

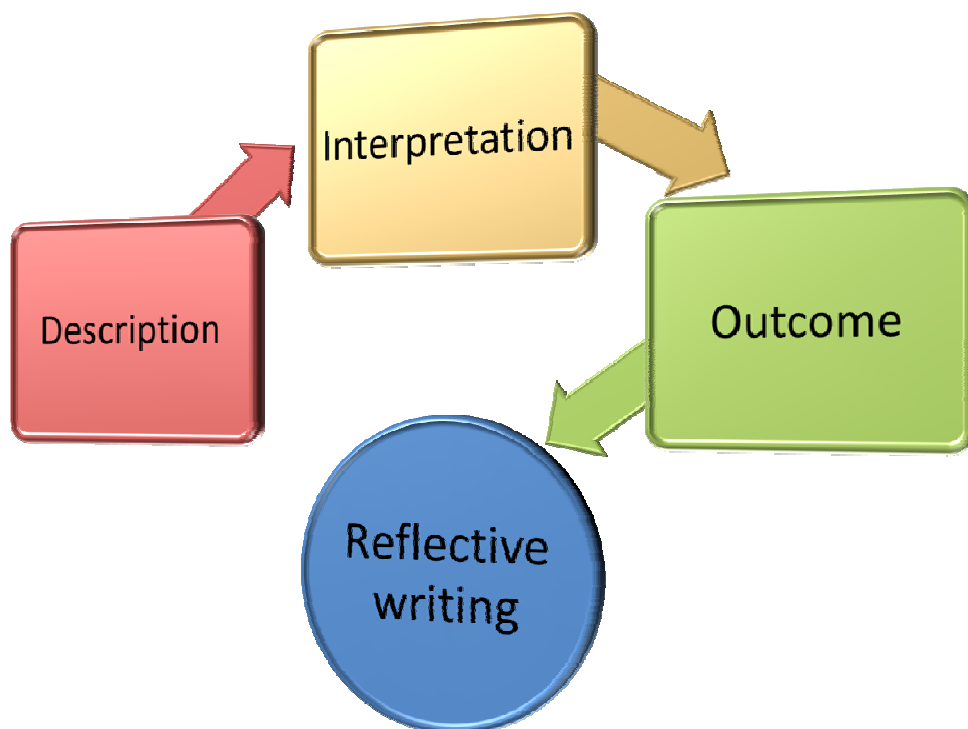


SWANSEA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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Reflective Writing – A basic introduction

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Reflective writing: A basic introduction

What is reflective writing?

Reflective writing is evidence of reflective thinking. In an academic context, reflective thinking usually involves:

1. Looking back at something (often an event, i.e. something that happened, but it could also be an idea or object).
2. Analysing the event or idea (thinking in depth and from different perspectives, and trying to explain, often with reference to a model or theory from your subject).
3. Thinking carefully about what the event or idea means for you and your ongoing progress as a learner.

Reflective writing is thus **more personal** than other kinds of academic writing. We all think reflectively in everyday life, of course, but perhaps not to the same depth as that expected in good reflective writing at university level.

Reflection is an **exploration and an explanation of events** – not just a description of them.

Genuinely reflective writing often involves “revealing” **anxieties, errors and weaknesses, as well as strengths and successes**. This is fine (in fact it is often essential!) as long as you show some understanding of possible causes, and explain how you plan to improve.

It is normally necessary to **select just the most significant parts** of the event or idea on which you are reflecting. If you try to tell the whole story you are likely to use up your words on description rather than interpretation.

It is often useful to “**reflect forward**” to the future as well as “reflecting back” on the past.

Structure for reflective writing

Reflective writing can be broken down into three parts these include; a description, interpretation and outcome.

1. Description (keep this short!)

What happened?

What is being examined?

2. Interpretation

What is most important / interesting /useful/relevant about the object event or idea?

How can it be explained e.g. with theory?

3. Outcome

What have I learned from this?

What does this mean for my future?

Vocabulary aid

The following are **just a few** suggestions for words and phrases that might be useful in reflective writing. The vocabulary aid is structured according to the three part analysis – description, interpretation and outcome.

1. Description (the short part!)

There is no specific vocabulary for any descriptive elements of your reflective writing, because the range of possible events, ideas or objects on which you reflect is so vast.

2. Interpretation (probably the most important part!)

For me, the [most]	{ meaningful significant important relevant useful }	{ aspect(s) element(s) experience(s) issue(s) idea(s) }	was (were)...
		learning	{ arose from... happened when... resulted from... }

Previously, At the time, At first Initially, Subsequently, Later,	}	I	{ thought (did not think)... felt (did not feel)... knew (did not know)... noticed (did not notice)... questioned (did not question)... realised (did not realise)... }
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[Alternatively,] [Equally,]	This	{ might be is perhaps could be is probably }	{ because of... due to ... explained by... related to... }
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This	{ is similar to... is unlike... }	because...
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[Un]Like...	this	{ reveals... demonstrates... }
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3. Outcome

Having	{ read... experienced... applied... discussed... analysed... learned... }	I now	{ feel... think... realise... wonder... question... know... }
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[Additionally, [Furthermore, [Most importantly,] }	I have learned that...
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I have	significantly	{ developed improved }	{ my skills in... my understanding of... my knowledge of... my ability to... }
However, I have not [sufficiently]	slightly		

This means that...
 This makes me feel...

This knowledge This understanding This skill	{ is could be will be }	{ essential important useful }	to me as a learner [because ...]
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Because I	{ did not... have not yet... am not yet certain about... am not yet confident about... do not yet know... do not yet understand... }	I will now need to ...
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As a next step I need to...