

## **I. MOTIVATING OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENT LEARNING AT QUEEN S**

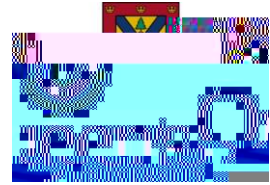
Our recommendation for Queen's is grounded by the following over-arching objectives to any new student learning endeavour:

1. To provide a university experience that **promotes the personal development of the learners** who come to Queen's. In that respect, we see a need to provide a more diverse, non-traditional, collaborative and experiential (less "siloed") learning environment that promotes personal encounters with people, as well as new challenges and areas of intellectual pursuit they might never have otherwise encountered.
2. **To provide an enhanced, collaborative learning experience.** We see a need to move outside the traditional course-based and classroom-based paradigm. We also want to allow students to take full advantage of everything the university has to offer. We recognize the value of learning by doing and the value of bringing people together through common effort/struggle. The opportunity here is to engage learning in an active, collaborative fashion. The idea is that the learner will learn as much from the process as well as the content, and will take lasting pride in what they achieve. It should change their concept of "leadership".
3. **To bring about positive social impact.** The process should result in outcomes that will bring value to the community/region. We feel that the effort itself will have significance and bring value.

## **II. PROPOSAL: INSTITUTE A TRANSFORMATIVE, INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITY AS THE SIGNATURE QUEEN S EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

We propose that Queen's University should make as its signature student learning experience a transformative, inquiry-based learning opportunity that brings students from diverse disciplines together in interdisciplinary teams to focus as a team on solving a "wicked idea" in the community.

By a "wicked idea," we mean an idea that is of important social, economic, political or cultural influence that has impact on others' lives in the community. It may include something like "homelessness in Kingston," a particular climate issue for a community in Eastern Ontario, or an issue facing correctional facilities in the area. The issue does not have to be profound, and could be entirely local in scope. It may be an 'experimental' structure, a conception, or a 'what if.' The aim is not necessarily to solve the idea entirely (or indeed at all), but to engage students in the practice of identifying and taking ownership of the idea, rehearsing best practices for collaboration, identifying opportunities for meaningful community engagement, and implementing imaginative approaches to problem-solving. This fits well with recent research in best practices in the scholarship of teaching and learning (Fernando and Marikar 2017; Hanstedt, 2018; Major and Palmer 2001; Murray 2007; Olusegun 2015).

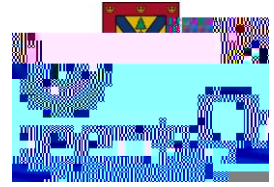


We believe that this type of learning can – and should – occur in all years and in all programs at Queen’s: undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs (both in Kingston and at the Bader International Study Centre). It can be a truly pan-institutional initiative: the signature stamp of a unique Queen’s education. Naturally, the implementation of such a program would need to begin somewhere more modestly, so we are recommending starting with a first-year program and building from that.

Such a learning initiative would feature the following key elements:

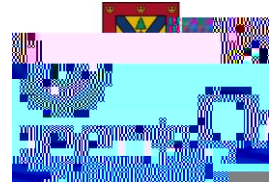
1. – the aim is to equip learners to problem-solve and develop learning, leadership, and collaboration skills early on in their learning journeys, in the first year of their respective programs (i.e. how to frame a problem, how to research, how to work together, how to communicate a problem or solution, how to engage with diverse ideas and perspectives);
2. **inquiry-based learning** – learners will be highly engaged and “learning by doing” – by working on an actual, impactful idea that they can see and experience and that matters to others in the community, and by doing so in a team-based environment, learners will connect and reflect on their learning with a broader purpose of inquiry and impact;
3. **empowering learners** to make their own learning choices in an inclusive, pedagogically sound fashion – learners can define the topics that are important to them, and the learning process will not have a set structure imposed but instead a range of possibilities for collaboration and pursuit;
4. – learners would come from a variety of disciplines and are teamed up to learn from each other and about each other’s disciplines and ways of approaching problems. This may also mean unlearning, and includes decolonization and embracing Indigenous ways of knowing.
5. **collaboration and learning leadership** – we would propose that learners work in multi-disciplinary teams of smaller groups (perhaps 6-12 learners) for an impactful team-building and leadership experience;
6. **community impact** – providing opportunities for Queen’s to engage with the Eastern Ontario community and make a difference by bringing the university into the community, including community partners and alumni;
7. **breaking down learning silos** – exposing learners to other disciplines beyond their 32(nB)-9(pos1u00B





