



2023 CAPFO Report

French Experiential Learning Trends in 2023

Exploring experiential education in the francophone postsecondary sector of Ontario, unveiling the latest trends that are redefining higher education



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What is eCampusOntario?

eCampusOntario is a provincially-funded non-profit organization that leads a consortium of the province's publicly-funded colleges, universities and indigenous institutes to develop and test online learning tools to advance the use of education technology and digital learning environments.

What is CAPFO?

The Consortium d'apprentissage expérientiel francophone de l'Ontario (CAPFO) is a program established by eCampusOntario to help bridge the gap between available francophone industry projects and the francophone postsecondary education sector in Ontario looking to partner for experiential learning opportunities.

Who are the CAPFO members?

The CAPFO members are:

- Collège Boréal
- Collège Glendon
- Collège La Cité
- Université d'Ottawa
- Université de Hearst
- Université de l'Ontario français
- Université Laurentienne

What is experiential learning?

"Experiential education is a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities."¹

What is work-integrated learning?

"Work-integrated learning is a form of curricular experiential education that formally integrates a student's academic studies with quality experiences within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and includes the development of student learning objectives and outcomes related to: employability, agency, knowledge and skill mobility and life-long learning."²

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Further Reading

¹ Association of Experiential Education. (n.d.). What is Experiential Education. <https://www.aee.org/what-is-experiential-education>

² Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada. (n.d.). What is Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)?. <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/About-Us/Work-Integrated-Learning.aspx#:~:text=Work%2Dintegrated%20learning%20is%20a,host%20organization%2C%20and%20a%20student>

Glance at Survey Results

Research design:

eCampusOntario surveyed its francophone and bilingual post-secondary institution (PSI) members in order to gather insights on experiential learning trends in 2023. In addition to the CAPFO member institutions (found on page two), the perspectives of Université de Sudbury were taken into consideration. Université de Sudbury is currently in the process of becoming autonomous, as it was formerly an affiliate of Université Laurentienne.

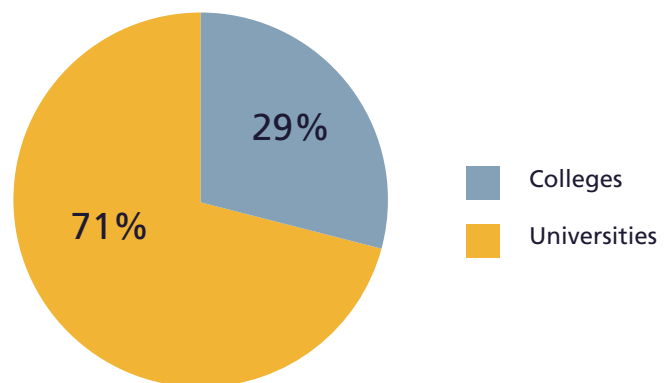
The study was conducted using a mixed-method research approach, specifically a survey of multiple choice and short answer questions, to uncover trends and challenges faced by these post-secondary institutions in a francophone linguistic minority context in Ontario.

Survey participants were not required to answer all questions.

Survey sample overview:

This survey had a total of 14 respondents, and at least one respondent per CAPFO institution and from the Université de Sudbury. 4 respondents (29%) are from a francophone college in Ontario while 10 respondents (71%) are from a bilingual or francophone university in Ontario (Chart 1 – Respondents by Institution). This sample is representative of the Ontarian francophone sector, which is comprised of the seven (7) aforementioned member institutions, of whom 29% are colleges and 71% are universities.

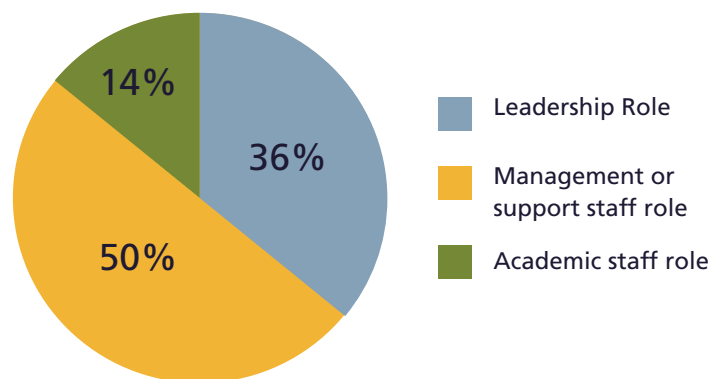
Respondents by Institution



This survey focused on capturing diverse perspectives in PSIs and requested respondents to self-identify with one of several the categories that best described their role:

- Leadership role (president, vice-president, director, associate director, etc.);
- Academic staff role (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, etc.);
- Management or support staff role (administrative officer, internship coordinator, coop and community engagement officer, placement coordinator, etc.).

