UL Practicum Module
Outline and Resources
UL Engage Resource (2017) Quillinan, B. ‘UL Practicum Module Outline and Resources’
The UL Practicum provides curriculum based accredited learning that deploys academic expertise in response to identified community needs, in the context of applied community projects, designed and implemented by collaborative teams comprising UL Staff, Community Partners and Students.

What makes the UL Practicum different to other modules?

- UL Practicums are undertaken in partnership with an identified community
- There is an agreed understanding regarding the roles, expectations and outcomes of academic, student and community partners
- UL Practicums include an evaluation of project outcomes and impacts
- Learning outcomes and assessments focus on applied academic expertise and generic transferable skills (see, for example: UL graduate attributes https://goo.gl/c53HJa; Department of Education and Skills, 2016: 33).
- Student learning takes place in a variety of non-traditional formats and fora.
- Reflective practice is a core component of the UL Practicum.

Who is it for?

Communities and Academics work together with students on collaborative projects. Undergraduate and Postgraduate students are eligible to participate, subject to approval by Programme Course Director and/or Home institution.

Why do it?

The UL Practicum enables UL Staff and students and Communities to come together as partners to: address identified community needs; transform learning and develop UL graduate attributes; and to carry out best practice community oriented research.
WHAT IS THE PRACTICUM MODULE OUTLINE?

Aims and Objectives
This module will provide students with practical experience, generic skills development (such as applied research work, team work, problem-solving and project work) and may afford the opportunity to be part of a multi- or inter-disciplinary team. It will enable them to apply the disciplinary knowledge that they have learnt to multi-faceted real-world problems. Students will: take part in problem identification and ideation; develop a deeper understanding of academic issues areas and problems in consultation with external stakeholders; work towards solutions in collaboration; implement identified changes and evaluate outcomes. A reflective practice will underpin the student experience throughout.

Learning outcomes
Civic Learning Outcomes are the Knowledge, Skills and Values individuals need to be effective Active Citizens (Tisch, 2013). An effective Active Citizen is a person who understands the obligation and undertakes the responsibility to improve community conditions, build healthier communities and address social problems. He or she understands and believes in the democratic ideal of participation and the need to incorporate the contributions of every member of the community. Communities can be geographic, interest-based and even "virtual" and may be local, national or global (Tufts, 2013).

The UL Practicum is designed to enable students to:

- Develop the capacity to apply curriculum-based knowledge in a real-world setting.
- Develop graduate attributes to work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in collaboration with external community stake-holders
- Develop project work and problem solving skills
- Develop competence in conveying ideas clearly and effectively to a range of different stake-holders in different organizational and/or community or cultural settings contexts.
- Explore issues of social responsibility, ethical practice and in sustainable community contexts.
- Develop the capacity to see new opportunities to address commonly identified issues/problems within the community
- Recognize the capacity of those outside their own area of expertise to deliver their own professional and/or experiential expertise into collaborative project work.
- In addition to the above Learning outcomes, academic staff may identify additional subject-specific learning outcomes specific to Practicum project.
- Opportunities for students to identify additional learning outcomes of their own are also encouraged.
Course Structure

**UL Practicum workshops and weekly meetings**

Three workshops are scheduled to support students throughout the Semester. All UL Practicum students must participate in the UL Practicum workshops. Workshops will address topics such as roles and responsibilities, UL graduate attributes, reflection, learning in community engaged placements, partnership principles, agreements and ethical considerations, engaged research methods, measuring impact and outcomes. On the weeks that workshops are not scheduled, the academic supervisor will be available to meet with students during the time scheduled for their Practicum Module.

**Community focused activities**

Academic supervision of the project work is carried out by the responsible academic for the project. The involvement of student Practicum Partners is contingent on the parameters of each individual Practicum Project and negotiated during the first part of the programme in the general project set up. Students may be required to sign a community learning partnership agreement, detailing the responsibilities of the academic department, of the community hosts, and agreed guidelines for your participation in the programme. In addition to the academic content of your programme, the UL Practicum offers an opportunity for students to learn a variety of important transferable skills in a supported environment. Students will be supported to develop graduate attributes (*knowledgeable, proactive, creative, responsible, collaborative, articulate*) to work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in collaboration with external community stake-holders.

**Course Assessment**

A range of formative and summative assessment methods will be used. Assessments will be designed to compliment the interactive teaching and learning approaches. In particular, methods conducive to workplace assessment will be employed (McDowell, 2002). Examples of these may include all or some of the following: project presentations, reflective assignments, real time problem-solving tasks, portfolios and profiles, negotiated assignments and learning contracts, group assignments, self, peer and co-assessment.
WHAT ARE THE STUDENT WORKSHOPS ABOUT?

