



Reflective journals are a useful tool for lecturers to see how a student engages with course concepts over a period of time. If you are interested in reflective practice for your own practice, see the [LIU's resource for lecturers on reflective practice](#).

A reflective journal can be kept over the duration of the course or for a specified time period within the course. It is important to distinguish reflective journals from [portfolio](#). A portfolio is a collection of artefacts and a reflective journal is a space where students critically reflect upon their own learning process.

The content of a reflective journal is a collection of the student's reflections on their own learning with the course; these reflections can be guided by the lecturer with 'prompt questions' or 'guided reflections' where the lecturer provides the area of the course that they would like the student to reflect upon. The student may be asked to reflect upon readings in the course, upon new skills being learned such as in a laboratory environment, or upon current events related to the course.

For reflective journals to be effective students must do their entries continuously throughout the duration of the assignment. To ensure that students complete entries in their reflective journals consistently, lecturers can set up a reflective journal online in order to see the timestamp of entry.

Key Points and Tips

- Reflection as making meaning from experience - and learning from it
- Educators often see reflection as a key element for 'Deep' / 'Transformative Learning'
- Reflection *on* action vs. reflection *in* action ([Schon, 1983](#))
- Reflection *for* action ([Eraut, 1995](#)): important for [PDP](#)
- Reflection is a complex process involving both intellectual *and* emotional elements ([Dewey, 1933](#))
- Many people find reflection 'difficult'
- People who are 'natural' reflectors do not necessarily record their reflections
- Private reflection vs. facilitated or group reflection
- Does assessment change the nature and honesty of reflection?

Assessing Reflective Journals

Here is a sample rubric for assessing a reflective journal from the Educational Technology Department at Boise State University.

Prompt Questions

Here are some sample prompt questions from the Learning to Learn Project at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The questions come from a guide available at the following link which also provides a template for a reflective journal: [Reflective Journal Guide with template](#)

- How what I have learned relates to my other experiences?
- What implications does it have regarding my learning?
- What difficulties have I encountered in applying my knowledge in dealing with everyday situations?
- What would be the causes for those difficulties and how could I overcome them?
- What has been discussed today in class? What does it mean to me?
- What do I find difficult in understanding? Why?
- What do I find difficult in accepting? Why?
- Could it have been otherwise?

Useful Links

Two good starting points for learning about reflection:

Moon J. [Guide for Busy Academics No.4. Learning through reflection.](#) HE Academy, York, 2005

Smith, M. K. (1999) '[Reflection: What constitutes reflection - and what significance does it have for educators? The contributions of Dewey, Schön and Boud et. al. assessed.](#)', the encyclopedia of informal education, www.infed.org/biblio/b-reflect.htm (accessed 3rd July 2006).

- The following link from the Learning Lab at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology provides tips for writing reflective journals for students writing reflective journals.
- The following link is an example of what a reflective journal kept over a period of 13 weeks can look like in a [Management and Organization Course](#).