

Strategies and Tools to Cultivate a Reflective Practice Workbook

Bonus Resource* from Module 2: Articulating Your Teaching Values and Practices:
Developing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy

*This resource was developed by the Teaching Assistants' Training Program, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto.

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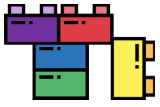
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Learning Outcomes

By the end of the workbook, you will be able to:

- Understand the characteristics and benefits of reflective practices in teaching;
- Explore different approaches to reflective practices; and,
- Practice developing and evaluating your own reflective plan.



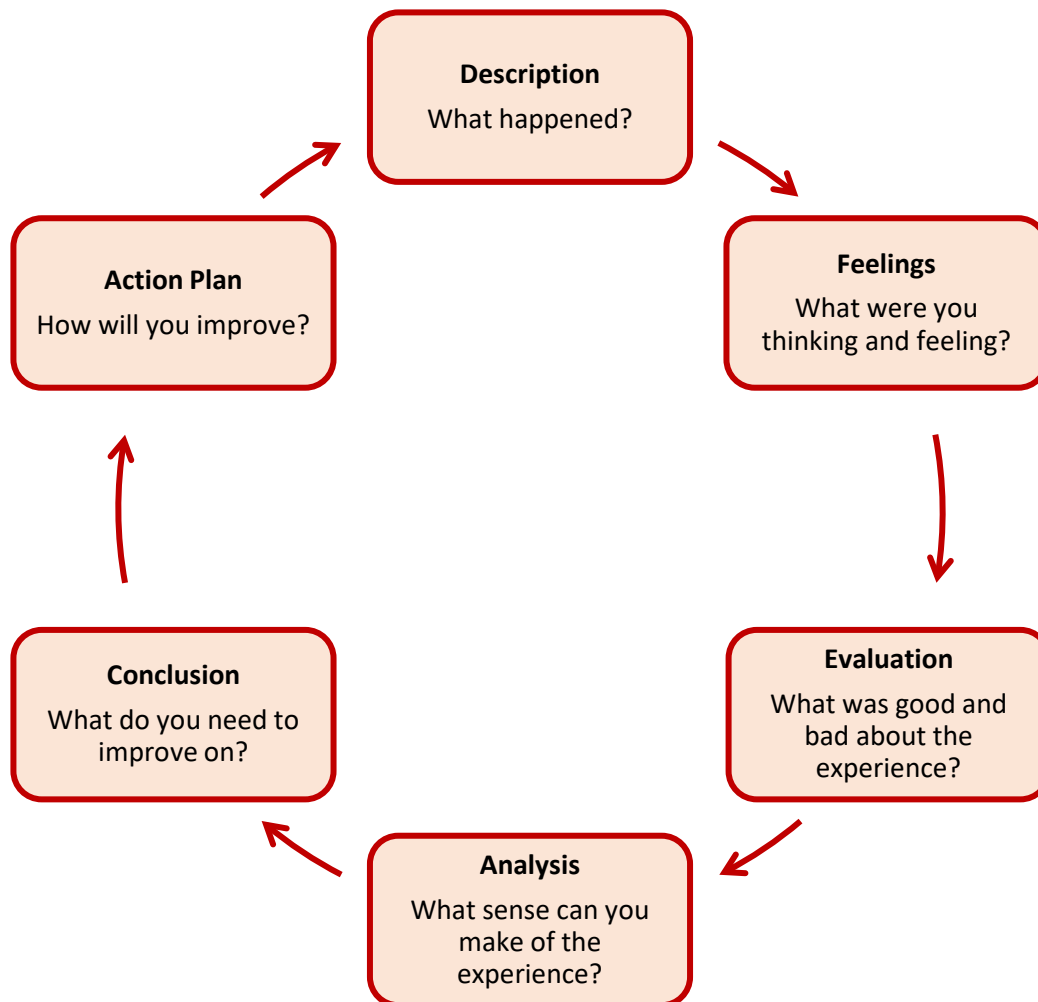
Section 1: What is Reflective Practice?