Students will engage with three facilitated workshops over the Semester. Practicum workshop details are listed below. Other meetings may be organised with the team throughout the course of the project.

Content Overview

WORKSHOP ONE

This workshop focuses on introducing students to the practicum and project specific details:
⇒ Background and context to working and learning with community partners
⇒ UL Graduate Attributes;
⇒ Introduction to Reflective Study (learning diaries)
⇒ The nature of knowledge in Community Engaged Learning and Community Engaged Research
⇒ Introduction to Community Engaged Learning and teaching approaches
⇒ Community, Academic, Student roles and responsibilities
⇒ Assessment Strategy

WORKSHOP TWO

This workshop will provide a space to review student progress and to share and reflect upon their Practicum. In this workshop, students will:
⇒ Share and reflect upon their experience with other Practicum students.
⇒ Identify opportunities to develop their graduate attributes and skills in the Practicum placement
⇒ Identify strategies to overcome challenges in the work being undertaken in their Practicum placement.
⇒ Learn how to plan for evaluation, and outcomes
⇒ Identify how to implement principles of ‘Engaged Scholarship @UL’ in their Practicum project (in terms of its implementation of partnership principles, agreements, ethical considerations)
⇒ Present a Practicum Progress report

WORKSHOP THREE

This workshop will address personal/professional development on their practicum placement and explore ways to continue your development going forward:
⇒ Engaged research methods
⇒ Project impact evaluation / Briefing Report
⇒ Review of practicum experience
⇒ Review of graduate attribute development
ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Students engaged in a Practicum Module will undertake both formative and summative assessment methods.

The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments, help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work. The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATION AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Community organizations should be integrally involved in the planning, design, implementation, evaluation and celebration of the work-integrated learning curriculum (Seifer, 2002). UL Engage and community organisations work in partnership throughout the Practicum experience to ensure a genuine partnership.

Students role within this partnership will be explored in the workshops.
GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Graduate attributes are the set of core outcomes that a tertiary education community agrees its graduates will develop during their studies. They encapsulate for both students and the wider community the defining characteristics of a student’s university degree program(s), and describe a set of characteristics that are designed to be transferable beyond the particular disciplinary context in which they have been developed. These attributes include teamwork skills, being able to think both critically and independently, being able to critically appraise one’s work and the work of others, and an appreciation of the need and value of critical reflection in one’s academic, personal, and professional life and apply previous disciplinary knowledge to new contexts.

Throughout your community placement, you are encouraged to self-assess the extent of your skills base in order to identify those particular areas related to graduate attributes that you wish to develop on your UL Practicum placement. This activity will be an integrated strand of the practicum module design. Your self-assessment and development activity will be strongly linked to the workshops and feedback sessions incorporated into the practicum module. The Graduate Attribute Development Student Self-Assessment tool will help you to assess how well your attributes are developed and identify aspects you would like to focus on throughout the UL Practicum and going forward.
WORKSHOP ONE ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Group Ice Breaker—Human Bingo

Directions: Find classmates who fit the descriptions you have been given, by asking them questions. Do not show each other your Bingo Card. Write your classmates names in when they fit the description. You cannot use the same person more than twice and you can’t use your own name on your sheet. Get to know your classmates!

- When ten minutes are up, ask the following questions of the group:
- How many people got all 20 squares initialled?
- Did you learn anything about the people that you work with on your team?
- Do you have anything in common with some of them?
- Do some of them have experiences that you don’t have?
- What’s good about that (diversity, differing ideas for brainstorming, etc.)?

If you have time, go through the blocks and find out who answered Yes to each one, so that the whole team learns more about each other.

Activity 2:

Project:

Students:

Having met with your community partners:-

What do you hope to achieve with your community partner? (Summary of the project in one/two sentences)

How are you going to evaluate the outcome?

What actions/activities (a) Have been undertaken, (b) Need to be undertaken?

What do you need to do
(a) as a group,  (b) individually?

Activity 3:

For the second workshop, each project group will submit one question relating to their project on an aspect for which they would like feedback/advice from group facilitator and peers.

Question:

Activity 4:

A summary of points/themes emerging from student weekly reflections will be presented by the facilitator for further group discussion.

Examples of topics: Being heard/communicating your ideas effectively, agreeing project plan and implementation with community partners, planning work, managing individual roles and responsibilities and working as part of a team, receiving and giving feedback, time management etc.
WORKSHOP TWO

COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) is used to describe pedagogical approaches that aim to achieve both academic and civic outcomes for students, while making a meaningful contribution to both local and global communities through reciprocal partnerships. In this way, CEL is a form of experiential learning that places students in partnerships with community and industry partners, and includes elements of Community engaged learning (CEL), Community Based Research (CBR), and Community Engaged Scholarship (CES). Effective engaged learning pedagogies will be introduced to students throughout the module.

