JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

Brisbane Campus

REFLECTIVE WRITING

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

REFLECTIVE WRITING

What is reflective writing?

Reflective writing is your response to experiences, situations, events or new information. Usually these are linked to a/some relevant literature on the subject. There is no right or wrong answer. They are unique as you are expected to use personal pronouns (I, me, us) to express your ideas.

There are several kinds for reflective writings:

- **Journal** – requires you to write weekly entries during the trimester. It is usually about course content
- **Learning diary** – similar to a journal but may require group participation.
- **Log Book** – used mainly in science subjects to record a process to help reflection upon past events and what to do in the future.
- **Reflective note** – Used mainly in law. It is a personal reaction to a legal issue raised during the course.
- **Essay diary** – this is where you reflect upon/examine your sources that might be in your essay as well as your own writing and research methods.
- **Peer review** – usually involves students showing their work to their peers for feedback
- **Self – assessment** – requires you to comment on your own work.

You will usually be required to do a reflective writing at University as a technique for learning.

Why do we do reflective writing?

- to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of what occurred.
- to react to the text or situation by agreeing or disagreeing and explaining why
- to discuss links between the ideas on a topic to the work of more than one writer (you need at least two)
- to consider classroom practice (or other field experience) to what is appropriate for you
- to make connections between what you know and what you are learning
- to examine how you learn and whether it is effective
- to reflect on mistakes and successes for your future career

How do you complete one?

There are three (3) basic steps to completing one:

1. Clarify your task – check which kind(see above) your lecturer wants and what they expect
2. Clarify the content – check with your lecture what information such as a reading or process the lecturer wants you to reflect on
3. Examine and evaluate the various opinions on the topic such as differences in research results.

Reflective Writing Presentation and Layout

Format
Reflective writing involves a number of formats but the four steps below (adapted from Boud, D, 1985, Reflection: Turning experience into Learning) are **describe**, **interpret**, **evaluate** and **plan (DIEP).**

- Introduction

  o Introduce the event/information and the scope.
    Then give an outline on the order of what you will cover i.e. description, interpretation, evaluation and plan.

- Body Paragraph(s)

  o Describe what happened (who, what, where, when)
  o Interpret what happened

      ➢ why did it happen
      ➢ what you saw and heard
      ➢ how it connects to what you have learned/know
      ➢ what are your feelings about it
      ➢ what is/are your conclusions/hypothesis

  o Evaluate if the event/information is useful or effective for you

      ➢ What is your opinion of this event/information
      ➢ Explain why it is your opinion
      ➢ State what the value of it is

  o Plan how the event/information might help you in the future.

      ➢ State how this event/information can help you in your course, program, future career and life in general.

- Conclusion

    - Summarise the main ideas from the body
    - State your overall view of the event/information in regards to its usefulness and effectiveness for you and your future

Contents

- Introduction example – Theme - Previous studies of the topic

Function	Example	Language
<u>Topic sentence</u> Scope Outline of what is in the body paragraphs DIEP.	While on fieldwork, I observed a number of learning situations and while doing this I took notes on the presence of teaching techniques. For this piece I will be exploring the theories of *Intellectual Quality* and *Supportive Classroom Environment* respectively. I will begin with the description of the learning situation and then explore how the particular theories are evident within them. I will identify the particular elements of these ideas, I felt existed, and also make reference to those, which appeared absent in the learning situation. I will finish by reflecting on the importance of this assignment and the implications for teaching in general.	← Use of past tense to introduce the event e.g. *observed, took*. ← Use of future, *will*, to outline what is in the body e.g. *will begin* ← Note use of *I*. Reflections allows this.

- Body paragraph examples – Description & Interpretation

Function	Example	Language
Describes the what was expected Result and observation Interpretation & support	The children were asked to close their eyes and 'think carefully' about their favourite characters and what they knew about them. The children all did this and it was obvious by the expressions on their faces that they were concentrating and thinking really hard. This to me indicated that they were involving themselves in a form of higher order thinking. Their finished diary entries also were evidence of this, they produced extremely interesting and clever work, which showed a great deal of thought on the student's part.	← Past tense Is used for a past event/situation. E.g. *were asked, did, indicated.*

Body paragraph examples – Evaluate and Plan

Function	Example	Language
Evaluation	Both 'deep understanding' and 'deep knowledge' were present in this lesson. The children demonstrated a deep understanding of the underlying concepts of the task; they were able to use their knowledge to solve the problem and were able to establish the relationship of there being more than one correct answer.	Past tense Is used to evaluate the event. E.g. *were, demonstrated*
Plan	This activity is effective in the classroom as it involves the students focusing on what they know and then attempting to apply it in order to function. The use of this teaching technique also highlights those you have the ability and those who may be struggling.	Use of present to describe if the technique can be regularly used e.g. *is*, *highlights*. Future can also be used here.

- Conclusion example

Function	Example	Language
Summarise main ideas Evaluate Writer's view	In conclusion, using the above teaching techniques allows students to apply the knowledge that they have learned. However it can slow a class down if the students have failed to understand the knowledge at first. Despite this weakness, it is still an effective teaching technique which should be used at some point in every classroom.	Present tense to summarise e.g. *allows,* Present Perfect to link past to present e.g. *have failed*

Reference List

A reflective writing may contain a reference list if a specific writing (s) is discussed. If needed, the reference list should give information about all sources cited in the report. Use the APA referencing format.

These guidelines are not prescriptive and some academic staff may have their own preferences, so it is important that you consult the subject outline and/or the tutor before proceeding.

Reflective Writing Checklist

Have you

- ☐ written an introduction, body and conclusion?
- ☐ outlined the purpose and scope?
- ☐ outlined the organisation of the body?
- ☐ Reported (described) the issue or experience upon which you are reflecting?
- ☐ Described your own response to the experience? (Interpretation)
- ☐ Outlined how the issue or experience changed your understanding and/or behaviour?
- ☐ Evaluated whether the situation/information is valuable/useful?
- ☐ Explained how this new understanding will help to reconstruct my future professional practice?
- ☐ Followed the required structure for this assignment?
- ☐ Checked that my assignment makes sense?
- ☐ Checked that my spelling and punctuation are error free?

References

RMIT Study & Learning centre(N.D) Reflective writing. Retrieved from
https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/2_assessmenttasks/assess_tuts/lit_review_LL/integration.html