



ALTERNATIVE STUDENT BREAK PROGRAM GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The **Alternative Student Break (ASB)** program involves uOttawa students in unique service learning projects during the **February reading week** and **summer breaks**.

ASB begins with **project planning and team-building activities** and culminates in a **local or international community service project** and **critical reflection** on what was accomplished. International project participants also fundraise to offset program costs.



ASB GOALS

The goal of the ASB program is to achieve lasting, positive outcomes for uOttawa students and for local and international communities. The program allows students to **build skills, meet new students, and learn about, and take action on**, local and global development challenges. At the same time, ASB **increases community capacity to respond to local needs** by linking up local and global organisations with uOttawa student volunteers.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The ASB program is more than just a simple volunteer placement. Following the PARE model,¹ the ASB program integrates four components to optimise outcomes for students and communities.

Preparation

- The preparation phase involves: building a relationship between students, the Community Partner, and the University; managing and discussing expectations; establishing learning objectives; fundraising (international projects only); and building students' understanding of community needs and the surrounding social issues.

Action

- During the action phase, ASB teams engage in a community service project in collaboration with the Community Partner, witness, social issues and the Community Partner's work in real world context, and deliver a final project or initiative .

Reflection

- The reflection component is integrated throughout the ASB experience. ASB teams participate in facilitated reflection activities and discussions to critically analyze their experiences and share observations with others.

Evaluation

- In the final phase, students and Community Partners are asked evaluate what was learned and how the project impacted the community. Comments are used to draw lessons learned and improve the ASB program.

¹ Troppe, Marie. PARE Model. *University of Maryland Faculty Handbook for Service-Learning*. University of Maryland, 1999.



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WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Centre for Global and Community Engagement (CCGE) collaborates with Community Partners, team leaders, and student participants to run ASB.

Centre for Global and Community Engagement

- Plans and administers the ASB program
- Cultivates long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with Community Partners
- Recruits team leaders and student participants
- Organises and co-facilitates pre-departure and reflection activities for ASB teams
- Collects feedback, comments and suggestions from ASB participant stakeholders to support program improvement.

Community Partners

- Identify community service projects that are designed to address local needs and to have lasting positive impacts
- Provide appropriate logistical and programming support for ASB teams
- Provide orientation on safety, security, and project context and activities
- Participate in program evaluation

Team Leaders

- Promote ASB at uOttawa and help recruit participants for their teams
- Act as liaisons between their teams, their Community Partners, and the CGCE
- Track team deadlines and finances
- Lead team-building activities to build effective, dynamic, and caring teams
- Co-facilitate pre-departure and reflection activities
- Submit a project report and participate in an interview about their experiences.
- *International projects only* – Coordinate at least two group fundraisers, and encourage their team members to fundraise individually

Student Participants

- Complete a community service project in collaboration with the Community Partner
- Participate in team meetings, pre-service training, a community service project, and reflection activities
- Participate in the ASB program evaluation
- *International projects only* – Pay a participation fee to cover personal expenses (e.g. travel, accommodation, etc.) and project costs (e.g. project material, administration) and
- *International projects only* – Carry out individual and group fundraising activities to raise awareness of issues, build skills, and offset participation costs.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for everyone involved, the CGCE has established four guiding principles for its ASB program:

1. **We respond to community needs.**
2. **We consider the potential consequences of our actions and words.**
3. **We practise respect, consideration, cooperation, empathy, and openness.**
4. **We prioritise safety, community partnerships, service, and learning.**