PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING SERVICE LEARNING UNITS

TRIM FILE REFERENCE: F26599

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DOCUMENT STATUS

☑️ Draft ☐ Ready for Review ☑️ Final

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1 Background

In September 2011, Academic Council resolved to give formal recognition on a student’s academic transcript to ‘Service Learning Units’ taught within its courses – units in which, on the basis of a partnership with an organisation in the wider community, students engage in structured unpaid work that combines some public benefit with an enrichment of their educational experience.

The University is also supporting the Guild’s development of a Volunteering Hub through which students can participate in various well-resourced and well-regulated extra-curricular service activities.

In the UWA context, the term ‘service learning’ refers specifically to community engagement activities that are embedded in units of study within the academic curriculum – structured and assessed as formal educational experiences. In contrast, voluntary activities are located on a less formal part of the community service spectrum. The importance of a clear distinction between service learning and volunteering is that they are managed separately (the former within the usual course arrangements, the latter through the Guild Volunteering Hub or a similar mechanism) and linked to different kinds of recognition (the former on a student’s academic transcript, the latter on a supplementary document). Academic Council has approved the Working Party’s proposals for administering the two kinds of activities on this basis, noting that some procedural details were yet to be clarified.

The present paper:

- provides a report on the first stage of identification of units currently being taught that warrant formal recognition as Service Learning Units;
- explains how it is envisaged that this process will be extended in the future.

2 Initial procedure for identifying Service Learning Units

Student Services, in partnership with the Service Learning Working Party, prepared an email message that was sent in February 2012 to all unit coordinators. It asked that anyone currently teaching a unit that appeared to fit the provided definition of service learning should nominate it for consideration by the Service Learning Working Party, with a view to having the unit tagged as such in the Student Information Management System. Appendix A reproduces that message.

The nine responses came from six different faculties, proposing a total of 12 units for consideration.

The Working Party at its meeting of 22 March 2012 identified six units that, in its view, merit formal recognition as Service Learning Units in their present form. They are listed in Appendix B.

Feedback is being provided to the coordinators of the other proposed units to assist them in developing the service learning component of their units more fully for the future.

The Board of Coursework Studies is now asked to endorse the Working Party’s list of units approved for this purpose, and to recommend to Academic Council that they be formally recognised as Service Learning Units.

It is proposed that Coordinators of these units will be asked to indicate at the time of submitting a student’s unit results whether he/she completed satisfactorily a service learning component.

3 Procedure in future years

The following annual procedure is envisaged for 2013 onwards:

1. Student Services will send out a request in much the same terms as used this year, reinforcing the value of this formal Service Learning Unit recognition by also mentioning that it is indicated in the Handbook.

2. Those coordinators whose units have already achieved formal SL recognition in 2012 will be asked each year whether their units have changed in any way.
3. As the Service Learning Working Party is not expected to continue beyond 2012, the evaluation of nominated units will be undertaken in the future by the relevant Board of Studies, assisted (if this would be welcome) by a small group of staff with expertise in service learning. This group could be selected by the Chair of the Board of Coursework Studies.

4. A list of the recommended units would then be forwarded via the Board of Coursework Studies to Academic Council for endorsement of their status.

4 Recommendations

1. That Academic Council be advised that the following units merit formal recognition as Service Learning Units:
   
   HUMA 2901 – Arts Practicum  
   HUMA 3901 – Arts Internship  
   EDUC 1102 – Learning Effectively  
   SSEH 3390 – Professional Practice [Sports Science]  
   BIOL 3360 – Saving Endangered Species  
   HSMD 3316 – Health Industry Practicum

2. That Academic Council be advised of the annual procedure (as described above) for identifying further Service Learning Units in the future.
Appendix A

Text of an email sent to all Unit Coordinators in February 2012

Subject: SERVICE LEARNING UNITS

The University wishes to identify any units being taught in 2012 that could attract formal recognition on a student’s academic transcript as “Service Learning Units.” We are asking you to take a moment to consider whether this may apply to a unit that you teach, and if so to let us know.

The background to this is a recommendation in the report from which New Courses 2012 emerged: that students should be given greater opportunities for “engagement with the wider community through a structured unpaid service learning experience with a not-for-profit organisation”.

In pursuing this objective, the University has since resolved (among other things) to recognise on a student’s academic transcript the completion of approved units that embed service learning, and to encourage staff to integrate service learning opportunities within the curriculum.

