

## Comparing essays and reports to reflective writing

Undergraduate Essay/Report	Reflective Writing
The subject matter 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	Although directed, 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 more likely a theme or direction, not a precise title that predicts the outcome.
Most ideas drawn into an essay / report will be predictable and will be determined by the subject matter	In reflective writing ideas can be drawn from anywhere the writer believes to be relevant. What is used will be determined by the sense being forged by the writer
There will be a conclusion, which is reached through logical reasoning and argument	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 expected to be fairly objective – speaking in the third person	The writing style is likely to be fairly subjective, speaking in the first person
An essay or report is usually expected to provide an analysis of factual information, data or published work	Reflective writing is expected to analyse feelings and experiences for the purpose of learning
An essay / report is likely to be the product of an clear analytical thinking process, tidily ordered	Reflective writing usually involves the process of thinking and learning. Although analytical, it is therefore not necessarily 'tidy' in its ordering