Reflective Writing

Learning Enhancement Team
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Variety is the Spice of Life!

Different Schools... 

- Can you use ‘I’ in an academic text?
- Should an essay have section headings?
- How long is a report?
- Do you use primary or secondary research?
- Footnotes, endnotes or no notes?
- Harvard style referencing or MLA? What about APA?

**Which school are you in? What is acceptable and what is unacceptable in your field?**

Always check in your module handbooks or with your tutor if you are concerned about appropriacy
Reflective Writing Aims

— To think about why you are asked to reflect

— To think about the concept of reflection

— To look at key features of effective reflective writing
Assessment

How are you assessed on your course?

There are many different types of assessment. Did you think of any of these? What might be added to the list?

- Essays
- Reports
- Presentations
- Performance
- Products
- Dissertations / Final Year Projects
- Reflection
- VIVA
- Reviews

What are the advantages / disadvantages of each assessment type?
Common Reflection Concerns

I have never heard of a Reflection before and am worried by the thought of writing one.

How do I know what I should be talking about?

The assignment says it should be critical – but I thought a reflection is just writing about what happened to me.
Reflection

What is a 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.

Why are you asked to do it?

— Being reflective shows your ability as a practitioner. All professionals should have the ability to review their work and their contributions, honestly and analytically, in order to continue to maintain best practice in their field.

Reflections are not trying to ‘catch you out’.
Reflective Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Writing</th>
<th>‘Traditional’ Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of personal experience</td>
<td>Analysis of theory, concept, or other writers’ perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often more informal (‘I’ can usually be used, for example)</td>
<td>Often more formal style (‘I’ rarely used)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose is to evaluate personal performance 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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Being critical is essential when writing academically. If you feel unsure, try the **Critical Thinking AWL Open Workshop**.
Reflective Writing

Both Reflective essays and ‘Traditional’ essays have one thing in common: Criticality/Argument. What do you think is meant by this?

— 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
Stages Of Reflection

1. Describe the experience
2. Explore the experience
3. Form alternatives / hypothesise
4. Analyse / interpret the experience
5. Frame future actions
Describe & Explore

Think about a difficult choice you had to make recently. Describe this choice to your neighbour. Why was this choice difficult? What was at stake?
Analyse And Interpret

Think about what you did to make this choice. Did you:

— Discuss it with friends/family
— Think about previous choices/outcomes?
— Imagine various outcomes?
— Research outcomes online?
— Change your mind?
Alternatives And Future Actions

Now you have made your choice, was it the right one? Think about:

— Ultimately, how did you make your choice?
— Was it the right choice?
— *If* you had chosen differently, what might have happened? Would this be better or worse?
— *How* might you make a similar choice in the future, based on this experience?
Bring It All Together

“We do not store experience as data, like a computer: we story it” (Winter, 1998).

What do you think this means?

How might this apply to your Reflection?
Task

Work with a partner to evaluate this reflection. What changes would you make? Why?

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 equipment, and was really aggressive with me. Then we couldn’t get on, and the commuters who we interviewed gave really stupid answers to our questions. Next time I won’t work with this group.
Hints And Tips

Reflective Writing is about you – this makes it both incredibly easy and incredibly difficult. Try to bear these points in mind:

- 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
- Take a step back from yourself and treat the experience 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
Where now?

— Need more detailed assistance? **Book a tutorial**!

— Want feedback on a specific section? **Drop in to Getting Your Assignment Ready**!

— Want somewhere quiet to write, and get on the spot assistance? **Try The Writing Space**!

— Got a few quick questions? **AWL Office Hours** at [The Study Hub] are for you!

— **AWL Open Workshops** can be **booked here**!

  • **Suggestions:**
    – Critical Thinking
It's QUESTION TIME!!