



# Service-Learning Manual *For Students*

Centre for Innovative Service-Learning  
Hong Kong Baptist University



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# Before you Start...

## **This manual**

Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) offers both credit and non-credit service-learning programmes. This manual is intended to help you sail through the journey of a service-learning experience in the formal curriculum. You will find in this manual rules, procedures and tips for you to gain the most in service-learning, not only academically but also as a formative experience in your university education. We hope you will find working in service-learning projects a fun, meaningful and rewarding experience.

This manual supplements course information and instructions given by your course instructor. Consult your instructor if there are questions about your learning.

## **About the Centre for Innovative Service-Learning**

The Centre for Innovative Service-Learning (CISL) was established in December 2017. One of its duties is to provide support to faculty members for the development and implementation of service-learning courses at HKBU.

CISL is committed to supporting the development of service-learning opportunities that meet community needs and foster social changes. Through planning, executing, and reflecting on service experience, we endeavour to deliver the best student experience to enhance whole-person development, promote civic engagement and ethics, and instil in students a sense of purpose.

# 1. Service-Learning – The Basics

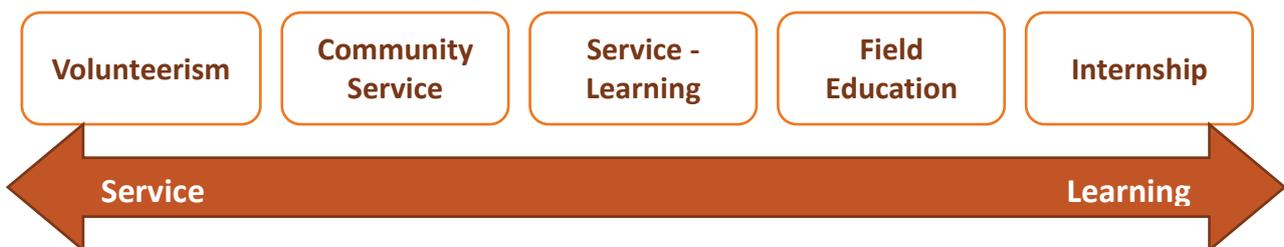
## 1.1. What is Service-Learning?

### The “Learning” in Service-Learning

Service-learning is a pedagogy<sup>1</sup>. It is a type of experiential learning and is different from traditional classroom teaching as service-learning deals with how to take your learning into the community and bring benefits to the society at large. Unlike hard knowledge or skills, what you learn from service-learning project can be broad and intangible.

### The “Service” in Service-Learning

Service-learning is a particularly useful method to help you develop citizenship and prepare for your work and life. It is because service-learning helps you apply your knowledge and serve the community at the same time. Most importantly, service-learning is different from community service and vocational training. A simple diagram below shows how service-learning straddles between the common notions of “service” and “learning”.



### The “Hyphen” in Service-Learning

The hyphen signifies the principle of service-learning in which academic contents and service experiences are closely integrated and are equally important.

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<sup>1</sup> Here, **pedagogy** is defined as the method and practice of teaching and learning. It describes different ways of how people learn.

To make sure you are on the right path to a service-learning experience, pay attention to the following aspects of service-learning. Try to find a balance between these three aspects to gain the most from the course.

1. **Academic content.** Service-learning in the formal curriculum will include academic contents, i.e. you learn some new skills or new knowledge in the course.
2. **Service.** There must be some form of service that benefits the community at large. You may directly serve the underprivileged, or you may work in areas such as the environmental preservation, public health education or advocacy.
3. **Analysis and Reflection.** In order to connect theory and practice, you will need to take your learning and experience to a new level. You will learn to apply **critical reflection as part of the course.**

## 1.2. What Happens in Service-Learning?

Most service-learning courses are loosely divided into:

1. a pre-service briefing / training component,
2. the service itself, and
3. a post-service evaluation that facilitates analysis and reflection.

Of course, the actual course design depends on the requirements of a specific course and the preferences of the instructor. No matter which course you are taking, you will find a few common learning outcomes of all courses with service-learning components (Box 1.2.1).

