

Reflection Activities

When constructing reflection activities, instructors should consider the following:

- Reflection activities should involve individual learners and address interactions with peers, community members and staff of community agencies.
- Students with different learning styles may prefer different types of activities. Instructors should select a range of reflective activities to meet the needs of different learners. Reflection can happen during ungraded one-minute papers, class discussion and role plays, journals (written or visual), quizzes and exams, reading responses, and in many other contexts.
- Different types of reflection activities may be appropriate at different stages of the service experience.
- Reflection activities can involve reading, writing, and telling. Some examples of reflective activities are briefly described below:
 1. **Case studies**

Assign case studies to help students think about what to expect from the service project and to plan for the service activity. Use published case-studies or instructor developed case studies based on past service-learning projects.
 2. **Journals**

Ask students to record thoughts, observations, feelings, activities and questions in a journal through the project. The most common form of journals is free-form. The journal should be started early in the project and students should make frequent entries. Explain benefits of journals to students such as enhancing observational skills, exploring feelings, assessing progress and enhancing communication skills. Faculty should provide feedback by responding to journals as well as class discussions of issues/questions raised in journals or further assignments based on journal entries.
 3. **Structured Journals**

Use structured journals to direct student attention to important issues/questions and to connect the service experience to class work. Instructors should provide students with prompts and guided reflection questions to ensure that they are learning course content through reflection. Some parts of the journal may focus on affective dimensions while others relate to problem-solving activities.
 4. **Team Journal**

Use a team journal to promote interaction between team members on projects and to introduce students to different perspectives. Students can take turns recording shared and individual experiences, reactions and observations, and responses to each others entries.

5. **Critical Incidents Journal**

Ask students to record a critical incident each week of the service project. The critical incident refers to events in which a decision was made, a conflict occurred, or a problem was resolved. The critical incident journal provides a systematic way for students to communicate problems and challenges involved in working with the community and with their teams and can thus help in dealing with the affective dimensions of the service experience.

6. **Portfolios**

Ask students to select and organize evidence related to accomplishments and specific learning outcomes in a portfolio. Portfolios can include drafts of documents, analysis of problems/issues, project activities/plans, or an annotated bibliography. Ask student to organize evidence by learning objectives. In addition to such “documentation,” portfolios also should include students’ reflections about what they have learned, how they have learned it, and why the learning matters.

7. **Papers**

Ask students to write an integrative paper on the service project. Journals and other products can serve as the building blocks for developing the final paper.

8. **Discussions**

Encourage formal and informal discussions with teammates, classmates, other volunteers and community partner staff to introduce students to different perspectives and to challenge students to think critically about the project.

9. **Presentations**

Ask students to present their service experience and discuss it in terms of concepts and theories discussed in class.

10. **Interviews**

Interview students on service experiences and the learning that occurred in these experiences. Students also can interview each other.

Based on Campus Compact, *Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning from Service*:
www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection

See also:

Battistoni, Richard M., *Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum: A Resources Book for Service-Learning Faculty*, Appendix B, “Reflection Questions that Tap Civic Dimensions,” Campus Compact, 2002.

Gelmon, Sherril, B., et al, *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*, Campus Compact, 2001.

Winona College rubric: <http://www.winona.edu/AIR/documents/insights.service.a.pdf>

Peace Corps rubric: www.peacecorps.gov/www/guides/looking.html.