

# Structured community-based learning

QCE guidelines

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# 1 What is structured community-based learning?

Structured community-based learning (SCL) refers to learning delivered in a real community context that is not a component of a training package, an accredited VET course or a course approved or accredited by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).

It can be defined as experiential education in which young people engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities designed to promote learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of community-based learning<sup>1</sup>.

Community-based learning:

- is not school-based — learning and assessment takes place in the community and involves individuals other than teachers as part of the learning process
- fosters the development of a participant's lifelong learning skills
- involves young people contributing to community capacity-building and adding to the social capital of the community through new knowledge and skills.
- There is an array of structured community-based learning in which young people may participate, including learning developed through:
  - leadership roles in clubs, youth groups and churches
  - teaching others specialised skills (e.g. traditional Somalian cooking)
  - voluntary work undertaken in organisations such as Meals on Wheels
  - various roles undertaken through youth projects sponsored by organisations such as Lions, Rotary, Edmund Rice and Amnesty International.

The QCAA recognises SCL that meets strict standards and criteria. Young people can use a result in a recognised SCL course towards the achievement of their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

The following sections of this document outline the benefits of the QCAA recognising structured community-based learning courses, the requirements, and how to apply<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Community-based Learning and Action (2007) About community based learning, on <http://www.evergreen.edu/communitybasedlearning/>.

<sup>2</sup> Meeting these standards and criteria does not guarantee formal recognition as there are many factors that will influence the outcome. An independent committee reviews all applications for recognition and makes a recommendation to the QCAA Board. The final decision rests with the QCAA Board.

## 2 What are the benefits?

### 2.1 SCL for organisations

SCL benefits organisations by:

- establishing networks and contacts for future recruitment — participating young people provide a base of contacts for organisations in future recruitment exercises for volunteers and leaders of community organisations
- building interest in the organisation and its purpose — SCL can help build interest among young people in the organisation and its work
- raising profile of courses — recognition enhances the credibility of SCL courses and the organisations that deliver these among students at schools and their parents or carers
- creating links with young people while still at school — organisations can create links with young people while they are at school and are contactable
- promoting equity — the recognition process is designed to give smaller, regional organisations access to the same formal recognition as larger, nationally based groups.

### 2.2 SCL for young people

SCL benefits young people by:

- delivering real-world experience — people increase their understanding of community through development of lifelong learning skills; a benefit to both young people and organisations
- enhancing pathways — recognised SCL helps people access further study, training and community engagement pathways through formal recognition of skills development.
- increasing participation — people who may not be attracted to formal instructional learning options can participate in equally valuable SCL and gain credit towards their QCE
- building networks — people develop contacts for their future, increasing social capital by broadening the networks of people that can enhance opportunities<sup>3</sup>
- adding value to studies at school — SCL complements school studies and assists with the transition from school to life in the community.

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<sup>3</sup> Zevenbergen, Robyn and Kelly, School-to-Work Transitions: Final Report, Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, 2008

## 3 Course requirements

This section outlines the requirements that must be satisfied before the QCAA will recognise a course.

### 3.1 Courses are owned by community organisations

SCL courses must be owned by community organisations and offered to QCE candidates, some of whom may be at school. Results must be reported, directly by the organisation, to the QCAA via a database.

### 3.2 Course length

SCL courses must total 60–80 hours of learning, which includes at least:

- two hours devoted to preparatory activities
- 40 hours in a real community-based context
- two hours devoted to reflective activities.

### 3.3 Enhancement of employability and lifelong learning skills

SCL courses must promote the development of new, or enhance existing, abilities and employability and lifelong learning skills (see Appendix 1) of the participant. Courses must develop skills to meet their needs in further learning and community engagement pathways.

### 3.4 Course structure

SCL courses must be delivered in three phases, with a minimum total course length of 60–80 hours, spread across the three phases.

#### Phase 1: Preparation (minimum two hours)

The activities in this preparatory phase will provide essential underpinning knowledge and preparation for the actual placement (Phase 2). Examples of this type of learning may include:

- developing an understanding of employability and lifelong learning skills and how these will be assessed in the community-based environment
- developing an understanding of how to record evidence of learning in their skills portfolio (see 1.6 Use of a skills portfolio) and what might constitute appropriate evidence
- learning about the environment in which they will be placed.

#### Phase 2: Community placement (minimum 40 hours)

This is the actual community-based component of the course and represents the majority of course time. The participant will undertake a series of activities, in the community or in a community-based organisation, that have been designed to deliver the learning objectives.

