

Community Engagement and Service Learning Guidelines for Higher Education



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Summary

This document provides guidelines for implementing Service Learning in higher education with hands-on course ideas. The appendix contains policy recommendations.

Promoting the nexus of migrants through active citizenShip (NEXUS)

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SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	7
About the Nexus project	8
About using Service Learning to enhance civic engagement	8
About defining and reaching our target group	9
About these guidelines	10
PART I	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	
Definition of Service Learning	12
Early definitions and the development of the concept in the US	12
The contemporary concept – the civic aspect of Service Learning	13
International service learning	14
Examples of good practice	15
PART II	17
SERVICE LEARNING IN PRACTICE	
Education and social responsibility – the relation of community engagement and Service Learning	18
Principles of Service Learning	19
Objectives, benefits and challenges of Service Learning implementation	19
SERVICE LEARNING STAKEHOLDERS	20
1. Choosing the partners	22
2. Assigning the roles: students, teachers, external partners	23
SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMME	24
1. The concept of the course	24
2. Curriculum development	25
3. SL course syllabus	26
REFLECTION AND CRITICAL THINKING IN SERVICE LEARNING	27
ASSESSING SERVICE LEARNING	29

PART III	30
A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE IDEA	
Examples of good practice – using Service Learning in foreign language classes	32
Implementing service learning in the curriculum – case study	33
OPTION 1 – no changes to an existing syllabus	34
OPTION 2 – a new Service Learning course	38
OPTION 3 – an add-on Service Learning course	41
FINAL REMARKS	45
REFERENCES	47
APPENDIX: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	50



SUMMARY

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The objective of these guidelines is to promote innovative ways in which HEIs can support and work with wider communities by enabling civic engagement within a diverse student group, specifically focusing on Service Learning (SL).

Service Learning as an educational method and as an integral activity of community engagement explicitly promotes cooperation between the academic community and the civil sector, putting students and community engagement at the core of the learning experience. It also contributes to the achievement of the third mission of the university, which directly facilitates the development of the social responsibility of students and other members of the academic community in solving specific societal problems.

There are many definitions of Service Learning since the concept has evolved over time and since there are numerous ways it can be implemented in different contexts. The European Association for Service Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE) defines Service Learning as “an educational approach that enhances students’ civic engagement, brings them closer to different social realities while allowing them to work in a real environment. It involves structured and graded student placements in organisations in response to the needs of the community and is different from volunteering because it is part of mandatory coursework.” (EASLHE, 2021). This is the definition of Service Learning we have chosen to use in this project because it includes all the key elements of contemporary Service Learning.

The guidelines are divided into three parts. The first part is a brief literature review that defines Service Learning and gives some background to its historical development. Part II provides a more practical and concrete

picture of the benefits of being involved in a Service Learning initiative. The most common challenges are also discussed, but the focus is on discussing and describing the roles of the stakeholders: the students, the HEIs and the external partners. The third part connects Service Learning to second language learning courses, having in mind that in order to reach the target group of students with a migration-related background within HEIs, such courses are available at most HEIs. Examples from syllabi that are appropriate for Service Learning are described and a concrete example of a possible way forward is presented.

At the end, policy recommendations for implementing Service Learning in Higher Education are appended to this document.

The image features a solid purple background. Large, thick, curved shapes in orange and yellow are scattered across the frame. One large orange shape is on the left, curving downwards. Another large yellow shape is at the top, curving downwards. A third large shape, split into orange and yellow, is at the bottom, curving upwards. The word "INTRODUCTION" is centered in white, uppercase letters.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

About the Nexus project

The NEXUS project is an ERASMUS+ project (2019-1-ES01-KA203-065861), running from 2019 to 2022, focusing on empowering students (especially migrants) to exercise their rights, uphold human values, and contribute constructively to the society around them and the global community in general.

The countries in the EU are representative and participatory democracies and as such it is crucial that citizens are engaged in order to be an active part of society (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018). The Eurobarometer from 2013 shows statistics that young people in EU are losing trust in EU-institutions, are becoming less interested in voting because of the feeling that their votes will make no difference and that they are unaware of the democratic processes within EU ([European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life, 2013](#)). Other studies show that young people are somewhat more engaged in non-governmental organisations than in traditional political parties and that they are using more digital tools, such as social media, when they interact and engage (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018). Even if there are significant differences among countries, the trend is still clear that young people are becoming increasingly detached and that there is a need for enhanced engagement among young people in the EU. Newly arrived migrants are especially vulnerable to feeling detachment since they generally risk lacking social identity, sense of belonging and social engagement (Mansouri et al., 2016).

NEXUS aims at innovating the civic educational process resulting in increased participation of students in their communities. To accomplish this, three interconnected and aligned intellectual outputs have been specified. Firstly, a MOOC on Civic education will be developed for students with a migrant

and diverse background, focusing on Civic education micro-learning units. Secondly, a knowledge-sharing platform (building on open educational resources and practices) for civic educators will be developed accompanied by an inventory of digital tools for Open Democracy and a handbook for educators on civic education for a digital age. Finally, and connected to these guidelines, NEXUS will focus on cultural diversity and migration within higher education institutions (HEIs), and how to enhance student civic engagement by integrating Service Learning elements into second language courses, i. e. teaching the language of the receiving country.

About using Service Learning to enhance civic engagement

The objective of these guidelines is to promote innovative ways in which HEIs can support and work with wider communities by enabling civic engagement within a diverse student group, specifically focusing on Service Learning (SL) that will be thoroughly introduced in the next section of these guidelines.

Service Learning fits well into the third mission of HEIs. The third mission can be described as the development of activities that will link a HEI to its surrounding environment. This puts the HEI in the position of being a significant stakeholder in both contributing to economic and cultural growth as well as becoming an active part of meeting the changing societal needs.

Thus, HEIs are becoming increasingly involved in teaching and researching community engagement in a broader sense and connecting both to real world problems and needs.

It is fair to say that teaching, learning and research, when connected to third mission initiatives, are driving HEIs to become increasingly more visible as stakeholders for change and thereby create a positive impact on the community. Students themselves require quality and purposeful study programmes in line with both the labour market and current social trends. At the same time, the teaching processes require the introduction of new, innovative and inclusive methods of working, teaching and learning, those that involve the integration of local, regional and global problems in the curriculum. In the broader perspective, it is necessary to ensure a strong connection, i. e. cooperation, collaboration and knowledge exchange between universities and local communities, as well as a joint response to challenges.

Even if community engagement is becoming more and more visible in various forms of visionary documents it is still at an early, peripheral phase in many European HEIs, and the central challenge is in placing it at the heart of HEIs' life. Service Learning can be one way for HEIs to work better together with the local community to meet its societal needs and harness the power of HEIs' diverse knowledge bases to drive a sustainable and inclusive Europe. By developing community engagement, HEIs need to integrate changes in their portfolios of activities and pedagogies. They must build their capacity for community engagement, and one way of doing so is to embed it in curriculum design and syllabus so it can be assessed within the course structure. In doing so, students will both gain awareness of different types of societal needs and get first-hand experience of engaging in the community and addressing these needs.

This will also help HEIs to reach their full potential as valuable actors in their local communities, not only for students and staff but also for those needing change to those not directly involved in teaching or research.

Service Learning as an educational method and as an integral activity of community engagement is crucial for the NEXUS project because it explicitly promotes cooperation between the academic community and the civil sector, putting students and community engagement at the core of the learning experience. It also contributes to the achievement of the third mission of the university, which directly facilitates the development of the social responsibility of students and other members of the academic community in solving specific societal problems.

About defining and reaching our target group

The purpose of NEXUS is to primarily reach newly arrived migrant students and promote their civic engagement. In order to reach this group within HEIs, these guidelines will give examples of designing Service Learning modules connected to second language learning courses offered at HEIs. These courses usually contain elements of culture and society of the receiving country that will lend themselves to Service Learning initiatives. By addressing these types of courses, we will specifically reach students that are new to the receiving country and that will benefit from taking part in a Service Learning module. Unregarding how long students are planning to remain in the receiving country, the Service Learning experience will build a sense of how the receiving community is organised and how civic engagement contributes to solving societal challenges.

About these guidelines

These guidelines have been designed to be used as both inspiration and a template for HEIs that wish to design their own Service Learning module within a second language learning course at a HEI.

The guidelines are divided into three parts. The first part is a brief literature review that defines Service Learning and gives some background to its historical development. Part II provides a more practical and concrete picture of the benefits of being involved in a Service Learning initiative. The most common challenges are also discussed, but the focus is discussing and describing the roles of the students, the HEIs and the external partners. The third part connects Service Learning to second language learning courses in the receiving country. Examples from syllabi that are appropriate for Service Learning are described and a concrete example of a possible way forward is presented.



PART I
LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Service Learning

There are many definitions of Service Learning since the concept has evolved over time and since there are numerous ways it can be implemented in different contexts.

Eyler and Giles define Service Learning as “a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems, and at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding for themselves” (Eyler and Giles, 1999).

According to Vogelsgang and Astin (2000) Service Learning is a “powerful form of pedagogy because it provides a means of linking the academic with the practical”. It provides an opportunity for students to step outside of the classroom and put into practice the theory they have been learning about. At the same time, it emphasises cooperation, responsibility and democratic principles and connects higher education with the community by responding to its needs.

The European Association for Service Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE) defines Service Learning as “an educational approach that enhances students’ civic engagement, brings them closer to different social realities while allowing them to work in a real environment. It involves structured and graded student placements in organisations in response to the needs of the community and is different from volunteering because it is part of mandatory coursework.” (EASLHE, 2021). This is the definition of Service Learning we have chosen to use in this project because it includes all the key elements of contemporary Service Learning.

Early definitions and the development of the concept in the US

The United States has a long tradition of Service Learning, which has evolved through time, and which has served as a source of inspiration for European practices.

The term “Service Learning” was coined in 1967 in the United States and was derived from the work of Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey who explored the concept developed by John Dewey in his works on the philosophy of education *How We Think* (1933) and *Experience and Education* (1938). According to Speck and Hoppe (2004), the connection of education and community was emphasised by philosophers throughout history, from Plato and Aristotle to Locke, Kant and Rousseau and Dewey’s philosophy of engaged education can be perceived as a continuation of this line of thought.

