

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TOOLKIT FOR NEW BRUNSWICK EMPLOYERS



GET REAL-TIME VALUE FROM EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING—WHILE BUILDING YOUR TALENT PIPELINE

You're a forward thinker. You see the need to attract diverse, youthful talent to your organization. But you can't afford to "pay it forward" right now if that means stealing attention from today's urgent tasks.

What if you could develop a talent pipeline of bright, energetic workers AND reap real value from your development efforts?

Guess what? A well-planned experiential learning placement enables you to do just that. With a little forethought, you can **gain present value from Gen Z talent while you lay the foundation for your future workforce.**

Many New Brunswick businesses and not-for-profits have already discovered how to do this, and we've compiled insights from their experiences into a short guidebook full of practical tips.

The *Experiential Learning Toolkit for New Brunswick Employers* gives you **simple, easy steps to follow so you can make the most of any experiential learning placement.** It walks you through the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes so you can attract and nurture the right talent to help sustain or grow your organization.

All the worksheets in the toolkit are available as fillable, printable PDFs, so you can complete them electronically or by hand.

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1. HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

Experiential learning is hands-on, and so is this toolkit. It assumes you're someone who will have direct responsibility for an experiential learning student, and it speaks in practical tips.

Each of the 10 modules contains a short article providing a few strategic guidelines, and most of the modules also include a worksheet to help you apply the guidelines in your organization.

If you complete each worksheet, then by the time you reach the end of the Toolkit, you'll be well on your way to planning and implementing a successful experiential learning placement.

The module content and worksheets build on one another, so **the best way to use the Toolkit is to complete the modules in sequence**. That being said, the module content is cross-linked, so if you'd prefer to hop, skip, and jump your way through the information and tools, you can do that too.

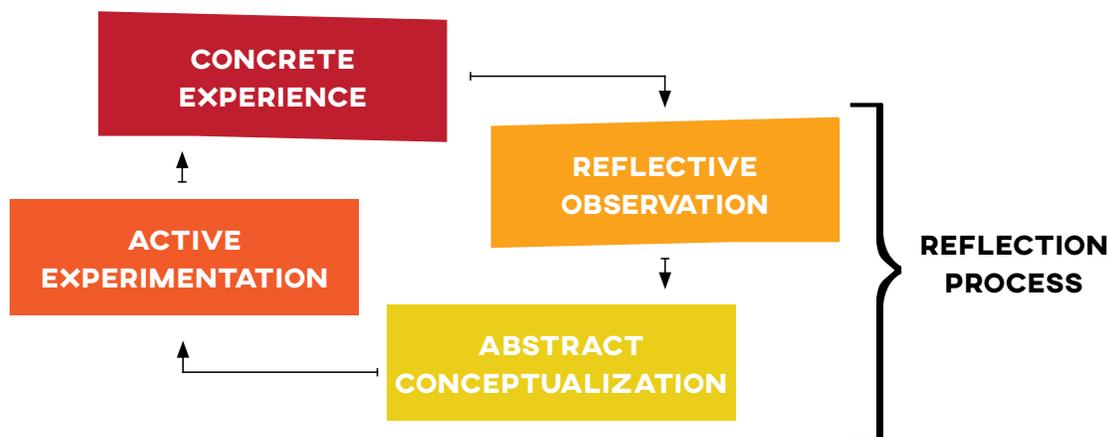
As you work through the Toolkit, you may find that the content raises questions specific to your organization. When that happens, please reach out one of the [university partners \(p. 30\)](#). Each of the four publicly funded universities in New Brunswick has expert staff dedicated to collaborating with employers, and they're eager to hear from you.

2. WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is both an intuitive and an intentional process.

Most of us recognize that we learn best when we're actively doing something rather than passively absorbing information about how to do it. So in some ways, experiential learning seems the most natural thing in the world.

But it's also possible to have an experience without learning anything from it. We've all known people who've had 10 or 20 years of work experience but have never advanced in their capabilities. That can happen because genuine experiential learning occurs only through deliberate effort.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS STRUCTURED LEARNING

When you participate in experiential learning, you agree to engage a student in a role and job activities designed to produce professional and personal growth. You commit to enabling the student to experience the experiential learning cycle, which works like this:

Concrete experience, you'll notice, is only one phase of the learning cycle.

Reflection is what enables the student to process what they've experienced, extract meaning from it, and master a new skill or attitude:

- *Reflective observation* involves stepping back from the experience to describe it in detail, in multiple dimensions—physical, cognitive, emotional, and social.
- *Abstract conceptualization* enables the student to articulate what they've learned and connect that learning with prior knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Finally, **active experimentation** allows students to apply what they've learned in follow-up work

NOT ALL STUDENT JOBS ARE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING JOBS

When you agree to an experiential learning work placement, you're committing to provide opportunities for deep learning, reflection, and application of lessons learned.

A student summer job as office gofer or the person covering vacations won't meet these requirements. You're ready to take on an experiential learning student only if you're able to:

- engage the student in work they'll find challenging and meaningful
- provide regular, ongoing feedback and opportunities to process new experiences with colleagues and/or supervisors
- opportunities to take on work challenges of increasing difficulty or responsibility

This doesn't mean that the role you design can't include routine work, such as answering phones or doing data entry. It should simply be realistic; it should expose the student to the kind of work they'd expect to do for you as a new hire, once they've finished their education.

In "real life," for instance, a junior accountant might spend a good chunk of each week creating spreadsheets and sitting in on meetings where they don't have much to say. So it's completely reasonable to give an accounting student the experience of performing both these everyday activities, perhaps along with the experience of taking on a special report or playing a small client-facing role on a particular project.

However, it's not reasonable to give the accounting student only data-entry tasks or to ask them to cover vacations in Marketing. That's not how you'd treat a new hire you're keen on retaining, so why would you treat a potential new hire that way?

YOU GET OUT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WHAT YOU PUT IN

You can expect to spend the first few weeks of an experiential learning placement guiding the student through the transition from academic life to working life. This will require a well-designed onboarding process, frequent communication, ongoing feedback, and mentorship from the supervisor and/or a "buddy."

But employers who make this upfront investment reap great gains—often more quickly than they'd anticipated.



David Alston, co-founder of TimberTop Adventures, experienced a rapid return on his experiential learning investment in the summer of 2019, when he hired two marketing interns. At first, David spent a lot of time with the students, providing frequent feedback and mentoring. But within a short time, the two interns were functioning at the level of seasoned employees. By the end of the summer, they were delivering the kind of value David would normally expect from someone with three years of experience in a marketing role!

DIFFERENT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS STRUCTURE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING DIFFERENTLY

Depending on the type of experiential learning you participate in, your university partner will have specific requirements for you to meet. For a typical co-op work term or internship, these could include goal-setting forms, check-in meetings with the student, and performance evaluations. You may also be asked to review reports or written reflections created by the student.

For the most part, these requirements are administratively light. They involve just a little paperwork, and your university partner will be happy to walk you through exact deliverables and timelines. The student should also be up-to-date on their responsibilities to their academic institution and prepared to guide you through any reporting processes.

How prepared is your organization to engage in experiential learning? To find out, *complete the self-assessment and brainstorming questions in the worksheet [Get Set for a Successful Experiential Learning Placement](#) (p. 32).*

3. DEVELOP A BUSINESS CASE TO MAXIMIZE YOUR ROI (RETURN ON INVESTMENT)

Many employers are drawn to experiential learning because they consider it a way to benefit their community. But just because you're giving a student a career boost doesn't mean you shouldn't also gain from the experience. In fact, approaching experiential learning as a value-based transaction is the best thing you can do for the student and your organization.

Experiential learning works best when employers approach it from a win-win perspective. If you view a student as a charity case, you may not demand enough of them to create a realistic work experience and help them build up their professional skills. But if you view your experiential learning hire as you would any other hire, then you'll demand and give measurable value, and the placement will produce measurable results.

Before you start drafting a job ad, take some time to calculate the projected ROI on your experiential learning venture. Here are some questions to consider:

- What specific tasks will the student perform for you?
- How are these tasks getting done now?
- What effort (person-hours and dollars) will it take to perform the tasks without the student?
- What will it cost you (salary and training time) for the student to perform the tasks?
- What's the long-term financial value of having achieved the tasks?