During this phase, the participant will be responsible for relating their learning to the employability and lifelong learning skills in their skills portfolio on a regular basis (e.g. daily).

### Phase 3: Reflection (minimum two hours)

During this period, the participant is to be given the opportunity to reflect on, and consider, their overall learning achievements in each of the employability and lifelong learning skills. They should also be given the opportunity to:

- consider how the experiences of the course contributed to further learning and community engagement
- consider the learning that has occurred in all three phases of the course
- ensure that their skills portfolio is up-to-date.

## 3.5 Course materials meet the quality criteria

SCL course materials must meet QCAA's quality criteria (see Appendix 2) to be eligible for recognition.

As a minimum, course materials must include the following:

### Rationale

Outline:

- The impetus for the course/activity (e.g. identified community need, meeting needs of young people, etc.) — the *Why*.
- Who the course is designed for — is there a particular target group of young people that the course is aimed at and how will they be targeted? — the *Who*.

### Learning objectives

Outline the learning objectives of the course, noting that it is a QCAA recognition requirement that the learning objectives align with the employability and lifelong learning skills.

### Course activities

Outline the activities that are going to deliver the employability and learning objectives. How are the learning objectives going to be achieved?

### Assessment plan

Outline an assessment plan that lists the items/instruments of assessment that will demonstrate the learning that has been achieved.

Some examples of assessment items you may include in your assessment plan are:

- a learning objective checklist
- a skills portfolio (see 3.6 Use of a skills portfolio)
- an interview with the participant to assess their skills
- written tests, quizzes, etc.

Assessment throughout the course, and not just at the end, is recommended. This will give young people the opportunity to receive feedback as they progress and a chance to gain skills not yet achieved.

**Samples and templates to assist with developing your course materials are provided in the document *SCL Samples and Templates*.**



## 3.6 Use of a skills portfolio

SCL courses must involve the development and use of a skills portfolio. This is a requirement for recognition by the QCAA. Skills portfolios are the responsibility of the participant and are a valuable learning experience.

### What to include

The participant is encouraged to collect samples of learning that reflect specific skills they have developed throughout the course. As a minimum, a skills portfolio must include:

- examples of work done (if possible) — may be annotated by the course supervisor/mentor
- evidence of development of employability and lifelong learning skills — this must include a Learner log and one or more of the following: written reports, plans, a histogram, or other suitable evidence
- a testimonial from the organisation supervisor/employer
- a participant's self-assessment.

**Samples and templates to assist in developing your course materials are provided in the document *SCL Samples and Templates*.**

### Key features of a skills portfolio

Key features of effective portfolios, as identified by Allen Consulting Group, are as follows:

- They are the responsibility of (and 'owned' by) the participant.
- They include appropriate materials such as examples of work done, self-assessment tasks, copies of physical output, and are endorsed by the course supervisor/mentor.
- They are able to be used for a variety of different purposes, such as information to include with a resume in a job application, or a VET or university entrance process, or for an application for a volunteer role.
- They supply evidence related to the development of each of the employability and lifelong learning skills. They identify what has been developed, how it was developed and when it was demonstrated. They include an opportunity for third-party validation.
- They are flexible and adaptable to allow for a variety of uses and provide for different contexts throughout life.
- They are easy to use by the 'portfolio owner'.
- They are seen as valuable by individual users for a variety of purposes, for example, such as guiding self-development or assisting with life planning.
- They are promoted by people and institutions in positions of influence, such as parents, teachers, employers etc.
- They are able to be adapted and developed as the individual develops to meet their emerging needs.
- They are available for use in a variety of formats to account for different individual needs and preferences, for example, through the internet, as a CD-ROM, in print in the form of a kit.

## 3.7 Roles and responsibilities

SCL courses must provide the opportunity for individuals to fulfil a range of responsibilities.

**The participant** is responsible for:

- collecting evidence of learning achievement for each lifelong learning skill in the course, for inclusion in their skills portfolio
- actively participating in the learning and assessment processes in each phase.

**The organisation applying for recognition** is responsible for:

- ensuring the participant is appropriately mentored by supporting and guiding the participant during all phases of the course
- ensuring that the participant and the provider of the activity are both actively involved in assessing the participant's learning in the community
- reporting results of achievements to the QCAA (more information is supplied upon application for recognition)
- maintaining evidence of learning and participating in random sampling by the QCAA
- ensuring the course does not encourage or condone contravention of federal and state laws and that all legislative requirements associated with the course are met.