### **Box 1.2.1. Common Learning Outcomes of Courses with Service-Learning Components**

Students will -

1. apply their cumulative learning gained from their discipline knowledge / course and beyond to address specific community issues by means of innovation;
2. demonstrate deep self-understanding, empathy and caring for others and great sense of commitment to the common good of humankind;
3. develop a habit of critical reflection for life-long and life-wide learning, personal and professional development; and
4. identify ways to strengthen generic competencies and professional skills.

## 2. Service-Learning Courses in HKBU

Students are expected to be able to learn the following in addition to academic and professional knowledge:

1. Learn more about social issues and their root causes
2. Reflect on your values and beliefs
3. Enhance your understanding of diverse communities and cultures
4. Step out of your comfort zone and be more open to change
5. Work to make a difference in the civic life of our communities

### 2.1. Planning and Preparation

In order to gain the most from a course with service-learning components, it is important that you be prepared to face the tasks and challenges. In the table below, you may consider a few guiding questions to help you prepare for the course:

1. Do I have, or am I expecting to gain, the knowledge required to perform the service?
Every service-learning project asks you to use your academic and professional knowledge to contribute to a community issue. It is important that you are familiar with the skills and knowledge before launching a community project.
2. Do I understand, or am I prepared to know more about, the community and the context in which I am going to perform the service?
Citizenship requires knowledge and understanding of the world we live in before we can start to identify areas and issues that we need to attend to. Get yourself familiar with the community “at large” in order to understand your service project, and how your service could help build a better community. When you start, gather all the information first. What is the project requirements? How much time do you have? Who is your community partner and how much support would they be able to provide?
3. Am I prepared to change my views, skills and / or attitude towards the academic subject and towards the community issue?
We believe a service-learning experience would change the way you perceive service, the community, and more importantly yourself. You should expect to undergo a change in your mindset, an improvement in some of your skills, or a change in your attitude towards a specific discipline and the community.

## Planning your project

Learn to define your project scope early on in your project. Try to frame your project into working towards a *specific* topic. Planning helps you identify your needs, your resources, and your scheme of work. There are a few specific points to note in service-learning courses:

1. **Time** is important. Carefully consider the amount of time required for you to work on your project. It can take weeks if not months of preparation before a project can be launched.
2. **Consult your course instructor.** Courses with a service-learning component require additional input from course instructors. You will need to work with them closely and frequently. Be proactive and seek help along the way.
3. **Prepare academic materials.** Academic contents help you learn more about a subject. You will need to prepare academic materials related to your service project and to learn a specific set of skills and techniques when you run your project. Literature relating to service-learning should also form part of your learning, especially during your critical analysis and reflection at the completion of your service project.
4. **Engage others.** We expect a service project to look more like work than a class assignment. Success in service projects requires efforts to pull things together – you need to involve your community partner, your service targets and your classmates as early and as often as possible.

## **2.2. Working with Community Partners**

A community partner is an organisation, or in some cases a person, who has an established service practice in the community and is willing to support your service project. A community partner can be assigned to you by the course instructor, or you may be asked to identify your own community partner.

### **Communication with community partners**

Communication with community partners is important. Here are some tips:

1. Planning - engage your community partner as soon as you have some ideas. To integrate your project into their work requires strategy and planning, and you probably need to make some compromises before reaching a workable solution.
2. Implementation - make sure you let the community partner know the progress of your project from time to time. If you encounter new challenges, keep them informed of the problems you are trying to solve and your proposed solutions.
3. Completion - when you are nearing completion of your project, don't forget to report to your community partner (and your service target(s), if appropriate) about the outcomes of your project. Consolidate the final results of your work professionally.

### **Attitude with community partners**

Community partners would expect you to act like an actual worker and abide by professional ethics. Respect your community partner's work towards the community and be grateful for having a chance for you to undertake your service project. Below is a list of their common expectations on HKBU students.

1. Dress appropriately for work and meetings.
2. Be punctual.
3. Call your supervisors / co-workers if you cannot attend work or meetings on time.
4. Respect the rules, habits and culture of the agency.
5. Personal businesses should be avoided.
6. Do not use agency facilities and equipment without consent.
7. Discuss with your co-workers, peers and your supervisor when a situation arises. Do not attempt to work out issues on your own without agreement on all sides.
8. Discuss potentially inappropriate behaviour in the agency with your course instructors, and report to the authorities in case of emergencies.