Before we begin, take a moment to reflect. What does "reflective practice" mean to you?

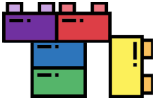
Models of Reflective Practice

There are many models of reflective practice. In this workbook, we will be focusing on The Reflective Cycle from Gibbs (1998) and the *REFLECT* model from Lawrence-Wilkes & Ashmore (2014).

Figure 1 Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.



Source: Cambridge Assessment International Education. (n.d.). Getting started with Reflective Practice.



Activity 1: Finding Points for Reflection

This section provides space for you to identify potential points of reflection.

"Reflective practice is a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful."

—Donald Schön

In the space below, take the time to reflect on the following questions:

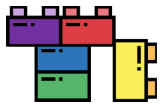
1. What do you want to reflect on in your teaching?

Note: For help, think of a recent, actionable experience that required a teaching-related skill. What did you do? Why did I do it? What steps did I take to do my best? For whom did I do it? When did I do it? Where did I do it?

Large grey rectangular area for reflection on question 1.

2. What areas are you hoping to make changes in and improve on? How would you change, improve, or develop your skill based on this experience?

Large grey rectangular area for reflection on question 2.



Section 2: Reflective Practice in Teaching and Learning

Reflective practice can be an integral part of professional development in the education field and has been linked to improvement in teaching (Mathew et al., 2017). Since 2008, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) has found that many teaching stream faculty and teaching post-doctoral fellows in Canada has been steadily increasing (Vajoczki, Fenton, Menard, Pollan, 2011). With the influx of teaching positions, the criteria for applying to teaching stream positions have expanded to include various components that require a robust reflective practice (e.g., teaching dossiers).

Reflective Practice and Your Professional Development

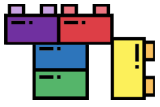
Part of our teaching context involves putting together highly reflective and thoughtful documents (teaching dossier, statement of teaching philosophy). Developing a regular reflective practice or a process of self-account can help generate application materials.

Expectations of Self-reflections

Almost 60% of search committees will explicitly ask for an STP from the candidate (across disciplines); however, of those that do not ask, many assume one will be included (Meizlish & Kaplan, 2008).

Table 1 Percentage of Survey Respondents Indicating Use of the Above Documents and Interactions to Evaluate Teaching Effectiveness, by Division.

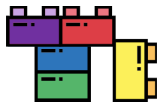
Division	Documents					Interactions			
	Description of Teaching Interests	Course Syllabi	Teaching Philosophy	Student Evaluations	Teaching Portfolios	Interview Questions on Teaching	Candidate Met with Students	Candidate Taught Class on Campus	Candidate Gave Teaching Job Talk
Humanities	81.6%	77.8%	50.2%	58.0%	34.9%	89.6%	79.7%	51.4%	44.8%
Social Sciences	79.4	58.2	49.6	74.5	23.4	81.6	80.9	42.6	39.7
Natural Sciences	65.4	16.3	79.8	19.2	11.5	75.0	71.2	16.3	26.0
Overall	77.2	57.8	56.9	54.3	26.0	83.8	78.1	40.7	38.9



Activity 2: From Self-Reflection to Professional Development

For this activity, we will use the Elements of Reflective Practice model (also known as the REFLECT) from Lawrence-Wilkes & Ashmore (2014). The objective of this activity is to develop Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART) goals for professional development in response to the identified areas for improvement from Activity 1.

Elements of Reflective Practice Model	Your Reflection
(R) Remember. Think about a recent teaching experience or areas of practice which you would like to change or improve.	
(E) Experience. What happened during this experience? What is significant about this experience or area of practice?	
(F) Focus. Who or what did this experience involved? When and where did it take place? What was your role or responsibilities?	
(L) Learn. If something went well or not so well, why do you think this happened?	
(E) Evaluate. What are the strengths and weaknesses of having had this experience?	
(C) Consider. Moving forward, what are the needs or possibilities of change? What skills can you develop?	
(T) Trial. What is something that I could do in the future to improve/change this experience? Use the SMART approach to create a Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound goal.	