For example, let's say you're considering getting an experiential learning student to write a market research report that will enable you to enter a new export market. Right now, your team is working at full capacity serving clients, so to produce the report, you'd either have to reduce someone's billable hours or outsource the research to a consultant. Or you could pass on the report and lose the export opportunity. In any of these situations, the cost to your organization, you estimate, would be at least \$15,000.

By your calculations, with a government subsidy, the cost of hiring and training a student would be less than \$3,000. Even without a subsidy, the cost would likely be less than \$10,000. It doesn't take much mental math to quickly recognize an immediate ROI of at least \$5,000 to \$12,000.

That amount could be compounded if you're able to bring on the fully-trained student as a permanent employee once they graduate. As you know, the time and energy required to recruit and train a brand new employee add up to significant costs. How much could you save by hiring a pre-vetted, pre-trained candidate who's ready to hit the ground running?

And the direct ROI on experiential learning is only part of the business case. By exposing a student to your organization's culture, you could also strengthen your brand in the local market, build a positive relationship with your university partner, and develop a reputation as a great place to work. All these qualitative benefits can help position you as an employer of choice and make it easier for you to attract and retain top young talent.

*What kind of ROI could you expect from experiential learning? Use the worksheet **Create Your Business Case for Experiential Learning (p. 34)** to estimate the direct, measurable value you could derive from bringing a student onboard for a placement.*

4. CREATE A JOB AD THAT ATTRACTS STUDENT EMPLOYEES

How are your copywriting skills?

Creating an ad to attract the right student to your organization is a serious sales job. Your ad must speak persuasively to the key features today's youth are seeking in a position and organization. It must also highlight some specific things students expect from an experiential learning placement.

WHAT GEN Z WANTS FROM A JOB

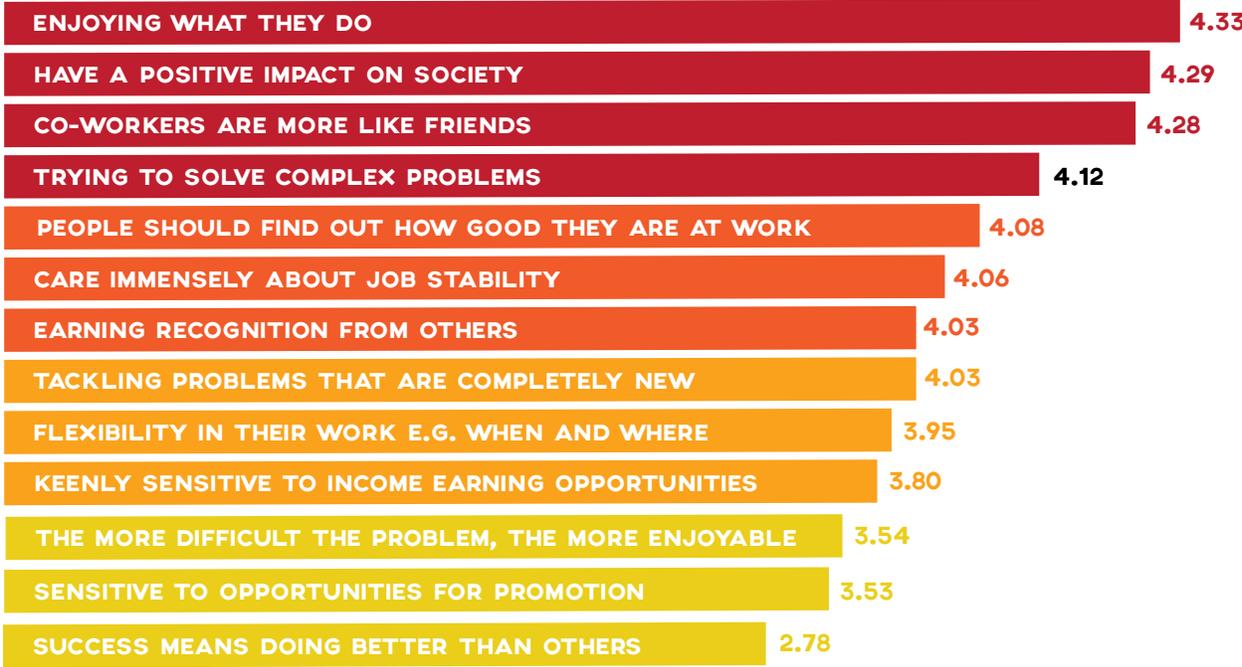
The cohort of students poised to enter the workforce falls into the generational category of Gen Z (people born between 1996 and 2010). In comparison with older generations, Gen Z has some distinct preferences in terms of what they're looking for in a job—and some of these may surprise you.

Gen Z is sometimes mislabelled as a bunch of hedonists because the number one thing they want from their work is enjoyment. **They expect work to be intrinsically rewarding, even fun.**

However, Gen Z is not just about fun; their other top priority is making a positive impact on the world. Consequently, **they prefer to work for organizations that aim to make a difference as well as a profit.**

A sense of belonging also matters greatly to Gen Z. **They want their workplace to feel like a friendly place where they enjoy collaborating with people they care about.**

In 2020, the University of Waterloo surveyed more than 200 of their co-op students to find out what criteria were top-of-mind when they considered job options. Here's how they rated 13 job characteristics (on a five-point scale):



Source: University of Waterloo. (2020). *Are You Ready to Manage the Workplace of the Future?*

A job ad that resonates with today's students will showcase qualities from the top of the above list. It will demonstrate how the role and the organization enable the employee to thrive on the terms that matter to them.

But that's just the starting point. A job ad that lures students to your organization also conveys workplace values that align with the top values of Gen Z: benevolence, self-direction, and enjoyment. Other important values for Gen Z include security, diversity and inclusion, and achievement.

Job ads that speak effectively to Gen Z use lively language and specific examples to describe the organizational culture and paint a clear picture of "what it's like to work with us."

WHAT STUDENTS EXPECT FROM EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Besides being members of Gen Z, students seeking an experiential learning placement have additional expectations. Based on their understanding of the experiential learning cycle, they presume that an employer will:

- Provide opportunities to engage in authentic work they find personally meaningful (work similar to what a new permanent employee would do)
- Assign work that challenges them and enables them to develop new skills
- Collaborate on setting learning goals and meeting other requirements of their university
- Give regular feedback
- Engage with them in debriefs and other kinds of reflection
- Include them in team meetings and social activities
- Take an interest in their professional development

To attract highly-motivated students to your organization, make sure your job ad shows them what the position holds for them. What special projects or tasks will they work on? What new skills will they be able to add to their resume? What opportunities will they have to interact with colleagues and become part of the team?

HOW TO CREATE A COMPELLING JOB DESCRIPTION

Think of your job ad as an invitation. You want to entice the student who will be the best fit for the exciting activities you have going on in your organization. So the more clearly you can describe those activities, the better your chances of attracting the right candidate (and screening out the wrong candidates).

Since you're writing for an audience new to the professional workforce, bear in mind that they may have trouble understanding how roles and responsibilities presented in typical HR language translate into day-to-day work. **Specific, concrete language and examples are critical.**

As you describe your organization and the job role, use the journalist's five W's as your guide. Here are some questions to jumpstart your thinking:

Who?

- Whom does the organization serve?
- Who's in the organization?
- Who will the student be in the organization?
- Whom will they serve?
- Whom will they report to and work with?

What?

- What does the organization do?
- What positive impact does it make on the world?
- What will the student do?
- What will their role contribute to the organization as a whole?
- What outcomes will they be expected to produce?
- What specific responsibilities will they take on?
- What will their day-to-day working life look like?
- What learning opportunities will be made available?

Where?

- Where will the main workplace be?
- Where will their colleagues be located?
- Will any travel be involved?
- Where are the people the student will serve located?

When?

- When will the position start and finish?
- When will the days and hours of work be?
- When will the orientation and/or training period take place?

Why?

- Why does the organization exist?
- Why does it do what it does?
- Why is this work significant?
- Why is an experiential learning student needed?

THINK OUTSIDE THE BULLETED LIST

To help students envision how rewarding it is to work with your organization, consider using a photo or video clip to capture the spirit of your workplace.

