TERMS OF REFERENCE
CHELO Program (Child Health Experiential Learning Opportunities)

Purpose, Overview, and Objectives

The CHELO program offers graduate students immersive, transformative, and compensated work-integrated learning experiences. These supervised opportunities promote transdisciplinary professional development in the field of maternal or child health and wellness. Embracing the philosophy that practical engagement enhances the application of theoretical knowledge, this program aims to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world challenges. Aligned with ACHRI and OCEC's objectives and values, the program emphasizes community outreach and collaborative partnerships with non-academic organizations to address pressing societal issues while making meaningful contributions to maternal or child health and wellness.

This program also recognizes the importance of advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) within child health contexts—particularly through inclusive mentorship, representation of equity-deserving groups and Indigenous peoples, and ethical, community-engaged practices.

Key Benefits Include

- **6 Course Credits**: practical work is integrated with academic learning, reinforcing classroom concepts and contributing directly to students' progress toward their degree or program. The program consists of two courses, with each one offering 3 academic credits.
- **Financial support**: students participating in the program will benefit from compensated internships and receive a $5,000 incentive award upon successful completion of the internship and all required deliverables (e.g., assignments, presentations). This financial support helps reduce the burden of living and educational expenses, making the program more accessible and encouraging broader participation without the concern of additional costs.
- **Career readiness and professional growth**: internships provide invaluable real-world experience, allowing students to apply their academic knowledge in professional settings. These opportunities help develop essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication. By showcasing practical experience, achievements, and competencies, internships strengthen students' resumes, enhance employability, and give them a competitive edge in the job market.
- **Networking and mentorship**: opportunities to connect with professionals, mentors, and peers, opening doors to career opportunities, collaborations, and expert guidance. These connections are further enriched through supervised placements that provide hands-on experience and personalized support.
- **Transdisciplinary collaboration:** create teams of experts from diverse backgrounds where a graduate student collaborates on a project to address complex child health challenges.

Eligibility Overview

Students

To qualify for the program, students must satisfy the following requirements by the start of Course A (Professional Development):

- Be a full-time, thesis-based graduate student (Master's or PhD programs) registered at the University of Calgary.
- Have a research project **in maternal or child health and wellness.**
- Have completed at least one academic term of their graduate program.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Be enrolled in a graduate program that does not have a required internship, practicum or co-op course.
- May not be currently enrolled in another internship or co-op opportunity.
- Have the approval of their graduate supervisor and their graduate program to engage in an internship.

Course B (Experiential Learning)

To enroll in Course B, students must complete the following requirements before its start date:
- Successfully complete course A (Professional Development).
- Confirm internship placement that meets the requirements of the CHELO program:
    - Includes a letter of offer and a job description from the employer.
    - A commitment from the employer to support the student's learning objective.
    - Tasks aligned with the student's skills and training level.

Employers

Criteria for CHELO Approved Internships

To qualify as a CHELO-approved internship opportunity, employers must meet the following criteria:
- Internship roles must focus on areas related to maternal or child health and wellness.
- Provide the student with a mentor at the host organization for the duration of the internship.
- Not be solely research-based.
- The proposed internship must align with the student's existing skills and be appropriate for their academic and professional training level.
- Be part-time (14 to 20 hours per week), at a minimum of 210 hours and maximum of 320 hours, for up to 16 weeks:

Hours/Week	Weeks	Total Hours
14	16	224
15	16	240
16	16	256
17	16	272
18	16	288
19	16	304
20	**16**	**320**
14	**15**	**210**
20	15	300
15	14	210
20	14	280

Criteria for Matching Students with Employers

To be considered eligible, internship placements must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The internship must not directly contribute to the student's thesis or academic research project.
- The position cannot be solely research-based.
- Employers must not be receiving funding from other internship programs (e.g., Mitacs, Transformative Talent Internships) for the same placement.
- Employers must clearly define learning objectives and expectations, ensuring they reflect inclusive, equitable, and accessible learning opportunities. Descriptions should provide insight into the role, highlight any efforts to create a welcoming environment for equity-deserving groups (including Indigenous students), and identify shared goals with both the student and the CHELO program. Where possible, employers are encouraged to outline how IDEA values are embedded in their workplace culture and mentorship approaches.
- A formal letter of offer must be provided, including a detailed description of the student's responsibilities.
- Employers must be accessible to the CHELO program team, sharing relevant contact information to support ongoing collaboration.

