
Student-Led Individually Created Courses (SLICCs)

Slide 1: This presentation will provide a brief overview of Student-Led Individually Created Courses, better known as SLICCs. We will begin with an introduction to the SLICCS framework, the key components that make up a SLICC, its potential value at the University of Waterloo and finally the benefits the SLICC framework offers students.

Slide 2: SLICCs are a relatively new experiential learning framework developed at the University of Edinburgh. They offer a reflective learning and assessment framework that is unlike traditional learning models. SLICCs can be implemented at any level to varying degrees; first year undergraduates through to doctoral students can participate in a SLICC. Additionally, SLICCs can serve to provide students with academic credit for substantial extracurricular activities, work placements or large projects undertaken for the purpose of the course. Because of this, the SLICC framework can be integrated into a course with a major project, or it can be the basis for the course itself.

Importantly, the inherent flexibility of the SLICC framework invites students to become co-authors of their learning process as they plan, propose, carry out, reflect on and evaluate their learning experiences associated with undertaking their proposed project.

Slide 3: Through the SLICC process students are given the opportunity to personalize some or all their learning outcomes, which promotes a deeper engagement with the learning process. Importantly, this work becomes an exercise in personal agency as students plan their project from start to finish. Through the SLICC process there is an emphasis on personal development as students use the learning outcomes they've created or adapted to undertake their project and reflect on their personal growth and skills development. As you can see, SLICCs seek to meet 5 learning goals. While our toolkit can provide you with more information on how the learning outcome process happens, providing students with the opportunity to co-author learning outcomes to guide project planning helps students develop lifelong learning capacities. At the same time, the SLICC framework can be tailored to meet required course learning outcomes. For example, some courses require students meet pre-determined learning outcomes in addition to the SLICC specific outcomes; in this case students will be asked to position their SLICC project within the given learning outcomes, explaining in the proposal how each outcome will be met. Other courses might provide learners with 1 or 2 course focused learning outcomes and permit or require the learner to generate or adapt 2 to 5 of the SLICC learning outcomes. Still other courses might allow students to adapt all the intended learning outcomes with guidance or input from the instructor.

Slide 4: To dig a little deeper into this idea of students as co-authors of their learning outcomes, we wanted to provide an example of how students might navigate this process. The University of Edinburgh framework uses the What? So What? Now What? Reflection model to help students adapt and address the Learning Outcomes. Students respond to prompts such as: What are you intending to accomplish? Why is

it important in the context of the course? What is important to consider? How will you implement this goal? And finally, what evidence might you provide to show that your learning outcome is met?

By way of example, for the Learning Outcome related to Application of Skills, students would respond to these prompts: What skills do I think are necessary for my SLICC? What skills do I currently have? What skills will I need to develop? What challenges do I foresee in developing and/or applying these skills? How can I address these challenges? And finally what evidence will I need to show that would document the progress I am making on this Intended Learning Outcome?

Here students are taking on a new role of planning, executing, and evaluating their own learning experience and are expected to be that much more engaged with the learning process itself. While students may find this uncomfortable, they have access to resources, instructors and peers to help them navigate and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Slide 5: This graphic provides an overview of the SLICC framework, highlighting both the instructor and student roles. At the beginning of the course the instructor provides the learning outcomes for the SLICC broadly. Students then use these as building blocks for personalizing the learning outcomes to the context of their proposed project. The SLICC learning outcomes focus on the learning process itself rather than the product, which encourages students to engage with their learning process focusing on transferable skill development and personal reflection. With an understanding of the goal of the SLICC framework and process, it is now the student's job to create a proposal that provides an overview of their project, their personalized learning outcomes, and their plan to ensure the project is manageable. This is submitted to the instructor who will offer extensive feedback and, if needed, will ask for revisions, then provide approval to commence the project. Students then begin working on their project and engage in weekly reflections to ensure their project is progressing and to reflect on their learning process. Around the mid-point of the course, students will submit an interim reflective report to provide the instructor with an update of the progress they are making on the learning outcomes providing evidence to document the progress, any adjustments they've had to make to their initial proposal with a rationale for the changes, and their plans for their project for the latter half of the course. Instructors will once again provide substantive feedback, and ask for revisions where necessary, to help the students move forward with their project. Students will use this feedback to inform their project plan for the remainder of the course and continue to complete weekly reflections. At the end of the course students will submit a final reflective report and self-assessment of the SLICC project along with any required project deliverables. Instructors provide the final assessment of the SLICC project.

