MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING RUBRIC AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

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# The Global Community-Engaged Learning (GCEL) Rubric and Best Practice Guide

*Michigan State University*

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# Table of Contents


Introduction ..... 1

How to Use the Global Community-Engaged Learning Rubric ..... 3

Partnership ..... 5

Engagement ..... 8

Academics ..... 10

Sustainability ..... 13

Assessment and Evaluation ..... 16

Worldview ..... 19

Conclusion ..... 21

Invitation to Contribute to Continued Development of the Rubric ..... 23

Acknowledgments ..... 24

Additional References ..... 25



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE FOR EDUCATION ABROAD

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

# INTRODUCTION

The *Global Community-Engaged Learning Rubric* (GCEL) is the result of a multi-year collaboration among Michigan State University's Center for Community Engaged Learning, the Office of the Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement, and the Education Abroad Office. Michigan State University is a national leader in community-engaged learning, community engagement, and education abroad. As a consequence, the rubric's development drew upon interdisciplinary scholarship, best practices, and practitioner experience from multiple fields. This rubric was developed as a tool to support community partners, Academic and Student Affairs staff, faculty members, and unit administrators in program planning, implementation, and evaluation of ethical, respectful, high quality, and high-impact global community-engaged partnerships.

Michigan State University defines community-engaged learning as follows:

> *A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community partnerships with instruction and critical reflection to enrich the student learning experience, teach civic and social responsibility, and strengthen communities.*

The rubric encompasses domestic and international partnerships as well as curricular and co-curricular programming. Please note global community-engaged learning may be known by other terms, including service learning, community engagement, community-based learning, civic engagement, alternative spring breaks, global volunteerism, and engagement abroad.

This rubric was developed through iterative revisions based on multiple conversations with community partners, dean's designees and representatives to the Education Abroad Office, and national colleagues at community engagement conferences, including the

International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement. Their conceptual and practical comments were extremely helpful in finalizing this version of the rubric.

Organized by six community-university partnership principles, this rubric addresses partnership, engagement, academics, sustainability, assessment and evaluation, and worldview. Each section includes a definition for the principle, what that principle looks like as a success, a work in progress, or not meeting requirements, and a brief bibliography related specifically to that principle. We also provide overall references for global community-engaged learning and suggest a way for you to share your ideas about improving the rubric or your success stories using the rubric with your community partners.

We invite you to use this rubric as a way of starting a conversation, establishing shared expectations, developing shared agreements, reaching collaborative decisions, and sharing responsibilities with your community partners.

# HOW TO USE THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING RUBRIC

The *Global Community-Engaged Learning Rubric* may be used in a variety of ways, depending on your role(s) within the institution and partnership.

**Community partners** may find the rubric useful to:

- Understand what is meant by global community-engaged learning.
- Identify ways in which their community expertise may contribute to successful global community-engaged learning.
- Understand questions they should ask faculty and academic staff in establishing mutually identified expectations for global community-engaged learning.
- Identify ways to improve ongoing global community-engaged learning.

**Faculty, academic staff, and student affairs staff** may find the rubric useful to:

- Initiate conversations with community partners about future global community-engaged learning.
- Plan for successful academic components of global community-engaged learning with community partners.
- Develop sections of the learning objectives, syllabus, or other student and community partner materials.
- Check in with current community partners to reflect on quality and excellence in ongoing global community-engaged learning.
- Identify areas for improvement with their ongoing global community-engaged learning partners.

**Unit leaders** may find the rubric useful to:

- Communicate and set expectations about academics, partnerships, and sustainability with new global community-engaged learning.
- Frame expectations, roles, and contributions with faculty and community partners who propose new global community-engaged learning.
- Talk with faculty about improving ongoing global community-engaged learning by aligning their work with best practices.
- Identify gaps between current and best practices in global community-engaged learning and, as a result, create appropriate professional development and support to close that gap.
- Review the unit's mix of programs to ensure global community-engaged learning meets minimum requirements for community engagement.

**Institutional leaders** for service-learning, community engagement, or education abroad may find the rubric useful to:

- Communicate and set expectations about academics, partnerships, and sustainability with new global community-engaged learning.
- Check in with existing program leaders to reflect on best practices in global community-engaged learning and potential improvements that could be made.
- Identify gaps between current and best practices in global community-engaged learning, and create appropriate professional development and support to close those gaps.
- Assess the extent to which global community-engaged learning meets minimum expectations.

