

Difference between and essay/report and reflective writing

Undergraduate Essay/Report	Reflective Writing
The subject matter is likely to be clearly defined.	The subject matter may be diffuse and ill-structured.
The subject matter is not likely to be personal.	The subject matter may be personal.
The subject matter is likely to be closely specified	The subject matter may be determined by the writer.
The purpose of this kind of writing is set in advance, usually fairly precisely in a title / topic	There may be purpose, but it is more of the nature of a 'container' or direction, not a precise title that predicts the outcome.
Most of the ideas drawn into an essay / report will be predictable and will be determined by the subject matter	Ideas will be drawn into reflective writing from anywhere that the writer believes to be relevant. What is drawn in will be determined by the sense being forged by the writer
There will be a conclusion	There may be a conclusion in that something has been learnt, or there may be a recognition of further areas for reflection.
Essays / reports are more likely to be 'one off' – finished and handed in.	Reflective writing may be part of a process that takes place over a period of time.
There is likely to be a clear structure of introduction, discussion and conclusion	There is not necessarily a clear structure other than some description at the beginning and some identification of progress made. Structures, such as questions to prompt reflective activity may be given.
The writing style is likely to be relatively objective – probably without use of the first person.	The writing style is likely to be relatively subjective, with involvement of the first person
An essay or report is usually intended to be a representation of learning.	The intention underlying reflective writing is likely to be for the purpose of learning.
.An essay / report is likely to be the product of a thinking process, tidily ordered.	Reflective writing usually involves the process of thinking and learning, and it is therefore not necessarily 'tidy' in its ordering.