

# UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

# Welcome



# GREat Skills

## Reflective Writing

### Learning Objectives:

- 1) To be able to **describe** what it means to reflect
- 2) To be able to **explain** some key features of reflective writing
- 3) To be able to **demonstrate** how reflection can be applied to academic writing and activities

# What does it mean to reflect ?

What do you think it means to reflect?



**2 minutes**

# What does it mean to reflect ?

To 'reflect' on something is to think about the **positives** and **negatives** and how well the event turned out/what the outcomes were and what you have learnt from an experience.

# Why might you need to reflect?

Reflection is a key part of any journey, whether that is in relation to academic writing, a process or an activity. This is because the knowledge and skills you gain on this journey are really valuable tools which you can use in the future.

Reflection allows you to:

- Show the knowledge you have gained
- Demonstrate the skills you have gained/built on
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your work
- Comment on any improvements you would make if completing this process/work again

# Where will you need to reflect on your performance in the future?

- Completing a performance review in your job e.g. for a promotion
- Planning a future event similar to one just completed

## **Putting Reflection into Practice**

Have a look at the following scenario and try to think about anything which you might be able to reflect on to learn from the experience.

You recently planned a trip to the Imperial War Museum in London on Saturday because you really wanted to visit one of the exhibitions there for a presentation you had coming up next week. You had looked in a magazine and had seen that the exhibition was on today and closed at 6pm. You planned your transport and set off on your journey. When you reached the museum, you were an hour later than you wanted to be as you left too late and missed your train.

You also arrived only to realise that the exhibition was closing sooner than you thought, as the magazine you read must have been incorrect about closing times. You still managed to see everything you needed and documented all the key information there for your presentation, however, the exhibition in a different museum may have been more informative for the details which you required.



# What could you reflect on?

Why did I choose this museum?

Motivation, why did I want to go to an exhibition?

What could I do better next time?

Did I use the resources at the museum effectively?

Was my research resource strong enough? (magazine)

Time management

Was this trip actually useful for me after all?

Planning

Thinking about a personal activity, project or piece of writing which you have completed, try to think about the areas which you might reflect on:

What were the weaknesses/what did I find difficult?

What were my aims/motivations? What did I want to learn or achieve?

How did I find information or resources I needed, and were they reliable?

What was different from my expectations?

What were the strengths/what went well?

Did I ask for support when I needed it?

What have I learnt from this project? How did I benefit from it?

What advice would I give to someone else starting this project?

Did I manage my time well?

What would I change if I started this all again?

What skills have I learnt/improved and how has this helped me?

# What does reflective writing look like?

Me, myself and I...

Reflective writing should:

- Comment on your personal journey
- Highlight why you made the choices you made and what you learnt from them
- Discuss successes and difficulties
- Describe how you would build on/overcome difficulties in the future

**Do not** skip over things you think didn't go well, the reflection is the perfect place to comment on the ups and downs!

# Where can I start?

**Me, myself and I...**

Do not start every sentence with 'I'

Instead, think about alternative starters, such as:

**During my research it was highlighted that..**

**One of the strengths of my activity was..**

**Completing this project taught me...**

# Like building a house...

Strong reflective writing is structured, and is built up in stages.

You should begin with your sentence starter:

**An aspect of this project which I found difficult was time management..**

You can then build on this with more information:

**At the start of this essay I rushed towards deadlines and found that I was not balancing my time in an efficient way.**

# Like building a house...

**You then have the opportunity to build on this information even further:**

An aspect of this project which I found difficult was time management. At the start of this essay I rushed towards deadlines and found that I was not balancing my time in an efficient way.

This meant that I missed a couple of deadlines to start with and found this quite stressful. Within the process, however, I began to improve this skill of time management and became more effective at organising my time, which really helped to make the next few deadlines much more manageable.

# Time to reflect..

- 1) Look at the 6 examples of reflective writing paragraphs, some of which reflect on essay writing and others on activities. Discuss whether you think they are good or not and what you think could be added or improved within each one, and why?
- 2) Using the traffic light grid, decide how you would score each paragraph:

**GREEN** - It has all the key features included and is an effective piece of writing

**AMBER** - Writing has some key features included but needs some improvement

**RED** - The writing is not really relevant or misses key features

# What makes a good piece of reflective writing?

What are the aims of Reflective Writing?	Features of Reflective Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To review and evaluate your own learning and performance</li><li>• To use effective communication skills to discuss conclusions (which have been reached using evidence or judgement)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detailed evaluation of both strengths and weaknesses of the process and the end result. Points made are balanced and well-developed.</li><li>• Strong evaluation of things which have been learnt and improvements which could be made when completing the process again.</li><li>• Writing is relevant and well-structured, and any conclusions reached are based on evidence or judgement.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some evaluation of strengths/weaknesses but writing is often one-sided.</li><li>• Some discussion surrounding things which have been learnt and improvements which could be made.</li><li>• Writing is sometimes relevant and well-structured, and some conclusions are based on evidence or judgement. Some points could be further developed.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No real evaluation of strengths/weaknesses. Writing is often one-sided and not well-balanced.</li><li>• Any conclusions reached are not based on evidence or judgement and points which are made are simple and have not been developed enough.</li><li>• Writing is not relevant and does not have an effective structure.</li></ul>



