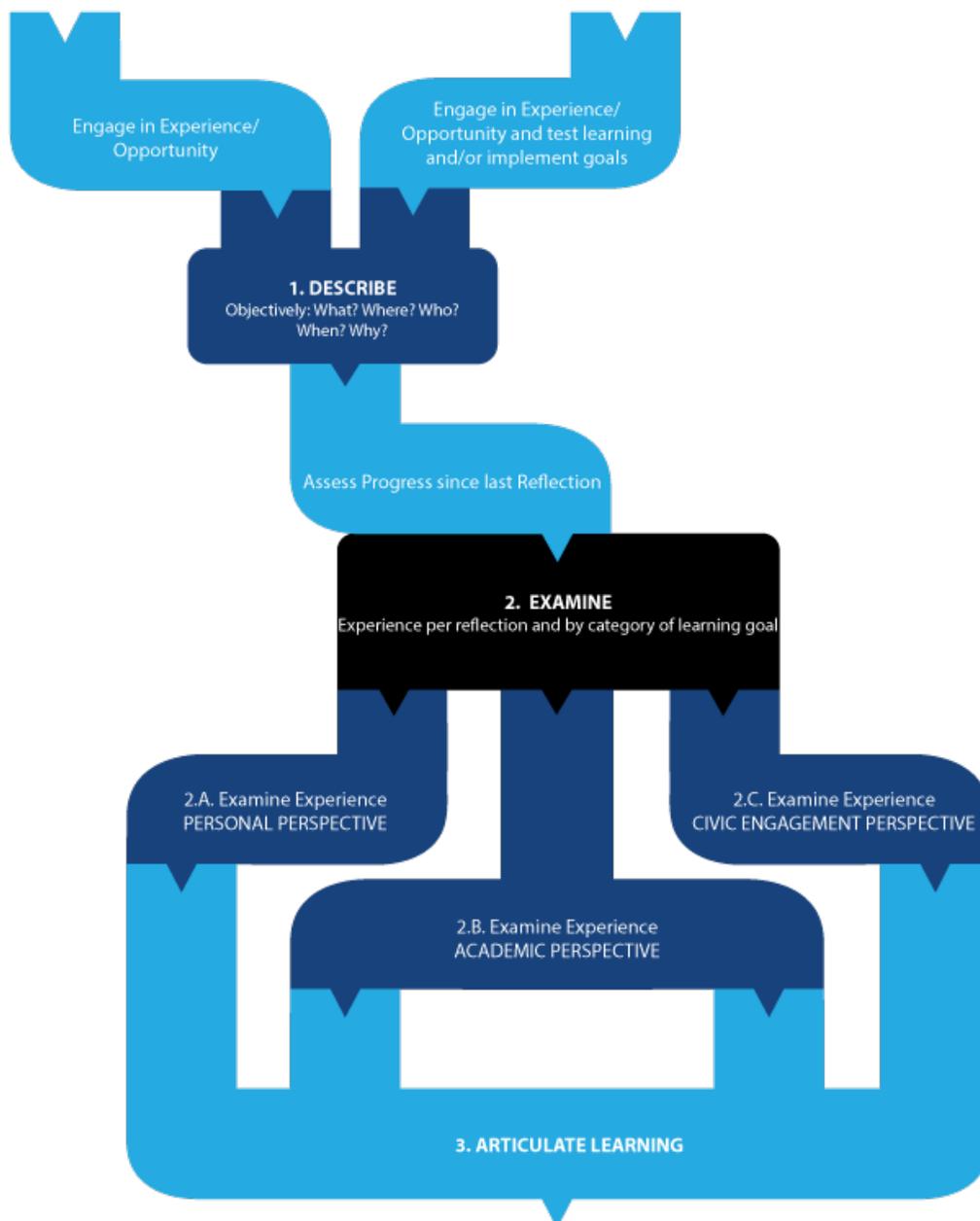


## DEAL: Model for Critical Reflection Assignment Sample

Below is an example of ways in which you can adopt Critical Reflection into an experiential learning opportunity (i.e. Academic Internship, Community Engaged Service learning, Practica, Work-Integrated Learning, Field Course, etc.). Feel free to use the following prompts to help students create a comprehensive reflection piece detailing the experience from the student perspective, and what they learned/gained from that experience. You are welcome include your own questions to further facilitate reflection.





