

Experiential Learning

Short statement: Experiential learning is an active process of learning by doing. It is planned and purposeful, designed to facilitate specific outcomes, structured throughout and supported with reflections to identify both planned and unanticipated learning. It is typically associated with, but not limited to, workplace learning.

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In the context of higher education it is often associated with experiences outside of the classroom and typically related to employment such as work based and placement learning. These experiences usually involve the active participation of an employer working in partnership with the higher education provider to give a student a specific and single learning opportunity. Other forms of experiential learning involve a more continuous partnership, which integrate work and learning throughout a programme such as an apprenticeship. There are other forms of experiential learning where the higher education provider is not directly in partnership with an employer but rather supports the student to extract the learning from their relationship with an organisation from activities such as volunteering or part-time employment. And in more recent years, higher education providers have been working with external organisations to provide a new form of experiential learning in simulations, immersive learning, and project-based activities on which students could reflect on a learning by doing process.

Experiential learning is rooted in popular pedagogies such as cognitivism, constructivism and connectivism. It gives opportunity to build on existing knowledge (cognitivism), offer practice that is unfamiliar and stretching (constructivism), and the chance to learn with others in professional networks (connectivism).

For the ASET community all these experiential learning opportunities require similar foundations, draw on the same principles of good practice and contribute to students' employability, agency and wider skills development. Providing a range of professionally managed experiential learning is important to enable provision to be responsive and adaptable to an ever-changing sector, and at the same time to be intentionally inclusive to the diversity that exists within the student body.