



2020 CityLAB SIR Curriculum Plan

CityLAB Semester in Residence | CityLAB Hamilton



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Completed April 2020

Overview

CityLAB Semester in Residence (SIR) is a unique community engagement program for upper-year post-secondary students. Students work on strategic initiatives with staff from the City of Hamilton and community partners to achieve tangible real-world results on city-identified projects.

The Semester in Residence has been in existence for two semesters (2018 and 2019) with ongoing evaluation based on feedback from students, alumni, staff and partners integral to improving the semester. Feedback has led to further work with student “Ambassadors,” SIR alumni hired to take leadership on developing improvements for subsequent semesters, with support from the MacPherson Institute and the Office of Community Engagement at McMaster. Randy Kay and Jeremy Sewnauth are the report authors.

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SIR STRUCTURE

CityLAB Semester in Residence 2020



The SIR program has been developing incrementally each year. Project Management and CityHall 101/City Building elements were added in 2019 to build on the original instruction areas of Design and Dialogue.

One of the key areas for improvement focuses on building student capacity to pursue independent student project work and projects within the semester framework, based on the experience of the 2019 semester. Interest in continued conversations on ways to strengthen CityLAB as an innovation hub can also lead to a richer experiential learning environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPARENCY

STUDENT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION and LEARNING PORTFOLIO

An existing biographical information requirement for incoming students was used to collect basic data to help with introductions on the first day of the semester in 2019. Students were instructed to bring in copies of their statements to distribute in class.

Collecting the information using an online form would allow easier sharing among students and faculty. Adding questions about specific skills and *learning objectives* can form the baseline for a living learning portfolio as students reflect on how they have applied their skills and learning over the course of the semester. With feedback from student Ambassadors, a draft **Student Bio Form** has been prepared to share with the instruction team in order to get input on its possible use.

OBJECTIVE

- Capture student biographical information and targeted learning objectives

DELIVERABLE

- Online Biographical Form <https://forms.gle/UheVYcjhVj6RyQGGA>

TIMELINE

- May to June - approve the final version of the form with instructors
- July to August - send to SIR students
- September to December - review and revise in classes

COLLABORATION

There is value in creating more opportunity for structured sharing within the semester, so that project teams can share success and struggles in a supportive, interdisciplinary problem-solving environment. With added student-led project initiatives in 2020, finding creative ways to collaborate and share progress is likely to provide immediate benefits.

OBJECTIVE

- Incorporate tools and processes to allow for regular transparent collaboration

DELIVERABLES

- Use a [Google Form](#) for regular progress reports accessible to all teams
- Use regular class time to have "stand-up" reports that seek input from other teams
- Use an [internal communication blog](#) and/or [Slack channels](#) to get feedback from others
- Use a [WIKI](#) to keep documents, calendars, links, forms, blog and other tools in an easy to share central site*

*Student assignments will still be submitted using Avenue to Learn

INSTRUCTION

SCHEDULE

Having a schedule of assignment deadlines and events from all instructors, prepared in advance, will allow more clarity on course expectations and requirements, and provide a transparent window into each area of learning for the semester. Some considerations:

- Build-in time for student-centred learning using the Google Model of 20% per week for their own projects to encourage time for innovation
- Move due dates up - assignments end the first week of November
- Last 3-4 weeks solely towards the final project
- Create and schedule an end of semester debrief (what worked/what didn't/etc) and celebration (potluck)

→ Clarify major dates and stick with them

OBJECTIVE

- Supply a schedule of activity to share with students in advance of the semester

DELIVERABLE

- A Weekly SIR 2020 Plan in a spreadsheet is intended to allow the instruction team to review and fill-in schedule of assignments and events prior to the start of the semester.

TIMELINE:

- May to June - approve the schedule with instructors' input
- August/September - make the schedule available to students (via WIKI)

INSTRUCTION ALIGNMENT

INSTRUCTION AREA	CONSIDER ADDING
Design	+ Design Thinking
Dialogue	+ Data Visualization + Tamarack workshop
Project Management	+ Student Invited guests (discussion and triage) + Student research initiatives (support)
City Hall 101	+ Production support (Podcast) + Scheduled Guests + Schedule field trips ex. Makerspace

Outside of the core Design, Dialogue, and Project Management areas, how will we incorporate new initiatives and student independent learning?

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In order to establish space and time for student initiative and a critical approach to understanding government, three areas of the Semester in Residence lend themselves to supporting direct student engagement: City Hall 101, Student Guests and Issues, and Student-led production and project development. We are calling this blend of learning and doing **Experience Lab**. By making avenues for exploration, critical thinking, and ultimately action, part of the expectations for students in SIR, Experience Lab can play a central role in developing and harnessing the innovative capabilities of interdisciplinary student teams and projects.

EXPERIENCE LAB STRUCTURE

City Hall 101	Student Guests/Issues	Student Production & Project
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<p>5 guests planned in advance - critical view of aspects of local governance - committees, upper-levels of government, etc. Associated field trips to local sites, agencies, etc.</p>	<p>Integrated into core teaching Areas (see chart above) and supported by Outreach Director, and social media and media monitoring and class discussions.</p>	<p>Students choose to join existing projects (social media, podcast) or develop their own project ideas (“research” based, i.e. not interviewing staff, etc.) and get credit for work Social Media - - issues lead to ideas for guests, projects, and podcast episodes</p>
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STUDENT-LED PRODUCTION AND PROGRAMMING

Recognizing that students bring a wide range of skills and experience to CityLAB, giving them space and opportunity to experiment and innovate outside of the formal instruction times is a priority for the SIR under the newly formed Experience Lab. SIR Social media, a CityLAB SIR Podcast, and video production, were some ways students innovated and built new processes and added value for the semester in 2019.

