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 in which this word is used here) means that you critically examine your experience and explicitly articulate what you have learned.

Why write reflection papers?

Writing a reflection paper offers you the opportunity 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, as it requires you to link 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 paper into the same three parts that we also use in the lab series:[1]

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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[1] 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. Your goal should be to make your project experience present by describing it in an *objective* and *fairly detailed* way. Do not jump straight into interpretations; provide the facts. However, do not simply recount the events from start to end; focus on aspects significant for your learning.

Prompts   The following prompts may help you when writing the description:

- How did you prepare yourself for the project? Which articles did you read?

- What was your role in the project? What were the roles of the others?

- If you wrote any code, what exactly did you implement?

- If you performed any experiments, what results did you get?

- Which feedback did you get during the project and at the project presentation?

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:[2]

> What specific concepts and skills were relevant to your project? Explain these concepts and skills 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? Given what you know now, how would you do the project today?

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[2] 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.

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.

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.

- Keep it short and sweet. The suggested length of a reflection paper in this course is 1,500 words (ca. 3 pages of text), which means you will have to actively select what to describe and analyse.

- 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 1,500 words, I expect you to invest approximately 16 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. Your grade for the post-project paper is your lowest component grade or the next highest ECTS grade if two or more of your component grades are higher than your lowest component grade.

	Component grade F	Component grade E	Component grade A
Description	Unclear what the project was about, what results it produced or what part you played in it. Lack of details and examples.	Clear and precise account of the project idea, its results and your role in it. Several details and examples.	Includes experience from additional reading or other sources. Focus on aspects significant for your learning.
Examination	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.	Considers how specific concepts and skills emerged in the project and explains them so that a student not in the course can understand them.	Develops an enhanced understanding of concepts and skills from the course in light of the project experience and any additional reading.
Articulation of Learning	Not clear what you learned, how exactly you learned it, or how this learning is relevant to the learning objective.	Clear what you learned, how exactly you learned it, and how the learning is relevant to the learning objective.	Convincingly explains how the relevance and significance of the learning extends beyond the course.
Formal aspects	Paragraphs are disorganised. Several errors in grammar and punctuation. Mostly informal language. Incorrect use of terminology.	Each paragraph has a central idea. Few errors in grammar and punctuation. Mostly academic language. Mostly correct use of terminology.	Paragraphs have a good flow. Virtually no errors in grammar and punctuation. Academic language throughout. Precise use of terminology. Correctly formatted references.

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.