



Reflection Strategies Using Sakai Forum Posts

LMS forum posts are a common ongoing reflection assignment / activity for community-based learning courses. These can be very successful, especially when used frequently in course to encourage on-going reflection. However, without intention and care in the structure of the reflection prompt, faculty may find that student reflection does not go beneath the surface.

Loyola University Chicago's [Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship](https://www.luc.edu/celes) has compiled a list of helpful prompt and assignment structures that are best practices. This is by no means exhaustive, but we hope it will help you and your students make the most out of their community-based learning experience!

Consider one or more of the following reflection strategies/tools that can facilitate critical reflection with your students:

- **Critical incident journal:** The following set of prompts ask students to consider their thoughts and reactions and articulate the action they plan to take in the future: Describe a significant event that occurred as part of the service experience. Why was this significant to you? What did you learn from this experience? How will this incident influence your future behavior?
- **Three-part journal:** Each page of the weekly forum entry is divided into thirds; description, analysis, application. In the top section, students describe some aspects of the service experience. In the middle section they analyze how course content relates to the service experience, and in the application section students comment on how their experience and course content can be applied to their personal or professional life.
- **Highlighted journal:** Before students submit their reflective journal post, they reread personal entries and, using a highlighter or underline, mark sections of the journal that directly relate to concepts and terms discussed in the text or in class. They may even place a reference to the course reading these concepts emerged in in parentheses after the highlight/underline. This makes it easier for both the student and the instructor to identify the academic connections made during the reflection process.
- **Key-phrase journal:** The instructor provides a list of terms and key phrases from course material at the beginning of the semester for students to include in journal entries. Evaluation is based on the use and demonstrated understanding of the term.

- **Dialogue journals:** Students are assigned 1- 3 other students to be in dialogue with around their community-based learning. Each week, a different student posts about their experience at their site and makes a connection to a concept from their course work. The other students respond with brief clarifying questions or other connections to course material. The focused student shifts every week.
- **Ethical Case Studies:** Case studies give students the opportunity to analyze a situation and gain practice in ethical decision making as they choose a course of action. Students write up an appropriately anonymized case study of an ethical dilemma they have confronted at the service site, including a description of the context and the controversy or event that created the ethical dilemma. Case studies can be discussed in class/posted in open forums and students can discuss the situation and identify how they would respond.
- **Exit Cards:** These are brief reflections turned in at the end of each class period / within the end of the class day. Students are asked to reflect on disciplinary content from class discussion and explain how this information relates to their service involvement. It is meant to be no longer than 3-5 sentences that could fit on an index card.

Other Reflection Strategies

While forum posts and formal journal entries are helpful tools, we would also encourage you to consider these other methods of reflection that do not center the written word and allow other modalities of expression!

- **Learning Portfolios:** These contain evidence of both processes and products completed and ask students to assess their work in terms of the learning objectives of the course. Portfolios can contain any of the following: service learning contract, weekly log, personal journal, impact statement, directed writings, photo essay, products completed during the service experience (e.g., agency brochure, lesson plans, advocacy letters). Students write an evaluation essay providing a self-assessment of how effectively they met the learning and service objectives of the course.
- **Class Presentations:** These can be as simple as three-minute updates that occur each month or thirty minute updates during the final two class periods during which students present their final analysis of the service activities and offer recommendations to the agency for additional programming. Agency personnel can be invited to hear final presentations.



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