

Assessment of Stone Soup Course Experience

This questionnaire is for faculty to describe and assess your experiences with “Stone Soup” Project assignments or activities. Your responses will be posted on the Indisputably blog and may be disseminated in other ways as well. Please describe specifics of your experience, but do not include information that could identify any student (except as noted below) or subject of a Stone Soup assignment or activity.

1. Faculty name: **Martha Simmons**
2. School: **Osgoode Hall Law School**
3. Course: **Theory and Practice of Mediation**
4. Semester: **Fall, 2017**
5. Number of students in the course: **18**
6. Briefly describe the Stone Soup assignment or activity (e.g., interview or focus group class). If you assigned students to conduct an interview, summarize the type of subjects and focus of the interview. If you conducted a focus group class, describe the speakers and issues discussed.

The students interviewed a mediator who has conducted a mediation within the last year. The students then wrote a report summarizing the interview describing insights they gained from the interview as they related to the theoretical issues discussed in class.

The goals of the assignment were to provide students with the opportunity to: (1) learn from someone's experience in a mediation; (2) practice interviewing skills including receiving ethics approval, developing rapport and protecting confidentiality; and (3) reflect on how concepts we discuss in class apply in mediations.

7. Was the assignment required, one of several options, or for extra credit?

Required

8. If students were to write a paper, how long was the paper supposed to be (in double-spaced pages)?

15-20 double spaced pages

9. When was the assignment due (or when did you conduct a Stone Soup activity)?

It was due at the end of the course, as required by university policy.

10. What percentage of the grade was allocated to the assignment?

60%

11. Did you discuss in class the results of students' work? If so, what did you and the students learn from this discussion? Was this a good use of class time?

No. Since the paper had to be submitted at the end of the course, there was no opportunity to review the assignment.

12. What did students learn that they wouldn't have learned without the Stone Soup assignment or activity?

The students were able to reflect on the theories discussed in class and practiced through their own mediations in Small Claims Court.

13. What worked well with the assignment or activity?

The student papers were stronger than they had been before the interview was added as a component. The students benefitted from networking with mediators and learning from them.

14. What would you do differently if you do it again?

The ethics approval process took longer than anticipated but now that we have an approved set of documents it will be quicker next time. Some students did not include as much literature in their final papers as was anticipated, so more explanation of expectations will be required next year.

15. What would you advise other faculty considering using a Stone Soup assignment or activity?

I would advise faculty who require ethics approval to seek such approval as soon as possible. I would also encourage them to set clear expectations about the outcomes from the interview to avoid confusion.

I would also encourage any faculty considering a Stone Soup assignment to try doing so. While an interview assignment may be novel in their classes, the benefits will speak for themselves. Students were unanimous in their positive feedback about the assignment.