

Criteria for Applied Learning Activities Missouri Western State University

The following criteria should be used by Departments, Programs, Units, and Stakeholders to determine if an activity meets the criteria for classification as applied learning. This criteria is set forth to provide guidance, clarity, and consistency around applied learning activities at MWSU.

Definition:

Applied learning is any activity in which students use course content, models, theories, and/or skills in real-world and/or hands-on settings to support career readiness. This includes a myriad of possibilities, such as: field trips, field work, internships, leadership, mentored research, performances, practica, service learning, and student teaching.

At Missouri Western, applied learning experiences generally fall into one or more of the following categories: Discovery, Work, Service, Creativity, Leadership. All manner of experiences may be considered applied learning activities if they meet the following criteria. When applied learning is embedded in a course, these criteria refer to the activity rather than the course as a whole. Regardless of the activity, both the experience and the learning are fundamental.

The Activity is Structured, Intentional and Authentic

All parties must be clear from the outset why this specific experience was chosen as the approach to the learning, and intentional about defining the knowledge that should result from it. The activity must be a structured experience with a formal process. It will include a course syllabus or learning contract between parties (students, faculty, and other supervisors as appropriate) and/or defined assessable learning outcomes. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined. Faculty and site supervisors (as appropriate) are expected to take the lead in ensuring the quality of both the learning experience and of the work produced. The applied learning activity should have hands-on and/or real world context and should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by or use it, or in response to a real situation.

The Activity Requires Preparation, Orientation and Training

Participants and mentors must ensure that students enter the experience with sufficient background and foundational education, as well as a plan to support a successful outcome. The training and plan should include learning expectations and be referred to (and potentially updated) on an ongoing basis by all parties.

The Activity Must Include Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Applied learning activities are dynamic. Therefore all facilitators in the activity share responsibility for ensuring that the experience, as it is in process, continues to provide a rich learning environment and is meeting learning outcomes. Activities include a defined and flexible method for feedback related to learning outcomes and quality performance for all parties.

The Activity Requires Structured Reflection and Acknowledgment

There must be a structured opportunity for students to self-assess, analyze, and examine constructs/skills/insights from their experience and to evaluate the outcomes. Reflection should demonstrate the relevance of the experience to student learning, including the student's articulation of how the experience draws on and improves this learning and meets defined objectives. Post-experience learning should include a formal debriefing. Reflection need not be exclusively in written form, though some documentation of the reflection should occur. All facilitators and students engaged in the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment.

The Activity Must be Assessed and Evaluated

Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes. Students must receive appropriate and timely feedback from all facilitators.

Criteria guided by and adapted from the Eight Principles of Good Practice for All Experiential Learning Activities National Society of Experiential Education

<http://www.nsee.org/8-principles>