**Structuring the Reflection Process**

**Designing Continuous Reflection**

Based on design considerations discussed in prior sections, faculty should develop a plan for continuous reflection to effectively integrate the service activities with other coursework. Faculty might find it helpful to think in terms of the three stages of reflection: before experience, during experience, and after experience. Faculty might want to address the same set of learning outcomes at each stage, but the way in which the outcomes are addressed could be very different depending on the stage of reflection. For example, faculty might focus on helping students acquire the prerequisite problem-solving skills before the experience. During the service, the focus might be on coaching students in solving a complex S-L problem. After the service, reflection activities might focus on helping students consolidate their learning, and consider limitations and future extensions.  
  
Examples of the goals of reflection and the design of reflection activities at each stage are given below:  
  
**Reflection before Experience**   
Design reflective activities that help students prepare for the service experience. Thus reflective activities could be designed to:

* Help students acquire the disciplinary knowledge required for service activities.
* Provide opportunities to practice application of disciplinary knowledge.  
  Help students develop the problem-solving skills required to address community concerns.
* Help students develop an understanding of community needs and organizations.
* Help students develop information gathering skills for collecting information required for service activities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Case studies | Assign case studies to help students practice problem-solving skills. |
| Presentation | Arrange for an orientation session by community agency staff. |
| Small group activity | Ask students to develop an information-gathering plan (sources of information, interview questions, etc.) |
| Large group discussion | Organize a large group discussion on developing an information-gathering plan |

**Reflection during Experience**  
Communicating with students throughout the service project may be critical to ensure that students are performing project tasks competently, and for helping students refine and develop their initial ideas. Ongoing communication can also be a starting point for understanding student problem-solving efforts and assessing the developmental levels of students as they grapple with issues. As these factors will have an impact on the service activity and student learning, they can provide useful information for refining the reflection process in subsequent semesters.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Structured Journal | Ask students to record thoughts, observations, feelings, activities and questions in a journal throughout the project.  Provide prompts to direct student attention to important issues/ questions to adequately frame the problem by examining various issues related to people, organizational structure and processes, resources etc. that must be considered in solving the problem; also, you may want to consider prompting students to gather appropriate evidence, to identify alternative solutions to a problem, and to make recommendations and justify these recommendations based on evidence |
| Critical Incidents Journal | Ask students to record a critical incident for each week describing events in which a decision was made, a conflict occurred, or a problem was resolved. Ask students to describe the event, how it was handled, alternative ways in which they could have resolved the situation, and how they might act differently in a similar situation in the future. |
| Small group activity | Ask students to keep a log describing plans and activities (sources of information, interview questions etc.) |
| Large group discussion | Encourage formal/informal discussions with team members, the class, volunteers and staff to introduce students to different perspectives and to challenge students to think critically about the project. |

**Reflection after experience**  
Use reflection to connect service experience back to disciplinary knowledge and explore future applications  
Challenge students to think critically about their service experiences and the responsible application of knowledge and public problem solving.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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. |
| Presentation | Ask student(s) to present their service experience and discuss it in terms of concepts/theories discussed in class |
| Interviews | Interview students on service experiences and the learning that occurred in these experiences. |