

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

DELIVERING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS

AUTHOR ELUNED ROBERTS



Eluned (Lun) Roberts has over 40 years' experience of leading groups in the outdoors. She was the Institute for Outdoor Learning's Professional Development Manager for a number of years and still coaches and assesses for them as well as being a member of the IOL committee in Wales.

She is a qualified teacher (PGCE and MEd), holds an MIA and is a Leading Practitioner (IOL). She is one of the authors and co-edited the Environmental Learning Cards.

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is now the awarding body for a suite of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) modules entitled 'Delivering Experiential Learning in the Outdoors'. These modules have been designed to support the IOL accreditation scheme (especially Registered and Approved Practitioner awards), but their experiential nature means that all sorts of practitioners have gained from them no matter what their level of experience or area of outdoor learning expertise. Modules can be undertaken together or separately. All modules are run face to face, are experiential, person centred and experimental in nature and have practicality and fun at their heart. They are a chance to try out new ideas and test the theory behind them. Let's take a look at the course modules...

Module 1: Facilitation of Experiential Learning in the Outdoors

Initially designed by Heather Brown and Elspeth Mason (Mere Mountains) for IOL and later modified by Eluned (Lun) Roberts (ER Outdoors) based on feedback gained from participants, this module takes 2 days (16 hours) to complete. Places are limited to 12 participants per course. Price includes copy of an e-manual. This module is accepted as CPD for members of the Association of Mountain Leaders (MTA) and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI).

By the end of this module, participants will:

- Have explored their beliefs about how learning takes place.
- Know about the main approaches to learning and how to facilitate them.
- Understand the term 'experiential learning' and have critically examined Kolb's learning cycle as a model for this.
- Have experimented with different aspects of facilitation including techniques for: learning names and getting to know groups; needs analysis and goal setting; framing and front-loading; varying briefing styles; creating optimum levels of challenge; mood shifting; reviewing and transfer of learning.
- Understand facilitation as a mindset.
- Understand the concepts of 'learning styles' and 'personality types' and how these can impact learning.
- Have tried out different approaches to managing behavioural issues.
- Have had a chance to network.
- Have enjoyed themselves.

Module 2: Fostering a Connection

This one-day (8-hour) module was designed specifically for outdoor learning providers by Joe Roberts (Natural Resources Wales), Eluned (Lun) Roberts (ER Outdoors) and Jim Langley (Nature's Work) in response to an Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) initiative and has since been developed by Lun in line with feedback from participants. It offers the opportunity to try out games, quizzes and other activities designed to help foster clients' connection to the environment, to discuss these ideas with fellow practitioners and to develop new ones. Connection can take place on many levels (intellectually, practically, emotionally, spiritually, through our senses and through our creativity) and the activities on offer reflect this diversity. The module is not aimed at trying to teach field studies or asking people to become walking encyclopedias of flora and fauna. Instead, it offers activities which can be fitted seamlessly into existing outdoor courses. Places are limited to 12 participants per course. An e-manual of teaching resources is included in the price. This workshop is recognized as CPD for members of the Mountain Training Association (MTA) and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI).

By the end of this module, participants will:

- Understand the importance of people feeling connected to nature.
- Have experimented with techniques for fostering that connection.
- Looked at ways of adapting facilitation techniques such as name games, icebreakers, goal setting, and reviewing to foster clients' connection with nature.
- Feel confident in making use of the ideas in the accompanying e-manual to engage people with the environment intellectually, emotionally, practically and through their senses and creativity.
- Have created an action plan for making their practice more sustainable and looked at how they might help their clients' make similar plans.
- Thought about how these ideas and techniques can be integrated into their existing schemes of work or combine to form a new 'Fostering Connection' course.

Module 3: Reflective Practice for Outdoor Learning Providers

This two-hour module was designed specifically for outdoor learning providers by Eluned (Lun) Roberts (ER Outdoors) based on practical experience of mentoring, assessing, moderating and quality assuring the IOL accreditation scheme. This module will be especially useful for people embarked on the IOL's RPIOL and APIOL award schemes, but also aims to make reflection an interesting and fun part of life for anyone who wants to get more out of their experiences (reflection is so much more than a box ticking work activity). This module offers the opportunity to try out a range of different ways of reflecting, many without using the written word. Participants will have the opportunity to try out a new IOL reflective practice e-journal and help develop it as a resource to support this module. This workshop is recognised as CPD for members of the Mountain Training Association and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors.

By the end of this module, participants will have:

- Enjoyed reflecting with other practitioners.
- Understood the theory behind reflective practice.
- Tried out a range of techniques for reflection.
- Experimented with adapting techniques to suit themselves.
- Become more aware of their 'inner compass'.
- Practiced contemplation.
- Discovered ways of making reflection an integral part of their life.
- Exchanged ideas, developed new ones, and had fun trying them out.
- Looked at resources they might find useful.
- Put their subconscious to work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Upcoming course dates are listed on the IOL website (outdoor-learning.org/Courses-Events/Event-Registration/EventId/7242) as are dates for Train the Trainer courses. If you are interested in becoming a trainer for these modules, please email (institute@outdoor-learning.org) to ask for an application form. We are particularly keen to train up Welsh speaking trainers. Module 1 has already been delivered bilingually and we are hoping to have resources connected to these modules available in Welsh soon. We would also love to hear from any Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers who deliver outdoor learning. If you have any other questions, please feel free to email lunwroberts@gmail.com.