

ExL Book

Experiential Learning Workbook

GradLife
McGill

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Have questions about this workbook and its content?

Email cindy.mancuso@mcgill.ca

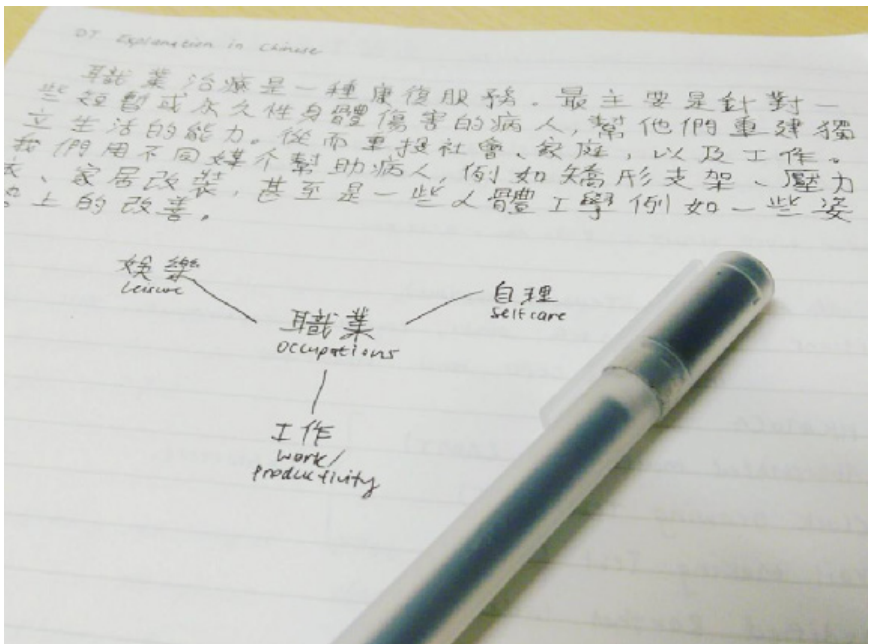


Photo by GradLife McGill Instagrammer Connie Luu

Introduction

Experiential Learning (EL) refers to the active process of learning by doing, in a mindful and intentional manner.

Why Reflect?

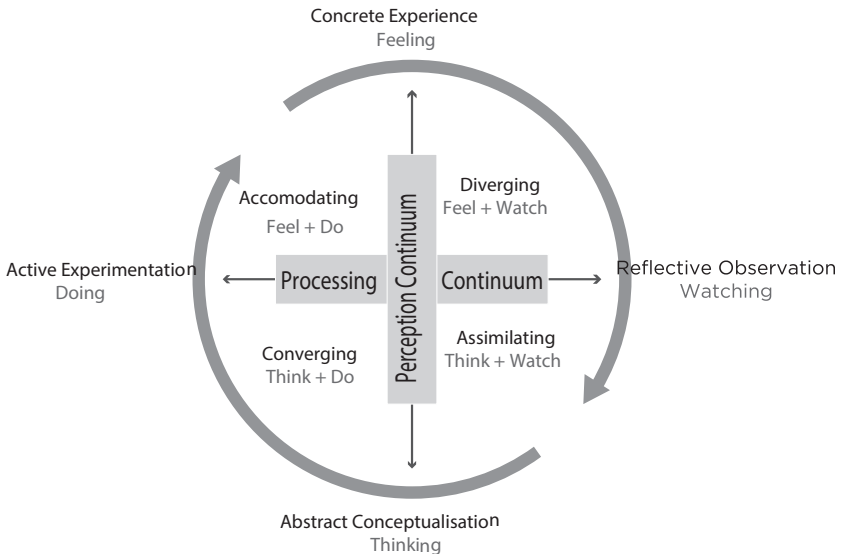
“Experiential Learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and syntheses.”

- Association for Experiential Education

Reflection is the second pivotal aspect of Experiential Learning. It is the essential process which transforms experiences into genuine and lasting learning.

