WELF1019: Assessment 3 Reflective essay

**Slide 1: Introduction**

This is a presentation on Assessment 3 which is a reflective essay. A reflective essay is quite different from traditional essays that you would write in other courses. For this assessment you are required to reflect on your learning and experience of the course. You have to use the reflections that you had recorded throughout the course to substantiate your arguments or discussion. This assessment provides you with the opportunity to connect your thoughts and experiences with the theories and concepts that have been introduced in the course. The task encourages you to be critical and reflect about the past, present and the future. You would also have to alternate between using the first person pronoun ‘I’ and academic writing. It is really important that you understand the requirements for the task before you begin doing it. If you are having problems understanding what you are expected to do, please consult your tutor.

**Slide 2: Copyright notice**

**Slide 3: The task**

This genre or format of the assessment is a reflective essay. The word limit is 2000 words and you are strongly advised to keep to the word limit (plus or minus 10%). Assessments that do not adhere to the word limit are not acceptable. The weight for this assessment is 40% of the total grade for the course. You are required to write a reflective essay describing two of your strengths and two areas that need further development. Each of these sections should be approximately 400 words. Your discussion must include the journal entries which you have been maintaining weekly throughout this course. You are also required to include an introduction and conclusion for your essay and provide a minimum of eight academic references using UniSA Harvard referencing conventions. The references should be from the journal articles and textbooks used in the course and distributed evenly across the four instances of learning.

**Slide 4: Formatting requirements**

The reflective essay should be typed using Times New Roman font and in size 12. You should provide 1.5 spacing and justify your text. You are required to number the pages and set the margin at 2.5cms

**Slide 5: What is a reflective essay?**

A reflective essay is a task that is set to encourage the development of students’ critical thinking skills by getting them to reflect on their readings, current knowledge and experiences of the course. \*For the current assessment you are required to examine your thoughts, feelings and responses to new information learnt and experience of the course in order to identify two of your strengths and two areas that need further development. You are then expected to discuss this in the essay with evidence from your journal entries, course readings, etc.

**Slide 6: Pre-writing activity (evidence for reflection)**

In order to complete the task effectively, you are expected to have maintained a weekly journal to record the reflections on your learning and to evaluate your skills as they develop. You have to specifically focus on three aspects and they are: what you learned in WELF1019; what was new to you and how this knowledge will influence your practice as a human service worker. These journal entries along with any other questionnaires or exercises that you have completed from the textbook can be used to substantiate your discussion in the essay. It is important that you store all your evidence in a systematic manner so that you will not have any problems when needing to refer to particular anecdotes in your reflection.

**Slide 7: The reflective journal can be used for:**

The reflective journal can be used for many things. You can use the journal to record your development and progress through the course. You can process your learning by focussing on particular readings or issues and record your insights or any questions you may have. The journal can also help you increase your self-awareness through the process of observing and clarifying perceptions, feelings and thoughts. There are many other things that the journal is useful for. These have been highlighted on this slide.

**Slide 8: The reflective practice model**

On this slide you will see a diagram of Gibbs (1988) and Kolb’s (1984) reflective practice model. The process highlighted in the model may facilitate your own reflective thought processes.

**Slide 9: Structure of reflective essay**

As with other essays, the reflective essay for this assessment should be structured in the manner identified on this slide. You would need to organise your discussion with an introduction, body and conclusion. \*The introduction is approximately 10% of the total word count. You generally have to introduce the reader to the aspects that you have learnt in the course and why they are important to a social worker. Next you have to specify what you would be discussing in the essay. This is where you could introduce the two strengths and areas that need to be improved further. You could then specify how you are going to organise your discussion

\*The body section of the essay is made up of 80% of your total word count. This is where a significant proportion of your marks are awarded, therefore you need to present a logical and coherent argument. The body section of the essay should be divided into different paragraphs. Each paragraph should typically have a topic sentence which would be expanded with supporting statements. You then have to demonstrate your critical thinking and provide examples wherever possible to show that you can relate the concepts to actual contexts. For this reflective essay, the body paragraphs need to include mini introduction to the key point that will be discussed in each of the paragraphs. This will have to be followed by support from your readings in the form of definitions, theories, concepts, research findings etc. Next you have to include the evidence from your journals, completed questionnaires or exercises related to your discussion. You then have interpret what this means to your profession, discipline and future practice. This is where you demonstrate your critical thinking. It would be a good idea to provide examples wherever possible to make your discussion clearer.

