COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING (CSL) PROGRAM

COMMUNITY PARTNER’S HANDBOOK

Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement

Visit our website at http://www.servingothers.uOttawa.ca

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I. Why partner with the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement?

Since its inception in 2011, the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement has been offering volunteer opportunities to students on and off-campus. Through our online Community Engagement Navigator, students can select extracurricular volunteer (EV) placements, or volunteer as part of a course through the Community Service Learning (CSL) program. The centre also offer unique initiatives to students like Days of Service, Alternative Student Break and TD Environmental Leaders program.

Partnering with the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement provides your organization with student volunteers who are highly motivated and keen to engage in new learning opportunities. We strive to ensure that the work carried out by student volunteers will enhance your activities, be it through frontline work, research or capacity building. A partnership with the centre facilitates volunteer recruitment for you and offers a mechanism to match your needs with available skill sets.

You can consult the centre’s website to learn more about CSL and the centre’s initiatives: http://servingothers.uottawa.ca/

II. What is Community Service Learning (CSL)?

Community Service Learning (CSL) is a credited educational experience, that (1) is conducted as part of a course, during which (2) students participate in a structured volunteer service placement (volunteer activities) designed to meet a community need or priority and (3) critically reflect on their in-community placement learning to develop a better understanding of class materials and of their field of study. To be included in the centre’s CSL program, a course must have all three components, as shown below.
II.I. What impact should CSL have on students?

At the University of Ottawa, CSL courses offer service placement options that are linked to the course’s objectives, and requires participating students to critically reflect on the connection between their placement experience and the course material. This in turn offers students the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of their field of study, and in some cases, enables them to understand the potential role they can play in effecting change in society (social impact).

Students complete a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer work over the course of a session.

CSL Community-based research

Community-based research is research that is action-oriented, of practical relevance to the community and carried out in the community. We are not a research centre, but through the Community Service Learning program, we have had students help our partners research a topic. If you have a topic that you would like to research, and if you think a student or groups of students can help you with this research as part of a course, let us know.

II.II. How does Extracurricular Volunteering differ from CSL?

Extracurricular volunteering (EV) takes place outside the classroom. EV opportunities are available to the entire uOttawa community (unlike CSL, which is only available to students registered in a course that has a CSL component). We promote these volunteer opportunities throughout the year. It should be noted, however, that there are greater numbers of students available during the school year, which runs from early September to mid-April.
II.III. What are the benefits of the CSL program?

The Community Service Learning program benefits all stakeholders:

Table 1 – Benefits of CSL

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Students</th>
<th>For Professors</th>
<th>For Community Partners</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Develops skills and broadens knowledge (critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, communication)</td>
<td>• Incorporates theory taught in class with practice available in the community</td>
<td>• Provides additional human resources, which in turn allows partners to increase services and accomplish goals that may otherwise not have been possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increases understanding of concepts learned in class</td>
<td>• Encourages students to be more engaged in class</td>
<td>• Provides organizations with knowledge and skills that students have gained through their university studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applies theory to real-life situations</td>
<td>• Enhances student experience and furthers learning through proven pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enhances social awareness and responsibility</td>
<td>• Creates partnerships with community organizations that can potentially lead to collaborative initiatives</td>
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Students who volunteer as part of a university course often choose this option over an alternative assignment. A volunteer placement requires a more intensive commitment, both in terms of time and personal involvement. The student is also evaluated through reflective assignments. Reflective assignments allow students to connect their volunteer experience to the theories learned in class. **The reflective process is what turns a volunteer position into a service-learning experience tied to an academic education.** It also allows students to analyze their experience, connect it to their lives and use what they have learned in their future.² For this reason, students who sign on for volunteer placements tend to be highly motivated, driven and very devoted to their placements.

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III. How does a CSL placement work?

The centre assigns a staff person, a placement officer, to work with your organization. The placement officer serves as support for you and is available to handle your questions and concerns.

When community partners take on student volunteer(s) under the CSL program, they are required to sign a Community Partner Agreement. The agreement defines the roles and responsibilities of the participating organization and the University.

III.1. Creating your placement

Once you have accepted to participate in CSL, and have discussed your projected needs for the session with a centre placement officer, you will be able to draft your placement(s) directly in the Community Engagement Navigator.

Note: If a placement does not fit with any of the courses offered in a particular session, it can be made available on the list of placements offered through extracurricular volunteering, with your approval.

III.2. Learning objectives

When you enter information on your placements, we ask you to identify which learning objectives you feel the placement will allow the student to meet. Learning objectives are set for both CSL and extracurricular volunteering placement opportunities. Identifying these learning objectives helps placement officers match placements you offer to different courses, based on what the professor has asked that his or her students learn during their CSL placement.