This workbook is designed to help you reflect on and learn from your experience as a Volunteer, as well as to gain insight into yourself and your interactions with others and the online world. To facilitate this process, we will ask you to think critically about your learning and answer questions about your motivations, experiences, and goals.

Our hope is that these exercises also help you to be intentional about your role as a Volunteer and to make the most of your experience.



All the best with your volunteer experience!

Pre-Experience Reflection

Volunteerism is not only the backbone of civil society organizations and social and political movements, but also of many health, education, housing and environmental programmes and a range of other civil society, public and private sector programmes worldwide. It is an integral part of every society.

Learning Outcomes

1. Social Responsibility

- Understand and participate in developing, and/or sustaining a positive change in local communities
- Seek involvement in diverse interests and with people different from oneself

2. Intellectual Growth

- Employ critical thinking skills in a variety of contexts
- Use complex information from a variety of sources including personal experience and observation to form a decision or opinion

3. Leadership Development

- Explore personal impact as a role model to foster leadership in individuals/communities
- Reflect on your leadership style and abilities
- Value leadership as a process rather than a position

4. Collaboration

- Contribute effectively to the achievement of a group's goals, objectives and shared vision
- Work positively and cooperatively with others (fairness, mindfulness, kindness)
- Demonstrate awareness of team/group dynamics
- Actively encourage and engage with team members

5. Self-Awareness

- Articulate personal skills and abilities
- Acknowledge personal strengths and weaknesses
- Exhibit positive role modeling
- Articulate your "personal brand"

6. Clarified Values

- Articulate, make decisions and model behaviours that reflect personal values
- Demonstrate willingness to explore personal beliefs and values

7. Creative Voice

- Develop visual and written communication skills
 - Explore multiple creative styles
 - Find the value that an individual voice can have
-

Name of Community Organization: **GradLife McGill**

What does being part of GradLife mean to you?

What are your intentions going into this experience?

Have you volunteered before? What did you learn about yourself?

What do you hope to gain from this experience?

What skills do you hope to use/develop in your role?

What do you want to be able to say when you look back on your experience?

Identifying Skills: Here and Now

Take stock of your skills by filling in the table below.

Take note: include both **hard skills** (i.e., related to professional knowledge, tools, or techniques – e.g., website development) and **soft skills** (i.e., social, communication, and self-management behaviours – e.g., creativity, problem-solving).

Skills I currently possess	Skills I want to improve	New skills to develop

Taking all of the above responses into account, summarize your personal goals for your Volunteer experience below.

My personal goals are:

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

- 4 _____

- 5 _____

Month 1-6

What did you do in the last 6 months?

How did you feel in the last 6 months?

What did you like/not like?

What did you learn?

Mid-Experience Check-In

Expectations

Rate your experience so far:

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied



Have there been any surprises?

What are you enjoying most about this experience?

What are you enjoying least about this experience?

Learning

Thinking of your Volunteer experience so far, what have you learned from your training/experience (i.e. orientation, training, manuals, meetups, group discussions) that you've been able to put into practice?

What have you learned about yourself? (e.g., I got better at managing competing priorities, I am a good communicator...)

What can you do at this point to enhance your experience? (e.g., I can be more engaged, I can take more initiative...)

Review Goals

Is there anything you would change about your initial goals on p.6?

Month 6-12

What did you do in this period?

How did you feel in this period?

What did you like/not like?

What did you learn?

Post-Experience Reflection

Exercise 1: Unpacking your Experience

Now that you have completed your year in GradLife McGill, take some time to reflect back on your experience in as much detail as you can, using the following questions as a guide:

1. The most satisfying aspects of your experience.

- What in particular did you enjoy?
- Who was involved?
- What were you thinking?
- What did you do?
- How did you feel?
- What did you learn?

2. The more challenging aspects of your experience.

- What made the experience challenging?
- Who was involved?
- What were you thinking?
- How did you react to this experience?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What did you do?
- How did you feel?
- What did you learn?

