SERVICE LEARNING

STUDENT HANDBOOK

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

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Dear Service Learning Student,

We are delighted that you have decided to participate in service learning here at University of Cincinnati. We believe your experience will be rewarding, with many opportunities to grow and learn more about your course subject and yourself. We are here to serve you, your instructors and our community partners to ensure that the service learning experience benefits everyone. Contact our office if we can do anything to help provide you the best service learning experience possible.

Good luck and enjoy your service learning experience.

If you have any questions about the Service Learning program at the University of Cincinnati, please contact:

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GENERAL INFORMATION
**WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?**

Service Learning (SL) is a specially designed learning experience in which students combine reflection with structured participation in community-based projects to achieve specified learning outcomes as part of an academic course and/or program requirement. By participating in academic community partnerships at the local, national or international level, students gain a richer mastery of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and ultimately develop a more integrated approach to understanding the relationship between theory, practice, ideas, values, and community.

**Service learning:**

- Focuses equally on education and service
- Meets identified community needs
- Is reciprocal because it benefits both the student and the service recipient
- Helps build partnerships between colleges and community-based organizations and schools
- Enhances the academic curriculum
- Promotes learning through active participation
- Provides structured time for reflection
- Enables students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situation
- Involves the community as teachers
- Fosters understanding of diversity and caring for others
- Builds leadership and cooperation skills
- Addresses complex problems in complex settings
- Promotes critical thinking and problem-solving in specific contexts
- Promotes deeper learning
- Provides opportunities for students to learn about challenges in their own communities

**SERVICE LEARNING: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

**Reciprocity:** The service and learning must be worthwhile and valuable for both the student and the community. There must be reciprocity between the server and those served.

**Reflection:** Intentional, systematic reflection about the experience must take place in order to accomplish critical thinking in community service experiences. Reflection of the service learning experience encourages introspection of other aspects of the student's life, thereby promoting learning before, during and after the service.

**Meaningful service:** Service tasks need to be worthwhile and challenging in order to strengthen students' critical thinking.
**Diversity:** A priority is placed on involving a broad cross-section of students working in diverse settings and with a diverse population within the community.

**BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING**

**Benefits to Students**

- Learn from the agency personnel, clientele, experience and the instructor
- Explore majors and careers gain valuable job experience and strengthen the resume
- Enhance critical thinking skills and moral/ethical development
- Provide practical application of academic pursuits
- Increase understanding of multicultural values and traditions

**Benefits to Faculty**

- Form new ways of encouraging students' academic progress and comprehension
- Build avenues for greater understanding through intentional critical reflection
- Improve the motivational base for instruction and learning
- Generate support and positive publicity in the community
- Establishes relationships with people in the community

**Benefits to the Community**

- Increases opportunities for collaboration and the creation of possible solutions
- Enhances meaningful services to the community
- Increases awareness of community needs
- Creates opportunities for community partners to participate in student learning
- Builds community awareness of college programs and services

**POSSIBLE LEARNER OUTCOMES**

The following is a list of learning outcomes that research has shown are often (though not certain) achieved through service learning. One significant aspect of an effective service learning experience is for the student and instructor to review these possible outcomes and identify which are most important to the student and then set goals accordingly.

- Personal growth and development
- Self-esteem, sense of personal worth and competence
- Self-understanding, insight into self
- Independence, autonomy, assertiveness
- Sense of usefulness, of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile
- Personal power, belief in ability to make a difference
- Conscious set of personal values and beliefs reinforced in action
- Openness to new experiences, to take risks and accept challenge
- Ability to take responsibility, acknowledge consequences of actions
- Capacity to be productive, to stay determined in difficult tasks
- Exploration of new identities, unfamiliar roles
- Intellectual development and academic learning
- Basic academic skills (writing, reading, calculating, etc.)
- Subject matter knowledge and skills gained and enhanced through a broader range of experiences and associations
- Knowledge and understanding of people, of social reality, of how to get things done in a democratic society
- Higher-level thinking skills (critical thinking, problem solving)
- Application of academic knowledge and skills to real problems
- Skills learned from experience (to observe, ask questions, synthesize)
LEARNING AND PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS
SELF-ORIENTATION LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN YOUR PLACEMENT

- Observe daily operations.
- Take a tour of facilities.
- Read organization's annual reports, studies, professional literature, and journals.
- Familiarize yourself with the goals and objectives of the organization.
- Observe and discuss with other staff persons, their roles and responsibilities.
- Discuss personal attitudes, values, and services, which are expected at the agency.
- Familiarize yourself with in-house forms, library, and other resource information.
- When appropriate, ask for permission to sit in on sessions where other services are provided for a particular group or client.
- After you have completed your initial assignments, discuss with your supervisor the possibility of adding more or varied responsibilities or projects.
- Ask for feedback, evaluation, or letter of recommendation before you leave.
- When you prepare to leave, notify your supervisor several days in advance of your last day. You may want to formally thank the staff for the learning opportunity.