You can select from the following objectives which the centre has set out:

- apply learning from a specific field of study
- develop critical thinking and analytical skills
- identify different approaches to solving problems through a variety of appropriate techniques
- develop the ability to communicate orally and/or in writing to a variety of audiences
- develop the ability to work in an interdisciplinary team
- enhance initiative, accountability, and decision-making skills
- enhance social awareness and active citizenship
- gain research experience

### III. III. Providing clear placement descriptions

It is important to provide clear, informative and detailed placement descriptions. The more specific your description, the more likely you are to find a student matching your needs. **You may also include your email address and request that students send you a copy of their Co-Curricular Record, which is an official university document that records their approved and verified volunteer activities.**

As described in the Navigator, make sure to include a brief organizational overview, a summary of the placement, working hours (if specific), office location (if different than address in profile), accessibility details (if applicable), and the type of support provided to help student obtain police record check (if applicable).

Placements are typically individual placements, but can also take place in groups (see Appendix II for Guidelines for volunteer placements involving groups of students in the Community Service Learning (CSL) program). We suggest formatting descriptions in the following way:

1. **Step 1:** Describe your organization in 2-3 lines
2. **Step 2:** Indicate the placement context (department, project, contact person)
3. **Step 3:** List the main volunteer responsibilities, using future tense (the volunteer will be responsible for...)
4. **Step 4:** Add the specific information about the placement (ex. necessary training, language requirements)
5. **Step 5:** Indicate the placement location and schedule (eg. if volunteers work specific days/times or if schedule is flexible)

Once your placement is saved on the Navigator, it will be revised by a placement officer and become active alongside other placements associated to the specific course. At the beginning of each session, the centre will determine a registration period of roughly 2 to 3 days for each course during which students registered to that course will be able to review and select a placement of their choice.
IV. Roles and responsibilities of Community partners

IV.I. Initiating a first meeting
Once a student has selected a placement with an organization, it becomes his or her responsibility to make initial contact with the placement supervisor. We have deadlines in place for this to be completed, which are listed on our website. Due to the fact that students must complete a minimum of 30 hours in approximately 10 weeks for CSL placements, it is important that supervisors respond promptly.

We strongly recommend setting up an initial meeting or training session during the first month of classes (September for the fall session, January for the winter session, May for the spring session, and July for the Summer session). During this meeting, you should discuss mutual expectations and highlight any training or orientation the student will need to complete. The meeting is also an opportunity to learn about the student’s program of study and the experience the student can bring to your organization. Setting a schedule for the completion of the hours helps keep students organized and ensures they successfully complete the placement. Progress meetings can also prove useful in keeping students on track.

IV.II. Approving volunteer hours
Once they start their volunteer placement, students are responsible for logging completed hours via their online account. We strongly advise them to do this regularly – this will be communicated to them throughout the session. It is the CP supervisor’s responsibility to approve these hours. This can be done through the supervisor’s account on the Community Engagement Navigator, by clicking on the Timesheets tab. We suggest that you do this weekly or bi-weekly, so that logs don’t pile up and become a burden. All student hours must be approved by the deadline set for each semester which will be communicated to you.

IV.III. Placement evaluations/feedback
At the end of the placement, you will also be asked to complete a short online feedback-evaluation form of the student’s performance, which should not take more than five minutes. You can do this through the supervisor account in the Navigator, by clicking on the Evaluations tab. Professors use these evaluations to assess student performance, so they must be done by the deadline we specify. Please note that students may view these evaluations.

Note: While evaluations must be completed every session for CSL placements, evaluations for EV placements are optional, though highly recommended.

IV.IV. About the student’s reflection activity
Participating CSL students are required to complete a reflection activity as part of their course, linking learning objectives with their community experience. This can take the form of an essay, journal entries and in-class presentations, to name a few.

While Community Partners have no direct responsibilities related to the reflection, students may ask questions to their placement supervisor throughout their placement to get perspective on what they are
seeing and learning. Placement supervisors are encouraged to discuss questions pertaining to the student’s reflection, where relevant and initiated by the student.

IV.V. What else should I know about my role in CSL?

Please refer to the Appendix 1 “ Roles and responsibilities of CSL” for a complete list of task that Community Partners, students, Professors and the centre are responsible for during a given session to ensure a smooth CSL program.

V. Placement environment

V.I Mutual respect in the workplace

All student-volunteers are asked to adhere to a code of conduct of respect when completing volunteer placements in the community. Equally important, all of our Community Partners must follow the centre’s Terms and conditions for posting a placement which you need to accept when first registering to the Navigator. You can also find a copy of the terms and conditions on the centre’s website.

