

A pause for reflection that matters: A series of interactions

Introducing reflection

- Introduce that reflection comes from the Late Latin word root *reflexio*. This early word meant “the act of bending back” or looking *backwards*.
- Ask students to discuss what reflection means to them.

Note: An absolute definition of reflection is not necessary for this experience. More important is that students develop ideas about reflection—what reflection and the reflective process mean to them, the value of reflection and the diverse ways a person can reflect.

- Ask students to brainstorm.
 - Why they would reflect, and what do they gain from it?
 - When would they reflect in CAS?
- Share collectively.

Reflection is not and reflection is

- Working in groups, students consider what reflection “**is**” and what reflection “**is not**”, placing their ideas under these two categories. See the chart below for examples.

| Reflection | |
|--|---|
| <p>Reflection is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • honest • varied • done in many different ways • sometimes boring • difficult • sometimes creative • building self-awareness • necessary for learning • surprising • sometimes really fun • helpful for planning • done alone or with others • about thoughts, feelings and ideas | <p>Reflection is not :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only led by teachers • forced • right or wrong • good or bad • to be graded • difficult • copying what someone else said • predictable • to be judged by others • done to please someone else • a waste of time • only written • only discussion |

- Construct a list of students’ ideas. Once the lists are assembled, ask if everyone agrees, has questions, or disagrees. Aim for conversations that promote reflection as varied, non-judgmental and providing insights.
- Remember that having the student list becomes an opportunity for discussion and clarification and a way to learn what matters to the students. It is appropriate during the debriefing, when clarifying, to change what is written on the collective list for more accurate understanding.

Note: Debriefing is essential for clarifying understanding, misconceptions and bias about the process of reflection. Allow ample time for debriefing.

- Key ideas for debriefing include the following.
- Summarizing—Often participants think summarizing or describing the experience is **not** reflection; however, this is important to clarify. Describing what happened is essential in reflection, because each person’s

individual summary reveals what is important or significant to them about the experience. However, if students **only** summarize, then this is reporting and not full reflection.

- Reflection is also expression of affect or feelings. In this way, both the cognitive (summarizing) and affective (emotions) are included in the reflective process.

Ways to reflect

- In groups, students brainstorm all possible ways they could reflect. Ask them to be sure have incorporated what they enjoy doing into reflection, such as writing poetry or music, art, drama, dance, photography, conversation and other modalities.
- Discuss which of these “ways to reflect” could be done alone or with others.
- **Optional:** Have students look at the various ways they have listed for reflection. Now have them consider which might be best to facilitate reflection on:
 - themselves—their thoughts, ideas, values, feelings, ethics, opinions, actions, hopes
 - others—their peers, people they meet or interact with
 - community—place and time including concerns, successes, trends, ideas, culture, values
 - society and the world—to gain insights and larger understandings.

Note: Remember that varying the reflective process allows all students to discover diverse ways for self-awareness and expression and provides for differentiation in learning styles.

To deepen understanding and emotional literacy

Two major components of reflection are:

1. Thoughts for deepening understanding
2. Feelings for emotional literacy.

Discuss these concepts with students.

Different words represent thoughts and represent feelings. Examples of words/phrases for thoughts include: I think, know, believe, guess, wonder, hope, suggest. Encourage students to brainstorm words that describe thoughts.

Examples of words/phrases for feelings include: I am (happy, sad, frustrated, excited) and I feel (concerned, curious, tired, content). Encourage students to brainstorm words that describe feelings, such as: tired, silly, happy, worried, joyful.

When reflection matters

- **When** would a person **choose** to reflect? Together with the students discuss what might prompt a person to want to reflect on their own. Consider moments when reflection might be useful.

Note: This changes reflection from being adviser or teacher led to being student initiated **by choice**.

Note that reflection experiences in groups can be beneficial, and they could plan ways to reflect with their CAS peers.

Questions to ask during reflection

These are the four important elements of the reflection process as referenced in the *CAS guide*.

Students can use words or images for their response.

- Ask students to discuss the following questions and their understanding of what they mean.
 - **What happened?** Students retell memorable moments, identify what was important or influential, what went well or was difficult, obstacles and successes.
 - **How do I feel?** Students articulate emotional responses to their experiences.
 - **Ideas?** Notation of any generative possibilities.
 - **Questions?** What can be discovered about people, processes or issues?
- Ask students to apply these questions to a CAS experience they have recently engaged in. Discuss how this has been helpful. Could they ask themselves other questions?

Supporting ongoing reflection throughout CAS

Having times when students share their processes for reflections and actual reflections can assist all students and encourages a supportive environment that values reflection. Arrange times for group reflections, especially if some students are finding the process difficult.

Refer to the section “Teaching strategy: Group interactions for reflection” in this TSM.