I learnt a huge amount about the portrayal of the Holocaust within British museums through the completion of my essay. My topic had always been one which had interested me greatly and one which I wanted to investigate further. Completing this work allowed me to really challenge myself and go beyond the syllabus of my subjects, and the knowledge that I now possess will be fundamental towards my chosen degree subject, so I am keen to continue my learning and research surrounding this topic, in my own time. I completed a 5000 word essay and I feel that the essay was a real success, as I conducted a good amount of relevant research from different sources, as well as having visited the museums myself in person for a more comprehensive understanding of the question I had posed. I provided a well-balanced and structured argument as to how effectively these museums could truly depict the nature and impact of the Holocaust on those attending them.

Once I had started my research, I quickly had to narrow my question in order to select a key theme surrounding the topic of the Holocaust, as I realised that the topic was a very broad one. I arrived at the more precise question of how well British museums can portray the Holocaust as a result of this initial research.

After completing my work placement, I feel that a weakness of mine within this placement would have to be my time management. I didn't allocate my time well and this meant that I found it difficult to meet deadlines and complete tasks which were set.

One of my strengths was communication, however, which meant that I felt confident asking for support when needed and was able to build some really effective relationships during my time in the company.

One of the weaknesses I found whilst completing my essay, was that my initial essay plan was not detailed enough. I understand that this was due to the fact that I was very keen to start my research, however, this did cause me disruption within my project. I should have provided more detail within my plan before I started to write my essay. My initial plan was not in-depth enough to support my writing and actually meant that I had to stop writing my essay temporarily, whilst I put more detail into my plan. I feel this was a good decision, as it allowed me to ensure I was back on topic and my research was all linked correctly into my essay. If I was to complete this again, I would ensure I provided a more in-depth plan at the start, as this would have saved me time and difficulty within the later stages of writing this essay. Planning is a vital skill I have learnt from completing this work and is a skill I can now use in my studies and within everyday life as well.

When I was completing my presentation, I felt very nervous and don't feel that it went very well. I forgot to mention a lot of the key details which I had researched. I didn't maintain strong eye contact with the audience and feel I could have answered some of their questions more effectively. I also forgot to give them the handouts I had prepared at the start as well. If I were to do this presentation again, I would practice more.

I used a number of different types of sources within my research, including books, journals, videos and the internet. When I started my research, I had little knowledge in relation to the extent of the displays within British museums and was finding that a lot of my research was focussing more on the event of the Holocaust itself, rather than the impact of attending a modern-day museum. This meant that I was off-topic and needed to focus my research more clearly. If I was to complete this essay again, I think that I would actually incorporate a few interviews into my writing, showing the views of those who had attended the museums.

The most difficult aspects of delivering a large scale event to over 1000 people were the planning which was required in advance of the event and the time management on the day of the event as well.

I completed a significant amount of research very early on, closely analysing a range and variety of events similar to the one which I was hoping to deliver, looking at everything from location, costing and duration, through to time of year and quality of gift bags given to guests. I feel that my research was a particular strength of mine, as it really supported me to be as prepared as possible and to make really effective decisions upfront. My networking and relationship building skills were also a particular strength, as I was able to create an excellent guest list and made some great savings on key aspects such as food, drinks, the band and even the marquee rental too.

The event was a great success, but there were definitely some learning points which I gained as result of completing this activity, one of which was time management. I found it very difficult to manage my time effectively on the day of the event and found I had to rush the serving of the food, as I had spent too long welcoming guests and serving drinks.

If I were to complete this event again, I would look to request additional support for the day, so that I could manage my time and availability more effectively.

# Final Reflections

Have a go at writing the first few sentences of a reflective piece, using a recent activity or essay which you have completed, as your focus.

# Reflection Checklist

Is your writing detailed? Have you explained your points well?



Is your writing clear and easy to understand?



Is your writing always relevant?



Is it balanced (have you thought about strengths and things to improve)?



Have you thought about the whole process, not just the outcome?



Is it well-structured?



Are any conclusions you've made based on evidence or judgement?





# Reflective Writing

After completing this workshop today, you should now be able to:

- 1) To be able to **describe** what it means to reflect
- 2) To be able to **explain** some key features of reflective writing
- 3) To be able to **demonstrate** how reflection can be applied to academic writing and activities

# Any Questions?

Join us at our next Open Day or other events:

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Resources produced for are for use in 2020/2021 academic year.

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