**Experiential Learning Initiative (ELI):**
**Common Parameters for Curricular Service Learning**

**Overview**

The ELI is characterized by the following common parameters, regardless of the particular experience or program in which the student engages to satisfy the ELI requirement. These parameters flow out of the National Society for Experiential Education's (NSEE) *Eight Principles of Good Practice for All Experiential Learning Activities.*

1. **Intention**: All parties must be clear from the outset why experience is the chosen approach to the learning that is to take place and to the knowledge that will be demonstrated, applied or result from the experience. Intention represents the purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge and, as such, is deeper than the goals, objectives, and activities that define the experience.

- All Service Learning ELI courses must successfully complete the Service Learning Course Approval application process. This involves faculty members submitting a course syllabus, including all specific service learning course components (reflection, content and authentic service) and specific milestones and completion dates for each component.
- All students who successfully enroll and complete ELI-SL expectations in ELI-SL approved courses receive ELI credit to meet their graduation requirement. Upon successful completion of the course, faculty will indicate to the Registrar the students have successfully completed ELI-SL requirements during the final grade submission process.

2. **Preparedness and Planning**: Participants must ensure that they enter the experience with sufficient foundation to support a successful experience. They must also focus from the earliest stages of the experience/program on the identified intentions, adhering to them as goals, objectives and activities are defined. The resulting plan should include those intentions and be referred to on a regular basis by all parties. At the same time, it should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations as the experience unfolds.

- ELI-SL credit is delivered through normal credit-bearing courses that have been vetted and approved. Each student must register and enroll in an ELI-SL designated course for it to count as meeting the ELI.
- The ELI-SL course approval process determines whether or not proposed ELI-SL syllabi adequately expose students to a sufficient foundation (content) to support a successful learning experience. Successful ELI-SL course proposals demonstrate that students will be introduced during the earliest stages of their SL experiences to the identified ELI-SL intentions.
- Students must articulate their goals/learning outcomes at the beginning of their service-learning experience and update them (as appropriate) as the experience occurs.
- Faculty encourage their students to refer to clearly stated educational objectives in the syllabus on a regular basis while emphasizing the importance of being open and flexible to engage dynamic and changing community partnerships as the experience unfolds.

3. **Authenticity**: The experience must have a real world context and/or be useful and meaningful in reference to an applied setting or situation. This means that is should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by or use it, or in response to a real situation.

- To qualify as an ELI-SL course the minimum balance of service, content and reflection is 40 hours over the course of a semester – of which is required a minimum of 20 hours of out-of-class service.
- Part of the ELI-SL approval process is determining whether or not proposed SL syllabi will adequately expose students to sufficient in & out-of-class components in the areas of content, service and reflection that support a successful learning experience.
- Successful ELI-SL course proposals demonstrate that students are introduced to a real world context and/or an applied setting or situation that involves the mutual beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity.
- ELI-SL experiences are designed in concert with participating community partners that work in authentic community situations.

4. **Reflection**: Reflection is the element that transforms simple experience to a learning experience. For knowledge to be discovered and internalized the learner must test assumptions and hypotheses about the outcomes of decisions and actions taken, then weigh the outcomes against past learning and future implications. This reflective process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Reflection is also an essential tool for adjusting the experience and measuring outcomes.

- As part of the course approval process, proposed ELI-SL syllabi must adequately expose students to sufficient reflection opportunities that focus on the ELI reflection questions to support learning throughout their experiences.
- Students enrolled in service learning courses will address the consistent reflection questions.
- Successful ELI-SL course proposals demonstrate reflection opportunities, tools and assignments that have the potential to transform simple community service experiences into deep service-learning where knowledge is discovered and internalized.
- As part of the ELI-SL course requirements, students must be able to articulate the connections between the experience and their personal/career goals, as well as community engagement as part of their reflection.
- Students will complete their reflection course requirements using the designated ELI module that is connected to the course on Canvas. (e.g., an SL module could be automatically loaded on every SL designated course to capture reflections.)

5. **Orientation and Training**: For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator(s), and to any involved organizational partners, it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate. Once that baseline of knowledge is addressed, ongoing structured development opportunities should also be included to expand the learner's appreciation of the context and skill requirements of her/his work.

- Students enrolled in vetted and approved designated service-learning courses will be made aware of the significance of the ELI-SL designation along with the content, service and reflection component expectations that faculty have articulated in the syllabus.

- ELI-SL syllabi are assessed for ongoing structured development opportunities that expand student's appreciation of their context and required skills.
- Consideration will be given to faculty member's prior SL experience and qualifications for facilitating SL experiences. Ideally, experienced community partners give students an orientation related to their service and engagement

6. **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**: Any learning activity will be dynamic and changing, and the parties involved all bear responsibility for ensuring that the experience, as it is in process, continues to provide the richest learning possible, while affirming the learner. It is important that there be a feedback loop related to learning intentions and quality objectives and that the structure of the experience be sufficiently flexible to permit change in response to what that feedback suggests. While reflection provides input for new hypotheses and knowledge based in documented experience, other strategies for observing progress against intentions and objectives should also be in place. Monitoring and continuous improvement represent the formative evaluation tools.

- ELI-SL credit is delivered through the context of a credit-bearing course that has been vetted and approved.
- Part of the ELI-SL approval process is evaluating the assessment plan for student learning.
- Within the context of all ELI-SL designated courses, faculty design clear learning expectations in their syllabi and provide monitoring and feedback on assignments for continuous improvement related to ELI-SL outcomes.
- Each service learning faculty member will review and assess the student learning during regular assignments throughout the semester with active feedback on progress towards meeting specific goals and objectives.
- Ideally, experienced community partners give ongoing feedback to students related to their service and engagement in structured community-based experiences.

Both in and out of class assessments must demonstrate sufficient flexibility to permit changes in response to feedback from both participating students and the community served.

7. **Assessment and Evaluation**: Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes. Assessment is a means to develop and refine the specific learning goals and quality objectives identified during the planning stages of the experience, while evaluation provides comprehensive data about the experiential process as a whole and whether it has met the intentions that suggested it.

- During ELI-SL course approval, faculty must clearly define how students will self-assess their accomplishment of proposed learning objectives.
- Service learning faculty members will provide assessment and feedback to students throughout the semester, preferably using Canvas so that such feedback can be archived, examined and provided as a form of assessment data on student performance.
- Faculty will be expected to use the ELI Assessment rubric (in Canvas) to evaluate service-learning ELI experiences.

8. **Acknowledgment**: Recognition of learning and impact occur throughout the experience by way of the reflective and monitoring processes and through reporting, documentation and sharing of accomplishments. All parties to the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. Culminating documentation and celebration of learning and impact help provide closure and sustainability to the experience.

- Each service learning faculty member will define an appropriate experience in which the student learning and accomplishments are recognized and discussed (e.g., in some cases, this may occur in public forums such as the various school symposiums).
- Faculty may also encourage students to share their ELI-SL related assignments with peers and community partners however this will vary by instructor.
- All students who successfully complete ELI-SL course requirements will be acknowledged on their transcripts.