For 2020 we want to formalize options for students to engage in small group projects that will be part of their overall grading. Students will be able to choose from existing **Production** stream opportunities or propose new ones and similarly encouraged to investigate the feasibility and scope of a new **Project**. Guidelines would be developed to help students investigate and research a project idea based on emerging or neglected issues outside of their city-led project work (while not directly engaging city staff or community members) and to develop a viable pitch that would then be shared with CityLAB Hamilton staff at an appropriate time. This could lead to a curricular or co-curricular opportunity to involve development of a new project and provide continuity, possibly in partnership with the Research Shop, MacChangers, et al.

Course-work, class discussions, social media monitoring, city committee observation, guest speakers, etc. will all contribute to identifying possible projects and new student-led productions.

STUDENT-LED INITIATIVE STREAMS

PROJECTS	PRODUCTION
Research New Project Ideas (City Issues)	Podcast
Research & Share Ideas for New SIR production	Social Media
	Blog
	Other

OBJECTIVE

- Allow more time for student-led programming and student project development

DELIVERABLE

- Adjust instruction format and workload to support independent student small group projects where possible through strategic alignment with the Design, Dialogue and Project Management assignments

- Add student learning portfolio requirement to track learning objectives and independent small group work
- Schedule in-class showcase event for student initiatives

TIMELINE:

Establish expectations during first session during the first week

Deadline for student proposals end of week 2 or 3

SOCIAL MEDIA

The 2019 Semester saw the creation of CityLAB SIR social media platforms, beginning with Twitter and Instagram. Having a SIR social media *brand* was secondary to the idea of using (especially Twitter) the platforms to follow local issues and influencers and gain insights into community engagement topics. By following community groups, advocates, politicians, journalists, CityLAB SIR students are able to better access current debates as they unfold in real-time.

OBJECTIVE

- Build critical social media analysis into the semester timetable/instruction

DELIVERABLE

- Continue using existing social media platforms and explore other platforms during the semester
- Use CityLAB SIR [Brand Guideline](#) developed by 2020 Ambassador Outreach Team
- Identify instruction and/or staff supports

LOGISTICS

CityLAB FACILITY

The CityLAB building is home to the Semester in Residence and a workspace for CityLAB city staff. With a single large open classroom, a theatre style auditorium, a foyer, a bookable meeting room and a small kitchen, the CityLAB space offers room for students to work on projects and collaborate. Feedback from the 2019 Semester identified the lack of separate quiet workspaces for small group work. The acoustic environment is loud, with little ability to limit sounds to any one area - sound from the foyer and classroom can be heard in the auditorium and the smaller office spaces. Meetings in the bookable meeting room can be heard in the adjoining city staff office.

Students also expressed interest in using the two wings of the building that are currently off limits, since it would allow them more potential quiet(er) spaces to work, and in finding ways to separate the rooms to help contain the volume and range of sound.

Students were constrained by the hours of the CityLAB building since the expectation is that the building is to be vacated by 5 PM Monday to Friday. Students working on group projects would often be interrupted by the limited hours.

As a result of new student productions in 2019, students have indicated they would benefit from more hardware and capital spending to enrich the innovation potential within the space.

OBJECTIVE

Create more viable space for innovation and small group work in the CityLAB building

DELIVERABLE

- **Access to Building** - the expectation of student attendance (days/times)
- Need to consider **hours** if students want to work after 5 pm. Adjust alarm-time to 10 pm?
- **Create soundproofed areas** to allow for quiet study or multi-media interviews, and dividers to block sound between rooms (classroom, foyer, meeting room, auditorium)
- **Equipment** to support established production (microphones, laptops, more whiteboards)

CityLAB SIR SHARED TOOLS AND APPS

Tools adopted during the 2019 Semester came part way into the school year as informal sharing led to wider acceptance of resources like project management app Trello.

Developed in 2019

- Shared room booking form/calendar in CityLAB
- Prayer/quiet space in CityLAB
- Printer guidelines
- Weekly photo capture of whiteboard content

To give incoming students an onboarding package of recommended (or even some mandatory) tools and apps ahead of the first class, supported by early training workshops or video webinars, would allow for more timely acceptance and early application.

OBJECTIVE

Support a common shared toolbox of apps and resources

DELIVERABLE

Students:

- HPL Library Card
 - access to documentary video streaming service Kanopy
 - Access to Makerspace at Central Library (3D Printer, Video and Audio production studios, Vinyl Printer, etc.)
- Google Account for access to GSuite Tools and Blogger
- Give advance access to Trello app as part of student onboarding
- Use Eventbrite or Bruha for attendance management (reimbursement from McMaster for student project expenses requires a list of attendees)

Faculty/Staff

- Agree to set *deadlines* and transparent *processes* around CityLAB requirements of students ex. mid-term bios, showcase submissions, room booking, building access
- Ensure that CityLAB staff and SIR staff have access to the same resources (booking calendars, report folders, communications, etc.)
- Establish learning platform guideline to align expectations on use of Avenue to Learn (ex. submitting assignments) and Google Suite/Sites (ex. for internal document and resource sharing)

NEXT STEPS

- Meet with McMaster stakeholders to discuss draft recommendations
 - ◆ Refine recommendations doc based on McMaster feedback and share with McMaster stakeholders for approval
- Meet with City of Hamilton staff/CityLAB stakeholders to review proposals and get feedback
 - ◆ Refine recommendations based on feedback
- Finalize document and schedule/course requirements