



Methods and Strategies for Student Assessment

Developed for the Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation (HPSISN) Program, a national demonstration program of service-learning in the health professions funded by the Corporation for National Service and The Pew Charitable Trusts

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1. “End-of-Program Survey” Students

Purpose:

The “End-of-Program Survey” for students is intended to describe the students’ perspectives and attitudes on several issues related to their experience(s) with service-learning course(s). Topics assessed by the survey include students’ view or attitude on service, the impact of service-learning on career/specialization choice, and the students’ perspectives on working in a diverse community.

The student survey provides demographic data profiling the students’ racial background, age, gender, academic discipline, and employment. In addition, the survey uses a 5-point Likert scale asking students their level of agreement with statements regarding their service-learning experience.

The “End-of-Program Survey” was used to describe various perspectives and demographics that exist across programs at multiple institutions. The tool, however, is also useful for assessing one course or multiple courses across a single institution. These strategies are helpful for institutions with diverse populations and for institutions surveying students from multiple disciplines. Additionally, the instrument has broader applications than its title would imply. The survey can be used as a pre/post tool to assess change in students’ perceptions over time and can be used to assess the students’ general attitudes after they have completed a service-learning program.

Preparation:

In preparation for using this tool, the following steps are recommended.

1. Users should determine if the survey is going to be used as a pre-post test to assess change in students’ perceptions and attitudes before and after the course, or if they are going to use the tool simply as a way to assess the general attitudes of the students after they have taken the course. It should be noted that few students will make dramatic changes in the topics being assessed after one quarter or semester. This tool is meant to complement other data-gathering strategies to develop a clearer picture of the students’ perspectives and attitudes toward this form of learning.
2. The most appropriate time to administer the survey is contingent on its purpose. It is suggested that pre-tests be given within the first week of the academic term and that post-tests be completed during the last week.
3. External researchers/evaluators may have difficulty accessing the students’ names and addresses. In some cases, the university has explicit regulations regarding the distribution student information; we were successful working with faculty members who distributed the surveys through campus mail or in class rather than mailing them directly.

Administration:

1. Students should be informed of the importance of the instrument and encouraged to take their time responding with honesty and integrity.
2. Students' anonymity should be assured to them and maintained throughout the collection process.
3. The surveys can be readily administered through campus or U.S. Mail using a self addressed envelope for return purposes. However, administering the surveys during a scheduled class time, if possible, assures a better response rate.
4. If administered by mail, the students should be allowed 2-3 weeks to return the completed forms. Caution should be taken if mailing surveys during scheduled breaks, as many students may travel and will not receive the questionnaire in a timely fashion. It should be clearly indicated on the form where the survey should be returned. If administered in the classroom setting, the students should be given 15-20 minutes to complete the form. The forms should be collected before students leave the class.

Analysis:

Data analysis can be conducted through utilization of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software or equivalent statistical software. In the case of assessing and comparing pre and post service-learning experiences, the analysis could include frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, Chi-squares, ANOVA and Factor Analysis. The descriptive statistics and the frequency distributions can be compiled into a database, providing mean, mode and standard deviation between items. Second, Chi-squares correlate demographic data between student groups. Third, Factor Analysis reduces items into categories that are closely related. Finally, ANOVAs are useful to explore the existence of variation within and among groups on either single items or groups of items that may arise from the factor analysis.

In the case of simply using this tool to assess general attitudes at the end of a program, analysis can be conducted using an EXCEL, or similar, database. The analysis includes frequencies and descriptive statistics that can be compared across sites or student groups.

What has proven most useful to date are the descriptive data that provide a rich profile of the sample both in terms of demographics and responses to individual items.

If using the following instrument, please use the citation below:

Anu F. Shinnamon, Sherril B. Gelmon, and Barbara A. Holland. Methods and Strategies for Assessing Service-learning in the Health Professions. San Francisco: Community Campus Partnerships for Health, 1999.

HPSISN Service-learning --Student Survey

The Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation program Evaluation Team would like to better understand the impact that service-learning has had on students. We particularly want to know how these experiences have influenced your perspective on learning, your view of service, your choice of career/specialization and your perspectives on working in a diverse community. The information collected in this survey is anonymous and will only be reported in aggregate. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Anu Shinnamon, Research Associate, HPSISN by phone at 503-725-8354.

I. First we would like to know some information about you.

1. What is your age group? Under 20 20-24 25-29 30-34 35 +

2. What is your gender? Male Female

3. What program are you in? Allied Health Dentistry Medicine Nursing
 Pharmacy Physician Assistant Public Health
 Other (please specify): _____

4. Name of your university/college: _____

5. What is your racial background? African American Asian American Caucasian/white
 Hispanic American Native American Other(please specify): _____

6. In what kind of agency did you Community Clinic Hospital or Health System School
have your service-learning experience? Community Center Social Service Agency Homeless Shelter
(check all that apply) Other(please specify): _____

7. What community needs did AIDS/HIV Disability issues Elderly care
you address in your service Homelessness Mental health Substance abuse
learning experience? Victim assistance Women's health Youth issues
(check all that apply) Other(please specify): _____

8. In addition to school, I have a 1-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 41+ I do not
paying job that requires me to work... hrs/week hrs/week hrs/week hrs/week hrs/week have a job

II. Next, we would like to gain your perspective about the service-learning course(s) in which you participated.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. The community participation aspect of the courses helped me to see how course material I learned can be used in everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Participation in service-learning helped me to better understand the material from my lectures and readings.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. I feel I would have learned more from the courses if more time was spent in the classroom instead of in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. Service-learning should be implemented into more classes at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13. My service-learning experience was not directly linked to building clinical skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. Participation in service-learning made me take more responsibility for my own learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15. Community service should be a voluntary activity rather than a course requirement.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. Service-learning made me more aware of the roles of health professionals in other disciplines besides my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. I would like to enroll in additional service learning courses offered through my degree program.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

