

Ten Criteria - a Reference Framework for Successful Service Learning

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The Higher Education Network 'Education through Responsibility' (Hochschulnetzwerk Bildung durch Verantwortung e.V.) set itself the goal of developing quality criteria that define an educational and scientific benchmark for the various manifestations of Service Learning projects. In 2018, a workshop that focussed on dialogue between higher education institutions and non-profit organisations kicked off a discussion between representatives from the scientific community and civil society which spanned several months. The focal point of this discussion was the quality of Service Learning.

The whole purpose of this series of conversations was to:

- Describe the various forms of Service Learning,
- Identify their unique features, and thereby
- Highlight the exceptional potential of learning through involvement.

Ultimately, the group came up with ten different criteria¹ that, as a whole, constitute a reference framework for the various manifestations of Service Learning in the community, without making the definition too restrictive. These quality criteria will act as a foundation for future quality development and quality assurance activities in the field of Service Learning.

On the basis of the above, the next step is to devise suitable procedures and tools that will provide those involved in Service Learning with guidance and ideas on how to maintain and improve quality standards, while highlighting how this can be taken into account not only at the planning and conception stage, but also at the project implementation stage.

The Higher Education Network 'Education through Responsibility' is well aware that this practical reference framework would never have materialised if it weren't for this mutual exchange of expertise and will continue to count on the participation of Service Learning representatives in higher education and wider society.

¹ The criteria are based on existing lists of criteria from the „Stiftung Lernen durch Engagement – Service-Learning in Deutschland“ (<https://www.servicelearning.de/lernen-durch-engagement/ide-qualitaetsstandards/>) and the K-12 Service-Learning Standards of the National Youth Leadership Council (<https://nylc.org/standards/>) project europe engage (<https://europeengage.org/>).

We would like to thank you for everything you have contributed thus far and look forward to your continued involvement - in keeping with the motto: Quality Needs Communication.

	Criterion	Description
1	Societal need	Projects and measures arise out of real societal problems and challenges and aim to provide the individual, a group or society at large with a specific benefit.
2	Defined goals	All the parties involved define common goals, work together in an effort to achieve them and, finally, assess whether the goals have been achieved.
3	Service Learning is an Inherent Aspect of the Degree Course	Service Learning is integrated into the degree course in terms of structure and content and is linked to the learning objectives of the degree course.
4	Skills Acquisition by Students	In Service Learning, students acquire personal, social, technical and professional skills in connection with the content and didactic structure chosen by the teaching staff and non-profit organisations.
5	Studying in Foreign Living Environments	Students study and take action outside their own university and study environment.
6	Collaboration between Parties Involved	All of the parties involved work together to plan, prepare and shape Service Learning.
7	Reflection	The parties involved reflect on their Service Learning experiences with the aid of technical and academic guidance.
8	Student supervision	Students are provided with support and supervision while they are planning and executing Service Learning projects.
9	Evaluation and quality development	Service Learning projects include evaluation measures, particularly with regard to quality assurance and development.
10	Appreciation	In Service Learning, the commitment and performance of the parties involved are acknowledged and valued, particularly on completion of Service Learning.

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