SAFETY AND SERVICE SUGGESTION FOR VOLUNTEERS

Service to the community may take you to places that seem different from your own neighborhood. Some people welcome the chance to learn about new areas, but others wonder if they are safe. The following simple precautions make good sense at a service site as well as in your hometown, your favorite weekend spot or on the UC campus.

1. Know where you are going. Make sure you have the correct address and a verbal description if possible. Get the telephone number so you can call for instructions if you get lost. Have a map. Check the route before you go.

2. Before you go to the site, make an appointment so that people are expecting you. Do not go where you are not expected. Always let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back.

3. Avoid being a target for trouble by:
   - Being aware of your environment at all times;
   - Not displaying expensive jewelry, large amounts of cash or valuable items such as sports equipment, compact disc players or cellular phones; and
   - Not leaving the same articles visible in your car, whether locked or unlocked.

4. Always lock your car. When returning to a parked car, have the key in your hand as you approach. Before opening the car, visually check around, under and inside.

5. Take action if necessary. It is very unusual to be harassed or threatened while
volunteering in the community or traveling to a site. If you should be harassed or threatened, try to leave the area and avoid the situation. Then, notify appropriate authority (i.e. supervisor, police, etc).

6. Report any incident or accident to your Service Learning professor and to Michael Sharp at 556-1533 or sharpmj@uc.edu

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERVICE LEARNING STUDENTS

Please keep in mind that you will be representing UC while performing service learning at your chosen site. Your dependability, conscientiousness and cooperative attitude can make you a very positive ambassador for promoting good relations between the college and the community. Have fun and get the most out of your experience!

- Meet with the person who will serve as your community service site supervisor. Together, complete the "Service Learning Plan and Contract." Return the agreement to your instructor.

- Ask your supervisor about any rules or regulations regarding the agency of which you need to be aware.

- Make sure you have transportation arranged for the days/times you will be going to the service site.

- Think of your service learning assignment as you would a regular job. Arrive on time and be prepared to work (i.e., wear appropriate clothing). If for some reason you are unable to be on time or unable to go at all, notify the site supervisor as much in advance as possible.

- When in doubt about what you are to do, ask the site supervisor directly for clarification.

- Fill out the "Service Learning Hour Report" at the end of each service day and have your site supervisor initial it.

- If any problems or concerns emerge as you perform your service duties, be sure to discuss them with your site supervisor or course instructor.

- If you need additional assistance, contact Michael Sharp at 556-1533 or sharpmj@uc.edu and/or speak to your professor.

- If you have any concerns during your service, talk to your supervisor openly and honestly to resolve the problem.
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A VOLUNTEER

Rights:
- To be treated as a co-worker.
- To be carefully interviewed and carefully assigned.
- To know as much as possible about the community partner.
- To receive orientation, training and ongoing supervision for the job expected.
- To receive sound guidance and direction.
- To have a variety of field experiences.
- To pursue leadership roles.
- To voice opinions and have ideas included in the planning of programs.
- To do meaningful and satisfying work.
- To be evaluated and to receive letters of recommendation based on service completed.

Responsibilities and Commitment:
- Treat your Service Learning assignment like a job:
  - Be prompt for your interview/orientation.
  - Set up a schedule and stick to it.
  - Call your supervisor ahead of time if you can't attend and arrange to make up the missed hours.
  - Do a good job.
- To be open and honest at your site from the beginning.
- To understand commitments of time and tasks and to fulfill them.
- To participate in evaluation when asked to do so.
- To share thoughts and feelings with staff, including making your learning objectives clear to the people with whom you'll be working.
- To respect confidentiality (while at the site, in discussions with friends, etc.)
- To seek honest feedback.
- To serve as ambassadors of goodwill for the project.
- To be effective advocates for change when it is needed.
- To enter into service with enthusiasm and commitment.
- To maintain professionalism (observe dress code, avoid gossip, use appropriate language, etc)
- Waiting to the end of the term and then complaining about your placement is unacceptable!
- When in doubt, seek advice
- If you drop the class or stop doing your service for any reason, please inform the agency.
LEARNING PLAN INFORMATION