# STEP 1

## **STEP 1: Describe an Experiential Learning Related Experience**

NOTE: This first step is to allow the student to provide an overview of their experience i.e. the big picture. The reflection should be described objectively and in some detail. Students can reflect on two or four key experiences to help focus the reflection, noting significant or reflection-worthy experiences.

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

- When did the experience take place?
- Where did it take place?
- What did I do?
- Why did you do it?
- What did others do?
- Who else was there?
- Who wasn't there?
- What actions did I/others take?
- What did I/other say or otherwise communicate?
- Who didn't speak or act?
- What else happened that might be important (i.e. equipment failure, weather-related issues, etc.)

### **Step 1A: Assess Progress since last Reflection**

NOTE: This step can be effective in assessing whether a student has understood their goals as articulated in their original or previous reflection activity. This is an opportunity for the student to reflect on their goals and determine if they had been achieved or not, and what steps need to be taken toward their goals, or if they need to reassess their original goals. It is also possible to leave this step to the very end of their experience.

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

- What were my goals as described at the end of the previous reflection session and/or in my learning from the previous reflection session?
  - What specific conclusions did I want to reach based on my learnings?
- What specific steps did I take in order to attain these goals?
- What obstacles (internal and external) hindered me?
  - What factors made me more effective?
- In what ways did my attempts to attain goals or to test conclusions follow through as expected, based on my earlier understanding, and in what ways was I surprised?
- What do my attempts to attain or test previous conclusions tell me about the validity of those conclusions?
  - In what specific ways is my understanding of those conclusions changing yet again?
- How can I change my behaviour or mentality in order to make better progress toward my goals?
  - What specific steps do I need to take in order to continue refining my understanding?

# STEP 2

## **STEP 2: Examination of Experience from Personal, Academic and Civic Engagement Perspectives**

NOTE: Depending on the outcomes of the Critical Reflection activity set by the instructor these sections can be used together or individually, and can be expanded upon. Not all the questions posed in this step need to be integrated, but provides the instructor with an idea as to the outcome of the individual section and what is to be accomplished by that section.

### **Step 2A: Examine Experience from a Personal Perspective**

NOTE: This section is to identify the experience from the student perspective based on how they perceived the experience.

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

- How did this experience make me feel (positively and/or negatively)?
  - How did I handle my emotional reactions?
  - Do I believe I should have felt differently than I did?
- What assumptions or expectations did I bring to the situation (including my assumptions about other persons involved) and how did they affect my actions?
  - To what extent did they provide true?
  - If they did not prove true, why was there a discrepancy?
- How have past experiences influenced the manner in which I acted or responded to this situation?
  - Am I comfortable with the influence past experiences has on me?
- What personal strengths/weaknesses of mine did the situation reveal?
  - In what ways did they affect the situation positively/negatively?
  - What might I do to build on strengths and overcome weaknesses?
- Why did I, or did I not, experience difficulty working/interacting with other people?
  - What might I do differently next time to minimize such difficulties?
- What personal skills did I draw on in handling this situation?

- What personal skills would I like to have had I order to have handled it better and how might I develop them?
- How did this situation reveal my own attitudes or biases, toward other people, toward the organization in question, etc.?
  - Do I need to make any changes?

## **Step 2B: Examine Experience from an Academic Perspective**

NOTE: This section is to identify the experience from the student perspective based on the academic learnings and materials presented to them in order to help facilitate the experience. Additional questions from the instructor can be added to this section to further enhance the critical reflection activity based on specific outcomes and readings, etc.