Experiential Learning Component Duration

Recognizing that students will have ongoing commitments to their research activities during the Experiential Learning term, internships are intended to be part-time, with a maximum of 20 hours per week for up to 16 weeks during the second semester. Full-time or extended placements may be approved by the CHELO program, subject to prior review and case-by-case evaluation before the internship begins.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Community partners of ACHRI and OCEC are vital to the implementation of the CHELO program as they serve as host organizations for internship placements. By engaging with community partner organizations, graduate students not only gain hands-on experience, build and enhance their competencies and expand

their professional networks, but also contribute to the communities that these organizations represent and help address the grand challenges that these communities face.

Examples of Learning Environments/Internships

- Clinical settings (hospitals, pediatric clinics, public health departments)
- Community organizations (nonprofits, advocacy groups, long-term care)
- Research and innovation hubs (biotechnology, pharmaceutical, IT, telemedicine)
- Government and global health agencies, and many more.

Courses Overview

The CHELO program includes two courses:

1. Professional Development course - MDCH 700A (First semester):

This course consists of a series of online workshops (via Zoom) designed to strengthen essential professional skills like communication, leadership, conflict resolution, and collaboration. The course also covers career readiness topics and supports students in preparing for their experiential learning placements.

During this course, students will apply for available internship opportunities. To enroll in the Experiential Learning course, students must successfully complete the Professional Development course and secure an approved internship placement. Internships are secured through a competitive process involving opportunity selection, interviews, and the negotiation of roles and responsibilities tailored to each student's learning goals.

Admission to the Course

Admission to the course is competitive, with a maximum of 15 students accepted per term. Selection is based on the following criteria:
1. **Alignment with Academic and Career Goals**: students must demonstrate how participation in the CHELO program aligns with their academic path and professional aspirations.
2. **Impact on Child Health and Wellness**: the relevance and potential contribution of the student's graduate work to child health and wellness.
3. **Availability and Commitment**: Confirmation that the student has sufficient time and capacity to fully engage in both coursework and internship responsibilities.
4. **Supervisor Endorsement**: A brief recommendation from the student's supervisor confirming the student's readiness and suitability for the program.

Applicants must submit an application form, which is reviewed by the ACHRI & OCEC Advisory Committee for Experiential Learning. Any exceptions to the eligibility criteria will be subject to the committee's consideration. Students selected for admission will complete registration through the UCalgary course calendar.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for more details on the Professional Development course.

2. Experiential Learning course – MDCH 700B (Second semester):

A part-time, work-integrated learning opportunity, supported by regular Zoom sessions covering topics like mentorship, networking, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, as part of this practical course, students will engage in assigned meetings with their internship supervisor, as well as the Directors of the CHELO program. A CHELO program staff member may also participate in these sessions.

Please refer to **Appendix B** for more details on the Experiential Learning course.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

All participants in the CHELO program (students, graduate supervisors, employers and the CHELO program) play a vital role in ensuring a successful experiential learning experience:

- **Students** are responsible for completing both courses, fulfilling internship objectives, submitting all deliverables, and participating in program events.
- **Graduate Supervisors** provide written approval and ongoing support for the student's internship and learning goals.
- **Employers** agree to foster a rewarding and supportive internship experience by:
  - Providing timely, constructive feedback and performance evaluations.
  - Actively supporting the student's professional growth and learning goals.
  - Accommodating students' attendance in scheduled synchronous classes.
- **The CHELO program** supports students throughout their internships, evaluates related coursework, and liaises with employers to ensure a positive placement experience. Additionally, CHELO administers a $5,000 award upon successful completion of the internship and all required deliverables (e.g., assignments, presentations).

While a formal agreement between the CHELO program team and the employer will not be required in most cases, an Internship Position Information form must be completed by the employer, with support and guidance of the CHELO program staff, to help ensure accountability of all parties involved in the program.

Withdrawal or Failure to Complete

Students who withdraw from any of the CHELO courses:

- Prior to the drop deadline: will have the course removed from their permanent record/transcript and will not be required to pay fees for the course.
- After the drop deadline: will have the withdrawal recorded on their permanent record/transcript and will not receive a fee refund.

Students who do not formally withdraw from a course are still considered registered in the course, even if they are no longer attending classes. In these cases, students will be assigned a grade and are responsible for paying the fees assessed for the course.

