Compulsory Credit-bearing Courses on Service Learning for The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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About PolyU

- Largest university in Hong Kong
- 6 Faculties and 2 Independent Schools
- ~30,000 students (22,500 FTE)
- Application-oriented programmes; ranging from higher diploma to PhD levels
Increasing emphasis on roles of universities in educating students into socially responsible citizens with a heart to serve the community
[Andrzejewski & Alessio, 1999; Purdue, 2005; Mohamedbhai, 2011; UNESCO, 2009]

Service learning: a high-impact educational practices [Kuh, 2008]
Background

- Change from a 3-year to a 4-year undergraduate degree structure in all Hong Kong universities in 2012/13

Aim:

- More balanced education for students
- Broader knowledge base to support specialised learning
PolyU’s 4-Yr UG curriculum

- Core (GE) Curriculum - General University Requirements (GUR)
- Major Study - Discipline Specific Requirements (DSR)
- Minor Study / Free Electives

Service Learning Requirement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>CT</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>IPS</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>EL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Freshman Seminar</td>
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<td>Cluster Areas Requirements</td>
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<td>Healthy Lifestyle Requirement</td>
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**Key:**
- **PC:** Professional competence
- **CT:** Critical thinker
- **IPS:** Innovative problem solver
- **EC:** Effective communicator
- **LL:** Lifelong learner
- **EL:** Ethical leader
SL Requirement at PolyU

- Successfully completed a 3-credit subject with an approved service-learning component in order to qualify for graduation

- Will need to offer 70+ subjects to cater for 2800+ students each year
Experiential learning

Integrating community service with instruction and reflection, to achieve institutional or programme learning outcomes

Include both direct service activities and indirect service (civic engagement) activities
Criteria for a SL subject

- 3-credit subject
- Can be offered by any academic unit
- Can be an open-to-all GUR subject, a GUR subject targeted at students with certain background, or a DSR subject (core or elective of a Major)
- Must satisfy the following conditions:
  - Clear academic objectives and learning outcomes
  - Significant community service (40+ hours)
  - Rigorous process of student reflections
## Examples of SL subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open to all</th>
<th>Targeting Yr-1 or Yr-2 students</th>
<th>Targeting Yr-3 or Yr-4 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technological beyond borders: Service-learning across cultural, ethnic and community lines</td>
<td>Community psychology</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>For students with certain backgrounds</th>
<th>Resilience of children in post-disaster areas</th>
<th>Engineering design for the community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Discipline specific | Ecotourism in rural and developing areas | Biomedical engineering services for people with physical disabilities |
Major challenges

- Staff buy-in: Skepticism about desirability of including SL as a mandatory subject
- Lack of common understanding of what SL is
- Little experience of implementing credit-bearing SL
- Few people with expertise in developing, delivering and assessing SL
- Funding and other support
- Large number of SL subjects (70+) and student-places (2800+ per year) needed
Strategies

- Convincing the university community
- Appointment of advocates
- Formulation of policies
- Central support
- Staff development
- Funding support and piloting
Convincing the university community

Much debate about desirability of SL as a mandatory subject – at different levels and contexts
Arguments both for and against the proposal
Policy eventually approved by the University Senate
Appointment of Advocates

- Spear-headed by Vice-President (Academic Development)

- Identified a core team of dedicated and experienced staff as advocates:
  - Head of the new Office of SL - operational
  - Chair of the Sub-committee on SL – academic approval
  - Members of the university Task Force on SL - strategies
Formulation of policies

- Policy paper on SL based on a study of international best practices
- Subject development guidelines
- Criteria and mechanism for subject proposal and approval
- Operational and funding model
Central support

A new Office of Service Learning set up to:
- Advise on developing SL subjects and projects
- Offer staff development workshops and activities
- Liaise with NGOs to find suitable SL opportunities
- Liaise with funding agencies and donors
- Organise exploratory SL projects

An eLearning module for students
- About concepts and practice of SL
- 10 hours of study effort
- Can be included as a component of a SL subject
Staff development

- Workshops and seminars
- eLearning short course for staff
- Practical experience short course
- Community of Practice in SL

Biomedical Engineering Services to the Under-privileged People with Physical Disabilities

Dr MS Wong, BME
Dr Aaron Leung, BME
22 Oct 2012 (Mon)
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

The experience of conducting a pilot service learning subject in the last summer will be shared. In the process of service delivery, PolyU students had opportunities to team up with the overseas students (University of Pennsylvania and Washington University in St. Louis) to provide orthotic services to the children with cerebral palsy in Ching Mei Island. This subject would allow PolyU students to have hands-on experiences in service learning.

Service Learning – Experience from the “Housing for the Community” Pilot Project

Dr Barbara Leung, BRE
10 Oct 2012 (Wed)
10:30 – 2:00

Housing for the Community was the first service-learning pilot subject successfully run by the Department of Building and Real Estate.
Funding and other support

- Funding for piloting of SL subjects
- Funding level > ordinary GUR subject
- Other sources of funding support to subsidize students for non-local services
- Donations of over US$ 1M received (2011-13)
Early results

Subjects developed

Service Learning Subjects Approved by March 2013
Total no. of subjects: 32

- Hotel & Tourism Management: 2
- Design: 1
- Health & Social Sciences: 12
- Humanities: 5
- Engineering: 5
- Construction & Environment: 5
- Business: 1
- Applied Science and Textiles: 1

No. of Approved Subjects
Early results [2]

- Number of students participated in SL subjects

**Student Involvement in Service Learning Subjects**
(From 2010/11 to 2012/13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculties/Schools</th>
<th>No. of Students Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel &amp; Tourism Management</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction &amp; Environment</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Science and Textiles</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students participating in SL subjects is shown in the chart. The highest number of students involved is in the Engineering faculty with 140 students, followed by Health & Social Sciences with 120 students. The lowest number of students is in the Design faculty with 10 students.
Early results [3]

Impact on students

Student Self-Evaluation of Generic Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Pre Score</th>
<th>Post Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Effectiveness</td>
<td>19.025</td>
<td>20.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>19.125</td>
<td>20.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>19.325</td>
<td>20.75</td>
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Ongoing issues

- Quality assurance
- Funding support
- Appropriate pedagogy
- Scalability
Thank You

Questions, comments or things to share?