V.II. Challenges during the placement

Throughout the session, the centre’s placement officer is the go-to person for all participants for challenges related to logistics (ie. online Navigator troubleshooting) but also any issues arising during the placement. The placement officer is available to assist with any challenges that you or your student may encounter.

We ask Community Partners supervisors to inform the centre as soon as possible if there are problems or concerns affecting the student’s placement, or if there is a change in supervision of the student.

V.III. Support for students in distress

If you believe that one of your student volunteers seems to be under a lot of stress or is having difficulty balancing work and volunteering with his or her studies and personal life, the University of Ottawa’s Student Academic Success Service (SASS) has resources that can help. Services such as personal and career counselling, as well as mentoring, can help students manage their stress and have a more successful university experience.

We encourage you to refer students experiencing stress to the SASS Counselling and Coaching Service or Mentoring Program. If you do not feel comfortable talking to the student, but feel that he or she needs to be referred to these services, please contact your placement officer and he or she will contact the student.

VI. Communicating with placement officers

Communicating with your placement officer is critical to ensuring the placement runs smoothly. If a student has registered for your placement and has not yet contacted you, or if he or she is not meeting
placement objectives, please advise your placement officer as soon as possible. If the community partner supervisor is leaving or changing his or her position with the organization, or if the placement is no longer available, please advise your placement officer immediately. This will minimize any potential negative impact on the student.

VII. Questions or concerns?
If you have any additional questions, or would like to discuss the suitability of a potential placement for a CSL course at the University of Ottawa, please contact the centre to speak to the Manager of Community Engagement, or one of the three Placement Officers.

Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement (MJCGCE)

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Email: servingothers@uottawa.ca
Appendix I: CSL Program Responsibilities (Professors; Students; Community Partner; MJCGCE)

For Professors

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<tr>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Service Placement</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Notify centre staff of their intent to participate in CSL by the sessional deadlines.</td>
<td>• Work in close collaboration with the centre to find volunteer placements that meet course objectives.</td>
<td>• Provide a structured reflection activity in the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Include the definition of Community Service Learning program, its requirements and a short text on the centre itself (provided by the centre) in course syllabus. Share a copy of the course syllabus with centre staff.</td>
<td>• Approve placements in a timely manner, before the in-class presentation by the centre.</td>
<td>• Determine evaluated reflection format (essay, blog, etc.) and proportion of overall grade reflection represents before the start of the course and share them with centre’s staff.</td>
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<td>• In optional CSL, determine the CSL-evaluated component of the course grade (or what CSL will replace in the course), assign proportionate weight for placement and reflection within the overall grade and contextualize student learning objectives for all options offered in class, so that students can make an informed decision.</td>
<td>• Review students’ evaluation and timesheets on the Community Engagement Navigator.</td>
<td>• Encourage students to respond to at least two or three key reflection questions, as outlined in the CSL Professor’s Handbook.</td>
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<td>• In courses where CSL is mandatory, contextualize what the CSL placement represents to students’ learning and the program requirements, and establish plan B coursework for students whose chosen placements fall through for reasons out of their control.</td>
<td>• • Arrange in-class CSL staff presentations with centre.</td>
<td>• Review the completed reflection activity to assign a grade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Arrange in-class CSL staff presentations with centre.</td>
<td>• Consider service hours carried out, evaluation from community partner, reflections and in-class CSL student discussion in grading student.</td>
<td>• Where appropriate, encourage reflection in the classroom (in both mandatory and optional CSL).</td>
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<td>• Meet all CSL sessional deadlines and inform centre staff of any changes that affect participating CSL students.</td>
<td>• Meet all CSL sessional deadlines and inform centre staff of any changes that affect participating CSL students.</td>
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For Students

