Self-assessment Model

Suggested approach
This self-assessment model is designed to help you explore and deepen your own reflective writing which will in turn help you to improve or affirm your professional understandings and practices. The model comprises six levels of reflective writing that range from brief descriptive reporting of events to reconceptualising your learning or practice by critical questioning and drawing on theory.

The six levels in the model are:
• Describing
• Reacting
• Explaining
• Evaluating
• Exploring
• Acting

You will find examples of entries that are typical of each of these six levels in the model below.

Once you have written your first few entries, check your writing against the six levels to determine the predominant features of your writing at this stage of your reflective journey.

The exemplars in this self-assessment model are based on journal entries about a first year tutorial presentation, but the same process can be applied to any learning/teaching context. For instance, you could assess your responses to a set reading or seminar discussion or assess your reflections about your early teaching practicum lessons in the same way. If you have included poetry or newspaper articles in your reflections, you can assess these for their depth and relevance as well.

If you find that you have been relying on a more descriptive type of writing, then you can use the examples to deepen your reflections in future entries.

Remember:
• the aim is to feel encouraged and strengthened by this process of self discovery
• deepening our reflections takes commitment, time and practical experience, just like any new skill.

Good luck!

Levels of reflection

1. Describing
This is the sort of brief, summarising of events that people do when they keep a travel log or wish to keep a factual account of their daily experience. This is a useful way to commence a reflective journal entry as it establishes the context for the entry. However, writing that remains at the descriptive level does not allow for deeper reflection.

This week we gave our group presentation in Key Educational Ideas.
2. Reacting
This level indicates an awareness of a feeling response to the context or situation and therefore encourages another dimension to the entry.

It is such a relief to have it over with. It was not as bad as I imagined. Some of the class were away, and I felt pretty comfortable with the students who were there and they were supportive.

3. Explaining
This level is similar to supplying evidence for an opinion in an argumentative essay. The writer supplies reasons for the earlier emotional response and finds a link between the incident and the subsequent reaction.

I spoke clearly and the audience seemed interested throughout. I used good eye contact, stood straight and tried so hard not to ‘um’ and ‘er’. I think I succeeded.

4. Evaluating
The writer at this level explores similarities or compares the experience with another one. If you are reflecting on a set reading, you might include an excerpt from another article or text by another author that challenges this viewpoint in some way or which supports the general concept but from a different angle or cultural context perhaps.

When I reflect on my performance and compare myself to others, I put myself in the middle of ‘C’ and ‘X’. I did not express as much enthusiasm as C but certainly more than X. I also received positive feedback from my fellow students.

5. Exploring
The writer explores what the incident (or reading) means on a deeper level by integrating theory with practice or challenging previous beliefs or developing a new understanding of an event. Writers demonstrating this level of reflection might also question established theory or question their previous beliefs in the light of this new knowledge or experience.

I did encounter one problem. My nerves got the better of me, despite a relaxing atmosphere, and I talked slightly too fast and came up short with timing for my piece. I was timed at six and a half minutes for a ten minute talk. That is clearly a problem which I will need to address in the future. Why do I get nervous in front of my peers when I love teaching children?

6. Acting
This may not always be necessary. However, if concerns about practice or learning have been identified earlier, then proposed action will help the writer to explore avenues for improvement.

I need to consider ways of dealing with my nervousness as I want to improve all my grades and after all, I need to be able to manage public speaking more confidently if I am going to be a teacher! I’ll speak to ‘B’ to give me more detailed feedback about how I showed my nervousness and then talk to other students about ways of relaxing before my next presentation.

I remember that we were given some videos last year about public speaking. Perhaps they mention fears and the problem of speaking too quickly. My main goal at this stage is to be able to stand in front of my peers and feel relaxed and confident so that I can pace my presentation more evenly and use strategies that I can then use effectively in the classroom next year....