3. How did you feel about bringing your voice to the graduate community? How did these experiences challenge your assumptions?

4. In a short paragraph, describe what you have learned about yourself.

5. Where do you go from here? How will you take these experiences and build on them? What's next?



Photo by GradLife McGill Instagrammer Subhobrata Das

Exercise 2: Quick Skill Check

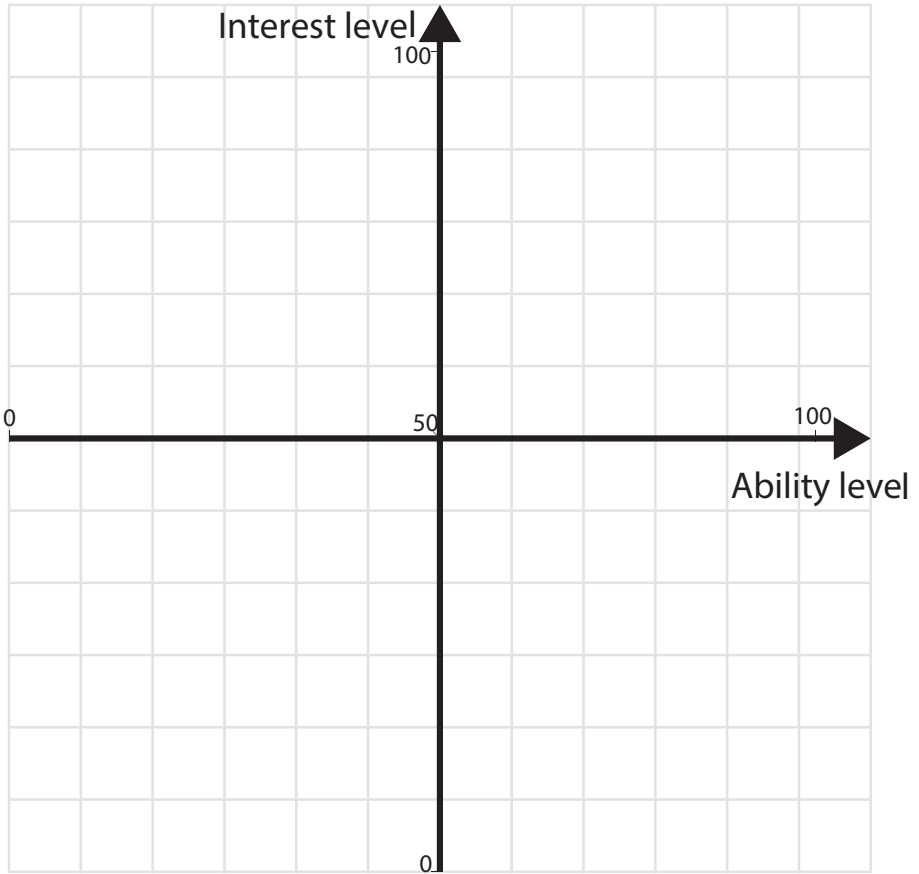
Now that your volunteer experience is completed, reflect back on the "identifying skills" exercise you completed prior on p.5.

1. Underline any word that best describes you.
2. Circle words that you believe you developed or honed as a result of this experience.
3. Please add other skills that you gained that are not listed in the second column.

