

2025 | 2026

Negotiating on the Frontlines



Credits

2 ECTS



Dates

7 – 25 September 2026



Format

Online (combination of self-study time and live sessions). Live sessions are mandatory and take place 2 times a week, usually in early afternoon CET.

This online course requires 15-17 hours of dedicated work per week. We recommend that participants devote at least 50% of their time to the course and adjust their professional activities accordingly, with flexibility in working hours.



Language

English



Fees

- **Full price:** CHF 1'700
- **Partner rate (MSF, ICRC):** CHF 1'360 (20% discount)
- **Special Rate for Government and NGO/CBO Staff:** CHF 850.
Available exclusively to staff from local and national NGOs, CBOs, and government employees in low/middle-income countries. Proof of local employment and salary required.



Lecturer

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Short Description

This experiential course is designed to equip participants with essential negotiation skills and tools needed to navigate complex and adversarial environments. It provides a robust understanding of crisis management, strategic frameworks for high-stakes dialogues, and tactical tools for effective negotiation planning in complex environments.

The course is structured over two weeks, combining theoretical presentations, practical exercises and simulations based on real-world scenarios such as public health crises, protection challenges, irregular migration and climate-induced disasters.

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to engage in group work with experienced practitioners to apply and reflect on their learning, culminating in a final reflection paper. The course aims to enhance participants' abilities to build trust, manage adversarial relationships, and lead constructive engagements in high-intensity situations.



Learning outcomes of the course

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. **Analyse Complex Environments:** Develop your ability to critically analyse political and social environments during public health and other humanitarian crises, identifying key stakeholders, their positions, interests, and the broader context influencing the negotiation process.
2. **Strategic Planning and Facilitation:** Design and implement a robust plan for professional dialogues on high-stake, contentious issues, incorporating strategic vision and tactical approaches to achieve constructive outcomes.
3. **Negotiation Frameworks:** Understand and apply various conceptual frameworks for complex negotiations, including transactional, relational, and adversarial models, tailored to specific contexts and relationships.
4. **Interpersonal Skills and Tension Management:** Enhance interpersonal skills to navigate challenging relationships, employing contemporary tools and methods to manage tensions, de-escalate conflicts, and perform effectively under pressure.
5. **Practical Application and Reflection:** Leverage insights from seasoned practitioners through experiential learning, simulations, and group work, enabling students to confidently engage in face-to-face negotiations with difficult counterparts and reflect on their personal development and capabilities.



Workload

Around 15-17 hours of work each week, including:

1. Asynchronous self-study activities (such as case studies, videos, recorded slideshows, readings, etc.)
2. Group activities and dialogue with experienced practitioners
3. Synchronous live sessions and simulations



Structure of the course

1. Engaging with Difficult Counterparts
2. Negotiation Models in Policy Environments
3. Context Analysis and Search for Common Shared Space
4. Stakeholder mapping and influence exercises
5. Value Proposition and Scenario Development
6. Building trust and fostering legitimacy
7. De-escalation techniques in adversarial relationships
8. Mandate Design
9. Risk management exercises
10. Enhancing Negotiation Success



Audience

- Professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector looking to develop their competencies in negotiation, as well as reflect and capitalize on their experience as negotiators
- Professionals from other sectors (political analysts, decision-makers, government officials, donor agencies) who wish to increase their understanding of negotiation in humanitarian settings



Admission requirements

1. A university qualification (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)
2. At least three years of relevant professional experience
3. Excellent command of English



Application deadline and registration: