Writing styles at university

Writing styles at university vary in objectivity, with some writing tasks being more objective and distant than others in style. This is because some tasks require you to demonstrate greater distance from your own personal opinion, and present ideas or arguments based on research, data or facts.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

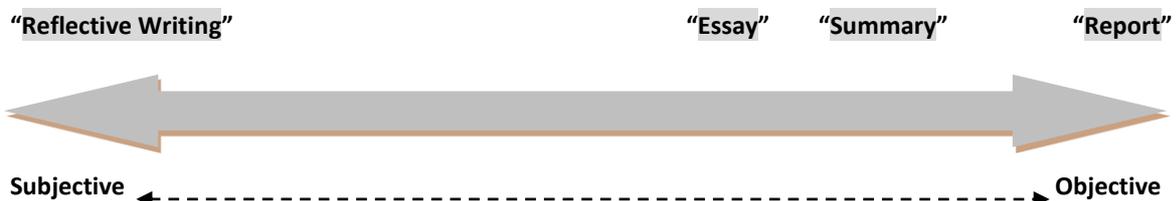The scale below gives examples of writing styles from subjective through to objective.

"Reflective Writing"   "Essay"   "Summary"   "Report"

Subjective ← - → Objective

Table 1: Writing styles and examples

Task type	Examples in paragraph form
Reflective Writing Reflective writing is often used to record your thoughts about your learning experiences in order to show personal growth. Reflective writing assignments may require you to link your personal reflections to relevant theories and concepts in your field of studies.	*The internet has meant a lot to my family and me. My father lives in outback South Australia and in 2010 he needed emergency open heart surgery. The Flying Doctor Service took him as far as Broken Hill where the local doctors could perform the operation with the help of the internet, as it connected them to surgeons at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. ……*
Essay writing Essays have a higher degree of objectivity, and require a persuasive argument. However, the use of personal language (e.g., 'I', my belief, my opinion, etc.) is usually not appropriate. Instead, ideas are supported by research and evidence. Introductions and conclusions include position statements.	*The internet has had a profound impact on public services such as hospitals. For example, city doctors use remote surgery to operate on rural patients using robotics, in conjunction with the internet, to perform operations (Adler 1994, p. 266). This diminishes the traditional disadvantages rural patients have had in terms of access to service.*
Summary A summary demonstrates your ability to explain a reading (e.g. article, book chapter, etc.) in an objective and concise way. A summary does not include your opinion on the reading.	*The internet has reduced the gap between rural and metropolitan communities. Adler (1994) explains that it has been achieved through the use of robotics and the internet in surgery.*
Report The report provides a concise, objective summary and analysis of events, phenomenon or experiments. Structure is highly formal, language is factual, and content is evidence based.	*2.1 The internet and telemedicine* *There were 107 operations performed using telemedicine in 2005 (Jones 2006). This was an increase of 47 percent on previous years. Table 7 shows how the rate of surgery using telemedicine is growing faster than the rate of surgery using…*

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Useful links *(all open in a new window)*

There may be resources that have been created with your lecturers, addressing assignment tasks and topics specific to your courses. Follow the links below to find out:

Business   Education, Arts and Social Sciences   Health Sciences   IT, Engineering and the Environment