

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, 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

- x DEAL Model Patti Clayton
 - o Description of experiences in a objective and detailed manner. This is an important step because learners tend to jump straight into interpretation.
 - o Examination of those experiences in light of specific learning goals and objectives. This helps learners connect what they experienced to learning objectives
 - o 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? Does it matter? What will I do in light of it?
- x What? So What? Now What? Gary Rolfe
 - o 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?
 - o 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

critical reflection in practice: Generating knowledge

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