

PERSONAL WORKBOOK



**KING'S
EXPERIENTIAL
LEARNING
PROGRAM**

King's Experiential Learning Program

Personal Workbook
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Introduction

This workbook is intended to help you get the most out of your student work experience. The sections provide a template to take you from the first days of your job, setting expectations and goals, through to framing your experience after the fact. The goal is to elevate your student work experience to work-integrated learning: to help you see how your studies have prepared you to act in the world, and how your learning and development in your work experience might reflect back on your academic work. A copy has also been provided to supervisors at King's to help clarify the goals of the experiential learning program and help employers understand what students are hoping to gain from their work experience.

The King's Experiential Learning Program (KELP) launched in October 2021 with assistance from the RBC Foundation through its Future Launch Program. Liberal arts students, especially those in the general arts, have traditionally been underserved by post-secondary experiential learning programs. KELP is an attempt to develop a model of experiential learning, including work-integrated learning and entrepreneurial support, that is suited to King's academic culture and has a special regard for the place of the humanities in the academy and in cultural and civic life. Refining this model will be an iterative process. Feedback and ideas on this booklet and the program in general are welcome. Please contact Joanna Sheridan, Public Humanities and Experiential Learning Coordinator, at joanna.sheridan@ukings.ca.

For more opportunities available in experiential learning at King's including programming, entrepreneurial support, fellowships, networking opportunities, and more, visit <https://ukings.ca/programs/experiential-learning>.

RBC Future Launch

King's Experiential Learning Program is partly funded through a generous gift from the RBC Foundation's Future Launch program. Future Launch is RBC's "commitment to help young Canadians prepare for a drastically changing workforce" by supporting efforts to help them gain new skills, grow their network, and acquire work experience.

According to RBC's research, "automation will impact 50 per cent of jobs in the next 10 years." Under these conditions, the most valuable skills, traits, and behaviours will be the ones that humans can do better than technology. Often called "soft skills", these are the durable, higher-order skills that are deepened by a liberal arts education. The Future Launch program focuses on the development of ten 21st-century skills:

- Critical thinking
- Complex problem solving
- Social perceptiveness
- Financial literacy
- Information communication/technology/digital literacy
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity and innovation
- Adaptability
- Persistence/grit

As you progress through your work experience, look for opportunities to develop in these areas. They make for a useful framework when thinking about how develop yourself personally, professionally, and academically.

Impact Surveys

At the beginning and end of each employment experience, you will be asked to fill out an online survey. **You will receive a \$10 gift card to a business on campus for each of the pre- and post-employment surveys.** These surveys help us to gain insight into how to improve the program and allow RBC Future Launch to gain insight into how to support Canadian youth to bridge the skills gap. If you have not received a link to the survey, please contact Joanna Sheridan, Public Humanities and Experiential Learning Coordinator, at joanna.sheridan@ukings.ca.

Section 1: Early Days

Work Plan/Duties

In the first days of your new position, book some time to sit down with your supervisor to co-create a workplan. Be as concrete as possible. For example, "Attend and photograph 20 sports games and produce an edited archive on an ongoing basis, to be completed by April 30th."

You can jot down some notes here. If the plan is extensive, you might consider drafting it on a shared OneDrive document that you and your supervisor can both view and edit.

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Keep a Journal or Work Log

Whether you keep a journal/log on your phone, computer, or treat yourself to a new journal, it is highly recommended that you keep a running record of your work experiences and reflections. This can be as brief as it suits you, but anything you write down will help you immensely when it comes time to do your final reflection (Section 3) and frame your experience for your résumé (Section 4). Taking moments throughout your experience to note what kind of work you found satisfying, creative, made your curious to learn more – as well as what kind of work you'd like to strategize to move away from in the future – will help you reveal what kind of work might be right for you. Keep track of...

- Dates and hours that you worked
- Tasks and accomplishments
- Quantitative data that will help you show the scope and scale of your work in Section 4 (for example, "Rehoused 55 archival blueprints"; "Responded to 180 student advising emails")
- How you felt doing the work
- Contacts you made
- Questions you have

Growth Plan

Are there things that could be planned into this work experience that would enhance your learning, professionalization, or network? For example, are there specific people in the field you want to connect with or that your supervisor thinks you should meet? A conference you could attend? A special meeting you could observe? A free online micro-course you could take that would allow you to gain or upgrade technical skills? Certain ideas might come to mind at the beginning, like an upcoming meeting, while others, such as a special assignment, make more sense to talk about after you've gotten settled into your job and your supervisor has a better sense of where you could contribute.

Jot down some ideas below.

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While you're here, set a date for your midpoint check-in.

Date: _____

More on this on the next page.

Section 2: Mid-Point Check-In

You will probably hear from your supervisor frequently about assignments and tasks, but when will you check-in next to discuss the bigger picture? The interval appropriate for each employer-employee relationship is different, but a check-in in the middle of the placement and at the end may be appropriate for many short-term student positions.

