



ENGAGED LEARNING CATALOGUE

CSL@VU.NL

Welcome to the Interdisciplinary Community Service Learning Catalogue!

This catalogue is created to inspire. It brings together examples of courses from every faculty at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam that connect students, lecturers, and societal partners in meaningful ways. Each course shows how learning and teaching can flourish when academic knowledge meets real life challenges and creativity.

Through Community Service Learning students grow as engaged citizens while organizations and communities benefit from their energy and fresh ideas. The projects highlighted here are just a glimpse of what is possible when we collaborate across disciplines and work with our surroundings.

Do you teach a course and would you like it to be featured in the next edition of this catalogue? Reach out to us. We are always happy to include new examples and celebrate the growing community of teachers and partners who make CSL possible.

Enjoy exploring these examples and let them spark ideas for your own teaching and collaborations.



Academisch Centrum Tandheelkunde Amsterdam

ACTA

ORAL HEALTHCARE FOR ELDERLY AT HOME

Master: Dentistry



Course

From September 2025, “**Oral Health Care for Elderly at Home**” is a fixed part of the ACTA dentistry curriculum.

Around 70 pairs of master’s students visit vulnerable elderly people who can no longer attend a dental practice.

They provide preventive care at home to avoid deterioration of oral health. Students gain valuable professional experience while addressing an urgent societal need.



CSL-oriented assignment

Students collaborate with **health professionals, caregivers, and societal partners** to reach elderly patients who are otherwise invisible to regular dental care.

Working in pairs, they **cycle** to people’s homes, where they provide preventive oral health support, **raise awareness**, and learn about the broader challenges of aging and access to healthcare.

The course connects **dental training** to **social responsibility** by engaging students directly with older community members and their caregivers.



Output

Each year, dozens of elderly patients will receive free preventive oral health care at home.

Students deliver both improved health outcomes and increased awareness among caregivers and families. For ACTA, the program also generates insights for policy and practice, helping to shape future geriatric dentistry and highlighting how oral health can contribute to overall well-being.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 3
Amount	+/- 140
Partner(s)	Residents
Code	
Coordinator	Claar Wierink
Timing	N/A



Vulnerable elderly who can no longer go to an oral care practice by themselves will be visited by ACTA students on a cargo bicycle from academic year 2025-2026. The students will provide free preventive care to the elderly to prevent their oral health from deteriorating.

Read the rest of the article here:



AT5 (Amsterdam news channel) has made a video of the new initiative. In this video, two students dentistry visit a 93 year old man and showcase the process.

Watch the rest of the video here:



Beta Faculteit
Faculty of Science

WELZIJN IN DE WIJK

Bachelor 1, 2, 3: Health Sciences, Health&Life Sciences



Course

In Welzijn in de Wijk, students work on real-life challenges that affect **well-being** in local neighbourhoods. They collaborate with community partners such as welfare organizations, local governments, or resident groups to identify needs and develop small-scale interventions.

The course emphasizes **participatory methods, empathy, and co-creation**. Students apply social science tools to explore issues like social isolation, access to services, and neighborhood safety, while reflecting on their role as future professionals contributing to more inclusive and resilient communities.



CSL-oriented assignment

In this edition, students collaborated with **De Kwekerij**, a social organization focused on supporting young adults facing existential questions and mental health challenges.

Their question: what do participants need to stay connected to the community and how do we ensure that the threshold is low enough for new people to join?

The students performed **interviews** with participants and **participated** in the sessions themselves in order to gain the insights necessary to answer these questions.

The co-developed and pitched new concepts to enhance De Kwekerij's impact and even **went a step further** by creating prototypes of their ideas, offering tangible tools for future use.



Output

The students were divided into two groups, each working on an overarching theme that was further divided into three subthemes.

Within each group, the subquestions were integrated into a shared research focus. As a result, the societal partner received:

- two final presentations with concrete recommendations
- physical prototypes of the proposed products.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+/- 30
Partner(s)	1
Code	AB_1303
Coordinator	Marjolein Zweekhorst
Timing	P5





The final presentations held at the location of the parter

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“I think this course should be compulsory! It is very informative and a refreshing change from the usual subjects” – Student



A prototype of one of the end products the students designed

POLICY, POLITICS & PARTICIPATION

Master 1, 2: Management, Policy Analysis & Entrepreneurship in the H&L Sciences



Course

In this course, students tackle diverse societal challenges from various fields, emphasizing transdisciplinary research skills. The focus is on complex issues and their solutions, exploring the dynamics between power and knowledge. It questions whose expertise should influence decision-making: academics or those directly involved?