# PARTNERSHIP

Global community engagement partnerships are formed around mutual expectations that connect the needs and goals of community partners with the needs and goals of faculty research, education, and student learning. A successful global community partnership takes time and is both intentional and inclusive of the varying needs of individuals with intersecting identities and life experiences. The partners serve as co-educators with a commitment to understanding and respect.

**Successful** global community partnerships may be described as:

- Partnership is driven by community identified needs and built on joint commitment, mutual respect, reciprocity, and trust.
- The responsibilities of all involved are clearly articulated, outlined, and agreed upon in a memorandum of understanding.
- Expertise of both community partners and university faculty is valued. There is an opportunity for assessment by the community partners.

Global community partnerships that are **making progress** may be described as:

- Partners have been identified, and there have been some opportunities for partners to meet and discuss their mutual goals.
- Discussions about roles, accountability, resources, and cultures have occurred. The partners have engaged in activities where trust may be established.
- There is a process of assessing and considering the expertise of all partners and educators.

Global community partnerships that **do not meet the requirements** may be described as:

- Partnership does not show qualities of an authentic relationship.
- Engagement strategy is not built around community-identified needs.
- Engagement is motivated by a one-sided research or teaching agenda only.
- Partners do not share similar interests.
- No established memorandum of understanding exists.
- The program leaders do not listen to or incorporate community needs.

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# ENGAGEMENT

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**Successful** global community engagement may be described as:

- Partners have agreed to the format for faculty and student engagement.
- Plan for sustainability is in place (when appropriate).
- Both partner needs and learning/research goals have been addressed.
- Positively impacts the local community.
- Partner is included in reflection activities.

Global community engagement that is **making progress** may be described as:

- Engagement activities are used for relationship building.
- Resources and gaps have been identified through partner input.
- Reflection activities are planned but specifics are lacking.

Global community engagement that **does not meet the requirements** may be described as:

- Transactional in nature.
- Expert-focused approach.
- Not connected to partner needs.
- Not planned with community partners.
- Does not make use of partner community resources.
- Does not include reflection activity.

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# ACADEMICS

Global community-engaged learning combines academic coursework with the application of institutional resources to address challenges facing communities. It focuses on "scholarly activities related to research and/or teaching that involve the collaboration of students, community partners, and faculty as co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge and that address questions of public concern" (Jameson, Clayton, Jaeger, & Bringle, p. 54).

**Successful** global community academics may be described as:

- Learning goals and syllabus were developed with significant partner input.
- Partners have been identified as co-educators and have an interest, understanding, and commitment to that role.
- Students and faculty are committed to working to achieve partner expectations.
- Faculty and staff purposefully connect important disciplinary concepts to the community engagement activities.
- Community partners, students, and faculty share roles and responsibilities as co-teachers and co-learners.

Global community academics that are **making progress** may be described as:

- The connection between the learning goals and the partnership engagement has been identified but not shared with or developed with the partners/co-educators.
- The faculty/staff member is engaged with the community partners and is communicating in a consistent manner.

- The faculty/staff member has worked directly with partners to identify the needs and expectations of the community partners and begun to build those into the syllabus.
- Community engagement activities are loosely related to the faculty members' disciplines.
- Community partners and students are not expected to contribute as co-teachers and co-learners.

**Global community academics that do not meet the requirements may be described as:**

- There are no specific learning goals connected to the partner engagement.
- The partners are not identified as co-educators and the faculty/staff member is not involved in the partnership development.
- There is not clear and regular communication between the partners, faculty, and staff.
- There is not a clear connection between the overall course goals and the partner engagement.
- Community engagement activities are not related to the faculty member's discipline.
- The faculty/staff member retains all control over the student experience, with the partner serving as "placement site" only.

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# SUSTAINABILITY

We define sustainability as a continuous commitment, or an ongoing component which places a very high value on meaningful and sustainable service. The depth of relationships/partnerships are built and maintained, before, during, and after service. The partnership should never "end" after the engagement.