\*Finally, you have to write the conclusion for your essay which is approximately 10% of the total word count. The conclusion brings together and wraps up the whole discussion. In the conclusion, you have to restate the thesis statement which is the main message of the essay. This is because you would be writing a lengthy discussion about the topic and the reader may forget what the thesis statement is and you have to remind them. You would also have to recap the key points raised in the body section of your essay. Try not to just repeat what you had said earlier but interpret what this means to your discussion. Then conclude your discussion with a concluding statement that is related to the topic. This could be suggestions for future research, implications for your discipline or simply just a thought provoking statement. It must be emphasised here that if you just describe the key ideas associated with the topic, you will not be awarded good grades. In order for you to obtain high marks, you need to discuss every aspect in detail with evidence.

**Slide 10: Language for reflective essay**

Unlike other academic essays, the use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ is allowed in reflective essays. You can use ‘I’ when you reflect on your thoughts and experiences. You would also have to alternate between the past and present tense. For example, when you refer to your journal entries and reflections, you would use the past tense. However, when you are referring to a theory or concept or even to simply make a general comment, you would use the present tense. \*The use of speculative language is also encouraged in reflective writing when referring to the future or hypothetical situations. In order to get good grades for this assessment, you need to go beyond simply recording your thoughts, emotions and experiences. You need to make connections between the different events and the theories or concepts that you have learnt.

**Slide 11: Introduction: good vs weak examples**

On this slide you have been provided with a good and weak example of the introduction section of the reflective essay. Take a moment to compare the both. Identify why they are different. You do not have produce your introduction in the exact manner as has been demonstrated in the example. The example has only been provided in this presentation so that you know what is expected by your tutors when you write your introduction for the reflective essay.

**Slide 12: Body: good example**

On this slide you will see an example of a good body paragraph. Observe how the writer has developed their discussion. They have organised their discussion with headings. As this assessment is rather long, headings provide the reader with signposts of how the discussion has been organised. It makes reading easy. Some tutors would not want you to use headings in essays. It is a good idea to confirm with your tutor whether you are allowed to use headings in your essay. \*The writer has introduced the reader to the key point that will be discussed in the paragraph. \*They then expand on the key point with supporting statements from their readings and research. This could be in the form of theories, concepts, or definitions. \*In the example, the writer has then included an extract from their journal entry to reflect on the key idea. They have then continued to be critical about this idea. Examples are always a good idea to concretise your discussion. It is a good idea to provide examples wherever possible.

**Slide 13: Body example: weak**

On this slide you can see an example of a weak body paragraph. The reader is not provided with a context and would find it difficult to engage with the discussion. You will also observe from the example that the writer has not substantiated their discussion with any evidence from their readings. This discussion seems to be based solely on the writer’s reflections. Although this assessment is called a reflective essay, there is still a requirement for you to support your discussion or arguments with evidence from your readings and research.

**Slide 14: Conclusion example: good**

On this slide you will see an example of the conclusion section of the reflective essay. This is a good example of how the conclusion section of your reflective essay should be presented. The writer has brought the whole discussion together in an effective manner. \*They have restated the main message of their discussion. \*They have recapped the key points that they had raised in the body section of their discussion. \*They have also concluded their discussion with a statement that is related to the topic.

**Slide 15: Conclusion example: weak**

Here is a weak example of the conclusion. If you compare this example with the previous one, you will notice how abruptly the writer in this example has concluded their essay. They have not recapped their key ideas and their concluding statement appears to be an afterthought. The discussion does not seem cohesive. The reader gets the impression that the writer cannot wait to finish their essay.

**Slide 16: Resources for your reflective essay**

There are many resources on the L3 resource hub that can help you with your essay (www.unisa.edu.au/L3). Do check out the links identified on this slide. You may find the resources helpful. Ensure that you have first logged on to the website or you may not be able to access the resources.