

PBL Definitions and Levels for CASL Programs

DEFINITION

Practice Based Learning (PBL) encompasses curricular and co-curricular experiences that require students to apply, analyze, evaluate, or create knowledge often in collaboration with others and across disciplinary boundaries. The aim of PBL is to promote a deeper understanding of core concepts through their application, and to provide students with the opportunity to assess and learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes. PBL coursework is built upon student centered projects that often relate to complex “real world” problems. PBL assignments and learning opportunities will typically be cumulative throughout a semester, resulting in deliverables aimed at public audiences within or beyond the university.

LEVEL I: PBL FUNDAMENTAL

To use this designation in the course schedule, a course should address at least five of the following learning outcomes.

PBL Fundamental will enhance students' ability to:

- address problems from multiple perspectives
- apply abstract knowledge to concrete scenarios, issues, or problems
- create links between understanding and action (i.e., develop skills to operationalize thinking)
- develop initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results
- engage intellectually, creatively, or socially within a project/team environment
- communicate skills, stories, or research effectively to public audiences and potential employers
- understand that the ways in which problem are defined will shape their proposed solutions
- recognize, understand, and respect socio-cultural diversity
- evaluate problems and their solutions within an ethical framework

LEVEL II: PBL PROCESS

To use this designation in the course schedule, a course should address at least four of the following learning outcomes.

PBL Process will enhance students':

- awareness of problem solving as an iterative process; that the first solution to a problem may not be the best or final solution
- ability to identify the assumptions used when defining a problem, and how those assumptions may influence the solutions generated and the effectiveness of those solutions
- ability to apply abstract concepts in solving practical and concrete problems
- ability to critically evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources and media
- ability to critically analyze a variety of problem-solving approaches and decision-making strategies
- ability to articulate the “tradeoffs” inherent in any solution
- awareness that some groups may benefit more than others from particular solutions, and that solutions should be considered in terms of their equity and impact on different constituencies and subgroups
- understanding of the complexity of many problems and, thus, the difficulty in finding simple solutions

LEVEL III: PBL ENGAGE

To use this designation in the course schedule, a course should address at least three of the following learning outcomes.

PBL Engage will enhance students’:

- skills in communicating and interacting with those outside of the campus community
- understanding of the complexity of many problems and, thus, the difficulty of simple solutions
- understanding of the needs and perspectives of various stakeholders within and external to campus
- development of networks and professional relationships with those outside of the campus community
- understanding of their own potential to positively contribute to society through civic engagement
- capacity to examine the world through the lens of equity and justice, and to act as engaged citizens
- ability to understand and articulate their own assumptions about helping others and the potential limitations of providing “solutions” to others.

Examples of classifications for:

[Anthropology](#)

[History](#)

[Women and Gender Studies](#)

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

PBL Level I: At this level you will have the opportunity to develop basic problem-solving and decision-making skills. Courses identified as **PBL Fundamental** will typically include smaller course assignments to provide you with practice in applying key concepts.

PBL Level II: At this level you will have the opportunity to work with your classmates to apply course concepts to problems. Courses identified as **PBL Process** will typically include a project that builds throughout the semester.

PBL Level III: At this level you will have the opportunity to engage with those outside of the campus community. Courses identified as **PBL Engage** will typically include doing some work off campus, engaging with local neighborhoods, nonprofit organizations, business owners, or local government.

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