Preparing Yourself for Work-Integrated Learning: Tips from the Field

FOR STUDENTS:

- ✓ Understand that WIL is more about the process than the result—keep your expectations realistic for what you can accomplish in a determined timeframe.
- ✓ Ask about the history between your instructor/department and the community partner you will be working with. Some community partners have been working with UVic for many years!
- ✓ Ask your community partner about the best method and time to contact them. Do they prefer email over phone, or vice versa? Do they respond to emails outside of business hours? Do they want you to follow up with them if they don't respond within 48 hours? Clarifying this early can prevent misunderstandings and save some frustration later in the project.
- ✓ Ask your instructor or coordinator what your process should be if the partnership or position is not working for you (I.e., how and when to work through conflict; how and when to change partners/projects).
- ✓ Check with your community partner whether you need to meet practical requirements such as:
  - ○ Criminal record check, if applicable
  - ○ First aid certification, if applicable
  - ○ WHMIS certification, if applicable
  - ○ Dress code (I.e., is it appropriate to wear jeans?)
  - ○ Transportation plan to get to the workplace, if applicable
  - ○ Travel insurance, if traveling outside of Canada
- ✓ Ensure you have completed any mandatory course and/or program requirements before beginning a WIL experience. For example, co-op students must complete the Introduction to Professional Practice course before finding a co-op position.
- ✓ Reflect on any worries or concerns you have and communicate them to your instructor or coordinator—the sooner you share them, the sooner you can get help to address them.

FOR INSTRUCTORS AND COORDINATORS:

- ✓ Find out whether anyone else in your department has worked with the community partner before, and if they have, connect with them to understand where you're picking up the reigns from.
- ✓ Clarify the assessment process with your community partner(s). Do they want to be part of the student's assessment?
- ✓ Re-assess your assessment strategies after running the course/experience once or twice. Does the assessment style still reflect how the course operates, or are there tweaks that could improve the alignment between the WIL activities and assessment(s)?
- ✓ Help students understand what professional communication entails (I.e., email etiquette when communicating with community partners/employers).
- ✓ Clarify expectations with both students and community partners. The CEL Office has created this document to help guide this process, if necessary.
- ✓ Have a conversation with students about the "twins" of self-efficacy and humility; help students to understand that they can have confidence in the skills they bring to the table whilst recognizing they still have a lot to learn from their community partner/employer.

- ✓ Meet students where they are at and be mindful of "throwing them into the deep end." For some students, this may be their first WIL experience and they may need help understanding the context of WIL or CEL before starting their placement; try not to assume that their existing knowledge is sufficient. Some students may not have any workplace or civic engagement experience, but some students may have a lot of experience in these areas. By knowing where your students are at, you can help them create a solid learning plan that prepares them for their placement.
- ✓ Align course learning outcomes and assessment activities with community projects/placements. Ask yourself: how will this community project/placement support achievement of intended learning outcomes, and how will that be assessed?
- ✓ Review your reflection strategy: is it designed to elicit meaningful reflections from students? See here for information on reflection in CEL.
- ✓ Consider your role within the students' WIL experience. Are you an instructor, facilitator, coach, or mentor? How do these different roles affect the way you support your students?

FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- ✓ Before you take on students on your project(s), ask yourself and your colleagues: What capacity do you and/or your organization have to provide support for a student? What kind of time commitment can you provide for them? Do you want to and are you ready to be in a mentorship role?
- ✓ Let the student know what they need to do before starting work:
  - ○ Criminal record check, if applicable
  - ○ First aid certification, if applicable
  - ○ WHMIS certification, if applicable
  - ○ Clarify your workplace dress code and whether you'd like students to follow it (I.e., is it appropriate for students to wear jeans?)
- ✓ Take some time to get to know the student you're hosting. Ask them about their skills, knowledge, interests, and passions. Getting to know them will help guide you on how to include the student in your work.
- ✓ Clarify expectations with the student and the instructor/program coordinator. Does the project/job you have in mind for them align with their learning outcomes, skills, and/or interests? The CEL Office has created this document to help with clarifying expectations, which may be useful.
- ✓ WIL and CEL require students to reflect on their experiences to gain the most out of their learning. Students would likely benefit from debriefing with you at different points throughout the experience, whether formally or informally. Think about how you might be able to support students with their reflection.

For more information about the different types of WIL
at UVic and who to contact, see here.