

UCD Community Engaged Learning Impact Case Study

NGO Law, Governance and Social Change



University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath
Ireland's Global University

LAW40760



MODULE TYPE: Elective 10 credits at masters level



LECTURERS: Professor Oonagh Breen



DEPT/SCHOOL: Sutherland School of Law

Module Purpose

This clinical legal module provides an opportunity for students to work with an "adopted charity" partner throughout a semester module in their preparation of a charity regulation compliance report for that charity. The module follows the life cycle of a charitable organisation from the establishment to operation and ultimate dissolution and provides students with the necessary legal tools to address governance, charity law, company law and tax-law related issues that face many small charities. Upon module completion, students feel much more confident in their abilities to contribute to NGOs and fit to put themselves forward in the future as potential board members.



Methods of assessment

- **40% OF THE MODULE GRADE** is awarded for the student's ongoing engagement with the charity's board and staff members, their compilation of a governance report for the charity and an oral presentation of their findings.
- **10% OF THE GRADE** is awarded for a written reflection on an assigned reading each week which is shared with classmates to encourage peer learning and reflection.
- **50% OF THE GRADE** for a Peer Scholar exercise which requires students to find a media story that applies the theory under discussion that week in the real life of charities. Students give peer feedback to each other on 3 occasions throughout the semester.

Community partners/ collaborators

Each year, depending on class numbers, we partner with 2 to 3 registered charities. Our community partner is The Carmichael Centre which helps us to contact charities interested in participating through its Charity Chairs Network. Guest lecturers have also been drawn from the Carmichael Centre, Benefacts, and the Approved Bodies Housing Regulator giving students a wonderful chance to hear from engaged practitioners. In a new collaboration in 2023/24, students attended the Philanthropy Forum organised by Philanthropy Ireland and had the opportunity to engage directly with Irish philanthropists.

IMPACT of Community Engaged Learning on students

The feedback from student evaluation has been very positive with students strongly agreeing that the module outcomes were met.

- One student shared "Working with adopted charities helped me understand all aspects of the non-profit sector. In addition, the show-and-tell exercises also came in handy in terms of using knowledge and skills in practice, while doing them there was also an opportunity to use additional reading, which is very nice."
- Another student commented, "Finally, the charity report is the overall achievement of the class, it allows us to put into practice our knowledge, and in relation with an NGO makes things realistic."



IMPACT of Community Engaged Learning on the community



Feedback from charity partners has been exceptionally good. Small charities often lack the resources to invest time in governance issues.

The contribution of the student's knowledge and energy is greatly appreciated by participating charities.

Each year, we have more applicant charities than we can take on in the class.

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Why do I do Community Engaged Learning?

Learning is never meant to be an ivory tower. It is so important to be able to take the benefits of higher education and apply them in the real world to the benefit of all. NGO Law, Governance and Social Change allows me and my students to give back, share our knowledge of charity law and hopefully support those deserving NGOs with whom we are privileged to partner.

COMMUNITY PARTNER QUOTE

Every year, partner charities are asked for feedback on their experience. One staff member quoted:

"By way of feedback both myself and the Board were impressed with the team's professionalism in any contacts we had with them. We have also been very impressed by the comprehensiveness of the final report, which showed a learnt understanding of the organisation."

STUDENT QUOTE

"The adopted charities project was undoubtedly the most enriching aspect of this module. Getting in contact and working with our assigned charity helped me better understand the intricacies of the third sector."



Tips for other lecturers interested in introducing CEL into their teaching



- Take time to think through how best to incorporate CEL so that it works best for your students and partner organisations in terms of expectations of engagement and outcome.
- Continuously weave the requirement for engagement throughout the module so that students get to know their partners and are sufficiently well versed to deliver good outcomes by the end of the semester.
- Seek feedback each year from your partners (even if it takes multiple reminders!) so that you can continue to adjust the module to work well for everyone.



CONTACT DETAILS



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