According to Bringle, Phillips and Hudson (2004), Dewey defined four conditions necessary for implementing inquiry-based learning: “(a) generate interest in the learner; (b) be intrinsically worthwhile to the learner; (c) present problems that awaken new curiosity and create a demand for information; and (d) cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time” (Bringle, Phillips and Hudson, 2004).

According to Giles and Eyler, (1994), since Dewey, “the efforts in this field have focused more on principles of good practice in combining service and learning and in developing a common, agreed upon definition”. During the 1990s, following a twenty-five-year long period of searching for a definition, the basic principles and the Service Learning framework in the United States have been determined.

According to Furco (1996), Service Learning includes activities ranging from volunteering in community service projects to field studies and internship programs. The National Society for Experiential Education emphasises that intentional learning goals need to be achieved through the Service Learning experience (Furco, 1996), while Giles and Eyler emphasise the importance of “linking Service Learning to the mission and philosophy of higher education” (Giles and Eyler, 1994).

The definition agreed upon during the 1990s is the one by Bringle and Hatcher (1995), which argues that “service-learning [is] a course-based, credit-bearing, educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995, p. 112).

The contemporary concept – the civic aspect of Service Learning

From the 2000s on the civic aspect of Service Learning was further explored. According to Saltmarsh (2005), higher education should include “civic learning” and students should be equipped with “the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate as engaged, democratic citizens” (Saltmarsh, 2005) in order to successfully participate in the democratic processes.

Butin states that Service Learning can “enhance student outcomes (cognitive, affective, and ethical), foster a more active citizenry, promote a scholarship of engagement among teachers and institutions, support a more equitable society” (Butin, 2003), therefore also emphasises the civic aspect of Service Learning.

According to Bringle, Clayton and Price (2012) civic engagement refers to “teaching, research, and/or service that is both in and with the community [...] and includes Service Learning and participatory action research”. Instead of student placements common in Service Learning, partnerships with actors from the community are encouraged which include a “mutually-beneficial collaboration, in which all persons contribute knowledge, skills, and experience in determining the issues to be addressed, the questions to be asked, the problems to be resolved, the strategies to be used, the outcomes that are considered desirable, and the indicators of success” (Bringle, Clayton and Price, 2012). Such an approach ensures further development of HEI’s civic engagement and public service, and the authors have developed a structural framework for relationships identifying five key stakeholders of Service Learning and community engagement: Students, Organisations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on the campus, Residents in the community (SOFAR).

Zlotowski also stresses the importance of a “coordinated partnership between the campus and the community, with the instructor tailoring the service experience to the educational agenda and community representatives ensuring that the students’ community service is consistent with their goals” (Zlotowski, 1999). Zlotowski also believes that the following three points are crucial for successful implementation of Service Learning: “1. integrating Service Learning programs into the central mission and goals of the schools and agencies where they are based; 2. establishing a balance of power between educational and community partners; 3. wedding reflection to experience.” (Zlotowski, 1995).

This is in line with the goals of Service Learning defined by Bringle, Phillips and Hudson (2004), which include “(a) benefit to community stakeholders (e.g., agency, clients, neighbourhood 4 residents) and (b) academic learning outcomes” (Bringle, Phillips and Hudson, 2004). Although Service Learning in itself does not necessarily provide learning, they emphasise the importance of combining theory and practice in order to achieve the goals of socially responsive knowledge according to Altman: “(1) to educate students in the problems of society; (2) to let have them experience and understand first-hand social issues in their community; and, most important, (3) give students the experiences and skills to act on social problems. (Altman, 1996, pp. 375–376).” (in Bringle, Phillips and Hudson, 2004).

In addition to this, “well-designed reflection activities should (a) intentionally link the service experience to course-based learning objectives, (b) be structured, (c) occur regularly, (d) allow feedback and assessment, and (e) include the clarification of values” (Bringle and Hatcher, 1999; Hatcher and Bringle, 1997).

International Service Learning

International Service Learning (ISL) combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context, and according to Crabtree (2008), it should support a civic mission and, as he puts it, “the objectives of SL include active, collaborative, applied, and experiential learning; development of cross-cultural, global, and diversity awareness and skills; critical reflection; increased university-community collaboration on social problems; and the formation of an informed and engaged citizenry” (Crabtree, 2008). Besides the cross-cultural experience which ISL provides, it also creates a context for “participatory, action, and feminist approaches to community-based research” (Crabtree, 2008) and an opportunity to link

to research with civic responsibility and social justice.

According to Butin, “service learning is highly amenable to a cultural perspective”. (Butin, 2003). It is seen as an ideal medium for civil engagement, democratic renewal and for enhancing “individuals’ sense of community and belongingness to something greater than themselves” (Barber, 1992; Lisman, 1998, in Butin, 2003). It encourages and increases “tolerance of diversity, to gain a greater awareness of societal concerns, to develop a stronger moral and ethical sense, and to encourage volunteerism and civic engagement” (Coles, 1993, in Butin 2003) and is therefore a very applicable practice in international context.

Since migrations do involve the international component of education, Butin’s perception of Service Learning is very applicable, especially since it emphasises that Service Learning on the macro level “is an ideal means by which to support and extend civil engagement, to foster a democratic renewal and to enhance individuals’ sense of community and belongingness to something greater than themselves” (Barber, 1992; Lisman, 1998 in Butin, 2003).

This makes Service Learning as defined above a good approach and a teaching method which can help remove barriers which refugee students are faced with. Accordingly, it can also have positive effects on other students with migration-related backgrounds.

✓ EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The examples of good practice indicate that Service Learning can be implemented in numerous different fields and that Service Learning activities can be adapted to various contexts. The examples listed here are only an illustration of European HEIs' Service Learning experience gathered by EASLHE.

Example 1

Babes-Bolyai University, Romania

Connecting students with the needs of shelter animals through S-L

Undergraduate students of Psychology participated in Service Learning activities within the course on Animal Psychology. The partner institutions are local NGOs managing animal shelters. The students' Service Learning project included working at the shelter (taking care of the animals but also promoting adoptions and participating in disseminating information within sterilisation campaigns and fundraising events. The also included activities aimed at improving their understanding of dog and cat body language, resulting in better understanding the elements of animal welfare and the benefits of human-animal interactions.

The students' activities were prepared and evaluated during the Animal Psychology seminars.

Source: [EASLHE](#)

Example 2

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Criminology in the Real World

Undergraduate students of Criminology participated in sixteen Service Learning projects. The partner institutions ranged from women's centres and athletic clubs to prisons and probation services. The students' Service Learning projects included activities such as working with a local prison to understand the impacts of Covid 19 on prisoner rehabilitation, working with a local athletics club to research how to provide support for the at risk youth during the pandemic, or working with the local authorities to understand crime displacement during the pandemic.

Source: [EASLHE](#)

Example 3

Ruhr University Bochum, Germany:

Learning through the Assumption of Social Responsibility: Social Inequality, Poverty and Housing

Undergraduate students of Geography participated in a year-long Service Learning project focused on community-based research. Three teams of students developed research and service ideas for community partners. Thereby the students developed skills such as time management, project management, team work, and self-discipline while at the same time they strengthening their research competences in the area of human geography. The partner organisations came from the local communities in the towns of Essen and Bochum.

Source: [EASLHE](#)

Example 4

The University of Limerick, Ireland

Limerick Inside Out

The Service Learning module included 6–8 hours over a 15-week semester and was worth 6 ECTS credits. The community service consisted of international students working with civic groups in addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers recently arrived in the Limerick area. Besides participating in activities aimed at enhancing the end-users lives, the students also conducted a needs analysis and prepared a report for the city and county council.

Reflection activities included practical reflective activities focused on student participation and contribution to the community project, which comprised 40% of the final grade. The remaining 60% of the final grade was comprised of a reflective essay, postcards, posters and a community project.

Source: [EASLHE](#)

Example 5

IES Abroad, Italy

S-L 395 Social Action Seminar

Service Learning is integrated into an interdisciplinary seminar which includes students' community service. The Municipality of Milan is the partner and offers a variety of activities in which students can participate related to the migration crisis at the local government level. Students with an advanced level of Italian language knowledge can shadow their mentors, help them with their cases by assisting the migrants, from both an administrative and human perspective. Students with Italian language skills at beginner level can participate in mentoring activities for teens. Reflection activities take place during the interdisciplinary seminar with a focus on the impact of immigration on Italian society.

Source: [EASLHE](#)



PART II
**SERVICE LEARNING
IN PRACTICE**



Education and social responsibility – the relation of community engagement and Service Learning

If we understand Service Learning as a method which aims to enrich the process of acquiring knowledge through critical reflection on the complex causes of social problems and mutual cooperation of different stakeholders on a joint project (Mikelić Preradović, 2009), it is an innovative teaching method because it changes the learning and the teaching experience – for both students and the teaching staff. At the very core of the method is the idea of the connection between the university and the society, the transfer of knowledge that enriches all the parties involved and the fact that higher education receives the opportunity – actively and positively – to influence the environment around itself (Begić et al., 2019). SL presents a micro-level within community engagement that ultimately stands for a larger set of policies, strategies and activities within an educational institution.

In SL, the learning component and the community service component should form a rounded picture centred on the engagement of students who work on a project that responds to a real, and clearly defined current problem, and which draws basic knowledge from the course. Therefore, for the implementation of the method the following is crucial: SL program must be linked to education, it must be based on the curriculum, and it must be oriented towards achieving well-being in a community. In short, SL improves the acquisition of knowledge, and the learning contributes to community service. It is important that the assessment of the course is based on the learning outcomes and not on the work results (Preradović, 2009).

Students' engagement in partner organisations helps them to become acquainted with the real opportunities in society and enables

them to better understand and adopt the theory acquired through a particular course. There are many ways in which students can be engaged. However, it is highly important to distinguish SL from student work placements or internships, as well as from volunteer work. Volunteering is focused on the common good, but it lacks a clear connection with the academic curriculum, and very often it does not even exist. Student work placements or internships can be related to the curriculum, but they do not necessarily include the component of social responsibility, civic engagement and the needs of the community.

