

Resource Guide

Implementing Reflective Assignments

Reflection is a form of mental processing where meaningful learning can take place as it offers the opportunity to make sense of new material in the context of prior knowledge and experiences. A well-designed reflection can promote higher-order thinking skills as it generates, deepens, and documents learning. While reflection is not about producing one right answer, not all reasoning is equally valid. It, therefore, requires a "safe, yet critical" space where learners can receive feedback. There are four observations echoed by various reflective learning researchers about the practicalities of implementing reflective assignments.

- 1.) Be clear about what you mean by "reflection" and the goals you want it to serve in your class.
- 2.) Reflection works better if it occurs regularly throughout a course or experience.
- 3.) Learners don't often understand how to approach reflection, so offering both good and poor examples of reflection that are discussed in class can help understanding.
- 4.) Provide a starting exercise or prompt to help focus the activity.

Frameworks for Reflective Assignments

- **DEAL Model**, Patti Clayton
 - **Description** of experiences in an objective and detailed manner. This is an important step because learners tend to jump straight into interpretation.
 - **Examination** of those experiences in light of specific learning goals and objectives. This helps learners connect what they experienced to learning objectives.
 - **Articulation of Learning**, including goals for future action that can then be taken forward into the next experience. What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why does it matter? What will I do in light of it?
- **What? So What? Now What?**, Gary Rolfe
 - **What?** This is the descriptive level of reflection. Asking questions like what was my role in the situation? What was I trying to achieve? What actions did I take?
 - **So What?** This is the theory and knowledge-building level of reflection. What did I base my actions on? What other knowledge can I bring to the situation? What is my new understanding of the situation?
 - **Now What?** This is the action-oriented level of reflection. What do I need to do in order to make things better? What are the consequences of this action?

Resources

Ash, Sarah L, and Patti H Clayton. "Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning." (2009).

Moon, Jennifer A. *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice*. Psychology Press, 2004

Rolfe, Gary, Melanie Jasper, and Dawn Freshwater. *Critical reflection in practice: Generating knowledge for care*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at cttl@slu.edu.