# Reflective Writing by Helena Beeson [Video Transcript]

What should be included, first of all it is important to provide some context or background to the activity or event upon which you are going to reflect. Think about what the reader will need to know in order to understand what happened and your role within it. Beware, however, of going into unnecessary detail. Make brief notes of your emotional response to the activity in which you’re engaged. Was it difficult? Were you interested in finding out more? Were you anxious about a particular aspect? Think about the effect this had on your performance. Record what went well or badly. Were you better at some aspects than others? How do you know? Give evidence, this might be feedback from peers or tutors. If you are reflecting on a workplace setting such as teaching or nursing placements, you might be able to use the reactions of your students or patients as a way of evaluating your performance. Ask yourself why things went well or why they didn’t, try to explain this using theory or other kinds of literature. The main reason for writing a reflection is to help you improve in the future, therefore it is not simply enough to note that something went well or badly. Use what happened to come up with a plan for what you will do in a similar situation next time. What have you learned? Would you change the way you do things? There are a variety of different reflective models such as Gibbs and Johns, you might be asked to use these when writing reflectively. For details of each model, look at the Reflective Models video.

Common problems and how to avoid them, often you will be required to reflect on something that happened over a period of a few weeks or a term, for example you may be asked to reflect on your performance in a whole module or on a placement, therefore it is important to make notes regularly otherwise when you come to write your reflection at the end of the experience you’ll have probably forgotten what happened. Usually you will be asked to reflect on a specific aspect of your performance such as communication skills. Make sure you keep the focus of the assignment in mind when writing. When writing reflection, it is tempting to go into great detail about what happened but if you adopt this approach you will end up with something very descriptive, instead try to be analytical, why did things happen the way they did? What conclusions can you draw? When writing about yourself it is sometimes easy to allow your own biases and prejudices to creep into your work. Don’t forget the reflection is still an academic piece of work, you need to avoid making generalisations and back up your claims with evidence. Honesty is the best policy, when writing reflectively it can be difficult to be honest especially if something had not gone as well as you’d hoped. Remember you will not lose marks for admitting you found something difficult, in fact this will give you something to write about, especially if you can analyse why you struggled and what you’ve learnt from the experience.

Don’t forget, while you are writing on a reflective piece you still need to write in an academic way. You can use the first person when writing, you need to make sure you still use current literature and policy to support your writing and remember to reference throughout. If you have any questions email cfap@northampton.ac.uk.

Thank you.