

Written Theological Reflections

PURPOSE

The purpose of a written theological reflection is to enable you to integrate a particular aspect of your knowledge and understanding of theology with some specific reality and experience. The process and discipline of theological reflection encourages Godward growth and often opens up new, creative possibilities for action or new perspectives on a situation or issue. Through the rigour of writing theological reflections you will begin to inhabit a skill and a discipline that will be formative for your discipleship and ministry.

CONTENT

This is a written piece of work that relates knowledge and understanding with experience and practice often using one of a range of established methodologies for theological reflection. One aspect of this assessment is to enable you to become familiar with the correct application of methods of theological reflection.

Another aspect of the assessment is learning to make insightful and creative connections between the knowledge and understanding gained in your studies with the reality of experience. This insight arises from the depth of knowledge and understanding of the theology with which you are engaging, as well as your ability to analyse and perceive the experience that you are bringing to the reflection. By ‘experience’, we mean an actual critical incident with which you were involved or which you observed, or a specific issue or situation in a church, community or in society more generally. You will need to engage with appropriate biblical studies and theological literature, as well as on literature related to theological reflection. You may also need to draw on other disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology, for example) in your analysis of the experience.

The content of this piece of work will therefore contain

- theological exploration through engagement with biblical and theological sources
- description and analysis of experience
- a creative ‘conversation’ or correlation between these
- some reflections about the implications of the learning that has taken place as a result.

The exact order, shape and way in which these four elements are incorporated into a theological reflection depend on the chosen method of theological reflection.

Some of the questions that you may wish to consider when making correlations between theology and experience may include questions such as:

- What differences are there between the chosen theological discourse and the experience?
- What resonances or similarities are there?
- Does the theological discourse bring new insights to the experience?

- Does the experience bring new insights to the theological discourse?
 - What new insights have emerged about myself? relationships? the church? society?
 - What new insights have emerged about who God is?
 - What new attitudes, actions and/or further reflection does this work point to?
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WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

First and foremost, we are looking to see how your written theological reflection demonstrates that you have met the learning outcomes of the Module Outline.

The experience / reality

- Have you chosen a topic that is significant, appropriate and with sufficient focus?
- Is your description of it clear and sufficient, restricting detail to what is appropriate?
- Is there a key question that is appropriately and perceptively articulated?
- Is the analysis clear, bringing insight from other disciplines where appropriate?
- Does the analysis demonstrate reflexivity (that is, your ability to reflect on your own emotional, spiritual, intellectual response to it)?

The theological discourse

- What is the rationale for your choice of theological resource?
- Are the boundaries of the chosen area identified and articulated?
- Is the description and analysis of it accurate, clear and of appropriate depth for the level of the module?

The correlation and reflection

- Is the reflection methodologically sophisticated and credible?
- Is the interaction between theology and experience persuasive and creative?

The conclusions

- Is there a forward-looking conclusion that flows logically from the reflection and that is realistic?
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TECHNICAL MATTERS

For the tutor:

- Written theological reflections can be used as the sole method of assessment for a practice-based module, but are generally more likely to be one component of a module, and, as such, are an effective way of encouraging integration between theology and practice.
- It is important to maintain rigorous engagement with the subject area, practice / experience, and the methodology of reflection – and the marking criteria should reflect this.

- It is helpful to encourage students to use specific methodologies, especially at lower levels – and to state what they are either in the reflection itself or in a prologue or appendix – but to be less prescriptive, and perhaps more creative, at higher levels.
- This is an opportunity to encourage students to use creative ways to communicate the results of their reflection.
- It may be helpful to allow students to submit a prologue or appendix which contains a description of the incident or the verbatim of the conversation, in order to avoid taking up word count for these aspects of the assignment.

For the student:

Written theological reflections have many of the features of academic essays, namely:

- A clear structure with signposts: you may want to use subheadings
 - Clarity of argument and expression
 - Academic conventions, including good grammar and spelling
 - References and a bibliography
 - Additional material as indicated by the tutor (see above)
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MARKING CRITERIA

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

1. How does your theological reflection demonstrate that you have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the relevant learning outcomes of the module?
2. 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 three categories:

Evidence of learning: Have you evidenced growing in your knowledge, understanding and/or skills through the reflection? What has changed in you?

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 experience / situation on which you are reflecting?

Is there a clear sense of a meeting between you, the subject of the reflection and the theological resource(s)?

Has engagement with other disciplines taken place, if appropriate?

Presentation:

Is your writing clear, using appropriate vocabulary, correct grammar and spelling?

Is your work presented well, using the conventions stipulated by your TEI?
