

Service Learning Guidelines Template

Over the years, we at Service Learning have found that the most meaningful and academically effective service learning courses are those in which the professors give clear, written guidelines to their students about how to learn in this very different way and how to make the connection between their community experiences and their courses. When you create your **Guidelines for Service Learners** sheet, here are some things you may want to include. If you regard this Template as if it were an RFP for a grant proposal—i.e. follow it like a cookbook recipe—your students should have a much clearer understanding of service learning and a richer learning experience.

1. **A brief paragraph explaining why you think a community experience will enhance their learning in the course.**
2. **What you expect them to put into the experience:** e.g. number of visits, hours; being faithful to their agreement, etc.
3. **What you hope they learn about the course material from their community experience:** e.g. how to write for a non-profit; how children's behavior is affected by family violence; how 2-year olds play--alone or together; particular aspects of cultures different from their own; how real people deal with ethical issues in their lives, etc.
4. **How they should go about gaining this knowledge or understanding:** e.g. observe what's going on around them (instead of only focusing on what they're doing); use all their senses; get to know a particular person from a different racial or ethnic group, different socioeconomic group, different age or ability group, etc.; interview staff members; ask questions; ask for a meeting with the site coordinator for further clarification; talk to you about their experiences, questions, etc.; talk to classmates--especially those serving at the same site; talk to their Service Learning Student Coordinator for that site, etc.
5. **What questions or issues they should be considering--in class, at their placement, and/or while writing journals or papers--that will draw connections between their community experiences and the course material.** You can give them the questions or have them develop their own.
6. **Specifically, what you expect them to produce:** e.g. a paper comparing some element of their community experience with some aspect of the course; an oral presentation using something from the community to illustrate course theory, etc. If you like the idea of journals as focusing, reflecting tools, you may want to discuss this here.
7. **How their service learning experience will compare--in time and effort--to the alternate, traditional learning course requirement.**
8. **What/how you expect them to contribute to their classmates' learning:** e.g. participate in class discussions; offer examples from the community to illustrate course theories, etc.
9. **Other expectations:** e.g. turn in completed and signed Service Learning Contract by due date (set by you); attend applicable Service Learning Trainings; attend at least one SL reflection; perform a set number of service hours, or go to site a set number of times (You can leave this up to the agency and our office to set up, if you wish. When students sign up they'll know what commitment the agency expects.); turn in a mid-term progress report (or hand in journal--to be graded or just checked--at specified intervals), etc.