A learning plan can be thought of as a “blueprint” that maps out what you hope to learn / accomplish as a result of your service learning experience. It includes specific learning objectives that provide some means of measuring progress toward completion of educational goals. Learning objectives are brief statements that define results expected in a specific period of time. They should:

- Be specific as to exactly what is to be accomplished.
- Be scheduled for accomplishment in a defined period of time.
- State results to be accomplished and state them in measurable terms.
- Be realistic, but challenging.

Discuss this plan with your faculty and site supervisors. You all should have input into this and each of you should sign it and keep a copy. It is your responsibility to ensure that this is done. If you require further assistance, please contact Michael Sharp at 556-1533 or sharpmj@uc.edu.

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge / Understanding. Gaining Knowledge implies acquisition of information, facts, concepts, theories, or ideas. Gaining understanding implies an ability to apply this information to problem-solving situations; seeing patterns and relationships, using knowledge for reasoning, analyzing, to extend learning beyond information acquisition.

*Example:* To gain knowledge about how computers are used in bill collection; To develop an understanding of the psychology used in writing fund-raising letters.

2. Skills. Gaining skills implies becoming able to do so activity; skills improve with use and practice; skills and the result of their use are observable. Skills may be mental or physical and can pertain to activities carried out with people (interviewing, public speaking, counseling), with things (sculpture, photography, computers), or with data (analyzing/preparing reports, gathering research information).

*Example:* To develop skill in interviewing clients at the Mental Health Association; To develop skill in categorizing photographs at a historical museum.

3. Attitudes / Values. These objectives usually involve the formulation and/or clarification of personal values or feelings. Think in terms of the personal convictions you think will be affected by this experience. What opinions, attitudes, or feelings do you hope to clarify?

*Example:* To clarify my opinion about the use of behavior modification in the treatment of juvenile delinquents; To clarify my feelings about the moral issues surrounding the debate on the safe disposal of toxic waste materials.
SERVICE LEARNING STUDENT HANDBOOK

This packet of resources is designed to prepare you for participating in a service learning course and for serving with a community partner. It is with great hope that you will benefit significantly from this endeavor. Described below are the forms required for participation.

1. Background Check

As a student seeking to offer your volunteer services with a local agency or school, you may be told that you need to have a background check (sometimes called a police check). In such cases, you should inform your classroom instructor (if she/he is not already aware).

2. Service Learning Plan and Agreement (double-sided)

The intention is to make certain that all stakeholders are aware of what specifically will be expected and accomplished for the time committed.

What you need to do: Complete with your site supervisor and return this form to your instructor before you begin your service experience.

3. Service Learning Hours Form

This form is recommended as a resource for your purposes.

What you need to do: Complete throughout the course and return to your instructor.

Please contact your instructor with specific questions.
SERVICE LEARNING PLAN

Student’s last name: ___________________________  First name: ___________________________
Phone number: ___________________________  Cell phone number: ___________________________
E-mail address: ___________________________  ___________________________
Best time to be contacted: ___________________________
Local address: ___________________________
    Street: ___________________________  City: ___________________________  State: ___________________________  Zip: __________
Student’s signature: ___________________________

Professor’s Name:
Course title and number: ___________________________  Quarter/year: __________
Professor’s signature: ___________________________

Agency/school name: ___________________________
Agency address: ___________________________

Supervisor’s name at placement site: ___________________________
Phone number: ___________________________  Cell phone number: ___________________________
    ___________________________
Best time to contact: ___________________________
E-mail address: ___________________________
Supervisor’s signature: ___________________________
Supervisor’s alternate to be contacted: ___________________________
Phone number: ___________________________
E-mail: ___________________________

Service start date: __________  Service end date: __________
Days/hours of service: __________  Hours per week: __________
Description of Service:
________________________________________
________________________________________

Learning Objectives:  How will you connect the course’s subject content with the
service goals? ___________________________

Evaluation:  (what evidence will you provide your professor to document achievement
of these objectives (e.g., report, annotated bibliography of research, summary of
research, reflective journals, oral histories, etc.)? ___________________________

_______________________________
STUDENT CONTRACT FOR SERVICE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Students must demonstrate professional behavior when representing UC in a community Service Learning opportunity. This document spells out a student’s responsibilities in a service learning course, in the hopes that adherence to them will improve the opportunity to learn.