Stakeholder Proportions



General key findings of Experiential Learning landscape in Franco-Ontario:

- **77%** of the participants who responded **strongly agreed** experiential learning (EL) has the potential to improve learning, knowledge and skills acquisition
- **71%** of participants **strongly agree** that EL has the potential to help learners acquire technical skills and relevant transferable skills
- **64%** of participants **strongly agreed** and **7% somewhat agreed** that EL helps learners acquire relevant interpersonal skills to their respective program or industry
- **64%** of respondents **strongly agreed** and **7% somewhat agreed** that the administration at their respective institutions is **committed to teaching and learning innovation**
- **57%** of respondents **strongly agreed** and **14% somewhat agreed** that the prospective benefits of EL and work-integrated learning (WIL) justify the initial development and integration into courses and career programs (course development, faculty training, career and community service office training)
- **43%** of respondents **strongly agreed** while **14% somewhat agreed** that courses with a WIL component lead learners to have better success in their career development

Survey Results

Survey results indicate that there is a strong interest in experiential education in the francophone postsecondary sector in Ontario in order to enhance learning, knowledge, and skills acquisition. Experiential education is regarded as a valuable tool in preparing learners for the labour market.

Respondents revealed that they are exploring the integration of experiential components across all programming, varying from micro-credentials and certificates to diplomas and undergraduate degrees that will allow learners in a variety of paths to acquire hands-on experiences to maximize their learning.



Detailed results on trends and challenges in EL for the Ontarian francophone sector

Which are the top three discipline areas that have a WIL application?

Respondents indicated that the top three (3) areas that have a work-integrated learning application are:

1. Business, Commerce, Finance & Administration, Career & Preparation
2. Community & Social Services
3. Social Sciences

Where will these experiences take place?

We asked respondents to indicate the modality of delivery available for experiential learning.

The preferred method of delivery were ranked as follows:

1. Hybrid delivery
2. In-person delivery
3. Remote delivery

What are the top challenges to scale experiential learning in the francophone sector in Ontario?

57% of respondents indicates that challenges are malleable in scaling experiential learning. What are the top barriers in this work?

Respondents identified these three challenges:

1. Establishing a **common jargon surrounding experiential learning**, particularly in French;
2. Identifying **common needs of the PSI and employer** and which courses to begin integrating EL / WIL components;
3. **Bilingualism challenge** – some learners may only speak French or are bilingual in another language than English.

What are the initiatives currently taking place to enable EL and WIL in the francophone and bilingual PSIs of Ontario?

- **1 in 7 institutions had their own EL platform** prior to eCampusOntario making Riipen available to the francophone sector in 2019
- Collaboration with **CEWIL's iHub program³ to create paid WIL opportunities** for learners
- **36% of respondents** indicated their institution is **conducting research on EL applications**
- **43% of respondents** indicated that there are **teams looking to scale EL at their institution**
- **21% respondents** said that there are **one (1) or more faculty members involved in EL** at their institution

Trends & Challenges for the future of EL and WIL in French Ontario

Given the data provided in this report, we may conclude that the trends and challenges below exist in the Ontarian francophone sector in implementing experiential education in pedagogy.



TRENDS

- There is growing support and interest in the francophone sector for EL and WIL;
- PSIs are beginning to experiment with a variety of EL and WIL applications;
- Research is conducted on when, how and where do EL applications make sense to enhance learning.



CHALLENGE

- Lack of infrastructure and framework for implementation;
- The specific Francophone minority context adds an extra layer of challenges for EL and WIL implementation;
- Faculty engagement is low and plays a key role in creating EL experiences.

With these trends and challenges in mind, we will explore the broader landscape of experiential learning in Canada to add perspective on the general framework that impacts EL in Ontario.