Category	Skills/Qualities/Attitudes	Other
Communication (written)	communicator, promoter, presenter, influencer, educator, trainer, cultural awareness, writing, synthesizing, languages	
Communication (visual)	communicator, promoter, presenter, influencer, educator, trainer, cultural awareness, writing, synthesizing, languages	
Communication (oral)	communicator, promoter, presenter, influencer, educator, trainer, cultural awareness, writing, synthesizing, languages	
Leadership	motivator, energetic, visionary, dynamic, team-builder, confidence booster, capable, outward-looking, accountable, assertive	
Problem-Solving/ Creativity	practical, logical, results oriented, achiever, successful, project manager, creative, astute, agile mind	
Team Work	supportive, organized, coordinator, deliverer, facilitator, imaginative	
Interpersonal Skills	listener, adviser, co-operative, counsellor, politically aware, initiator, professional, constructive, accommodating, tactful, diplomatic, tolerant	
Self-Awareness	purposeful, focused, self-assured, realistic, reflective, perceptive, objective	
Willingness to Learn	inquisitive, motivated, enthusiastic, adaptable, keen learner, open-minded	
Initiative	positive, persistent, ambitious, persuasive, pleasant, proactive, opportunistic, initiator, relationship-builder, resourceful, personable, developer, respected, entrepreneurial, risk-taker, self-reliant, driven	
Action Planning	decision-maker, planner, able to prioritize, organized, negotiator, evaluator, forward thinker, results-oriented, driven	
Flexibility	versatile, willing, multi-skilled, multi-disciplinary, adaptable	
Numeracy	accurate, quick-thinker, detailed, consistent, analytical, thorough	
Commitment	dedicated, trustworthy, conscientious, reliable, loyal, punctual, knowledgeable	

Exercise 3: Building on your Experience

Place the skills you have identified in Exercise 2 in the grid below according to level of ability and interest. This will help you to identify the skills that you want to use or build on as you go forward.



Take this opportunity to brainstorm experiences you would like to get involved with to continue to develop your skillset.

Exercise 4: Communicating your Insights via CVs, Cover Letters, and Interviews

Consider how you would communicate the key aspects of this experience to others, especially potential employers. You can refer to your Co-curricular record (CCR) for ideas.

Role & Responsibilities: Describe what your duties were and what was expected of you

Situation: Provide a brief overview of the situation/context/task

Action: Explain the action you took and why, step by step

Result: Describe the outcomes of your actions

Skills: List the skills you needed to accomplish this task

Example:

Role and Responsibilities: GradLife McGill blogger/instagrammer. Responsibilities include posting one Instagram photo per week and/or two blog posts per month on the GradLife McGill social media platforms, attending group meet-ups and brainstorming sessions, and contributing to the representation of everyday graduate student life at McGill University.

Situation: GradLife McGill is a relatively new platform at McGill university undergoing tremendous growth and reconstruction. At the start of the academic year, the Instagram platform was in its infancy, the blog was not achieving the intended reach to target populations, and the Facebook page needed revitalisation.

Action: Within the first month of school, I met with the GradLife McGill team members to brainstorm ways in which we can increase the followship and membership of the platform, engage with the graduate student community, and generate interesting posts. During the graduate orientation event, the GradLife McGill team implemented new engagement strategies by creating a photo booth and photo frame contests. Throughout the rest of the year, I contributed images/blog posts on a regular basis and promoted the social media platforms by commenting, liking, and sharing the work of my teammates.

Result: The GradLife McGill Facebook photo album reached over 10,000 people and consequently increased our followship on both Facebook and Instagram. The social media platform grew as a result of our efforts, and our presence was shared with other organizations and departments within the university and elsewhere.

Skills: I demonstrated teamwork, creativity, oral communication, and social media literacy skills.

Here are some questions to help you describe your volunteer experience in a CV, cover letter and at a future interview.

1. **Your CV:** Fill in the template below.

Role Title	Mar. 2017
Name of community organization, Montreal, QC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created a comprehensive inventory of services offered by organization.	

2. **Cover letter for a job or internship:** Write a short paragraph about being a volunteer, summarizing your contributions and key skills.

3. **Job Interview:** Consider these questions and write down what you would say.

Tell me about a time when you took initiative.

Describe a time when you worked as part of a team.

How would your fellow colleagues describe you?

Describe a situation when you needed to communicate effectively. Talk about your weaknesses.



Photo by GradLife McGill Instagrammer Alison Wong



Photo by GradLife McGill Instagrammer Patrick Molicard-Chartier