



What is CBEL?

Community-based experiential learning (CBEL) is an overarching term that encompasses a number of community-based pedagogical practices, including Community Service Learning, and Community Engaged Learning. All CBEL activities involve students applying their academic learning within a community context.

CBEL is quite different from volunteering. The emphasis is on mutual benefit. Students have the opportunity to apply their academic learning in a community context, deepening their understanding of disciplinary content.

Community partners have the opportunity to draw on students' talents as a contribution to the work of their organization, while also teaching students about key issues in the sectors in which they are working. It is critical to the success of CBEL that community partners take on the role of co-educators of students – they define the priorities that students work on, and the contours of the student experience.

CBEL always involves an intentional learning process. Students engage in guided critical reflection throughout the experience.



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Examples



CIVL 202 – Civil Engineering II – Dr Susan Nesbit

This course has worked with a diverse range of community partners on projects that have spanned from design and build projects at the UBC Learning Exchange, to conceptual systems designs for Ray Cam Community Centre, to conducting research and creating recommendations for Metro Vancouver.

LFS 250 – Land, Food and Community I – Dr Will Valley and Dr Hannah Wittman

For the past five years students in this course have completed Community Impact Projects in elementary schools across Vancouver. Examples of recent projects include: planting school food gardens, carrying out food prepare and share activities, establishing vermicomposting systems in classrooms, and conducting surveys of the school food environment.

ENVR 400 – Research Project in Environmental Science – Dr Tara Ivanochko and Dr Sara Harris

This capstone course connects environmental science students with community organizations such as Village Vancouver and David Suzuki Foundation to conduct research to support diverse initiatives in waste management, biodiversity, sustainable resource management, agriculture, citizen science, marine issues, land, air and water quality.



CBEL Overview

Who is Involved in CBEL?*



Faculty members from a diverse range of Faculties across UBC integrate community-based experiential learning (CBEL) into their courses, and through these CBEL experiences, students work with community partners in a multitude of sectors in Vancouver and beyond. A wide range of students across UBC participate in these course-based experiences, as well as co-curricular CBEL programs, e.g. Trek and Reading Week, managed through the Centre for Community Engaged Learning.

For CBEL experiences to be successfully implemented, faculty and community partners are encouraged to co-design the experiences, with the support of the Centre for Community Engaged Learning as needed. The responsibilities of everyone involved in CBEL are detailed below.

Community Partners

- Identify the organization's priorities or needs that CBEL could fulfill
- Identify appropriate responsibilities and tasks for students, and co-design CBEL experiences with faculty and/or CCEL
- Orient students to organization's mission and specific CBEL work and communicate expectations
- Designate a primary contact for students
- Notify faculty member if problems arise
- Provide feedback on student performance
- Debrief with faculty at the end of the CBEL experience

Student

- Select a CBEL experience if there are multiple options, considering personal, professional, and academic goals
- Participate in orientation sessions, trainings, and other activities in preparation for CBEL experience
- Carry out CBEL experience professionally, respecting the community partner's guidelines and following the agreed upon schedule and deliverables
- Reflect critically on experiences
- Seek out feedback and guidance during CBEL experience
- Complete all assignments and work, as agreed with team members, community partner, and faculty

* References consulted:

Gallagher et. al. "Faculty Guide to Service-Learning: Information and Resources for Creating and Implementing Service Learning Courses." Experiential Learning Center, University of Colorado Denver.

McMaster University Student Success Center. "Community Service Learning: Resource for Faculty."

Mills, Steven. "The Four Furies: Primary Tensions between Service-Learners and Host Agencies." Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning. Fall 2012, pp. 33-43.

Tryon et. al. "The Challenge of Short-Term Service-Learning." Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning. Spring 2008, pp. 16-26.



