

UPROOTED U TOOLKIT



**Post – Secondary Education Program
for Precarious Status Youth**



The Counselling
Foundation of Canada





Uprooted U Toolkit – Tools for Reproducing a Post-Secondary Education Program for Precarious Status Youth

Refugee and newcomer youth face many challenges as they transition into Canadian society. One of the greatest challenges involves the barriers faced in accessing post-secondary education, which weighs very heavily on precarious migrant youth. Not only does it perpetuate feelings of impermanence, but also aggravates existing precarity. As one of the youth in the FCJ Youth Network frames it, “My school counselor told me that I couldn’t even apply for university because I don’t have the right status here. It felt like my life ended while everyone around me moved forward. There was no point in even planning anything because my options were zero. What else could I do than get whatever under-the-table job I could, and try to survive?”

To mitigate this exclusion, the FCJ Refugee Centre, with the support of the Counselling Foundation of Ontario, developed a project to offer accessible, flexible and community-centric learning opportunities for refugee and precarious status youth. Over the course of six academic semesters, students had the opportunity to learn based on their own goals and interest, aptitudes and abilities, from different presenters and in different environments. This guide provides some ideas and tools from our experience of this project to support similar endeavors in other cities.

Start Up.....

At the start of the program, students submitted an application and received an acceptance letter (templates included) to familiarize them with this type of process. They then worked with the Coordinator to develop their personal, self-directed learning plan, seeking out opportunities for city-wide learning. This process was grounded in identifying the best learning pathway for each individual to provide them the most appropriate knowledge and skills to facilitate their eventual entry into post-secondary education (learning contract template included).

Class Time...

Students came together once per week in an anti-oppressive “classroom” environment to work individually and collectively on a specifically designed curriculum to develop critical thinking, writing and reflection. Through principles of critical pedagogy, popular education, and building on the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Essential Skills Passport, students have been supported in their intellectual growth and pathway to self-actualization. This project presents a different approach to learning and education, one which is not mandated by current financial and political motivations commodifying education, but rather based on a genuine desire for learning and the belief in the essence of education as a practice of freedom; not only benefitting the educated individual but society more broadly.

Class time has taken different forms, adapting to the expressed needs and desires of the students. The first semester consisted of a program taught by one professor to





develop specific academic skills (syllabus included). However, this was not the most useful model for all students as they came to the class with very different experiences, interests and levels of education. In order to diversify content and create a more dynamic environment, guest professors from local universities and colleges were invited to offer one or more lectures to the students based on their own expertise. To date over 15 professors have donated their time to offer a uniquely designed class for the students. The project coordinator ensured that a coherent progression in the class and assigned and marked related assignments. In order to replicate the project, some flexibility will be needed adapt to the unique class assembled. Connections should be made with local post-secondary institutions to both recruit volunteer professors when possible and to advocate for the admission of refugee claimants and other precarious status youth.

Mentors...

Where possible, students were matched with mentors in their chosen field of interest. The mentors were local professionals who were willing to share their knowledge and answer questions the students had about entering that field. Mentors were asked to provide one hour a month to their assigned student and were given a contract to formalize the agreement (contract included). This proved the most challenging part of the project for us, and as a result, students did not have mentors every semester. While this provided a rich learning experience for students who did have mentors, the other students still valued the opportunities received from the other parts of the project.

Sensitivity Training (Anti Oppression and Awareness)...

Whenever recruiting volunteers for the program to act as either mentors or professors, it is very important to ensure a level of awareness and sensitivity to the underlying immigration issues. The students, being in precarious situations, should not be put in situations where they would have to answer uncomfortable questions or respond to comments. Therefore, it is important to offer a workshop or training for new volunteers on the barriers to immigration and integration for precarious status youth, including sensitivity in referrals to other organizations, programs and individuals. This should be done from an anti-oppressive framework to ensure the safety of the students above all.

Overarching Goal...

This project aimed to assist in promoting self-esteem and self-worth for precarious status youth through the validation of knowledge and scholastic abilities. This opportunity to gain intellectually, personally and professionally also raised employability options and enable a greater understanding of professional goals, opportunities and possibilities. Moreover, building on these social outcomes, students will also have the awareness and ability to engage civically in their communities and in the broader Canadian society, and will be encouraged to do so.





