



THE CENTER  
FOR ENGAGED  
LEARNING

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PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE  
FACULTY AND STAFF TOOLKIT



# Reflective Practice

**Reflective Practice** is a process for **making meaning** out of one's experiences.

Learning is not simply a matter of seeing or hearing new information. Instead, in order to learn, we must **actively construct** our knowledge. Critically reflecting on our ideas, thoughts, and encounters is a way to understand them, connect them to what we already know, and interrogate them in order to **come away with some new insight into ourselves and our world**.

**Recognizing that reflective practice is a key component of engaged learning, the Center for Engaged Learning invites the entire campus community to participate in our Year of Reflective Practice.** To introduce reflective practice, we have developed a toolkit of resources for both faculty/staff and students. You will find models of reflective practice, sample assignments, and tips for engaging in critical reflection on these webpages. In addition, the CEL will be hosting and co-sponsoring a variety of events this year on the theme of reflective practice.

There is a rich tradition of reflective practice in many domains – the philosopher contemplating the nature of knowledge, the artist submitting their work for critique, the social worker developing a more effective practice with their clients, to name just a few. We hope that you will adapt our resources to be true to your discipline or share examples from your disciplinary tradition to add to our toolkit. Please email [cel@providence.edu](mailto:cel@providence.edu) or use #PCReflectivePractice to share.

# Reflection in Practice

## Finding value in reflection

The regular practice of critical reflection cultivates a habit of self-examination of past experiences. Its goal is self-knowledge, challenging our past practices, thoughts, and assumptions; and informing our current and future beliefs, actions, and self-understanding.

The basic process of reflection follows the **ERA model** – Experience, Reflection, Action. Most reflective models have a similar underlying structure. One of the biggest values of reflection comes when we repeat the reflective process again and again for a series of experiences. Following an experience, we reflect on it and identify learning and actions that feed into future experiences, increasing the learning and value each time we go through the reflective process.

By building an ongoing process of reflection, we create significant additional value, including:

- Strengthening our reflective skills and habits
- Producing deeper reflections that enhance learning and self-awareness

## Reflection models/frameworks

### **5R's**

- **Reporting** of the context of the experience
- **Responding** to the experience (observations, feelings, thoughts, etc.)
- **Relating** the experience to knowledge and skills you already have
- **Reasoning** about the significant factors/theory to explain the experience
- **Reconstructing** your practice by planning future actions for a similar experience

### **Gibb's**

- **Description** of the experience
- **Feelings** and thoughts about the experience
- **Evaluation** of the experience, both good and bad
- **Analysis** to make sense of the situation
- **Conclusion** about what you learned and what you could have done differently

- **Action plan** for how you would deal with similar situations in the future, or general changes you might find appropriate

### **Four F's**

- **Facts:** An objective account of what happened
- **Feelings:** The emotional reactions to the situation
- **Findings:** The concrete learning that you can take away from the situation
- **Future:** Structuring your learning such that you can use it in the future

### **CARL**

- **Context:** Briefly describe the context of your experience
- **Action:** Explain what actions you took
- **Results:** Explain what happened as a result of your actions
- **Learning:** Identify what you have learned

### **What? So what? Now what?**

- **'What?'** helps you describe the situation you want to learn from. You should identify the facts and feelings of the situation.
- **'So What?'** allows you to extract the meaning of 'What?'. Moreover, you should question what knowledge you and others had in the situation, and what knowledge or theories that could help you make sense of the situation.
- **'Now what?'** allows you to create an action plan for the future based on the previous questions.

## Assessment

### Assignments/Activities

#### Summative

- A reflective journal
- A report that pulls on evidence from a reflective journal
- A reflective blog
- A reflective essay on the student's development in the course
- A reflective essay on meeting benchmark statements
- A reflective essay on a particular experience (for example a critical incident in an experiential learning course)
- A skills-development log

## Formative

- Individual entries from a reflective journal
- A reflective blogpost
- Interim essays on development during the course or on benchmark statements
- Drafts on reflective summative assessments
- Reflective workbooks

## Criteria

*Question to ask yourself while developing assessment criteria for assignments*

- Why am I asking students to reflect (what do I hope they gain from it)?
- How does this assignment/activity relate to my learning outcomes?
- Is there clear alignment between this assignment/activity and the course's learning outcomes?
- What does doing well on this assignment/activity look like?
- What will not be sufficient to pass?
- What questions/aspects must be addressed for this work to be acceptable?
- What are the different dimensions that make up the assignment/activity? (For example clarity, critical thinking, evidence, etc.)

*And what does 'good' reflection look like?*

- What do I think good reflection looks like?
- What will students need to demonstrate in the reflective task to make it helpful for achieving my learning outcomes?
- To what extent do I want students' reflections to be similar to my idea of good reflection? Is it enough they just reflect?

## Rubrics (holistic and analytical)

**Holistic rubric:** Gives general description of different performance levels (e.g., novice, apprentice, proficient, or distinguished)

Reflective writing rubric example developed by Chabon and Lee-Wilkerson (2006) when evaluating reflective journals of students undertaking a graduate degree in communication sciences and disorders.

- Level 1 (Descriptive): Students demonstrate acquisition of new content from significant learning experiences. Journal entry provides evidence of gaining

knowledge, making sense of new experiences, or making linkages between old and new information.

- Level 2 (Emphatic): Students demonstrate thoughts about or challenges to beliefs, values, and attitudes of self and others. Journal entry provides examples of self-projection into the experiences of other, sensitivity towards the values and beliefs of others, and/or tolerance for differences.
- Level 3 (Analytic): Students demonstrate the application of learning to a broader context of personal and professional life. Journal entry provides evidence of student's use of readings, observations, and discussions to examine, appraise, compare, contrast, plan for new actions or response, or propose remedies to use in and outside structured learning experiences.
- Level 4: Students demonstrate examination of the learning process, showing what learning occurred, how learning occurred, and how newly acquired knowledge or learning altered existing knowledge. Journal entry provides examples of evaluation or revision of real and fictitious interactions.

**Analytical rubric:** Allows for identification of performance against defined assessment criteria (e.g., Analysis, Presence, Description)

# Literature

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