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<th>Academics</th>
<th>Service Placement</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Read the syllabus to understand the Community Service Learning program requirements and make</td>
<td>• Log onto the Community Engagement Navigator to select and start their service placement</td>
<td>• Complete the in-class CSL reflection evaluated component and take the</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Service Placement</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<td>a decision on whether or not to take on optional CSL.</td>
<td>on time, and then contact their placement supervisor to schedule a first meeting.</td>
<td>time to reflect on their learning as described in the syllabus.</td>
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<td>• In mandatory CSL, select or propose a placement before the centre-assigned deadline.</td>
<td>• Fulfill placement requirements (training, police record check, etc.) in a timely matter.</td>
<td>• Participate in class discussions or other activities to encourage further learning, as proposed in the course outline (optional and mandatory).</td>
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<td>• Ensure they understand the learning objectives and how they relate to the available placements.</td>
<td>• Carry out the required hours and enter them on the Community Engagement Navigator throughout the session, meeting all deadlines.</td>
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<td>• Ask the centre or professor for clarification as necessary.</td>
<td>• Notify both their professor and the centre of any changes to the placement (i.e., cancelling or dropping the course).</td>
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<tr>
<td>For Community partners (CP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
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<td>• Ensure they understand the difference between CSL and extracurricular volunteering (EV) and confirm their interest in taking on CSL students, who volunteer as part of a course.</td>
<td>• Prepare placement description and requirements prior to the start of the session—as much as three months in advance.</td>
<td>• Ensure they are available to discuss questions pertaining to the student’s reflection, where relevant and as initiated by the student.</td>
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<td>• At the start of the student placement, provide orientation on the organization and the placement tasks as well as occupational health and safety requirements, as needed.</td>
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<td>• Provide ongoing feedback as well as ongoing and timely placement supervision.</td>
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<td>• Inform the centre as soon as possible if problems or concerns arise, or if there is a change in supervision of the student.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Approve timesheets directly on the Community Engagement Navigator by the deadlines.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Document students’ work and performance in the online evaluation form by the deadlines.</td>
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### For Centre staff

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<th>Academics</th>
<th>Service Placement</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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| • Assist professors in integrating CSL into their class.  
• Familiarize themselves with course syllabi to understand the learning objectives.  
• Work with professors to ensure staff understand the type of placements being sought.  
• Verify with the professor that any course with CSL includes all three program components. If it does not, bring the matter up with manager or director to review how best to approach the situation.  
• Provide professors with a definition of the Community Service Learning program and its requirements, as well as a short text on the centre itself and specific centre staff contact information to be added to the syllabus. | • Liaise with community partners to cultivate ideas for possible placements.  
• Identify community-based placements that meet the course objectives.  
• Organize CSL class presentations for students.  
• Answer questions from students, community partners and professors by email, telephone or in person.  
• Send reminders to students and community partners regarding the timely entry and approval of timesheets as well as the submission of the online evaluation.  
• Problem solve as needed with community partners, professors and students. | • Assist professors in adapting reflection questions as required. |
Appendix II: Guidelines for volunteer placements involving groups of students in the CSL program

Typically, volunteer opportunities identified through the Community Service Learning (CSL) program are for individual positions. However, they can also entail a project or community service activity involving a group of students. The Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement defines a group placement as being a placement for a group consisting of a team leader and team members working together to produce a deliverable. The team leader takes responsibility for preparing, in collaboration with the community partner (CP) and team members, a project plan that includes a timeline for the project. The team leader becomes accountable for monitoring this timeline and ensuring that the final product is of the anticipated quality and delivered on time and in consultation with the CP and professor. The sections below provide tips and information to guide professors, students and community partners. Paying attention to these tips is important in order to ensure a positive experience for all involved. If at any point you have questions, email us at servingothers@uOttawa.ca or contact your placement officer.

<table>
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<th>Professor</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Community partner (CP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ If you offer a CSL option in your course that requires students to work in a group, define placement parameters and expectations very precisely (e.g. no. of students per group, type of CPs, timelines, deliverables, evaluation and grading criteria). Include as much detail as you can about the community service activity or project to be carried out.</td>
<td>➢ Carefully review and understand group placement expectations to ensure you can fully commit to all requirements.</td>
<td>➢ Create your group volunteer placement in Community Engagement Navigator. Describe your placement thoroughly so the group understands the overall objectives. Include start and end dates, no. of students needed, key deliverables and dates along with any essential qualifications.</td>
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<td>➢ Clarify when you plan to provide input to or consult with each group. Note: It’s important for you to clarify the extent of your involvement before the CP posts a group placement to help avoid any misunderstandings and ensure CP is willing and able to handle all necessary tasks.</td>
<td>➢ Before CSL group placements become active in Community Engagement Navigator, identify placements of interest and begin forming groups.</td>
<td>➢ Ensure the person responsible for supervising the group has the necessary time to provide feedback and monitor student progress and that the group is following project plan. Note: Be sure to clarify the extent of the professor’s involvement with the students throughout placement.</td>
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<td>➢ Determine and communicate grading process. Please keep in mind that a CSL placement typically represents a 30-hour commitment per student and includes reflection activities. Note: Once your group placement is well defined, your placement officer will begin identifying possible placement options. Due to the complexity of group placements, the Centre will not accept placements proposed by students (PPBS) for group placements.</td>
<td>➢ Assign a team leader to serve as the primary contact between the professor, CP and the Centre. The team leader registers for the placement in Community Engagement Navigator, follows up with team members to ensure they activate their Community Engagement Navigator accounts and gathers and communicate team member information (i.e. names and email addresses) to placement officer by the deadline. Note: The placement officer will manually match each team member to the placement.</td>
<td>Once a group has selected your placement, you will receive a confirmation email. The team leader will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss mutual expectations and develop a project plan. Note: If you haven’t heard from anyone within 48 hours of receiving the confirmation email, please contact your placement officer.</td>
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<td>➢ Ask students to form groups and identify a team leader to serve as the primary contact between you, their group, the Centre and the CP (this will be in addition to their other duties). You may want to consider assigning bonus</td>
<td>➢ Team leader contacts the CP to arrange a meeting to discuss project requirements, timelines for all deliverables and overall expectations. At this meeting, establish a project plan and guidelines for regular communications and check-ins. All students should be at this first meeting (check availability of all team members before arranging the</td>
<td>➢ After initial meeting, contact your placement officer if you believe there is a conflict between your expectations and those of the group (we may then contact the professor to review the learning objectives).</td>
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<td>➢ Lis</td>
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<td>➢ Within a few days of this first meeting, your team leader should send you the</td>
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mark to the team leader for this added responsibility.