Students may withdraw from a course(s) through the **Student Centre** by the withdraw deadline (see **Academic Schedule**). Please consult the **Faculty of Graduate Studies website** for more information. Students are encouraged to speak with their academic advisor prior to withdrawing from a course(s) or making changes to their course schedule.

Extenuating Circumstance Withdrawal

Students facing exceptional situations that may justify a course withdrawal due to extenuating circumstances are encouraged to review the relevant policy on the University of Calgary [website](#).

Conflict navigation: Student, Employer, and CHELO Team

In the event of conflict, early reporting is essential. Students are required to report any issues, concerns, or conflicts to both the course instructor(s) and the Experiential Learning Specialist as early as possible.

The CHELO Team will:
- Gather relevant information from both the student and the employer to understand the situation.
- Facilitate a mediated discussion or suggest solutions, where appropriate, to help resolve the issue informally.

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the program may:
- Reassign the student to another placement,
- Conclude the placement early, or
- Initiate an academic review of the student's standing in the course.

The process for students who raise concerns in good faith will be handled with confidentiality and sensitivity to power dynamics within the placement setting.

The program recognizes that equity-deserving students may experience unique challenges in professional environments. All concerns will be addressed with sensitivity to power dynamics, systemic bias, and identity-based vulnerabilities.

Grading and Transcript Recognition

For all assignments and deliverables, both courses will use a grading system based on the 4.0 scale. Student's enrolment in both courses ensures the internship is recorded on their transcript and allows the student's graduate program to track their progress.

Financial Support

Students who successfully complete their Experiential Learning component – meaning that they complete and submit all required deliverables in a timely manner, as well as complete their required meetings for the mid-point and final evaluation – will be awarded an incentive of $5,000 each, at the end of the internship. Payment will be made directly to the student in the form of an incentive award. This award will be disbursed at the end of the internship, once all course requirements have been fulfilled and submitted.

Insurance

Students participating in experiential learning programs to gain practical knowledge related to their studies may be provided workers' compensation coverage in the event of a workplace accident under the Government of Alberta's account. Additionally, the University of Calgary provides accidental injury coverage for all active students attending classes of the University of Calgary, who are under the age of 70, and are participating in a work placement or volunteer setting approved by the University of Calgary, and who are not otherwise covered by workers' compensation. The accident injury placement coverage applies to accidental injuries only, and does not extend to sickness, disease, or pre-existing conditions.

- For more information on coverage and on reporting workplace injury/accident, please visit this website.
- For reporting an accident, please visit this website.

Contact Information

With any questions, please contact Vanessa Bélanger-Marceau, Experiential Learning Specialist at achri.training@ucalgary.ca

Appendix A: Course Description – Professional Development (Course A)

Course Description:

This course supports the professional development of thesis-based graduate students by introducing diverse career pathways in the health sciences, with a particular emphasis on child health. Students will explore opportunities across academic and non-academic sectors and develop strategic approaches to career planning. Through a transdisciplinary lens, the course fosters the development of key professional competencies, including leadership, communication, and stakeholder engagement relevant to child health research and practice. Students will engage in reflective activities to deepen their understanding of their professional identity and goals.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

The objective of this course is to help students understand and strengthen a range of professional competencies (i.e., communication, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, ethical decision-making, self- and situational-awareness, problem-solving, decision-making) within the context of child health and transdisciplinary collaboration. Students will critically reflect on their skills, identify areas for growth, and integrate these insights into a personalized Individual Development Plan (IDP). By the end of the course, students will have completed an IDP and gained clarity on how their strengths and interests align with career opportunities in child health-focused environments.

Appendix B: Course Description - Experiential Learning (Course B)

Course Description:

This course emphasizes advanced professional development for thesis-based graduate students through a structured experiential learning placement within an external organization. Students may cultivate academic, technical, and professional skills while engaging in meaningful personal growth. The course provides a reflective framework to critically evaluate the placement experience and supports the development of advanced skills relevant to diverse professional environments. Special attention is given to placements that align with child health and transdisciplinary approaches.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

The primary objective of this course is to enable students to apply and enhance a range of professional competencies (i.e., communication, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, trustworthiness, ethics, self- and situational-awareness, problem-solving, decision-making) through engagement in critical reflection to assess their strengths, identify areas for growth, and integrate these insights into their ongoing career development. By the end of the course, students should have completed a placement focused on child health and demonstrated advanced proficiency in key professional skills within a transdisciplinary context.