There is flexibility in the application of the SLICC framework, but this has provided an important high-level overview.

Slide 6: Reflection with feedback are central components of the SLICC framework. Students are asked to engage in weekly reflections throughout their SLICC to help them focus on their learning process and document the progress on the learning outcomes in their interim and final reflective reports. In doing so, they are developing lifelong learning skills, recognizing how they can plan for their personal growth and development, and identifying the transferable skills they are developing and deploying that will serve them long after they graduate.

Students are also asked to self-assess throughout their project. Ideally, depending on course structure, students should engage with peer feedback groups, where students meet to discuss their project progress and any challenges they are facing and provide one another with support. For example, they could present their proposals or mid-point report to the peers and receive feedback prior to submitting to the course

instruction. Seeking and assessing feedback from sources other than the instructor builds lifelong learning capacity.

Instructors and TAs are expected to provide substantive formative feedback at the proposal and mid-point reflective report stages – points where the student can use the feedback to enhance their work moving forward. When necessary, instructors may provide guidance when students face challenges as they undertake their planned projects keeping in mind, though, that the goal is to allow students to take ownership of their learning and learn to address challenges and pivot as necessary.

Slide 7: SLICCs are a great way for students to work on a project they are passionate about, develop a plan to achieve it, and document the skills they are developing throughout the learning process. This process promotes student ownership and a deeper engagement with the learning experience. It helps them develop skills necessary to become self-directed, self-regulating lifelong learners. SLICCs ultimately supports a learning experience that is more aligned with the world students will face when they graduate, an opportunity that is notably absent from traditional learning models.

Slide 8: The SLICC model aligns well with many of the areas outlined in the Waterloo's strategic plan and with Waterloo's Future Ready Talent Framework which stresses the importance of flexibility and personal growth for students preparing for the workforce. This includes important life skills such as:

- Discipline and context specific knowledge
- Self-management
- Self-assessment
- Lifelong learning and career development
- Critical thinking
- Innovation mindset

Slide 9: While SLICCs have the potential to be integrated into a wide range of courses and classroom, SLICCs may be of particular interest to you if you are an instructor for a practicum course, capstone course, major project-based course, e-coop and/or entrepreneurship courses. The SLICC framework can be integrated into electives where students can design their own experiential learning experience, or into programs or courses that have volunteer, service-learning, self-directed learning, internships, work experiences and/or research projects requirements or if you are interested in a integrating a framework that supports experiential learning.

Slide 10: Students are expected to navigate a VUCA world when they graduate, yet traditional learning approaches do not prepare them. SLICCs help students experience the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity and its associated discomfort when planning and carrying out a project. But they have the added advantage of a safety net. Instructors are there to help students make sense of the process and build confidence navigating through it. Should the 'final product' fail, the learning should be considered successful and effective when the student is able to articulate what they would do differently if they were to undertake the project again, what they have learned, and how they will transfer this learning to new and different situations moving forward. While students won't be 'experts', SLICCs provide a unique opportunity to experience what we like to call a 'crash course' in VUCA. Students are able to apply and build on this experience moving forward.

Slide 11: Research from the University of Edinburgh and preliminary research from the University of Waterloo find that's students definitely agree! They reported gaining a number of skills from their experiences surrounding feedback, reflection, and their engagement with the learning process itself. And we have included three quotes from students here at the university of Waterloo.

"It was very open ended, and I was able to take it in any direction I chose. I got a lot of personal growth out of the project."

"It allowed me the freedom to focus on a project I was interested in, which helped engage my learning more than a traditional project options list."

What was the best part of Work on a SLICC? "The hands-on experience about entrepreneurship. No other course gave me a real experience of what to expect."

Slide 12: Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to our presentation today and we encourage you to explore our newly launched SLICC toolkit to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the SLICC process, the benefits to students and what a SLICC could look like in your classroom. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Katherine Lithgow at: klithgow@uwaterloo.ca and remember, great things never come from comfort zones.