

Mastering Social Intelligence – Leadership in Collaboration & Communication (B50)

Credit weighting: 2.0 ECTS credits

Teaching period(s): 3 August 2026 –7 August 2026 (1 week)

Level: Bachelor

Teaching methods: 50 hours of training, workshops, coaching, assignments.

Course leader: Ewald Theunisse

Lecturer(s): Ewald Theunisse, Miriam Zwaan

Description

After the course, the *Circle of Understanding* will offer you new and advanced challenges for a period of two months, to enable further exploration of all things learned in the course. Meanwhile, your private online platform serves as a reunion room.

The course is offered in collaboration with Ewald Theunisse, co-founder of the Academy of Understanding and Miriam Zwaan, director of education of the Academy of Understanding.

What recent participants wrote about the course:

"It was impressive to have so many interactive activities that let us learn from a very different perspective and definitely, the teachers as much as the content helped me develop more as a person, as well as have a better understanding of global citizenship".

"Even if you have high expectations of the course, I believe it will always exceed them; also, what you learn in and outside the classroom you will cherish forever. Hope you have the curiosity, courage and compassion to start the adventure and find out what's here to learn".

"The highlight that I will cherish forever, is having met each of you and having shared moments together in all the activities".

Target audience

This course is designed for students from any discipline who recognise that social intelligence is the new foundation of personal leadership. It is for those who believe that human understanding truly makes the difference—students who want to develop themselves in compassionate leadership, intercultural communication, and meaningful collaboration. Whether you study business, communication, technology, the arts or any other field, this programme welcomes anyone committed to becoming a more aware, capable, and human-centred professional.

Study load

50 hours of training, workshops, coaching, assignments.

You will be graded based on their performance during the workshops and on the assignments, assessed by means of participation, handling feedback and a reflective report. Overall level of participation and cooperation within group settings will be considered when assessing your performance. Full time attendance is required to earn the credits for this course.

Compulsory elements: You must attend all learning activities (e.g. workshops, fieldwork), unless absence is officially approved by the teachers and the coordinator of the Utrecht Summer School.

Course Goals:

- This intensive program aims to enrich your personal and professional life in a variety of ways. Not only will the trained global citizen's skills expand your capabilities, but they will also broaden your perspective on life and how to lead it with more resilience and compassion.
- You will gain insight into possible ways of looking, thinking, doing, listening, and communicating and will become aware of your own ways, and those of others. A true intercultural experience.
- You will build on your personal leadership.
- You will enter new levels in mastering Social Intelligence.

The didactical approach of this course may be quite different from what you would expect from a traditional module. Together with lecturers and professional coaches from the work field we will guide you through a meaningful and valuable experience.

It starts with the four-week online preparation in the Circles of Understanding. It's not time consuming but a great way to get you into the vibe of the course.

What to expect: indoors, outdoors and interactive!

The sessions in Utrecht are highly interactive, challenging and fun; you will be invited to experiment, experience, reflect and discuss. You will learn by doing and explore different perspectives, while in the meantime being offered important professional and personal insights. The course will help you integrate your existing knowledge and skills with new insights, step out of your comfort zone and develop the mind-set to improve communication and compassionate collaboration. During this learning experience, you will receive intensive coaching.

When the weather allows it, we will spend parts of the day or the whole day outside in nature.

Therefore: bring comfortable shoes (like sneakers, or hiking shoes).

Mastering Social Intelligence – Leadership in Collaboration & Communication

20.07.2026-25.07.2026

Course Director: Ewald Theunisse

Professor Ewald Theunisse, Miriam Zwaan

E-mail: summerschool.business@hu.nl

The day to day program is subject to changes depending on the availability of the guest lecturers. All the subject will be covered. But the times and dates can change.

Saturday and Sunday, 18 and 19 July		
Time	Activity	Description

For more information about the Social Programme, please visit the [Utrecht Summer School website!](https://summerschool.utrecht.nl)

12:00-18:00	Key pick up	You will find the exact key pick up location in the pre-departure information, which becomes available after you have paid the course fee.
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Monday, 20 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-12:30	Introduction Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting acquainted, setting individual goals The Four Modes in a nutshell: Achiever, Connector, Creator, Guardian
12:30-13:30	Lunch*	
13:30-16:30	The Walking Challenges: discovering the Four Wheels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courage, Curiosity, Compassion and Commitment How do you relate to each?
16:30-17:00	Reflection Circle (plenary)	2 key questions: Which Mode feels most natural to me so far, and why? Which wheel is the hardest to start spinning for me?

Tuesday, 21 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9.30-12:30	Achiever Mode + Connector Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal & non-verbal recognition Desires, needs, and motivational patterns Common triggers & stress signals Attitude to change Strong, relevant arguments in decision making
12:30-13:30	Lunch*	
13:30-16:30	The Walking Challenges: two modes, four wheels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Achiever Wheels The Connector Wheels
16:30-17:00	Reflection Circle (plenary)	Two key questions: What was your biggest discovery? Where did you develop more social intelligence?

Wednesday, 22 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9.30-12.30	Creator Mode + Guardian Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal & non-verbal recognition Desires, deeper motivations, common frustrations Typical triggers & protective behaviour under pressure Attitude to change Logical anchors and effective arguments when making choices
12:30-13:30	Lunch*	
13.30-16.30	The Walking Challenges: two modes, four wheels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Creator Wheels The Guardian Wheels
16.30-17.00	Reflection Circle (plenary)	Two key questions: What was your biggest discovery? Where did you develop more social intelligence?

Thursday, 23 July		
Time	Activity	Description

9.30-16.30	Guided challenge hike (groups of 2 along the route)	<p>Focus areas, explored through micro-challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking in social situations • Self-regulation and emotional control • Problem solving under uncertainty • Cross-cultural observation and insight • “What is normal?” vs. “What is familiar?” • Understanding friction before judging it • Learning to verify before interpreting • Spotting similarities before highlighting differences
16:30-17:00	Upload reflections, voice-notes or short videos	<p>Example route prompts (done while walking):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Name one moment today when you almost misinterpreted something.” • “Which Wheel helped you most when correcting that?” • “What does ‘normal’ look like from where you grew up, and what feels normal here?”

Friday, 24 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9.30-12:30	Final session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4x4 Challenge: putting yourselves to the Social Intelligence Test • End presentations: what did we learn • Each team records a short, four-voice promotional video for future students
12:30-15.00	Closing Celebration Circle + Certificates + Drinks + Lunch	

*Please note: Students must bring/cover their own lunch