Service Learning diagram

According to Fresno State University, Service Learning can be presented by the diagram below, which shows the position of Service Learning at the overlap of academic learning, practical experience and civic engagement, student practice, student volunteering and civic education.

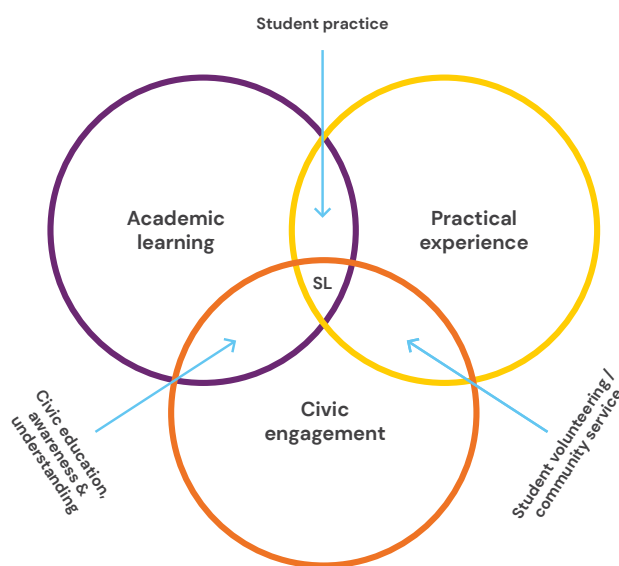


Figure 1: Service Learning Diagram, source: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/csm/arc/service-learning.html>

Principles of Service Learning

According to Begić et al. (2019), for a SL program to be successful, three principles should be observed:

- **Reality:** student engagement should be based on real, identified and previously researched problems, challenges and needs of a community.
- **Reciprocity:** all the parties involved should benefit from the exchange of knowledge – the students, the teachers/higher education institution and the community.
- **Reflection:** a revision of the connection between engagement and educational content must be ensured

Students become equal stakeholders in the learning and teaching process and are focused on proactive and critical thinking. Simultaneously, they become involved in social, community and business processes because they are collaborating with organisations outside the education system which can ultimately provide them with various contacts or their first employment. Also, this is in line with the principles of the Bologna process because it responds to the problem of acquiring theoretical knowledge without practical experience that corresponds to specific social problems (EACEA, 2020).

A key component of SL is integration. All activities that students choose and conduct must be implemented so that they review, identify, illustrate, validate, expand or question the teaching materials and the knowledge that an academic course provides (Preradović, 2009).

Objectives, benefits and challenges of Service Learning implementation

The innovativeness of the SL method lies in the fact that, when implemented properly, it directly affects all involved stakeholders; it challenges the established patterns, beliefs and assumptions of stakeholders in the educational process (Begić, 2019).

Therefore, the benefits of SL should equally affect students, the university, and the community. The students receive an insight into many ways to apply their academic knowledge and see how it can positively affect the selected community. On the other hand, the teachers are given a more detailed insight into the talents and the abilities of students, which are not always easily recognisable in the “traditional” educational environment. Finally, the chosen community is given the opportunity to be reconnected with the knowledge within the education system.

Ensuring a system in which learning and teaching go beyond their established framework is not an easy task. SL stresses that the students should use the knowledge gained in the classroom to improve their environment and learn from the process. The implementation of SL programs requires careful planning and careful allocation of time and energy. In the equation of daily obligations and traditional teaching, this can become very challenging for the involved stakeholders (Begić et al., 2019).

In order to clearly present the objectives, the advantages and the challenges of SL as described by Begić et al. (2019), the following table has been prepared:

Objectives, benefits and challenges of Service Learning

	Objectives	Benefits	Challenges
Students	<p>Improve their learning through the combination of theory and social engagement.</p> <p>Learn about teamwork in which caring for the team and the community is a prerequisite.</p> <p>“Soft” and “hard” skills are equally targeted.</p> <p>Experience different knowledge, social and business challenges.</p> <p>Learn about civic engagement and active citizenship.</p> <p>Develop critical thinking and academic literacy.</p>	<p>Understanding theoretical knowledge in a real context.</p> <p>Critical thinking and creativity development in dealing with real societal problems.</p> <p>Development of self-esteem, a sense of responsibility and teamwork skills.</p> <p>Clearer articulation of the detected problem and the needs of the chosen community.</p> <p>Accepting social diversity and reducing stereotypes.</p> <p>Learning about project management.</p> <p>Making contacts and preparing future collaborations with various organisations and persons who have different professional interests.</p> <p>A possibility of employment and/or as self-employment.</p>	<p>Collision of courses and planned activities with other obligations.</p> <p>Lack of time for implementing all the activities in one semester.</p> <p>Fear of taking over additional, unknown responsibilities.</p> <p>Fear of working in an unknown environment with unknown associates.</p> <p>Logistic challenges (transport, time management, unforeseen costs).</p> <p>Poor interpersonal relationships and team organisation.</p> <p>Unequal participation of all the team members in the implementation of the activities.</p> <p>Inability to connect socially useful work with the outcomes of the academic course.</p> <p>A low number of ECTS credits can be demotivating.</p>
HEIs	<p>Improve the teaching process by fusing theory and community engagement.</p> <p>Develop a permanent system for course improvement.</p> <p>Enrich the offer of courses and learning outcomes.</p> <p>Create opportunities for cooperation between the education system and the community.</p> <p>Motivate students for greater commitment and active participation in the educational process.</p>	<p>Expanding the teacher’s role.</p> <p>Developing innovative teaching methods.</p> <p>Expanding the academic field of expertise and creating new knowledge.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the impact and the application of academic knowledge in the community in order to meet its needs.</p> <p>Understanding and structuring institution’s own social responsibilities.</p>	<p>Lack of control over the knowledge acquisition process.</p> <p>Lack of control over all aspects of organising and implementing student activities.</p> <p>Lack of appropriate student assessment.</p> <p>Lack of time to work with all the students and address the challenges they face.</p> <p>Observing SL as a “supplement” to the course, and not its integral part.</p>

Objectives, benefits and challenges of Service Learning

	Objectives	Benefits	Challenges
HEIs	<p>Prepare students for “real” life and for active citizenship.</p> <p>Encourage students to think about their future career and their role in the society.</p> <p>Build a positive image of a socially responsible and community engaged educational institution</p>	<p>Exchanging knowledge with the community which can impact the development of new courses and projects.</p> <p>Recognizing different talents and student abilities.</p> <p>Creating a positive image of the institution in the community.</p>	
External partner	<p>Solve the problems and meet the needs of the selected community/social groups/end users.</p> <p>Create an environment in which the local community is an active participant in education.</p> <p>Create an environment in which the community has access to academic knowledge as well as high-level information.</p> <p>Create an environment in which knowledge sharing is solution-oriented and deals with existing problems.</p> <p>Create an environment in which the community has greater access to higher education.</p>	<p>A possibility to work with volunteers (students).</p> <p>A possibility to improve an organisation’s influence and its processes.</p> <p>A possibility to build a wider (business) network.</p> <p>A possibility to solve problems in the community through the exchange of (academic) knowledge.</p> <p>A possibility to receive and give new knowledge, information and perspectives.</p> <p>Detecting new opportunities and space for action.</p> <p>A possibility to influence students, their professional and personal development.</p> <p>A possibility to create new business and social opportunities for themselves, their users and the community.</p>	<p>Lack of time for preparing, training, working with, and supervising all the students.</p> <p>Insufficient understanding of the benefits SL provides.</p> <p>Difficulties in recruiting students for several reasons: location, timeline, type of engagement.</p> <p>Difficulties in defining engagement and SL activities that are clearly linked to the course learning outcomes.</p>

Table 1. Objectives, benefits and challenges of Service Learning

SERVICE LEARNING STAKEHOLDERS

There are two steps to be taken before the SL programme begins, both are a prerequisite for its successful implementation: first appropriate partners should be chosen, and then roles should be carefully assigned.

1. Choosing the partners

Selecting the appropriate partner organisation is crucial for successfully implementing an SL programme. The knowledge gained during the course should be channelled into a meaningful activity important for a particular study field. Unlike volunteering or professional work placement, "SL is not oriented towards a market economy but towards a set of organisations that connect people with the government and the private sector, i. e. act in space between the state, the market and the citizens, in the civil society" (Mikelić Preradović 2009).

According to Mikelić Preradović in her book Learning for the knowledge society: theory and practice of service learning (2009), in which she provides a plethora of practical tips, this type of partner is called a "social partner", and this term includes non-profit and non-governmental organisations, public institutions, educational institutions, and social welfare institutions.

Choosing the external partner can be done in three ways:

- the teachers and students choose the partners jointly,
- students select the partners independently,
- teachers select the partners independently.

According to Mikelić Preradović (2009), before choosing the appropriate partner, the following questions should be answered:

Questions before choosing external partners	
Questions about the organisation (external partner)	Questions about the student engagement
In what area of expertise does the selected organisation operate?	Will working in the selected organisation ensure at least a partial positive effect on the target group of the organisation?
What are its goals, mission, structure, and history?	Does the selected organisation require certain skills and particular student knowledge?
How many users does it have?	Will the students be provided with the mentoring program, evaluation, feedback?
What is the public image of the selected organisation?	Will students have one or more mentors?
Does the organisation have experience in similar projects?	What are the expectations of the organisation, what is the type of student engagement required?
How does the organisation meet the needs of the community?	What are the needs of the community that we can define, and what are the ones the organisation is trying to address?
Where is the organisation located and what are its working hours?	
Does the partner have the necessary knowledge and capacity to work with the students?	

Table 2. Questions before choosing external partners

According to Begić et al (2019), it is important to collect information about the potential partners in a timely manner, in order to match the number of students with the number of selected organisations and to avoid large teams, to make sure that students are truly involved in SL activities, to agree on an organised monitoring system with the partners in order to monitor the progress of the engagement before, during and after the end of the semester, by all the stakeholders: the students, the teachers, and the external partners.

