

Example One: Reflective Blog Assignment Series

TPD Facilitator Context:

The goal of this assignment is to provide TAs with a degree of structure for ongoing reflection about their teaching, in a low-stakes way that is spread out across their teaching and learning experiences. It also involves peer collaboration and feedback through peer responses, and the instructor is likewise encouraged to read and provide feedback on TA blogs (if not weekly, then at key times in the term in a way that addresses all entries). The assignment instructions encourage TAs to think about how their learning (in TPD experiences) relates to their teaching in practice, for example by requiring that students explicitly connect their reflections to learning outcomes from prior TPD sessions.

The assignment is intended to be an ongoing (e.g., weekly) series, with several individual blog entries interspersed with response posts from peers at strategic intervals. For example (in a ten-week term), you might have a weekly assignment that results in eight blog entries and two responses. Consider your TPD context when outlining the exact frequency and sequencing, which you can provide to TAs in a course outline in the syllabus (along with any other TPD assignments).

TA Assignment Instructions:

Throughout the term, TAs enrolled in [class] will compose an online “blog” to reflect on their teaching experiences. A theme all year long is that the simple act of genuine reflection (with a critical eye) is one of the single most important things you can do to improve as a teacher. Thus, this process will be structured for you (in a “low-stakes” way) over the course of this term’s teaching experience!

At the beginning of the term, each TA will create a [LMS] “Discussion” as their blog [or alternative mechanism]. You will use this one discussion as your blog all term long. The discussion’s title should begin with “[TA Name]’s Blog:” so that it can be easily identified. Feel free to append a creative (but civil and professional) name that fits your own unique teaching style or persona. (Naming convention example – “Adam’s Blog: Pathological Metacognition”)

A total of [eight] blog posts will be due throughout the term (see “Course Outline”): [six] of these will entail authoring your own reflective blog entries (“Entry”), and [two] will require reading and responding to the blog entries of one of your peers up to that point (“Response”).

In both cases, the goal of these posts is to *demonstrate your understanding of the [class] learning outcomes* for the sessions from the week(s) leading up to each post, and *apply these learning outcomes to your own teaching experience*. This will look slightly different for entries and responses:

1. To create an “Entry” post:

- a) **Revisit the learning outcomes** from each [class session] prior to the upcoming post. The outcomes and slides are available in the “Modules” section of the course [LMS] site. Note that posts on some weeks will span more than one [class session], and posts should account for all preceding sessions not covered by earlier entries.
- b) **Describe your current teaching with respect to those outcomes.** The learning outcomes for each week are crafted to be measurable traits of your teaching, so the goal of the entries is to describe:
 - i. Where you stand at present with respect to those abilities. *How confident are you about the outcomes? Why? What does your teaching look like as it relates to those outcomes? Do they manifest in your teaching? If so, how?*
 - ii. How you could continue to improve upon them. *How has the [class] content and group discussion helped you grow with respect to the outcomes? What progress have you already made in your teaching? What are you currently doing to improve your teaching with respect to the outcomes? What will you do in the future to keep improving further?*
- c) **Entries should be no more than 1000 words** and are graded by quality not length. Ideally you will be able to speak to each of the week’s outcomes, but this may not be practical in all cases. If you find that there is too much to discuss, focus the entry on your top priorities as they relate to your personal growth as a teacher.
- d) **Get creative!** The goal of the assignment is to put each week’s learning outcomes into the context of your teaching experiences this term as well as your overall evolution as a teacher. But don’t let that

stop you from writing a good blog! Your entries should connect [class] content to your personal experiences, but also feel authentic and be fun to read. Think about it from the reader's perspective and find a way to truly make it *your* blog.

2. To create a "Response" post:

- a) **Identify the blog to which you will respond.** These will be arranged by the instructor and posted on [LMS] as an Announcement prior to the upcoming response posts.
- b) **Read their blog entries up to that point.** While doing so, keep an eye out for lingering questions or areas where your colleague could benefit from input and feedback.
- c) **Provide encouragement and constructive feedback about their teaching journey.** *Can you offer any encouragement for their efforts? Do you have any advice concerning the methods or strategies they discuss? Are there things from [class] discussions that would be helpful to remember? Are there methods or strategies that work for you? Can you identify and respond to any lingering questions the author may have posed? Do you have other advice or feedback with respect to the topics discussed in the blog so far?*
- d) **Responses should be no more than 1000 words** and are graded by quality not length.

See [LMS] for full assignment rubrics. Briefly, Reflective Teaching Blogs will be evaluated in terms of:

- Whether posts were submitted on time [8 pts total; 1 point per post]
- Quality and thoughtfulness of the blog entry/response [16 pts; 2 pts per post]
- Alignment with relevant learning outcomes from preceding class sessions [16 pts; 2 pts per post]

[In this example, the assignment series is worth a total of 40 points in a 100-point course (40% of grade).]

