**REFLECTIVE WRITING**

**Purpose**

Reflective writing or a Reflective Essay critically discusses personal experience and opinion in light of broader literature, theories or subject materials. **Conventions and expectations may differ across contexts, so always check expectations about the format with your lecturer or tutor.**

**Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe</strong> the selected experience, practice or theory.</td>
<td><strong>Write</strong> a personal response that reflects your overall assessment of what happened by:</td>
<td>• In summary, what do you think about this situation/experience or practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain clearly:</td>
<td>• <strong>Explaining</strong> how the practice specifically links to your own experiences or emerging practice or existing theory?</td>
<td>• What conclusions can you draw? How can you justify these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What happened?</td>
<td>• <strong>Explaining</strong> what specifically worked (or didn’t work)?</td>
<td>• In hindsight, would you do something differently next time and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What was I doing/involved in? When? Where?</td>
<td>• <strong>Describing</strong> how you felt, and what made you feel that way? How did others respond, and what made them feel that way.</td>
<td>• How has your participation or experiences shaped your own understanding of the discipline?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What did you observe?</td>
<td>• <strong>Reflecting</strong> on how the experience connects with your own knowledge, understanding or practice? And in what ways?</td>
<td>• How has the experience impacted on or shaped your understanding of …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What seems significant to pay attention to?</td>
<td>• Providing an explanation for what happened? How does the relevant theory, literature and/or research inform your thinking about this.</td>
<td>• What new questions have emerged for you as a result of your reflections?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are reflecting on a written text you might attempt to:</td>
<td>• <strong>Considering</strong> the ideas in terms of their logic, usefulness, theoretical soundness and implications.</td>
<td>• What have you learnt about yourself as a learner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Examine</strong> how the writer’s prior experience has shaped his or her views. Does this affect the validity of the ideas presented?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the take home messages you have uncovered in relation to the topic, concept or theory?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is acceptable to provide an opinion but it must be supported with evidence or examples.

If your reflection relates to observation, link what you observed to your own ideas about your own emerging practice.

**How could you use this reflection to further develop your practice or understanding in the future?**
Academic Language for Reflection

"...This was quite possibly due to ... Alternatively,..."

"...The problem here, I believe, was the fact that..."

"...While it may be true that..."

"...On the one hand, ..., yet on the other..."

"...In thinking back, ... On reflection, ..."

"...I guess that being .... like X has made me aware of..."

It is acceptable to use the personal pronoun 'I' in reflective writing, as long as it is not overly used. Always attempt to vary your sentence beginnings.

Discipline Examples

Guidance, Counselling and Careers Development


Useful Links

Models of Reflection


Reflective writing in Psychology


Reflective Practice


Reflective Writing: a basic introduction