

Experiential Research Paper

An experiential research paper is a formal paper based on the experiential learning theory. Students are asked to identify a particular experience or set of events at a service site and to reflect upon. The analysis of the experience within a broader context will assist in making recommendations for subsequent action. For example, in order to complete this assignment, students might be asked at mid-semester to identify and describe a perplexing, frustrating, or confusing experience at the service site. Students then identify an important social issue that may be underlying this circumstance (e.g., health care to homeless youth, volunteer recruitment strategies). They identify the multiple perspectives from which the issue can be analyzed and how it might be the basis for making recommendations to influence community agency operations, policies, or procedures. Students then locate articles in professional journals and other relevant sources to provide a conceptual framework for the issue. During the second half of the semester, students use this research to write a formal paper that analyzed the social issue and includes recommendations.

Ethical Case Study

At the service site students frequently encounter events that raise not only intellectual and practical, but also moral and ethical issues. In this reflection activity, students are asked to write case studies of an ethical dilemma they confronted at the service site, including a description of the context, the individuals involved, and the controversy or dilemma they observed. Case studies can be written to include course content, as appropriate. Once the case studies are developed, they can provide the basis for formal papers, class presentations, or structured group discussions. These case studies are particularly well suited for an exploration and clarification of values because their diverse perspectives allow students to discuss the issue from alternative points of view.

Class Presentations

Students can share experiences, service accomplishments, or products created during their service in classroom presentations that use videos, PowerPoint, bulletin boards, panel discussions or speeches. These presentations provide excellent opportunities for students to organize their experiences, develop creative displays, and publicly celebrate their accomplishments. Community agency personnel can be invited to these presentations.

Portfolios

Students are required to collect several items throughout the semester for a final portfolio. Portfolios can include reflection journals, issue or interest papers, newspaper or magazine articles with reflections and creative artwork related to service experience.

Still Photo or Video Montage

Throughout their service experience, students can take pictures or video that demonstrates issues at their service site. Remember, the agency has to approve taking pictures or video. MANY agencies have confidentiality restrictions, so respect of clients

may prohibit this project. However, in agencies that work with the environment or animals, this will not be an issue.

Current Event Portfolio

Students collect newspaper articles, brochures, flyers, anything current on social issues that they are experiencing at their service site. With these collected materials, a brief analysis of how this relates to the social issues they are working with is required. These collections of materials need to be organized in a three ring binder or online via a web page.