

Reflective Activity – Detailed version

“Reflection is more than looking back it's a core skill for success. It helps you learn from experience, grow personally and professionally, and recognise, evaluate, and articulate the other skills you are developing. Reflection therefore has a vital role in the design and delivery of effective teaching and learning” – [University of Edinburgh Reflection Toolkit](#)

Reflective activities are valuable learning tools that can take many forms, from written reflections via an essay or journal entry, introspection, expressing verbally with others, or through a creative expression though different medias, each taking as much or as little time as preferred. Reflection has a vital role in the design and delivery of effective teaching and learning contributing to the key life skills.

The University of Edinburgh Reflection Toolkit provides information and resources to [support self-reflection](#), or to help [facilitate reflection in others](#). In developing reflective activities there are three key components to consider: firstly, the way or mode of reflecting (or allow free choice), structure (prescribed or free choice), and type of assessment (voluntary, or completion, or assessed to support learning and performance, or evaluative of the learners experience). Activities can be applied pre-, during, and/or post the experience you wish them to reflect upon. When choosing an activity this needs to be appropriate to the situation and support planned learning outcomes.

Going further then the simple activity outlined in the resource pack, a fuller reflective activity be applied at the start of a site visit (pre reflection) and/or then towards the end (post-reflection), is described below to further encourage students/learners to engage more deeply with the site visit. This layered approach to reflection supports a more meaningful outdoor learning experience.

Part 1: Pre-site visit intro and activity

This part requires around 10-15 minutes. Around 5 minutes could be taken to introduce the activity, then providing student/learners sufficient initial time (~10 minutes) for (pre) reflection.

1. Clarifying the definition of reflection could also be useful, by using the definition here:

“the conscious examination of past experiences, thoughts, and ways of doing things. Its goal is to surface learning about oneself and the situation, and to bring meaning to inform the present and the future. It challenges the status quo of practice, thoughts, and assumptions and may therefore inform our decisions, actions, attitudes, beliefs, and understanding about ourselves.” – [University of Edinburgh Reflection Toolkit](#)

2. Introduce the students/learners to why you are doing a reflective activity by talking to them about the values that come from engaging with this approach. Reflection is more than looking back, it's a core skill for success, so you can:
 - **Learn from experience**, to make sense of what you have learned and experienced.
 - **Recognise your skills**, identify strengths, abilities and areas for further development.
 - **Improve your performance**, to use and inform the present and future.
 - **Build self-awareness**, understand how you learn, respond and develop.
 - **Prepare for success**, connecting your learning to personal, professional and academic development.
 - **Think critically**, an opportunity to ask questions either to clarify their understanding or to challenge the ideas to improve their learning, and develop critical thinking.
 - For University students Reflection supports key [Skills of Success](#).

3. (Optional) If there is time you could use reflection to introduce reflection to the students/learners to e.g.

How does spending time in nature make you feel, and why do you think you feel that way?

The aim is to encourage them to move beyond describing and also think about feelings, experiences and personal responses.

Part 2: Post visit understanding

Post visit reflection can give you insights to the key learning from the site visit and how theoretical knowledge is applied to real life experiences. This part requires around 10-15 minutes and can be implemented at the end of the visit or on your return. Invite participants to think about the site visit and ask some questions to find out what the main learning points have been. Responses could be written down or discussed in groups/or pairs.



Useful Resources:

University of Edinburgh Reflection toolkit: [Reflection Toolkit](#) | [Reflection Toolkit](#)

Reflection activity 1: Current Understanding (pre site visit). Invite participants to write answers down or discuss in groups/or pairs. They could run through the whole list of questions or select a few to discuss. These questions could be printed off and shared with the students

What do you already know about:

1. The state of biodiversity/nature in Scotland?
2. The state of woodlands in Scotland?
3. The role of woodlands for climate change and carbon storage?
4. What are your views on nature restoration?
5. Who benefits from woodlands, and how might those benefits differ between groups?

Expectations:

6. What do you hope to learn during the visit?
7. What questions do you have about woodland restoration?
8. What do you think are the biggest challenges when creating or restoring woodland in Scotland?

Prediction:

Complete the sentence: "**I think a successful woodland creation project needs...**"

Reflection activity 2: Post visit Understanding

This segment requires 5 – 10 minutes and can be implemented at the end of the visits on you the return. Invite participants to write answers down or discuss in groups/or pairs. They could run through the whole list of questions or select a few to discuss.

Main learning points

1. What are three things you've learned from the site visit today?

Inspiration

2. What did you find most interesting or exciting? Why did it stand out to you?
3. Has the visit changed how you think about woodlands or restoration in Scotland? Did anything challenge your previous assumptions? If so, in what way?

Applying your learning

4. How could you use this learning in your studies, work, or everyday life?
5. What topic, if any, would you have liked to explore further? How could you do this?

Challenges and uncertainty

6. What was unclear or hardest to understand during the visit?
7. Why was it challenging?
8. What could you do to improve your understanding?

Your Question

If you were the land manager of this site, what would successful restoration look like?

"I think successful restoration needs..."