

Developing Reflective Exercises for your STEP Forward Activity



What do we mean by reflection?

The meaning of this term varies across the different disciplines and professions, and according to its theoretical framing.

The following definition captures key elements:

*“those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation”*¹

¹ Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (2013). Promoting reflection in learning: A model. In R. Edwards, A. Hanson, & P. Raggatt (Eds.), *Boundaries of adult learning* (pp. 32-56). New York: Routledge.

As a learning tool, reflection is used to:

- Deepen understanding and application of academic concepts and material.
- Develop intellectual and analytic skills, including critical thinking and active, effective learning.
- Integrate learner's current learning with past knowledge and experience.
- Improve academic and other professional skills and practice.

- Explore social justice implications of experience and knowledge by examining assumptions and implicit power relations.
- Promote self-authorship, “the capacity to internally define one’s beliefs, identity and social relations.”²
- Support personal, academic, and professional development planning.

2. Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Activities should take into account:

- The nature of the experiences on which students are reflecting
- Students' cognitive and metacognitive development (see link for more information)
- The context in which the reflection takes place
- Learning goals for the reflection

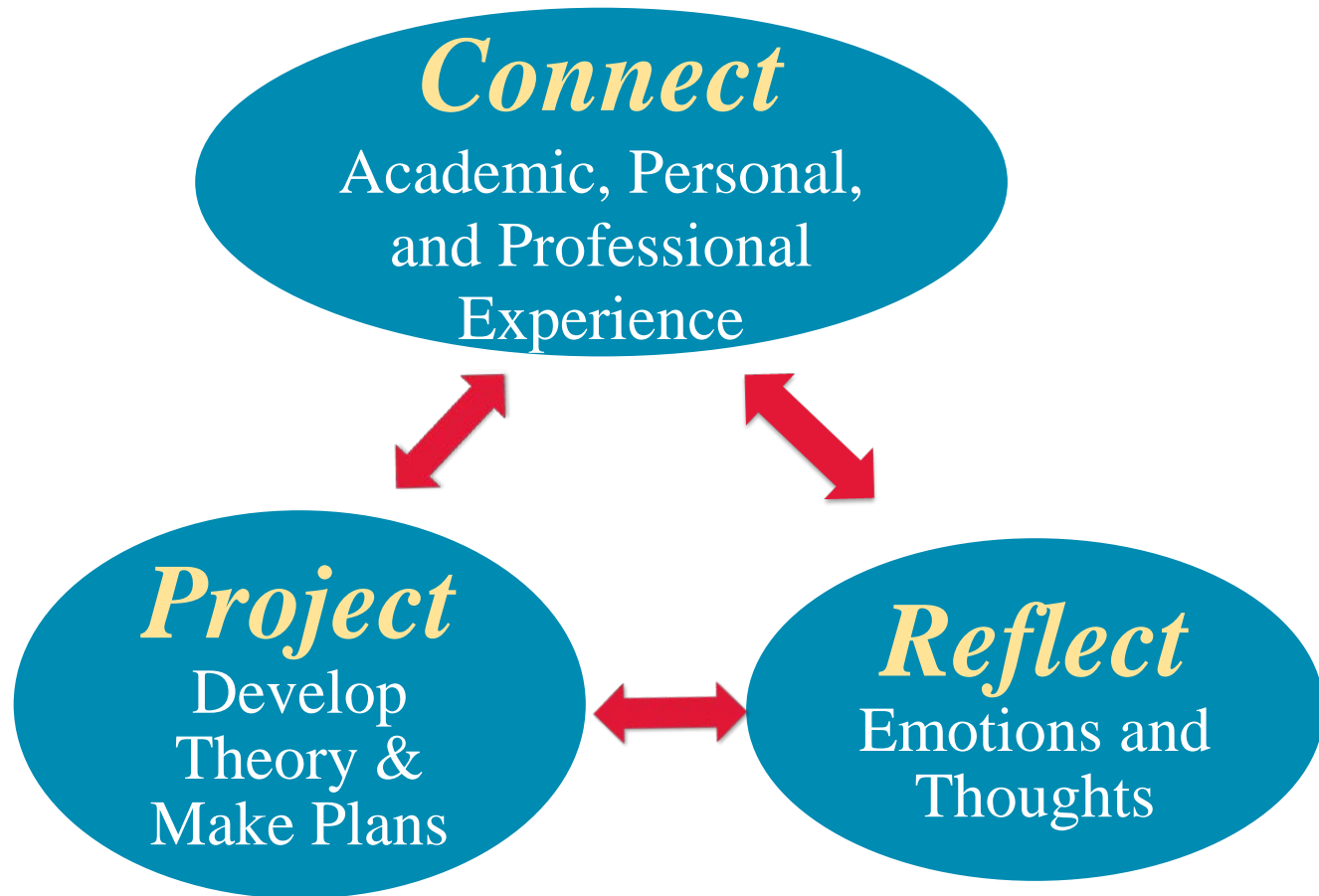
How does reflection work in
STFP activities?