STRUCTURE YOUR AD FOR EASY READING

Create an ad that stands out by making your job description visually appealing and easy to read. Use a large font (at least 11 points), headings, and bulleted lists of no more than five to seven items. Avoid dense paragraphs and lengthy, undivided lists, which make reading look like a lot of work.

Remember: you're targeting Gen Z, a group that wants work to feel fun and friendly. The technically-oriented description you'd use for a more senior hire probably won't entice your younger audience.

Here's a simple structure you can use to organize your description. You'll notice that it gives students both a macro-level view of your organization's mission and culture AND a micro-level view of the role and responsibilities, all in a format that's easy to skim and understand.

STRUCTURE FOR A STUDENT-FRIENDLY JOB AD

CATCHY TITLE

Headline that attracts attention and piques curiosity



CONTEXT

Background on your organization, emphasizing the story behind your mission, as well as the values and cultural elements that align with Gen Z priorities



OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE

High-level description, indicating how the role will contribute to the organizations overall mission; emphasis on **enjoyability and impact**



DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTION

Regular and occasional duties and responsibilities, painting a clear picture of what the job involves day to day



LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Specific ways the role will benefit the student, emphasizing unique opportunities for personal and professional growth



REQUIREMENTS

Your list of must-haves and nice-to-haves

MODEL JOB AD



KinderTech

Learning Systems

Join us in our mission to transform K-12 learning

We're a world-leading educational technology company based in downtown St. John. For the past six years, we've been on a mission to transform grade-school learning.

We build interactive software for teaching language arts and social studies, and our award-winning programs have impacted more than 12,000 students in Canada, the UK, and Denmark.

Why we need you

We're gearing up to expand our product line into the natural sciences, and we need someone to help us plan for this growth.

As our new Product Innovation Intern, you'll conduct detailed market research that will enable us to launch into this new territory within the next six to 12 months.

How you'll contribute

You'll use your laser-focused research skills to craft an in-depth report. This important document will guide us in designing, developing, and marketing the new product line.

Your main job activities will be to:

- Hunt down, summarize, and analyze published market research available online through trade journals, industry websites, academic journals, and industry reports
- Conduct interviews (by phone and/or Zoom) with current clients in Canada, the UK, and Denmark
- Identify competitive products and analyze their strengths and weaknesses
- Participate in regular staff meetings and brainstorms with our 10-person team
- Present your interim and final findings through email reports, slide presentations, and a detailed written report (probably 20 + pages) that will be shared with our Board of Directors

In addition, you'll pitch in with some other projects we have on the go in Marketing and Sales. We're a small, nimble team, so you'll find that job duties shift depending on the needs of our clients. We also pride ourselves on looking out for one another, so you may be asked to temporarily lend a hand with an activity outside your domain if a co-worker is dealing with a work overload or someone goes on vacation.

What you bring

One of our core beliefs is that diversity breeds innovation. So we hope you'll bring a unique skillset that will surprise us with some hidden talents!

At the same time, you'll need certain core skills and attitudes to work well with the team and succeed in your research project. At a minimum, you should bring:

- Experience conducting research in a business class (preferably a marketing class)
- Superb skills in written and oral communication
- Data visualization skills (you can "translate" a data set into a graph, chart, or diagram)
- Proficiency with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint (you know how to use all the features in the "ribbon" and most of the features in the drop-down menus)
- Ability to work independently in a fast-paced environment, with a variety of personality types, many of whom have strong opinions
- Unfailing sense of humor (see the point above)

We'd consider it a great bonus if you were bilingual, as some of our clients are in Quebec, and we'd like to expand our customer base in that region.

What you'll gain

In our small organization, you'll get the chance to see how customized software development works, from end to end. You'll also have opportunities to:

- Participate in client meetings
- Refine your research, writing, and presentation skills
- Collaborate with technical and nontechnical colleagues in an agile, creative environment
- Participate in presenting your findings to the Board of Directors
- Attend the annual EduTech conference in Chicago (Aug 1 to 5)

Position details

- The internship will start May 2 and run until the end of August.
- You'll work out of our office at 635 Harris St.
- You'll need your own laptop (Mac or PC is fine).
- Our work day is 8 hours, including an hour for lunch. You can choose a start time of 8, 9 or 10 a.m.
- Compensation will be \$16/hour for a 35-hour work week.
- We welcome applications from international students.

Interested?

Send us your resume by February 20th, along with a cover letter telling us why you'd be a great fit for our mission and our team: info@kindertech.ca.

If we think it would be worth our having a conversation about the internship, we'll email you to invite you to an interview.

If you have any questions about the role, please feel free to reach out to our Chief Innovator, Ruth Stuckey at 506-455-7878.

Ready to start creating your job ad? The [Job Ad Template \(p. 36\)](#) worksheet will guide you through the process.

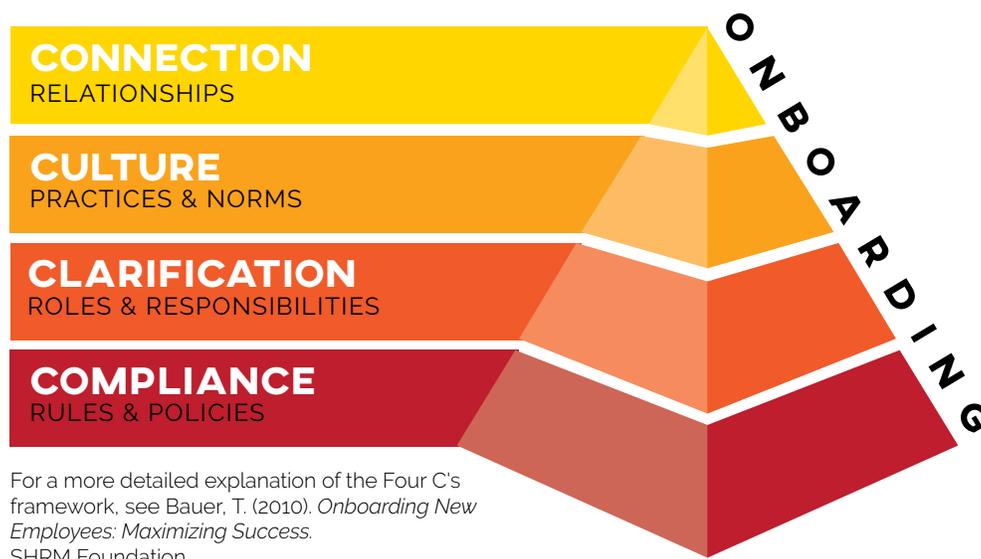
5. DESIGN A SIMPLE, EASY ONBOARDING PROCESS THAT FITS YOUR ORGANIZATION

Does onboarding sound to you like an elaborate and expensive process? It doesn't have to be. Many businesses and not-for-profits in New Brunswick have successfully integrated experiential learning students into their organization without investing in formal orientation programs or disrupting their day-to-day activities.

Their secret? Making **culture** and **connection** their onboarding priorities. When you go out of your way to make a student feel they belong to your team, it's surprising how short and smooth their onramp becomes.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR C'S OF ONBOARDING

Successful onboarding includes four levels of orientation:



Most organizations master the bottom two levels. They ensure compliance by giving newcomers the basic “rules” concerning such matters as working hours, compensation, and reporting requirements. They also practice clarification by briefing a new employee on their job duties.

But too often, onboarding stops there—even though the other two C's provide the richest opportunities for helping a new colleague fit in and quickly get up to speed.

We all know how important “fit” is when recruiting and hiring, but in the midst of a busy work week, it can be easy to forget that **true fit requires facilitation**. Sure, you've carefully selected the student who seems to have all the characteristics that will make them a great team player. But if the team doesn't provide a proper welcome, your promising rookie may never play at the level you expected. Or they may stick around to play at all.

Employers who get the most value from experiential learning find low-fuss ways to engage students from the get-go and make them feel at home. Think of onboarding as your opportunity to show New Brunswick's famous hospitality:

- What simple steps can you take to orient a newcomer to the way things get done in your organization?
- How can you help them form positive relationships with the people around them so they don't just want to get in the game but want to become one of your all-stars?

TAKE IT STEP-BY-STEP

Onboarding doesn't happen overnight. It's a journey that starts before the student's first day on the job and ends several weeks into the placement. At that point, the student has arrived at a level of competence that enables them to function fully in their assigned role.

