

Learning diaries

How to write a learning diary

A learning diary is a journal of your own work, thoughts, problems, questions, learning processes, conclusions, reflections. It is mental processing of things you have learned - but also of things you recognize are yet to be learned.

A learning diary is NOT the same thing as a basic lecture diary in which you just summarize the contents of a lecture. When writing a learning diary you go beyond describing the simple facts presented during the lecture. Instead you answer questions such as

What have I achieved?
How did I learn?
How did my skills improve?
How did I feel about it?
How shall I proceed the next time?
How can I use this in the future?

On reflection

Reflection is an integral part of a learning diary. Reflection is something we do every day when we are thinking what went well and what didn't, and why, and what are our feelings about it. After reflecting on something we may choose another way of doing things, or, maybe not. By reflecting it is possible to find out how one thinks, processes information, and learns. Is there a way of doing them more efficiently?

Reflection can be done in a structured way, using a specific model. An easy model to adapt is the Gibbs' model of reflection. Following this model you first describe the context (what has happened), and then proceed to thinking about your feelings and thoughts about it then and now, evaluate (how did things go) and analyse the situation, and finally, decide on future action. A good description of the process can be found here.

REFLECT - PLAN - ACT - OBSERVE - REFLECT - PLAN - ACT - OBSERVE - ... (repeat N times)

For more information try googling "learning by reflection".

Resources in the web

Notes on how to reflect and write a learning diary using Gibbs' model. Particularly pages 3-4 and 6-8 are useful. It may also give you additional insights why writing a learning journal can be beneficial in developing your learning processes.

If you are unsure of what to include in your learning diary, you can start by following this template.

Assessment and grading

Each learning diary entry is given a grade between 0 and 5. Each learning diary is graded individually by teachers, and all entries need to be submitted in order to get a grade. Below are very general guidelines to give some idea what is required for each grade for each individual entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>The learning diary shows . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>deep learning on the topics and the &quot;big picture&quot;; personal touch and applications, various perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>wider learning and reflection; relations between topics, and personal context, applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>some learning of the topics; personal perspective and reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>little or no reflection; descriptive &quot;report&quot;; misunderstood central concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>grave misunderstanding of the whole topic; no effort put in the work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The deadlines and possibly some more specific instructions for each learning diary are given on the lecture's wiki page.

The final grade for the course is calculated from the grades of the home work assignments and learning diary entries, rounded to the nearest integer, taking into account the evaluation sessions and possible activity during the course (mainly participating on the course blog discussions).