

## Developing Solutions for Community Projects at La Trobe University

The course Service Learning in the Community (HUM2SLC) has been offered at La Trobe University (LTU) in Australia. It invites students (a maximum of 30 each semester) to work in groups on projects that assists community organizations in their goals. It is a credit-bearing elective course available to second- and third-year undergraduate students (including exchange students) from both College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce, and College of Science, Health, and Engineering. With learning beyond the classroom, students are encouraged to actively reflect on and make connections between their academic studies and their community project. In 2018, this course is expanded into 'Service Learning or a Research Internship in the Community'. Students can choose to work either individually or in a team, to help design and implement a project that either benefits a community organization or links to the work of a researcher in the Humanities and Social Sciences at LTU. The individual project is a newly introduced component in this course that takes the

form of an internship with a LTU researcher in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. The conventional study mode in this course remains the group projects that arise from partnerships that LTU has already arranged with community organizations. Each student group has a mentor to guide through the project. There are different projects for different organizations, one of which includes a planned study tour to Samoa.

### Distinctive Features:

- ✔ Adapting to academic and career needs of students;
- ✔ Blending learning with activities of face-to-face training, distance education, off-site experiential community project, and overseas study tour;
- ✔ Targeting on the development of holistic competencies, particularly problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills

### Designed Learning Outcomes (LO):

- I. Apply your critical problem solving skills when identifying issues that affect the community
- II. Identify your role within a team, and comprehend group dynamics on decision making, leadership and problem solving
- III. Speak and write effectively to a wide variety of stakeholders
- IV. Understand and be sensitive to issues of cultural and social diversity
- V. Work co-operatively with a local organisation to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to a community problem

Source: LTU 2018

### Coursework Teaching & Learning Activities:

HUM2SLC is offered in Semester 2 of LTU (12 weeks from 30 Jul to 26 Oct, in the academic year of 2018)

- ✎ Workshop (Week 1): a 3-hour face-to-face workshop [replacing the 1-day symposium, delivered via blended learning]
- ✎ Scheduled Online Classes (Week 1 – 12): a 2-hour online session scheduled each week
- ✎ Placement (Week 1 – 12 off site): 30 hours of placement off site per study period on weekdays
- ✎ Tutorials (Week 1 – 12): a 1.5-hour face-to-face tutorial every two weeks (i.e. 6 sessions in total per study period)

## Assessment Approaches

	Name	Learning Activities	Weight	Aligned LO	Type	Generic Skills
A1	Online Reflective Modules	Students are assessed in the reflective modules of scheduled online class participation.	10%	I. IV.	Formative	Communication; Critical Thinking; IT; Study Skill
A1 <sup>0</sup>	Online Quizzes	There are 4 online quizzes for students to complete following the 4 self-paced online modules.  The workload of A1/ A1 <sup>0</sup> is equivalent to a 500-word written assignment.	(20%)	I. IV.	Formative	Communication; Critical Thinking; IT; Problem Solving; Self-management; Study Skill

A2	Project Plan	Students are required to write up a 1000-word group project plan, or individual research project plan.	20%	I. II. III. V.	Formative	Collaboration; Communication; Creativity; Critical Thinking
A3	Presentation	Students need to conduct a 10-minute group or individual presentation, on the outcomes of their community project. Each group has a maximum of 5 students. The workload of this assessment is equivalent to a 2000-word assignment. Students can deliver a talk, video, Sway, Pecha Kucha or other multimedia presentation.	40% (30%)	I. II. III. IV. V.	Summative	Collaboration; Communication; Creativity; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving
A4	Reflective Essay	Each student needs to write a 1000-word reflective essay on the agendas and methods of stakeholders or of researchers.	30%	I. II. III. IV. V.	Summative	Communication; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Study Skills

Note: A1 is implemented starting from 2018, while A1<sup>o</sup> is the obsolete version adopted before and during 2017. Weightings in brackets belong to the obsolete version.

### Assessment Type

Both formative and summative assessments are adopted in the course, with the summative ones carrying heavier weighting. Students are assessed during their participation in the formative learning activities, including the workshop/ 1-day symposium, online modules, and community project.

