

Service Learning

What is Service Learning?

Service learning (SL) is a combination of what we know as formal education and applying that learning in a service-oriented way.

Service Learning can be considered a type of educational philosophy which requires the student to connect the cognitive to the emotive to demonstrate their knowledge, resulting in better outcomes for learning.

It provides experiential learning that connects personal and interpersonal development with cognitive and academic advancement, providing opportunities for personal connections and ultimately transformation.

Definition of Service Learning

There are many ways to define Service Learning, with some key components found across definitions, including: **Reflective learning**, **mutual benefit**, **learning while serving the community**, **learning with the community**, experiential learning.

Manchester Definition (2022)

Here at The University of Manchester, we have decided to have an authentic yet simple definition for SL at Manchester:

“Service Learning is a positive symbiotic engagement exercise in the community in which students and the communities are expected to benefit equally”.

- Prof Raj Ariyaratnam, Dr Rachel Lindley (2022)

How does Service Learning differ from traditional learning?

- Service learning strives to achieve a balance between service and learning objectives - in service learning, partners must negotiate the differences in their needs and expectations.
- Service learning places an emphasis on addressing community concerns and broad determinants of health.

- In service learning, there is the integral involvement of community partners - service-learning involves a **principle-centred symbiotic partnership between communities, students, and academic institutions.**
- Service learning emphasizes reciprocal learning - In service-learning, traditional definitions of "faculty," "teacher" and "learner" are intentionally blurred. **We all learn from each other.**
- Service learning emphasizes reflective thinking and practice - In service-learning, reflection facilitates the **connection between practice, theory and the community and fosters critical thinking.**
- Service learning places an emphasis on developing citizenship skills and achieving social change - many factors influence health and quality of life. **The provision of health services is not often the most important factor. In service-learning, students place their roles as health professionals and citizens in a larger societal context.**

(Modified Citation: Seifer SD. (1998). Service-learning: Community-campus partnerships for health professions education. Academic Medicine, 73(3):273-277.)

Important elements of Service Learning

- A form of experiential education
- Addresses human and community issues and needs
- Learning occurs through active participation in **thoughtfully organized service environment**
- Includes **structured reflection linking emotional experience to learning**
- Coordinated in true collaboration with the community
- Links to curriculum and/or co-curriculum but must **include structured time for reflection**
- Leads to acquisition of new skills, knowledge, leadership, and a sense of caring and social responsibility.

Adapted from National Service Learning Clearinghouse, Johnson Foundation

Service Learning is not:

- An add-on to an existing curriculum
- An episodic volunteer programme
- Logging a set number of community service hours to graduate
- Single beneficiary: benefiting only students or only the community

Types/Pathways of Service Learning in Manchester

Curricular integrated Service-Learning

Anchored in a specific course, faculty and students work to meet a community need and advance their understanding of course content. Structured reflection is integrated into the curriculum to foster connections between their service, the curriculum of the class, and its impact on their personal values and community engagement.

Co-Curricular structured Service-Learning

Students engage in thoughtfully planned service that meets a community-identified need. Meaningful, structured reflection on the needs of the community, service and its impact on personal values is an important aspect of cultivating an effective service-learning experience. This can be recognised (and celebrated) with institutional awards:

- [Stellify Awards or points](#)
- [Making a Difference Awards](#)
- [Pledges Passports \(authorised by the institution\)](#)

REFERENCES

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4. Clearinghouse. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, Washington A
4. Ariyaratnam, S; Lindley, R -University of Manchester 2022