

Service Learning Definition and Characteristics

Service Learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets a community need and (b) reflect upon their service activity as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, an enhanced sense of civic responsibility, and/or a greater interest in and understanding of community life.

Definition adopted by NKU SHAPE committee and presented to NKU community in January 2006. Adapted from Bringle, R. and Hatcher, J. A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty. The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Fall 1995, pp 112-122; and Student Action for a Change <www.actionforchange.org>.

For a course to be designated as a service learning course at NKU, it must:

- Directly and explicitly link the service experiences to the course learning objectives
- Engage students in reflection aimed at connecting lessons from the service experience(s) to course content and life experience
- Assess the learning that occurs as a result of the service experience(s)
- Require the service experience of all students enrolled in the course (assessment of student learning for the course includes completion of service learning activities)
- Demonstrate reciprocity between the students in the course and the community agency or population being served

Service Learning courses may:

- Include one or multiple service experiences
- Have different service projects available for different students

There is no minimum number of service hours required of students for a course to get a service learning designation. The amount of service hours necessary should be determined by the instructor based upon service goals, learning goals and service learning goals for the course.