**Successful** global community sustainability may be described as:

- The university is attentive to the community partner's mission and vision and takes time to plan and understand the human dimension of the community partner's work.
- The university is mindful of the community partner's resources, and allows community partners to educate the next generation of individuals who are committed to more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities.
- The university remains flexible in making adjustments and changes along the way.
- The university and community members develop a timeline and track progress.
- There are many systematic approaches to ensure various community voices.
- A maintenance plan is created in partnership with the community members. In addition, there are no short-term or singular occurrence international volunteer programs.

Global community sustainability that is **making progress** may be described as:

- The university nurtures trustworthy relationships and allows participation, contributions, and ownership of the community in which the service takes place.
- The program utilizes local skills, experience, and expertise of the communities, while allowing the community members to drive the projects.
- The university conducts progress checks regarding the partnership.

Global community sustainability that **does not meet the requirements** may be described as:

- The university does not conduct progress checks about the partnership and does not communicate with the local community members to ensure sustainability.
- A maintenance plan is not included in project planning.
- The community perspectives and partnerships are both ignored and excluded in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of the projects.
- The university fails to bring community members to the center of the conversations.

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# ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment for community-engaged learning is designed to evaluate both cognitive and noncognitive outcomes of the service experience. Cognitive outcomes are directly related to the educational objectives indicated by the faculty/instructor. Noncognitive outcomes often look at concepts such as moral development, self efficacy, or even how students have changed in their civic attitudes.

Using Kolb's experiential learning model (1984), we have identified seven components in the process of implementing quality global community-engaged learning: investigation, preparation, engagement, reflection, connection, evaluation, and demonstration. During the creation of the evaluation, there are two questions that should be asked. The first is around the outcomes to be assessed. Deciding between student, community, project, partnership, institutional, or personal outcomes may include using a combination of them. The second question is about how you will measure both progress and success of your chosen outcomes. This rubric provides guidelines for creating an assessment/evaluation plan that meets all the requirements for a quality program.

When developing your assessment/evaluation plan, pay attention to the type of assessment you plan to use. Formative assessment is done either before or during the course, and the goal is to improve project design and make course corrections as needed. Many times this is done by way of reflection papers or small group check-ins. Summative assessment occurs at the end of the course to show impact and is conducive to using quantitative methods. No matter what you decide to do, it is important to think about using a variety of perspectives and to include your community partner in the process.

**Successful** global community assessment and evaluation may be described as:

- Evaluates student learning, faculty efficacy, project success, and community impact.
- Specific outcomes have been selected and agreed upon with community partners and address a variety of perspectives.
- Student learning is assessed using guided reflection practices that relate to the community engagement experience.
- Project success is defined collaboratively by the university and the community partner(s).
- Resources and learning are shared with the local community and partners.
- The university and community partners should be able to identify the feedback and describe in detail the adjustments that need to be made. Additionally, they should suggest priorities for the actions to be taken, reflecting those most in need of attention.

Global community assessment and evaluation that is **making progress** may be described as:

- Relies on only one perspective (i.e. student learning) to evaluate the outcome of the experience.
- Community partners had limited input in chosen outcomes.
- Does not include reflection that connects back to the course.
- Consideration of community partner needs is expressed but the community partner is not formally included in the assessment plan.
- Resources and learning are not shared with the local community and partners.
- Feedback does not provide actionable outcomes.

Global community assessment and evaluation that **does not meet the requirements** may be described as:

- No assessment plan indicated.
- Absence of reflection strategy.
- Community partners not involved in any part of assessment process.
- Process feedback (formative assessment) not provided.

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# WORLDVIEW

Issues of race, class, gender, culture, power, and privilege influence all interactions within global community-engaged learning. It is important to be cognizant of these issues and work to create a program that is inclusive and produces quality learning outcomes for all participants.

While this rubric covers issues of diversity into planning and implementation of community-engaged learning, it is important that everyone also considers their own positionality within the course/project. It is recommended that participants recognize the value of cultural humility and utilize reflective practices with community partners as approaches to engaging in a respectful and effective manner.

A **successful** global community worldview may be described as:

- Provides knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks.
- Focus is on both verbal (e.g. learning basic conversational language) and nonverbal communication (e.g. symbols, gestures).
- Curiosity and increased openness are fostered.
- The community partner gives information about the perspective of the community using local knowledge.
- Students, faculty, and the community are prepared for working with diverse communities using training programs, readings, dialogue, and reflection.
- All activities lead to enhanced self-awareness as indicated by the appropriate assessment tool.

