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**Department of English Language and Literature Module: Research Methodology…. 1st Year**

**Lecture 05:**

**How to Promote Reflective Practice**

The reflective learning log is designed to structure an intense and active review of a learning activity or session. The learning log is a reflective learning tool in any programme of study. The learning log is where the students engage in focused, concise and analytical reviews of their own practices, processes and learning – for a specific learning or study activity and/or across a whole programme of study.

Learning logs are designed to encourage active learning – to move students from surface to deep learning. Basically, the idea of the log is to help students become more successful students in the first instance (and thus to assist with the evolution and development of a successful graduate identity (Holmes, 2002)) and that the practice, if continued, will enable students to become ever more thoughtful, reflexive practitioners.

Typically, the role of the log is to rehearse students in good active learning practice. That is, students will be taken through a series of reflections designed to make their learning conscious in analytical ways and this will improve both the quantity and the quality of their learning.

For your first log we recommend that you write your diary entry in response to the headings that we give below. After a while you can decide which particular headings you would like to continue to use in your own logs in order to ensure that they are useful to you

The structure that we recommend that you use first has six parts: what, why, reaction, learned, issues, goal setting. Each of these topics prompts you to useful thought, as described below:

**What:** It is useful to briefly describe the topic in which you have engaged for it is very easy to forget once a session is over.

**Why:** Make brief analytical notes explaining the purpose of the activity

**Reaction:** Make brief notes of your emotional response to the activity in which you engaged or the information that you received. **Note:** This is where you notice the *affective* (emotional) dimension of your learning. It allows you to build a picture of yourself as a learner and as a student. An entry, after a session on group work, could be like this: ‘I did not think that I would like group work, but actually the people in my group were really interested in the topic and I really enjoyed the discussion.’

**Issues:** Make brief notes on any problems that you encountered – and any solutions that you discovered – in the session itself or in the follow-up activity related to the session. For example, if asked to use at least two journal references in an assignment you might have an entry like this: ‘Could not find any journals in the library. Went to a subject librarian session and discovered the paper journals – and the journals online. Brilliant!’

**Learned:** Make brief notes on all that you think you learned from the lecture, class or your reading. This is where you make your learning conscious, which improves both the quantity and quality of that learning. It is a quick revision of a learning activity. An entry on note-making could be something like this: ‘Learned the what, why and how of note-making after a structured brainstorm and lecture. Realised that the brainstorm did help me get more from the lecture. Also learned the Cornell and the pattern systems of note-making. I think that they are both useful. I will have to devise a system for myself where I use patterns – and where I indicate how a particular lecture relates to course aims, outcomes and the assignment.’

**Goal setting:** Make brief notes on possible follow-up activities in which to engage after a study session. Typically note ***when*** you will do the follow-up activities or they tend not to get done. Follow-up activities can include engaging in further research or in writing a section of an assignment. For example: ‘Wednesday at 2.00, I will look for two articles on pattern notes online. Will write a draft paragraph on pattern notes for my Business Skills essay.’

**Tips:** Keep description to a minimum, be concise, focus on the analysis – this increases your understanding of what is happening in a course and why. When completing the ‘reaction’ section, be honest. You will not get a helpful picture of yourself as a student if you just say that you enjoyed everything.