## **2.3. Responsibilities and Ethics**

### **Your expectations**

We expect you to be independent in problem solving, carrying out a service project, and be capable of analysis and reflection so as to integrate your service experience into the academic learning.

You should expect to face challenges in various stages of the course – from learning a new skill, planning something you have no experience in, to encountering sudden changes in the project. Challenges are bound to arise as you are learning something new.

### **Attitude with service targets**

Your service targets are people in need. When we deliver the service, it is expected that we do our best to serve them. You also need to show empathy towards the service targets who are your partners in learning.

1. Never think you are there to save them from the world. Instead, respect their work and lives and show gratitude to them for working with you.
2. Your service will be relatively short in duration and small in scale compared to the actual lives of the service targets. You may wish to show your care towards the service targets but be sensitive about privacy.
3. Make the service project an opportunity to make friends with people from all walks of lives. You may wish to stay in touch with them after the service project but you need to ask for permission.
4. You may be able to look for further chances to serve the community. Take the advantage to work on new things with increased responsibilities, but never overcommit and take your learning above their needs.

### **Photo Consent**

It might be useful to take photos or videos for your learning journal and presentation afterwards. Please consult your agency supervisors and let them know how the images will be used. Remember that service users might have their own reasons for not wanting themselves to be photographed, and it is important we respect their choice.

## **Ethics**

If you need to sign any form of **contract** with your community partner, or if there is any **payment** involved, make sure your course instructor is informed and approves the undertaking.

Working with a community partner usually entails the exchange of information. Please observe the rules to protect intellectual property copyrights and make sure you adhere to the principals of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Get yourself familiar with the rules by visiting the Office of Student Affairs website:

### *Intellectual Property Copyrights*

<https://sa.hkbu.edu.hk/cls/guidelines-and-procedures/guidelines-for-the-protection-of-intellectual-property-rights>

### *Protection of Personal Data*

<https://sa.hkbu.edu.hk/cls/guidelines-and-procedures/personal-data-privacyordinance>

## 2.4. Tips for Students

### Be innovative

Take calculated risks and don't over worry about making mistakes. Combining knowledge with practice is always a new venture. Don't be afraid to try!

### Keep a working journal

Taking notes is a very important tool. You will need to document carefully what you learn. When you plan and implement your service project, take careful notes of **what** you have done, **why** you have done it and **how** it was done. You may also wish to jot down your **personal observations, feelings and emotions** of different things happening which will be important in the reflection and analysis stage. As your notes describe your day to day exercises, we sometimes call this a **working journal** – like a seaman's log that records everything and anything happening on deck.

### Reimbursements and claims of expenses

Your course instructor will let you know if financial support is available for some of the out-of-pocket expenses. Please follow the guidelines in Appendix 5.1.

### Health and safety

Working with your community partner usually means working on site outside of the HKBU Campus. Pay attention to potential workplace hazards and make sure you communicate **risks** and **potential risks** to your course instructor and community partner.

Keep in mind to protect yourself and others against **discrimination** and **harassment**, especially sexual harassment. You are encouraged to consult the Office of Student Affairs website to raise awareness on this issue:

<https://sa.hkbu.edu.hk/cls/guidelines-and-procedures/equal-opportunities-and-sexual-harassment>

## **Insurance**

The University has a Group Personal Accident Policy for all students against bodily injuries arising from accidents while engaging in activities organised or arranged by the University and/or student organizations. For enquiries, please call the hotline 3411 5894 or refer to the website of the Finance Office:

<http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~fohome/new/students/ins.htm>

## **Emergency Assistance for Overseas Services**

HKBU has appointed Inter Partner Assistance Hong Kong Limited (IPA) as the provider of emergency assistance service, namely Global Secure, to our undergraduate students during their overseas trips which are organised / arranged by the University.

