



Definition of Service-Learning for the University of Saint Joseph

Service-Learning at USJ is a course-based, credit-bearing pedagogy that intentionally links disciplinary learning with sustained, mutually beneficial partnership work with local and regional communities. Through thoughtfully designed service activities, structured reflection, and joint planning with community partners, Service-Learning enables students to:

- apply and deepen disciplinary knowledge and skills in real community contexts;
- address community-identified needs in ways that build community capacity (doing with rather than for); and
- develop civic, ethical and intercultural competencies consistent with the Catholic and humanizing values of USJ.

This form of learning is curricular (integrated into course/program outcomes), reciprocal (community and university co-design and co-benefit), reflective (structured reflection is required before/during/after service), and sustainable (projects are designed with community partners for continuity and measurable impact).

Short policy wording for USJ documents

“Service-Learning at the University of Saint Joseph is a pedagogical approach that integrates academic learning with collaborative, community-based action. Course-based and credit-bearing, Service-Learning engages students, faculty and community partners in projects that meet identified community needs while advancing disciplinary learning, civic responsibility, and ethical reflection. Projects are co-designed with community partners, include structured reflection and assessment, aim for sustainable community benefit, and align with USJ’s commitment to academic excellence, Catholic Social Teaching and the Core Values of Catholic Education and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”

Core operational components USJ should adopt

1. **Curricular integration** — Service-Learning is **course-based and credit-bearing** (learning outcomes mapped to course/program outcomes).
2. **Community partnership** — Projects are co-designed with community partners; partners help define needs and assessment criteria.
3. **Structured reflection** — Reflection activities are required (before, during, after) and explicitly assessed.
4. **Sustainability and ethics** — Projects aim for continuity/impact, and adhere to ethical principles (respect, dignity, do-with not do-for).
5. **Assessment & scholarship** — Use formative/summative assessment for student learning and community outcomes; encourage faculty scholarship on SL.
6. **SDG mapping** — Encourage explicit mapping of projects to relevant SDGs (supports AM 3.2).



Why this definition fits USJ

Alignment with Strategic Plan 2024–2028

1. **Adheres to highest international standards in education, research and innovation (SO1).**
 - Making Service-Learning course-based and credit-bearing supports accreditation and quality assurance expectations in SO1 (AM 1.1). Embedding scholarly assessment (student outcomes, peer-reviewed scholarship on engagement) supports AM 1.2.
2. **Promotes internationalization (SO2).**
 - Service-Learning can operate at local, regional and international scales (partnerships in Greater China, Southeast Asia, Portuguese-speaking countries), consistent with AM 2.2 and USJ's profile as a multicultural, bilingual university. Projects may also be designed as joint, cross-institutional modules.
3. **Nurtures ethical values and sustainable community outreach (SO3).**
 - The reciprocity, reflection and community-driven orientation of Service-Learning directly supports AM 3.1 (community outreach), AM 3.2 (SDG alignment), and AM 3.3 (ethics/Catholic social teaching). The emphasis on dignity, civic responsibility and critical reflection reflects service-learning literature emphasizing civic and ethical aims.
4. **Fosters local development and lifelong learning (SO4).**
 - Service-Learning centered on Macao/Greater China contexts advances local development goals, provides Lifelong Learning pathways, and strengthens alumni/community connections (AM 4.2, AM 4.3).
5. **Resonates with USJ's Catholic identity (SO5).**
 - A Service-Learning approach that prioritizes human dignity, solidarity and the common good aligns with Catholic social teaching and the University's mission/ethos.

Alignment with the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Service-Learning at the University of Saint Joseph is aligned with the **principles of Catholic Social Teaching**, which guide the University's commitment to human dignity, justice, and the common good.

This alignment is expressed through the pedagogical and community engagement practices of Service-Learning:

- **Human Dignity** — Service-Learning affirms the inherent dignity of every person, encouraging students to engage respectfully and ethically with individuals and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalized.
- **Common Good** — Service-Learning promotes responsibility toward the wider community, fostering collaborative efforts that contribute to social well-being and the flourishing of all.
- **Solidarity** — Service-Learning cultivates a sense of shared humanity and social responsibility, inviting students to work with communities in a spirit of partnership, empathy, and mutual learning.



- **Preferential Option for the Poor** — Service-Learning encourages attentiveness to the needs of the most disadvantaged, supporting initiatives that address inequality and promote inclusion.
- **Stewardship of Creation** — Service-Learning fosters care for the environment and responsible use of resources, in alignment with ecological sustainability and the protection of our common home.
- **Participation and Subsidiarity** — Service-Learning values active participation and shared responsibility, recognizing the importance of empowering individuals and communities to take part in decisions that affect their lives.

Through this alignment, Service-Learning contributes to the formation of students as socially responsible and ethically grounded graduates, committed to justice, service, and the transformation of society in accordance with the values of Catholic social teaching.

Alignment with the Core Values of Catholic Education

Service-Learning at the University of Saint Joseph is aligned with the **Core Values of Catholic Education**, grounded in the person of Jesus Christ as the Way (Via), the Truth (Veritas), and the Life (Vita).

This alignment is expressed through the pedagogical and community engagement practices of Service-Learning:

- **The Way (Via)** — Service-Learning fosters a commitment to loving service and solidarity with others, encouraging students to engage with communities in a spirit of compassion, responsibility, and mutual respect.
- **The Truth (Veritas)** — Service-Learning promotes the pursuit of truth through the integration of academic knowledge and critical reflection, enabling students to discern ethical dimensions of real-world challenges and act with wisdom and integrity.
- **The Life (Vita)** — Service-Learning upholds the dignity of every person and contributes to the flourishing of individuals, families, and communities, while encouraging care for creation and the promotion of the common good.

This alignment is further reflected in the development of students' dispositions and actions, inspired by the twelve actionable behaviours associated with Catholic education, including love of neighbour, commitment to justice, responsible freedom, care for life, and stewardship of creation.

Through this alignment, Service-Learning contributes to the holistic formation of students, nurturing not only academic excellence but also the development of moral character, civic responsibility, and a commitment to justice and sustainability.



聖若瑟大學
UNIVERSITY OF
SAINT JOSEPH

Author: Service Learning and Outreach Coordination Entity

Approved by: Executive Council

Approved on: 7 July 2026

Operational Commencement Date: 7 July 2026

Access Rights: Public

Version Number: 001