

The Global Society - The Importance of Interdisciplinary Collaboration to Tackle Societal Challenges

KU Leuven

Theme and objectives of the summer school

The theme of this doctoral summer school is the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to tackle major challenges in today's global society.

The summer school brings together participants and experts with a wide variety of academic backgrounds. It aims to create a unique international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary environment, in view of proposing solutions for major societal challenges. There is no better way to train young researchers to take up their future role in society as creative, all-round professionals than to confront them with following complex question: *How can I, together with colleagues from other disciplines, contribute to the solution of a major present-day challenge, such as sustainable development, ageing, global warming, poverty, the consequences of digitalisation, inequality, etc..?* Participants will be invited to suggest other themes which they consider relevant.

The participants will work in separate interdisciplinary teams on the solution of the selected challenge. Furthermore, they will receive high-level information and training from various experts in thematic sessions. Since the scope of this assignment is much wider than what they are generally exposed to in the course of their PhD trajectory, the participants will be challenged to leave their comfort zone, while relying on each other to develop solutions. At the end of the week, each team presents its findings, followed by a peer-evaluation session.

Expected learning outcomes

- **Intercultural communication:** Participants will learn how to communicate values, ideas and opinions to a mixed audience more effectively. Through personal coaching and peer-assessment they will gain a better understanding of group dynamics, learn how to give and receive constructive feedback and effectively convey a message in a culturally diverse group.
- **Novel collaboration methods and social entrepreneurship:** Using successful business examples as a starting point, the participants will improve their responsiveness to opportunities and gain insight into new concepts to find solutions for societal problems. They will be trained in analyzing possible solutions to a global problem while taking into account the moral and ethical implications of novel technologies.
- **Increased self-confidence and strengthened leadership skills:** Through hands-on sessions, the participants will develop a personal (management) style and influence decision-making, a most useful skill in professional and other contexts. They will be empowered to engage in group dynamics, influence peers and increase their impact on others.
- **Acknowledgement of the added value of 3I collaboration:** Through reflection on their own and on each other's personality, discipline and cultural background, the participants will gain a deeper insight into and appreciation of their own and other disciplines. They will learn to identify potential in other team members and use interdisciplinary collaboration as a tool for problem-solving and creative thinking.

Participants requirements

PhD researchers from all disciplines are encouraged to apply for this summer school. Candidates should be in an advanced stage of the doctoral program and be highly motivated to work intensively on this project in an international and interdisciplinary team. The participants should be available for the entire duration of the summer school and participate in all events. All lectures, hands-on events and discussions will be in English, so proficiency in English is a prerequisite. We aim to accommodate 40-44 participants, divided over 6 teams of 6-7 members each. In addition to participants from LERU universities, we aim to select a few candidates from the CE7 (seven leading Central-European universities with whom LERU interacts) and from Flemish universities (to emphasize and strengthen the unique Flemish interuniversity ties, which are part of the central theme of this summer school).

Organising team:

Danny Wildemeersch (Professional Learning & Development, Corporate Training and Lifelong Learning)
Pol Ghesquière (Doctoral School Humanities and Social Sciences)
John Creemers (Doctoral School Biomedical Sciences)
Patrick Willems (Arenberg Doctoral School of Science, Engineering & Technology)

Supporting team:

Michele van Buggenum (Doctoral School Humanities & Social Sciences)
Katleen Vercammen (Doctoral School Biomedical Sciences)
Leen Cuypers (Arenberg Doctoral School Science of Engineering and Technology)
Wim Fyen (Leuven Community for Innovation driven Entrepreneurship and KU Leuven Research & Development)
Melissa Vanbeselaere (HR Development; Training and Development)

Participation costs:

There is fee of a 500€ per participant. This covers course materials, accommodation in Leuven for five nights from 8 to 13 July 2018 (Sunday night to Friday morning), meals and transportation within Leuven. Participants will have to cover travel to and from Leuven, as well as any additional social activities undertaken.