REFLECTION

Activities that stimulate reflection have an essential role to play in fostering knowledge transformation in WIL experiences (Sattler, 2011). An adaptation of Ash & Clayton’s (2009) three-step D.E.A.L. Model for Critical Reflection will be used as a guiding theoretical framework for engagement in the reflective process. The framework describes reflection as a three-step process made up of: Description of learning experiences in an objective and comprehensive manner Examination of learning opportunities in light of previously identified goals or expected outcomes of learning Articulation of learning, which acknowledges the learning experience that has occurred and establishes goals for future action in the learning process.

Themes arising from student reflections will be addressed through facilitated discussions in the three practicum workshops.
**Activity 1:**
Within your project groups, discuss the successes and challenges you have encountered so far.
- Each group will present their key challenges and success (5 minutes)
- Discussion and input from other groups (focusing on suggestions to manage challenges, learning from success etc.) (10 minutes)
- What would you do differently if you were to start again? (Key points relating to communication, project planning etc.) (10 minutes)

**Activity 2:**
For the second workshop, each project group will submit....

One question relating to their project on an aspect for which they would like feedback/advice from group facilitator and peers

**Question:**

**Activity 3: Graduate Attributes**
Refer to the Graduate Attribute self-assessment and development booklet.

In pairs, each of you share-;

- One attribute you have identified as strength
- One attribute you have identified which you would like to focus on for development

**Activity 4**
A summary of points/themes emerging from student reflections will be presented by the facilitator for further group discussion
WORKSHOP THREE

COMMUNITY BRIEFING REPORT

A template for a UL Engage Community Briefing document has been designed to present your community with a briefing report on your project. This Briefing will be a concise publication to include in your professional portfolio and to submit to your home University if required.

STUDENT PRACTICUM EVALUATION

In order to assist with the on-going evaluation and development of the Practicum Module, students will be asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of their placement.
Activity 1:
Project:
Students:

Within your project groups, discuss your poster and community briefing document.

♦ What actions/activities (a) Have been undertaken; (b) Need to be undertaken?
♦ What do you need to do (a) as a group, (b) individually?

Activity 2:
A summary of points/themes emerging from student weekly reflections will be presented by the facilitator for further group discussion.
WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS SAY?

Students work and learn with community partners on projects identified by local community groups. Some of the projects implemented in the Limerick region are briefly described below with accompanying testimonials from community partners, students and staff.

I am so appreciative for the opportunity to have been part of the UL Practicum. The module really made me feel like I was a part of the Limerick community, not just a study abroad student here for a brief time. It was so valuable to feel that I had left my mark, even a small one, on the area. I was able to meet fantastic, caring, visionary, supportive people who helped me to grow throughout the semester, and I wouldn’t trade that for anything. I can’t recommend the practicum enough to any international student! It opened my eyes to the impact a small group of determined people can have, and I’m both proud and thankful that I was able to be involved in it.

Abbey Benning
UL International Practicum student
University of Minnesota

The students were very enthusiastic and I was very surprised at how fast they took on, you know took the information in and were able to compile something very clear cut which is what we wanted. They gave their all, they took it very personal which I love. I know you if somebody wants to feed into that and that I will get the best out of them and that is exactly what we got.

Suzanne Roche
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
CEO, Limerick’s Gateway to Education

It was great to have the students alternative vision because you’re focused inside in the project, you’re working on it every day so you don’t see the whole picture. It’s great to have students come in from outside and say ‘do you know what I think would be a really good idea’, but because you’re so focused on sales or timesheets or whatever you don’t see it. It was brilliant to have that…. just bright, talented students just to say ‘I think this will work’. 

Karen Keane
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
Limerick’s Gateway to Education

In terms of what this experience has meant to me personally, it has been something that I find hard to summarize, not because of the lack of depth in it, but the exact opposite. Unlike a regular classroom setting, being involved in hands-on work with my community partner has enhanced my skills and served as an opportunity that cannot be replicated in any other setting. The overall aspect of this module more than met my expectations, and I was honestly amazed by how much I felt I grew both in my study abroad experience and as a student. In light of the benefits of this module, I feel that I am both a better student, but also a more well-rounded person.

Bailey Perry
UL International Practicum student
University of Minnesota
My experience with the Practicum really mattered because I could tangibly make a difference in peoples’ lives while in college. University pushes people to think about themselves: their career, future relationships, money planning, classroom learning, etc. but little is done to expand thinking beyond academic walls and outside oneself. This experience enabled me to do that in a way that made learning a joy!