APPLICATION FORM: *Uprooted U*

Personal Information

Full Name: _____
Last First M.I.

Address: _____
Street Address Apartment/Unit #

City Province Postal Code

Home Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Email _____

First Language: _____

Birth Date: _____ Gender: _____
yy/mm/dd

Education

Current/Most Recent:

Institution Name: _____

City/province: _____ Country: _____

Attended From: _____ To: _____

Area of Study: _____

Certificate Obtained: _____

Previous:

Institution Name: _____

City/province: _____ Country: _____

Attended From: _____ To: _____

Area Of Study: _____

Certificate Obtained: _____





Write at least 500 words why you're interested in this area and your future goals



September 25th, 2014

Dear XXX,

Congratulations on your admission to the Uprooted U Program at the FCJ Refugee Centre. Although in its early stages, this program will provide you with a transformative academic experience, moving you closer to your future professional goals. This program is unique in its capacity to connect you with professional mentors in your area of interest, while concurrently offering essential skills and academic training.

Please review the information below, to make sure it is accurate:

Name:	
Area of Study:	
Semester:	
Starting Date:	
End Date:	

We hope that you are taking our offer seriously. Recognizing that there is a large population of people in Canada who do not have access to post-secondary education, this project is a unique opportunity for you to pursue your chosen trajectory. We hope that this pilot program will increase academic space for students like yourself, and we are excited that you are part of this innovative initiative.

We look forward to seeing you at the first class on September 30th. If you have any questions about the program please contact your program coordinator, Tanya Aberman, at (416)469-9754 x 226, or email uprootedu@fcjrefugeecentre.org.

Sincerely,

Loly Rico
Co-Director

Francisco Rico-Martinez
Co-Director



Mentor Contract

Uprooted U is a unique educational program created and developed by the FCJ Refugee Centre. The purpose of the program is to offer post-secondary education opportunities to youth with precarious immigration status. These students are largely barred access to post-secondary institutions as a result of their status, an experience that has proven to be both extremely frustrating and disheartening. As such, the Uprooted U program offers students the opportunity to learn essential academic skills while exploring their self-identified area of interest. A formal classroom setting will enable students to work on the critical thinking, reading, writing and presentation skills; and opportunities to acquire knowledge in their specific areas of interest will be created within the broader community.

In an effort to meet the learning interests and needs of the diverse student group, each student will prepare their own learning contract, identifying their area of interest and how they will implement learning trajectories. Students will be expected to attend 12 external lectures/seminars/on-line presentations within their identified area of interest. In order to further advance and develop their understanding in these areas, each student will be paired with a professional mentor.

The role of the mentor is to assist and support the student in their learning path. This will be accomplished through monthly face-to-face meeting with the students, where questions will be raised, confusion clarified and debates discussed. The student will come to the meeting prepared with the information they acquired from the external learning opportunities, questions outlined, and key themes identified. The mentor may supplement this information with knowledge and anecdotal evidences from their own experience. In this way, the student will not only gain an understanding of the field, but also a sense of the actualities of working in their field of interest.

Therefore, mentors commit to meet with their assigned student once a month for the entirety of the semester (12 weeks). There may also be agreements made about email or other forms of communication on a more frequent basis. While there is no prescribed length to the meetings, as they may vary from month to month with the student's learning outcomes, we would ask that a minimum of 1 hour be set aside to give the student the opportunity for in-depth discussion.

Should concerns or problems be identified at any point throughout the semester, mentors and students are encouraged to contact the course director. This project is a completely new initiative, and while we have attempted to conceptualize it from beginning to end, we recognize that unforeseen obstacles may arise. We are pleased to invite you on this journey with us.



I, _____, agree to act as a mentor
(name of mentor)

for the Uprooted U, summer 2014 session. In this capacity, I commit to meet with my student,

(name of student)

once a month for the duration of the 12 week semester. As part of these meetings, I agree to

share my specialised knowledge with the above named student and support them in their self-

defined learning trajectory.

(Mentor signature)

(Student signature)

(date)

(date)



Uprooted U LEARNING CONTRACT: Guide to Completion

Introduction: Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to commit to professional growth by developing and achieving specific learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are captured through a detailed learning contract which is created by the student in *collaboration with* their mentor. The learning contract is formal agreement between the student and their mentor. Furthermore, the learning contract is meant to be a practical tool by which your external learning progression can be evaluated.

