

# Guidelines for the post-project paper

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## What are reflection papers?

A reflection paper is an academic essay where you reflect on a course experience. In this course, you write a reflection paper on your project. To *reflect* (in the sense that I use this word here) means critically examining your experience and explicitly articulating what you have learned.

## Why write reflection papers?

Writing a reflection paper allows you to process an experience and think about how it has helped your learning. As [Gibbs \(1988\)](#) writes, '[i]t is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.' Reflective writing also trains your analytical skills, requiring you to relate your experience to your existing knowledge. For me (the examiner), a reflection paper is a means to assess to what extent you have achieved a learning objective.

## How to write reflection papers?

There are many ways to write reflection papers, but for this assignment, I ask you to structure your text into the same three parts that we also use in the lab series:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Describe* your project experience in fair detail and as objectively as possible. Focus on things that let you illustrate what you have learned.
2. *Examine* your project experience and link it to relevant concepts and skills from the course. See below for prompts that will help you with this.
3. *Articulate* your learning: What did you learn? How, specifically, did you learn that? Why does this learning matter?

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<sup>1</sup>This structure is based on the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection ([Ash and Clayton, 2004](#)).

## Part 1: Describe your experience

This part lays the foundation for your reflections. Provide the facts of your project experience; do not jump straight into interpretations. Select aspects significant for your learning; do not simply recount the events from start to end.

*Suggested structure* Here is a suggested structure for this part:

- Start with a short summary of your project (at most 200 words).
- Explain why your project is interesting and what you wanted to learn from it.
- Describe what you actually did in the project and what results you obtained.

Make sure to write your description so readers who were not involved in the project will understand what you did, why you did it, and what you found. As your reader, imagine a fellow student who has not taken this particular course.

## Part 2: Examine your experience

In this part, you move beyond a mere description of your project. Instead, your goal here should be to critically examine your experience and connect it to the course content and any additional reading you did for the project.

*Prompts* Respond to the following prompt:<sup>2</sup>

What specific technical concepts and skills from the course were relevant to your project? Explain them so that a fellow student who is not in the course can understand them. How exactly did you use these concepts and skills in the project?

For a higher grade, additionally address one of these more advanced prompts:

- What similarities, what differences were there between your prior understanding of the course content and the way in which it emerged in the project?
- Based on your experience and your analysis, was your understanding of the course content and any additional reading adequate? If not, what exactly was lacking?
- How has the project enhanced your understanding of the course content? Given what you know now, how would you do the project today?

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<sup>2</sup>The prompts were adapted from [Duke Service-Learning \(2018\)](#).

### Part 3: Articulate your learning

In the last part of your paper, you summarise your reflections by explicitly articulating what you have learned, and explaining how this learning is relevant for the learning objectives.

*Prompts* Respond to all of the following three prompts:

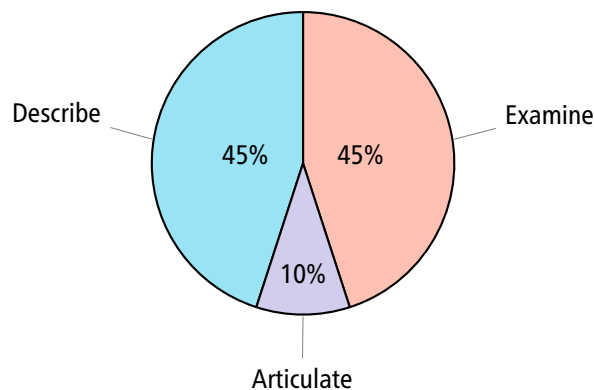
- What did you learn? Express an important learning, not just a fact.
- How, exactly, did you learn it? Connect your learning to specific details in your description and insights from your analysis.
- Why does your learning matter? What value does the learning have for you? How will you use it? Consider how your experience has helped you achieve the learning objective for the project module:

*On completion of the course, the student should be able to seek, assess, and use scientific information within the area of NLP.*

### Paper length

The maximal length for the post-project paper is 4 pages (8 columns) using the provided style files. This excludes references.

*Length distribution* The first two parts (*Describe* and *Examine*) should each make up approximately 45% of the total length (ca. 3.5 columns). The third part (*Articulate*) should take the remaining 10% (ca. 1 column). A common mistake is to make the description too long and the examination of the learning too short.



## Additional tips

Here are some additional tips that can help you write a good reflection paper:

- Make sure you understand the context and purpose of the project. What you write should be relevant for the learning objective.
- Before starting with the paper, review any material related to the project and jot down things that stand out in your mind. For example, think about what you found especially interesting, surprising, or hard.
- Make it understandable. Imagine that you are writing the paper for a fellow student who is not in the course. I (the examiner) will read your paper as if I were such a student. Explain all technical concepts that you learned in the course.
- Work with the text. I will assess your paper as a piece of academic writing. Stick to one central idea per paragraph. Aim for a good flow. Use academic language (but do use first-person pronouns). Check for typos and errors in grammar.
- Plan ahead. A good reflection paper needs work, and work takes time. For a paper of 4 pages, I expect you to put in approximately 12 working hours. Make sure to reserve that time in your schedule. Do not wait until the last minute.

## How are reflection papers assessed?

When grading your post-project paper, I will assess it with respect to the criteria spelt out in the rubric below. For each criterion, I will assign a component grade from the scale A, C, E (all passing grades) and F (fail). The descriptors for A, E, and F are given below. If your presentation meets all of the criteria in the descriptor for E and partially meets the criteria for A, your component grade will be C. To pass, you must have a passing grade in each component. In the end, your component grades are converted to points (given in parentheses).

	<b>Component grade F</b>	<b>Component grade E</b>	<b>Component grade A</b>
<i>Description</i>	Unclear what the project was about, what results it produced or what part you played in it. Lack of details and examples. (0)	Clear and precise account of the project idea, its results and your role in it. Several details and examples. (30)	Includes experience from additional reading of scientific literature. Focus on aspects significant for your learning. (60)
<i>Examination</i>	Fails to show which concepts and skills from the course emerged in the project. Hard to follow for someone who has not taken the course. (0)	Considers how specific concepts and skills emerged in the project and explains them so that an outside student can understand them. (30)	Develops an enhanced understanding of concepts and skills from the course in light of the project experience and any additional reading. (60)
<i>Articulation of Learning</i>	Not clear what you learned, how exactly you learned it, or how this learning is relevant to the learning objective. (0)	Clear what you learned, how exactly you learned it, and how the learning is relevant to the learning objective. (30)	Places the learning from the project in a broader context by explaining the project's relevance for the research community. (60)
<i>Formal aspects</i>	Paragraphs are disorganised. Several errors in grammar and punctuation. Mostly informal language. Incorrect use of terminology. (0)	Each paragraph has a central idea. Few errors in grammar and punctuation. Mostly academic language. Mostly correct use of terminology. (20)	Paragraphs have a good flow. Virtually no errors in grammar and punctuation. Academic language throughout. Precise use of terminology. Correctly formatted references. (40)

## References

Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Pearson, 2001.

Sarah L. Ash and Patti H. Clayton. The Articulated Learning: An Approach to Reflection and Assessment. *Innovative Higher Education*, 29:137–154, 2004.

Duke Service-Learning. DEAL: Model for Critical Reflection Assignment Sample. Retrieved 4 November 2018 ([source](#)).

Graham Gibbs. *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford Further Education Unit, 1988.