➢ Ask each team leader to register for a group placement in Community Engagement Navigator and email a list of all members of their group to their placement officer (including each member’s email address).

➢ After each team has had its first meeting with the community partner, discuss with the team leader any potential issues (e.g. discrepancy in professor’s and CP’s expectations, participation of a particular team member).

➢ Throughout the session, emphasize the importance of fulfilling the required volunteer hours and meeting deliverables and communicate any penalties you’ve established if requirements aren’t met.

➢ Throughout the session, consult with each group to ensure they’re on the right track (i.e. will be able to provide quality and timely deliverables).

➢ Send reminders of project deadlines and for entering hours in Community Engagement Navigator.

➢ At the end of the session, log into Community Engagement Navigator to review the CP evaluation and timesheet entries for each group. If you need assistance, please don’t hesitate to contact your placement officer.

Note: If any students don’t complete the required number of hours for the placement, consider lowering their CSL grade. However, we suggest you discuss your decision first with the team leader and take into account the evaluation submitted by the CP (we will try our best to ensure these evaluations get completed).

Professor | Student | Community partner (CP)
---|---|---

Draft a schedule for key deliverables, keeping in mind schedules of the students, professor the CP. Send the final plan to the CP.

➢ Throughout the placement, the team leader communicates regularly with CP to ensure CP’s feedback is effectively integrated (keep other team members up to date—in person, by phone or email as needed).

The team leader also facilitates discussions between the team and professor to gather input. If the team leader feels there is a discrepancy between what the professor and the CP are requesting, the leader is to notify the placement officer immediately.

Note: All students should be involved in these exchanges in order to maximize learning.

➢ Throughout the placement, each team member logs their completed hours in Community Engagement Navigator (timesheets module). **Students enter their individual hours.

➢ Team leader sends reminders to approve pending hours to CP supervisor, if necessary.

Note: Final group evaluation is completed by CP supervisor (all students will see a copy in their Navigator account).

➢ Advise team leader if you have any questions or concerns throughout the process on any aspect of the group placement. Team leader follows up with placement officer.

Send reminders of project deadlines and for entering hours in Community Engagement Navigator.

Once the placement is complete, please complete the online evaluation. Usually an evaluation is submitted for each student. However, you can evaluate the group as a whole and simply copy your group evaluation into each student’s profile.

Your evaluation is very important and helps professors assign a final grade to each student. An additional comment on the team leader’s overall performance is also very helpful and would be very much appreciated.

Note: Timesheets are approved by the CP supervisor.

➢ The CP supervisor contacts the team leader with any questions about timesheet entries.

➢ Team leader sends reminders to approve pending hours to CP supervisor, if necessary.

Note: Final group evaluation is completed by CP supervisor (all students will see a copy in their Navigator account).

➢ Advise team leader if you have any questions or concerns throughout the process on any aspect of the group placement. Team leader follows up with placement officer.

If a problem arises that you’re not able to resolve, please contact your placement officer to discuss possible solutions. The team leader is your primary contact person throughout the placement and should be part of this conversation. Be sure to copy the team leader on all communications.

Note: If for some reason you don’t hear from the team leader within a reasonable time or you have any concerns, please contact your placement officer, who will bring the issue to the attention of the professor or team leader.

If any students don’t complete the required number of hours for the placement, consider lowering their CSL grade. However, we suggest you discuss your decision first with the team leader and take into account the evaluation submitted by the CP.