The following information explains the relevant details.

Definition

In the present context, “Service Learning” refers to a structured educational experience of community engagement that meets the following criteria:

1. It forms a substantial part, or the whole, of an approved unit of study at UWA, and the community engagement is explicitly indicated in the approved unit outline, specified learning outcomes and assessment details;
2. It is shaped by a collaborative partnership between the University and an external organisation to ensure that the service component is beneficial to both the recipient (community members) and the provider (students individually or as a group);
3. It integrates students’ participation in a real-world service experience with guided curriculum-embedded reflection on that experience;
4. It requires students to produce work that combines academic rigour with practical relevance and is evaluated as part or all of their assessment for the unit.

Clarification

In some cases the component of service learning may be an option within the unit; in other cases it may be required of all students undertaking the unit.

An internship or professional practicum does not necessarily involve service learning. But it may sometimes do so, particularly if:

a) the external organisation that hosts the student is part of the “third sector” – i.e. a not-for-profit organisation with community benefit as its main purpose; or
b) if the work done, though not in a not-for-profit organisation, requires the student to produce assessable work that involves analysis of community benefit issues.
In any case, to qualify for recognition as service learning the work done must meet the definitional criteria listed above.

Unit Coordinators will be asked to indicate at the time of submitting a student’s unit results whether he/she completed satisfactorily a service learning component. This can be done quite simply. But the first step is to identify those units that do give students an opportunity for SL, so that Student Services can later request the relevant information from the Unit Coordinator.

**Recognition**

Units for which the approved outline, specified learning outcomes and assessment details include an explicitly stated component of service learning will be tagged as such in SIMS (the Student Information Management System).

Units with a formally defined component of service learning will be indicated on the academic transcript. In such cases there will be a generic statement at the end of the transcript which says: “[Unit Code] [Unit Name] contained an assessable component of Service Learning”. The definition of Service Learning will appear on the reverse of the transcript.

**What we require from you**

If you believe a unit you teach contains a component of Service Learning as outlined by the above criteria and would like it considered for official recognition of Service Learning, please forward the following information to adam.stubbs@uwa.edu.au by 9th March. This submission will then be reviewed by the Service Learning Working Party.

- Unit Code
- Unit Title
- A description of the community engagement that this unit includes, accompanied by a brief justification as to how it qualifies as Service Learning
- A description detailing how the Service Learning component will be assessed
- Whether this component is an option within the unit, or required by all students undertaking the unit

If you have any queries regarding Service Learning please don’t hesitate to contact me on ext. 4229 or the Chair of the Service Learning Working Party, Ian Reid, on ext. 2470. More information can also be obtained from the CATL website available [here](#).

**Regards,**

**Adam Stubbs**

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Business Analyst, Student Systems
University of Western Australia
Ph: (08) 6488 4229
Email: adam.stubbs@uwa.edu.au
Appendix B

List of units recommended for formal recognition as Service Learning Units

HUMA2901 – Arts Practicum; and HUMA 3901 – Arts Internship
Each of these units comprises an industry placement based on a negotiated arrangement with an external organisation. The learning outcomes emphasise constructive responses to workplace problems, and both units require all students in their assessed work to reflect on specified issues of social responsibility and community benefit.

EDUC1102 – Learning Effectively
The explicit purpose of this unit includes “opportunities for community service through tutoring”, and these are negotiated with external organisations. There is a benefit for the person being tutored, while the UWA student is required to produce a reflective journal and/or case study indicating what the external organisation or individual has learned.

SSEH3390 – Professional Practice [Sports Science]
There is a strong community focus in many of the placements undertaken in this unit. Partner organisations include WA Disabled Sport, the Autism Association and Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service. Work required for assessment includes a reflective report on the student's experience.

BIOL3360 – Saving Endangered Species
This has a “real world” focus on environmental challenges identified within a particular south-west community. It is organised around an intensive period spent in Albany and contributes to local conservation knowledge and problem-solving in that region. The students' findings are provided to the external partner (DEC).

