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### Integrative Field Experiences Enhance Theory-to-Practice

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# Integrative Learning: A Framework For Online Learning

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## Defining Integrative Learning

The Association of American Colleges & Universities defines integrative learning as:

An understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

(Association of American Colleges & Universities)

## A Framework for Success

Integrative learning connects learned ideas from academic knowledge with practical field experiences in a way that allows students to be creative, evaluate performance, identify strengths, reflect, and make self-assessments to become well-rounded professionals.



Franklin motivates its students to participate in this unique experience because it offers students a chance to synthesize connections between academic learning and experiences in the field by identifying a real world problem and addressing it during the field experience. Integrative learning integrates internships, service learning, civic engagement, and other valid field experiences so that students learn to transfer skills, abilities, theories, methodologies, and/or paradigms to their academic discipline. Additionally students will achieve ethical, social, and intellectual growth through the exploration of complex issues.



## A Stride to Create Social Transformation

Integrative learning takes students on a knowledge journey outside of the formal classroom setting, challenging them to develop and use their critical thinking skills to solve real world issues in the community. The focus begins with identifying a need for change and generating solutions to practical problems. Integrative learning has the ability to empower other individuals by influencing them to engage in development and implementation activities that will create positive and much needed change.

## The Benefits of Integrative Learning

- Networking opportunities
- Allows students to fine tune career discipline
- Culture and expectations
- Intellectual capital
- Civic engagement
- Opportunity to keep up with industry changes
- Opportunity to fulfill community needs
- Prepares the workforce for emerging students and needs
- Social transformation
- Promotes self-directed learning

## Integrative Learning at Franklin University

The integrative learning courses at Franklin have been designed to introduce students to the action research concept by blending several approaches that create flexibility for the project. The goal of action research is to identify a problem, within the student's community or organization, conduct research on the problem, propose a solution, implement the solution and measure the effectiveness of the action research project.



## Applying Action Research

Action research is situation-based and context specific. The information is subjective and each experience is unique to the learner. The knowledge that each participant gains stems from how they approach the research. So, the learner's beliefs, strategy, and methods all play a crucial role in how action research is applied.

### Important Aspects of Action Research to Remember:

- Different research methods illuminate only particular aspects of a situation or solution. None give a whole picture.
- Action research is that things do not always go as planned, so in order to solve a problem the research must be applied through several cycles.

## Expected Outcomes

Franklin has chosen to introduce integrative learning to its students in the form of a 15 week course that can be used as an elective at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Due to time constraints, students are only expected to develop a research proposal based on the stated problem within the organization they choose. Throughout the 7 units, students will research the problem or dilemma and submit short papers that reflect on parts of their research and analysis. The culminating assignment is a poster presentation that synthesizes and displays their analysis and recommendations.



### Undergraduate Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course at the undergraduate level, students will be able to:

- Prepare a research project proposal aimed at solving a problem or dilemma.
- Construct a summative project (paper, performance, or application) that draws on current research, scholarship, and teaching in a field of study.
- Define a problem important to the field of study.
- Develop an implementation plan for your solution.
- Construct sustained, coherent arguments or narratives in multiple mediums and for multiple audiences.
- Justify a position on a public or private issue when presented with alternate views within an organization, community, or policy environment.

## Expected Outcomes Cont.

### Graduate Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course at the graduate level, students will be able to:

- Create a research project proposal aimed at solving a problem or dilemma.
- Assess the contributions of major figures and organizations in the field of study.
- Illustrate the methodologies and practices of an organization through projects, papers, exhibits, or performance.
- Develop sustained, coherent arguments or narratives in multiple mediums and for multiple audiences.
- Develop a reasonable and achievable solution(s) to your problem or dilemma.
- Design an implementation plan for a complex problem, include any by competing local, state, national and/or global interests.
- Defend the significance and implications of the work in the primary field of study in terms of challenges and trends in a social or global context.

## Evaluating Integrative Learning

Students participating in this unique experience are evaluated on their ability to:

- **Create Connections to Experience**- connect experiences outside the formal classroom to enhance understanding and expand the learner's point of view
- **Create Connections to Discipline**- connect theories, examples, and facts to draw conclusions and synthesize information
- **Transfer knowledge**- adapt and apply prior skills and knowledge to new situations to create long-term solutions for new or ongoing problems
- **Integrate Communication**- clearly deliver information so that the audience can easily identify the learner's purpose and connection
- **Reflect & Self Assess**- build on past experiences and evaluates personal strengths and challenges

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