Course Planning and Design

Service-learning courses should be planned around student learning, rather than beginning with what should be taught.

In general, a helpful way to design a course is to proceed through the following phases in planning, moving from a semester overview to the daily work.

1. Start with desired outcomes and develop clear course goals and learning objectives.
2. Find the endpoint and plan backwards from there: begin with desired learning outcomes; develop clearly articulated course goals; and plan the course around helping students meet those goals.

- Set clear, specific goals:
  - Content goals: What knowledge do you want students to attain?
  - Skill goals: What abilities do you want students to develop?
  - What should students be able to do with their learning after your course? How can they apply their new knowledge?

- Talk to experienced faculty and instructors in your department to get an idea of what can be expected of incoming students.

- Plan how to measure student progress throughout the semester: assessment and evaluation. Service-learning courses should have a strong, ongoing assessment component throughout.

- Plan assignments and tests that both teach and test the learning you value most. Be sure planned assignments fit the learning goals and assessments give students the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge or skills learned.

- Provide students with frequent, informal opportunities to re-think and revise. Learning from mistakes leads to ongoing improvement in understanding.

- Sum up a student’s performance with a grade, after opportunities for feedback and revision, at the end of a particular effort.

- Plan learning experiences and instruction. Plan learning activities that support the learning goals of the course and adapt your teaching strategies as needed.

- Be clear with your students about what you want them to learn.

- Plan problems, questions and activities carefully to develop your students’ ability to meet your learning goals.

Key principles to remember in planning a coherent course:

- Nothing is assessed that is not taught.
- Nothing is assigned that is not assessed.
- No learning objective is not assessed.

Contact APPLES

Faculty considering a service-learning course should contact the APPLES office at apples@unc.edu to set up an initial consultation.

Materials adapted from:
http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/teaching_resources/preparing/course_design.htm
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Service-Learning Series Overview

This pedagogy guide offers foundational information about service-learning practice and implementation. It serves as both reference documents and a set of primers on the possibilities for service-learning inside and outside of the classroom. The series provides information on planning and designing service-learning courses, developing community partnerships, resources for service-learning written reflections and examples of forms that facilitate service-learning activities.

Introduction to Service-Learning
- Defining Service-Learning
- Faculty and Instructor Expectations
- Service-Learning Course Components
- Service-Learning Course Rubric

Course Planning and Design
- Course Planning Timeline
- Service-Learning Syllabi
- Course Goals and Objectives
- Bloom’s Taxonomy Verb List
- Assessment and Evaluation

Community Partnerships
- How Does Service-Learning Differ from Volunteering?
- Community Partnership Models
- How APPLES Can Help You Get Started
- Best Practices of Service-Learning Partnerships
- Developing Community Partner Relationships
- Meeting with New Community Partners
- Community Partnership Agreement

Reflection Resources
- Written reflections and the DEAL model
- Reflection through writing resources

Service Learning Forms
- Student Service Learning Agreement
- Choosing a Community Partner
- Service Learning Time Log
Course Planning Timeline

Year before:
- Propose new course designation and title; identify course goals and objectives.
- Research possible community partners; begin developing relationships.
- Consult with APPLES for course design assistance, help with navigating administrative and structural challenges and funding ideas.

Semester before:
- Draft syllabus, course goals, assignments and assessments.
- Begin working with community partner(s).
- Continue working with APPLES:
  - Meet guidelines for APPLES course designation.
  - Deadlines for service-learning footnote in registration database: Sept. 15 for spring courses, March 1 for fall courses.
  - APPLES will work with Office of Undergraduate Curricula on your behalf to determine Experiential Education designation.

Month before:
- Send introductory email to students about the course and link to APPLES module.
- Finalize assignments, include a service-learning definition and APPLES information in the syllabus.
- Agree on scheduled contact dates to check in with community partner(s). Share syllabus with community partner and meet face-to-face to finalize plans.

During Semester:
- Week 1: Begin preparing students for service-learning and share service-learning opportunities; students complete APPLES module.
- Week 2: Student/community partner matching; confirm student placements with community partner(s).
- Week 3-4: Students begin service, submit the service-learning agreement (a written agreement between students and community partners).
- Week 4-5, 8, 12: Faculty and instructors check in with community partner(s), mid-semester student assessment of course/partner, if not performing more frequent assessments.

End of semester:
- Assessment/evaluation of student from community partner.
- End of semester faculty debriefing with community partner on the course/community partner relations.
- Thank your partner in some tangible way: a letter, cup of coffee or lunch together are appreciated.
Service-Learning Syllabi

In order for students to fully understand the service-learning experience, we ask that faculty and instructors include the following information in the syllabus. This helps students better prepare for their service experience and will assist in the integration of service into the course.

**Service-learning**
- A method by which students learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service.
- A reciprocal collaboration between campus and community organizations in partnership to address identified needs or opportunities.
- A teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility.