2. Assigning the roles: students, teachers, external partners

The level of cooperation between all the key stakeholders, their patience and openness to accept criticism, especially when Service Learning is implemented for the first time, is of key importance.

Failure is a great risk in the implementation of SL programmes, and it can be caused by insufficient preparation, planning and communication between the team members. The learning experience differs, depending on the chosen topic, on the engagement of the chosen partner and the dynamics between the students.

Remember:

It is crucial that the teacher builds an environment in which students will act collaboratively, with a clear division of tasks and responsibilities.

An overview of stakeholder roles		
Students	HE institutions	External partner
<p>Gather information about the chosen external partner.</p> <p>Become acquainted with other team members.</p> <p>Clearly define achievable goals and activities.</p> <p>Participate actively and equally in the defined activities.</p> <p>Communicate regularly with other team members, the teacher and the external partner.</p> <p>Regularly work on their SL journals.</p>	<p>Define the learning outcomes.</p> <p>Include the SL method in the course syllabus.</p> <p>Monitor the quality of all the goals and activities, as well as the academic aspect of the tasks and their quality.</p> <p>Encourage critical thinking. Implement student assessment procedures.</p> <p>Sign agreements with the partners regarding.</p> <p>Review and evaluate SL journals</p>	<p>Define the problems and social needs in the community.</p> <p>Mentor and evaluate the students' work.</p> <p>Monitor the students' progress.</p> <p>Do the logistics planning in collaboration with the teacher and the students: the choice of place, time and the manner of project development.</p>

Table 3. An overview of stakeholder roles

Remember:

According to Begić et al (2019), here is a list of tips for teachers for a successful implementation of SL:

- Plan ahead – the semester is short.
- Develop feasible tasks and activities.
- Use clear and effective communication.
- Clearly indicate the stakeholders' responsibilities.
- Express gratitude and appreciate other people's work.
- Ask the students what their interests are.
- Respect your students and associates.
- Give and gladly receive constructive criticism.
- Involve all students equally.
- Use the students' talents.
- Be aware that everyone has limited time.
- Help students understand the importance of their engagement.
- Encourage students to be proactive and creative and to develop new ideas.
- Do not assume anything, especially about the stakeholders' needs and expectations.

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMME

The planning of a Service Learning programme is carried out through several stages, starting from defining the concept of the course, through developing the curriculum and the course syllabus.

The students' Service Learning assignments and experience should relate to the learning outcomes of the course where the pedagogical method is implemented. Also, they should address the chosen social problem and include equal supervision and mentoring by both the teachers and the selected partner organisations. Since the initial planning is always the biggest challenge, Begić et al (2019) advise that the process be collaborative, within which the students, the teachers and the community jointly choose a problem, plan the implementation and define the method of reporting of the project in a collaborative manner. This approach will ensure equal involvement of all the stakeholders in the implementation of activities.

1. The concept of the course

According to Mikelić Preradović (2019), a good way to start with introducing SL is including it in an already existing course, and then gradually improve it, depending on the academic goals and the students' result. There are several possibilities for organising a course with an SL component:

Service Learning in different course types		
Course type	Description	Example
SL as an obligatory part of a certain course	Requires all students to engage in SL activities. It is mandatory to write a SL journal, essay, or an analytical article	Geology students organise workshops about earthquakes, their effects and methods of protection for the general population.

Service Learning in different course types		
Course type	Description	Example
SL as an elective part of a certain course	<p>Provides an alternative to the "traditional" way of learning and teaching. Ensures the right to choose, but results in different learning experience if some students do not select SL.</p> <p>Students who do not participate in the SL project may get the impression that it is less demanding.</p>	A group of economics or law students advise senior members of the community on legal and financial literacy
SL in course clusters	<p>Connects the learning outcomes of two or three courses in different studies and disciplines.</p> <p>Encourages cooperation, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary between higher education institutions.</p> <p>Integrates knowledge from different disciplines.</p>	Students of nutrition, design and sociology conduct a campaign focused on teenagers about the importance of proper nutrition
Final thesis project for undergraduate or graduate studies	<p>A more complex project depending on the academic field.</p> <p>Demonstrates the skill of applying and understanding the SL method. Integrates higher level knowledge and prepares students for future careers.</p> <p>Higher level of critical thinking in collaboration with the teacher and the chosen partner.</p>	

Table 4. Service Learning in different course types

2. Curriculum development

Depending on the learning objectives of each course, students can be engaged in a wide variety of types of projects. According to Delve and Mintz (1990), types of activities may vary depending on the chosen topic, tasks and needs of the chosen partner:

Direct socially beneficial activities are those that students conduct by working with the end users of a selected organisation. Examples of such activities are: future primary school teachers and high school teachers work on teaching children with disabilities, sociology and medicine students work with senior citizens, nutrition students work in the public kitchen, etc.

Indirect socially beneficial activities include students working on a project in a selected organisation, but do not have direct contact with the organisation's end users. An example of such an activity: research activities, designing promotional material, writing project applications etc.

The curriculum should connect learning outcomes with community service activities, encourage cooperation, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. Whether choosing a new course or improving an existing one, before developing a curriculum, according to Mikelić Preradović (2009) it is important is to answer the following questions:

Questions regarding the students' and teachers' role

Questions related to the students' role:	Questions related to the teacher's role:
<p>How many students will be included in the course and work on projects?</p> <p>Will all students work on one project, or will you organise more small projects for different groups?</p> <p>Are the objectives of SL aligned with the needs and interests of students and to what extent?</p> <p>Will students be divided into teams?</p> <p>What knowledge, skills and interests do students need to show before starting the course to successfully acquire knowledge?</p> <p>Are there students who you do not recommend for participating in the SL project?</p> <p>Will all students have an equal workload?</p> <p>Will the chosen activities present an equal, or at least similar, intellectual challenge to all the students involved?</p> <p>Are students clearly informed about their roles and responsibilities, are they prepared well enough?</p> <p>What are the main activities to be carried out?</p>	<p>What are the reasons and needs for introducing SL in the course? Which are the most important and which are the least important reasons?</p> <p>What changes does the teacher want regarding the students?</p> <p>Which student competencies and knowledge does the teacher want to see developed?</p> <p>What learning outcomes should SL achieve?</p> <p>What will you consider a socially useful activity in the context of the course?</p> <p>Will a socially useful activity be a central or a peripheral activity in the course?</p> <p>To what extent does the success of the course depend on the success of student engagement?</p> <p>Before the project starts, will the teacher check its feasibility, time management, material resources and professional relevance?</p> <p>Is the teacher willing to provide additional support and training?</p> <p>How will the supervision of the student work be carried out?</p> <p>How will the SL component be evaluated?</p> <p>Will an external partner be selected in cooperation with the students?</p> <p>How will the teacher integrate the SL component in the curriculum for the other students who do not participate in the project to benefit from it?</p> <p>Will other teachers be involved in the project?</p> <p>Does the course meet the needs of a for-profit or a non-profit partner, or both?</p> <p>Is it better to implement the project as a part of the course or should the whole course be devoted to SL?</p>

Table 5. Questions regarding the students' and teachers' role

3. SL course syllabus

After developing and/or adjusting the curriculum, it is necessary to adjust the syllabus of the selected course. According to Heffernan (2001), the basic elements that each SL syllabus of should contain, regardless of the academic field, is:

- Community service activity is included in the course as one of the goals of the course

- The instrument for assessing the experience of the SL as well as what, when and how will students be evaluated during the semester is clearly described
- The roles and responsibilities of students in the project are described in detail
- It is specified how students should demonstrate what they have learned on the project
- The process of critical reflection and analysis is described

- Course tasks that connect community service activity with the course content are presented
- Expectations related to the public dissemination of student papers are described

Therefore, there are three stages which need to be included: the initial stage – setting the goals and preparing the students; the action stage – community service activity (ideally 15 to 20 hours) and the final stage – critical reflection.

REFLECTION AND CRITICAL THINKING IN SERVICE LEARNING

Critical thinking and reflection are the key to successfully mastering the SL method. It includes methods such as a journal, discussion, listening and reading about mutual experiences, analysis and critically connecting student experience with the course objectives and study programme. Depending on the selected topic, the dynamics among students and other factors, students can decide for themselves on how they want to report on the progress of their projects (Mikelić Preradović, 2009).

According to Mikelić Preradović (2009), the following critical thinking activities can be included:

- Group discussion
- Journal
- Analytical article
- Service Learning map
- Presentation
- Critical study of the subject literature
- Case study
- Index cards
- Student online forum or an e-mail discussion
- An essay type exam
- Whatever the chosen format may be, critical reflections can be implemented at three points: before, during and after the community service activity by answering a number of questions which can serve as guidelines for both teachers and students.

Questions for critical reflection	
1. Before the start of the course:	<p>What are your expectations from the implementation of SL?</p> <p>What challenges do you expect in the implementation of the project?</p> <p>What specific social problems does your project seek to solve?</p> <p>What social needs does the project seek to meet?</p> <p>Can you list the causes of these needs and problems?</p>
2. During the implementation:	<p>What did you do this week that had a good or bad effect on others in the community?</p> <p>As a result of your project implementation, does your understanding of the chosen community change?</p> <p>Upon completion of the project, how can you continue to contribute to the solution of the selected problem?</p> <p>How can you educate others or raise awareness about the selected issues?</p>

Questions for critical reflection

<p>2. During the implementation:</p>	<p>What is the most positive thing that has happened in the implementation of your activities this week?</p> <p>What are the most difficult parts of the project, why and how do you solve them?</p> <p>Which part of the project are you most satisfied with and why?</p>
<p>3. During and/or at the end of the semester:</p>	<p>What did you learn from the success or disappointments associated with working on the project?</p> <p>During the implementation, was there a problem/situation that you want to discuss with the mentor or teacher?</p> <p>What course concepts do you understand better because of this experience?</p> <p>How is the SL experience related to your long-term goals? Are the project results in line with expectations? If not, is it necessary to modify expectations or the whole project?</p> <p>Are there any recognizable leaders in your team? Who would that be?</p> <p>What is your biggest contribution to the project and the community?</p> <p>Did you miss something in the planning, what?</p> <p>What did you learn from the success or disappointments associated with working on the project?</p> <p>During the implementation, was there a problem/situation that you want to discuss with the mentor or teacher?</p> <p>What course concepts do you understand better because of this experience?</p> <p>How is the SL experience related to your long-term goals?</p> <p>Are the project results in line with expectations? If not, is it necessary to modify expectations or the whole project?</p> <p>Are there any recognizable leaders in your team? Who would that be?</p> <p>What is your biggest contribution to the project and the community?</p> <p>Did you miss something in the planning, what?</p> <p>What knowledge and skills should you further develop in order for your project to succeed?</p> <p>What have you learned so far?</p> <p>In what way and to what extent have you managed to contribute to solving the problems in the community that your project deals with?</p> <p>Do you see any other needs in the community that your next project could address?</p>

Table 6. Questions for critical reflection

The critical thinking and reflection stage gives students the opportunity to document and discuss the knowledge acquired through community service.

