



BUSINESS/
HIGHER EDUCATION
ROUNDTABLE

Leading / Learning / Working / **Together**



BHER SUBMISSION

HUMA study on Experiential Learning
and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth



BHER Submission: HUMA study on Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth

In 2016, members of the Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) [announced](#) an ambitious goal: for 100 per cent of students in their first degree, diploma or certificate at Canadian post-secondary institutions to benefit from some form of meaningful work-integrated learning (WIL) experience before they finished school.

When it comes to defining meaningful WIL, BHER advocates for the following broad definition, compatible with the definition used by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario:

Work-integrated learning is the process through which students come to learn from experiences in educational and practice settings. It includes the kinds of curriculum and pedagogic practices that can assist, provide, and effectively integrate learning experiences in both settings.

Under this definition, our [research](#) shows that a broad range of WIL experiences provide meaningful learning opportunities for students. Specifically, BHER research has identified nine types of meaningful WIL, grouped under four main categories:

1. Systematic training, where most learning is done in the workplace.

- **Apprenticeships:** A combination of in-school training for a skilled trade or occupation, and on-the-job workplace training.

2. Structured work experience, where students become familiar with the world of work as part of a university or college program.

- **Co-op:** Periods of study alternate with work placements, offering students a structured approach that integrates their studies with work experience in a related field.
- **Internships:** Work experiences, typically lasting a year or more, at or near the end of a study program.
- **Mandatory professional practice:** Work arrangements required for a professional license or designation.
- **Field experience:** Placements and work-related experiences that prepare students for professional or occupational fields, but are not required for a professional license.



3. Institutional partnerships are activities or programs offered by a university, college or polytechnic, and designed to achieve specific industry or community goals.

- **Applied research projects:** Students taking on real-world projects, often with industry partners as clients and the students as service providers.
- **Service learning:** A range of activities intended to provide equal benefit to the service provider (the student) and the recipient (the community) while maintaining a focus on learning.

4. Emerging types of WIL, based largely on the importance of innovation in the digital economy:

- **Incubators and accelerators:** Intended primarily to promote entrepreneurship, but the scope of their services has expanded in recent years to include social initiatives. Qualified applicants may receive funding, supervision, and mentorship from experienced practitioners.
- **Bootcamps and hackathons:** Popular venues for computer programmers and app designers to develop and showcase their skills. These events are widely seen as a more practical alternative to university computer science programs, and more responsive to industry demands. But the quality of instruction varies markedly due to a lack of oversight and regulation.

BHER advocates that as much as possible, all key stakeholder groups including the Government of Canada adopt a common definition and typology of WIL experiences. In particular, this common framework will allow for the creation of consistent evaluation metrics necessary to track WIL outcomes and impacts.

9 TYPES OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING



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|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ① Apprenticeships | ④ Mandatory professional practice | ⑦ Service learning |
| ② Co-ops | ⑤ Field experience | ⑧ Incubators and accelerators |
| ③ Internships | ⑥ Applied research projects | ⑨ Bootcamps and hackathons |



A recent survey of major Canadian employers, “[Navigating Change: 2018 Business Council Skills Survey](#)” found that many Canadian employers are working harder and spending more to recruit and retain recent post-secondary graduates in an increasingly competitive labour market. In large part this is taking the form of increasing their commitment to WIL.

Based on responses from hiring managers at 95 of Canada’s largest companies, the Council’s biennial skills report says that “recent graduates are looking for more money, challenging assignments, increased flexibility and mobility, and quicker advancement.” To keep pace, an overwhelming majority of Canadian employers have turned to co-ops, internships and other forms of WIL. The survey found 86% use such programs, up from 76% two years ago.

These firms are also spending more on training, with 51% budgeting more than \$1,000 per employee per year, up from 46% in 2016. In return, employers are demanding more; 70% said their expectations of new grads are higher today than five years ago, largely because of tech-driven changes in the workplace.

The top skills employers are looking for when hiring recent graduates are those most often fostered and developed during WIL experiences. They are:

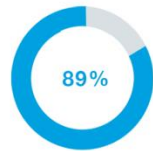
1. Teamwork & relationship-building;
2. Communications;
3. problem-solving;
4. Analytical capacity; and
5. Resilience.

And it’s not just employers who see value in increasing their participation in WIL initiatives. A 2016 survey of 1,000 students and recent graduates from Canadian post-secondary institutions conducted by Abacus Data measured the perceptions and attitudes students have on WIL programs and post-secondary education. It found that students overwhelmingly favour programs that provide meaningful practice-based learning opportunities.

- 89% support more work-integrated learning in their programs and
- 88% think that students who graduate with degrees that offer WIL have an advantage when it comes to finding a job.
- 97% of recent graduates with a lot of WIL experience were satisfied with their post-secondary experience, versus 75 % of those with no WIL experience.



Graduates with WIL are more likely to transition into the workforce with ease while rating their post-secondary experience as positive and fulfilling.



Support more work-integrated learning in their programs



Think that students who graduate with degrees that offer WIL have an advantage when it comes to finding a job



Of recent graduates with a lot of WIL experience were satisfied with their post-secondary experience

Since BHER's announced commitment to the goal of 100 per cent WIL, members have been committed to taking action, launching a number of sector-specific WIL initiatives with key allies. These include Government of Canada supported WIL pilot programs in financial services, mining and start-ups with several additional programs in development.

BHER's model works in stages:

1. Identify sectors challenged by changing skill requirements/skills gaps.
2. Support sector-specific CEO champions in driving initiatives and collaborative partnerships.
3. Identify third-party groups – often industry associations – able to take on program development, design and the implementation of the pilots.
4. Facilitate connections between industry members and partners, (e.g. educational institutions, SMEs, and government), able to participate in and support the program.
5. Highlight best-practices, including the development of evaluation frameworks.
6. Support implementation efforts and communicate success.

Beyond this, BHER champions and support WIL across numerous other industries and sectors. Looking to the future, BHER is committed to working alongside government, post-secondary partners, students and industry partners to develop an action plan on achieving our 100 per cent goal.



About BHER

Launched in 2015, the Business/Higher Education Roundtable represents some of Canada’s largest companies and leading post-secondary institutions. Although partnerships between higher education and industry have existed in other countries – including the U.K., U.S. and Australia – for decades, Canada has lacked a coordinated strategy to strengthening cooperation between employers and educators. BHER harnesses the strengths of some of Canada’s top businesses, universities and colleges to deepen collaboration and improve opportunities for young Canadians.

Mission

To strengthen Canada’s economic performance and human capital by deepening collaboration and harnessing the strengths of our world-class companies and post-secondary institutions.

Mandate

BHER develops, supports, and promotes collaboration between Canada’s post-secondary institutions and private sector employers and enables the executive leaders of businesses and postsecondary institutions to work together on solutions to Canada’s skills and innovation challenges.

Strategic objectives

BHER’s mandate is guided by three strategic objectives:

1. Improve the quality of relationships and level of coordination between executive leaders of businesses and post-secondary institutions (universities, colleges and polytechnics).
2. Help young Canadians successfully transition from education to employment.
3. Strengthen research and innovation linkages between Canadian companies and post-secondary institutions.

The action plan to achieve these strategic objectives will be guided by the principles of Leading, Learning, Working together.

Guiding principles





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