Reflection in STEP Activities

Through reflection on their experience, students identify their learning, make meaningful connections among different domains of knowledge and experience, and identify next steps or plans for the future.

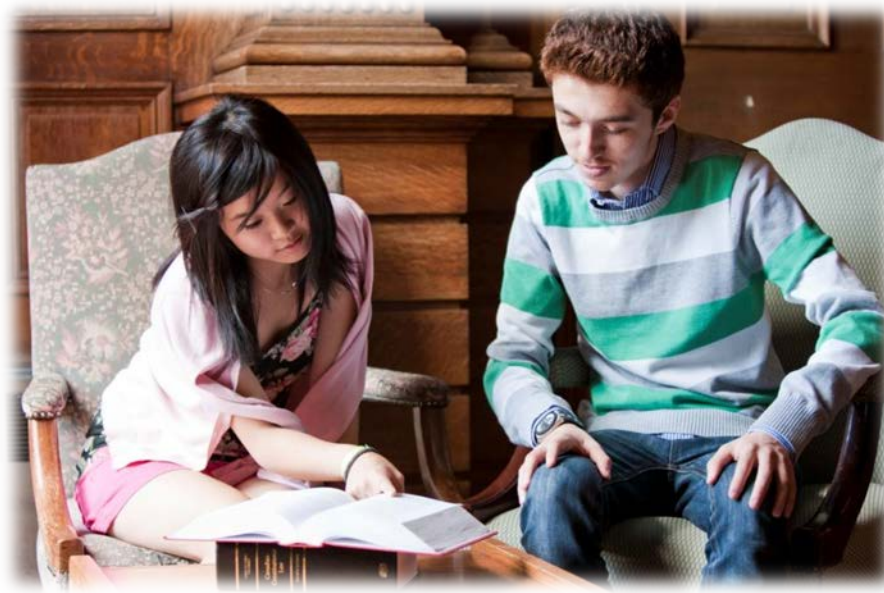
Reflection in STEP Activities



Through STEP reflective exercises, students will:

- ***Connect*** knowledge and understanding across academic, personal, and professional spheres.
- ***Reflect*** on learning experiences, interests, and goals within and between each sphere.
- ***Project*** goals onto short-and long-term plans that integrate personal values with academic knowledge and professional skills.

Designing your reflective exercise



General tips

- Start simply. Build your exercise as you become more familiar with what works and what doesn't in your specific context.
- Enable collective inspiration. Work with others in designing and revising exercises.
- Engage in and model reflection in how you approach the design and lay it out for students.
- If using exercises from the web, revise them to fit your particular culture and context.

Guidelines for designing STEP reflective exercises

Please download the **STEP Forward –
Designing your reflective exercise** PDF for
prompts and resources to help you develop a
specific activity plan.

Time frame of reflection exercises

One option is to have a single reflective exercise at a designated time in your STEP activity.

An alternative is to provide a few sequenced opportunities for reflection throughout your activity. These include, most commonly:

- Pre-activity (to surface prior knowledge and generate shared content for the participants).
- Mid-session (to re-focus and re-engage participants, and to remind them of or revisit learning goals)
- End-session (to articulate learning, identify take-away messages, and set goals)

Developmental reflective practice

If you plan staged reflective exercises, consider how each component of the reflective exercise corresponds to and supports your overall goals for student learning and reflection in your STEP activity.

In encouraging students to adopt a reflective approach to their learning, developmental reflective exercises allow students to practice the ongoing, iterative reflection that can become a life-long skill.

Concluding thoughts



Your own reflection

For one minute, write some keywords or brief notes to the following questions:

- What aspects of creating a reflective activity did you find most valuable or interesting?
- What was confusing or difficult to conceive in relation to your own context?
- What questions or concerns do you have that you want to think more about or discuss with others?

Notes

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For further information or discussion

Contact Linzi Manicom

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