On the other hand, teachers get a chance to evaluate their knowledge.

ASSESSING SERVICE LEARNING

The critical reflection stage includes the evaluation of progress from the academic perspective, as in most cases the students need to be graded at the end of the course. The assessment of academic achievement should be based on the evidence provided by the students themselves, and not on the proof of participating in community service activities.

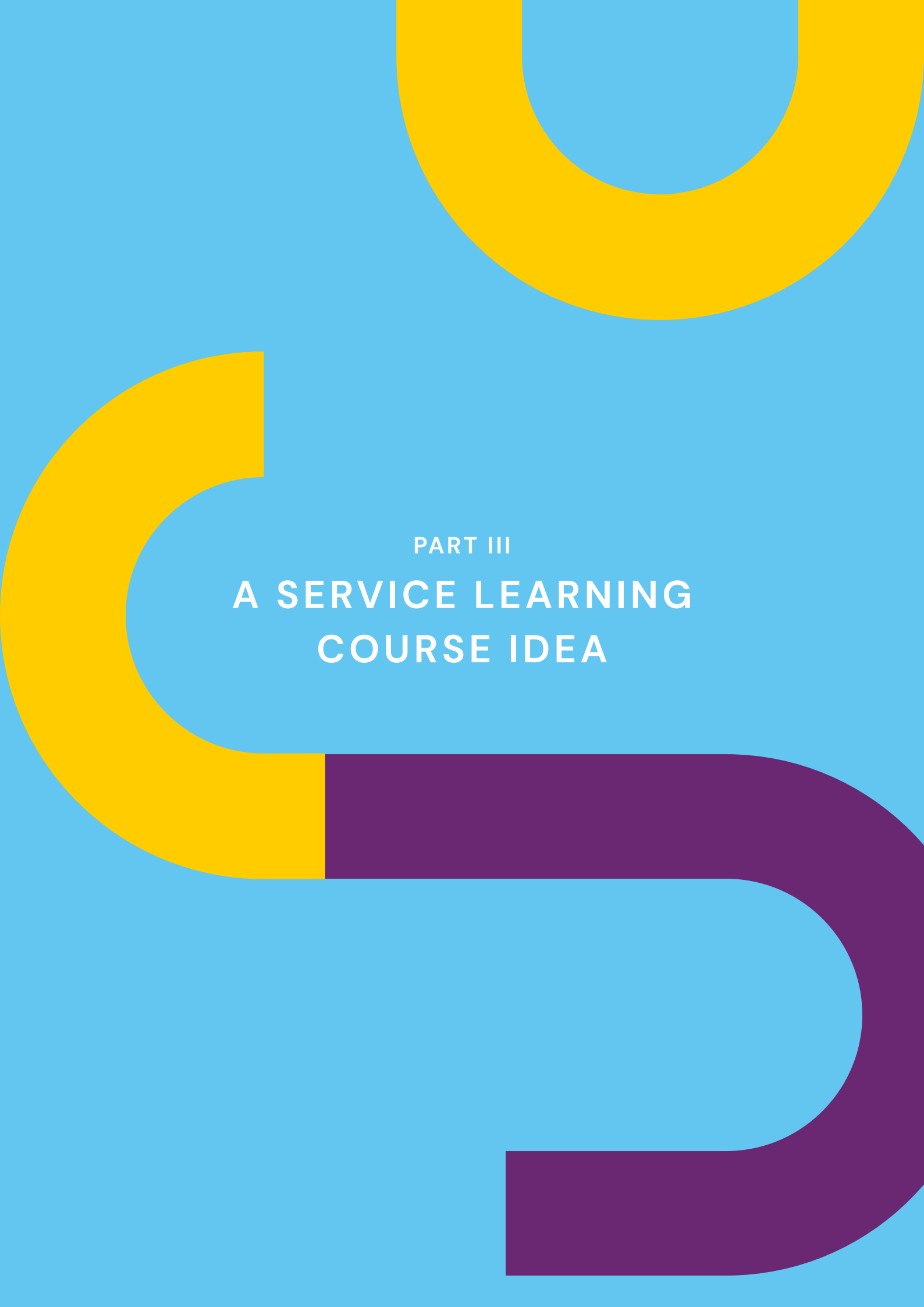
According to the Living Knowledge Educators' Guide to Service Learning (2019), it is important to determine whether the learning goals have been met and in what way and has the planned positive change been achieved? Other elements to consider is active student participation and reflection. Accordingly, there are two ways to measure impact: a) before and after project implementation, b) comparing similar projects.

Assessment activities can include the following:

- Interview with the mentor in the community (external partner)
- Interview with the student project leader
- Journal analysis
- Evaluation of student products / services
- (Self) assessment of students in the team on the engagement of other team members
- Evaluation form at the end of the semester

Remember:

- Additional hours of work do not necessarily mean additional points.
- It is important to observe the emotional reactions of the students.
- Combining two or more assessment tools can be useful.
- Document whether students have gained new insights and used analytical and critical thinking skills.
- The SL program does not have to succeed!

A large, stylized number '3' is the central graphic element. The top curve of the '3' is yellow, while the bottom curve and the vertical stem are a dark purple. The background is a solid light blue. The text is centered within the upper loop of the '3'.

PART III
A SERVICE LEARNING
COURSE IDEA

The examples of good practice show that Service Learning projects which involve migrants and/or persons with a migration-related background involve them as objects, i. e. as the end users – the ones who are receiving the students' help and/or benefiting from the students' Service Learning activities. The Nexus project aims to make the students with a migration-related background the subjects in Service Learning projects, i. e. aims to include them in Service Learning projects as active participants – the ones who implement community service activities in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the courses and at the same time become actively involved in the community and increase their level of civic engagement.

Migrant students are not a homogeneous group within HEIs, but rather they are dispersed through various study programmes at different levels and follow different study paths. Moreover, students cannot be profiled based on their migrant background. For this reason, it was concluded that the best way of reaching migrant students would be through the receiving countries' language courses. These courses are offered to newly-arrived foreign students by HEIs, and have a high probability of including migrant students' participation.

The HEIs from all the Nexus partner countries offer similar courses, which also include a component regarding the culture and/or society of the receiving country.

Throughout the partner countries of this project, HEIs offer second language courses from beginners' level to more advanced levels. Target groups for the courses vary, but to a high extent, the courses are aimed at foreign students already enrolled at the HEI in question, such as exchange students and international students, so called free movers. A few examples of courses aimed at other tar-

get groups are the Croaticum summer school aimed at earlier emigrants' descendants in Croatia, and specific courses in Sweden with the aim to reach national general entry requirements for university studies.

Apart from a language proficiency of different levels and language skills, many of the courses have an explicit learning outcome of knowledge of the national culture and/or society. The purpose of including this element in the course may be a method and means to get a wider understanding of the target language, or an outspoken aim to enhance the students' awareness of cultural and societal mechanisms in their new society. An example of the latter is Malmö University's course package aimed at international students, Swedish Language, Culture and Society I–IV, which teaches and assesses the culture and society strands in English to ensure content on an academic level.

For the purpose of this project idea—creating a Service Learning course with the aim to enhance newly arrived students' civic engagement in the local society—the project has chosen to work with courses designed with the explicit learning outcome of an understanding/knowledge/proficiency of the local culture and society, like the one described above.

Using Service Learning as a pedagogical tool in language learning courses in higher education is not new. However, earlier examples come with the aim to develop the students' language proficiency. The novelty of this suggested course outline is that the academic content for the students to develop in practice—as well as the takeaway for the receiving organisation—would be within the field of culture and society. This means that the language course has more the role of a vessel for the Service Learning outcome in a way that the project has not been able to find elsewhere.

✓ EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Using Service Learning in foreign language classes

The experience of implementing Service Learning into foreign language classes is quite positive because the students' service work provides them with the opportunity to learn the language in an authentic language context, and not in a simulated one such as a classroom. Acquiring the language through interaction with native speakers in real-life situations is more interesting and more natural, therefore easier for students.

Here are some examples of successful Service Learning in the context of learning foreign languages which can serve as inspiration for designing a course.

Example 6

KU Leuven, Belgium:

Service Learning in a Chinese context: connecting encounters

Students of Chinese Studies (Master of Sinology) take a Service Learning course worth 12 ECTS, consisting of 160 hours of preparation, reading and reflection and 160 hours of community service. They take this course during their year abroad in China. The partner organisation is a local Chinese societal organisation, which articulates its needs. Students' Service Learning projects consist of either teaching English to internal migrants who come from the countryside to the suburbs of Shanghai or visiting an elderly citizens' home. The students' engagement with the organisation and their reflection output is evaluated and graded.

Source: [EASLHE](#)

Example 7

Example 7. Sacred Heart University, USA:

Using Service Learning as Part of an ESL Program

Service Learning is integrated into the ESL (English as Second Language) Programme. The partner organisations are the local soup kitchen, an elementary school, a tutoring agency, a retirement community, a Habitat for Humanity construction project, where students serve on a weekly basis and use English actively. The students' engagement is discussed in class, and they are given reading or writing assignments which are graded.

Source: <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Minor-ServiceLearning.html>

Example 8

National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan:

I help, therefore, I learn: Service Learning on Web 2.0 in an EFL speaking class

Service Learning is integrated into EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class and is focused on using Web 2.0 tools (YouTube and Facebook). The partner organisations the University and the city, and the students create two YouTube videos in English with useful information for international students on campus (public transport, sightseeing etc.). The videos are graded.