CSL-oriented assignment

Every year, there are multiple partners. We will highlight one of them: **PreZero**.

VU and PreZero collaborate to achieve zero waste by 2030. VU aims for a 10% reduction in waste per employee/student. Students explore circular strategies like "refuse, rethink, and reduce" to achieve this. Results inform the Zero Waste roadmap, guiding steps towards the ambitious goal. The results will be taken into the Zero Waste roadmap of PreZero and VU, the living strategic document.

Their question: How to reduce waste at the VU: specifically making use of circular r-strategies: refuse, rethink, and reduce?



Output

Each student group was tasked with holding two focus group discussions.

On average, every group spoke with 12 different societal actors - gathering a lot of valuable data for the partners.

In the end, the partners got:

- final presentation containing data and preliminary analysis
- policy advice report for the Zero Waste Roadmap



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+/- 40
Partner(s)	5
Code	AM_470589
Coordinator	Anne Loeber
Timing	P2



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We wanted to say that the students did a great job and we were very happy to be a commissioner for this project. We will definitely use some of their findings in our future plans! – Commissioner

For the first time, the goal was not simply clogging my brain with endless streams of information, I was actually able to contribute to something, to be useful. – Student

BACHELOR PROJECT: BUSINESS CASE

Bachelor 3: Business Analytics



Course

The course runs across the second semester and addresses different aspects in each period. Its aim is twofold: to provide students with orientation on further studies and career opportunities, and to offer hands-on experience in applying business analytics within a real **multidisciplinary** business context.

Students integrate their knowledge of **mathematics**, **computer science**, and **business economics** to analyse and model commercial and industrial processes. Throughout the project, they also develop essential social and professional skills, becoming aware of how these disciplines interact with each other, with other sciences, and with society at large.



CSL-oriented assignment

Each year, the Business Case partners with companies, public institutions, and NGOs.

Students co-create solutions to challenges that require both technical and social perspectives. For example, they supported the **Municipality of Amsterdam** in improving crowd management by spreading tourists across the city, collaborated with **Caeli** to predict ammonia emissions for climate policy, and analyzed app data from **Garage2020** to improve youth mental health interventions.

Other cases included helping **IKEA** optimize shelf-space, supporting **IreckonU** in better serving customers in hospitality, assisting **NIPV** with strategies for large-scale calamities, and improving ward capacity management at **OLVG hospital**.



Output

Students deliver a professional **report and presentation** tailored to their partner's needs. Examples are:

- predictive models
- process analyses
- advisory frameworks
- strategic recommendations.

Alongside these outputs, students practice teamwork, research, and communication skills.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 3
Amount	+ - 70
Partner(s)	7
Code	XB_41000
Coordinator	Annemieke van Goor-Balk
Timing	P4+5+6



Faculteit der Sociale en Geesteswetenschappen
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

MEDIA USE IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

Bachelor 1: Communication & Information Studies



Course

This course explores how organizations use various (digital) communication modes, with a focus on **persuasion, behavior change, and social impact**. Students are introduced to key communication theories and qualitative research methods such as interviews, participant observation, and focus groups.

They then apply these tools in a real-world setting by collaborating with societal partners on authentic communication challenges.



CSL-oriented assignment

Students collaborate with a partner organization to tackle authentic communication challenges through scientific research and deliver actionable insights. This year, students collaborated with **Stichting VoorUit**, as they were just getting started with setting up their media channels.

Stichting VoorUit is a social initiative where students receive affordable housing in exchange for weekly community work in their neighborhood—such as tutoring, organizing activities, and supporting residents.

They tackled multiple questions:

1. How can we recruit more students from diverse backgrounds?
2. How can VoorUit better present/communicate itself to companies/organisations that want to sponsor VoorUit?
3. How can we recruit more students with a care background? (in the context of long-term home care flats/more activities aimed at seniors)



Output

The students all prepared presentations for the community partners, who came to the VU their final meeting. In the end they received:

- Research reports and communication strategies tailored to VoorUit's needs
- Creative presentations blending scientific rigor with practical application
- Deliverables stored and accessible [LINK](#)



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+/- 20
Partner(s)	1
Code	L_AABACIW113
Coordinator	Robert Prettner
Timing	P5+6



ORGANIZATIONS & ANTHROPOLOGY

Bachelor 3: Anthropology



course

In this course, students engage in real-world assignments for societal organizations through a Community Service Learning (CSL) approach. They conduct **ethnographic research** with and for **external partners**, translating anthropological insights into **practical solutions** for social and organizational challenges. Students critically reflect on their role as anthropologists-in-practice and collaborate in research teams on assignments that hold immediate value for the partner organization.



