



Using the 4Rs for Reflective Writing

Reflective writing forms an important element of your HEA application. To structure your reflective writing, you might consider using the 4Rs structured reflective approach (Ryan & Ryan, 2013; Bain, et al., 2002). Each 'R' represents a level of reflection, each increasing in complexity from description and personal response through to the use of personal experience and theory to explain that response. The elements are:

- **Reporting and responding** to a critical issue or experience in your teaching and learning;
- **Relating** this issue or experience to your own knowledge in this field;
- **Reasoning** about causes and effects of this issue/experience according and relating it to relevant theories or literature; and
- **Reconstructing** your thinking to plan new ways to approach the issue or engage in similar experiences in the future

When writing your application, you might consider structuring your reflection like this:

Reporting

Briefly, summarise the teaching and learning activity you wish to discuss. Respond to the activity by making observations about it, or the associated challenge or context. Express your opinion.

Relating

Now, make connections between the teaching and learning activity and your own skills, experience, and knowledge.

Reasoning

Highlight in detail the context underlying the teaching and learning activity. Explain and show how the context is important to your activity. Here you demonstrate your understanding of the teaching and learning issue through reference to relevant theory and literature in the field.

Reconstructing

Finally, through developing ideas and reflecting on the teaching and learning activity, comment on how you might act differently in the future. Ask: How would I design this differently in the future? What might work and why? Are there different options? Are my ideas supported by theory?

References

Bain, J., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C. & Lester, N. (2002) Reflecting on practice: Student teachers' perspectives. Flaxton, QLD: Post Pressed.

Ryan, M. & Ryan, M. (2013) Theorising a model for teaching and assessing reflective learning in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(2), 244-257.

The 4Rs Model of Reflective Thinking can also be accessed via <http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/write/4Rs-for-students-page1-v1.5.pdf>