(Adapted with permission of Northern Kentucky University)

Students in this service learning course are required to:

1) Know, adhere and show respect for relevant rules, policies and procedures at their community service site.
2) Communicate with the site’s personnel in a professional, tactful manner. This includes
   • conforming to the dress and behavior requirements,
   • exhibiting an ethical sense of confidentiality in dealing with clients and employees, and
   • treating their site’s employees, clients and visitors with respect.
3) Assume responsibility for the care of all resources provided by the community site or UC.
4) Meet all responsibilities promptly and display a willingness to accept additional responsibilities.
5) Maintain a professional demeanor at all times
6) Be present at the site when expected. Advance notification to the site and the professor is required if the student cannot attend the site at the scheduled time.
7) Confirm the services time and locations well in advance of the scheduled time.
8) Make necessary adjustments to their own workload and courses to accommodate the additional time that service learning requires
9) Promote positive resolution to all conflict
10) Be open to constructive criticism offered by people at the site and the professor
11) Abide by all policies and procedures in the University of Cincinnati’s Code of Conduct http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Code_of_Conduct.html
12) Ask questions, seek help, and volunteer to help at the site. There is always something to do in a community Service Learning site.

Students must also meet all the requirements imposed upon them by the service site.

Please answer the following questions:

Have you ever been charged with a crime? ___ yes ___ no
Please describe, including the location and date.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? ___ yes ___ No
Please describe, including the location and date.

I agree to abide by the policies and procedures as outlined in the Service Learning Handbook. I further agree that all documentation submitted is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Student Signature __________________________
Date_________________
GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO REDUCE RISK IN SERVICE LEARNING
(reprinted with permission from California State University)

The following guiding principles are considered best practices throughout the field and apply to all the parties involved in service learning experiences: service learning staff, faculty members, community based organizations and service learning students. Since each service learning course is different, these guidelines are not intended to be all encompassing. However, these do’s and don’ts apply to most situations. The intent of these guidelines is not to prohibit service learning experiences, but rather, to provide best practices that allow for safe and positive service environments where the risk and liability have been minimized.

**DO** participate in orientation for your service learning experience.

**DO** make sure you know whom to contact at the site and at the university in case of an emergency.

**DO** make sure you know how to exit your service site in case of an emergency.

**DO** ask for help from your supervisor or another staff member at your service site when in doubt.

**DO** be punctual and responsible in completing your commitment to the service site.

**DO** call your site supervisor if you know you will be late or not able to come in at all.

**DO** keep all information about clients you work with confidential.

**DO** show respect for your service site, its staff, and its clients.

**DO** be aware that you are representing your university.

**DO** know that if you are having trouble at your service site, you can talk with your faculty member about it.

**DO** sign-in at your service site every time you are there, and record your service hours on your student service log. This will ensure you receive credit for the hours you have served.

**DO** know that you can request an alternative service site if you are not comfortable with your current site.

**DON’T** report to your service site under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

**DON’T** give or loan a client money or other personal belongings.

**DON’T** make promises or commitments to a client that you cannot keep.

**DON’T** give a client or community-based organization representative a ride in a personal vehicle.

**DON’T** tolerate verbal exchange of a sexual nature or engage in behavior that might be perceived as sexual with a client or community-based organization representative.

**DON’T** tolerate verbal exchange or engage in behavior that might be perceived as discriminating against an individual on the basis of his/her age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or ethnicity.

**DON’T** engage in any type of business with clients during the term of your service.

**DON’T** enter into personal relationships with a client or community-based organization’s representative during the term of your service.

DO know that if you are having trouble at your service site, you should talk with a faculty member.
### Student Tracking Sheet

**Student Name:** 

**Course:** 

**Student Phone:** 

**Term:** 

**Professor:** 

**In case of emergency, contact:** 

**Community Organization:** 

**Supervisor Name:** 

**Supervisor Phone:**

**Supervisor Email:** 

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**Total Hours:**

My signature affirms the documented total hours and the successful completion of service. Comments may be recorded on back. Additional evaluation or letters are invited.

**Student:** ____________________________  **Supervisor:** ____________________________