

Reflective Learning Journals

PURPOSE

Reflective journals are an opportunity to demonstrate your skills of critical reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity. In writing a reflective journal you have the opportunity to contribute new ideas and thinking to the subject matter and its relation to practice.

The purpose of the journal is to encourage you to engage with some aspect of the learning in the module *at the time* so that you assimilate the learning at a deeper level. A journal is written over a period of time and includes reflective responses to questions and learning. It shows development of learning over time. As you write entries into your journal you will record the specific area of study or experience or practice that you have chosen to write about, reflecting on your own response, evaluating it and articulating the questions that the learning or experience has raised for you. It is a holistic exercise as you pay attention to the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and even physical dimensions of your responses.

CONTENT

A journal normally contains a number of dated entries: it shows development of learning over time as well as learning related to specific areas of study or experiences of practice. It may be that you wish to re-visit some entries in the light of new learning: if so, simply note the date of the addition. In many ways it is a relatively 'free' form of assessment. In addition to prose, you may wish to use other genres of writing – a poem, a prayer, a song, a psalm or a letter, for example.

Here are some suggestions for writing a really effective journal:

- Do not merely describe, but interpret events or situations.
 - In any one entry, focus on one particular incident or aspect: it is not a diary or record.
 - Record the questions that arise for you, but also attempt to address at least some of them.
 - Articulate any new insights or hypotheses that occur to you and consider how you might build on, or test, them.
 - When expressing a view or an opinion, explain how you arrived at it.
 - Do interact with theology as well as with experience and practice.
 - Suggest actions arising out of your reflections: make your learning transformative.
 - Explore your own reactions to what you have been studying and to what you are writing about: take time to articulate them as honestly and accurately as you can. This is the essence of reflexivity.
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WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

First and foremost, we are looking to see how your reflective learning journal demonstrates that you have met the learning outcomes of the Module Outline. In your journal entries overall, we will be looking for:

1. Description

... that is clear and concise.

2. Analysis

... that shows critical thinking, penetrating an issue / practice and its meaning, demonstrating understanding and insight.

3. Reflection

... that demonstrates awareness of the implications of an area of study, of an experience or issue, or of your practice. This awareness should involve some theological reflection.

4. Reflexivity

... that shows how the learning is affecting your inner world.

5. Concluding thoughts and pointers for action

... that indicate new perspectives and/or actions for you in relation to your own discipleship and calling.

TECHNICAL MATTERS

For the tutor:

- Students should be encouraged to show evidence of engaging with theological disciplines as well as with practice, experience and their own transformative learning.
- Journals are likely to form only part of the assessment of a module. They are particularly appropriate for placement and integrative collaborative learning.

For the student:

- We don't expect any references or bibliography, although you may want to refer to texts or books in your reflections.
 - The journal needs to be written in such a way that it is comprehensible to a marker.
 - There is no need for quotations from books, especially given the limited word count, but if there is a short one that seems particularly pertinent (and you wish to remember it!) use it.
 - It is good practice to write your journal without reference to the word count, and then to make a selection of extracts for submission that complies with the word count for the assessment.
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MARKING CRITERIA

The questions that your marker will be considering when assessing your work are as follows:

- How does your journal demonstrate that you have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the module's learning outcomes?
1. To what standard have you fulfilled these? These standards – by which your work will be graded – are described in the **Assessment Criteria for Reflective Journals and Written Theological Reflections** for the level of your module. The criteria against which your work will be marked fall into the following categories:

Evidence of learning: Have you evidenced growing in your knowledge, understanding and/or skills over the course of your journal?

Engagement with dimensions of the task: Have you shown the ability to think coherently and creatively, to identify key issues and to ask good questions?

Is there good and relevant engagement with biblical and theological resources (which may include Christian practices as well as beliefs)?

Have you shown awareness of your own position in the reflective process, and if appropriate in the subject of the reflection?

Have you made good connections between what you have been learning and what you already knew or believed and between theology/theory and experience/practice?

Has engagement with other disciplines taken place, if appropriate?

Presentation: Is the journal well organised, showing the chronology of your reflections persuasively?

Is the journal comprehensible – does the way it is presented aid or hinder understanding?

Reflection, reflexivity and integration:

Does your journal give evidence that your learning has affected your own inner world?

Have you integrated different areas of learning effectively and appropriately?