Source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09588221.2013.818555>

Implementing Service Learning in the curriculum – case study

There are several options for incorporating Service Learning into an existing curriculum for enhancing newly arrived students' civic engagement through gaining a more thorough understanding of the society and culture of the receiving country.

The options are shown in the example of the course Swedish Language, Culture and Society IV offered by Malmö University, Sweden, taught in English.

OPTION 1 – no changes to an existing syllabus

Some higher education institutions and even some national higher education systems have a complex and lengthy evaluation and approval procedure for introducing new courses or introducing changes to existing courses, and this can be an obstacle for implementing Service Learning. In this case, Service Learning might be integrated in an existing course as a teaching method, with no changes to an existing syllabus so that the evaluation and approval procedure of a new syllabus version is not necessary.

In this option, teachers could use the possibility to interpret and adapt existing teaching practices and learning activities to implement Service Learning.

It is important to identify the part of the course where Service Learning can be implemented, which learning outcomes can be targeted, and how they can be assessed within the existing course framework. The interventions to the syllabus are shown below.





Highlighted text in yellow refers to existing possible connections to Service Learning. Orange text in option 2 and 3 indicates proposed added text to the syllabus. When explanation is needed, it is written as a comment in the margin.

Syllabus spring 2022

Title: Swedish Language, Culture and Society IV

Swedish title: Svenska för internationella studenter – språk, kultur och samhällsliv IV

Course code: AK307E

Credits: 10 credits

Grading scale: UA / Excellent (A), Very Good (B), Good (C), Satisfactory (D), Pass (E) or Fail (U)

Language of instruction: English

Syllabus approval date: 2021-05-26

Syllabus valid from: 2021-08-30

Decision-making body: Faculty of Education and Society

Entry requirements: General entry requirements + English 6 and completed course

SV213S/SV213L/AK306E Swedish Language, Culture and Society III.

or

equivalent knowledge in Swedish tested by an eligibility test.

Level: Basic level

Main field: No main field.

Progression level: G1F

Progression level in relation to degree requirements: The course can normally be a part of a first-cycle qualification.

Course objectives: The aim of the course is to further develop knowledge and skills in the Swedish language **as well as deepen knowledge and understanding about Swedish Culture and Society.**

Course contents: The course develops knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical parts for oral and written communication in Swedish. The course also contains reading of coherent texts. In all parts, the Swedish everyday life, the student life and societal issues stand in focus.

In addition to the language instruction Swedish culture and Swedish social life will be presented and discussed in English.

Learning outcomes: Upon completion of the course, the student can:

1. use a vocabulary of high frequent Swedish words and phrases concerning everyday life, student life and societal issues
2. read and understand coherent texts in Swedish
3. write coherent texts in Swedish
4. apply rules for the structure of the Swedish language in writing
5. orally reproduce occurrences, opinions and explanations in Swedish
6. talk about everyday life, student life and societal issues
7. demonstrate the ability to understand spoken Swedish

8. describe aspects of Swedish social and cultural life

After finishing the course, the student will have a knowledge in Swedish that corresponds to approximately 50% of Level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference scale (CEFR).

Learning activities: Learning activities are lectures, practical exercises – both individual and in groups–, role–plays, dialogues and discussions. **Other learning activities are independent**

studies¹ and process writing.

Assessment

Exam 1: Oral Exam, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1, 5–7.

Exam 2: Written Sit-in Exam, 3 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1–4. The exam takes place in the middle of the course.

Exam 3: Written Sit-in Exam, 3 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1–4. The exam takes place in the end of the course.

Exam 4: Written Assignment, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 8²

The grades of Oral examination and Written Assignment is Pass/Fail (G/U).

Grading criteria for the course are announced by the course director in the beginning of the course. For all assessments, the basis must be such that individual performance can be distinguished.



¹One example of other learning activities could be Service Learning in a partner organisation.

²Service Learning experience can be presented in this written assignment.

Course literature and other study material

Fasth, Cecilia & Kannermark, Anita (latest edition), Form i fokus B with key. Lund: Folkuniversitetets förlag. (ca 200 s)

Levy Scherrer, Paula, Lindemalm, Karl (latest edition). Rivstart B1+B2 Textbok. Lund: Natur och Kultur. (ca 85 s)

Levy Scherrer, Paula, Lindemalm, Karl (latest edition). Rivstart B1+B2 Övningsbok. Lund: Natur och Kultur. (ca 65 s)

Literature in Swedish and by a Swedish author (selected in consultation with the teacher).

Material for Swedish culture and Swedish social life will be distributed by the teacher.

Additional material may be introduced but no more than 100 pages.

Course evaluation

The University provides students who participate in or who have completed a course with the opportunity to make known their experiences and viewpoints with regards to the course by completing a course evaluation administered by the University.

The University will compile and summarise the results of course evaluations as well as informing participants of the results and any decisions relating to measures initiated in response to the course evaluations. The results will be made available to the students (HF 1:14).

Additional information

This is a translation of the course syllabus approved in Swedish

OPTION 2 – a new Service Learning course

If the procedure of introducing new courses is not complex or time-consuming, a new Service Learning course might be introduced. The language component from option one has been taken out so that the focus can be entirely on culture and society with Service Learning as the dominant teaching method. The interventions to the syllabus are shown below.





Highlighted text in yellow refers to existing possible connections to Service Learning. Orange text in option 2 and 3 indicates proposed added text to the syllabus. When explanation is needed, it is written as a comment in the margin.

Syllabus spring 2022

Title: Swedish Culture and Society for international students through Service Learning

Swedish title: Svenskt kultur- och samhällsliv för internationella studenter genom Service Learning

Course code: new code

Credits: 10 credits³

Grading scale: UA / Excellent (A), Very Good (B), Good (C), Satisfactory (D), Pass (E) or Fail (U)

Language of instruction: English

Syllabus approval date: new date

Syllabus valid from: new date

Decision-making body: Faculty of Education and Society

Entry requirements: General entry requirements + English 6 and completed course

SV213S/SV213L/AK306E Swedish Language, Culture and Society III.

or

equivalent knowledge in Swedish tested by an eligibility test.

Level: Basic level

Main field: No main field.

Progression level: GIF

Progression level in relation to degree requirements: The course can normally be a part of a first-cycle qualification.

Course objectives: The aim of the course is to deepen the knowledge and understanding about Swedish Culture and Society through Service Learning.

Course contents: The course develops knowledge of Swedish culture and Swedish social life, which will be presented and discussed in English and through placements in partner organisations. Social issues and community engagement stand in focus.



³Alternative 3 or 5 credits see below.

Learning outcomes: Upon completion of the course, the student can:

1. describe aspects of Swedish social and cultural life
2. reflect upon about everyday life, student life and societal issues in Sweden

Learning activities: Learning activities are lectures and **Service Learning placement⁴** in a partner organisation.

Assessment

Exam 1: Written Assignment – Service Learning Journal, 3 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 1.

Exam 2: Written Assignment – Essay, 3 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 1.

Exam 3: Oral Assignment – Presentation, 4 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 2.

The grades of Oral examination and Written Assignment is Pass/Fail (G/U).

Grading criteria for the course are announced by the course director in the beginning of the course.

For all assessments, the basis must be such that individual performance can be distinguished.

Course literature and other study material

Literature in Swedish and by a Swedish author (selected in consultation with the teacher).

Material for Swedish culture and Swedish social life will be distributed by the teacher.

Additional material may be introduced but no more than 100 pages.

Course evaluation

The University provides students who participate in or who have completed a course with the opportunity to make known their experiences and viewpoints with regards to the course by completing a course evaluation administered by the University. The University will compile and summarise the results of course evaluations as well as informing participants of the results and any decisions relating to measures initiated in response to the course evaluations. The results will be made available to the students (HF 1:14).

Additional information

This is a translation of the course syllabus approved in Swedish

ⁱ ⁴Depending on the number of credits of the course, the dynamics can vary:
3 credits: Total of 15 hours, performed once a week throughout the semester
5 credits: Total of 30 hours, performed twice a week throughout the semester
10 credits: Total of 60 hours, performed as an internship for ten 6-hour working days during the semester

OPTION 3 – an add-on Service Learning course

Service Learning can be included in a course by incorporating a Service Learning add-on component into an existing course. Although the learning outcomes of the course do not necessarily change, the student workload will increase, so it is to be expected that the number of credits will increase too. If this is not possible, e.g. in cases where the number of credits per course are limited, the credits will have to be rearranged according to learning outcomes.

The interventions to the syllabus are shown below.



i Highlighted text in yellow refers to existing possible connections to Service Learning. Orange text in option 2 and 3 indicates proposed added text to the syllabus. When explanation is needed, it is written as a comment in the margin.

Syllabus spring 2022

Title: Swedish Language, Culture and Society IV

Swedish title: Svenska för internationella studenter – språk, kultur och samhällsliv IV

Course code: AK307E

Credits: 10 credits

Grading scale: UA / Excellent (A), Very Good (B), Good (C), Satisfactory (D), Pass (E) or Fail (U)

Language of instruction: English

Syllabus approval date: 2021-05-26

Syllabus valid from: 2021-08-30

Decision-making body: Faculty of Education and Society

Entry requirements: General entry requirements + English 6 and completed course

SV213S/SV213L/AK306E Swedish Language, Culture and Society III.

or

equivalent knowledge in Swedish tested by an eligibility test.

Level: Basic level

Main field: No main field.

Progression level: GIF

Progression level in relation to degree requirements: The course can normally be a part of a first-cycle qualification.

Course objectives: The aim of the course is to further develop knowledge and skills in the Swedish language **as well as deepen knowledge and understanding about Swedish Culture and Society.**

Course contents: The course develops knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical parts for oral and written communication in Swedish. The course also contains reading of coherent texts. In all parts, the Swedish everyday life, the student life and societal issues stand in focus.

In addition to the language instruction Swedish culture and Swedish social life will be presented and discussed in English.