Section 3: Tools and Resources for Your Reflective Practice

In this section, we will cover some practical tools for self-reflection. The tools listed below may be categorized as analogue, in other words, traditional tools (e.g., teaching journals), and digital, or tools that support electronic information capture. Ultimately, deciding which tool to use will reflect personal preference and familiarity. Regardless of which tool is used, any tool to capture the self-reflection process will support the reflective practice.

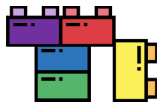
Assessing Yourself

The best time for self-assessment is as soon as possible after the teaching experience, whether it be a lecture, tutorial, lab, or practical. Rather than evaluating the quality of the experience, focus on the events that took place. You can write down observations into three categories: (1) things I planned for, (2) something that I did not prepare for, which improved the learning experience, and (3) something that I did not prepare for, which hindered the learning experience. Once you have completed capturing observations, you can begin the evaluation process.

Table 2 Tools for Self-Reflection

Purpose	Analog Tools	Digital Tools
Written reflection, creating lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching journal (notebook/sketchbook) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day One®, popular journaling app for those on the Mac/iOS platform, freemium Journey®, popular journaling for those also on the Android platform. freemium Notion®, web-based app to capture thoughts and content in the style of a personal database, free with a university email Evernote®, web-based app to capture thoughts and content, with clipping tools online and notebook-style organization, freemium OneNote®, free for students from institutions using Office365
Tracking outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graphical tracker Visual tracker (e.g., mood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excel/spreadsheet (e.g., a numerical ranking of performance categories)

Source: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., & Thompson, S., eds. (1995). *Tutoring and demonstrating: A handbook*. Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, University of Edinburgh.



Getting Feedback from Students

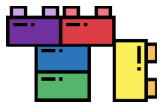
It is essential to create a feedback-friendly environment early in the semester. It may be appropriate to obtain weekly feedback; as a way of tracking improvement efficiently, you can also ask for feedback before, after, and during the course. Respond to feedback in a timely and consistent environment to ensure that students know that you actively involved in integrating their thoughts. However, it is not necessary to respond in the moment. While negative feedback may be discouraging, remember not to take critical comments personally. If the students raise challenging issues, you can always connect with your course instructor, colleagues, or department head.

Table 3 Tools for Gathering Feedback from Students

Purpose	Analog Tools	Digital Tools
Questionnaires (e.g., checklist, rating, text answer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper handouts Ticket-out-the-door Post-it® Feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poll Everywhere®, interactive polling platform that allows students and teachers to view the response in real-time, freemium Survey Monkey®, online polling software used to create a survey (e.g., mid-term check-in), freemium Kahoot®, online platform for creating educational games, including true/false questions and multiple choice (e.g. monitor weekly understanding), freemium Course evaluations
Performance tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graphical tracker (e.g., line plot of assignment grade averages) Visual tracker (e.g., smiley rating of student engagement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excel/spreadsheet (e.g., exported from Poll Everywhere)

Note: Online polling tools offer students a degree of anonymity such that they cannot be identified by the user that created the poll. It is essential to be mindful of student privacy, such as not to share their identifies with others. This would include including specific student names or other identifiers in polling software.

Source: Forster, F., Hounsell, D., & Thompson, S., eds. (1995). *Tutoring and demonstrating: A handbook*. Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, University of Edinburgh.

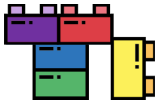


Getting Feedback from Colleagues

Engaging in a dialogue with academic colleagues can allow space to set goals a teaching experience (e.g., tutorial) and afterward to reflect on whether those goals were achieved (i.e., debriefing). In this case, colleagues may refer to peers such as other TA/CIs, or in the next step, the supervisor or department chair. By reflecting on the teaching experience and getting an outside perspective, you can have the opportunity to explore whether certain aspects of the teaching experience met your expectation, why or why not.