CSL-oriented assignment

This year, students collaborated with the **Municipality of Almere** on a project about social cohesion. In total, there were 10 groups, who each tackled a different side of the question. For example:

- How do young families experience social connectedness in their neighbourhood, and what do they expect from the municipality to strengthen this?

Through team-based, practice-oriented research, students respond to a real-world issue brought in by a societal or organizational partner. Using anthropological tools and perspectives, they co-create a usable product such as policy advice, a report, or a creative intervention, tailored to the partner's needs. In doing so, **students learn not only how to conduct research but also how to translate their findings into meaningful, actionable outcomes for society.**



Output

The municipality's question was complex and of course multi-faceted. By breaking it up into various sub-questions, the students shone light upon the various different aspects. They tackled issues with regards to **belonging, littering, social cohesion, green and blue spaces**, and more.

At the end, the students visited the municipality in the city hall and presented their findings there. Additionally, each group created a 5-7 page policy report with the context, data collection methods, analysis and advice.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+-40
Partner(s)	1
Code	S_OAA
Coordinator	Ellen Bal
Timing	P4+5+6





The students visited the Almere town hall for their final presentations



One of the groups presenting their findings to the commissioner

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At Organisations & Anthropology, second-year anthropology students conduct their first stakeholder research. What is striking is how quickly they develop. They learn not only how to conduct targeted research, but also how to communicate effectively with an external partner and how to present their insights clearly and usefully. The leap they make in a short period of time towards independence, professionalism and social engagement is impressive to see. – Teacher

CO-CREATIVE RESEARCH

Bachelor 2: Sociology



Course

Students practice co-creative action research: a participatory approach where societal stakeholders are **directly involved in shaping the research question, design, and outcomes.**

Working in teams, students collaborate with a stakeholder to explore a real-world issue through co-creation sessions and fieldwork.

The results form the foundation for the **follow-up course** Project 4: Consultancy, where students continue to build on their findings in more depth.



CSL-oriented assignment

Students work with partners such as **Stichting Samen is niet Alleen (SINA), UWV, Rabobank, Cliëntenbelang, BI+, Amsterdam Museum, and Inholland.**

In fully co-creative teams, they define research questions, collect and analyze data, and address issues like financial resilience, healthcare access, cultural participation, and social inclusion.

Projects always stem from **real challenges**. For instance: how can UWV normalize mistakes within its organizational culture? How can BI+ make bisexuality more visible in queer spaces? And how can Stichting SINA act more effectively and in a culturally sensitive way during home visits?



Output

The outcomes are **tailored to the needs** of each partner. Depending on the project, students deliver products within a wide range of options such as:

- policy reports
- practical toolkits
- exhibitions
- podcasts
- workshop formats



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+/- 60
Partner(s)	8
Code	S_CCO
Coordinator	Lise Woensdrecht
Timing	P5



Faculteit der Gedrags- en Bewegingswetenschappen
Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences

VITALITEIT & KWETSBAARHEID BIJ OUDEREN

Bachelor 1: Movement Sciences



Course

This course explores mechanisms of aging, ways to measure frailty, and the **effectiveness of interventions**. Students work on a real-world assignment from stakeholders and provide practical recommendations to support healthy aging and independence among older adults.

The course is set up in such a way that the students **learn the theory in the first half** of the course, while already getting to know the partners. **the second half of the course is centered around the question by the partner**, so that they can apply the knowledge they gained in the first half.



CSL-oriented assignment

This year, the course has 8 partners. The first year, it was 4: **HvA, Gemeente Amsterdam, Team Sportservice, Combiwel**. Each partner brought in their own unique question(s), giving the students the opportunity to choose a partner to their liking. This was done through an initial matching event where the students and partners could provide their preferences.

We will highlight one of the projects. Team SportService was curious about their new movement intervention: the "beweeegbank" (movement bench). How do people interact with it? can the target audience use it? (to what degree) does it impact peoples' vitality?

Students learnt about the initiative and interviewed respondents about the usage, and educated potential users on how to use it.



Output

The final event of the course was set up like a "dragons den", with all partners present at the final date.

Students presented their research, preliminary analyses and results to the partners. Where applicable, they also presented potential follow-ups and policy ideas.