A global community worldview that is **making progress** may be described as:

- Attention to diversity comes in the form of third-party interactions only.
- Students are asked to read about the community without really experiencing it.
- Students participate in training programs that are not specific to the community with whom they will work.
- No assessment of student change is indicated.

A global community worldview that **does not meet the requirements** may be described as:

- Constituents are not prepared with knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to engage diverse communities.
- Students do not hear from or meet the community partners until they arrive onsite.

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# CONCLUSION

In higher education, it is unique for education abroad programs, outreach and engagement units, and community-engaged learning centers to come together, work together, and create together. The relationship between these types of offices at Michigan State University has been in the making for nearly a decade. While each unit at MSU works intentionally on separate missions with a variety of interwoven goals, three dimensions of this collective work are critical to all: global community partnerships, global engagement scholarship, and global education. The shared interest and shared intent of this rubric design project was to create an approach to global community engagement that is equitable and inclusive.

MSU's Education Abroad Program is committed to developing authentic global community partnerships wherein students and faculty have the opportunity to learn about global communities in ways that are supportive and aligned with the goals and plans of that community.

Michigan State University's Office for Education Abroad partnered with Adanu, a Ghanaian-led nonprofit organization, to host the 2019 Global Community Engaged Learning Symposium in Ho, Ghana.

From June 24th-29th, 2019, participants from the United States, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Kenya discussed best practices of community-engaged learning. The symposium included keynote speakers, workshops, poster presentations, panels, and field trips to the Ghanaian community partners.

The symposium included best practices of community-engaged learning, which is the basis of this toolkit. Keynotes and workshops from the symposium have been divided into

the following themes: community-engaged learning course design, ethical engagement, and assessment and evaluation.

Several years ago, the Office for Education Abroad convened a group of MSU faculty and staff who had been working on community engagement abroad programs to share their practice and to identify successful program design options. The work around global community-engaged learning (GCEL) has continued, culminating in an international symposium in Ghana in summer 2019 and ongoing work on an MSU rubric for high quality GCEL programs.

The Center for Community Engaged Learning at MSU is committed to supporting faculty, student affairs staff, students, and community partners with the appropriate tools for community-engaged learning. The Center teaches that good community partner practice is based on trusting relationships that allow participation, contributions, and ownership by the community in which service takes place. The long-standing relationship between the Office of Education Abroad and organizational alignment with University Outreach and Engagement has allowed for the Center to further the understanding of good partnership practices with new faculty, student affairs staff, and communities. This furthers the Center's mission of preparing students for lifelong civic and social responsibility.

University Outreach and Engagement at MSU is committed to supporting community engagement scholarship and practice, domestically and internationally. The unit serves the entire faculty body, their students, and community partners, by providing resources, workshops, and other learning opportunities focused on ethical and respectful community engagement. The collaboration with the Office of Education Abroad and UOE's own Center for Community Engaged Learning has enhanced the unit's ability to support a broader range of global community partnerships. Important outcomes from this institutional collaboration include an edited book about community engagement and study abroad, this global community-engaged learning rubric, and the symposium on global community-engaged learning in Ho, Ghana, in 2019.

Campus Compact for Michigan has a foundational relationship with Michigan State University. In partnership with the Center for Community Engaged Learning, the Office of Education Abroad, and University Outreach and Engagement, CCMI worked collaboratively on the development of resources and support for Michigan and the broader Campus Compact network, expanding the conversation and work in Michigan to a global context and strengthening the network around community-engaged learning and regional partnerships.

# INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUBRIC

The *Global Community-Engaged Learning Rubric* was developed as a tool for community partners, academic staff, faculty members, and administrators to establish respectful and ethical community-university partnerships. We invite you to use this rubric as a way of starting a conversation, establishing shared expectations, developing shared agreements, reaching collaborative decisions, and sharing responsibilities with your community partners.

We would like to hear about how you used this rubric. Please contact the MSU Center for Community Engaged Learning at communityengagedlearning@vps.msu.edu to learn how to share your story and provide feedback.

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# NOTES

# THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING RUBRIC AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

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