Assignment Rubrics [adjust point values to your context]:

Reflective Blog: Initial Post [5 pts total in example]			
Criteria	Exceptional	Satisfactory	Cursory
Completion and Timeliness <i>Post was on time? Meets the length expectations?</i>	The post was on time and does not exceed 1000 words.	The post was submitted late without prior instructor approval. Alternatively, the post may exceed the maximum length (1000 words) by an unreasonable margin.	The post was not submitted.
Quality and Thoughtfulness <i>The post is a thoughtful and genuine reflection of the TA's teaching? It reflects on the TA's current abilities as well as how they plan to improve in the future?</i>	The post is a genuine effort to reflect on the TA's teaching and grow from the experience. It addresses all aspects of the assignment description in a non-trivial manner. That is: the blog is a thoughtful reflection on the current state of their teaching, and a commitment to improvement is evident to the reader. The analysis of the [class] content and their own teaching experience is done in a thorough manner.	Overall the post is a good reflection, but it could benefit from further analysis to be of greater instructional value. Some assignment guidelines may be addressed incompletely; the blog may need greater clarity or detail to be of benefit to the TA and/or their peers.	There is no post, or the analysis is too brief to provide much insight into their current teaching and how they hope to improve in the future. Some assignment guidelines may be ignored, addressed incompletely, or addressed too superficially to be of instructional value.
Alignment with the Learning Outcomes <i>The post connects [class] content to the TA's teaching? The post makes a concerted effort to</i>	The post explicitly connects the [class] content to the TA's teaching experiences. The content includes the learning outcomes from all preceding class sessions not covered by earlier blog posts. The post addresses all relevant learning outcomes (if possible);	The post connects some of the learning outcomes to the TA's teaching experiences, but it would benefit from a more thorough assessment of the outcomes and/or more detail per outcome. It may not be clear to the reader why certain outcomes	There is no post, or it does not explicitly connect the [class] content (learning outcomes) to the TA's teaching experiences.

<p>address the most important and/or all feasible learning outcomes? The content covers all preceding [class sessions] not covered by previous blog posts?</p>	<p>in cases where that would not be realistic, the TA focuses on the outcomes that align with their highest priorities, and their reason for doing so is clear to the reader. The post describes the TA's current skills or abilities concerning the learning outcomes, and also describe how they plan to improve upon these outcomes in the future.</p>	<p>were not discussed, or some may have been unjustifiably omitted. It may not cover all the necessary outcomes (from all preceding sessions not addressed by previous blog entries).</p>	
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Reflective Blog: Response Post [5 pts total in example]

Criteria	Exceptional	Satisfactory	Cursory
<p>Completion and Timeliness <i>Post was on time? Meets the length expectations?</i></p>	<p>The post was on time and does not exceed 1000 words.</p>	<p>The post was submitted late without prior instructor approval. Alternatively, the post may exceed the maximum length (1000 words) by an unreasonable margin.</p>	<p>The post was not submitted.</p>
<p>Quality and Thoughtfulness <i>The post is a thoughtful and genuine response to the TAs blog entries? It's clear that they read the full blog? It identifies key priorities based on issues and topics raised in the entries to date?</i></p>	<p>The response author makes it clear that they've read all previous entries, making specific connections to the teaching experiences and reflections of the blog's author. The response author identifies appropriate places for feedback based on the blog entries to date. Responses to those key areas for feedback are thoughtful and thorough. Overall, this is a significant effort to consult with the TA's colleagues about their teaching experiences and reflections.</p>	<p>The response exists, but would benefit from greater clarity, detail, or diversity of thought concerning the issues addressed. It may not be immediately clear that the response author has read the full blog, as it makes too few specific connections to the content. The response identifies and addresses some areas for feedback, but this input could be more helpful; the response could benefit from different priorities regarding the topics or issues addressed, and/or could benefit from more detail regarding those issues in order to be maximally helpful.</p>	<p>No post exists, or the response is too superficial to be of much value to the blog author.</p>
<p>Helpfulness and Constructiveness <i>The response is helpful? It provides positive feedback and encouragement? It shares input, advice, and/or resources that speak to issues raised in the entries?</i></p>	<p>The response includes several types of helpful input for the blog's author. The response encourages the author, normalizes their perceptions and experiences when relevant, and supports them in their commitment to improving as a teacher. In addition, the response provides specific input, advice, strategies, and/or resources concerning the issues/methods/questions raised in the blog entries. This input will be of practical value to the blog's author when trying to improve in regard to those specific topics.</p>	<p>The response is generally helpful, but could be made more so with more development on behalf of the response author. The response may not adequately encourage and support the blog author, or could be more constructive in its tone. The response may provide some input concerning the issues/methods/questions raised by the blog author, but this input may need to be more thorough in order to be of maximal instructional value.</p>	<p>No post exists, or the response is too superficial to be of much value to the blog author. Conversely, the tone may not be constructive and collaborative in nature.</p>

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