CATALYST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What will I be doing during Catalyst?
Catalyst programs are 5-day immersive, community engaged learning programs. That means you aren’t sitting in a lecture learning about the topic but rather engaging in a variety of activities that help you learn. This may include visits to community organizations, facilitated workshops, guided conversations with community members and guest speakers, volunteering with an organization, watching and discussing a documentary, participating in reflective activities, cooking a meal together, going on a field trip to a neighbouring community, creating and facilitating workshops for youth, and so many more possibilities. Guaranteed, you will not be bored!

What does the Catalyst fee cover?
Your Catalyst fee contributes towards the some (but definitely not all) of the costs of running the program. Your fee directly contributes towards costs such as renting accessible space, financially acknowledging community experts and facilitators, meals and snacks for you during trainings and reading week activities, resources and supplies that your specific program needs, and some transportation costs during the program.

I need to study during Reading Week; will I have the opportunity to do that?
The program runs for 5 days during the February reading week which gives you the opportunity to dedicate time to studying on the weekends before and after the program. We know it is a busy time of year and, we provide information upfront about time commitment the program requires. Program days will be busy; there may be some time in your evenings to study, but we recommend you use your weekend time wisely.

I still have concerns about being in close proximity to people; what measures will be in place to keep us safe?
We want all of our participants to feel safe therefore, all participants must be fully vaccinated and respect measures like wearing masks, sanitizing, and social distancing. All program delivery will be in line with COVID-19 guidelines from the University and Public Health.

Where will I stay during the week?
This depends on your program. If the program takes place in Guelph, unless otherwise indicated, you provide your own accommodation. For programs that happen outside of Guelph accommodation will be organized for you.

Will transportation be provided?
For programs that take place outside of Guelph you are responsible for getting to and from the point of departure (which is usually the University). Programs that take place in Guelph, you will need to get yourself to and from the location of your program within city limits.

**Does this count towards academic credit?**
Currently, Catalyst does not count as an academic credit, however, you may be able to find a faculty member who would consider supporting it as part of an independent study, or for it to be counted as an EL credit within your college, or as part of a course assignment. You will need to explore this yourself.

**What are the benefits of participating in a Catalyst program?**
Catalyst is an opportunity for learning which happens outside of lecture halls and textbooks. It is a chance to be fully immersed in a topic through various mediums. If you have interest in any of the topic being offered, Catalyst is an opportunity to learn from a variety of sources and deeply engage with themes. Past participants of Catalyst have said that the program was one of the highlights of their university experience. Catalyst is also formally recognized on your Professional Career Development Record (PCDR).

**How much time will I need to commit?**
In addition to the five full days during reading week, you begin your Catalyst experience with a full-day interactive orientation (food provided), and then usually a couple of short meetings with your team, during February (in-person or virtual). After the program is over, all Catalyst participants reunite in March for a meal and to share and reflect on what they learned and experienced.

**Do I have to know anything about the program themes before I sign up?**
Prior knowledge about program themes is not a pre-requisite, but a demonstrated willingness to learn collectively and autonomously is required. It is important that participants be ready to take initiative to explore, learn, and engage as much as they can.

**Who's going to be there? Will I be alone?**
A big part of this program is ensuring that there is a lot of team building and discussion, we want to take learning outside of the traditional classroom setting and make it more about community. You will be working with fellow students from different disciplines, a student leader, and team leader, all who are there to help support you and learn with you.
I'm worried it's too big of a time commitment. What have other students said about the program?

We totally understand that reading week falls at a busy time in the semester. We aim to provide programming which is cognizant of that. The info sheet about the program outlines how much of a time commitment it will be before, during and after the Reading Week program portion.

Past Catalyst participants have repeatedly shared that the program was the highlight of their university experience. For many it reshaped what they wanted to do once they graduated. For others they made lasting friendships and connections. For everyone, it enhanced people’s understanding of critical social issues. That all seems like time worth invested!