



Academic and Career **PATHS**

Work Based Learning: What it is and FAQ's

Definition: Work-based learning (WBL) is a “planned, structured learning experience that provides [students] with real-life or simulated work experiences where they can develop and apply academic, essential, and technical skills; and contributes to the achievement of their post-secondary goals.” -- CCRI definition aligned with Governor’s Workforce Board

Examples of experiences that qualify:

Internships	Part-time or full-time jobs
Clinical rotations and practicums	Industry projects built into classes
Job shadowing	Cases studies with industry partners
Visits and tours of businesses	Service learning
Apprenticeships	Performances
Capstones with employer/industry engagement	

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What does CCRI’s work-based learning policy require?**

The policy requires degree-seeking students entering the college in Fall 2024 and beyond to have one work-based learning experience before they graduate. This means that one required course in a degree program should have some kind of work-based learning component built in. Any changes in degree requirements or course learning outcomes/titles, or new course proposals will still go through the normal process of approval by the CRC.

- **Does the policy apply to certificates, too?**

No, the WBL graduation requirement is only for degree-seeking students.

- **How does the work-based learning policy help our student population? Does it consider the realities of their busy lives?**

As stated in CCRI's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, "we believe education is essential to creating equitable upward socioeconomic mobility for students in our region, and that we must work with an intentional focus to increase access and opportunities to empower students from low-income backgrounds and underrepresented populations." The WBL policy is consistent with CCRI's mission to offer professional and personal growth for our students, and to respond to the workforce needs of our community.

Our students deserve to have equitable experiences to students elsewhere. We want them to come away with a connection to an industry they might not otherwise get, something to put on their resume or discuss in an interview, and an idea of whether this field is something they might be interested in. We can do that while still taking into consideration the many obligations they are juggling.

Work-based learning allows our students to get work experience to support their career trajectories. Benefits to students include gaining exposure to the world of work, getting firsthand involvement in specific occupations or industries, gaining experience that reinforces academic instruction, and getting a paying job that may become permanent¹.

- **What counts as experiential or work-based learning?**

Departments can design experiences that will be meaningful for students without being overly burdensome. Departments choose what works best for their students/their degree programs. See list of example experiences at top of page.

- **What about students who lack transportation to get to employers?**

Not all WBL will involve students going out to employers; we could also have employers come into class, students work on industry projects in class, or participate in online experiences.

We're working with the CCRI Foundation on a scholarship fund to cover expenses for students who need help with them; we're also looking to partner with Financial Aid to determine whether we can leverage Work Study dollars to create meaningful opportunities on campus (in labs, for instance). Some experiences on campus already could count: tutoring, library employee, campus radio station DJ, etc.

- **Will internships conflict with the hours students already work at their jobs?**

¹ Jobs for the Future, "How to Develop an Effective Work-Based Learning Program." Retrieved from <https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning/how-develop-effective-work-based-learning-program/>

Credit for prior learning may be an option if students' work experience is relevant to their program/equivalent to a WBL experience we offer. Credit award decisions remain at the discretion of the academic department.

WBL could be something worked into the requirements of a class and therefore not requiring additional hours.

- **What if there are not enough employers in a field to support all of our students needing WBL experiences?**

Career Services will help departments find appropriate employers; again, this isn't all about internships or going out to employers.

Some students will meet the requirement in other ways (e.g., through credit for prior learning).

There are also virtual options, including Forage which is an online platform of 5–6-hour virtual work experiences.

- **What about students who have program-related prior learning?**

Some students may enter CCRI programs with program-relevant prior learning and may be able to satisfy WBL requirements with their prior learning. This option should be considered as WBL components are developed for programs and new WBL-related SLOs are established by departments.

- **Who creates WBL experiences for General Studies?**

General Studies is being re-examined (GS redesign is in Academic Master Plan, Goal 2, C ii). We will aim for 2025 to build WBL into the new program.

COMM 1010 may serve students in General Studies for now (if a work-based learning student learning outcome is added, as is being explored by Communications faculty).

- **Will degree programs need to make room for a new class?**

Programs do not need to drop a class to accomplish this. They could substitute a WBL class for an elective, if they so choose. If not, they could tweak outcomes of an existing class to meet the requirement. If there is already an elective WBL course in the program, it could be changed to a required course.

- **What if WBL is embedded into a course's student learning outcomes, but it won't work in all modalities/term lengths?**

If a course is currently offered in j-term, for example, and you don't think work a WBL experience would fit in that short a term, don't change that course to include WBL as a student learning outcome. You might want to develop a new course with a WBL component instead.

- **May a student do a WBL course in a department that isn't their major department, and still meet the graduation requirement?**

Yes, technically, the policy just says students must have one WBL experience by the time they graduate. For the maximum benefit to students, however, they should gain some experience within their chosen fields of study.

- **May a student do more than one WBL Course?**

Yes, in fact it might be ideal for students to do an early WBL course (e.g., COMM 1010) to get them to experience a more general industry collaboration early on. Then, in their final semester they might do a more targeted experience in a capstone or co-op course within their major.

- **How will we know if students complete the WBL requirement?**

We're working with staff in the Registrar's Office to create an attribute in Banner and Degree Works that would track which courses are WBL. This would be noted on the student's transcript.

- **What are some examples of WBL experiences already happening at CCRI?**

Work-based learning experiences are already happening at the college. They range from bringing a project with an industry partner into a course, to full-semester placements in a student's field of study.

One example of an in-class industry project is the partnership between our Communications department and the Fidelity Group. This partnership enables students to pair up with Fidelity employees to write captivating and quick attention-getting social media posts, blog posts, news, and profile articles. Courses participating are Comm 1400 Social Media Communication, COMM 2221 Multimedia Reporting, and COMM 2000 Media Writing.

Other long-standing work-based learning experiences have been happening for decades:

Education and Social Services degrees: Service Learning/Field Experience/Practicum courses are built in throughout the degree programs. Placements range from 50-90 hours per semester.

Fine Arts degrees in Music and Theatre require performances that are practical experiences in those fields.

Health and Rehab Sciences: Practicum/Clinical/Fieldwork experiences are integrated throughout degree programs in this division.

Finally, many professors have required service learning and industry projects in individual classes. For a course to have a WBL attribute, this would have to be in an SLO for all sections of a course.