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

- What specific academic material is relevant to this experience?
  - Explain the concept, theory, etc. clearly and concisely so that someone unfamiliar with the material could understand it
- How did the material emerge in the experience?
  - When did I see it or note its absence?
  - How did I or should I or someone else use it?
- What academic (e.g. disciplinary, intellectual, professional) skills did I use/should I have used?
  - In what ways did I/others think from the perspective of a particular discipline and with what results?
  - How was I able to apply a skill, perspective, or concept related to the academic material?
- How does this experience enhance my knowledge of a specific reading, theory, or concept?
  - Does it challenge or reinforce my prior understanding?
- In what specific ways are my understanding of the material or skill and the experience the same and in what specific ways are they different?
  - What are the possible reasons for the difference(s) or inadequacies? e.g. bias, assumptions, lack of information on my part or on the part of the author/instructor/community?
  - What questions should I ask to put myself in a better position to judge the adequacy of the material?
- Based on analysis of the experience in light of the course material, is the material (or my prior understanding of the material) adequate?

## Step 2C: Examine Experience from a Civic Engagement Perspective

NOTE: This section is to identify the experience from the student perspective based on how people act as part of a larger process to generate change in the world around them, and how this impacted the student and what they might be able to do/not do to facilitate this change.

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

- What was I/or someone else trying to accomplish?
  - In taking the actions I/or they did, was the focus on symptoms of problems or causes of problems?
  - Was the focus (symptom or cause) appropriate to the situation?
  - How might I/they focus more on underlying causes in the future?
- What roles did reach person/group/organization involved in the situation play and why?
  - What alternative roles could each have played?
- Did I/other individuals act unilaterally or collaboratively and why?
  - Should I/they have worked with others in a different way?
- Did I reinforce or challenge an assumption or social system by the way I acted?
  - How does this experience highlight the relationship between the larger systems?
- How else could I have handled the situation?
  - Identify both the paths of least resistance and the paths of greater resistance.
  - Why did I/others follow the path I/they did?
- What agendas did I and others bring to the situation?
  - Are these agendas appropriate?
  - Are they understandable?
  - Are they shared?
  - How are these agendas related to larger social or cultural issues?
- In what ways did power difficulties emerge in this experience?
  - What are the sources of power in this situation and who benefits and is harmed?
  - In what ways might any dependence be eliminated?
- What privilege did I/others bring to this situation?
  - What are the sources of such privilege?
  - How am I, or others, disempowered by lack of privilege?
- How did leadership emerge in this situation, on my part and/or the part of others?
- What is the interest of the common good in this situation?
  - In what ways is the individual good (mine or that of other people) linked to and/or contrary to the common good?
  - What trade-offs between them are involved?
- In what way did any other trade-offs (long-term/short-term; justice/efficiency; etc.) emerge in this situation?
  - Were the trade-offs made appropriate or inappropriate and why?

- What changes does this experience suggest are needed: within my group, within the organization, within our society more generally?
  - How can these changes be accomplished: with individual action or collective action/working within the system or challenging the system/etc.?
- How does this experience help me to better understand the organization's vision, mission, and goals?
  - What does it reveal to me about the relationship between the organization and those it serves?
  - What does it suggest about how this relationship might be improved?



## STEP 3

### **STEP 3: Articulate Learning**

NOTE: Students are to use their responses to Steps 1 & 2 of this reflection exercise to respond to the following questions where they should articulate what was learned from the experience as a whole. This can be provided as a final essay/paper or in the format the Critical Reflection was originally designed (i.e. journal, portfolio, blog, etc.)

Use these questions to assist in the reflection discussion:

“I learned that...”

- Express an important learning, not just a statement of fact
- Provide a clear and correct explanation of the concept(s) in question so that someone outside of the course can understand
- Explain your enhanced understanding of the concept(s), as a result of reflection on the experience
- Express in general terms, not just in the context of the experience in order to apply this learning more broadly to other experiences

“I learned this when...”

- Connect the learning to specific activities making it clear what happened in the context of that experience so that someone who wasn't there could easily understand it

“This learning matters because...”

- Consider how the learning has value, both in terms of this situation and in broader terms, such as other organizations, communities, activities, issues, professional goals, courses, etc.

“In light of this learning...”

- Set specific and assessable goals, consider the benefits and challenges involved in fulfilling them

- Tie your learning back to your original goals

Future directions...

- In what ways will I use this learning, what goals shall I set in accordance with what I have learned in order to improve myself and/or the quality of my learning and/or the quality of my future?