Before you start pulling together any onboarding materials, your first step should be to map the ground the student will need to cover. Start at the job offer and follow the journey all the way to the point where colleagues no longer think of the new hire as "the student" but simply as a fellow employee.

For an experiential learning placement, onboarding typically takes place through three stages:

- **Before Day One**—The first impression the student gets of your organization starts long before they show up for the first day of work. The moment they're hired, they're launched on their onboarding journey.
- **Day One**—The first day of work can positively or negatively colour the entire placement experience. It's critical to start this leg of the journey on a strong footing.
- **Ongoing onboarding**—This process looks different in every organization, and the duration can vary greatly. Plan for at least a couple of weeks of close supervision and mentoring. If the job role is particularly complex or requires a lot of skill development, you may find it takes up to the mid-point of the placement for the student to come fully into their own.

Here's an example of how these three stages might unfold for a student completing a co-op in an industrial chemistry lab:

Before Day One, the student:

1. Receives an informal job offer by phone.
2. Receives a formal job offer by email. The formal offer is written in friendly, accessible language (not legalese) and clearly outlines next steps.

3. Accepts the job offer in writing.
4. Receives a personal welcome email from the organization, including a friendly welcome package (introducing the team and their main activities) and the name of the supervisor.
5. Receives a personal welcome email and/or phone call from the supervisor, giving clear instructions about where and when to report on Day One and outlining what will happen on the first day.

Little things mean a lot. Here's an example of a short welcome email from a supervisor that goes a long way toward encouraging a sense of belonging:

SUBJECT: Looking forward to your first day

Hi Gavin,

My name is Trish Delaine, and I'm a team lead in the chemistry lab at Fernwood Chemicals. Sally from HR has shared your resume with me, and I can't wait for you to join the team on May 5. It looks like you already have a great background in organic chemistry, and your experience working at a kids' camp should equip you for dealing with the day-to-day craziness around here. Because research priorities can change from one week to the next, we have to stay on our toes all the time!

On May 5, I'll wait for you at the front door of the same building where you attended your interview (56 McLaughlin Ave.).

Our work day starts at 9, but I'll need a few minutes to get settled, so let's plan to meet at 9:15. If I'm running late, the receptionist can point you to the waiting area.

We'll spend most of your first day getting you set up for working with Fernwood. There will be security paperwork to complete, so **bring your social insurance number and one piece of photo ID.**

Please also be sure to **wear closed shoes** as you won't be allowed in the lab with sandals. Jeans are fine if you find those comfortable.

If you have any questions between now and your first day, just give me a call. My desk line is 506-765-4433, and my cell is 506-889-6545.

Cheers,

Trish

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Cheers,
Trish

On Day One, the student:

1. Meets their supervisor at the front door.
2. Visits HR to complete all onboarding paperwork, including security forms, and receive employee manual.
3. Learns about any required training (e.g., lab safety course).
4. Gets a tour of the lab and the building.
5. Receives all the equipment they'll need to do their job, including a laptop and a lab coat.
6. Has lunch with the colleagues they'll be working with.
7. Meets key staff members they may need to interact with, such as the payroll clerk and the safety officer Also meets some of the company leadership, including the Vice President of Research & Development.
8. Has coffee with an assigned mentor, a junior researcher who graduated from university last year.
9. Gets briefed on current research projects and the role they will likely play in the lab.
10. Assists with a small, authentic task that engages them in the real work of the lab.

During ongoing onboarding, the student:

1. Consults with the team lead to set learning goals for the placement.
2. Meets each morning with the team lead to receive assignments for the day.
3. Debriefs with the team lead for 15 minutes at the end of each day.
4. Shadows and assists a senior researcher in the lab.
5. Completes some independent lab tasks, receiving feedback on performance. Tasks become increasingly complex.
6. Assists with record-keeping and data analysis, performing more and more independently.
7. Participates in weekly team meetings.
8. Gets invited to social events, such as team lunches and the company softball league.
9. Meets with mentor at least once a week.
10. Keeps a work journal, reflecting weekly on achievements and lessons learned.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

There's no single, right way to onboard an experiential learning student. But it helps to keep a few key principles in mind and to consider examples of effective onboarding practices:

BEFORE DAY ONE

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Decide who will own the onboarding. During onboarding, the student may receive training and mentoring from several people, but who's in charge of the overall process? When no one or everyone is in charge, it's easy for the student to feel confused and lost.</p>	<p>Even if the student will report to various people on various projects, establish one primary supervisor. Give this person the responsibility of shepherding the student through the onboarding process. As a minimum, they should regularly check in with the student to find out how they're settling in.</p>
<p>Make a place. Where the student works is important. Create a work space close to co-workers so the student feels part of the action and can easily ask questions.</p>	<p>If possible, place the student close to their supervisor or a mentor so they can ask questions as they arise. If no one has assigned work stations, make sure the student understands the protocol for finding their daily seat.</p>
<p>Get the right tools. What are the essential items the student will need to do their job? Make sure all of these will be ready when the student arrives.</p>	<p>Picture yourself in the student's role performing their daily tasks. List all the items you'd need to do the job—from a laptop to sticky notes. Line up any approvals you need to procure the large items so the student won't have to spend any downtime waiting for equipment to show up.</p>
<p>Prepare to access technology. What systems and programs will the student need to access on a daily and weekly basis? Get clear on the steps required to get login credentials and access training.</p>	<p>If your organization has an IT department, it may be helpful to schedule a meeting with them on Day One so the student can get all the required passwords at once.</p> <p>The student may not be able to accurately gauge their level of proficiency with a given technology. The best way to find that out is to assign them low-level tasks, evaluate their performance, and then provide training or other kinds of support as needed.</p>
<p>Create a clear job description. A lot can happen between the interview and Day One. Have your expectations of the role changed based on shifts in the organization or on skills the student brings to the position? Update the job description accordingly.</p>	<p>Ideally, your updated job description should describe the role's duties and responsibilities as well as the specific outcomes it's expected to produce. Also make sure the reporting structure is crystal-clear.</p>

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Prepare orientation materials. Besides the job description, these should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basic HR and payroll paperwork 2. Employee manuals and/or policy documents 3. Company overview and organizational chart 4. List of key contacts, including key clients or customers if the role is public-facing 5. Background on specific activities or projects to which the student will contribute 	<p>While it's important to be thorough, avoid dumping too much information on the student all at once. You may want to assign reading in pieces or at least highlight the most important content the student should start with.</p>
<p>Share the news. Let the team and the broader organization know about the new arrival. Encourage colleagues to make the student feel welcome.</p>	<p>Since emails don't always get read, don't rely just on an email announcement to pave the way for the student. Mention the new hire during meetings and casual conversations. Generate interest in the student by sharing particular aspects of their profile that promise to make them a valuable contributor.</p>
<p>Arrange meetings. Make a list of all the people the student will work with or need to consult with. Arrange opportunities for the student to meet with as many of these colleagues as possible.</p>	<p>A workplace tour or walk-around is a great way to facilitate meet-and-greets. Email introductions can also help connect the student with their new colleagues. And nothing says "you're welcome here" like being invited to a special team lunch.</p>
<p>Communicate Day One expectations. Be clear about where and when the student should report. If there's a dress code, or if the student will need to bring any documents or equipment with them, state those requirements.</p>	<p>Most students look forward to their first day in an experiential learning placement with a mix of excitement and anxiety. You can lessen the anxiety by giving them a preview of what to expect on Day One. For clarity's sake, it's a good idea to provide key details (such as start time) in writing.</p>