Student Name:

Mentor's Name:

LEARNING GOAL (Statement outlining what I plan to achieve)	LEARNING OBJECTIVE (Statement explaining how I will achieve my goal – S.M.A.R.T.)	LEARNING ACTIVITIES (What activities will I engage in to accomplish my objective? Must begin with a verb)	EVIDENCE (How will I know I have achieved my objective?)	TARGET DATE (When can I reasonably and realistically expect to achieve my objective?)





Student's Name and Signature

Date

Mentor's Name and Signature

Date





Helpful Information

Goals: Complete 5 different goals

- What do you plan to achieve and why?
- There is a difference between *wanting* to achieve something versus *planning* to achieve it. Planning confers intention; this means your goal needs to be realistic and achievable. The learning contract outlines your plan for how you will achieve your goals in more detail.
- When developing your goal, consider its relation to your chosen area of study.

Learning Objectives: Complete 5 objectives (1 objective per goal)

- What do you have to do to meet each goal?
- Each objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-sensitive.
 - Specific: Do not be vague. Provide enough detail so that the reader can understand how you will achieve your goal.
 - Measurable: Your objective should be able to be measured either quantitatively, qualitatively, or both. This way, you will know when your objective has been met.
 - Achievable: Know the limits of time and resources. Ensure that you will actually be able to achieve your objective.
 - Realistic: Know yourself enough to know what you can realistically accomplish.
 - Time-sensitive: Attaching time periods to your objective will keep you focussed and motivated. Attaching time to your objective also allows you to monitor your progress.
- The following are some examples for ways that you may identify your learning objectives:
 - Increase knowledge of ...
 - Develop skills in ...
 - Improve ...
 - Gain competence in ...
 - Deepen awareness of ...
 - Become familiar with ...

Learning Activities:

- What do you have to do to achieve each objective?
- Start each activity statement with a verb.
- Provide a comprehensive listing of activities you will need to perform to achieve your objective.





Evidence:

- How are you going to prove that you achieved your objective?
- Often it will be clear if you have met your objectives through your journal writing, discussions with mentors, increased clarity from lecture to lecture, preparation for final report, etc...

Target Date:

- When do you plan to achieve the objective?
- Provide as many time periods as helpful to explain when your objective will be met.

Examples

The following provides examples to guide your completion of the learning contract. These are simply examples and are not meant to prescribe how the student should complete their contracts. Each student will identify a plan which is appropriate and relevant to themselves.

LEARNING GOAL	LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE	TARGET DATE
Become familiar with different concepts in the discipline of psychology.	Increase knowledge of at least three models used in psychology within 2 months	<p>Attend at least 3 lectures in the community /on line that describe particular models.</p> <p>Read journal articles describing the models investigated</p> <p>Discuss the models with my mentor for clarification and in-depth understanding</p>	<p>Be able to describe models to other people</p> <p>Write about models in my journal and final report</p> <p>Be prepared to describe models during my final presentation</p>	May 20 - July 22, 2014





LEARNING GOAL	LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	EVIDENCE	TARGET DATE
Learn effective marketing for Business	Gain the skills necessary to market specific products effectively within three months	<p>Attend lectures on marketing/sales</p> <p>Read articles in business magazines regarding marketing</p> <p>Observe marketing campaigns in magazines and on TV and analyze them</p> <p>Discuss marketing with my mentor and other community members</p> <p>Develop a marketing strategy for an invented product</p>	<p>I will have an increased understanding of marketing principles</p> <p>I will have a marketing strategy that I created</p> <p>Mentor will provide feedback on my strengths and areas to improve.</p> <p>Describe marketing strategies and effective examples in my journal and final report</p>	<p>Attend five lectures by July 1, 2014</p> <p>Prepare my strategy by August 1, 2014</p>





Summer 2014

Course Hours: Tuesday 4:00- 6:00 pm

Course Director: Tanya Aberman

Phone: 416-469-9754 ex. 220

E-mail: uprootedu@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to university-level academic standards with respect to critical thinking, reading and writing. Other related skills such as note-taking, good study habits and time management are also covered. Guest speakers will occasionally be invited to contribute to the learning trajectory.