Nicholas Himann
UL International Practicum Student
Wilfrid Laurier University

Adare Tidy Towns was very pleased to be involved in UL Practicum I feel that both projects have benefited from the involvement of the students. Students working with us on the Tourist Ambassador Program identified the need to extend our focus to younger people and their recommendation to partner our volunteers with international students is welcomed. Students also worked with the local conservation officer and produced a simple pamphlet for owners of the cottages which we hope will encourage owners to comply with existing regulations. The students were delightful to work with and I feel that they enjoyed their time in Adare. The project work enabled them to become involved in the community from the outset. I would like to thank UL for the opportunity to take part in this Practicum and look forward to future engagement.

Eleanor Purcell
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
Adare Tidy Towns

My experience was interesting and something completely different to what I’m used to. Being able to go out, meet, and work alongside people with other cultures and getting credit for it has been one of the best experiences that I’ve had in Ireland. Most students get to see Ireland in a tourist perspective, but you don’t get to see the reality of Ireland until you’ve done the Practicum.

Aimee Allcock
UL International Practicum student
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
The UL Engage project was a real shot in the arm to get our projects going again, for people to come in with fresh eyes and ears and look at our challenges and potential from a different light.

Our community has benefitted from students coming in from a whole new country with a new international way of looking at things. This opened doors that maybe local people might not have been able to open and in that regard our project might not have progressed unless the students were involved.

Mark Nagle
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
BGM Community Council Chairperson

“This fresh young minds, outside eyes and new ideas—needed in every community!”

Biddy Hayes
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
BGM Community Council

This practicum proved to be an invaluable educational experience because it taught me lessons about and skills for working with different people, stressed the importance of giving back, and built me as a person overall.

Kelsey Kuiper
UL International Practicum student
Davenport University

Fresh young minds, outside eyes and new ideas—needed in every community!”

Biddy Hayes
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
BGM Community Council
The students made an invaluable contribution towards our aim of presenting and promoting the rich heritage of Mungret to visitors from at home or abroad. In particular, they furnished badly needed technological skills with the enthusiasm and creativity of youth. Coming from outside Ireland enabled them to format the material in a manner that would be interesting to overseas visitors.

The students’ obvious interest in our project was a welcome affirmation of our own efforts. It gave our confidence a badly needed boost and renewed our enthusiasm.

Nessan O’Donoghue
Community Practicum Co-ordinator
Mungret Heritage Society

I have never worked on a community project quite like the UL Practicum and this entire process has been different, exciting, but more importantly, enjoyable. This experience has not only been engaging and creative, but one of learning and growth. By working with complete strangers in a country I have never been to before, I do believe that I have learned how to better adapt to situations and communicate with others while in the moment. Overall, I am grateful to have had this experience. This course has made my time studying abroad in Ireland that much more meaningful and it was an experience that I would not have gotten in a normal classroom on campus.

Ryan Cafaro
UL International Practicum student
Southern Connecticut State University
While it is simple to learn and memorize facts and processes given enough time, the world outside the bounds of a college campus demand a greater variety of skills and more adaptability. This is where a practicum course can serve to provide a place to build such skillsets through real world experience in a controlled environment. Throughout the UL Engage Spring 2017 Practicum, I learned a variety of lessons, but they were all centred upon people. In practice there is no job or industry that is entirely void of interaction with people, and, while all people are different, and every individual brings along with them a variety of challenges, I was able to take away some new strategies for how to approach human centred interactions in the future.

Overall, this educational experience was just that: an experience. While classes offer tried and true definitions and methodologies, this practicum offered an opportunity to not hear about an experience, but go through the experience. Just as I recognized the necessity of collaboration and attention to individuals in collaboration, learning is something that must be customized. By engaging in a practical experience, it is possible to have personalized learning that provides the student with the opportunity to develop their own methodologies and intuition for dealing with real-world situations.

Gabriella Haire
UL International Practicum student
University of Minnesota

Samaritans were delighted to become partners with UL Practicum as it offered the chance to put into practice projects that Samaritans would love to do, but because of the logistics involved and voluntary nature of the organisation can be difficult or too time consuming to achieve. It has also granted us the opportunity to work with a highly educated, diverse and motivated group of students.