DAY ONE

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Roll out the welcome mat. Today's experiential learning student could be tomorrow's permanent hire, so foster a sense of belonging from the beginning.</p>	<p>Make sure you're prepared for the student. Have their work station ready, equipment in place, key meetings scheduled, and first tasks lined up. The student probably feels nervous; the more organized and calm you can make their first day, the better they'll be able to concentrate.</p>
<p>Provide an agenda. Make the student comfortable by letting them know how their first day will unfold.</p>	<p>The student may have no idea of what to expect from the first day in a professional work environment. Give them a rough schedule of the day, including break times, so they'll have some sense of what's ahead.</p>
<p>Paint the big picture. Students new to the world of work can have a hard time grasping how their role relates to the organization's overall mission and goals. Help them understand how their contribution fits with the contributions of their colleagues and makes an impact.</p>	<p>"Impact" is a significant word for Gen Z, so be sure to use it. Let the student know not just what they'll do but why they'll be doing it and what they'll be helping to achieve.</p> <p>An organizational chart can quickly orient the student to who's who and create a sense of social connection. Organizational success stories can show your organizational values in action and enable the student to imagine themselves contributing to the organization's success.</p>
<p>Put people before processes. The culture and connection elements of onboarding don't happen through information-sharing; they happen through relationship-building.</p>	<p>Fly-by introductions to colleagues just won't cut it. Provide opportunities for meaningful social connection, such as a team lunch or meetings devoted to getting-to-know-you conversations. The "what" of the job—specific tasks and procedures—can come later. On Day One, it's critical that the student start to develop trust in the "who" and the "why" of their work.</p> <p>If at all possible, assign the student a mentor or "work buddy." This person can serve as an additional support when you're not available. They may also provide a helpful sounding-board if issues come up that the student doesn't feel comfortable raising with you.</p> <p>If you have more than one experiential learning student working for your organization, be sure to connect them. Students find strength in sharing similar work experiences. They also value opportunities to connect with recent graduates or other young talent who can easily relate to their situation.</p>

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Translate shop-talk. Every industry and every workplace have their unique jargon. This will sound like a foreign language to the student, so take time to provide plain English translations.</p>	<p>Provide a list of key jargon terms and acronyms the student will encounter. Encourage the student to ask for clarification when they hear a term they don't understand.</p>
<p>Avoid overwhelm. To use an old cliché, the first day on the job can feel like "drinking from a fire hose." Don't feel you have to provide everything the student needs to know all at once. Remember, onboarding is a journey, and Day One is just the first step.</p>	<p>Break up briefings with social time. Encourage the student to take notes (they may not think to do this) so they can keep track of new information without feeling they need to remember it all. Allow some downtime for breaks so the student can pause and recharge.</p>
<p>Provide the tools for success. Delays in getting equipment and access to technology can create a sense of confusion and cause anxiety. Make sure the student has everything they need to hit the ground running.</p>	<p>Before assigning any task, it's a good idea to make sure the student has all the tools and supports they need to complete it. These could include background context, step-by-step instructions, equipment, technology, contact information, and troubleshooting steps.</p> <p>Consider also other organizational resources that might be generally helpful to the student. These might include, for instance, HR staff and wellness programs.</p>
<p>Ask questions. Check in with the student frequently to gauge how well they're absorbing information and how comfortable they're feeling.</p>	<p>The student may feel embarrassed about asking questions, so make it easy for them to do that. Rather than asking "Do you have any questions?" try asking what questions they have about a particular topic you've explained. Or you could ask which part of your explanation it would be helpful for you to repeat or clarify.</p>
<p>Open communication channels. Establish multiple modes of communication so it's easy for the student to reach you when they have questions or concerns.</p>	<p>Make it possible for the student to reach you through more than one channel. Let them know the best way to reach you. You might also ask them about the mode of communication they prefer; remember, your goal is to make it as easy as painless as possible for them to access your guidance when they need it. It's also a good idea to provide an alternative contact, someone the student can reach out to for help when you're not available.</p>

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Create psychological safety. A workplace feels psychologically safe when employees know it's okay to make mistakes. Offer this assurance to the student so they're willing to try new things and tackle challenges they may find daunting.</p>	<p>One way you can create psychological safety is by sharing stories of your own mistakes and how you learned from them. Encourage "stupid" questions and learning by trial-and-error.</p>
<p>Start real work. Experiential learning is hands-on learning, so immerse the student in real job activities as soon as you can. Even a small taste of what it's like to contribute to the team can provide a big dose of encouragement at this stage.</p>	<p>Assign a small task the student can do with you, a work "buddy," or on their own. Make this initial task easy enough for them to succeed but not so easy that it gives the impression that the job will be boring. Be sure to explain how the task fits into the big picture of the team's strategic priorities and to provide timely feedback.</p>

10 EASY WAYS TO COMMUNICATE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND PROMOTE CONNECTION

Five simple ways to convey the strengths of your culture:

1. Explain the rationale for doing something "the Organization way" or "our way."
2. Share stories that illustrate organizational culture in action, such as origin stories or stories about making tough decisions based on core values.
3. Contrast "our way" with the standard industry approach, explaining the advantages.
4. Celebrate organizational heroes for embodying core values.
5. Invite the student to events where they can see official representations of culture and values.

Five ways to connect students with their colleagues:

1. Encourage colleagues to invite the student for lunch or coffee (or a video conversation).
2. Allow 15 minutes of social time at the beginning of a team meeting.
3. Hold a team lunch once a month.
4. Facilitate team-building exercises.
5. Invite the student to give a presentation on something they've learned through their placement or through their university courses.

ONGOING ONBOARDING

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>State what the end-point looks like. How will you and the student know when they've completed onboarding and are functioning as a fully capable employee? Spell out exactly what success will look like.</p>	<p>A rough timeline will give you and the student a goal to reach for—but be prepared to adapt as necessary. Also be prepared to revisit the original job description, refining and clarifying as necessary.</p>
<p>Provide frequent, timely feedback. Students who are new to the workforce are often anxious about their performance and need confirmation that they're meeting expectations. To be useful, feedback needs to occur as immediately as possible.</p>	<p>The student may want or expect more feedback than you have time to give, so it may be helpful to establish feedback routines. For instance, you might conduct a daily or weekly debrief to review the week's assignments. Or you might request a daily email report and respond with a few lines. You might also consider pairing the student with another colleague (a "work buddy") who could give them feedback in your stead.</p>
<p>Assign tasks of increasing difficulty. Employers who derive the most value from experiential learning placements are skilled at assessing student skill levels and assigning work accordingly. The key is to start off with tasks that provide minimal challenge; as the student demonstrates specific skills, you can assign more and more challenging work.</p>	<p>To shorten the student's learning curve, consider them as your apprentice. In the beginning, make them your helper on tasks so they can learn by observing and imitating you. As their skills develop, you can then provide opportunities for more independent work, gradually reducing the amount of coaching and other kinds of support you provide.</p> <p>Another approach is to start by breaking complex tasks into manageable pieces and provide feedback after the student has completed each piece. As the student develops their capabilities, you'll be able to make each piece larger and larger until eventually they'll be able to tackle the entire task on their own.</p> <p>Avoid the common mistake of underestimating what a student can do! If you begin with tasks they find too boring, you'll quickly lose the opportunity to engage them.</p>
<p>Allow opportunities for reflection. The experiential learning cycle depends on reflection as the means of interpreting and learning from work experiences. Students may need some coaching in how to reflect effectively and intentionally grow their professional skills.</p>	<p>You can model reflection, in one-on-one conversations and team meetings, by debriefing and contemplating "lessons learned." Encourage the student to keep a work journal where they can record their daily or weekly experiences and unpack them.</p> <p>Another way to encourage reflection is to provide opportunities for students to link the work they're doing on the job with topics they've studied in their university program. You may find that you and the rest of your team benefit from fresh insights the student derives from this exercise.</p>

KEY PRINCIPLES	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
<p>Give clear correction. Effective feedback is not always positive. In fact, trying to sugar-coat negative feedback can backfire. If the student doesn't understand what they've done wrong, and if there are no consequences, how will they know how to improve?</p>	<p>Practice the art of kindly but unmistakably pointing out mistakes. When the student has an opportunity to correct their error, be sure to give timely feedback on their performance.</p>
<p>Collaborate on finding solutions. When a performance issue or conflict arises, engage the student in brainstorming possible solutions.</p>	<p>The student is expected to take ownership of their workplace learning experience, and it's important for them to develop skills in problem solving and conflict resolution. If you and the student find yourself at an impasse, remember that you can always reach out to your university partner for help.</p>
<p>Track learning goals. The goals you and the student set at the beginning of the placement may need to morph over time as their responsibilities and their skill level evolve.</p>	<p>Besides checking in regularly with the student about their work performance, check in about their learning experience. Is their role providing the expected learning opportunities? If not, do the learning goals need to be adjusted? Or are there ways to expose the student to the kinds of situations and challenges you both anticipated at the start of the placement?</p>
<p>Mentorship matters. The employers who gain the most from experiential learning invest in their personal relationship with the student. They take time to appreciate the student's interests and nurture confidence as well as competence.</p>	<p>If you don't have time to mentor the student personally, consider delegating that task. A mentor doesn't need to be a senior employee. Students often relate very well to mentors who are near-peers and can remember what it was like to be the new employee on the block.</p>
<p>Celebrate the end of the journey. The end of the onboarding process marks the beginning of the student's ability to enter fully into the life of the organization. Celebrate their arrival at this milestone and plan for the new journey ahead.</p>	<p>The end of onboarding doesn't always have a time-stamp. One day, you or a colleague may just suddenly notice that the student has become an ordinary employee. When that happens, it's time to celebrate. Congratulate the student on the knowledge they've gained and the skills they've mastered—and reward their effort by giving them increasingly challenging assignments. You might think about marking the end of onboarding by assigning a special project or presentation that gives the student a chance to shine in their new identity as a professional colleague.</p>

*To design your own onboarding journey for an experiential learning student, use the worksheet **Mapping the Student Onboarding Journey** (p. 38). You'll also want to check out the **Onboarding Journey Checklist** (p. 43).*

6. FOLLOW A PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH TO EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Experiential learning offers a great way to diversify your workforce. Ads for placements can attract a wide variety of candidates, and some funding opportunities are earmarked for students from underrepresented groups, such as international students, Indigenous students, and students with disabilities.

But of course there's more to creating diversity than simply hiring a student who's "different" in some way from others on your team. Embracing diversity means adopting an attitude and culture of inclusion so that everyone feels welcome and empowered to perform to their full potential.

SEEING THE PERSON FIRST

Diversity is about recognizing, appreciating, and accepting differences. At the core, it means perceiving people as individuals rather than as categories.

When you take a person-centred approach to diversity, you see a person with mental illness rather than a schizophrenic and a person of Indian origin rather than a foreigner. You recognize identity as something that emerges from many factors, not as a single, simplistic label.

Here are a few practical pointers for fostering a workplace environment that genuinely respects and welcomes all experiential learning students, regardless of their race, religion, gender, age sexual orientation, or physical abilities:

1. Discuss a student's needs and preferences directly with the student rather than with others.
2. At the beginning of a placement, invite the student to share any information about themselves they think it would be helpful for you to know as you lead and support them.
3. Focus on strengths, rather than weaknesses, and on how to leverage them.
4. Approach solution-finding collaboratively; listen to the student's suggestions about how to accommodate their needs or preferences.
5. Be open to adjusting workflows and processes in creative ways.
6. Provide training for your team to raise awareness about ways to nurture diversity and inclusion.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you decide to use experiential learning as a way to increase diversity in your team or organization, you may want to level up your HR knowledge and practices. The following New Brunswick organizations may be able to offer some helpful resources:

1. **Joint Economic Development Initiative** (for help with hiring Indigenous students):
<http://jedinb.ca/main.html>
2. **New Brunswick Human Rights Commission**
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc.html>
3. **Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area** (for help with hiring international students and students from ethnic minorities)
<http://magma-amgm.org/>
4. **New Brunswick Employer Support Services** (for help with hiring students with disabilities)
<https://employersupport.nb.ca/>

In addition, your university partner may have some useful suggestions. Remember: they're there to guide you through the entire process of recruitment, hiring, and onboarding, so feel free to reach out to them with specific questions.

7. COACH STUDENT EMPLOYEES TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

An experiential learning student is an employee with high growth potential. Although they may come to your workplace with little professional knowledge or experience, they tend to have a hunger for learning and a desire to impress. As a result, a little coaching can go a long way, and produce results more quickly than you might expect.

The key is to take a **genuine coaching approach** to managing the student.

Coaching differs from teaching, which emphasizes direct instruction. It also contrasts with mentorship, which emphasizes role-modeling and emotional support. True coaching intentionally targets performance improvement, and it puts the responsibility for improvement squarely on the shoulders of the person being coached.

Coaching works well with experiential learning students for a few reasons:

1. As members of Gen Z, they tend to value self-direction at work. Coaching puts them in charge of their progress and gives them the tools they need to create their own success.

2. Being new to the professional workplace, they may have no idea of what it means to be managed. They probably do, however, have some experience with being coached in a sports or other extra-curricular context.
3. Coming from an academic context, they are used to receiving direct, frequent feedback on their performance and appreciate structured learning opportunities.

Here are a few tips to help you coach an experiential learning student into becoming a valuable team contributor:

1. **Be intentional.** Collaborate with the student to set specific performance goals. Ideally, these should connect with the learning goals they've articulated for their experiential learning.
2. **Focus on strengths.** Even when there are glaring weaknesses, it's easier to build on capabilities than it is to fix deficiencies.
3. **Explain the process.** Be clear about your expectations, including responsibilities, timelines, and performance evaluation.
4. **Target outcomes.** Coaching is a journey, not a ramble. Clearly state the destination—for the coaching overall and for individual sessions.
5. **Ask probing questions.** Your aim is to empower the student to take on their own learning. Ask questions that challenge them to find the answers they need.
6. **Act as a sounding board.** One of a coach's main roles is to provide a safe space for self-discovery. Encourage reflection, and practice active listening, including such techniques as paraphrasing and asking questions to check your understanding.
7. **Monitor and measure progress.** Provide mechanisms for accountability, such as daily reporting or weekly tracking. Give direct, precise feedback on performance. And be sure to celebrate achievements!

*New to coaching? Use the **Coaching Planner (p. 46)** and **Coaching Session Cheat-Sheet (p. 48)** to get started.*

8. ENGAGE, MOTIVATE, AND RETAIN YOUNG TALENT

So... imagine that you've successfully invested time and energy in onboarding an experiential learning student. They're doing a dynamite job, and you'd like to persuade them to return to your organization after graduation. How do you keep them engaged and keen to continue working with your team?

To help Gen Z employees thrive, and to cultivate their loyalty, it's important to provide:

1. **Frequent feedback**—Given them assurance they're making a valuable contribution, and enable them to mark progress.

2. **Transparent communication through various modes**—Benevolence is an important organizational value for Gen Z, so they need to know they can trust you. Honesty in communication is a non-negotiable.

Gen Z employee also want to be able to reach you using the mode of communication that feels most natural to them. Spoiler alert: that might not be email or phone. Be open to staying in touch through alternative channels, such as video chat and direct messaging.

3. **Culture that feels like a startup**—Gen Z values autonomy at work, as well as creativity and the ability to solve complex problems. You don't have to paint your walls neon green or install a ping pong table to make your organization feel like a startup. You can, for instance, consider ways to flatten the reporting structure, allow for some flexibility in working hours, encourage collaboration, and reward out-of-the-box thinking.

4. **Alternative paths to leadership**—Young talent tend to underestimate the time it will take to move up the organizational ladder. They may have little patience with situations that don't allow for rapid, vertical advancement in their career.

If you can't offer a promotion, provide a creative opportunity, such as a special project that speaks to their interests, or an invitation to brief the executive on a topic they're knowledgeable about.

5. **Clarity about expectations and opportunities for advancement**—Help Gen Z employees chart a realistic career path within your organization. If you can't offer a lot of opportunities to change roles, what can you offer instead? How can you provide challenging work of increasing complexity? How can you offer responsibilities with intrinsic rewards? How can you enable the employee to grow as a person as well as a worker?

6. **Flexibility**—Work-life integration matters a lot to Gen Z. Get creative about ways to maintain efficiency in your workflows while allowing employees to accommodate medical appointments, family responsibilities, and time for rest and recreation.

7. **Inclusivity**—Diversity and inclusion are more than buzzwords for Gen Z. Today's youth will form the most diverse workplace ever, so they want to work for organizations that show a genuine commitment to welcoming and supporting all employees, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or physical capabilities.

