



Northeastern University
Center of Community Service
 Service-Learning Program

**Service-Learning Course
 Designation Criteria & Process**

The Rationale for a Service-Learning (S-L) Course Designation

- To ensure the service and learning components of a course meet the recognized best practices outlined in the S-L Course Criteria I-V on pg 2.
- To ensure courses utilizing S-L are supporting the Mission of NU and applicable areas of the Academic Plan
- To provide a mechanism for tracking students' participation and certify completion of the experiential component of the General Education Curriculum

The Process for Designation

Submit syllabus and S-L related course material with necessary criteria incorporated into the document(s), to the Service-Learning Coordinator at service-learning@neu.edu or 212 CP four weeks before registration begins for desired semester. The timeline will allow for approval of the request for designation and notation to be included in the course catalog.

- *Faculty new to utilizing S-L can start by contacting the S-L Coordinator for the S-L Course Development Form and schedule a meeting to discuss strategies for and best practices of incorporating S-L into a course and syllabus.*
- *Course designation can be approved after the start of a semester; however designation may not appear in the course catalog for the semester in question.*

Approval for S-L designation will be granted,

- for the specific course section of the faculty member submitting for designation.
(If S-L is required for all sections of a course, but taught by different faculty, then each faculty member should submit his/her own syllabus and related material. This is unless the group of faculty are working from the same syllabus and related material through which the recognized criteria is incorporated into each section equally.)
- only to courses for which S-L is required of all students

Once a course receives S-L designation,

- the course will appear with an "Experiential Learning" designation in the course catalog because service-learning is counted as a form of Experiential Learning.
- the course does not need to seek approval each semester thereafter as long as the syllabus does not reflect significant changes in how S-L will be utilized or required in the course.
- If possible, the faculty member should also revise the course description to state that service-learning is the form of experiential learning being utilized in the course.

Service-Learning Course Criteria

Northeastern University employs a definition of service-learning and 'best practices' universally accepted by practitioners.

Service-Learning (S-L) is an academically rigorous educational experience in which students,

- 1) participate in organized service activities/project(s) that meet needs identified by the community, and
- 2) reflect on the service activities/project(s) in such a way as to gain further understanding of course/program content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Adapted by Northeastern University's Service-Learning Advisory Board (2006), from Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher, A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty. *The Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Fall 1995, pp.112-122.

To that end, the following criteria must be present in an S-L course and related material at Northeastern.

I. Purpose

Because service and learning enhance one another, S-L courses should include,

- service that clearly contributes to students' ability to meet the learning objectives of the specific course.
- course learning content that informs and enhances student service, and is drawn upon throughout.
- service opportunities that reflect and meet real needs expressed by and designed to recognize the needs of the community-based nonprofit organizations (referred to as Community Partner in this document).

II. Preparation and Orientation Component

- Arrange appropriate orientations, trainings, support, and supervision with the specific community partner(s) in order to ensure students can meet service and learning goals.
- If students are responsible for forming their own S-L partnerships for the course, a deadline for locating appropriate placements should be designated. Then each placement should also be approved by the professor before student may proceed in order to ensure goals will be met.
- The following should be integrated into the syllabus and/or other course documents, as well as discussed thoroughly with students in the first few class meetings:
 - the rationale for using S-L in the course (connection between course learning and service objectives)
 - the goal to create a mutually beneficial relationship with our community partners
 - the service placement/project/research options, roles and activities
 - reflection: its function, types utilized, and assignments to facilitate integration of theory and practice
 - the methods and processes of assessment and evaluation

III. Community Partnership and Service Component

The hallmark of S-L partnerships is the creation of mutually beneficial semester long relationships with under resourced organizations serving underserved communities, including nonprofit or governmental agencies (e.g. public schools, community centers, philanthropic arm of a for-profit).

In order to meet the needs of all parties, students should provide a minimum of 2 and maximum of 5 hours a week of direct service or work on the service project/research beginning within the first 2-3 weeks of the semesters start and continuing through to the last week of class. The time allocated and type of service provided should be determined by which model of S-L is most appropriate for the course, paired with the request of the community partner(s).

IV. Reflection Component

Guidance must be provided to assist students in connecting their service activities with their learning objectives through ongoing, meaningful, structured reflection which acts as the primary link between service and learning in the course. Meaningful, structured reflection is; Continuous, Connected, Challenging, and Contextualized (Eyler, et al, 1996).

V. Assessment & Evaluation Component

Assessment of the partnership(s) and use of S-L in the course is essential and the methods should be clearly stated the syllabus. The evaluation of students and assignment of grades should be determined by their success in demonstrating course specific learning outcomes from the service experience. Grades should not be given strictly for completion of service activities when service is direct; grades can however be assigned to the quality of the report or product of a project/research. Assessment and evaluation should involve the instructor, community partner(s), students, and S-LTA if applicable. Designated courses must also participate in the S-L Program's evaluation system which supports the University's goals for assessing Experiential Learning.

For additional information, please contact,

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www.neu.edu/servicelearning

References

- Eyler, J., & Giles, Jr., D.E, and Schmiede, A., (1996). *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning Student Voices and Reflections*. Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. Pgs. 17-21.
- Loyola College Office of Service-Learning's Service-Learning Course Criteria outline. Retrieved November 14, 2006 from http://www.loyola.edu/ccsj/service_learning/about.html
- Service-Learning Advisory Board. (2007). Northeastern University, Boston, MA