Apart from pre-trip information and advices, Global Secure also provides security assistance and consultancy services like crisis response. With its 7 x 24 service and close connection with the University Insurance Provider, Zurich Insurance, students would definitely enjoy a more comprehensive coverage and protection during their overseas trips.

Please visit the Office of Student Affairs website for more information:

<https://sa.hkbu.edu.hk/cls/welfare-and-services/overseas-emergency-assistance>

## 3. Personal Reflection

If you arrive at this stage, congratulations! You have just completed a service-learning experience.

Your service-learning journey does not just end here. Now, it is an important time for you to carefully re-visit every stage of your service-learning experience to acquire new knowledge for yourself.

### 3.1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

This is the process of *synthesis* in service-learning. We can follow Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to complete the process.



In a service-learning project, you are doing *active experimentation* in which you put what you have learned into practice.

You gain *concrete experience* through your service project from start to completion, i.e. you get to know “What happens?” in the process. It is important that you document well the first two parts of this cycle. This way, you can go through your work and systematically *describe* your experience.

*Reflective observation* is a systematic way to think about your experience comprehensively and derive meaning from them. There are different strategies for reflective learning. This manual introduces a list of guiding questions to help your reflection.

When you conclude the new ideas and concepts distilled from reflective exercises, you have reached the *abstract conceptualisation* stage. These are your “take home messages” in service-learning. We hope these new skills and knowledge will help you sail through school and life.

## 3.2. Guiding Questions for Reflection

The following table shows a list of guiding questions for reflection. The answer to the questions can be used in your reflective exercises, class assignments, or even your final project report. Your instructor may give further instructions about how to report your reflection.

We always start with answering *descriptive* questions about what happened because we are used to recording events all the time. We are somewhat good at describing our feelings as well. When you work through the questions, try to think deeper about your experience – this helps you take the experience to a more personal level. In other words, the *reflective* questions help you “own up” your learning from the experience.

### About myself and my academic studies

Before	During	End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What am I good at and how can I contribute to the service project?</li> <li>• What do you fear about concerning the service?</li> <li>• What are my perceptions and beliefs about the social issue and population I will be serving?</li> <li>• How am I going to relate my class materials, knowledge and previous experience to the service?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are my observations? How do I feel about them?</li> <li>• What are the most challenging or satisfying parts of my work so far? Why is that so?</li> <li>• How are the course materials helping me overcome obstacles or dilemmas in the service experience?</li> <li>• What specific skills and academic knowledge am I using? Are they enough? Why or why not?</li> <li>• What innovative solutions am I introducing?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What impacted the way I view the situation/experience?</li> <li>• What are the new insights for myself in terms of values, opinions, beliefs, strengths, interests and role as a global citizen?</li> <li>• What would I like to learn more about the subject and myself?</li> <li>• How does the experience contradict or reinforce class materials?</li> <li>• How does this service-learning experience relate to my personal development?</li> </ul>

### About the service and the community

Before	During	End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What issue is being addressed and population is being served?</li> <li>• What role does the service organisation play in the community?</li> <li>• What are the support and solutions available locally and globally? Which one is the most innovative? Why?</li> <li>• What impacts/changes do I expect to bring to the community?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is happening at the community site?</li> <li>• How is the experience different from my expectations?</li> <li>• How does this service project address community needs?</li> <li>• In what way is it different from other solutions?</li> <li>• What is working and what is not? Why?</li> <li>• What process, service or product at the community site do I find innovative?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have I learned about the people, community and social issue?</li> <li>• What are the feedback and suggestions from service-users, community partners and course instructors?</li> <li>• Do I think their feedback is valid? Why or Why not?</li> <li>• How can the service be done differently to achieve better results? Why?</li> <li>• What can I and others do to support this social issue in the short-term and long-term?</li> </ul>

