would agree to a work schedule with your supervisor. You must complete 84 hours across the term. Discuss with your supervisor how you will complete these hours. How many hours a week will you be available for? When are you available? How is work typically completed in their lab or work environment? What is the expectation if you are ill or miss a week for other reasons? How are you to inform them that you might miss a session?

Part III should be completed in conjunction with your supervisor and is a list of skills that you will be taught and practiced over the course of the term. Keep in mind that in experiential learning you are not expected to complete a project but rather practice distinct skills. If you are completing a project your work might be better being evaluated under the Independent Research class (for more information reach out to the head of the Biology Curriculum Committee- Patrice.Cote@dal.ca).

In the last part of the form (Part IV) please have your supervisor list how long they have done these skills. In the case where you will be directly supervised by another member of the lab, please also indicate who in the lab will be teaching you the corresponding skill.

The learning agreement should be completed by you and your supervisor prior to being sent electronically to the course coordinator (ldgibson@dal.ca). Learning agreements submitted by email with the supervisor CC'ed will be considered as signed by both parties.

At that point if the project looks appropriate, I will give you permission to register in the class.

For each term you must be registered by add/ drop date for the term.

Throughout the term you will be expected to keep a log of your activities, and the number of hours you work. You will be provided with an excel spreadsheet that can act as your activity log. It is expected that you will complete 84 hours in the course of a term.

Once you've completed your hours, you will complete a short report on your experience. I will send you the guidelines for this report once you have been accepted into the class.

I hope this gives you a sense of the course, and how it is managed.

## **Student Resources**

By submitting the Learning Agreement both students and supervisors are agreeing to behave in a professional manner and meet the expectations for undergraduate research as outlined below:

- Students can expect to have regular communication with their supervisors to receive help mastering the agreed to skills.
- Supervisors should expect students to attend the agreed to hours and session. If sessions need to be changed this should be communicated in a timely manner.
- Students can expect to have a clear understanding of what is expected as they volunteer with your organization.
- Students and supervisors should discuss and agree to any changes to the learning agreement.

- Students should receive regular feedback and any correction to skills should be given with time for further practice.
- Students are expected to give serious and considered attention to the advice from their supervisor(s) concerning skill development.
- Students can expect their efforts to be focused on the agreed to skills. While students may choose to participate in other projects within the research lab, they should not be diverted from the timely completion of their volunteer hours and other course obligations.

If either the student or the supervisor feel these expectations are not being met they should reach out to the class coordinator, Lara Gibson. If issues cannot be resolved at the class level, either party can reach out to the Chair of the Biology Department, Mark Johnston (Biochair@dal.ca).

### **Course Materials**

It is the supervisors responsibility to provide any resources the student requires during their volunteer placement.

### **Assessment**

BIOL/ MARI 3800 is graded as Pass or Fail, and is GPA neutral if assigned a PASS grade. With a PASS the class counts towards the students earned hours but not towards their GPA calculation. For both Biology and Marine Biology majors this class counts as a class at the 3000 level. For Marine biology Honours students, this class does not count as a marine intensive class.

Please note that some graduate programs and professional schools place a cap on the number of Pass/ Fail classes they will accept on an applicant's transcript. If you considering a particular graduate or professional program you should ensure this class would be acceptable to your chosen program.

### **Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements**

Students and supervisors are to determine how to inform each other about changes to the agreed to schedule throughout the term.

If communication breaks down please reach out to the course coordinator, Lara Gibson, ldgibson@dal.ca

### **Course Policies related to Academic Integrity**

Students are responsible for practicing the agreed upon skills. Any work submitted for evaluation should be produced by the student.

## Learning Agreement Form *for* Experiential Learning in Biology or Marine Biology

Course Coordinator: Lara Gibson ([ldgibson@dal.ca](mailto:ldgibson@dal.ca))

The experiential learning class is a way for students to gain experience and learn practical biology related skills outside the typical curriculum. Note to potential supervisor: In exchange for members of your lab or organization to teach the skills to the student, the student agrees to volunteer approximately 84 hours of their time. They do not need a project of their own, but it should be clear what biology related skills the students will gain through this experience. We expect you and the student to compile this list together.

The student can learn from any member of your lab or organization as long as the person teaching and supervising the skill has more than one year of experience in doing the skill.

If you have any questions or concerns please get a hold of the course coordinator at the above noted address.

### **Part I Contact Information:**

**Student Name & E- mail:**

**Student Banner Number:**

Do you intend to take this course as BIOL or MARI:

Supervisor Name:

Supervisor E-mail:

Year/ Term:

### **Part II Work Experience Schedule:**

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of weeks: \_\_\_\_\_

Average hours/week the student is expected to commit for the learning activities:

**I agree** to provide activities that will enable the student to practice the skills listed in Part III, and to monitor and assess the performance of the student during their work experience, including submission of a completed evaluation form to the course coordinator.

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree** to undertake the learning activities outlined in Part III and to the terms outlined above including the maintenance of an activity log and completion of a detailed final report on the work experience.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part III:** *to be completed in conjunction with the supervisor who has agreed to evaluate this student's BIOL/MARI 3800.03 experience.*

Please list all the SKILLS the student will be practicing over the course of the term.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV: Criteria for Supervisor's Evaluation** *to be completed by supervisor who has agreed to evaluate the student's BIOL/MARI 3800 experience.*

*For each skills please indicate how much experience the direct supervisor has with this skill. If this skill is new to the direct supervisor, (<1 year) indicate who will oversee the students mastery of the skill*

#### **Supervision of Skill Mastery**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

## University Policies and Statements

### Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or [elders@dal.ca](mailto:elders@dal.ca). Additional information regarding the Indigenous Student Centre can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/communities/indigenous.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html)

### Internationalization

At Dalhousie, 'thinking and acting globally' enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders." Additional internationalization information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/internationalization.html>

### Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/academic-integrity.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html)

### Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre ([https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/accessibility.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html)) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/student-success-centre.html>)

## **Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect**

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

## **Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect**

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>

## **Student Code of Conduct**

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html)

## **Fair Dealing Policy**

The Dalhousie University Fair Dealing Policy provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie. Additional information regarding the Fair Dealing Policy can be found at: [https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html)

## Originality Checking Software

The course instructor may use Dalhousie's approved originality checking software and Google to check the originality of any work submitted for credit, in accordance with the Student Submission of Assignments and Use of Originality Checking Software Policy. Students are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative method of attesting to the authenticity of their work and must inform the instructor no later than the last day to add/drop classes of their intent to choose an alternate method. Additional information regarding Originality Checking Software can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/leadership-governance/academic-integrity/faculty-resources/ouriginal-plagiarism-detection.html>

## Student Use of Course Materials

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.