Frequently Asked Questions!
CityLAB Semester in Residence

GENERAL FAQs

What is CityLAB SIR?

CityLAB SIR is an experiential opportunity that allows McMaster students to work alongside local community organizations and the City of Hamilton on real change-making projects to address social and political issues in Hamilton. The program aims to build students' capacity in leadership, community engagement, project management, and design thinking. *The CityLAB SIR program consists of two academic courses (*CMTYENGA 4A06 and CMTYENGA 4A09) that are taken concurrently during the fall semester. *The two courses are equivalent to a 15-unit academic semester.* As such, for most students, the CityLAB SIR courses listed above are the only courses students take while participating in the program.

Please see the '*How will two courses adding up to 15 units fit in with my schedule/program requirements?*' section in this document for further details.

Who is eligible for the program?

Any undergraduate student who will be enrolled in Level III and above in the upcoming fall semester is eligible. Students from all faculties and programs may apply, and there are no prerequisites to participate. This program is open to international students as well.

Who is CityLAB SIR for?

Everyone! CityLAB SIR is an opportunity for students of all disciplines to grow and develop their community engagement and project management skills. You don't need prior experience in community engagement or project work. You just have to be open to listening and learning about the needs of the Hamilton community, and how to best support those impacted by the issues we address. We understand everyone has a different set of skills and experiences gained from school, work, volunteering, and life experiences, and we know each and every one of you will bring something unique to the SIR program. If you want to:

- Make positive change,
- Explore social issues,
- Develop professional relationships,
- Build your public-speaking, communication, and active listening skills,

- And have fun...

... then CityLAB is for you!

What does the program schedule/hours look like?

CityLAB SIR students are expected to be available during business hours, Monday to Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM. During this time, students will be working on their projects alongside City of Hamilton staff or local community organizations. Classes and lectures are also held during this time.

A more detailed breakdown of the schedule will be developed and shared before the start of the term.

What is the process to enroll in CityLAB SIR?

Applications for the CityLAB SIR program open in April 2022. Once we review applications, we will let you know if you have been accepted into the program before the enrollment period for the upcoming academic year opens (by mid-June).

McMaster students accepted into the program will be provided with course permission, and will be able to register as usual using Mosaic after they have been accepted. Redeemer students are encouraged to meet with Kim Lammers, Registrar (klammers@redeemer.ca) to discuss available options. Redeemer students need a 7.0 cumulative GPA (70 or B-) to be eligible. If you have difficulties with the application form, please email Randy Kay, Outreach Director for Semester in Residence at kayrl@mcmaster.ca.

Note: We recommend discussing how the CityLAB SIR program will fit into your course schedule and degree requirements with your academic advisor before you apply. You can also view your advisement report in Mosaic to assess if CityLAB SIR will fit into your remaining elective space.

Is CityLAB SIR offered in the winter or spring/summer terms?

At present, the CityLAB SIR program is only offered in the fall term (September to December).

What projects will be offered? Can we choose our own?

City of Hamilton staff and local community organizations submit a broad range of projects and challenges for students to work on throughout the year. We work with City staff, community partners, and faculty to scope out appropriate projects for the CityLAB SIR program, and a final list of approved projects will be presented in early September. The projects will be co-created between City staff, community leaders, faculty members, and students, so they will change depending on specific interests. All projects will align with the City of Hamilton's Strategic Priorities.

Here's a link to past projects and final reports:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lw_2IZ4HtSzx5v7HA0TpEtufn4tB4T7l?usp=sharing

CityLAB SIR students are assigned to projects by the instructional team based on skills, interests, and to ensure interdisciplinary teams.

Can I get advance permission from the Office of Community Engagement to join the semester a year before the semester begins (so I can better plan my next two years)?

Planning ahead is a great idea, but the permission phase only happens as part of the application process. You will have to wait until the year you apply for the permissions process to activate.

Does participation in this program require living in a specific residence? Where are classes held?

No, participation in the CityLAB Semester in Residence (SIR) program does not involve living in a specific residence! "Semester in Residence" simply refers to the idea that you will be spending the whole fall semester participating in the program. Currently, CityLAB SIR classes take place in downtown Hamilton in the CityLAB Innovation Hub, right beside City Hall at 58 Jackson Street West.

Is the CityLAB Semester in Residence program physically accessible?

The CityLAB SIR classroom space is located in downtown Hamilton at 58 Jackson Street West. There is access to an elevator and accessible washrooms.

Each semester, the CityLAB SIR program also organizes field trips to various parts of the city. If you require accommodations, these can be made in collaboration with CityLAB SIR faculty and staff.

For further questions regarding accessibility, please contact our Outreach Director, Randy Kay, at kayrl@mcmaster.ca.

ACADEMIC FAQs

How will two courses adding up to 15 units fit in with my schedule/program requirements?

*The CityLAB SIR program consists of two academic courses (*CMTYENGA 4A06 and CMTYENGA 4A09) that are taken concurrently during the fall semester. *The two courses are equivalent to a 15-unit academic semester.*

The CityLAB SIR courses are meant to be immersive experiences and will not necessarily fit everyone's program requirements. Depending on your program, you may be able to use all or part of the credits towards your degree requirements. You should discuss how CityLAB SIR will fit into your degree requirements with your faculty's academic advisor. We recommend doing so *before you apply*.

I'd like to register for just CMTYENGA 4A09 (or just CYTYENGA 4A06). Can I do this?

CMTYENGA 4A06 / CMTYENGA 4A09 cannot be taken as standalone courses; they must be taken together as a full 15-units as part of the broader CityLAB Semester in Residence program.

Can I take another course (i.e., can I "overload" my courses?) while in SIR?

Overloading is possible, however, it is not recommended since the workload for the 15 units is intensive and demanding. If you want to overload, you can check with your program for approval should you wish to add a course.

Can I take CityLAB SIR in place of a thesis course?

Some faculties and programs allow students to use their participation in the CityLAB SIR program to fulfill the thesis requirement for their degree. If you are interested in this, consult your academic advisor to see if this is possible in your program.

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Is there a course outline? How will the course be graded? Are there previous course outlines?

There is a course outline, which is often updated after each semester. The course outline will include grading. Previous course outlines are available to view here: http://bit.ly/CityLABSiR-Course-Outlines

Who is teaching the courses?

Our core teaching team is made up of an interdisciplinary team of educators:
- Dialogue Instructor – Darina Vasek, MSW, RSW; vasekd@mcmaster.ca
- Design Instructor - John MacLachlan, PhD; maclacjc@mcmaster.ca
- Project Instructor – Dave Heidebrecht M.A.; dheide@mcmaster.ca
- City Building 101 - Randy Kay B.A.; kayrl@mcmaster.ca

I've been accepted into CityLAB SIR. Is there a deadline to register?

You have some time to enroll since you are already approved to join the SIR. You can enroll any time before the start of term.

I'm trying to enroll in the courses right now and I'm being told by MyTimetable that I haven't met the requisite requirements.

If you've been approved, register for both courses at the same time, for a total 15 units. If you only register for one of the courses at a time you won't be able to enroll.