Students are expected to participate meaningfully in all discussions. Please do your best to think critically about the class readings and share your comments with others. Please bring the relevant books and materials to class with you every week.

The course is designed to be self-directed to meet the needs and interest of each student. As such, you are responsible for identifying and attending the external seminars and recording and reflecting upon their content. You will also meet with your assigned mentor on a monthly basis. These meetings will allow for critical discussions of seminar content as well as topic-specific readings chosen by students with the guidance of the mentors.

What you can expect from me: my role facilitating discussions, teaching and clarifying course materials, and fostering a comfortable and respectful environment for everyone to successfully complete the course. Please remember that your experience in the tutorial is largely dependent on your level of preparedness in each class. If you have any problems related to the course, please notify me immediately so we can work toward a resolution together.

What I expect from you (i.e. some basic ground rules):

- Speak to others in a respectful manner. Do not interrupt, cut-off or yell at others. We are here to discuss and debate ideas, not launch personal attacks against one another.
- No cross-talk or side-bars (private discussion while others are talking).
- Be aware of how much space you are taking up. Discussion is encouraged, but not to the extent that it inhibits the ability of others to participate.
- While we are all entitled to our opinions, certain language is not okay. This includes sexist, racist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic and classist comments. Comments of this nature advocate ill treatment of marginalized groups and are often used to perpetuate stereotypes.
- Try to avoid derogatory and generalizing statements of entire groups or categories of people. They are often inaccurate and promote prejudices.
- We all need to do our best to use gender inclusive language unless speaking of men/women specifically as individuals or as a group (speaking and writing).



- No question is “stupid” (chances are that if you have a question someone else has it, or has a related question).
- Turn off your cell phone. Limit or eliminate laptop use in tutorial. A paper and pen should be sufficient for tutorial notes. We often change seats during tutorial (e.g. to form small groups) and as such, a laptop tends to be more hassle than paper. If you must use a laptop, do so only for class-related work. If you are caught using the laptop for other purposes, your laptop privileges will be revoked for the rest of the year.

Assignments

Weekly Assignments
Weekly seminars and readings
Monthly meetings with mentors
Final Report
Final Presentation

Missed Lectures/Tutorials

If you do not attend a lecture or tutorial, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.

Assignment Submission, Late Penalties and Extensions

Proper academic performance depends on you doing your work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. All work must be in hard copy format. Arrangements for extensions on written assignments are to be made with your Course Director. Any and all outstanding work must be submitted by the end of the term.

Feedback on Assignments

One way to improve your written work is through feedback on your assignments. Your Course Director will detail the kinds of problems with the assignments and what you need to do to improve. Listen carefully to these comments and then re-read your own assignment. Can you identify the main revisions you would need to make in order to improve the paper?

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are offences that are taken very seriously in this course. Plagiarism is submitting academic work which is not your own and/or taking credit for the ideas of others. Be sure to understand what constitutes plagiarism to avoid unwittingly engaging in it. It is better to be safe than sorry!



Course Outline

May 20, 2014

Introductions

Overview of Learning Contract

Assignment: Complete first draft of Learning Contract

May 27, 2014

Peer Reviewing: constructive criticism, editing and productive comments

Journal writing

Activity: peer review of Learning Contracts

Assignment: Journal entry (2 pages)

June 3, 2014

Critical Reading

Note Taking

Assignment: Article (Read and analyze – Submit analysis)

June 10 2014

Essay Writing

Clarifications about Final Assignment

Assignment: Essay outline

June 17, 2014

Research Skills

Referencing/Plagiarism

Activity: Research exercise

Assignment: Annotated Bibliography

June 24, 2014

Quantitative Research

Using statistics, making graphs

Activity: Produce a graph

Assignment: prepare a short presentation about information on the graph (2-3 minutes)

July 1, 2014

Holiday

July 8, 2014

Presentation Skills

Assignment: Outline for final project

July 15, 2014

Debate: Work in a team

Essay Writing

Activity: write and perform debate

Assignment: Read article



July 22, 2014

Critical Reading/thinking: Article Analysis

Revisit writing of final paper

Assignment: revise learning contract and explain

July 29, 2014

Problem solving and strategic responses

Activity: Problem Tree

Assignment: Flyer to promote presentations

August 5, 2014

Collective evaluation tools

Revisit final presentations

August 12, 2014

Presentations