### Assessment Focal Areas

**Holistic competencies:** The links among intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and graduate capabilities are identified clearly in the course outline (LTU 2018). Through the activities of symposium/ workshop, online modules, and community projects, students are expected to enhance their communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork collaboration skills. The level of holistic competencies can then be assessed by online participation (A1), class presentation (A3), and the writing of reflective essay (A4)

**Knowledge application:** Through analyzing and devising solutions to community problems, students get to apply their discipline-specific knowledge and skills in real-world setting within both familiar and unfamiliar environment. Students need to compile a project plan (A2) with methods of knowledge application prior to setting out the community project. Some LTU students have the opportunity to travel to Samoa on a study tour with a Melbourne-based community organization. In the unfamiliar

environment of a foreign country, students receive initial guidance about the sustainability dilemmas of several local communities and organizations in Samoa (CERES 2018). They also observe local activities, potential problems, and needs. Students then look for solutions, by communicating with previous course instructor, conducting field research, and talking to local stakeholders (CERES 2015). The effectiveness of knowledge application is then assessed in the presentation on the outcomes of community project (A3), and the writing of a reflective essay on the agendas and field methods of community stakeholders (A4).

**Reflection:** The values for reflection are embedded in the assessment design of the course. The online quizzes have been turned into online reflective modules to enhance the reflection of students while going through the online scheduled classes (A1). The reflective essay (A4) focuses on critically reviewing the community problems and solutions. It renders students time and space to culminate their service learning experience.

### Assessment Standards/ Sample Rubrics

Rubrics or assessment standards specific to this course are not available. There is a generic rubric suggested by LTU to its tutors in assessing class presentation and major essay:

A3 & A4. Suggested Rubrics	Marking Criteria	Very poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	MARK
	<b>CONTENT (? Marks)</b> The student has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpreted the instruction/ question appropriately.</li> <li>• Clearly addressed the topic with appropriate elaboration of relevant sub-topics, appropriately weighted and within the prescribed word count.</li> <li>• Demonstrated an understanding of the necessary concepts/perspective/theories.</li> <li>• Used sufficient and appropriate material from relevant and credible sources to effectively support the key points.</li> <li>• Followed any instructions on the number and type of references to be used.</li> <li>• Demonstrated the ability to critically reflect upon key ideas/issues/findings.</li> </ul>						
	<b>STRUCTURE/ORGANISATION (? Marks)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction is appropriate to the type and format of response and clearly outlines the focus.</li> <li>• The body of the response is well structured, with coherent and logical development of key ideas in appropriate sections/paragraphs.</li> <li>• Each section/paragraph has a clear focus and line of thought.</li> <li>• The conclusion is appropriate to type and format of the response, successfully summarising the key ideas/issues/findings.</li> </ul>						
	<b>WRITTEN EXPRESSION (? Marks)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing style is appropriate to the task.</li> <li>• The writing is fluent, exhibiting grammatically correct sentences that are appropriately punctuated.</li> <li>• There are no spelling or typing errors and due regard is given to rules of capitalisation and abbreviation, etc.</li> <li>• Key ideas from the literature are effectively paraphrased and cited, and direct quotes are appropriately incorporated.</li> </ul>						
	<b>PRESENTATION (? Marks)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response conforms to the appropriate style guide advice and the requirements of the specified format (font, margins etc).</li> </ul>						
<b>REFERENCING (? Marks)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-text citations and direct quotes follow referencing guide rules.</li> <li>• Reference list and/or bibliography appropriately compiled.</li> </ul>							

Source: LTU 2000

### Teacher's Stories

Dr. Adrian Neil Jones, Associate Professor of History, Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)

### Professional Engagements

Adrian Jones holds a PhD from Harvard University. His academic work and service to history education have been recognized by the award of an Order of Australia Medal (OAM). He has also received numerous awards for teaching excellence, from the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (2007), La Trobe's Dean of Humanities (2006) and Vice-Chancellor (2008), and the Australian Learning and Teaching Committee (2008).

### Partnership

 Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES), a community-based environmental education organisation in Melbourne, is a partner of the course. CERES Global is the international outreach program of CERES, linking the local community to partner organisations around the world, by devising and facilitating overseas field trips and study tours. These engagements intend to create "a space of mutual learning and the exchange of ideas", as well as "discussions that explore social and environmental challenges facing both

parties” (CERES 2018). Ms. Sophie Edwards, the CERES Global Coordinator, says that, *“experiencing other cultures and communities, witnessing the world in new ways, meeting people gentle and humble and with generosity so big that it moves and stirs us – it challenges and changes us, this is what makes travel so powerful.”* (CERES 2018)

 Leukaemia Foundation is another partner of the course. Students can choose to support

the operation of the foundation’s annual charity events across Australia, namely ‘Light the Night’. The event raises funds for blood cancer research to improve treatments and find cures, which gives “families the emotional and practical support they need, and fund research to help more Australians survive Leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and other related blood diseases and improve their quality of life” (LTU 2016).

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### Students’ Side of Stories

 Not available.

### Featured Video

 Not available

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### References

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