The teacher and partners acted as the jury to decide which group had the best presentation and ideas. the winners got a small prize: coffee and a snack, paid for by Dax.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+ - 25
Partner(s)	4 to 8
Code	AM_470589
Coordinator	Dax Houtkamp
Timing	P1



Are we really preparing our students for the job market?

Or do they leave university unsure about their future career paths? A project within the VU's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) programme took on these questions. Dax Houtkamp, VU lecturer Human Movement Sciences and PhD candidate in healthy aging, used his SoTL grant to give his students hands-on experiences that help them step into their professional paths.

Read the full article here:



Dax Houtkamp - course coördinator
and designer of the course

School of Business and Economics

MANAGEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

Master: Chemistry, Business, SBI, DBI, Physics & Astronomy, Transport&SCM



Course

In this course, students explore the complexity of sustainable innovation. They take into consideration **the complete picture**: economic challenges, societal influences, the organisational structures, etc.

This course explores these complexities through cases from diverse organizations. Students learn frameworks on shared value, innovation, and digital sustainability, and apply systems thinking to identify opportunities for accelerating change.

Using a **challenge-based** approach, they conduct desk research and fieldwork (interviews) to generate insights and propose potential interventions for participating organizations.



CSL-oriented assignment

This course works with several organizations each year. One example is **Designathon Works**, an NGO active worldwide that empowers children through maker education and design thinking, nurturing the innovative thinkers of the future.

The students will help the organization with questions around scaling and systems change:

- How can they ensure long term partnerships and engagement with partners?
- How can they meaningfully measure impact?
- How can Designathon Works become embedded in formal education systems where teachers are often overburdened and structures remain rigid?

Through their research and fresh perspectives, students not only contribute to these questions but also offer directions for future growth and impact.



Output

Each group of students is tasked with making a research report that holds the **data, analysis, and recommendations** for interventions. But as we want the students to have actual impact, and go beyond just words and paper, we always try to have students also **test a prototype** of their intervention. So, besides their report, they deliver:

- A presentation for the partner organization, highlighting the key findings and opportunities.
- Prototypes or small-scale pilots that translate their recommendations into concrete, testable actions.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+ 95
Partner(s)	2 to 4
Code	E_DBI_MANSI
Coordinator	Damla Diriker
Timing	P2



IBA LAB 1

Bachelor 2: International Business Administration



Course

IBA Lab is an experiential learning course within the SBE that combines **entrepreneurship, collaboration, and societal relevance**. The course functions as a **living laboratory** in which both students and teachers explore new ways of learning, with an emphasis on developing entrepreneurial attitudes and generating social impact.

Students, divided across two working groups and several project teams, collaborate with societal organizations to address pressing challenges. The lab functions as a **learning space** for both **teachers and students**, fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and real-world impact.



CSL-oriented assignment

The course collaborate with various organisations. We showcase two of them: one group collaborated with **Boerderij De Meent**, a learning farm where undocumented migrants and volunteers build community through farming and craftsmanship. Students designed a “Friends of De Meent” donation campaign and explored sustainable partnerships with impact-driven companies.

Another group partnered with **De Huismeesters**, a social enterprise in Amstelveen, to develop a mentorship platform linking ambitious youth from disadvantaged backgrounds with role models. A related challenge explored employing people experiencing homelessness as caretakers through collaboration with De Regenboog Groep.



Output

For **De Meent**, they developed a roadmap for launching a “Friends of De Meent” donor program and proposals for long-term collaborations with socially responsible companies.

For **De Huismeesters**, students created business and implementation plans for a youth mentorship platform and designed partnership models to employ people experiencing homelessness.

These outputs combined strategic insights with practical, actionable steps and have already influenced ongoing initiatives.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	70
Partner(s)	4
Code	E_IBA2_LAB1
Coordinator	Christer Guldemand
Timing	P4



In 2023 IBA LAB students visited Enviu, the social impact venture builders in Rotterdam. They had a chance to discover what it actually means to explore a societal problem and to develop and execute a fitting solution to this in collaboration with societal stakeholders.

Read the full article here:



Inerdisciplinary University-wide Modules

INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING 1

Master: everyone



Course

This course welcomes Master's students from **all disciplines** to engage with complex societal challenges. Together with citizens, policymakers, and other stakeholders, students define the problem before exploring possible solutions.

The course works with 3 themes (decided on in co-creation with society:: **sustainable energy systems, urban healthy food systems, and inclusive public spaces for mental strength**. By combining perspectives across disciplines and society, students learn to **co-create** knowledge, reflect on frictions and synergies, and creatively integrate insights.



