SPLASH Introduction to



Reflective Writing

**Can you give me some examples of reflection at**

**university?**

* Reading and acting on your tutor’s feedback on your essay to improve it
* Writing a reflective report on an incident or event you participated in
* Deciding whether course reading material is suitable/relevant to your essay
* Keeping a learner diary in order to record changes in your opinions on a topic
* Keeping a record of your learning development

**What is reflective writing?**

* much more than a description of facts or events
* critical writing, questioning different viewpoints, examining reasons
* a process through which you develop or change your opinions and/or your behaviour

**How do I structure my written reflection?**

There are four basic stages. It may help to ask and answer a series of questions:

1. **Something Happened (Brief description)**

What was it? An event you took part in? A task you were assigned for your portfolio? A group task in which you played a role? Something you organised?

1. **What Happened? (Your feelings and those of others involved)**

Not just what you did – but what happened? What were the main challenges/difficulties? What were your motivations for doing what you did? And others? How did you react to things that happened? How did you feel? Was anyone else involved? What are their views? How did they react? What was familiar and what surprised you? Have your views/expectations been confirmed or challenged?

1. **So What? (Evaluation/Analysis/Conclusions)**

What is your evaluation of your performance? What criteria are you judging yourself by? Has your evaluation changed over time- from then until now? What feedback have you had – both formal and informal? Whose views support your actions/beliefs and whose can provide a different perspective? How does this fit in with what you know already? What further reading and research could you do?

What conclusions can you draw from this experience? What else could you have done?

1. **Now What? (Action Plan)**

Would you do anything differently next time? What key lessons for the future have you learned? In what areas do you feel you need to develop? What might hold you back? Who/what can help you? What are the short and long-term benefits for you?

**The language of reflection**

Here is a list of suggested reflective phrases you might like to use:

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| --- | --- |
| After observation…. | The significance of this activity… |
| This comment tells me…. | It is important for me to realize… |
| In this situation, I should have… | This is significant because… |
| Because of this activity, I was prompted to… | I acknowledge that… |
| This is an indication of… | I focused on….because… |
| To promote continued thinking I plan to… | I realized that… |
| With hindsight, I should perhaps have… | In the future… |
| In retrospect… | I have since concluded… |
| After this activity, I found….to be significant because… | On reflection, I feel that… |

**What are tutors looking for when they mark my reflection?**

* That you make connections between the event and your knowledge
* You show evidence that you have learnt something as a result of your experience
* You include the views and motives of others involved, as well as an awareness of your own feelings
* You show your awareness of your own strengths and qualities
* Your own weaknesses and areas for improvement
* That you have questioned what you did and whether you could / would do something differently next time (Action planning for personal development)



Need further advice on reflective writing?

Go to the SPLASH website for more information: [www.surrey.ac.uk/splash](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/splash)

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