John Downey,
Community Practicum Co-Ordinator
Director, Limerick & Tipperary Samaritans

The University of Limerick Practicum module was a class unlike any I have taken before. It has been far more rewarding to learn these skills through experiential learning, rather than studying directly from a textbook for hours on end. It was much more enjoyable as well and often times did not feel like I was working. It was not until I reflected on this experience did I realize how much I have changed from the beginning of the semester to now due to my practicum experience. In the future, I will seek out more experiential learning opportunities like this because I have developed many skills that I cannot get from a traditional classroom.

Jaxon Sommers
UL International Practicum student
University of Minnesota

I really enjoyed this experience, there is nothing like it back at my home university so it was an entirely new opportunity for me. Not only did the project allow me to go into the community ad meet new people from the Limerick area, I got to spend time with a group of incredible students who were also involved in the various projects. The practicum pushed me to be social, when studying abroad could have a solitary experience.

Matthew Moran
UL International Practicum student
Southern Connecticut State University
This practicum played a huge part in me enjoying my time in Ireland and it came at a complete surprise when it was offered upon arriving here. Not only did I learn so much about myself and the community I was involved in but I learned about the culture and history of Ireland. I learned things that most students don’t take the time to learn while they are abroad. The best part about this class is that I learned it by leaving the classroom and getting involved. I had a great amount of support from the module instructors and the community partners that made it very easy to enjoy what I was doing.

Colleen Condry
UL International Practicum student
Syracuse University

The Practicum Experience was the hands on project I was looking for. If I were to compare my involvement between my first four months of my undergrad, and my last four months here at UL, I got so much more experience out of my months here at UL. I was able to meet an amazing group of individuals who were going through the same experience abroad as I was, which helped tremendously in finding my own community here in Ireland. I also got to know faculty and community partners who I formed lasting connections with. People thought I was crazy to go abroad in my last term of my undergraduate degree, but I have learned life skills and knowledge here that will continue to serve a purpose in my upcoming future. In light of this, I would highly recommend this practicum to all incoming students who are in search of that community setting and obtaining life skills. The quality of my learning has been improved due to this module.

Jessica Kern
UL International Practicum Student
Wilfrid Laurier University

It’s the most amazing opportunity for growth that you could never find in a classroom.
Jonathan Tormoen
UL International Practicum student
University of Minnesota

It is challenging coming to a foreign place and then working alongside new faces in a different workplace with its own special quirks; however, the experience is well worth it after overcoming those trial and tribulations. It is a great way to witness a different side of Ireland by interacting and working alongside an older Irish community than just being surrounded by students on campus.

Conor O’Riordan
UL International Practicum student
State University of New York
This practicum was a very positive experience for me. For course credit, we were able to get involved in the community and become part of something greater than just four classroom walls. Coming from a different country and culture, engaging in the Limerick community from the start was very comforting and a welcoming experience. Being part of a community organization that I was interested in and passionate about, while also knowing I was helping them move forward and making a difference, was extremely rewarding.

Emma Lambert
UL International Practicum student
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

The practicum program gave me a chance to immerse myself in the Irish culture and learn things that I would have otherwise completely missed. It gave me a chance to initially reflect on my skills and see how I was able to improve as a student and as a professional. This was a chance to partner with like-minded students, who value making a difference using their own set of personal skills and talents. I was challenged, pushed, and was outside of my comfort zone as times, but to reflect and see the accomplishments that my partner and I were able to achieve was well worth it!

Kathleen Larson
UL International Practicum student
Drury University

The Practicum experience also taught me the positive effects that challenging you can bring. Choosing to do this module was something that was out of my comfort zone but provided me with the courage to put myself out there more because of the positive impact it had had on me. The way of which I was able to learn all of this was in an interactive environment. This was very different from a normal school setting but was done in a way that proved to be much more enjoyable and interesting to me. I learned by doing and not just studying and writing papers. To me this actually proved to be more effective for my personal style of learning. I was truly able to grow in areas of myself that I did not even know I had in me. This showed to be important not only in my work but also in my own personal self. The lessons that I learned will help me in my future careers. It taught me how to work in a professional environment and be professional. This experience has given me new skills, new confidence and a new way of looking at things that I will forever cherish.

Meghan Dion
UL International Practicum student
Bridgewater State University
Over the series of Practicum workshops students will be provided with resources to support them. The following resources are also available at: www.ul.ie/engage/node/3271

- UL Graduate Attributes
- Framework for Communication and Shared Understanding
- UL Practicum Module Outline and Assessment Strategy: Spring 2017
- UL Practicum Module Outline and Resources
- Reflection in Community Engaged Learning
- Facilitating Community Engaged Learning
- Student Evaluation of Practicum Placement
- Student Community Partnership Agreement
- Consent Form (use of photographs, moving image, audio clip)

Tools and resources for community partners are available at: www.ul.ie/engage/node/3131
REFERENCES


