



Assignment for Research in Practice Placement: Producing a reflective portfolio

What is a Reflective Portfolio?

A Reflective Portfolio is a collection of evidence and reflections documenting students' development, learning, and experiences. Unlike most traditional assignments, it encourages students to explore their personal learning journey. While most academic projects require objectivity and impartiality, a Reflective Portfolio emphasizes personal perspectives, opinions, and feelings. It offers an honest account of the work undertaken and highlights the skill sets developed.

Why is a Reflective Practice Portfolio a good choice of assessment for Research in Practice Placement?

- It promotes personalised learning and a student-centred approach
- It allows students to explore their own learning process
- It enables integration of feedback from student, managers, peers and clients
- It can provide ideas and materials for students to market their skills beyond their PhD
- The format and content can easily be adapted for different students and settings

Aim and Objectives

The overall objective of the reflective portfolio is to promote personal and professional growth and employability by critically analysing and reflecting on workplace experiences, including evaluating challenges, successes, and learning opportunities.

Students will establish their personalized objectives for the portfolio. Suggested objectives might include:

- Reflecting on personal growth and learning during the placement.
- Discussing how research skills can be adapted to workplace settings.
- Evaluating challenges and opportunities encountered, along with strategies implemented.
- Reflecting on how the placement has influenced career aspirations.
- Identifying strengths and areas for improvement related to employability while setting future goals.
- Documenting feedback from supervisors or colleagues and reflecting on its impact.
- Assessing experiences of professional communication and networking.
- Reflecting on how the placement has shaped their approach to continuing doctoral studies.

Proposed content

The content of the portfolio is flexible depending on the your identified objectives, but should be divided into three sections: before placement, during placement and end of placement.

At the outset you should identify your own personalized objectives for the reflective portfolio.

1. Reflection before placement

- Describe your objectives for the placements and reflect on these (e.g. what skills and experience are students hoping to gain and why).
- Possibly reflect on the process you went through for obtaining your placement – e.g. how you identified and contacted possible hosts, any selection procedures,
- Brief outline of the project (as set out before the placement)
- You could also consider reflection on the expectations/concerns about your placement, and how this may fit with your career aspirations. Regarding concerns, you could also reflect on how you might mitigate these, as well as the ongoing roles of both supervisors and the SCDTP / RiP team.

2. Reflection during placement

“Diary entries” during placement that may include reflections on:

- Skills developed (you could consider including a “skills inventory” or other form of self-assessment)
- “Critical incidents” – both positive and negative
- Networking opportunities and communication with colleagues, supervisors and clients.
- Contributions made to the organization (including links to specific outputs etc.)
- Feedback – reflections on colleague or client feedback
- Ethical or professional dilemmas
- What “research” entails in the workplace, how it is conducted in the host setting and how this differs from the academic setting.
- The support and opportunities received during the placement and if /how this could be improved.

While we do not wish to be prescriptive, we suggest that the diary entries are made regularly during your placement e.g. at least once every two weeks.

3. Reflections at the end of the placement

This should reflect issues of particular importance to you and you may wish to start it by reflecting on what you found most memorable or striking during your placement. The reflective summary of the placement might include:

- Have your objectives been met, and if not why? What do you feel was most positive, and most negative about the placement, and why? What, if anything, could have made the experience more valuable?
- What skills have been developed? What gaps do they think are still there, and what are your plans for addressing this as part of your DNA?
- How will the placement affect how you approach the rest of your PhD, and how did you find the transition back to doctoral study?
- How has the placement changed your career aspirations (if at all)?

- How could the SCDTP better support RiP?
- We encourage you to include a short reflection from the host on the experience of having a placement student, as well as a reflection from the supervisor on the value of the placement.

Format and Submission

Diary entries and summaries can be presented in various formats, including videos, podcasts, posters, blogs, infographics, handwritten notes scanned into the document, photos, reports, presentations, or relevant links.

- Suggested length: 2,000–3,000 words, with flexibility for other media.
- Submission deadline: Six weeks after completing the placement (or three months for part-time students).

Assessment

Assessment will be conducted by the Academic RiP leads, with outcomes categorized as “Accept Submission” or “Requires Further Review.” Written feedback will be provided, and a marking rubric will be shared with students beforehand.

Tips for writing a reflective portfolio

- When writing the reflective portfolio you should use the first person, and use a reflective and analytic tone that moves beyond the descriptive e.g. “this situation make me understand that..” or “on reflection, I considered that ...”. Language should remain formal / professional in style.
- When describing situations or events, consider reflecting on issues such as *What went well, and what didn't? How could I approach this differently in the future?*
- Consider using reflective frameworks (e.g. Gibbs, Kolb or Schon) to structure your reflections.
- Use headings to clearly structure your portfolio. If you are using different types of media (e.g. video, audio) “signpost” and link them within a written document.
- Where possible include feedback from peers, managers, clients or supervisors.
- We are looking for a piece of work that show real depth of reflection and honesty, not a “polished” output.
- Please ensure that all media (e.g. video, audio, photographs) are in a format that is easily accessible to the assessors.

Resources

General resources on reflective practice

University of Edinburgh (March 2024) Embedding a reflective portfolio for student development in science courses: Challenges, suggestions, and solutions. <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/teaching-matters/embedding-a-reflective-portfolio-for-student-development-in-science-courses-challenges-suggestions-and-solutions/>

Roberts, A. (2009). Encouraging reflective practice in periods of professional workplace experience: the development of a conceptual model. *Reflective Practice*, 10(5), 633–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940903290703>

Moon J.A. (2004). A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice. Routledge

Guidance on reflective writing and producing reflective portfolios

Bassot B. **The Reflective Journal**. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. v. 4th edition ISBN 9781350422988. Disponível em: <https://search.ebscohost-com.soton.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=3908225&site=ehost-live>. Acesso em: 25 mar. 2025 This is an excellent guide to reflective writing and practice, and you can access an e book through Webcat / University of Southampton Library. If anyone at other universities has any difficulties getting hold of it please let one of the RiP academic leads know.

University of Edinburgh: Reflectors Toolkit (accessed 19/3/25). [Reflectors' Toolkit | Reflection Toolkit](#)

This useful resource covers setting objectives, models and frameworks for reflection and guidance, producing reflections and reflective language and writing. It also has a great section on reflection for employability, and provides links to literature and other resources.

University of Cambridge: Reflective Practice toolkit (accessed 19/3/25). [Introduction - Reflective Practice Toolkit - LibGuides at University of Cambridge Subject Libraries](#)

Another very comprehensive and useful toolkit.

University of Hull Reflective writing (accessed 19/3/25) [Home - Reflective writing - Library at University of Hull](#)

This is another useful resource – the section on different frameworks for reflective practice is particularly good.

Ivory Research: How to Write 1st Class Reflective Portfolio (accessed 19/3/25) <https://www.ivoryresearch.com/library/other-articles/reflective-portfolio-how-to-write-1st-class-reflective-portfolio/>

Alison James HEA lego talk video. Creative reflection for employability [Alison James HEA Lego talk on Vimeo](#)

Arizona State University Resources for producing digital portfolios (accessed 19/3/25) [Welcome - Digital Portfolio Help Resources v1](#)