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Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL)

- Assist faculty in development of CBEL courses, quality CBEL experiences that fulfill learning outcomes, and/or learning activities
- Support faculty to determine grading and rubrics for CBEL experiences
- Identify potential community partners and assist with scoping of robust CBEL experiences that fulfill learning outcomes
- Provide resources, examples, and grading rubrics for reflection activities
- Conduct orientation and reflection sessions, if requested
- Conduct TA training sessions
- Assist with troubleshooting if any issues or challenges arise during the term
- Provide evaluation resources for faculty and community partners

Faculty

- Articulate learning outcomes
- Consider options for CBEL experiences
- Develop and maintain long-term relationships with community partners, as appropriate to experiences
- Develop syllabus with integrated CBEL component
- Create assignments to draw upon CBEL experiences
- Prepare students for CBEL experiences
- Structure reflection activities throughout term
- Monitor CBEL experiences and attend efficiently to any issues that arise
- Evaluate CBEL experiences to determine if the experiences fulfilled course learning outcomes
- Share culmination of student work with community partners
- Debrief with community partner at the end of the CBEL experience



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Potential Benefits & Outcomes of CBEL¹

Adapted from University of Minnesota Career + Learning Centre and the University of Alberta Community Service Learning Guidebook



Students

- Deepen understanding of academic content
- Apply academic content to complex “real-world” situations
- Work across disciplinary boundaries and integrate information from multiple subject areas
- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Develop a sense of social responsibility
- Gain an understanding of community context and the systemic factors underlying community issues
- Build professional skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership
- Developing self-awareness, clarifying values and refining career goals

Faculty

- Gain experience with active teaching methods
- Foster reciprocal learning among all involved – students, teachers, community partners
- Promote students’ active learning as they bring new insights and dimensions to class discussion
- Learn firsthand knowledge of community issues
- Develop relationships with the community – providing opportunity for collaborative work
- Discover new avenues for research – including the scholarship of teaching and learning

Partners

- Inject new energy, enthusiasm, and perspectives into the organization’s work
- Gain additional human resources needed to achieve organizational goals
- Co-educate youth about community issues – perhaps correcting misperceptions
- Increase public awareness of key issues
- Network with colleagues in other organizations and agencies
- Identify and access other University resources; build relationships with faculty and staff
- Expose future professionals to a range of career pathways

¹ Adapted from the CSL Instructor Guidebook, University of Alberta, Faculty of Arts Community Service Learning. http://www.csl.ualberta.ca/en/-/media/Community%20Service%20Learning/Documents/Forms%20Guidebooks%20etc/CSL_INSTRUCTOR_GUIDEBOOK_2015-2.pdf



Co-education

"The spirit of collaboration ensures a channel of communication in order to more effectively respond to the evolving needs of the community and help close the often prevalent or historical divide between campus and community."²

Community organizations are not only important partners in helping UBC deliver community based experiential learning (CBEL) opportunities for students; they play an integral role as co-educators in the academic careers of students. By sharing their knowledge and expertise, they help students to better connect and contribute to the community in which they live; learn about the larger political and social structures in the community; develop civic responsibility and strong leadership skills; examine and challenge their value and belief systems; build professional networks.

Co-education is a broad term that when embraced can be looked at a number of different ways depending on the organization, the experience, the goals of the placement, and the learning objectives for the students. Simply put, CBEL is meant to be a learning experience for students and co-education is a critical component for its success.

Co-education...

- Is a multiparty relationship that includes students, faculty, the Centre for Community Engaged Learning, and community
- Implies that everyone has the dual role of educator and learner
- Requires co-creation on any number of areas including course design, development of learning objectives, project or placement development, and support for student learning and reflection
- Intentionally moves community-university relationships away from logistical/transactional toward developmental/mentorship and builds on a willingness to go beyond the convenience of logistics

Co-education manifests itself in a number of ways:

- **Informal:** non-classroom setting but structured and intentional
- **Formal:** classroom setting, structured and intentional
- **Non-formal:** when it happens in a less structured way where community and students talk, share experiences and tell stories



Examples

1. Deliver an orientation to your student(s) when they begin. Share information about your organization, the community you support, the current priorities and challenges. Tell stories about your work.
2. Have students contribute to the delivery of services in the community and take time to talk to students about their experiences after.
3. Introduce students to other staff and community members that access your services as appropriate.
4. Work with the faculty member to identify how your organization can support students learning objectives.
5. Include students in professional development activities or planning meetings you have scheduled for your staff team.

²<http://bonnernetnetwork.pbworks.com/w/page/13112912/Partners%20as%20Co-educators>