This is an opportunity to look back at your work plan and growth plan to see if things are on track, talk about what you especially valued working on, and ask about new possibilities. If you haven't set a growth plan yet, this might be the time (see Section 1). Now that you know your role better, what concrete steps could you take to increase your skills, network, or knowledge? This is also an opportunity to get valuable feedback on your work. Feedback may help you clarify where you should direct your efforts to develop yourself.

Take some time after your check-in to note your own thoughts. Consider your successes so far (glow points) and some things that you can continue to improve upon (grow points). Make sure to reflect on your growth plan.

What parts of your workplan have been accomplished?

What remains to be done?

Have other projects or opportunities come up?

Is there time in your contract to accomplish all of this or do you need to reduce workload in certain areas to allow for priority projects to be completed by the end of your term?

Does anything need to happen so that you can complete the unfinished work (transfer of files, introductions to contacts, orientation meeting, training/learning in a certain area etc.)?

Self-Evaluation of Performance

Glow points:

-
-

Grow points:

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What steps could you take to grow in these areas?

What parts of the job are you enjoying the most and the least?

Section 3: Reflect on Your Experience

Reflecting critically on your work experience is as important as the experience itself, since it is often through reflection on the experience that we learn the most about ourselves. Dedicate some time to thinking through these questions. Describing and examining your experience will help you draw conclusions and chart your next steps.

What kind of activities did you complete during this work experience? What did you enjoy most? What were you most proud of? What tasks were not a good fit for your interests, talents, personality, or values?

What skills do you believe you have gained or improved upon through this work experience? Have you developed or advanced any of the endurable 21st-century skills?

21st-Century Skills

- Critical thinking
- Complex problem solving
- Social perceptiveness
- Financial literacy
- Information communication/technology/digital literacy
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity and innovation
- Adaptability
- Persistence/grit

Be sure to fill out your post-employment survey. **Each participant receives a \$10 gift card to an on-campus business.** Email joanna.sheridan@ukings.ca for your link to the post-employment survey if you have not already received it.

How have the skills, knowledge, behaviours, or values developed through your studies supported you in your work placement? Have you developed new competencies that will support you in your studies?

Have you taken any courses that you feel prepared you in some way for this experience? Has this experience inspired you to seek out any university courses?

What skills do you feel like you still want to improve upon?

Does this experience tie into any long-term goals you have? Has it helped you refine any career or academic goals?

Section 4: Framing Your Experience for Your Résumé

Don't wait to add your latest work experience to your résumé. In fact, you might find it quite useful to talk to your supervisor about how to frame your accomplishments, as another perspective—especially one from someone further along in their career—can often shed light on how others might see you and relate to the work you did. Rather than listing responsibilities, show that you did a *good job* by framing your experience in terms of accomplishments with impacts. Quantify your work where possible to indicate scope and scale.

Action Verb + Work You Did + Result/Impact

Examples:

- Developed text for new student webpage resulting in greater awareness of program and a 50% decrease in questions to administrator
- Oriented students and public members to the workout room, creating an inviting and safe environment for 230 users per month
- Prepared 65 archival blueprints for transfer to professional scanner, in order that digitized technical drawings could be provided to facilities team and archival documents preserved according to best practices

Use the space below to jot down some of your experience using the structure above.

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Section 5: Alignment with Education and Ambitions

Does your job align with your education and ambitions? If it does, great! If it doesn't, take heart. You are at the beginning of your career journey and there are many things you can do to improve your experience and get ready to make your next move to a job that aligns better with your potential, interests, and purpose in life. It can be hard to build work experience when it takes experience to get your foot in the door. It's always a good idea to approach all aspects of a job with rigour and professionalism, and you may hear people say that the right person can learn from any experience. That may be true to an extent, but you also want to take your learning and development into your own hands and be strategic.

If your current job isn't helping you develop the skills or experience you need to get hired into the job you want, look for ways to improve the skills that you need to get where you want to be and see if you can find a way to demonstrate them in your current job. Does your job involve a lot of downtime? Consider using that time to take a free course that earns you an industry-recognized microcredential. Ask your supervisor if there is a stretch assignment you could do. Perhaps you've identified a problem or an inefficiency and you could research potential solutions and present them to your supervisor or team.

Even the most humble jobs often involve communication. Answering questions from a reception desk may not feel like *real* communications work, but take it seriously as communicating on behalf of an organization and you put it on a continuum that you will be on for the rest of your career. Consider how you could improve. Do you deal with frustrated people sometimes? You could research techniques for how to diffuse tense situations and apply them in your work. If your scope for communication isn't enough to allow you to grow, consider what kind of work would present a challenge for you. Would you feel nervous speaking extemporaneously in front of a large group? You could join a public speaking and leadership group like Toastmasters; you'll improve your skills and extend your professional network.

Another option is to examine your current education and consider if it lines up with your future ambitions. You could consider taking electives that broaden your skills and knowledge base beyond your current educational background. Explore the offerings at King's and Dal and consider other opportunities that might interest you based on your work experiences. Be brave!: university is the perfect time to expose yourself to something completely new to you.

Try to frame your work experience as positively and professionally as possible, and instead of dwelling on a lack—which is only a temporary situation—emphasize the endurable “human skills” you are demonstrating and improving. They will serve you—and others—everywhere you go.