Learning outcomes: Upon completion of the course, the student can:

1. use a vocabulary of high frequent Swedish words and phrases concerning everyday life, student life and societal issues
2. read and understand coherent texts in Swedish
3. write coherent texts in Swedish
4. apply rules for the structure of the Swedish language in writing
5. orally reproduce occurrences, opinions and explanations in Swedish
6. talk about everyday life, student life and societal issues
7. demonstrate the ability to understand spoken Swedish

8. describe aspects of Swedish social and cultural life through SL placement experience

After finishing the course, the student will have a knowledge in Swedish that corresponds to approximately 50% of Level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference scale (CEFR).

Learning activities: Learning activities are lectures, practical exercises – both individual and in groups–, role–plays, dialogues and discussions, **Service Learning placement in a partner organisation⁵**. Other learning activities are independent studies and process writing.

Assessment

Exam 1: Oral Exam, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1, 5–7.

Exam 2: Written Sit–in Exam, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1–4. The exam takes place in the middle of the course.

Exam 3: Written Sit–in Exam, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcomes 1–4. The exam takes place in the end of the course.

Exam 4: Written Assignment, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 8

The grades of Oral examination and Written Assignment is Pass/Fail (G/U).

Grading criteria for the course are announced by the course director in the beginning of the course. For all assessments, the basis must be such that individual performance can be distinguished.

Exam 5: Write and oral presentation of the Service Learning experience, 2 credits. The exam examines learning outcome 8.

⁵Depending on the number of credits the dynamics can range from a total of 15 hours performed once a week throughout the semester to 60 hours performed as an internship for ten 6–hour working days during the semester.

The grades of Oral examination and Written Assignment is Pass/Fail (G/U).

Grading criteria for the course are announced by the course director in the beginning of the course. For all assessments, the basis must be such that individual performance can be distinguished.

Course literature and other study material

Fasth, Cecilia & Kannermark, Anita (latest edition), Form i fokus B with key. Lund: Folkuniversitetets förlag. (ca 200 s)

Levy Scherrer, Paula, Lindemalm, Karl (latest edition). Rivstart B1+B2 Textbok. Lund: Natur och Kultur. (ca 85 s)

Levy Scherrer, Paula, Lindemalm, Karl (latest edition). Rivstart B1+B2 Övningsbok. Lund: Natur och Kultur. (ca 65 s)

Literature in Swedish and by a Swedish author (selected in consultation with the teacher).

Material for Swedish culture and Swedish social life will be distributed by the teacher.

Additional material may be introduced but no more than 100 pages.

Course evaluation

The University provides students who participate in or who have completed a course with the opportunity to make known their experiences and viewpoints with regards to the course by completing a course evaluation administered by the University.

The University will compile and summarise the results of course evaluations as well as informing participants of the results and any decisions relating to measures initiated in response to the course evaluations. The results will be made available to the students (HF 1:14).

Additional information

This is a translation of the course syllabus approved in Swedish

Before Service Learning is introduced through any of the three options described above, the higher education institution should go through the following steps:

1. Educating teachers about Service Learning
2. Adapting the higher education institution's policies and procedures to include Service Learning as a teaching method
3. Create a network of partner organisations from the community

The partner network can consist of NGOs and similar organisations and initiatives dealing with societal issues, local, regional or national, which can help politically activate migrant students. Some examples of partner organisations are the ones dealing with human rights, inclusion, environment protection and green transition, animal rights, or any other field that includes working on policy changes.

A large, stylized number '5' is the central focus of the page. It is composed of two colors: orange and yellow. The top curve and the middle horizontal bar are orange, while the bottom curve and the right vertical stem are yellow. The background is a solid purple color. The text 'FINAL REMARKS' is centered within the orange part of the number.

FINAL REMARKS

The motivation for creating these Guidelines lies in the motivation for designing and implementing the NEXUS project – the overall aim is to engage more young people, and especially migrant students, in their local communities, to equip them with tools for active citizenship and to increase their civic participation. These guidelines are designed to provide background and insight on how implementing Service Learning in the curriculum can benefit community engagement for stakeholders on different levels:

- Community: Engaged citizens are a prerequisite for development towards a sustainable and democratic society
- Higher education institutions: Engaged HEIs provide education for a sustainable and democratic society, and sustainability feeds from community engagement
- Students: Studying is a transformative experience for students. Students are changed by the experience and also become agents of change by exercising their democratic rights and using the available tools to create an impact in their local communities, in their everyday lives and the wider context of the society.

Service Learning is a flexible pedagogical method and in order to achieve the previously mentioned benefits it can be connected with other pedagogical methods already internalised and used in teaching and learning. For example, Challenge Based Learning can be integrated with Service Learning quite easily. In Service Learning the assessment is focused on the learning experience rather than on the potential solution to a problem, and in that sense, it has the same pedagogical output as Challenge Based Learning.

Service Learning and Challenge Based Learning are both based on a student active design where students are empowered by the transformative learning experience of applying in-

tellectual work and academic knowledge to real world, novel, problems connected to different forms of sustainability. Empowerment incorporates a mix of, on the one hand, realising the scope of the magnitude of sustainability issues, on the other hand getting the immediate sensation of reaching results in the local community or individual life by nudging things in the right direction. In other words, no one can do everything, but everyone can do something. If a larger variety of pedagogical methods is used to encourage community engagement, a wider scope of fields of study can be reached, especially the ones that are traditionally not participating in community engagement activities. Whether HEIs design their teaching and learning from a Challenge based, Service Learning or other pedagogical perspective is not important as long as the takeaway for the students is a sense of empowerment and readiness to engage intellectually and practically as change agents for active citizenship and sustainability.

As a concluding thought, the NEXUS project regrettably finds that during the final stages of the project, Europe faces another refugee crisis, much like it did when the project was designed. Therefore, the need for Higher Education Institutions to apply pedagogical tools for community engagement is still highly relevant. For this reason, policy recommendations for implementing Service Learning in Higher Education are appended to this document, as submitted to the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference 2022.

The image features a solid purple background. On the left side, there are large, stylized shapes: a pink 'U' shape at the bottom and a yellow 'U' shape above it. To the right of these shapes, the word 'REFERENCES' is written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

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APPENDIX - POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	50
Abstract	52
Introduction	53
The Challenge: The Detachment of Young People from Civic Participation	54
Service Learning as a Tool for Increasing Students’ Civic Participation	54
The Civic Aspect of Service Learning	55
Service Learning Diagram	55
Implementing Service Learning for Enhancing Students’ Civic Engagement	56
Policy Recommendations	56
Recommendations for Higher Education Systems (System Level)	56
Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions (Organisation Level)	56
Recommendations for the Teaching Staff (Implementation Level)	57
References	58

ABSTRACT

Background

Research shows that young Europeans feel that they do not have much say over important decisions, laws and policies affecting their lives. At the same time young people express that they would like to be more actively engaged in political decisions on various levels.

This strikes particularly hard among young Europeans with migrant backgrounds, since they, according to research, run a higher risk of lacking a sense of belonging in their local society. This affects all parts of life that ensures social cohesion and functioning as autonomous, productive, self-realised citizens.

Methods

One way to facilitate opportunities to increase civic engagement is through the HE pedagogical method, Service Learning. This form of higher education community engagement can help increase the level of civic participation of the student population through their placements in organisations that deal with issues relevant to the community. An increased focus on implementing Service Learning as a pedagogical method in HEIs would especially benefit migrant students' possibilities to engage in their local society.

Recommendations

To facilitate the implementation of Service Learning as a pedagogical method in higher education, this Policy paper gives recommendations on three levels: system level (national authorities in charge of higher education), organisation level (higher education institution level) and implementation level (teaching staff).

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[NEXUS – Promoting the nexus of migrants through active citizenship, 2019–1-ES01-KA203–065861](#)

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- UNIMED – Mediterranean University Union, Italy
- Zavod APIS/APIS Institute, Slovenia

INTRODUCTION

“Service Learning fits well into the third mission of higher education institutions, which can be described as the development of activities that will link a higher education institution to its surrounding environment” (Skleđar Matijević et al., 2021). According to Farnell (2020), there is a long tradition of universities’ interaction with their communities, and “the benefits of higher education are not limited to students and graduates but extend across society” (Farnell, 2020). By becoming increasingly involved and connecting their activities to both the problems and needs of their communities, higher education institutions can become significant stakeholders in contributing to economic, cultural and societal growth. While the umbrella term ‘community engagement’ is used to “refer to engagement with a broad range of external stakeholders on a broad range of issues” (Farnell, 2020), ‘civic engagement’ implies “a focus on promoting active citizenship and democratic values” (Farnell, 2020), and this is the aspect that the NEXUS¹ project is focused on. More specifically, it is focused on empowering students (especially migrants) to exercise their rights, uphold human values, and contribute constructively to the society around them and the global community in general.

NEXUS aims at innovating the civic educational process resulting in increased participation of students in their communities since in representative and participatory democracies, it is crucial that citizens are engaged in order to be an active part of society (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018).

However, the Eurobarometer statistics show that young people in the EU are feeling that their votes will make no difference and that they are unaware of the democratic processes within the EU (European Commission, 2021). According to other studies, young people are somewhat more engaged in non-governmental organisations than in traditional political parties and that they are using more digital tools, such as social media, when they interact and engage (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018). Although there might be differences among countries, the trend is clear that young people are becoming increasingly detached from political participation in the traditional format and do not participate in civic engagement activities. Newly arrived migrants are especially vulnerable to feeling detachment since they generally risk lacking social identity, sense of belonging and social engagement (Mansouri et al., 2016).

One way to address the issue of the detachment of young people is implementing the Service Learning method in higher education because it can help with enhancing the civic engagement of students. NEXUS has prepared recommendations for higher education institutions that wish to implement Service Learning as a teaching method because it involves planned and structured student placements in partner organisations as a mutually beneficial response of higher education institutions to the challenges faced by their community.

