## **Working with industry partners** **in the Classroom**

[Danielle Morin](https://www.concordia.ca/academics/experiential-learning/in-practice/danielle-morin.html) works with external partners every semester for her data analysis course. “Students can analyze any sort of data, but the experience of helping a client solve a real organizational problem is much more meaningful.”

### **Why invite a partner into your classroom?**

#### Increased student engagement

Experiential learning activities increase students' motivation to learn, boost their self-esteem, strengthen their capacity for leadership & heighten their engagement in school and at work. Incorporating [reflection exercises](https://www.concordia.ca/academics/experiential-learning/faculty-staff/resources.html) into your teaching strategy encourages students to engage with the course content on a deeper level ([higher cognitive processes](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602930802226502)).

#### Benefits for students

Working on a real-world project allows students to experiment in a safe space. Through this practical experience they develop a whole set of [transferable skills](https://www.concordia.ca/academics/experiential-learning/students/skill-sets.html). Working with an industry partner also gives students an opportunity to network with potential future employers.

### **How much effort will this be?**

You decide what the ideal experiential learning project will be. Consider the following:

#### Learning outcomes

Design a project that aligns to your course learning objectives. Ex:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course objective   * Through research, students will be able to **identify** key events & figures in Montreal. | Project objective   * Students will be able to **explain** the influence & impact of a historical figure within the context of contemporary society. |

#### Timing

* Will it span the entire semester (ex. a capstone project) or it will just be one assignment?

#### Student skill levels

Consider how much responsibility students can handle. This will impact how you will manage the partner/student relationship.

* Will you find the project/partner or empower students to find one on their own?
* Will you be the intermediary between the students & partners or ask students to do this?

Consider removing some content from in-class hours, assigning suggested readings for independent student learning, or flipping the classroom.

#### Support

In line with the student’s skill level, consider how and when you can provide feedback to students. Is there space/time in your course to provide support? Ex:

* + Office hours
  + Devoting an entire class to this activity

### Danielle’s best practices for working with industry partners

Keep in mind that quality will vary. Depending on the student’s skill level, you may only show partners the top student submission(s).

#### Set the project scope

##### Needs

Tell the partner what your needs are.

Ex. For this assignment, students will need access to archived documentation to create an interactive website about a historical figure in Montreal history.

##### Project deliverables

Tell the partner what the students will do.

Ex. Students will create a report, video, website, prototype, survey, poster etc.

#### Actively search for partners

Don’t wait for partners to submit a proposal to you on your posted course page. [Search through the project library on Riipen](https://app.riipen.com/projects) to find the right project or organization for your course. This may take some time, but the investment will make your course more successful.

#### Find the right partner

Interview potential partners to make sure that they are the right fit.

#### Suggested partner commitments to discuss:

· Time in hours (ex: 4-6 hours over the semester)

· Feedback for students on deliverable(s)

· Availability for milestones:

o Phone call to assess suitability and project scope for the course

o Final presentation dates with students

· Able to answer periodic emails/calls from students over the semester

#### How do partners benefit from this activity?

The partnership is first and foremost a learning opportunity for students. This means that a partner may not expect the same quality that would come from an employee. Nevertheless, this is a great opportunity for a partner to crowdsource innovative ideas and to seek out future talent to join their organization.

**Working with community organizations**

Consider that community organizations may benefit the most from student projects; however, it may also create an additional burden to be available to mentor and give feedback to your students. Ask students to be mindful of this unique relationship

## **Student Skill Development**

[Transferable skills for the 21st Century](#_2.8_21st_Century) like communication, time management and interpersonal skills are essential for success both inside and outside of the classroom. They transfer to multiple contexts and they will better prepare students for life after graduation.

[FutureReady](#_FutureReady_at_the) provides skills development opportunities through student workshops. You can leverage this resource to help your students better prepare for their EL experience. Coordinators can request specified services and workshops that are more relevant to the academic program, professional area, or internship requirements.

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