**The provider of the actual community-based activity (may be the same party as above)** is responsible for:

- providing as many opportunities as possible for the participant to develop the employability and lifelong learning skills
- assisting the participant to identify appropriate evidence of learning in their skills portfolio
- actively participating in the learning and assessment process during Phase 2
- adhering to all legislative responsibilities associated with engaging them in a community-based learning activity, including appropriate inductions etc.

**Mentors** are responsible for:

- taking the participant into the organisation as a member of a team
- assisting their socialisation into the organisation
- customising learning experiences for the participant
- giving and receiving feedback.

Some advice: mentors interpret and empower people to arrive at their own decisions and conclusions without judging or over-instructing. They provide support while challenging the participant. A high level of support with a high level of challenge is the best combination to achieve the learning objectives of the course. Too little of either can leave the participant afraid or under-stimulated.

## 3.8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

When planning a course that involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges or cultures, consideration needs to be given to: understanding and following community protocols; conscious examination of the ethics of various practices; and cultural rites, responsibilities and sensitivities.

Assistance should be sought from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members or education workers in both planning and developing a course. It is important to identify areas that may need special consideration within the SCL, and fundamental to the success of the course. The following guidelines may help.

### Collaboration and consultation

Aboriginal knowledges and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are diverse, and local communities are the custodians of their unique knowledges. Consulting with local community provides insight into one of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups within Australia.

Courses considering local community knowledge should be developed in collaboration with the local community to ensure that the course has mutual benefits for both the student and the community. Consultative processes that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people before, during and after the course enable negotiation, and protection of local knowledges.

### Copyright and intellectual property

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is shared community knowledge and protocols exist within these communities to protect this knowledge and associated cultural practices. When planning a SCL, it is important to negotiate the copyright and intellectual property rights afforded to the student and those of the community.

It is imperative that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement within a SCL is acknowledged, particularly in publicly available materials. Where community knowledge is shared knowledge the language group of origin should be recognised. Identifying key contacts or representatives who have the right to share community knowledge is an important part of developing a learning project.

### Cultural rites, responsibilities and sensitivity

The teaching of culture is the responsibility of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people only. However, as circumstances may arise in the course, where adhering to the protocols surrounding one (or more) of these cultural practices, learners need to be aware of these sensitive areas.

Due to the diversity within and between Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures, protocols will vary. Learners are encouraged to be aware of the sensitivity surrounding working with these knowledges and following community protocols. It is vital that students consult with appropriate local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members to discuss any matters that arise.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers within schools, districts, dioceses or regions can assist and support people that are considering development of a SCL course incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges or cultures.

## 4 How do I apply for recognition?

Before making an application for recognition, please contact the QCAA to discuss the requirements. Phone 07 3864 0255 or email [recognition@qcaa.qld.edu.au](mailto:recognition@qcaa.qld.edu.au).

To apply, download the application form from the QCAA website. Go to [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au), click on QCE > Recognised Studies from the menu options.

Complete the application and post it to the QCAA.

### What happens next?

Applications are first reviewed by a panel of experts, and then by an independent committee, which advises the QCAA Board. The Board makes the final decision as to whether a course is recognised, its type and the assigned credits. Applications are generally processed within three months of receipt.

If your application is successful, you will be notified in writing by the QCAA and will be sent a Recognition Agreement. This outlines the responsibilities of the course owner in delivering a course and reporting to the QCAA.

### Appeals

Unsuccessful applications may be appealed. Contact us for more information on the appeals process.

### Retrospective recognition

The legislation governing the QCAA clearly states that achievement in courses cannot be recognised retrospectively. That means that a result cannot be recorded on the QCE for a course that was completed before formal recognition of that course by the QCAA Board.

### More information

Please contact the QCAA Curriculum Services Division on 07 3864 0255 or email [recognition@qcaa.qld.edu.au](mailto:recognition@qcaa.qld.edu.au).

# Appendix 1: Employability and lifelong learning skills for structured community-based learning

In 2004, Allen Consulting Group together with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) identified eight key employability skills desired by employers.

## Capacity to work and learn independently

The ability to develop independent learning strategies to supplement group learning exercises. The individual has the capacity to understand and apply new knowledge and information learned independently of others<sup>4</sup>.

Appropriate supervision of the young person is to be provided at all times during the course.

## Communication

The capacity to communicate effectively with others using a range of spoken, written, graphic and other nonverbal means of expression. This may include:

- actively listening, speaking clearly, being assertive
- reading and interpreting documentation
- writing effectively for a particular audience and working with numbers.

## Initiative and enterprise

The capacity to be resourceful in seeking and applying knowledge, information and the translation of ideas into actions, in ways that contribute to innovative outcomes and translating ideas into actions. This may include:

- adapting to new situations
- identifying opportunities
- being creative.