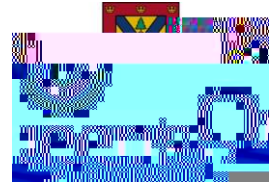
professional school would absolutely value a student who experienced such a learning opportunity because the leadership, collaborative, and problem-solving skills gained through





- c) learners choose their own “wicked idea” to work on, based on something that is important to them and that would have a real, palpable impact in the community (from Kingston or Eastern Ontario);
- d) the groups, with the aid of some faculty guidance, set the structure and progress of the experience, including meeting times, work to be done, and scope, as well as appropriate training and education on working supportively, equitably and inclusively in groups with diverse members;
- e) the groups choose their own collaborative working models, from a range of collaboration models presented to them (which would be pre-set to give guidance to the groups, but along a range of options, which would allow them to choose “how” to work together based on a model that best fits that group and its task);
- f) the experience may be one semester long, or an academic year, or the summer (we are open to any);
- g) the “end point” of the experience is also designed by the group – it may a thorough exploration of the wicked idea, it may be the communication of the idea in a certain outlet to a certain group, it may be the launch of a pilot project, or it may be the actual “doing” of the “wicked idea” itself;
- h) the “product” or “output” for the group is up to the group to design: it may be a presentation to a community group, a document like a prescriptive recommendation paper, or something more: a delegation presentation to a governmental group, a media release, or the actual “doing” of the “wicked idea” itself (if it is such an idea capable of “doing”); and,
- i) assessment of a learner’s participation in the experience would proceed holistically and be assessed by the faculty lead for the group, based on current pedagogical approaches to assessing inquiry-based, participatory learning experiences (i.e. assessment would be based on the learner’s participation in the process, not on the end product the group produces).

## **VII. OBSTACLES SHOULD**



transformative inquiry-based learning experience pilot such as this can be the catalyst for this institution to have some long-overdue (in our view) conversations about such university administrative issues, with an eye to making things better.

Graduate work typically, by its nature, embraces the wicked problem concept. But the emphasis on building community (broadly-defined) inroads, and in knowledge mobilization that moves beyond the academic community, could be considered a natural extension of this proposal for graduate students.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Shifting Queen's to a model of transformative, inquiry-based learning opportunity as the signature Queen's educational experience would showcase Queen's as among the leading educational institutions around the globe. Armed with such an experience, Queen's graduates would become sought-after prospective employees and contributors to world knowledge.

Queen's graduates would be confident and collaborative leaders who know how to learn, how to collaborate, and can harness the powerful impact that learning can have by bringing that learning engagement directly into the community.

## References

Fernando, Sithara, and Faiz Marikar. 2017. "Constructivist Teaching/Learning Theory and Participatory Teaching Methods." *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching* 6 (1): 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v6n1p110>.

Hanstedt, P. 2018. "Creating Wicked Students: Designing Courses for a Complex World". Stylus; Stirling: Virginia.

Major, Claire and Palmer, Betsy. 2001. "Assessing the Effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning in Higher Education: Lessons from the Literature." *Academic Exchange Quarterly* 5 (1). <http://www.rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/mop4spr01.htm>

Murray, Jacqueline. 2007. "The Impact of Problem-Based Learning in an Interdisciplinary First-Year Program on Student Learning Behaviour." *Vj g'Ecpcf kcp'lqwt pcr'qhlj ki j gt 'gf nec vkqp <Nc'' t xw g'ecpcf kgppg'f ogpugki pgo gpv'iw r<sup>2</sup> t kgwt*. 37, no. 3: 87–107.

Olusegun, Bada. 2015. "Constructivism Learning Theory: A Paradigm for Teaching and Learning." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5 (6): 66–70. <http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jrme/papers/Vol-5%20Issue-6/Version-1/I05616670.pdf>.