



## Guidelines for Service Learning

Accès Study Abroad can help a limited number of qualified students arrange service learning projects each semester at non-profit organizations in Strasbourg. Students may receive 2 academic credits if they successfully complete the service learning project and obtain approval from their academic advisor at their US college. Service learning projects generally last for 10-12 weeks (early October through mid-December or mid February through mid-May). Students must work on the internship site for at least 48 hours per semester.

### **I. Prerequisites for consideration :**

- Lower-intermediate level French (at least B1 on CEFR scale)
- approval from student's US college advisor

### **II. Volunteer responsibilities**

Service learning is a way for students to positively contribute to the host community by volunteering their time and skills. It is an opportunity for student learning outside the classroom. The service learning project is not remunerative.

The host organization has the final word in whether or not to take on a volunteer. Generally, the host organization makes its decision close to the time the volunteer experience would start and after meeting with the student. Furthermore, students' availability for volunteering is not known until after arrival in France when they receive their class schedule. Therefore, Accès cannot guarantee students placement at service learning project before they arrive in France. For this reason, students must take a full load of courses at the university (at least 12 credits) in case the project does not materialize.

Before the service learning project begins, the student and the Accès director will meet with the host institution director to establish a "convention de stage", a document which outlines the specific areas of work in which the student will be engaged and which highlights the importance of supervision by the director. The document is signed by all three parties.

During the first three to four weeks, the student will observe the different types of work which is performed at the host organization. Although there may be some menial jobs (photocopies, cleaning, making coffee), the student should primarily be engaged in substantive activities directly related to the mission of the host organization. Students should also begin researching the host organization, its history, structure, funding, relationship to other similar organizations, etc. The primary source of such information will be the host organization itself.

Like an internship, service learning projects require readings and a final written report. However the service learning report is much more focused on the host organization itself. It should present the organization, its mission and primary areas of work, and the challenges it faces. While the first part of the report will

be a factual overview of the organization, the latter part of the part should be analytical.

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By the end of the semester, the student submits a 8-12 page "mémoire" which consists of the following sections:

- introduction (1 page), brief overview of the content of the memoire, the motivations of the student for volunteering and the choice of the host organization
- context chapter (1-2 pages): Overview of the problem or situation which the host organization is trying to address. For example, children from poorer families in Strasbourg tend to drop out of school, or there are many stray dogs in certain neighborhoods. Be sure to give as many concrete examples and facts as possible. Has the problem evolved? What other solutions have been proposed?
- The work of the host organization (2-4 pages): Introduces the reader to the host organization, its history, its founders, its mission, its funding, its growth (or decline), its scope of activities, its relationship to other similar organizations, etc. The student should also provide details of his or her own work at the organization.
- SWOT analysis (3-4 pages) The student should provide his or her own appreciation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which face the organization. Students must show that they have understood not only the work of the organization but also the nature of the problems which it is trying to solve.
- Conclusion (1 pages) a brief recap of the student's experience with recommendations for future volunteers.

### **III. Credits and evaluation**

The service learning project itself does not bear any credit. However, students may earn 2 credits for their mémoire. The mémoire is read and evaluated by the Accès director, with input from the student supervisor at the host organization.