

Community Service Learning (A005957)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2024-2025

A (Year) Dutch Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2024-2025

Buelens, Gert LW07 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2024-2025

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, French)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Russian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Turkish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, Russian)	5	A
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Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, Turkish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, German, Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, German, Russian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, German, Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Language Studies: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, German, Turkish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in African Languages and Cultures	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in East European Languages and Cultures	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Humanities; social engagement; multiperspectivism; participation; volunteer work.

Position of the course

This course module is aimed at students who have already completed a significant portion of their studies and wish to use their free time to focus on the social competencies of their education. In this module, students have the opportunity to sharpen and deepen these skills in the context of a volunteer organization.

Collaborating with (other) volunteers brings a unique dynamic. Students who are already active as volunteers can use this course to carry out a specific project in the volunteer organization that aligns with their educational objectives. Students who are not yet active as volunteers but wish to be will be connected with partner organizations where they can apply the skills they are acquiring in their studies.

Contents

In introductory lectures, we build the theoretical foundation for volunteer work. We provide academic knowledge and insights to develop a critical perspective and a well-thought-out reflection framework for social engagement. Together, we go through relevant literature and theoretical concepts, and encourage you to critically examine current ideas about volunteer work. The theoretical lessons cover various topics, such as community-based thinking and acting for altruistic purposes (including the legal status of a volunteer), ethics, teamwork, project management/initiative, sustainability, feedback, and scientific-based reflection. We challenge you to think deeply about how your academic studies can impact the broader society. After these theoretical lessons, we move on to practice. For ten weeks, you will spend an average of four hours per week actively participating in a community project proposed by the instructors or one that you propose (subject to instructor approval). This project aligns with the expertise of our faculty and is determined in consultation with the organizations with which UGent collaborates, primarily non-profit organizations that require volunteers. The course instructor may choose to have all projects connect to a specific societal theme, which will be communicated in advance. The volunteer work takes place outside the familiar academic context and, under certain supervision conditions, can even be conducted abroad. During this practical experience, you will apply the theoretical knowledge to real situations, understand the needs and challenges of local communities, and learn not only practical skills but also how to share valuable insights with the organizations you work with. Reflection is an important part of this course, addressed through seminars held during and after the practical experience. They help you discuss and critically evaluate your personal growth, challenges, and successes, as well as reflect on how you have applied academic knowledge in volunteer work. Group discussions and peer feedback sessions are also organized to explore your experiences with a mentor, enhancing both your understanding and personal/professional development.

Initial competences

The required knowledge may vary depending on the focus and objectives of the fieldwork. Flexibility and a willingness to apply discipline-specific knowledge in practical contexts are crucial. Students are expected to be motivated to actively participate in social initiatives, to be self-driven, and to critically evaluate their actions. An open and tolerant attitude toward diversity and multiperspectivism, as well as a posture that encompasses reliability, integrity, and respect for ethical norms, are essential. Students should have good communication skills, empathy, and social intelligence and be able to effectively work with others in the context of a volunteer organization.

Final competences

- 1 Acquire a deeper understanding of the importance of volunteer work for developing one's (intellectual) personality, for the development of others (volunteers, professionals working with volunteers, and those who benefit from volunteer work), and for building a caring society.
- 2 Gain advanced insight into the needs of the specific organizational context in which social engagement is undertaken.
- 3 Be able to successfully complete a project in collaboration with others (especially with volunteer staff) that involves the specific and social competencies of your studies, demonstrating the necessary creativity, flexibility, sense of responsibility, language and cultural sensitivity.
- 4 Understand and apply the ethical and normative aspects of engagement-oriented education, and be able to convey their meaning and importance to a non-academic audience.
- 5 Be able to provide written and verbal reports about your experiences in translating academic competencies into sustainable practices in a volunteer context, both during and after the fieldwork period.

6 Critically reflect on your personal engagement experience, assessing the value and effectiveness of the social engagement undertaken, and your role in it.

7 Understand which specific experiences as a volunteer provide satisfaction and why they inspire further societal involvement.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Excursion, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

This is a year-long course integrating various didactic approaches, including lectures, seminars, group work, independent work, and excursions. Through this approach, we emphasize both theory and practice, as well as reflection on volunteer work. Over the first six weeks of the first semester, you will have three lectures providing current theoretical information and perspectives on analyzing and understanding volunteer work, focusing on topics like change, planning, project management, and ethical behavior. You will also learn about methods and tools for planning and implementing community projects and receive a framework for reflection that allows you to critically examine your role and impact within volunteer initiatives. Between the autumn and Easter breaks, you will spend 10 weeks, four hours per week, involved in a volunteer organization, carrying out a project that aligns with the social end goals of your studies. This enhances the development of skills like teamwork, communication, and problem-solving while contributing to the organization with which you work. To ensure a structured growth process, there are four seminars focused on reflection. Before the volunteer work begins, an instructor-led seminar is organized to raise awareness about your personal goals and expectations for the upcoming fieldwork. During the volunteer work, there are two seminars to discuss progress, identify challenges, and share experiences and achieved objectives. After the volunteer work, a seminar is held to critically evaluate the achieved results and place the fieldwork experience in a broader context. This approach helps develop a holistic understanding of the relevance of your achievements.

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Texts and tools

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Other

Available on Ufora : Yes

Additional information: More than one language

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011). *Principles of Community Engagement, 2nd Edition*. NIH Publication N. 11-7782

Thompson, S., & Thompson, N. (2023). *The Critically Reflective Practitioner*. Bloomsbury.

University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development (z.d.). *Community Toolbox*. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/about>

Course content-related study coaching

- Guidance by the course instructor and/or tutors during the start-up and the intervision sessions.
- Feedback on the portfolio.
- Individual interim feedback by appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Professional practice, Oral assessment, Participation

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Professional practice, Oral assessment, Participation

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

- Behavior evaluation on the workforce. Using a transparent rubric, a university instructor evaluates, in consultation with the field supervisor, the student's competencies based on several criteria. These include work quality related to academic objectives and the student's attitudes during the fieldwork.
- Participation. The student's (pro-)active participation in the organization's daily activities is assessed, as well as their participation in the seminars, focusing on sharing and reflecting on experiences, actively contributing to group discussions, and providing constructive feedback to fellow students. Part of the evaluation is peer assessment.
- Portfolio/workpiece. The personal and professional growth during the fieldwork is assessed via a portfolio. The portfolio includes a series of personal reflections in which the student adopts a critical approach to specific learning objectives of the course and how they are applied in practice. The student should be able to explain these personal reflections verbally and respond to questions. Evaluation considers the depth of the reflections, clarity of presentation, and connection with the theoretical aspects of the course. Here too part of the evaluation may occur through peer and/or self assessment.

Calculation of the examination mark

50% of the grade is a workforce behavior evaluation, determined in close consultation with the field supervisor. 50% of the grade is an evaluation of participation in the introductory lectures, active participation in the seminars, and the submission and oral presentation of the reflective portfolio on the volunteer experience. During the oral presentation of the portfolio, the student demonstrates that they take full responsibility for the workpiece. If this is not sufficiently evident, the student receives a failing grade for the second evaluation component. A passing grade for the entire course is only possible if both evaluation components are passed. If this is not the case or if the student fails to complete all assignments, the student will receive the highest non-deliberable grade (7/20).

Facilities for Working Students

Not applicable. The course's experience-based approach is crucial; fieldwork and participation in reflection activities are essential.