



UVA in Ghent:

Global Internships in Education, Society, and Human Services

Summer 2020

Internship position: Facilitating life with HIV/AIDS in the (school) community in Uganda

Organization/unit: E-QUAL

E-QUAL is a center of expertise on Quality of Life, situated within the Faculty of Education, Health and Social Work of the University College Ghent. Over the years, the concept of Quality of Life (QoL) has been applied in different contexts and has shown to be a useful theoretical framework for supporting people in divergent socially vulnerable situations (e.g. persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with substance-related problems or other chronic diseases). Instead of treating a disease or disorder, supporting persons to pursue personal goals in life, and by doing so improving their QoL, is considered as one of the most important objectives and outcome indicators of today's practices in health, special education and other fields. E-QUAL focuses on generating, developing and disseminating theoretical knowledge and practical applications related to the concept of Quality of Life starting from a cross- and interdisciplinary perspective. Central research topics are: community-based support, recovery, quality of life, peer work, assessment, mental health and addiction, human rights, etc.

Research Project:

Sub-Saharan Africa houses the biggest population of young people living with HIV/aids (YPLWH) globally. In countries like Uganda, with an estimated number of 100.000-150.000 YPLWH (UNAIDS, 2014), HIV prevention and care have advanced considerably over the past decade and have contributed to reduced mortality and morbidity and increased longevity among infected young persons (Lima, 2009). Noticeably less efforts have been invested towards addressing the challenging experiences and longer-term support needs that this population faces because of growing up with HIV/AIDS amidst normative social pressures during adolescence and the myriad indirect consequences of this chronic condition on various life domains and the overall quality of life. One of these indirect consequences is that many YPLWH struggle with HIV-disclosure in the school community and drop out of school prematurely, presumably due to challenges such as incorporating complex medication schedules in their school programme, distress related to questions about the future, and encountered stigmatization and resentment from peers (Kasedde et al., 2014; Kimera, 2016; Parchure et al., 2015). This shows that living with HIV is largely challenged when the environment fails to respond resiliently to HIV-disclosure and subsequently emerging special needs.



Therefore, this project adopts a community development approach to promoting resilient (school) communities that engage collectively in reflection, planning and action to deal with challenges associated with HIV-disclosure and to facilitate living with HIV in the school community. The objective of this study is to: 1) gain insight into the perceptions of YPLWH and stakeholders in the school community on current challenges of living with HIV in the school community and on the prospective capability of communities and community institutions (schools, health centres, etc.) in facilitating this; 2) co-create a community-based intervention that facilitates disclosure and living with HIV in the school community.

Description of position:

- This position will provide opportunities to strengthen your research capacities and global engagement in the context of an applied international and interdisciplinary research project. The student(s) will be supervised by one lecturer/researcher but exchange frequently with the entire research team as well as organizations in the field. Moreover, the research project is embedded within the Centre of Expertise on Quality of Life (E-QUAL), which will also offer plenty of opportunities for learning on related topics.
- Responsibilities involve research activities (e.g. data analysis and reporting) but also valorization activities (e.g. developing of training materials, planning exhibitions).
- Possible responsibilities may include:
 - Literature reviews
 - Qualitative data-analysis
 - Writing of position paper
 - Development of training materials for school personnel
 - Setting up small photo exhibitions with photovoice material from youth living with HIV/AIDS
- The research intern can expect to develop/learn the following:
 - Data analysis
 - Critical insights in research methodologies
 - Presentation skills
 - Working in an interdisciplinary team
- Supervisor: Sofie Vindevogel

Preferred qualifications:

*****UVA requirement: All candidates must be in good academic and disciplinary standing.*****

The international and interdisciplinary research team (social educational care work, public health, occupational therapy, social work, EQUAL) is looking for (a) motivated and dynamic student(s) to join us on this project.

- Given the interdisciplinary character of this project, students from different schools and programmes in health, education, and social sciences are welcomed. Other disciplines can also be considered when deemed relevant for the project.



- Given that experience with academic research is required, we prefer advanced undergraduate or graduate students.
- Other relevant qualifications/qualities include (among other things): knowledge of interpretative research methodologies, excellent writing skills, communication skills, ability to analyse critically, ability to think innovatively and design-oriented, planning and time management, independent worker and team player.
- Interns must be highly independent and self-motivated so they can successfully complete projects as assigned and as established by themselves.

Language:

- Dutch is the language of the workplace but English is spoken and widely understood by E-QUAL staff. Selected students will be offered the opportunity to commence self-study of Dutch prior to their arrival in Belgium (during the Spring 2020) semester, as having even a basic knowledge of the language would be beneficial for daily life in Ghent.

More details:

- Working hours: M-F, 9am-5pm with lunch break
- Dress code: Business casual (please be aware that many Europeans- both students and professionals- tend to dress more formally than their counterparts in the U.S.)
- Location: HoGent's Schoonmeersen campus

Pre-internship preparation requirements:

- Will be discussed with the selected student before their arrival in Belgium. Background research and/or technical skills development may be required in advance of arrival.

Additional information:

- Location: Please note that this position will be a research position, based at HoGent's Schoonmeersen campus, not in Uganda.

Previous interns' reflections:

What did you learn through this internship experience abroad?

Through completing this internship, I have learned how to go outside my comfort zone and stare down the things that I find intimidating, whether it be as simple as navigating the public transportation system or as challenging as modifying my way of thinking through research at HoGent. As I continue with my education, I have to recognize that I am not just moving towards meaningful work that happens after I



graduate, but rather that I have the capacity to participate in meaningful work now in this globalizing world. I don't mean to overestimate my capacity to change the world, but rather wish to emphasize my ability to participate in the world now, as a student and global citizen.

~ BROOKE HABIT (Summer 2019)

What advice would you give to prospective global interns?

One piece of advice that I would give to future global interns is to be open to what the work they will be doing in their internship and what the experience will be like. Something I was very surprised with when I started my internship is that most of the staff at HoGent did not regularly do research. This was the first time my supervisor had done any major research. While I still learned a lot, I had anticipated working with someone who had a lot of background with research. Another piece of advice I would give is to expect cultural differences even in places where you would not expect one. Although this seems silly, after speaking with some of the other interns I went with, something we came to the conclusion about was that we had expected almost no culture shock compared to [other] interns going other places. While this is still probably true, I definitely underestimated what this would be like in Europe.

~RAQUEL FREIDMAN ARNILLAS (Summer 2019)