III. The next set of questions relates to your attitude toward community involvement.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
18. I was already volunteering before this service-learning experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19. The community participation aspect of service-learning showed me how I can become more involved in my community. (Continued on the next page.)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20. I will continue involvement specifically with my service-learning site. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. I feel that the work I did through service learning benefited the community. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. I probably won't volunteer or continue community involvement after this course. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Service-learning helped me to become more aware of the needs in the community. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. I have a responsibility to serve the community. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IV. Next, we would like to know the influence of your service-learning on your future professional work.
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25. Doing work in the community helped me to define my personal strengths and weaknesses. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Performing work in the community helped me clarify my career/specialization choice. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. I will integrate community service into my future career plans. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

V. Finally, we would like some personal reflections on your service-learning experience(s).
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 28. I developed a good relationship with my service-learning instructor(s) because of the community work. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. During this experience, I became more comfortable working with people different from myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Service-learning made me more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Participating in the community helped me enhance my leadership skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(Continued on the next page.)

32. The work I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate my ideas in a real world context.

33. I can make a difference in the community.

34. Please add any other comments you have about your service-learning experience(s).
(Please use the back of this paper or attach an additional sheet of paper.)

Thank you for your insights regarding service-learning.

Please return this survey in the enclosed envelope by date to:

2. Focus Groups Students

Purpose:

To generate an open interactive discussion about community-based learning among students from multiple institutions who participated in service-learning programs. Focus groups can also be utilized on a course by course basis to discuss the experiences among students in a particular course. The goals of either focus group are to discover patterns of experience and to generate suggestions for improvement in organizing and supporting the course/program. Additionally, this tool should produce data regarding impacts on students according to study variables.

Preparation:

Focus groups should be arranged early. An external representative (either the evaluators or trained facilitator) should facilitate the group, not the faculty member or program director. Additionally, faculty members and/or program directors should not be present. Arrange for a quality tape recorder (be sure to test the device prior to the focus group to ensure that it is working). One facilitator will be needed for each group of 8-12 students. If the course is large, it may be necessary to conduct two separate discussions. Each focus group should have a note-taker to accompany the facilitator. The note-taker is responsible for operating and monitoring the recording equipment throughout the focus group and for taking notes of non-verbal communication.

Administration:

- Begin and end on time. Arrange the group in a circular form.
- Read the introductory message on the focus group script that follows to participants before beginning the questions. Remind the students of the introductory guidelines as needed.
- Facilitators and note-takers should be introduced and their role explained. The facilitator does not participate, rather s/he guides the discussion ensuring that no one person dominates conversation and encourages comments from those who hold back.
- The discussion should be taped and notes should be taken in case of equipment failure.

Analysis:

Tapes and notes from the focus groups must be transcribed as soon as possible after the session. Additionally, the transcript should be reviewed by both the facilitator and the note-taker to ensure completeness and accuracy. Focus groups generate a large body of rich, contextual data. Analysis consists of organizing the data into meaningful subsections. One can begin organizing the data according to the questions posed. The analysis can be further narrowed by identifying the key words and themes; highlight and organize these by the study variables or indicators outlined in the research design.

For more information on the administration of focus groups, see the following resources:

Morgan, David L. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
Morgan, David L., editor. (1993) *Successful Focus Groups*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

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HPSISN FOCUS GROUPS: STUDENTS

Introduction

Thank you for joining us for this focus group. All of the participants are students with one of the HPSISN grantees.

Our goal for this focus group is to have an open and interactive discussion. Focus groups are a guided conversation in which everyone participates. We want to learn more about how you feel about your service-learning experiences, and will ask you some questions that will focus on aspects of these experiences and their impact on you as a learner. As facilitator, I will offer no opinions; my role is to ask questions to guide you through the conversation.

The intent of the focus group is to hear everyone's ideas and impressions. As participants, you can make the focus group successful by being both candid and as specific as possible when discussing different issues. I will try to make sure that everyone participates and that no one dominates the discussion. During this discussion, please be brief and specific. Where there is disagreement, you should talk about your different perspective, but we will not spend time pressing for consensus or reaching agreement. The purpose is not to reach a common view, but to learn about all the possible views.

This discussion will be tape-recorded. Only the person transcribing the tape will hear it. The summary transcripts and reports will not identify speakers, so what you say will be kept confidential. Please be sure to speak one at a time so that the tape will be clear.

Questions

1. Please introduce yourself, indicate which HPSISN grantee you are a student with, and briefly describe the nature of your service-learning experience (what did you do?). (10 minutes)
2. Why did you get involved in service-learning? What were your expectations? (10 minutes)
3. What were the learning goals of the experience? (5 minutes)
4. Describe how the service-learning experiences related to your academic program of study. What connections were there between classroom discussions, assignments, required readings, or clinical experiences with the service-learning? (10 minutes)
5. How would you assess the experience? Was it a success? Why? What factors contributed to the success? What obstacles did you encounter and how did you overcome them? (10 minutes)
6. Describe your interaction with your community partner. What was it like to work with a community person as part of your learning experience? (10 minutes)
7. What did you learn about the community or society in general from this experience? Did the experiences leave you with new questions, concerns or confusions? (5 minutes)
8. What recommendations would you make to universities and health professions educational programs about offering service-learning as part of the health professions curriculum? (5 minutes)

Total time: 1 hour

Thank participants.