

## WRITING REFLECTIVELY IN YOUR REVALIDATION JOURNAL

The Professional Registration Board expects you to write reflectively in the 'What specific thing/s did you learn professionally?' field for each entry in your journal. This article will help you understand what reflective writing is and how to use it in writing your journal.

Reflecting on practice has become an important part of the continuing competence process. It gives you the opportunity to step back and examine your work critically, enabling you to identify areas for improvement and gain a better understanding of your work practices. By writing reflectively, professionals can develop more effective strategies for tackling work-related challenges and further their professional growth. Reflective writing encourages professionals to pause and consider how their work is progressing and how it could be improved. This helps to identify areas of growth and areas needing further development.

Reflective writing involves three processes:

1. experiencing something
2. thinking (reflecting) on the experience, and
3. thinking about your learning from that experience.

Reflective writing is written in the first person. Tell us about what you learned and what conclusions you reached about the activity, not about your team or colleagues e.g. "I think" not "we learned".

Reflective writing gives you an opportunity to think deeply about something you've learned or an experience you've had. There is neither a right nor a wrong way of reflective thinking - only questions to explore.

## QUESTIONS TO ASSIST IN REFLECTIVE WRITING

To assist you in your reflection you may find it helpful to ask yourself one or more of these questions:

- What did I learn from this activity?
- What prior knowledge did I have? Did this hinder or help me?
- What did I find most interesting about the activity and why?
- How does what I learnt relate to what I already knew?
- What did I learn from this activity that conflicts with my prior understanding?
- What worked well for me during this activity that I should remember going forward?
- What links can I make between my experience during this activity and other events/ideas from my workplace/work experience?
- How can/will I use the knowledge I have gained from this activity in the future?
- Based on what I have learnt, how should I act in future?
- What other information do I need in order to understand the implications of the activity?
- Did the activity expose a lack of knowledge of skill? If so how will I correct that?
- What is the best way for me to go forward after the activity?
- Looking back, would I have done things differently? If so, what and why? If not, why not?
- What did I find most surprising about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Has my understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ changed? Why/Why not?

- What advice would I give to a friend about how to get the most out of this activity?
- What will/should I do with what I've learnt?
- How have I been changed by what I've learnt?

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REFLECTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

A common theme in many journals is that the reflective comment is not reflective but descriptive. Description of the activity, however detailed, is not what the Board is looking for. To avoid the trap of falling into a purely descriptive narrative consider using one of these phrases to kick-start your reflection:

- The most important thing was...
- At the time I felt...
- This was probably due to...
- After thinking about it...
- I learned that...
- I need to know more about...
- I realised...
- This was because...
- This was like...
- I wonder what would happen if...
- I'm still unsure about...
- My next steps are...

Reflective writing is NOT:

- only conveying information, instruction or argument
- pure description, though there may be descriptive elements.
- straightforward decision or judgement, e.g. about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad
- simple problem-solving
- stating that you enjoyed the activity.

## EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE AND NON-REFLECTIVE WRITING

Here are some examples of activities showing reflective and non-reflective writing versions of the same activity.

Non-reflective		Reflective	
What did you do?	What specific thing/s did you learn professionally?	What did you do?	What specific thing/s did you learn professionally?
I attended a webinar about the move to the ECM.	The webinar took attendees through the tool and how it all works now that the management of eBooks is more streamlined and has moved from EBSCOadmin to the ECM. There is so much more functionality now with the improvements, and still more features to come! After attending the session, I reviewed the training materials and I'm very excited to get stuck in and make changes	I attended a webinar about the move from EBSCOadmin to the ECM. The webinar covered the streamlined eBook management, which offers more functionality.	I learnt that the progress made allows me greater control of our eBooks by manipulating access on a title-by-title basis. This provides a better service to my community. Because of what I have learnt, I am now able to provide more curated access to our eBooks and increase usage while limiting turnaways. Knowing that I was pushing for these features and finally seeing them in action, I will continue to advocate for features that benefit the community I serve.
Read the blog post <i>Using Social Media to Expand your Reach and Advocate for your Library</i> .	This blog is in Library Learners by Cari White. It was recommended to me by a friend. I learned so much and now I feel confident about promoting the library.	Read the blog post <i>Using Social Media to Expand your Reach and Advocate for your Library in Library Learners</i> by Cari White.	I learned that by using the social media platforms our patrons use, they will see and connect with our activities. I particularly liked the idea of highlighting our value to our patrons. I have been confidently promoting our library on Twitter ever since reading this.
Developed on-line orientation sessions for new students.	At the start of each year, we hold orientation sessions at the library for all our new students. We realised that it would be great to have them online for students who arrive during the year. We created modules and students can complete these at their own pace. We introduce the library and the collections and services over four modules. Some of our students trialed it for us and gave feedback. I learned so much from creating these and from the feedback. They are ready to go for the new year.	Developed online orientation sessions for new students. We created modules and students can complete these at their own pace. We introduce the library and the collections and services over four modules. Some of our students trialed it for us and gave feedback	The feedback helped me to see that the pace was too slow and some of the students may get bored. I used this and changed some of the modules so they moved faster. I learned what our students valued about our library and incorporated it into the modules. I appreciate how important it is to try things ahead of time to check I am communicating effectively.

Non-reflective		Reflective	
What did you do?	What specific thing/s did you learn professionally?	What did you do?	What specific thing/s did you learn professionally?
I attended a day's customer service processes workshop with my team.	It was done in a way that made it fun and we all enjoyed being a part of it. My team seemed to get a lot out of it and we all talked about things from it.	I attended a day's customer service processes workshop with my team.	From this workshop, I learnt some tips on how we could work smarter, including using a quality reference interview process to find out what the customer really wants. We need to consider who we are working with and also their abilities. This has made me think a lot more about how I will deliver in the future.
I did a personal online Myers-Briggs test and discovered that I am an ISTJ.	Through the test, I learned some things about how I respond in situations at home and work.	I did a personal online Myers-Briggs test and discovered that I am an ISTJ.	Learning more about the way I naturally respond, I talked with my manager about how that could alienate customers. I learned that I need to be more patient with customers. We have agreed a plan where I will consciously invite people into a conversation and allow them to talk rather than regard serving them as a quick transaction.
Attended an Endnote training session.	This session was taken by our Reference Librarian who took us through the basics of the tool, what it looked like and how it worked. The team benefitted from this training greatly and have more confidence answering questions.	Attended an Endnote training session, taken by our Reference Librarian who took me and my team through the basics of the tool, what it looked like and how it worked.	After attending this session, I took the time to explore Endnote further and learned more about how to use the product. and now feel confident answering queries on the topic, though there is still more to learn and explore. I have also signed up to some of the more advanced sessions to broaden my knowledge and continue to grow my confidence.