

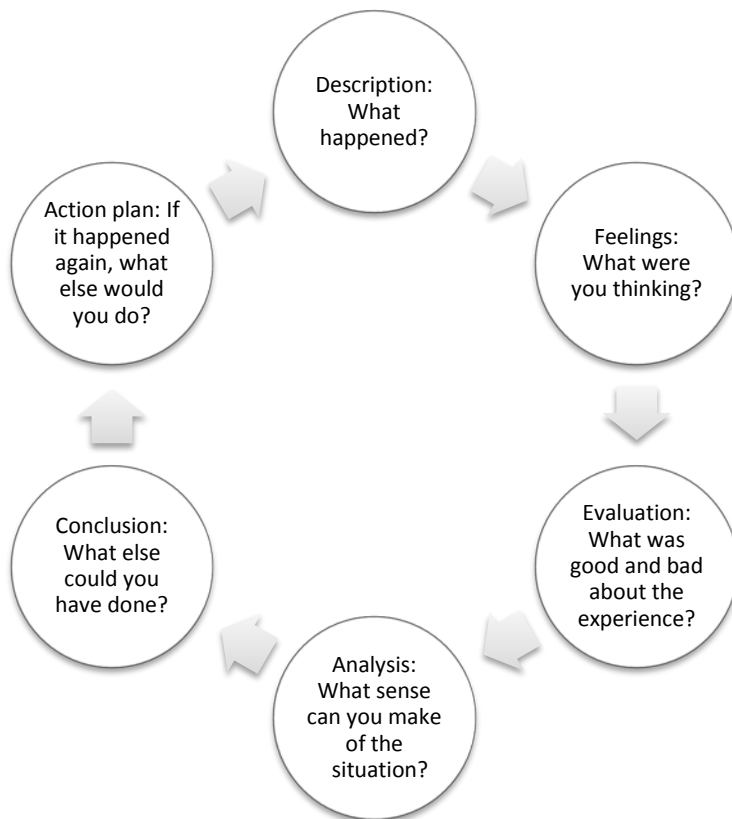
Reflective Writing

Reflecting on your actions and your ongoing personal and professional development is a powerful way of learning. What does it mean to reflect in an academic context? By considering the strategies below for integrating theory and practice, you will be prepared to think reflectively and communicate about your learning discoveries.

Many university courses require you to engage in reflection through writing. This may include journals, portfolios, or papers on professional development.

Reflective writing is...	Reflective writing is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting your experience to course or program concepts • Integrating your perspectives, experiences, and relevant literature in an organized manner • Thinking critically about past experience in order to improve future practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “diary” that records experience without insight on <i>what the experience means</i> • Unstructured writing • A report on content you have read without implications for your actions/learning

Reflective writing is part of a process where you learn by thinking about an experience you had, considering its implications for your personal and professional growth, and determining what future action you might take as a result of your learning. The process of action and reflection is often described as a cycle:



In an action/ reflection learning cycle, you begin by focusing on an **event** that happened, considering your **thoughts and feelings** during and after the event.

You then move to **evaluation** and **analysis**, which allows you to incorporate theory you are learning into your understanding of your experience.

The final steps allow you to draw **conclusions** and consider alternative **actions** you could have taken, and to consider your future development. These final steps allow for deep learning that supports future growth and the application of insights to your professional practice.

Cycle adapted from Gibbs, 1988



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Prepare for Reflective Writing

When a course requires reflective writing, you might choose one or more of the following activities to support your practice:

- Keep a learning journal. This journal answers questions such as: What did I learn? What went well? What could I have done better? What are the long-term implications of this learning for me?
- Free-write in response to a reflection prompt. Use this as the basis for a more structured reflection that you submit in your assignment.
- Keep an audio or video journal of what you are learning. You may be able to include this in an online assignment, or use it as the basis for later writing.
- Complete a structured pre-writing activity, such as the one below, as preparation for writing.

Think of an interaction, event, or episode you experienced. Describe what happened.	
What feelings and perceptions surrounded the experience? How would you explain these to someone else?	
What does this experience mean in the context of your course ?	
What other perspectives, theories, or concepts could be applied to the situation?	
How does the experience impact your present and future actions?	

(Adapted from Monash University, 2018)

By developing a reflective writing practice, you will prepare yourself for excellence in your chosen career through ongoing learning and personal development.

References

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