¹The NEXUS project (<https://nexus4civics.eu/>) is an ERASMUS+ project, running from 2019 to 2022, is implemented by a consortium composed by: UNED – Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain (coordinator); ECAS – European Citizen Action Service, Belgium; Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia; Knowledge Innovation Centre, Malta; Malmo University, Sweden; UNIMED – Mediterranean University Union, Italy; Zavod APIS APIS Institute, Slovenia

The Challenge: The Detachment of Young People from Civic Participation

The findings of the 2021 Eurobarometer Youth Survey indicate that “a majority of respondents feel they do not have much, or any, say over important decisions, laws and policies affecting them”. As many as 53% feel they do not have much, or any say over decisions, laws and policies affecting their local area, and when it comes to matters affecting the EU the percentage is higher (almost 70%) (EACEA, 2021).

However, according to the same source, young people perceive poverty and social inequality, climate change and environment protection and unemployment as priority issues which need to be dealt with, which proves that they have an interest in social issues.

This is in line with the findings of the survey conducted by the NEXUS team and targeting students in higher education. Although 97% of the answering students believe their opinion (public opinion) is worthy to be listened to and taken into consideration, 59% of students think they do not have or know the means to make his/her voice be heard in the relevant institutions (NEXUS, 2020).

At the same time, 60% of the responding students would like to improve their participation and be more actively engaged, while 74% think that they would like to have a more active part in the resolution of problems and decision making in university life (NEXUS, 2020).

Also, 86% of the surveyed students think that some of the problems of their communities could be (partially) solved with a higher level of public participation and 75% are ready to invest time and effort to receive training in active citizenship (NEXUS, 2020). There is a clear indication that young people are inter-

ested in their communities and would like to be included in tackling the challenges and issues their communities are facing; they want their voices heard but do not feel that they have a say or know how to make themselves heard.

Research, therefore, shows that there are two trends in parallel. Although young Europeans are losing faith in EU-institutions and bureaucracy, they are at the same time expressing increased concern and interest in important problems facing the society.

Diversity is another dimension that needs to be considered in the context of higher education, since the student population is increasingly culturally and migration-based diverse. Newly arrived migrants are especially vulnerable to feeling detachment since they generally run a higher risk of lacking social identity, sense of belonging and social engagement (Mansouri et al., 2016). According to the OECD, active participation of migrants in education, the labour market, and in public life is vital for ensuring social cohesion and enabling migrants to function as autonomous, productive, self-realised citizens (OECD/EU 2015). Therefore, the issue of young Europeans’ community engagement needs to be addressed with particular interest when it comes to the subgroup of young migrants.

Service Learning as a Tool for Increasing Students’ Civic Participation

According to Morgan and White (2015), “... higher and further education should play a role in addressing gaps in achieving educational qualification, job training, access to the labour market, and in other aspects of integration.”

Service Learning, as a form of higher education community engagement, can help increase the level of civic participation of the

student population in the community-related decision-making processes through their placements in organisations which deal with issues relevant to the community. According to the Council of Europe 2008 White Paper, active participation by all residents in the life of the local community contributes to its prosperity, and enhances integration (Council of Europe, 2008). If Service Learning is adopted by higher education institutions, they become more involved in the community and provide support to their students who seek a way to make their voices heard by the decision makers.

In terms of newly arrived migrant students, Service Learning can provide additional integration opportunities by including them in the community service activities which address the issues of the local community. According to the Council of Europe, “the genuine integration of migrants into their new society also involves efforts to accommodate them that go beyond the specific steps taken to welcome them. The acceptance of new forms of social behaviour, provided that they do not infringe the fundamental values of democracy, presupposes that the society in question is open to otherness and tolerant of change” (Council of Europe, 2017).

The Civic Aspect of Service Learning

According to Skledar Matijević et al (2021), there are many definitions of Service Learning since the concept has evolved over time and since there are numerous ways in which it can be implemented in different contexts. A contemporary concept of Service Learning is reflected by the European Association for Service Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE), which defines Service Learning as “an educational approach that enhances students’ civic engagement, brings them closer to different social realities while allowing them to work in a real environment. It involves structured and graded student

placements in organisations in response to the needs of the community and is different from volunteering because it is part of mandatory coursework” (EASLHE, 2021).

The civic aspect of Service Learning has been explored from the 2000s on. According to Saltmarsh (2005), higher education should include “civic learning” and students should be equipped with “the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate as engaged, democratic citizens” (Saltmarsh, 2005) in order to successfully participate in the democratic processes.

Service Learning Diagram

The Fresno State University provided a Service Learning diagram, which positions it at the overlap of academic learning, practical experience and civic engagement, student practice, student volunteering and civic education.

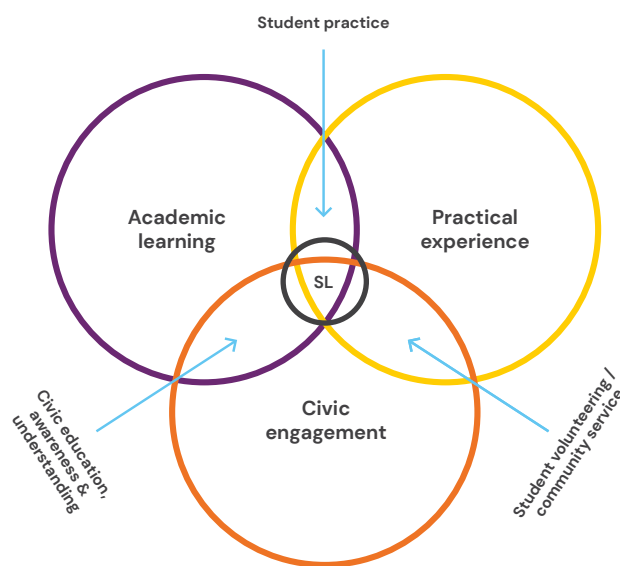


Figure 1: Service Learning Diagram, source: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/csm/arc/service-learning.html>

Implementing Service Learning for Enhancing Students' Civic Engagement

According to Skledar Matijević et al. (2021), students require study programmes which are in line with both the labour market trends and current social trends. The teaching process on the other hand needs new, innovative and inclusive methods of working, teaching and learning, and the curriculum needs to include the integration of local, regional and global problems. In a broader perspective, it is necessary to ensure a strong connection, i.e. cooperation, collaboration and knowledge exchange between higher education institutions and local communities, as well as a joint response to challenges (Skledar Matijević et al. 2021).

However, even though community engagement is becoming more visible in various forms of strategic documents in European higher education institutions, it is still at an early stage. The central challenge is creating the framework for successfully implementing Service Learning. According to Skledar Matijević et al. (2021), it is essentially community-based learning, and it represents a possible way for higher education institutions to meet the needs of their communities, which can in turn benefit from higher education institutions' diverse knowledge bases. Such an approach can lead to a sustainable and inclusive higher education. "Higher education institutions' capacity for community engagement can be reinforced by embedding Service Learning into the curriculum and syllabus design so it can be assessed within the course structure. In doing so, students will both gain awareness of different types of societal needs and get first-hand experience of engaging in the community and addressing these needs. This will also help higher education institutions to reach their full potential as valuable actors in their local communities [...]" (Skledar Matijević et al, 2021)

Policy Recommendations

Although Service Learning is being adopted by many higher education institutions in Europe, there are hardly any system-level policies which refer to implementing Service Learning as a teaching method in higher education. There are some policies which refer to community engagement, such as the European Commission's Renewed Agenda for Higher Education (EC, 2017) but Service Learning as such has not been emphasised. For this reason, the NEXUS team has prepared recommendations at three levels: system level (national authorities in charge of higher education), organisation level (higher education institution level) and implementation level (teaching staff).

Recommendations for Higher Education Systems (System Level)

To support the implementation of Service Learning as a teaching method which increases the levels of community engagement of higher education, it would be beneficial that the education system recognises and encourages Service Learning as a teaching method by:

- Recognising Service Learning as a teaching method which supports community engagement of higher education institutions and as a valid point in quality assurance and external evaluation procedures
- Standardising the procedure of introducing Service Learning as a teaching method

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions (Organisation Level)

To successfully introduce and implement Service Learning is recommended that higher education institutions take the following steps:

- **Providing support in terms of guidelines and training for the teaching staff**
The staff should understand the concept and the principles of Service Learning, as well as the models of implementation, the requirements and the desired outcomes of a Service Learning programme.
- **Defining the stakeholders**
There are three key stakeholders in a Service Learning programme: the students, the higher education institution and the external partner. The higher education institution should scan their community for suitable partners (e. g. NGOs, citizens' initiatives, charities...), contact them and sign agreements.
- **Providing support for teachers who want to implement Service Learning in their courses**
 - **Providing administrative support**
The teaching staff need institution-level administrative support for contacting external partners, informing students, reaching the target groups, organising off-campus activities etc. It is recommended that such support is provided through establishing a Service Learning office, or to provide support through existing organisational units (such as Career Centres or Student Services).
 - **Allocating time**
The teaching staff need extra time to plan and organise a Service Learning course, so they need support in allocating enough time within their working hours.
 - **Simplifying the procedure for syllabus modification**
The teaching staff who wish to implement Service Learning will need to modify their syllabi in terms of mode of delivery and assessment. If the internal procedure for making changes to existing syllabi is lengthy or complicated, it would be beneficial if higher education institutions take steps to simplify the

procedure or make it more flexible.

- **Offering recognition, reward and incentives** (e. g. via promotion, awards, reassigned time) to the teaching staff who have implemented Service Learning into their teaching, to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives.
- **Including Service Learning in internal quality assessment procedures**
Developing criteria for regular internal quality assurance of Service Learning will ensure that teaching quality standards are being observed.
- **Allocating funding**
It is to be expected that creating the framework and supporting the implementation of a new pedagogical method will require additional funding so higher education institutions should plan accordingly.

Recommendations for the Teaching Staff (Implementation Level)

To successfully introduce and implement it is recommended that the teaching staff take the following steps:

- **Learning about the Service Learning method**
The Service Learning Guidelines by the NEXUS project cover all the steps necessary for implementing the Service Learning method and offer valuable examples.
- **Actively communicating with the external partners**
Involving external partners in the planning process and the implementation will ensure the success of the Service Learning programme.
- **Providing support for students**
Students may find some situations within their Service Learning projects challenging and will need mentor support. Planning enough time for providing feedback and encouragement is recommended.

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