Keeping a reflective journal

A reflective journal is useful for understanding and learning from a longer experience such as a course, a placement or time abroad. It lets you chart your development step by step and also look back across the whole period. It will provide a lot of useful material, supporting evidence and examples if you need to write a report about what you have learned from your experience.

**To get most benefit from reflection**, it’s helpful to distance ourselves from our immediate impressions and try to be objective. One way to do this is to keep a ‘split’ journal where you record what is going on shortly after it happens and then return to reflect and comment on it a little while later.

![At the time and Later reflection diagram]

**Focus on the purpose of your reflection**, for example:
- To see how your skills/knowledge are developing
- To make sense of something new
- To analyse an incident or event

**Explore both the positive and the negative**

**Use your reflection to target ways for you to move forward**

### At the time
- Write a description as you see things now
- Include your feelings
- Note down anything you might want to refer to as ‘evidence’
- If they occur to you, write down questions or things you might want to explore later

### Later reflection
Look back objectively

- Compare what you think now with what you wrote then:
  - Ask yourself probing questions eg
    - How? Why? What if?
    - What does this say about me?
    - What have I learned?
    - How should I move forward?
- Use this thinking to write your reflective analysis