Table 4 Tools for Getting Feedback from Peers

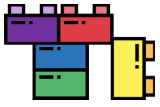
Tools	Description
In-class observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the Teaching Assistant (TA) or Course Instructor (CI) with an outsider’s perspective on their teaching without the stress of being watched by their supervisor or department chair • An effective way of getting direct feedback • Potential to obtain feedback about organizational skills, clarity, oral presentation skills, rapport with students, use of teaching aids, and overall impact • Allows a TA or CI to have a detailed conversation on their teaching strengths and areas that might need improvement in a supportive and confidential environment • Allows after de-briefing and self-reflection
Microteaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows participants who often lack real classroom teaching experience to practice delivery micro-lessons • Provides TAs or CIs to participate in peer-to-peer learning • Three elements are crucial for teaching development: teaching, receiving feedback, and giving feedback



Activity 3: Creating a Self-Reflection Plan

In this section, we will create a plan for reflection based on feedback, which can be obtained from students and peers, as well as through self-assessment. Based on your identified area of focus (Activity 1) and goal for self-development (Activity 2), begin creating an outline of your self-reflection plan. Feel free to use your answers from the previous activities. These boxes will allow you to connect the dots and lay out a plan from self-reflection to professional development.

Laying Out a Plan	Your Reflection
Area of Focus. Based on reflection for Activity 1, what area of teaching will you be focusing on for development?	
Self-Assessment. Using some example methods for self-assessments, identify one way in which you would be interested in assessing your performance.	
Student Feedback. Using some example methods for obtaining student feedback, identify one way in which you would be interested in trying.	
Peer Feedback. Using some example methods for obtaining peer feedback, identify one way in which you would be interested in trying.	
Action Plan. After you have obtained and evaluated the feedback, what are some options or resources you can use for personal or professional development?	



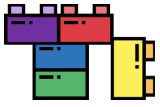
Section 4: Giving Feedback as Reflective Practice

Giving feedback is also a form of reflective practice. By observing someone else teach or reading another person's reflection, we can identify themes and concepts which are also important to you. When providing feedback on a colleague's teaching performance or written reflections (e.g., statement of teaching philosophy), it is important to remember that our role is not to judge or evaluate a person's approach to teaching or teaching style. Rather, the goal is to share strategies and perspectives that will help the teacher identify a plan for improving her or his teaching practice. By learning to give effective feedback, we articulate and understand how to create a successful learning environment.

Tips for Giving Helpful Feedback

- **Focus on the content.** Describe what you have observed, read, or heard and how it may have impacted you as a learner. Remember: you are providing feedback on aspects of teaching, not the person.
- **Be specific.** Identify a specific comment or behavior and describe how it affected you. Link your comments to specific moments in the teacher's lesson. Whenever possible, offer concrete strategies for addressing concerns.
- **Be positive and constructive...and honest!** Always offer a positive observation first. However, try to avoid insincere praise. Follow up constructive comments with your ideas for improvement or things to try.
- **Offer options and alternatives.** Do not only point out areas of difficulty. Let the person know what they did well so that they remember to do it also in the future.
- **Avoid prescriptive language.** Instead of saying "You should do this..." or "Don't do that...", phrase your suggestions as stemming from your own observations: "I'm wondering if you tried X, what might happen..."; "I'd like to see you try Y"; "I would have benefitted from a clearer explanation here, could you try this...".
- **Do not demand unreasonable change.** Avoid pointing out challenges the teacher cannot reasonably change or address.

Source: Verderber & Verderber (1983) in Leptak, J. 1989. Giving and receiving constructive criticism. *Lifelong Learning*, 12(5), 25–26.



Activity 4: Giving Feedback

Locate a sample Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP), preferably one written by a Teaching Assistant, and think about what feedback you would give the Teaching Assistant on their STP.

Feedback Prompts	Your Feedback
What are the strengths of this STP?	
What are some areas for improvement?	
How can you apply these comments to your own teaching practice or professional development?	



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