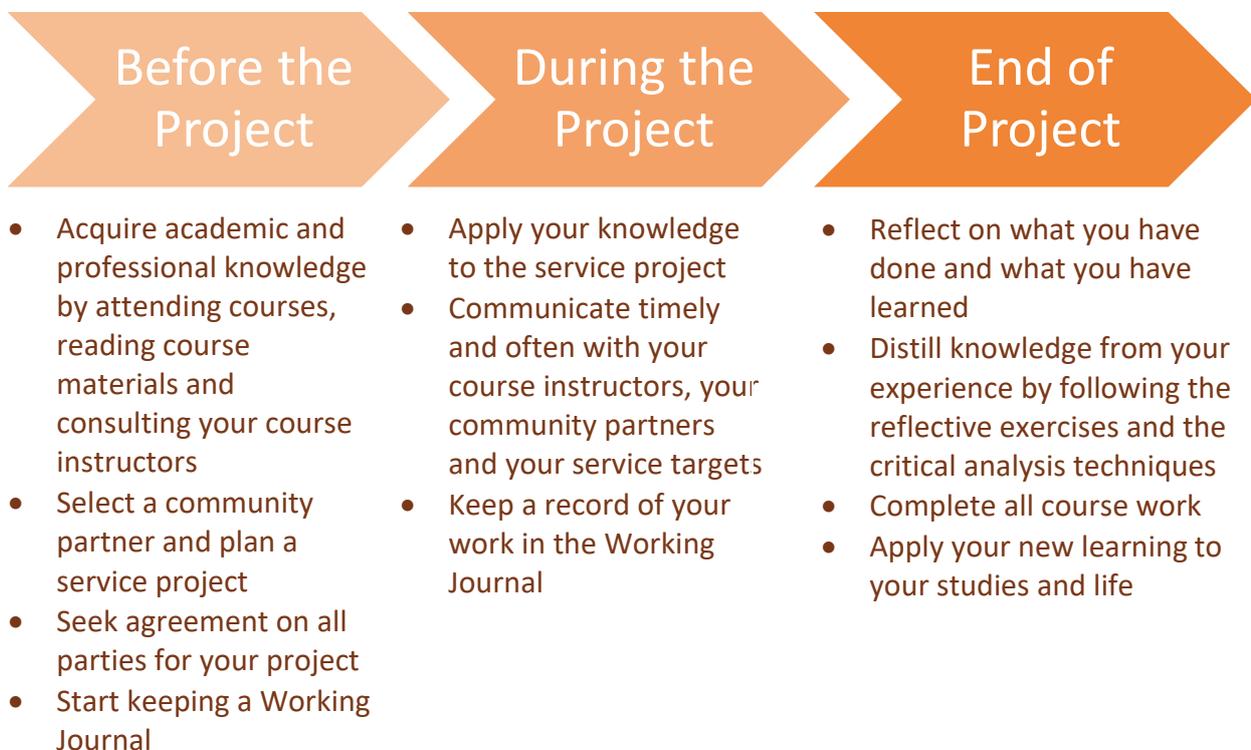
## 4. Final Remarks

A service-learning experience is challenging yet rewarding. This manual discusses the general *modus operandi* of service-learning courses and the tools introduced – keeping a working journal, planning a project and how reflections and analysis can be done – are intended as a general guide to the stages of service-learning.

Each service-learning course is unique in some way – the professional and academic practice, the community partners, the course instructors, the timeframe – so each of you are going to embark on a different journey along the service-learning path. Always consult your course instructors and the course materials for information specific to your course.

