



CENTER FOR ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Reflective Writing

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Reflective Writing is a low-stakes one-page assignment that facilitates learner engagement and self-awareness. It can be applied in a variety of courses across the disciplines. Learners should be given credit for the activity, but reflective writing is not graded as a formal writing assignment. In addition, timely feedback should be provided to learners on their reflective writing. As with all “small teaching,”¹ reflective writing should be employed several times in a semester to allow students to practice self-reflection.

Reflective Writing can be employed in a variety of ways: 1.) It can provide learners an opportunity to reflect on their understanding of an important concept before high-stakes assessments. This in turn can provide instructors with immediate feedback on learner progress and allows early intervention and clarification. 2.) It can provide an opportunity for learners to reflect after an exam about their studying process or to reflect on their process as they completed a research paper, oral presentation, or other project. This in turn provides instructors with “snapshots” of learners’ methods of completing a project or studying for a high-stakes exam and allows instructors to provide timely feedback on learner methods. 3.) It can provide learners an opportunity to reflect on the learning activities they engage in and which of those learning activities align the best with their learning styles (and why). This in turn can provide instructors with immediate feedback on which learning activities provide learner comfort and engagement and what can be adjusted to facilitate learner progress.

The following are sample prompts corresponding to the three implementation examples above:

1. (Early Unit Reflection) Having read the introductory materials and completed other initial class activities for our unit on post-colonialism, write a one-page reflection in which you do the following: 1.) provide in your own words your understanding of colonialism and its relation to imperialism. 2.) explain in your own words anything you are confused about, anything you disagree with (and why), and any questions you have.
2. (Post-Assignment Reflection) Write a one-page response in which you answer the following questions about your web design project: 1.) What was your design process for creating your web page? 2.) What elements of your web page do you think turned out well? 3.) What aspects of the design process would you like to have spent more time on? What would you have done differently and why?
3. (Unit Learning Styles/Learning Activities Reflection) Now that we have completed the unit on nuclear fission, write a one-page essay response in which you do the following: First give a short definition of nuclear fission. Then answer the following questions in relation to your understanding of the concept covered in this unit: 1.) Out of the readings, short quizzes, in-class activities, and lectures, what was the most helpful unit learning activity and why? 2.) Which of the learning activities from the unit did you find least helpful in understanding nuclear fission and why? 3.) What did you do to reinforce and strengthen your comprehension of the material?

¹ See James Lang, *Small Teaching*. Joss-y-Bass 2016.

¹ Adapted from “Example Reflective Writing Assignments,” *Reflective Writing*, Auburn University.

<http://wp.auburn.edu/writing/wp-content/uploads/Example-Reflective-Writing-Assignments-with-notes.pdf>