Further Reading

- ³ Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada. (n.d.). The CEWIL Canada iHub.
<https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/Resources/IWIL-Hub/IWIL-Hub-Home.aspx>

Experiential learning – coming to the forefront of postsecondary pedagogy

According to the House of Commons 2018 report on *Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth*,

There is an emerging consensus that experiential learning is an effective way to prepare young people for the labour market and address youth unemployment and underemployment. Moreover, educational institutions, employers, students, organizations serving youth and the federal government all agree that there need to be strong links between education, training and the working world. Yet, it is estimated that less than half of young Canadians have access to programs that prioritize this approach.⁴

Since this 2018 report, we are seeing federal support nationwide to enable experiential education in postsecondary institutions and to support the initiatives of postsecondary institutions in order to address the lack of skilled workforce. As the Conference Board of Canada, in partnership with the Future Skills Center, outlined in their 2022 report on the future of post-secondary education, *Beyond the Classroom: The Future of Postsecondary Education Has Arrived*:

There is also strong evidence that experiential learning improves labour market outcomes for graduates: while 68.8 per cent of students who take part in experiential learning secure jobs after graduation, only 47.6 per cent of those who do not take part in experiential learning find meaningful employment after graduation.⁵

Given the positive impact experiential education provides for the learner during their studies and society at large, federal and provincial governments have provided PSIs with funding in the form of grant applications and programming. The following are some examples:

- **eCampusOntario’s CAPFO program⁶ (Ontario-only):** Funded by the Government of Ontario since 2019, eCampusOntario has been supporting the francophone and bilingual postsecondary education sector in Ontario to enable experiential learning with resources. Resources include but are not limited to free access to the Riipen platform, open education resources to support educators, and badges to certify skills acquired in EL and WIL experiences;
- **CEWIL’s iHub Program⁷ (Canada-wide):** Partially funded by the Government of Canada’s Innovative Work-Integrated Learning (I-WIL) initiatives program⁸, CEWIL has been offering financial support to PSIs Canada-wide as part of the iHub program since 2021. This allows institutions to build relationships with employers through a collaboration on projects while also remunerating students for these WIL opportunities;
- **Riipen’s Level Up Program⁹ (Canada-wide):** This initiative is also partially funded by the Government of Canada’s I-WIL initiatives program and allows Riipen to give students access to paid opportunities through direct student – employer connections on its platform. The student may work on a project 100% remotely and gain experience in their field on real employer projects.

Further Reading

⁴ May, B. (October, 2018). *Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth*. House of Commons Canada. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HUMA/Reports/RP10078738/humarp12/humarp12-e.pdf>

⁵ Future Skills Center. (March 3, 2022). *Beyond the Classroom: The Future of Post-secondary Education has Arrived*. https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FSC_VRST_beyond-the-classroom-1.pdf

⁶ Consortium d’apprentissage expérientiel francophone de l’Ontario. (n.d.). <https://capfo.ca>

While these supports generally include additional support for French language minority contexts, there is still a broader need for francophone resources in the space of experiential education, as shown in our survey responses and outlined in the overall challenges identified within the francophone sector.

Conclusion

Experiential education is undoubtedly becoming an integral part of professional development, and the programming that has been made available to the post-secondary sector Canada-wide illustrates the value provided by enriching EL opportunities.

The question remains: how do we better enable experiential learning at postsecondary institutions? And more specifically, how do we provide support to francophone and bilingual institutions in Ontario to make EL equitably available?

Based on the data shared in this report, we foresee the following supports as potential solutions to help accelerate and create a sustainable foundation for EL applications:

- Direct funding to institutions to create EL and WIL administrative supports to collaborate with external stakeholders and create a sustainable infrastructure internally;
- Creating a common framework and reference for PSIs, particularly in French, to gain a shared understanding and a language surrounding this work;
- Providing educators with professional development opportunities and resources in order to familiarize themselves with the work and its value in their pedagogy.

Further Reading

- ⁷ CEWIL Canada. (n.d.). The CEWIL Canada iHub. <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/Resources/IWIL-Hub/IWIL-Hub-Home.aspx>
- ⁸ Government of Canada. (April 30, 2021). The Innovative Work-Integrated Learning Initiative. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/work-integrated-learning.html>
- ⁹ Riipen. (n.d.) Level Up. <https://www.riipen.com/levelup>