A guide to writing a Reflective Report

The purpose of the Reflective Report is to foster an ability to reflect on their experience and consider ways in which their developing understanding of the theory, which underpins practice, can help them to develop an attitude of critical awareness of their own actions, values, motives etc, and also to the actions, values and motivations of others that they work with.

Students complete a weekly reflective report during level 1, and a fortnightly reflective report during levels 2 and 3. A form is provided for this purpose, which can be found in the Practice Handbook or on the website (www.baywat.weebly.com) along with guidelines about how to complete this for each stage of the course. However, the following points should be noted with regard to reflective reports for all levels:

- Reflective reports are submitted by email to tutors by 4.00pm on the Friday they are due. Late submissions will be counted as a fail.
- They are graded using the practice CAS scale.
- There is no specific word count associated with reflective reports but, as a guide, level 1 should cover 2 sides of A4, while levels 2 and 3 will probably require a further side in order to provide adequate evidence of reflective activity. However, quality is more important than quantity, and the main content of each Reflective paper should be within the ‘Reflective Comments’ section.
- In order to attain professional accreditation, at Level 3 all students must meet JNC Level 2 requirements (CAS 12 or above) for all their reflective reports. Students who do not meet these requirements but do pass (CAS 9 -11) can still graduate without JNC professional accreditation.
- No more than 5 reflective reports can be failed in any semester, or the practice will be counted as having failed for that semester. Students are permitted to resubmit each reflective recording once in order to meet the appropriate standard.
- Normally, practice would be made up during the summer, but students should note that only 1 semester’s practice can be made up during the summer.
- Students are not permitted to proceed to the next level of the programme until all practice components of the course have been successfully completed.

It is important that reflective reports contain a strong emphasis on reflecting on practice, and that the future actions section in particular should contain concrete and realistic targets for how the student’s practice will change as a result of their reflective activity.

Professional Occupational standards
The Competencies provide the framework for the student’s reflective activity, and each reflective report should contain an indication of which Competency is being reflected upon. Each student should reflect at least once on each of these competencies in any academic year. These standards are found on the annual review forms of the Practice Handbook.

Description of the Situation
In this section the student is expected to describe a situation relating to what they have observed in a youth work setting or experienced as an aspect of their own practice. The
description should be clear and concise, however the more specific the description is about a particular aspect of practice, the easier it will be to reflect upon. It is useful to incorporate in this section whether others have observed the same thing as you, if not then is there any reason for the difference?

In this description students should avoid using names of young people or volunteers in order to maintain confidentiality (although these reflections will not be shared to others).

Students may wish to start the description with reference to literature that initiated the process of reflection however the main emphasis in this section should be on what was observed in practice.

Reflective Comments
This is the section that most students find the most difficult. There are three key elements to this section:

• Theory – What has been drawn from the literature about this aspect of practice? It is useful to draw from some of the set texts or in class materials in courses that you are either currently studying or have previously taken. You should not rely on just one author but try to draw from a range of sources. Remember that this theory may draw as much from theological literature as from informal education literature.
• Relate to practice – Your reflective comments should not be an essay but rather relate the theory to the practice you have observed. This should be a critical exercise and not merely finding literature that supports your current practice but rather to look at the practice afresh in the light of literature. Having a critical look at practice does not necessarily mean that you are identifying deficiencies in practice (although you may choose to do this), it can also mean that you are identifying from the literature why some element of practice may be identified as good practice.
• Self-critical reflection – If you have chosen to initiate the reflection by looking at the practice of others then you should try to incorporate a self-critical element to the reflection. Are there gaps in your skills, knowledge and abilities or are there aspects to your own practice that need to be improved upon.

The highest quality reflections will tend to look at their practice through the lenses of informal education and theological literature (this is more than taking a biblical text out of context and applying it to your reflection) resulting in a critical approach to your own practice (and the practice of others if appropriate).

Proposed Future Action
Reflection with action is pointless! This section provides students with the opportunity to focus on the action that ought to be taken as a result of the preceding section. These proposals should be as specific as possible and should not merely be vague possibilities but rather include how you are going to take these proposals forward. For example, who are you going to discuss this with? What are you going to produce? What books are you going to read? What are you going to differently next week?

When presenting proposals, students should remain critical by thinking through the impact of such proposals. One way to do this is by using a SWOT analysis where the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the proposals are critically weighed up.
If you have been self-critical enough in your reflection then you should be able to identify proposals that will also focus on your own development and learning i.e. what are you going to do to improve yourself as a practitioner.

**Bibliography and Presentation**

All reflective reports should be submitted with a bibliography; failure to do so will result in the report being failed. The bibliography should reflect the core bibliographies from the programme, and use of ‘popular’ level texts will be marked down. In addition, repeated use of the same texts will also be viewed as indicating an inability to engage with a sufficiently broad range of views and ideas.

The author and date should be cited within the text, using the normal Harvard style, but a page reference is not required for reflective reports unless the student is quoting directly. Extensive quotations are discouraged within reflective reports. (See the Programme Handbook guide appendix to referencing and bibliographies)

Reflective reports should be written with a professional tone, avoiding overly informal language.

**Levels 2 & 3**

At level 2, students are expected to not only reflect upon their own practice but also on how they and their agency communicate and liaise with other stakeholders.

At level 3, students are expected to also reflect on how to manage change and how such change may affect staff, volunteers and service users. This should include aspects of monitoring, evaluation and training.