## Planning and organising

The capacity of an individual to plan and organise one's own work activities, including make good use of time and resources, sort out priorities and monitor performance; set goals, locate, sift and sort information in order to select what is required and to present it in a useful way. This may involve:

- collecting, analysing and organising information
- evaluating the relevance, reliability and authority of information
- managing a number of tasks, planning and setting clear goals.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the recording employability skills please see Allen Consulting Group for DEST (2004), *Employability Skills – Final Report: Development of a Strategy to Support the Universal Recognition and Recording of Employability Skills – A Skills Portfolio Approach*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

## Problem solving

The capacity to apply problem-solving strategies in purposeful ways to achieve an outcome in situations where the problems and situations are evident as well as in new or creative ways.

This involves:

- identifying problems (troubleshooting)
- using a range of strategies to solve problems, including the use of data
- providing customer service and offering solutions based on a range of options.

## Self-management

The capacity to manage workload, effort and develop strategies for time management so that tasks are completed within the required time frame and to the necessary standards.

The capacity to develop strategies and take action to achieve them, including:

- having a good understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses
- time management skills (managing tasks and meeting deadlines)
- working safely.

## Team work

The capacity to interact effectively with other people both on a one-to-one basis and in groups, including understanding and responding to the needs of a client and working effectively as a member of a team to achieve a shared goal. This may involve:

- working effectively in diverse teams
- understanding the role of the individual and the accountability to other members
- working towards consensus in a team environment.

## Technology

The capacity to apply technology and/or operate equipment to manage routine or non-routine tasks more effectively with the understanding of principles needed to explore and adapt systems.

This may include:

- having basic IT skills in a range of software applications
- operating machinery and technologies effectively
- applying new technology skills, understanding of OHS in relation to technology.

# Appendix 2: Quality criteria for structured community-based learning

## Criterion 1 — Rationale

A course of study will describe learning opportunities that, in the opinion of the QCAA, enhance employment pathways.

This means each course of study will include a rationale that:

- establishes for whom the course has been developed
- establishes why the course and its intended learning outcomes are appropriate for the educational needs of these people
- provides details of how employment is enhanced by completing the course including, if applicable, any relevant links to other accredited learning.

## Criterion 2 — Course specification

A course of study will include details about:

- what participants should know and be able to do when they complete their learning
- the extent to which participants can demonstrate this
- what evidence of achievement is required
- a time component for completion of the course of study.

This means that each course of study will include:

- specific details of
  - key ideas and concepts
  - expected learning outcomes
- details of (if applicable)
  - required learning experiences
  - resource requirements
- details of the amount of learning required for completion of the course
  - core elements (breadth and complexity of learning)
  - sequence of learning
  - the typical length of a course of study
- details of (if applicable):
  - elective elements (breadth and complexity of learning)
  - compulsory formal and/or experience-based learning (extent)
- details of conditions of significant junctures, for example, completing the course, interim judgments of achievement, or significant stages of recognition
- a description of the process to be used to make judgments of achievement (for example, application of criteria and standards) including:

- the process for differentiating achievement
- details of any relevant links to other accredited learning
- a description of the assessment techniques that will be used to make judgments about achievement
- an outline of the assessment requirements of the course, for example, a combination of techniques, or formative and summative judgments
- a disclosure, if applicable, of any weighting or processes that privilege one judgment of achievement over another
- details of procedures for making reasonable, accountable and transparent decisions about achievement\*, including processes for validating evidence of achievement, for example:
  - cross-marking, conferences, professional development opportunities, and the like
  - formal meetings for discussing performance decisions
  - external moderator (provide details of qualification)
  - use of common assessment device
  - other moderation processes
  - details of an appeal process regarding achievement decisions.\*

If there is scope for a provider to interpret a parent document, for example, in the case of an Authority syllabus developing a work program, additional information will be required including:

- details of the criteria that will apply to interpretations developed at a provider level
- details of the processes for ensuring interpretations are consistent with the criteria.

In addition, a course developer may be requested to supply any other information the Authority requests to clarify its understanding or interpretation of the course.

### Criterion 3 – Compliance

**A course of study will not encourage or condone contravention of federal and state laws.**

This means that each course of study:

- will not either implicitly or explicitly encourage or condone contravention of Commonwealth and State laws
- may make reference to specific law/s important to its delivery.

\* Where a course is one of a suite offered by an organisation, or where a course has been developed from a parent document, for example an Authority syllabus, this extra information will be requested by the QCAA, but need not be part of the given syllabus