

UW Tacoma Community-Engaged Learning (CEL)

COURSE GUIDELINES

What is a Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) Course?

The UW University Committee on Curriculum Administration (UCCA) approved a tri-campus institutional definition of community-engaged learning (CEL) and a new "E" course designation in Spring 2024. This definition was developed by a faculty committee between 2020 and 2023, following the UW's 2020 Carnegie classification as community-engaged campuses. The UCCA also approved each campus to develop their own process to identify and approve "E" courses on their respective campus.

Definition: Community-engaged learning (CEL) courses are hands-on, skill-building opportunities for students to engage with community partners through the mutually beneficial exchange of creativity, knowledge, and resources.

CEL GUIDELINES

Faculty who meet the **minimum guidelines in BOLD** below are encouraged to seek an "E" designation for their course within their respective academic School.

Community Engagement

- ☐ **There is clear purpose, strategy and objective(s) for the partnership, which outlines mutually defined goals and provides a learning agreement between student, instructor and community partner OR that purpose and strategy is clearly included in the course syllabus, community agreements, learning contract, memorandum of agreement, and/or other student, faculty and partner facing document(s).**
 - *Heuristic: What product(s), deliverable(s) or recommendation(s) will community partners receive that will enhance their ability to do their ongoing work or meet their mission?*
- ☐ **Expectations are set and students are trained for collaboration with community partners.**
 - *Heuristic: What are expectations for how students will encounter community partners and how will you train students to encounter partners effectively?*
- ☐ **When possible, there is a plan to collaboratively assess mutually defined goals and consider the larger community impact of the activity, in addition to community partner(s) and university goals.**
- ☐ Students graded on (and receive credit for) their CEL experience with community partner input/grading.
 - *Heuristic: How are community partners engaged in assessing students' learning?*

Experiential Learning

- ☐ **The course design centers community-engaged scholarship, project(s), applied experience(s) and/or creative activity.**
- ☐ **Depending on the nature of the collaboration, students and community partners engage directly at agreed upon intervals throughout the quarter, for a minimum average of one hour per week or more.**
- ☐ **The course's learning outcomes incorporate a minimum of two of the sample student learning objectives (below).**
- ☐ **The course anticipates where, when and how students will experience, examine, and explore issues of power, privilege, and positionality within historical, cultural and societal contexts of partnership and collaboration, and incorporates opportunities to support students in learning from these experiences.**
 - *Heuristic: What opportunities exist to examine/explore/embed issues of equity, inclusion and social justice?*

- **Students will have opportunities for structured individual and group (peers, faculty and/or partners) reflection before, during and after their community-engaged learning experience, scaffolding toward civic, personal and academic development of students.**
 - *Heuristic: How are reflection opportunities designed to achieve learning outcomes and to promote integrated learning?*
- **Students will have opportunities to integrate what they are experiencing and learning in different life contexts (e.g., coursework, work and relationships) and to make connections between their lives before, during and after college.**
 - *NOTE: Experiences may have opportunities for students to direct their learning or project within the mutually defined goals and agreed upon parameters of the partnership. Students may be involved in identifying opportunities and challenges in the experience with the encouragement of partners, staff, and faculty.*
 - *Heuristic: What opportunities will students have to provide and receive feedback with faculty, staff and/or community leaders who shaped their CEL opportunity?*
 - *Heuristic: How will students have opportunities to direct their own learning or project within the basic goals and parameters of the partnership?*
- **Students will self-assess their CEL experience to evaluate their development relative to the course's CEL learning outcomes and the achievement of the mutually established partnership goals.**
 - *Heuristic: How will students identify and assess multiple approaches to the problems/opportunities/issues in the community partnership?*
- **Students will publicly demonstrate their experience, knowledge, and the impact of their experience (e.g., a presentation, website, report, creative work).**

CEL OUTCOMES

By engaging in community-engaged learning (CEL) experiences, UW Tacoma students will demonstrate learning in the following areas:

- **Civic Identity**
 - Understanding of oneself as an active and civically engaged participant in society
- **Cultural Humility**
 - Ability and inclination to reflect on ways one's own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities
 - To be open to learning about and from the perspectives of diverse communities and cultures
- **Perspective Taking**
 - Ability to identify, explain and apply multiple perspectives to understand community strengths and address community needs
- **Systems Awareness**
 - Understanding of the historic and contemporary role and effect of economic, political and social structures on the experiences of individuals and communities
- **Integrative Learning**
 - Ability to synthesize learning in the course with community engagement and other experiences

SAMPLE STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By engaging in community-engaged learning (CEL) experiences, UW Tacoma students will be able to:

- **Civic Identity**
 - Demonstrate active civic engagement in society.

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- **Cultural Humility**
 - Examine the ways one's own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities.
 - Value learning about and from the perspectives of diverse communities and cultures.
- **Perspective Taking**
 - Identify, explain, apply and evaluate multiple perspectives to understand community strengths and address community needs.
- **Systems Awareness**
 - Propose solutions aimed at addressing historic and contemporary role and effect of economic, political and social structures on experiences of individuals and communities.
- **Integrative Learning**
 - Articulate the relationships among learning in the course with community engagement and other experiences.

CEL GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Experiential Learning:** Participating in community-engaged outreach, scholarship, service, teaching/learning, research or creative activity in order to prepare our students to be educated, engaged citizens able to strengthen democratic values, address critical, societal issues and contribute to the public good.
- **Community-Engaged Outreach:** The application and provision of institutional resources, knowledge or services that directly benefit the community.
- **Community-Engaged Scholarship:** The creation and dissemination of knowledge and creative expression in furtherance of the mission of the university in collaboration with the community in order to address community needs through research, teaching and service in a mutually beneficial partnership.
- **Community-Engaged Service:** The application of professional expertise to addresses community-identified needs in support of the goals of the university and the community.
- **Community-Engaged Teaching /Learning:** A pedagogical approach that connects students and faculty with activities that address community-identified needs through mutually beneficial partnerships that deepen students' academic and civic learning.
- **Community (Publicly)-Engaged Research:** A collaborative process between the researcher and community partner that creates and disseminates knowledge with the goal of contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community.
- **Community (Publicly)-Engaged Creative Activity:** A collaborative process between the researcher and community partner that creates and disseminates creative expression with the goal of contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community.
- **Community Partners:** Groups of people affiliated with UW Tacoma by geographic proximity, special interest, similar situation or shared values who enter into sustained collaboration for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration and application of knowledge, information and resources
- **Mutually Beneficial Exchange:** The sharing, application or provision of institutional resources, knowledge, information, creative works or services between UW Tacoma and community partners, with the quality and impact of the exchange to be determined by the instructors, students and community partners

These guidelines were originally developed by a faculty and staff community-of-practice who worked together in the summer of 2018 as part of a High Impact Practice initiative of the Student Success Council. As of Spring 2025, related to the 2020 Carnegie Community-Engagement classification, all campuses of the University of Washington have replaced the legacy "S" (for service-learning) course designation with a revised "E" (for community-engaged) course designation. In Winter and Spring Quarter 2026, edits and updates were made to these guidelines by faculty and staff and subsequently approved into policy by UW Tacoma APCC and Faculty Assembly Executive Council.