

# REFLECTIVE WRITING: DIEP

Reflective writing aims to help you understand and write about your learning experiences. The focus of the writing is on significant new understandings or insights you have gained in the course. These insights may have come from an experience, reading, or from other course work. This outline is one approach to writing a reflection, using the DIEP strategy.

## The DIEP strategy

First, choose something to reflect on.

This is something you have 'learned', i.e. a new insight. It can be a new understanding or something you find interesting or challenging. Then apply the four steps in this approach to write **four paragraphs** that describe, interpret, evaluate and show a plan for transferring the new insight.

Adapted from Boud, D 1985, *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*

### D – Describe objectively ONE thing you learned

- Introduce **the new insight**.
  - Start this paragraph with a statement like: 'The most interesting thing I learned/noticed (...this week/ in this article/ class/ meeting ...) is/was ...' Say what the learning is.
  - Give details of what happened, where, when etc.
- Answer the question: 'what did I learn? (and when /where/ why/ who with?)'

### I – Interpret the insight

- Consider why this new understanding may be important for this course or for your professional development.
- Explain:
  - reasons why it may be important
  - the connection between this idea or insight and other learning
  - your hypotheses and/or conclusions about the importance of understanding this.
- Answer the question: 'what might this new insight mean?'

### E – Evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of the learning

- Make judgements that are clearly connected to observations you have made.
- Consider:
  - the value of this learning – relate it to theory and/or research (with references?)
  - how this learning will help you in the course – show that you know how it 'fits' with the course content
- Answer the question: 'how useful is this new understanding for this course?'

### P – Plan how this information will be useful to you

- Consider: In what ways might this learning experience serve me in your:
  - course
  - program
  - future career
  - life generally
- Answer the question: 'How will I transfer or apply my new knowledge and insights in the future?'

## STUDY TIPS

## Critical reflection

First, select an experience or insight to reflect on.

Then attempt to:

- analyse your own learning and deepening understanding
- integrate the concepts taught in courses (including the literature where relevant)
- focus on your developing confidence and cognition and verbalise how you feel about your learning
- make connections with other theories in your course or program, and other relevant ideas and experiences
- evaluate your gains in understanding and development, and acknowledge any complexities
- demonstrate transfer of learning to your study (and to your professional life).

## How to write a reflection in four paragraphs: DIEP

**D – Describe objectively what you learned**

Choose a new insight. It might be something that you now understand (that you didn't before).

Give the details of what happened. Answer the question: 'What did I learn?'

Some suggested **starting phrases**:

The most interesting (surprising/ important/ significant/ ...) theory (insight/ issue ...) I read (saw/ heard/ realised/...) this week is that ...

One thing I realise (understand ...) now is that ...

A significant issue I had not addressed in my previous writing is ...

Continue the paragraph with details of what, where, when, etc.

**I – Interpret the insight**

Explain your learning: the meaning of the new insight/ connection with other learning/ your understanding, hypotheses, conclusions, etc.

Answer the questions: 'What might it mean?' 'How might this be important?'

Suggested **starting phrases**:

This realisation is / may be important for three reasons. First, it implies ...

A possible implication/meaning of this (understanding) is that ...

This new understanding of ... is likely to mean three things. It could be ...

**E – Evaluate what you learned**

Make judgments about the value of what you learned connected to observations you have made.

Answer the question: 'How is this useful for my deeper understanding?'

Suggested **starting phrases**:

This concept of ... is valuable for .../ makes me realise that .../ will change the way I approach ...

This understanding will help me in a number of ways. First it ...

This insight is connected with (theoretical approaches to .../ a number of important theories/ concepts/ what I/we have been doing in...)

Having realised that ..., I wonder if .../ I intend to develop ...

**P – Plan how this learning will be applied**

Comment on this insight relevance to your course, program, future profession, life...

Answer the question: 'How might this learning apply in my future?' Use future tense in this paragraph to show transfer of knowledge to the future. Suggested **starting phrase**:

This ... will be useful in this course, in the (bachelor) degree, in my future career as a ..., and in my home and family life. In the course, (understanding ...) will/ can/ could ...