Reflective Writing
Learner Development Unit
Overview

• To reflect on why you’re asked to do it

• To reflect on the concept of reflection

• To focus on key features of effective reflective writing
Different forms of assessment on university courses

- Essays
- Reports
- Presentations
- Performances
- Products
- Dissertations
- Reflective writing
- Reviews
### Differences between Reflective Writing and an Academic Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PDP, diary, log, reflective journal, etc.</th>
<th>Academic essay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of personal experience</td>
<td>Analysis of theory, concept, other writers’ perspectives</td>
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<td>Slightly more informal style (first person ‘I’ can be used, but don’t overuse it)</td>
<td>More formal academic style. Generally avoids first person singular</td>
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<td><em>Purpose:</em> to evaluate personal experience in order to move forward</td>
<td><em>Purpose:</em> to synthesise and evaluate the work of others before arriving at a balanced conclusion.</td>
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ARGUMENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Giving reasons for a particular point of view or perspective – explaining why

Building up a body of evidence to support this perspective – using other writers’ work, DVDs, websites, TV recordings, etc

Giving examples to support your ideas

Being precise and logical
Description versus analysis: A painting by Henri Rousseau
Description versus analysis: A painting by Bridget Riley
What is reflection?

Reflection can be defined as an **analysis** of past events from a position in the present.

This analysis enables us to learn from our past experiences and be better prepared for similar events taking place in the future.

(Reflections document on LDU on Oasisplus)
Stages of Reflection

1. Describe/explore the experience
2. Analyse/interpret the experience
3. Explore alternatives; frame future actions

Middlesex University London
Is this a good example of reflection? Why? Why not?

Our group decided to film at Southgate tube station. It was absolutely disastrous. Two people turned up late because of an accident or some other stuff that happened on the North Circular. Another one had forgotten to bring some equipments, and was really aggressive with me. Then we couldn’t get on, and the commuters which we interviewed gave really stupid answers to our questions.
Effective reflective writing:

- Analyses, rather than describes
- Tries to back up a particular point of view with ‘evidence’
- Looks for reasons why something happened
- Avoids emotional adjectives, e.g. disastrous, stupid, aggressive
- Uses standard English grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Avoids slang and informal language, e.g. stuff
Describe an experience on the course that you have had since you started at Middlesex.
Stages of reflection: Analyse and interpret your experience

• Take a step back from writing your book review and treat it more objectively
• Break the experience down into parts
• Start to ask ‘why’ – explore which aspects of it were easy to do and which were more difficult
• Draw some conclusions about what you have experienced
Stages of reflection: Explore alternatives and frame future actions

- Think about alternatives in how this experience could have been different
- Question ‘your taken for granted’ views about how you wrote it
- Talk to others about and build up a bank of differing ideas
- Decide how you can use what you have learned to do it differently next time
A useful book:

PALGRAVE
STUDY SKILLS
THE STUDY SKILLS
HANDBOOK
STELLA COTTRELL
THIRD EDITION