### 4.1. Service-Learning Timeline

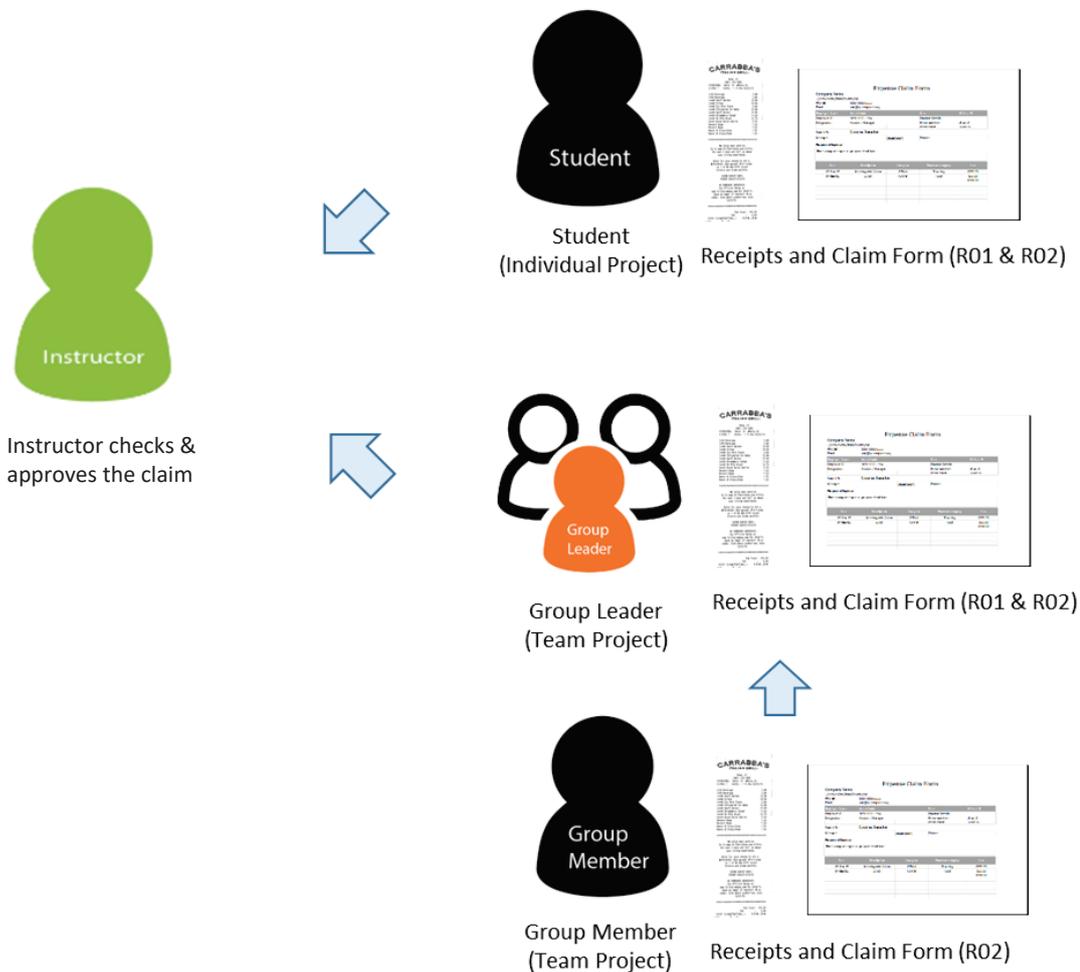
The process of service-learning can be summarised as follows:



# 5. Appendix

## 5.1. Reimbursements and Claims of Expenses

1. Please stick the original receipts on A4 sized papers and arrange a reference number for each record.
2. If only electronic receipts are available, please note that company stamp is required on the e-receipts. Without the company stamp, the applicant has to declare that the e-receipt is the only receipt issued by the company with his/her signature. Otherwise, the e-receipt will not be accepted.
3. All receipts must show the company name, product name, quantity and price of each item clearly.
4. Reimbursement procedures:



Hong Kong Baptist University

Service-Learning Mini-Grants

Subsidy for Students' Out of Pocket Expense (Local Projects)

Claim Form for Student Project Expenses (R01)

Student Name (in full):

Bank Account Name:

Student ID:

Bank Account No:

Mobile:

Email:

Project Expenses (A)			
Item No.	Date of purchase	Description of item purchased	Amount (HK\$)
1			
2			
3			
4			
Total Travel Expenses (B)			
Total HK\$ (A)+(B)			

Please attach the following documents together with this claim form:

- Original receipt(s) of the purchased item(s)
- Signed Travel Expenses Form(s) (R02)

I certify that all expenses stated in this claim form were necessary for the project(s). No item of this claim has been reimbursed/paid by any other organisation(s)/person(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Course Instructor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date









**Centre for Innovative Service-Learning**

**Tel: 3411 2472 | Fax: 3411 5540**

**Email: [cisl@hkbu.edu.hk](mailto:cisl@hkbu.edu.hk)**

**Website: <http://cisl.hkbu.edu.hk/>**

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