Recommended Criteria and Essential Learning Outcomes for
Service-Learning at University of Wisconsin-Madison

Definition of Service Learning

A credit-bearing educational experience that integrates meaningful community engagement with guided reflection to enhance students’ understanding of course content as well as their sense of civic responsibility while strengthening communities.

Criteria

1) Service or other engagement activity is integrated with course content and supports the academic focus of the course, with a minimum of 25 hours of service and intentional learning that takes place with a community partner per semester.

2) Students are involved in engagement that meets community needs, as stated by the community itself. Evidence of contact with community partner/s is required in the course proposal.

3) Structured opportunities for guided reflection such as writing assignments, discussions, presentations, or journals are required during the course.

4) Guided reflection activities:
   • Examine critical issues related to their service-learning project
   • Connect the service experience to coursework
   • Enhance the development of civic and ethical skills and values
   • Find personal relevance in the work

5) Clear explanations of both academic and community engagement expectations and their assessment are provided in syllabus.


Course Models**

Model A. Standard semester-long course. Course is instructed as a standard semester-long service-learning course (discipline or project based) and includes a minimum of 25 hours of community contact.
Model B. Semester-long course with service during spring break or early summer. During the spring semester the course will meet regularly to prepare students for the on-site visit and will include a post service reflection component.

Model C. Semester-long course with service during winter break. During the fall semester the course will meet regularly to prepare students for the on-site service and include a post service reflection.

Model D. Summer service-learning course. Course is instructed as a minimum of 4 week-long summer experience. The course will include: at least 15 hours of classroom preparation and reflection, including intensive study of the culture of the country or location being visited; a 10-14 day on-site service visit that includes at least 25 service hours and reflection upon return.

**Other course models that meet the criteria can be designed. Please contact the Morgridge Center for options to enhance this model with additional learning support.**

**Recommended Practices for All Service-Learning Courses**

1) Include assessment criteria for student learning as well as assessment of community impact.
2) Provide a course syllabus to community partners in advance of the semester, and invite partners to make class presentations when possible.
3) Use service-learning agreements or memoranda of understanding outlining expectations agreed upon by the student, faculty member, and community partner.
4) Agree on method of ongoing communication that works best for all partners.

**Essential Learning Outcomes**

Each service learning course will have its own content-specific learning objectives that align with the Wisconsin Experience Essential Learning Outcomes [http://www.provost.wisc.edu/content/docs/welo2010.pdf](http://www.provost.wisc.edu/content/docs/welo2010.pdf), and specifically with Essential Learning Outcome #3, Personal and Social Responsibility:

1) **Civic knowledge and engagement; local and global** (awareness and understanding of community/social issues)
2) **Intercultural knowledge and competence** (respect for people and diversity in all its forms)
3) **Ethical reasoning and action** (greater self-leadership: understanding critical issues and different perspectives; developing empathy, critical thinking, and personal development)
4) **Foundations and skills for lifelong learning**; anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.