

University College Ghent (HoGent)

Research Center for Learning in Diversity

Ghent, Belgium

In [this research center based at University College Ghent \(HoGent, in Dutch\), 'Learning' and 'Diversity' form the two central concepts](#). This center conducts practice-oriented scientific research on how people learn. We focus on both formal and informal learning, typical and atypical learning and learning throughout the life span (i.e. young children till adults). When conducting studies, we explicitly recognize and take into account diversity aspects. On the one hand, many individual differences exist between learners, and on the other, the context in which learning occurs, can differ tremendously.

Research Project: Investigating the attitudes and beliefs of prison guards towards learning in detention

In this research project, we are interested in learning in a very specific context, namely prisons. This research question was initiated by *Klasbak*, an organization that forms the Flemish (Dutch speaking part of Belgium) branch of the *European Prison Education Association (EPEA)*. The EPEA is an organization consisting of prison educators, administrators, governors, researchers and other professionals, whose interests lie in promoting and developing education and related activities in prisons throughout Europe in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe. They want to achieve more decisiveness regarding learning in detention and therefore stimulate research on this topic.

One of the questions *Klasbak* and the broader EPEA is interested in, is how the training program of the prison guards looks like and whether this program includes a part on (the importance of) learning in detention or not. Therefore, by means of this research internship, we want to explore this issue for the first time. Given that the internship will occur digitally, we also want to make use of the opportunity that the internship will stay in the U.S. and therefore, we will include a cross-country comparison part to the study.

Our concrete research questions are:

1. Is (the importance of) learning in detention a part of the curriculum/training program for prison guards in Belgium? And other European countries?



2. Cross-country comparison study: do the attitudes and beliefs of European prison guards towards learning in detention differ from those of American prison guards? How?

Description of virtual internship position:

Two UVA interns working as a team will engage in the following activities:

- Prepare a literature study about learning in detention
- Develop an online English questionnaire and send to prison staff (especially jail correctional officers)
- Contact prison staff and conduct some semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews with them.
- Analyze quantitative data (with help of the supervisor)
- Summarize the data in a scientific report.

→ The research interns can expect to develop/learn the following:

- Increased knowledge on education/learning and about prison guards training programs and prison systems (In Belgium, but also globally)
- Experience with searching relevant scientific literature
- Experience with developing a valid online questionnaire
- Experience with quantitative data analysis
- Developing academic writing skills
- Developing critical, open and creative attitudes

Preferred qualifications:

- Candidates should have an academic background in Educational Sciences; Psychology, Sociology, Criminology, or other relevant disciplines/programs.
- Given that experience with academic research is required, we prefer advanced undergraduate students.
- Knowledge of MS Office (Word, Outlook, Teams & PowerPoint)
- A strong interest and basic knowledge of learning and education and/or the prisons/detention.
- Other relevant qualifications/qualities include (among other things): knowledge of research methodologies, excellent writing skills, communication skills, ability to analyze critically, ability to think innovatively and design-oriented, planning and time management, independent worker and team player.



Language:

- Dutch is the language in the Flemish part of Belgium but English is spoken and widely understood by HoGent community members and by prison staff.

Pre-internship preparation requirements:

1. UVA interns will need to obtain proper clearances from both University College Ghent and UVA's research review boards (i.e. IRB) prior to beginning work on this project.
2. Read:
 - Klasbak ENGLISH. Geraadpleegd 29 oktober 2020, van Klasbak: <https://klasbak.webhero.be/english>
 - Delaere, G., De Caluwé, S. & Clarebout, G. (2013). Prison Education and Breaking Through the Walls in Flanders: The Motivational Orientations of Long-Term Prisoners. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 64 (2), 2-21.
 - Hurkmans, G. & Gillijns, E. (2012). Mentoring Teachers in Prison Education- Experiences in Three Correctional Facilities in Belgium. *Proced. Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 69, 2215-2218.
3. The supervisor at University College Ghent will expect a summary and a critical reflection from the student.

Previous interns' reflections:

My time at University College Ghent in Belgium taught me a new way to look at life! I created relationships and was exposed to literature that expanded my language skills and understanding of Belgium's divided society. The time frame of six weeks forced me to revamp my work ethic for the better and produce an entire research article at the end. I also quashed misconceptions and learned how to interact across cultures in a professional setting. Support from the faculty members at UVA and University College Ghent allowed me to prosper intellectually and further confirm my interest in the international field.

~JOVERIA JAVED (in-person, Summer 2019)

My experience as a research intern with the Mix! Diversity Centre research team at University College Ghent was wonderful! I enjoyed navigating the cultural difference and finding the similarities between my colleagues and myself. My research on super-diversity and inclusion was fulfilling and challenged me to think critically about the intersection of solidarity, citizenship, and nationalism. I also appreciated the opportunity to work independently and develop my skills in interdisciplinary literature review.



~BROOKE HABIT (in-person, Summer 2019)

Interning in Belgium was an awesome experience! I was there as a research intern and was able to gain valuable work experience such as the ability to conduct in-depth interviews, compiling literary sources and presenting my findings in one thorough report.

~KENZA LO (in-person, Summer 2019)