**Expectations of students**
- Students are expected to serve a minimum of 30 hours during the semester, ideally three to five hours a week for 10 weeks with a community partner listed with the course.
- Service-learning will not compromise the academic rigor of the course, but rather enhance the learning.
- Communicate any questions, concerns or challenges with site supervisor, instructor or the APPLES program.

**Expectations of faculty**
- Provide ongoing opportunities for students to participate in critical reflection to explore issues relating to course content and community service.
- Prepare students for serving in and partnering with communities during the service-learning experience.
- Respond to students’ questions, concerns or challenges.

**Expectations of community partners**
- Create active service experiences that relate to the course material.
- Promote personal and professional growth opportunities while providing constructive feedback for students.
- Respond to students’ questions, concerns or challenges relating to the service-learning experience.

**APPLES information (to include on your syllabus)**
Volunteer Description and Community Partner Information
  - Contact information
  - Mission
  - Position description

APPLES
For more information on service-learning opportunities at UNC:
APPLES Service-Learning program
Student Union, Suite 3514 • CB#5210 • (919) 962-0902 • ccps.unc.edu/apples
Course Goals and Objectives

Course Goals
Course goals are broad, general outcomes that students should be able to perform as a result of experiences in the course (and should appear as part of the overall course description in the syllabus). Goals should be written in such a way that evaluation of the outcomes is implied or can be foreseen.

Examples:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Critically analyze a work of art.
2. Perform and interpret microscopic urinalysis.
3. Use principles of behavioral psychology to interpret real-life events.
4. Evaluate the impact of stereotypes of non-Western cultures on American society policies.
5. Develop an individualized nutrition plan and modify it if necessary.
6. Establish causal relationships between potential risk factors and disease in a community.

Objectives
Objectives are very specific outcomes that enable students to achieve the general course goals (and therefore are associated with particular units, lessons or class meetings in the syllabus). Objectives should be written in terms of particular student behaviors so that the evaluation methods are explicit.

Examples:

1. Recall the appropriate terminology used to describe and critique oil paintings.
2. Classify examples of political events that determined historical outcomes.
3. Identify the assumptions underlying community interactions.
4. Write a logically organized essay against or in favor of euthanasia.
5. Use a sphygmomanometer and stethoscope to measure blood pressure.
6. Describe the difference between a sodium atom and sodium ion.

Materials adapted from:
Brian Rybarczyk, The Graduate School, UNC-Chapel Hill
**Bloom’s Taxonomy Verb List**

When developing course goals and objectives, it is important to consider appropriate language to convey the associated outcomes. Bloom’s Taxonomy offers verbs which can be associated with various types of learning, which often can build on one another. Consider this list as you move students from understanding knowledge, to learning how to apply and synthesize the information. **NOTE:** Depending on context, use and intent, some verbs may apply at different levels. This list is simply intended to provide some ideas for stating goals and objectives.

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**DO NOT USE:** understanding, knowledgeable, appreciation, familiarize, aware, conscious, acquainted, familiar.

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*Materials adapted from Brian Rybarczyk, *The Graduate School*, UNC-Chapel Hill*
Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are central to effective teaching and to service-learning pedagogy. Specifically, this refers to the process of checking in with students throughout the semester to determine if they are learning what they need to learn in order to meet the course goals and objectives. Assessment is usually ungraded and is most useful as a feedback mechanism for both instructor and students.

Assessment also offers students multiple low- and no-stakes checks on their own learning; they can see where they currently are in their learning process and where they need to improve. Regular assessments, like short homework problem sets, quizzes, paragraph-long or shorter writing assignments and in-class practices, allow both instructors and students to catch misconceptions and errors early and correct them.

Basics of assessment:
All assessment and evaluation for the course should be directly tied to the course goals and objectives. You can’t assess whether students are meeting course goals without clear goals to aim for. Assessment helps articulate your course goals very clearly; when planning assessments, you’ll find it’s difficult to create good, valid, helpful assessments for nebulous, broad or non-measurable course goals.

In order to maximize assessment’s potential in the classroom, instructors should be:

- Committed to listening to students’ input on their learning and your teaching.
- Flexible and ready change course in response to their feedback.
- Have clear, measurable course objectives and goals.

Basics of Evaluation and Grading
Assessment is taking stock of where your students are performing relative to course goals and objectives. Grading, or evaluation, is meant to be a summary of a student’s progress, learning and/or mastery over the course of a semester.

Basics of Evaluation:

- Be clear with your students about what you will and will not be grading them on. Rubrics are an excellent way to be explicit about your expectations for a given assignment.
- Give clear grading schemes in your syllabus and assignment prompts and think through grading philosophies carefully.
- Consider your grading method.
- Choose what types of evaluative mechanisms you will use.

Materials adapted from: