Externship Toolkit

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Acknowledgements

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Externship Toolkit

Introduction
As two of the culminating competencies in the Life Long Learning Area, the Externship Project is an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to learn. Throughout the Lifelong Learning competencies students have been developing learning skills. Through Externship, students assess their own learning ability, the strengths and weaknesses of their learning style as well as the advantages and disadvantages of different learning methods. Here students are encouraged to explore experiential learning methods and to take chances. In Foundations of Adult Learning, students are introduced to the Kolb learning cycle and other learning theories. Through the Externship, students self-consciously utilize Kolb’s theory (or another learning model) and reflect upon its usefulness for a specific learning project. In this way, students increase their facility with learning methods and broaden their own ability to learn beyond academic skills.

L-10 Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.
L-11 Written by student/faculty

Externship Options

Independent Project
Students are encouraged to design their own learning project using a variety of learning methods. In this way, students make conscious choices and can reflect upon what they expect to gain from each methodology. Throughout the learning process, students can assess the advantages and disadvantages of each learning method; they also reflect upon their own learning styles, revisiting the Learning Styles Inventory that is conducted in Foundations of Adult Learning in the context of this learning project.

In addition, students who exercise this option develop important independent learning skills. In preparation for the independent Advanced Project, students develop time management, self-assessment and other skills that will facilitate independent learning throughout their lives.

Students who design and complete a learning project may consider writing a second competency that highlights their development of independent learning skills such as...Can employ independent learning skills in the study of (subject of study).

Externship Course
Students who wish to develop this competency through a course have several options. As the competency emphasizes experiential learning, courses have been designed to provide students with a learning experience that will facilitate reflection upon learning methods, processes and styles. Service learning is a methodology that engages students in community work to promote understanding of a particular issue. Also, through travel courses, students experience a culture or organization that promotes their understanding of art, history or social change. These courses include
assignments that facilitate the examination of learning methods, processes and personal
learning styles using learning theory introduced to students in Foundations of Adult
Learning.

Students who participate in an Externship course might write an additional
competency that highlights the knowledge and insights developed about the subject of
study.

**Helping students to develop an independent project**

The development of an independent study project requires certain skills that a
student may or may not have already mastered. The first step might be a self-
assessment by the student to determine which of the following skills need to be
developed:

1. **Setting learning goals**: What have I always wanted to learn? Brainstorm as many
different ideas as you can think of….don’t censor yourself. Then evaluate the list
and pick one that is both realistic and exciting.

2. **Identifying effective learning strategies**: Brainstorm as many different methods as
you can think of to learn about this (interviews, books, films, computer games,
tapes, music, classes, individual tutor, experimentation, manuals, experiential
learning). Then evaluate whether to use all of these methods or pick several from
the list.

3. **Integration of learning from experience and learning from others**: What have I
learned about this topic in the past from my personal experiences? What am I
learning experientially about this topic in this project? Identify three main ideas. On
another piece of paper, What have I learned from other people either through
interviews, books, classes? Identify three main ideas. Now compare the two lists of
three main ideas. Are they similar? Are they different? Are they contradictory or
opposing?

4. **Establishing learning timelines**: Set achievable deadlines for the completion of
different aspects of the project; First: the proposal, second: five journal entries,
third: a videotape, fourth: five more journal entries.

5. **Getting feedback**: identify two people from whom you will solicit feedback about
your work. Discuss the topic of study with them after they have read, listened to or
watched your work. Ask them to first tell you what they liked about your work. Then
ask them how you might strengthen your product. Listen carefully. Consider
recording their critique and your reaction to it in your journal in order to improve
your understanding of their perspective. Try to revise your work based on the
feedback you received.

6. **Soliciting external and internal encouragement**: Make arrangements with someone
you trust to check in with them periodically for moral support. (An SNL student who
has already completed Externship would be ideal. Contact the SNL alumni
association, if necessary, for a name). Then follow up by calling them at regular
intervals to discuss your project (build these calls into your timeline). Tell them what
has been exciting about the learning project. Then tell them your frustrations. At the
same time, pay attention to messages you give yourself. Catch yourself when you
find you are making negative comments to yourself in your mind. Remember to replace negative messages with encouraging messages whenever possible (see p. 64-66 of *Peak Learning* for a practice exercise).


Smith, Robert M. and Associates, editors (1990) *Learning to Learn Over the Life Span*

On the following pages, specific criteria for L10 are listed. Included are suggestions for activities that have been found to promote learning in this area. Traditionally, journals have been a tool for reflection during the Externship project. Journaling can be a reflective form of writing in which students are encouraged to “think out loud” rather than craft and edit their ideas as they would for an essay or research paper. However, faculty look for depth of reflection and connections between different ideas. In the following pages, several suggestions for journaling exercises are recommended to help students achieve each outcome.

**Outcome 1:** Can apply a model of learning from experience to reflect on, articulate and analyze what one learned from a particular experience.

The Kolb learning cycle is introduced to students in Foundations of Adult Learning. The model’s simplicity allows students to relate difficult theoretical concepts to a personal learning event. However, there may be other models that work as well to achieve this outcome. Kolb’s learning theory emphasizes concrete experience as the center of every learning event, followed by reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and experimentation.

1. In order to apply the four stages of learning to a current learning experience, you may address the following in your journal.

   1) **Describe the learning experience:** What happened today? Whom did I meet? What did I read? What methods did I use?
   2) **Explain your personal reaction** to the learning experience: What feelings/thoughts did I have about what happened? Was I comfortable with the learning process? What memories about previous learning experiences were generated today?
   3) **Articulate ideas** that derive from the learning experience: What main ideas are you learning? What have you learned about these ideas in the past? What have you read that you agreed/disagreed with? What assumptions did you make about this topic that turn out to be wrong?
4) Consider changes in personal behavior that result from this learning experience: How has this learning experience changed you? How has it changed the way you view someone/something in your life? Please address each of these four components of the learning experience on separate pages so you can distinguish between them and see which aspect of the experience is the hardest for you to write about.

2. Students may also share one version of the journal assignment with a group of other students. Team or class mates can ask questions that will help the author to expand, say more about each level of the learning experience. In the process, the whole class will better understand the four levels of the Kolb cycle. If you’re working independently, arrange such an exchange and write the questions you were asked by the other person in red on the journal page.

3. Repeat the above assignment as the learning project continues. Notice differences in your personal reaction to changing circumstances. Have you noticed changes in your personal behavior already as a result of this learning experience?

4. Identify the main ideas you’ve learned by preparing a presentation for someone else...you, or a family member. This process of teaching can help to articulate the general concepts that you’ve learned. Otherwise, students can get stuck at the describing and reflecting stages of the cycle.

**Outcome 2** Can identify potential applications of what one learned to new circumstances.

This criterion emphasizes the importance of the last stage of Kolb’s learning cycle, the application of learning to new situations.

1. Toward the end of the Externship project ask yourself: What would you do differently if you were designing this learning project again? What methods might have been more effective? Why?

2. List three things you learned from this Externship project. Imagine a circumstance in which you will use this knowledge or ability in the future.

3. Identify one other topic that you would like to learn about some day? How would you design a project to learn that?

**Outcome 3** Can compare and contrast learning styles and strategies used for the project against one’s learning preference.
1. The following exercises are described in Chapter 5 of Ron Gross’ *Peak Learning*, a good book to purchase for Externship. Each exercise encourages students to examine a different aspect of their learning style...

   --What time of day do you learn most effectively?
   --Do you learn bottom up or top down?
   --In which of the seven forms of intelligence are you strongest?
   --What learning resources match your learning style?

2. Complete Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory; Meyer Briggs, or another form of learning style assessment. Write a one-page discussion of experiential associations (memories) that you have with this learning style. Recall or imagine a situation in which this style been an asset to you? Recall or imagine a situation in which this style has been less helpful to your learning?

3. Describe a moment during your Externship project in which you used this familiar learning style; describe a moment during your Externship project when you were required to use a learning style with which you are less comfortable.

Armstrong, Thomas *In Their Own Way*

Outcome 4 Can assess the method(s) used in terms of its strengths and weaknesses for achieving one’s learning goals.