CSL-oriented assignment

Instead of starting from a ready-made assignment, students **collaborate with societal partners** to define the problem itself. By engaging with citizens, policymakers, and organizations, they uncover diverse perspectives and tensions. Students are encouraged to use **creative methods** such as art, storytelling, or design to integrate viewpoints and explore system-level solutions.

Students collaborated with partners including Street Art Museum Amsterdam (SAMA) and with the Local Libraries (OBA NW).



Output

Students engaged with residents and community librarians of the OBA to explore themes such as community, gentrification, and social cohesion. They investigated how libraries connect with local residents and how this could be strengthened.

With the input from the conversations, the students **created artworks in collaboration with SAMA**, which address, for example, the connection between neighbourhood and library or the sense of community in the neighbourhood.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 2
Amount	+/- 25
Partner(s)	2
Code	AM_1254
Coordinator	Geertje Tijisma
Timing	P2



Various students collaborate with SAMA

In one of the previous iterations of the course, students from VU and HvA collaborated with Street Art Museum Amsterdam (SAMA) to engage local residents in co-creating research agendas for their neighborhoods

Read the full article here:



INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING 2

Master: everyone



Course

Interdisciplinary CSL 2 (iCSL2) invites Master's students from **any discipline** to engage in inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge co-creation and hands-on research in real-world contexts. Students collaborate and work closely with communities, organizations, companies, and government partners to address complex societal challenges.

The course culminates in an interdisciplinary report and **a public presentation**, engaging both scientific and societal audiences during a **dialogue event**. Students gain skills in critical thinking, problem solving, cultural understanding, and translating academic knowledge into tangible societal impact.



CSL-oriented assignment

The projects are always divided into **three themes**: Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Cities, Mental Health and Resilience, and Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems.

Students collaborated with partners including **De Groene Hub, De Regenboog Gemeente Amsterdam, We Are Local, and Boerderij De Meent**.

For example, in the project with **De Regenboog Gemeente**, students explored how a religious community can serve as a **"third place"** to address loneliness in a secular city. Students visited two churches, conducted interviews and observations, and developed policy advice on enhancing visibility, recognition, and social impact for the church's programs.



Output

All student teams presented their findings at the **Science with Society Festival** at the public library. Presentations were interactive, involving the public, local residents, and often international university participants.

Beyond traditional reports, students created participatory experiences that engaged audiences in dialogue, reflection, and co-creation.

Finally, the students deliver a reflection report that explains the view of their particular background on the topic



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 3
Amount	+/- 35
Partner(s)	7
Code	AM_1253
Coordinator	Eduardo Urias
Timing	P4+5+6





Students and citizens in dialogue at the Science with Society festival



OpenResearch Amsterdam – All student end products

GLOBAL HEALTH MINOR

Bachelor 3: everyone



Course

The Global Health Minor is open to 3rd-year Bachelor students **from all disciplines**, at VU and beyond. Alongside global health courses, students participate in the Transdisciplinary Global Health Challenge (TGHC), where they work with local and international community partners on pressing global health issues.

Spread across three phases (Engage, Investigate, Act) the TGHC **combines coursework, workshops, and fieldwork**, while fostering **transdisciplinary collaboration** and skills in ethics, positionality, intersectionality, and community impact. Students gain both academic knowledge and practical experience in co-creating solutions for **global health challenges**.



CSL-oriented assignment

This minor works with several community organizations each year, both locally and internationally. One example was the **Access to Healthcare Committee**, which supports undocumented migrants in navigating barriers to medical care. Over the course of the minor, the students created an application that helped the undocumented migrants with access to healthcare.

Another case was **Together We Can**, an advocacy agency in India that pushes for disability rights and inclusion in policymaking. Students explored how schools and local communities could better include children with disabilities, developing new ways for the organization to engage policy actors and strengthen their power.



Output

The TGHC always delivers outputs that are **useful for partners and impactful for communities**. Examples from previous years include:

- A framework to monitor psychosocial wellbeing in art-based community projects.
- An advisory report on short-chain food systems for local policymakers.
- A workshop on the health risks of fossil-fuel air pollution.

This year, new collaborations include Stichting Kraktie, @ease, and continued partnerships with Access 2 Healthcare and Together We Can.



Course details

CSL intensity	Level 3
Amount	+ - 20
Partner(s)	3+
Code	Multiple courses
Coordinator	Sarju Sing Rai
Timing	P1+2+3

