

HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND CONFLICT

An online course for practitioners
(Postgraduate Certificate)

Learning
from
the workplace

CENDEP

THE COURSE

Building on its 20 years of expertise developing teaching and learning programmes, CENDEP (Centre for Development and Emergency Practice) at Oxford Brookes University offers a three module entirely online Postgraduate Certificate designed specifically for practitioners and field workers.

This programme tackles the newest and most innovative developments regarding cross-cutting issues such as conflict sensitivity and transformation, culture sensitivity, and participation or urban crises and resilience. It uses multiculturalism as a teaching tool and as a means of creating more practical and theoretical knowledge about humanitarian action. Creating a space for a true dialogue between different understandings is undoubtedly one of the main challenges of the humanitarian community and of higher education institutions teaching Humanitarianism.

The course is taking the workplace as the main learning environment and allows students from all over the world, involved in humanitarian actions, to engage with a global community of learners and tutors in discussion, conceptualisation and practice based exercises about humanitarian issues in conflict or turbulent environments.

E-LEARNING

The main advantages of a totally virtual learning environment are its flexibility in terms of time and place of learning and the diversity of methods and approaches possible. It allows the learner to personalise the learning experience to a certain extent and therefore achieve a real lifelong and advanced workplace learning process.

In practice e-learning suits learners who are working on short contracts, have a lot of mobility in their assignments and who are not able to attend conventional university classes. Learners can exchange and build knowledge during group work and discussion, engaging with other practitioners currently working in other locations and subjects and working for a range of institutions such as the UN, international press and international or local NGOs.

FIELD BASED ACTION RESEARCH

The methodology that underpins individual learning on the programme is based on action research, particularly in learning by doing, self-reflectivity and action testing of theories. This allows the teaching and learning to take into account the specificities of fields such as conflict transformation or humanitarian practices for which attitudes and personal competences such as the capacity to work in an intercultural setting, under pressure, the ability to lead a team, to build trust are as important as the theoretical (based on knowledge) and pragmatic ones (based on know-how).

The set of competences has been identified with consideration of the EU Dublin Descriptors.



The HAC PGcert has opened up a major new means of online learning and development for the Aid sector. Immediate access is gained to students who are actually in the field, working and living in the situations that they are studying.

MARTIN KNOPS provides psychosocial support and counselling for Oxfam and is a tutor in Module 1 and 2.



The programme is an eye-opening experience! Even though the rhythm, while working fulltime, is intense, the interaction with the other participants is very refreshing and enriching. The level of the weekly discussions is impressive and the programme is well structured. It is a pleasure to be part of this programme!

PETRA HEUSSER, learner, Protection Officer with UNHCR in Colombia.

THE MODULES

MODULE 1: CONFLICT AND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

The module will seek to equip students with a sound understanding of the complexity of conflicts, with conceptual frameworks and theoretical debates relating to humanitarian action in conflict or turbulent environments. The module also provides some analytical tools to comprehend better the contexts of conflict and to make adequate assessments on the dilemmas they will face as practitioners. It introduces them to the latest development of conflict sensitivity approaches and the links to conflict transformation.

MODULE 2: CULTURE SENSITIVITY FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

This module allows participants to deal with and discuss with experts based in all parts of the world core issues related to culture, communication, trust building, participation and culture-sensitivity. It develops cases related to cultural dimensions such as gender, displacement or identity.

MODULE 3: HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND URBAN CRISES

Focusing on urban spaces becomes increasingly important for the efficiency of humanitarian actions but presents a new challenge as humanitarian and development traditions have historically focused on 'open spaces' and rural environments. Rebuilding some social links and re-inscribing solidarities in spaces will become one of the key elements in making collective life possible again. Tools in order to develop specific humanitarian programmes in urban environments are still under construction. Through action research-based teaching methods, issues related to urban settings and specificities of humanitarian projects are investigated.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The weekly student workload is evaluated at around 15 hours which includes reading material, working on the different assignments and communicating with peers and tutors; assessing and applying new learning directly at the field level and reflecting on their application in practice (this does not constitute an extra workload but another way of learning by doing).

Tutors bring a large range of different experiences coming from different work-based, geographical and institutional environments within the NGO sector, academia and civil services.

Every week new material is loaded onto Brookes' **Virtual Learning Environment**. This material includes readings, audio or video materials and themes for discussions. Assignments are given two weeks before the beginning of each module in order to allow learners to organise themselves accordingly to be able to meet deadlines.

Tutors are available to guide learners either as a group or individually.

The building of a real community on the web is a key element of the success of a strictly online programme. At the start of the programme, time is spent getting to know each other, knowing and sharing objectives, expectations and experience.



Students were invited to open up a discussion on the relationship between conflict and culture and how the two affect each other. With such a diverse group of students meeting in the virtual learning realm - a kind of culture in itself - the discussions quickly took on a dynamic edge, clearly marked by mutual respect and the celebration of each others' backgrounds. What has been apparent throughout the course is that we often tend to consider making time to stop and reflect on our own practice as an impossible luxury, whilst actually it is key to the evolution of humanitarian action in conflict settings.

NICOLA HARRISON, anthropologist, Operations Support Officer at the UNRWA, Jerusalem, tutoring during module 2.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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Oxford Brookes University is one of the leading modern universities in the UK and enjoys an international reputation for innovation and high quality in education and research. Founded in 1927, the School of Architecture is one of the largest in the UK and a highly regarded centre of education for architecture and the built environment. CENDEP undertakes research and education in disaster management, chronic poverty and humanitarian response. www.oisd.brookes.ac.uk/architecture/cendep/

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The programme is open to all candidates who fulfil at least one of the following conditions:

- hold a good honours degree in a relevant discipline and some experience in the field of humanitarian action
- hold a relevant recognised diploma or professional qualification
- hold no prior diploma but have substantial and proven field experiences in humanitarian action and related fields.

TIMING

The programme runs from September to July. The three 10 week long modules start respectively in September, January and April.

COST

Information about the course cost and scholarship opportunities can be found at:

www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/courses/postgraduate/hac



work and mitigate negative impact before it happens. Everywhere I go, where I work now, I apply it.

For my organisation, this is capacity building. I have been trained before but this course opens the range of the topics, and adds humanitarian issues. I am sure the course will help me to be more professional in conflict transformation.

JEAN-PAUL NTEZIMANA, Learner, Search for Common Ground, Rwanda.



When I signed my first contract with a humanitarian NGO to go to Mozambique in March 1990, I received a very succinct briefing: 'You'll help a population displaced by a very violent conflict. Use your common sense and try to do it right'. At the time I could hardly find Mozambique on a map!

Having always worked to relieve suffering among victims, I never took the time to delve into the causes of the violence and suffering.

After more than 20 years of doing and telling others what to do in 'humanitarian emergencies', I thought it was time to sit in a classroom, listen to others and try to evaluate what I did wrong or right and why.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE AZÉ,
Head of Logistics, HSE/GAR Global Alert and Response, World Health Organisation.

TO APPLY

Contact humaC@brookes.ac.uk if you are interested in applying or would like further information.

www.oisd.brookes.ac.uk/architecture/cendep/hac.html

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