

Service-Learning Course Approval Process and Criteria

(Approved by SL Subcommittee on 3/5/2010)

Service-learning is a method where students learn by active participation in organized service that addresses community needs and is linked to academic study through structured reflection. The community needs may include direct service to people in need, improvement of community resources, applied research, community outreach and education, or policy analysis and advocacy. The academic study may be in any discipline or combination of fields.

The following information is designed to guide faculty and departments through the process of obtaining a service-learning or “S” designation for a course. The “S” designation process includes the following steps:

1. Those faculty/departments that would like to obtain an “S” designation should initiate a course change proposal or new course proposal with accompanying support materials. Support materials should include a draft syllabus for the proposed course and a memorandum clearly addressing the criteria established to become an “S” course. (See “S Designation Criteria” below.)
2. Once the proposal has departmental and school/college approval, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Curriculum Committee will submit the materials to the Service-Learning Subcommittee for evaluation of the “S” designation criteria.
3. If approved by the Service-Learning Subcommittee, the proposal will be returned to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Dean of Graduate Studies for distribution to the appropriate committees. These committees will treat the proposal as they do all others. If the proposal is not approved by the Service-Learning Subcommittee, recommendations will be provided to help strengthen the application, which can then be resubmitted to the subcommittee for further consideration.
4. If approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Curriculum Committee, the course will be designated as a service-learning (“S”) course.

“S” Designation Considerations

Departments should consider several issues before seeking a service-learning (S) designation for a course. The most important considerations are the appropriateness of service-learning for the course in question and how the “S” designation criteria will be met. Departments should consider and address in their memorandum the following:

1. Will all sections include a service-learning component, or just some sections? If certain sections of the course will not include a service-learning component, which ones will be excluded and why?

2. What changes will need to be made to catalog copy as a result of the proposed revisions? For courses that will include service-learning in all sections, the revised catalog description should end with “Formerly... [insert non-S course designation and number].” For courses where “S” and non-S sections will exist simultaneously, the course description will include “(S)” after the number and the statement “S sections include a service-learning requirement (see Community Engagement and Service Learning in the General Catalog)” at the end of the course description.

"S" Designation Criteria

Designation as a service-learning course requires that the following criteria be met. These elements must be addressed in writing as part of the “S” designation curriculum proposal and should be reflected in the proposed syllabus. (See “Service-Learning Course Syllabus Template” at <http://www.csufresno.edu/facultysl/three/syllabi.shtml>.)

1. Justification that the service-learning component is integral to and supportive of the academic focus of the course.

2. Description of the mechanism(s) introducing the service-learning component to the students. This may be done through various methods including, but not limited to: class discussions, guided readings, experiential class periods, or utilizing the Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning as a resource.

3. Description of the:

(a) type of agency where the service-learning assignment will be completed;

(b) typical service activities that will meet the service requirement;

(c) length of time students will be required to serve (minimum of 15 hours, with 20 hours being optimal);

(d) process for verification of service hours.

4. Explanation of the structured opportunities for ongoing reflection and mechanism(s) requiring students to integrate the service-learning component with course content (e.g., class discussions, journals, papers, presentations).

5. Validation that the service-learning component accounts for a significant portion of the total course grade (minimum of 15%, with 20% or more being optimal).

For more information or assistance on this process, please contact the Jan & Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning at 559-278-7079.