This criterion encourages students to evaluate the methods that they used in their Externship project. By reflecting on the methods used, you can determine the advantages and disadvantages of each method so that, in future learning projects, you can choose effective methods of learning. Some examples of methods that may be used to learn during an Externship project are experiential learning, reading, interviewing people, observing others, etc. Create a chart like this to facilitate your assessment of the methods you used for your Externship project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List the methods used for your Externship Project</th>
<th>List what you learned from this method</th>
<th>How did using this method help you to learn?</th>
<th>List something you were not able to learn with this method</th>
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Externship

Final Journal Assignment

This final paper allows you to summarize all that you’ve learned about learning from your Externship project and demonstrate the four outcomes of the L10 competency:

**L-10 Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.**

**Outcome 1:** Can apply a model of learning from experience to reflect on, articulate and analyze what one learned from a particular experience.

**Outcome 2:** Can compare and contrast learning styles and strategies used for the project against one’s learning preference.

**Outcome 3:** Can assess the method(s) used in terms of its strengths and weaknesses for achieving one’s learning goals.

**Outcome 4:** Can identify potential applications of what one learned to new circumstances.

Please reread your journal; answer the following questions, at least one paragraph each. Estimated length: 3 pages.

1. The Kolb learning cycle has four stages, Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization (or Generalization) and Active Experimentation. After reviewing your journal, please identify and summarize (at least one paragraph each):
   --the highlights of your learning experience
   --observations, feelings, reflections on that experience
   --the conclusions that you came to
   --decisions that you made about what you will do in the future

2. Through the completion of Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory and Peak Learning exercises you have identified some unique aspects of your learning style.
   --please describe your learning style (from the LSI results) as well as other aspects of your approach to learning (from Peak Learning).
   --discuss how your learning style affected your approach to your learning project.
   --discuss how your learning style made certain aspects of the project challenging.

3. Experiential learning is a unique method of learning that has both advantages and disadvantages. So does learning from books. Please discuss what you learned from each of these learning methods.

4. The last stage of the Kolb learning cycle (Active Experimentation) allows us to choose to change the way that we learn. If you were to design and execute this project again what would you do differently? How might you change your approach to learning in the future?
Externship Bibliography

Books


Video

DiNozzi, Robert, Director and Producer (2003) *Flow*. Videorecording produced in cooperation with the Drucker School at Claremont Graduate University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education; Los Angelos, CA.
Externship
Self-assessment

Use these questions to evaluate how you feel you are employing independent learning skills to accomplish your learning goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have I set realistic goals for what I want to accomplish?</td>
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<td>Am I sticking to the amount of time I had planned to spend on this project each week?</td>
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<td>Am I getting the support I need to accomplish difficult tasks?</td>
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<td>Am I exploring multiple learning methods?</td>
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<td>Am I learning about myself?</td>
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Use these goals to evaluate your journal entries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I observe myself as I learn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I observe the connections with past learning experiences?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I recording my experiences, reflections, conclusions?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I reflecting on my own learning style?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I reflecting on the ease with which I employ different learning methods?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have I evaluated my design of this project and thought about how I would design it differently?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have I considered how I will use what I have learned in the future?</td>
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What learning is...

Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I may remember. But involve me and I'll understand.
*Chinese proverb*

Learning by self-directed inquiry is a perpetually self-empowering activity.
*Charles D. Hayes*

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
*Goethe*

Learning can be defined as the process of remembering what you are interested in.
*Richard Saul Wurman*

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.
*Henry Ford*

All human beings, by nature desire to know.
*Aristotle*

Adults are better learners than children, if they have the patience to be beginners.
*Marilyn Ferguson*

You learn as much by writing as you do by reading.
*Eric Hoffer*

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.
*Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

A teacher is like a fire. If you get too close, you get burned. If you stay too far away, you don't get enough heat. A sensible moderation is recommended.
*From a Tibetan proverb*

The gifts of nature are infinite in their variety, and mind differs from mind almost as much as body from body.
*Quintilian*

...shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to recognize that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to recognize that you do not know it. That is knowledge.
*Confucius*