*How well-positioned is your organization to retain young talent? Assess your strengths and weaknesses by completing the worksheet **Key Factors for Retaining Experiential Learning Students** (p. 49).*

9. AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

Poor communication tops the list of what can go wrong with an experiential learning placement. Watch out for these pitfalls:

1. **Unclear expectations—on both sides.** You may think the job ad was crystal-clear and the interview spelled out what the role involves. However, it's wise to confirm that the student shares your understanding.
A positive approach is to describe what success will look like, as concretely as you can. Wherever possible, spell out specific outcomes the student will be expected to achieve, (e.g., creating a report, making a sales quota, producing a manual, or developing a new process).
It's also a good idea to explain how your performance evaluation process works. Let the student know the criteria by which their work will be judged and when and how they can expect that to take place.
2. **Weak communication.** Students may not always reach out when they lack clarity. To make sure you're understood, err on the side of overcommunication rather than undercommunication. Avoid assuming a baseline of knowledge and instead ask plenty of questions to confirm comprehension, especially at the beginning of the placement.
3. **Poor planning.** Much of onboarding success depends on what happens before Day One. Use the first part of the Onboarding Journey Checklist to make sure you're well-prepared for the student and have prepared them for their first day.
4. **Lack of connection to learning goals.** Experiential learning depends on the ability to connect workplace experiences with academic knowledge. Take time to appreciate the student's aspirations for professional and personal growth so you can, to the extent possible, align job opportunities with their learning goals.
5. **Incomplete documentation.** Your university partner will require some documentation to track the student's learning. If you're uncertain about the expectations, the student should be able to clarify them for you. Of course, you can also reach out at any time to your university partner for guidance.

6. **Insufficient resources for supervision and mentoring.** Experiential learning delivers great benefits, but it also requires commitment of resources. Successful placements result from dedicated, hands-on supervision throughout the onboarding process. At the beginning of the placement, a supervisor or experienced colleague must be available to answer questions, give feedback, and provide coaching.

7. **Mistaken assumptions about the student's abilities.** Some students need much more support than you'd expect, whereas others succeed much more quickly than you'd think they could. Rather than guessing at their level of competence, ask questions—and invite them to suggest the kinds and level of support they need. Make this an ongoing conversation as the placement progresses.

*The worksheets **Get Set for a Successful Experiential Learning Work Placement (p. 32)** and **Mapping the Student Onboarding Journey (p. 38)** will help you steer clear of many of the above problem areas. Your university partner may also have some specific advice based on their experience with employers in situations similar to yours.*

10. HOW TO CONNECT WITH UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Each of New Brunswick's four publicly-funded universities has an Office of Experiential Learning or Experiential Education, with staff dedicated to collaborating with employers like you.

Reach out to any one of them to explore possibilities for placing a student in your organization. They're eager to hear from you and can help you map out an onboarding process that will fit with your workflow, culture, and team.

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**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TOOLKIT
FOR NEW BRUNSWICK EMPLOYERS
WORKSHEETS**



GET SET FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WORK PLACEMENT



Because experiential learning is an intentional, structured learning process, setting up a successful placement requires some advance planning. Use the following chart to find out how ready your organization is to take on an experiential learning student and what you should do to get fully prepared.

Description Items that need to be completed. <i>Check out the helpful hints.</i>	Score Indicate a percentage (100% = completely ready)	What should you do to get more prepared? List the specific action steps you should take before starting the recruitment process.
1. The job role has been designed specifically for an experiential learning student; duties will align with the student's learning goals. <i>Hint: Your university partner would be happy to help you design the job role and create a job posting.</i>	Score %	Action steps:
2. The job role is linked to specific outcomes. <i>Hint: Measurable outcomes (or outputs) clarify expectations for you and the student.</i>	Score %	Action steps:
3. The job role will allow the student to participate in realistic work they'll find challenging. <i>Hint: Every job includes some "grunt work," but the student will also expect assignments similar to what they'd do as a new permanent hire.</i>	Score %	Action steps:
4. The work flow will allow for hands-on supervision during the first six weeks of the placement. <i>Hint: Some students get up to speed very quickly, but it's wise to plan for a complete onboarding process.</i>	Score %	Action steps:

5. The work flow will accommodate the need for frequent feedback and opportunities for reflection.

Hint: Feedback and reflection form essential elements of the experiential learning process.

Score

%

Action steps:

6. Our organizational culture encourages mentoring and coaching.

Hint: A "sink or swim" approach to onboarding won't work well with a student. But a little mentoring will go a long way!

Score

%

Action steps:

7. I'm comfortable completing any documentation required by the university partner.

Hint: The Office of Experiential Learning/Education can walk you through their specific requirements.

Score

%

Action steps:



CREATE YOUR BUSINESS CASE FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



To get maximum value from an experiential learning work placement, start by defining the specific, measurable goals you'd like a student to achieve.

Use this worksheet to formulate those goals and project the return on investment (ROI) you can expect from the time and effort spent onboarding a student.

STEP 1: GOALS

1. What are the top three strategic goals for your organization right now?

Example: This quarter, we're focused on strengthening our brand, getting \$50,000 in new projects from our current client list, and acquiring at least one new client from the US.

2. Which of these goals would you like a student to help with?

Example: The student could help strengthen our brand.

3. What activities could a student engage in to help achieve that goal?

Example: The student could take the lead on social media.

4. What specific tasks could a student complete as part of these activities?

Example: The student could: Develop a three-month editorial calendar for both platforms, create branded templates for typical kinds of posts, analyze weekly metrics, etc.

STEP 2: RETURN ON INVESTMENT

5. What specific long-term results can you expect from the tasks assigned to the student?

Example: We can expect that ramping up our social media presence will create a foundation that will allow us to: 1) Grow our Facebook audience by 30% over the next 9 months, 2) Generate at least 10 new inbound leads a month, starting in the spring, 3) Give us the profile to deliver presentations at A-level conferences in the United States of America.

6. What's the rough dollar value you can expect from these results?

Example: Over \$30,000

7. How much will it cost you to hire and onboard the student? (Make a rough calculation based on the hourly wage of the person or persons doing the hiring and onboarding.)

Example: (10 hours for hiring + 40 hours for onboarding) @ \$35/hr = \$1,750

8. What's the difference between the dollar value you can expect from the results of the student's work and your costs for hiring and onboarding? *This is your projected ROI.*

Example: \$30,000 - \$1,750 = \$28,250

FURTHER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. If you are not the person holding the purse strings, how will you make the business case to the person with that authority? What are the most compelling points to emphasize?

2. What additional information would strengthen the business case?

3. How will you make the student you hire aware of the expectations laid out in the business case?

JOB AD TEMPLATE



Grab students' attention with a title that reads like a headline. Make it sound inviting and intriguing.

Hint: Starting with a verb creates a sense of energy (e.g., "Join us on our mission to...", "Help us [change the world in an amazing way], Discover the rewards of working in renewable energy).

CATCHY TITLE

Context. Share your organization's mission so that students understand your "why" and get excited about helping to achieve your goals .

This is a great chance to share a few details from your company story.

WHY WE NEED YOU

Give an overview of the position, explaining how it contributes to the organizational mission.

Avoid HR-speak. Instead, speak directly to the student in language they can readily understand.

HOW YOU'LL CONTRIBUTE

Present the list of job duties in a way that shows their relevance to the organization's mission and strategic goals.

Describe job duties in a way that's easy for students to understand—no jargon or buzzwords. Paint a clear picture of what daily work will look like.

WHAT YOU BRING

Spell out the job requirements as precisely as you can. Qualify what you mean by terms like "proficiency" by giving examples of specific tasks the applicant should be able to perform.

Students new to the workplace may underestimate or overestimate their abilities, so give them concrete benchmarks they can measure their skills against.

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

Experiential learning students are seeking rich learning opportunities. Here's your chance to showcase unique experiences that will foster professional and personal growth.

What special achievements will the student be able to list in their resume once they've finished their placement? Those are the kinds of opportunities you want to describe.

POSITION DETAILS

Clarify as many logistic and administrative details as possible. Include such items as location, hours of work, rate of pay, and any special equipment or dress requirements.

What might students want to know before they decide whether to apply for your position? Make sure you don't leave any of those questions unanswered.

INTERESTED?

Clearly state the exact next step or steps an interested applicant should follow.

You may also want to include a contact name and number in case students have questions.