HSMD3316 – Health Industry Practicum
Students enrolled in this unit complete a placement in a health-related agency, carrying out a project identified by the external partner. There is a reciprocal benefit: the final work is presented to the agency, and the student also produces for assessment a portfolio that includes a reflection on the learning experience.
8. PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING SERVICE LEARNING UNITS – REF: F26599

Members were reminded that when Academic Council approved the Working Party’s proposal for administering service learning and volunteering in the new course structure (170/11) it noted that some procedural details were still to be clarified. An incomplete draft paper entitled *Procedure for Identifying Service Learning Units* (Attachment D) provided a report on the first stage identification of units currently being taught that could warrant formal recognition as Service Learning units. The report also explained how it was envisaged this process would be extended in the future.

Members agreed that with the inclusion of the units identified as, in the Working Party’s view, merit formal recognition as Service Learning units the final paper would be transmitted to the Board of Coursework Studies for consideration, with a view to endorsing the proposed recommendations. The paper would contain two recommendations for the Board to consider for endorsement and transmission to Academic Council.

AGREED:

1. EO to transmit the final copy of the *Procedure for Identifying Service Learning Units* report to the Board of Coursework Studies for consideration, with a view to endorsing the proposed recommendations.

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Regards,

Adam Stubbs

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HSMD3316 – Health Industry Practicum
Students enrolled in this unit complete a placement in a health-related agency, carrying out a project identified by the external partner. There is a reciprocal benefit: the final work is presented to the agency, and the student also produces for assessment a portfolio that includes a reflection on the learning experience.
9. REVIEW UNIT COORDINATOR SUBMISSIONS REQUESTING RECOGNITION OF UNITS CONTAINING SERVICE LEARNING

Members were provided with a copy of the submissions received from unit coordinators (u/c) in response to a request by Student Services to nominate units that may fit the provided Service Learning definition.

The Chair provided some feedback based on his preliminary assessment of the proposed units for members’ guidance only. He emphasised that the feedback was not intended to constrain or pre-empt discussion. Members considered each unit and identified those they considered warranted formal recognition as Service Learning Units as follows:

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<th>Members’ discussion/comments</th>
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<td>GRMN1002/2002</td>
<td>• Agreed: there is no evidence of a focus on community engagement or public benefit.</td>
<td>Not accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRMN1405/2405/3405</td>
<td>• Has potential; • the unit outline needs to be more explicit in stating the objectives / learning outcomes. • Are students engaging with the interviewees?</td>
<td>Provide feedback to u/c: the unit has the potential to be recognised, but needs to demonstrate explicit community engagement and student reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMA2901/3901</td>
<td>• Agreed: these units fit well; • Reflection is well incorporated.</td>
<td>Accept both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1102</td>
<td>• Agreed: this unit meets requirements.</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN2801</td>
<td>• Agreed that this unit has the potential to provide a great service learning opportunity.</td>
<td>Provide feedback that encourages the unit coordinator to proceed with implementation of the outlined unit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSEH3390</td>
<td>• Is this more of a professional practicum unit than a service learning based unit? • Agreed: provides service learning framework.</td>
<td>Provide feedback to u/c that while the opportunity for service learning is inherent in the unit, the integration between the student reflection and community focus of the professional skills is not explicit from the outline submitted. • These requirements are to be made explicit to the students. • Accept with u/c to attest that students have met the Service Learning requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSC1981</td>
<td>• If assessment work focused on service learning was explicitly included, the Winthrop Singers option within this unit could become eligible for recognition.</td>
<td>Not accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL3360</td>
<td>• The desirability of providing a more explicit statement about community benefit was noted.</td>
<td>As for SSEH3390 above • Accept with u/c to attest at the conclusion of the unit those projects that have met the Service Learning requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENSC1001</td>
<td>• Has the framework and structure to meet service learning requirements. • Requires critical feedback and discussion with the u/c to determine the degree of community engagement and how students who actually contribute in a direct way to</td>
<td>Still to determine, where is the direct engagement with the community for the student? • Probably not accept although this may depend on the u/c’s feedback.</td>
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the community would be identified.

**HSMD2216**
- As clarified by the u/c, this unit prepares students for HSMD3316. Its main focus is on project management training
- Not accept

**HSMD3316**
- Presents a stronger case than HSMD2216 as a practicum unit with service / organization involvement.
- Accept with requirement that Service Learning components are to be more explicit.

**ACTIONS:**
1. Chair to discuss these outcomes with the relevant unit coordinators.
2. Advice to be transmitted to the Board of Coursework Studies as outlined in item 8.

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