MAPPING THE STUDENT ONBOARDING JOURNEY



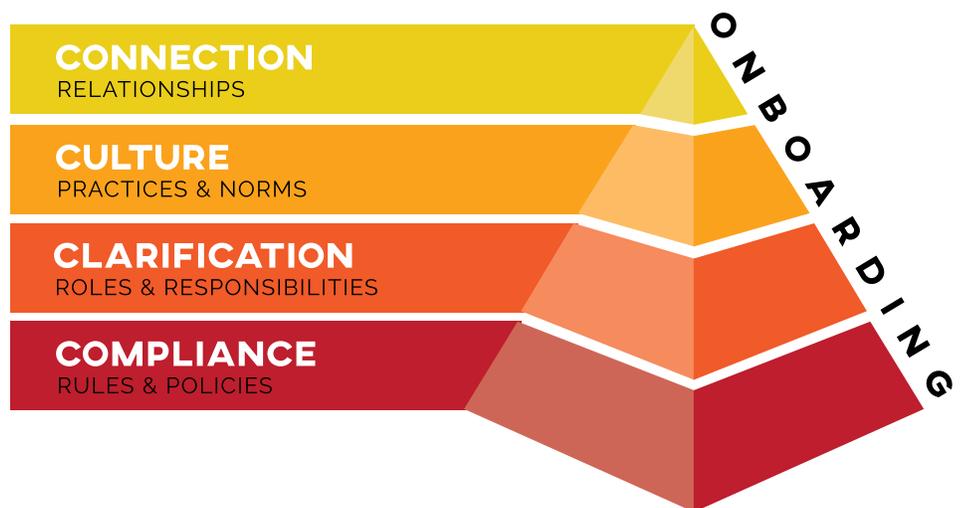
Successful onboarding requires attention to detail, but that doesn't mean the process has to be complicated. To simplify things, plan your onboarding in two steps:

1. Consider the Four C's framework and identify specific activities that will fulfill each of the four levels.
2. Map those activities onto a timeline divided into three phases: Before Day One, Day One, and Ongoing Onboarding.

STEP 1: ACTIVITIES TO FULFILL THE FOUR C'S

For each level of onboarding, describe the specific things you'll do to make sure you satisfy all of the Four C's.

Use the questions in the left column to spark your thinking, and record your list of action items in the right column.



CONNECTION

- How will you integrate the student into teamwork?
- Who will act as a mentor to the student?
- What opportunities will you provide for getting-acquainted conversations?
- What introductions will you make?
- What social occasions will enable the student to get to know their colleagues?

CULTURE

- What company stories will you share?
- How will you communicate the company values?
- What practices or unique ways of doing things will you need to explain?
- What preconceptions or mistaken assumptions might you need to overcome?

CLARIFICATION

- How will you explain the job role and how it fits into the big picture of the organization's mission and strategic priorities?
- Does the job description used to create the job ad require any updates?
- What outcomes will the student be responsible for?
- How will you explain the reporting structure and requirements?

COMPLIANCE

- What documents will you share with the student?
- What policies will you explain?
- What unstated "rules" will you state?

STEP 2: ONBOARDING TIMELINE

In the table below, list in order all the steps you'll take to integrate the student fully into your organization and equip them to perform their role.

BEFORE DAY ONE

From job offer through to reporting for the first day of work

ACTION STEPS

Example:

Check on budget for laptop.

Place order with IT department.

NOTES

If there's not enough in the department budget, check with Jan

DAY ONE

The first complete day on the job

ACTION STEPS

NOTES

ONGOING ONBOARDING

A period of several weeks (probably at least six) as the student adjusts to their role and the working environment. Onboarding ends when the student is fully integrated into the organization and able to perform all the duties listed in the job description.

ACTION STEPS

NOTES

ONBOARDING JOURNEY CHECKLIST

Onboarding is a team responsibility, so you may want to work through this checklist with your colleagues to make sure they understand and buy into the entire process.



BEFORE DAY ONE

- Put one person in charge of the onboarding process
- Set up a workspace for the student, close to other team members
- Prepare HR and payroll forms
- Get familiar with the documentation required by the university partner
- Acquire all the tools and technology (including permissions) the student will need to access the workplace and do their job
- Update the job description
- Prepare a package of orientation materials
- Announce the student's arrival
- Schedule meetings with HR and leadership
- Plan meet-and-greet opportunities (if possible, include a team lunch)
- Communicate Day One expectations to the student

NOTES

DAY ONE

Note: The checklist presents items in random order; it doesn't imply any chronological sequence.

Meet the student as soon as they arrive at the workplace

Share the agenda for the day

Share the organizational chart and any other documents that help the student understand how their role contributes to the overall mission and priorities

Review the job description, clarifying duties and responsibilities, including reporting requirements and performance expectations

Take the student on a workplace tour, introducing them to colleagues as you go, especially those they'll be working closely with

Introduce the student to their mentor and give them time to get acquainted

Provide a list of jargon terms and acronyms

Provide a list of key contacts

Discuss the best way for you and the student to communicate

Enjoy a team lunch!

Chaperone the student through meetings with HR and leadership

Engage the student in a small piece of authentic work

NOTES

ONGOING ONBOARDING

Provide frequent feedback

Allow opportunities to reflect and identify lessons learned

Gradually increase task difficulty and complexity

Facilitate social connections with the immediate team and other colleagues

Coach the student in specific areas of performance where you'd like them to improve or see potential for them to stretch

Track progress toward the student's learning goals

Complete documentation required by the university partner

Provide mentorship

Involve the student in meetings and special events

Celebrate achievements!

NOTES

COACHING PLANNER



Coaching zeroes in on a particular area of job performance with the aim of creating measurable improvement.

Before you start coaching a student, be sure you're clear about your goal for the coaching process. You'll also want to consider how you'll encourage the student to build on their existing strengths.

The questions below will help you plan for your first coaching session with an experiential learning student.

1. In what specific area of job performance do you want the student to improve?

2. Describe the student's current level of performance, giving specific examples.

3. What will success look like? After coaching, what will be different for the student? For you? For the team?

4. What measurable results will you and the student be able to observe?

5. What are the student's professional and personal strengths? How could the student leverage those to achieve success?

6. As a coach, how will you create a sense of psychological safety and build confidence? If you anticipate resistance, how will you handle that?

COACHING SESSION CHEAT-SHEET



NEW TO COACHING? HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE TIPS TO HELP YOU GUIDE AND ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO IMPROVED PERFORMANCE.

Hold coaching sessions in a neutral space that doesn't "belong" to you, such as a board room.

Start each session by identifying a specific question or issue to work on.

Whenever possible, invite the student to set the topic and direction of the conversation.

Ask open-ended, exploratory questions. Encourage the student to draw on their own knowledge and experience to find solutions to roadblocks.

Use your emotional intelligence. Check in with the student to find out where they are emotionally with regards to the performance issue you're discussing and the coaching process. Pay attention to body language so you can identify resistance, discomfort, confusion or other negative emotions and respond to them in the moment.

Practice active listening. Use paraphrasing to confirm understanding.

Allow pauses in the conversation. Give the student the opportunity to ponder and reflect, especially if they have introvert tendencies.

Give even-handed criticism. Criticism comes across as fair when it judges specific facts, not the person.

Be clear about performance targets. Make sure the student knows exactly what you're expecting from them from one session to another.

Connect the coaching with the student's learning goals and with the experiential learning cycle. Link job performance to the goals the student and you have set for the experiential learning placement. Point out how the coaching process enables reflection, learning, experimentation, and continual development.

Assign homework. Give the student an opportunity to apply what they've learned during a coaching session. And be sure to provide timely feedback.

Close on a strong note. Wrap up each session with a summary of the conversation, clear instructions for any homework assignments, and a plan for the next session.

KEY FACTORS FOR RETAINING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING STUDENTS



How well-positioned is your organization to retain young talent? For each Gen Z retention factor, rate your organization's performance in that area. Then brainstorm ways you could improve.

Gen Z Retention Factor	Current Organizational Performance Assign a rating from 1 to 5. 1 = We're barely in the game 5 = We're a Gen Z magnet!	How to Improve Brainstorm ways you could increase your ability to retain experiential learning students.
Frequent feedback		
Transparent communication through various modes		
Culture that feels like a start-up		
Alternative paths of leadership		
Clarity about opportunities for advancement		
Flexibility		
Inclusivity		



For more information about experiential learning in New Brunswick, visit the **FutureNB** website at

futurenewbrunswick.ca

Do you have experiential learning tips to share with other New Brunswick employers? We'd love to hear them.

Please send your ideas to

info@futurenb.ca

