

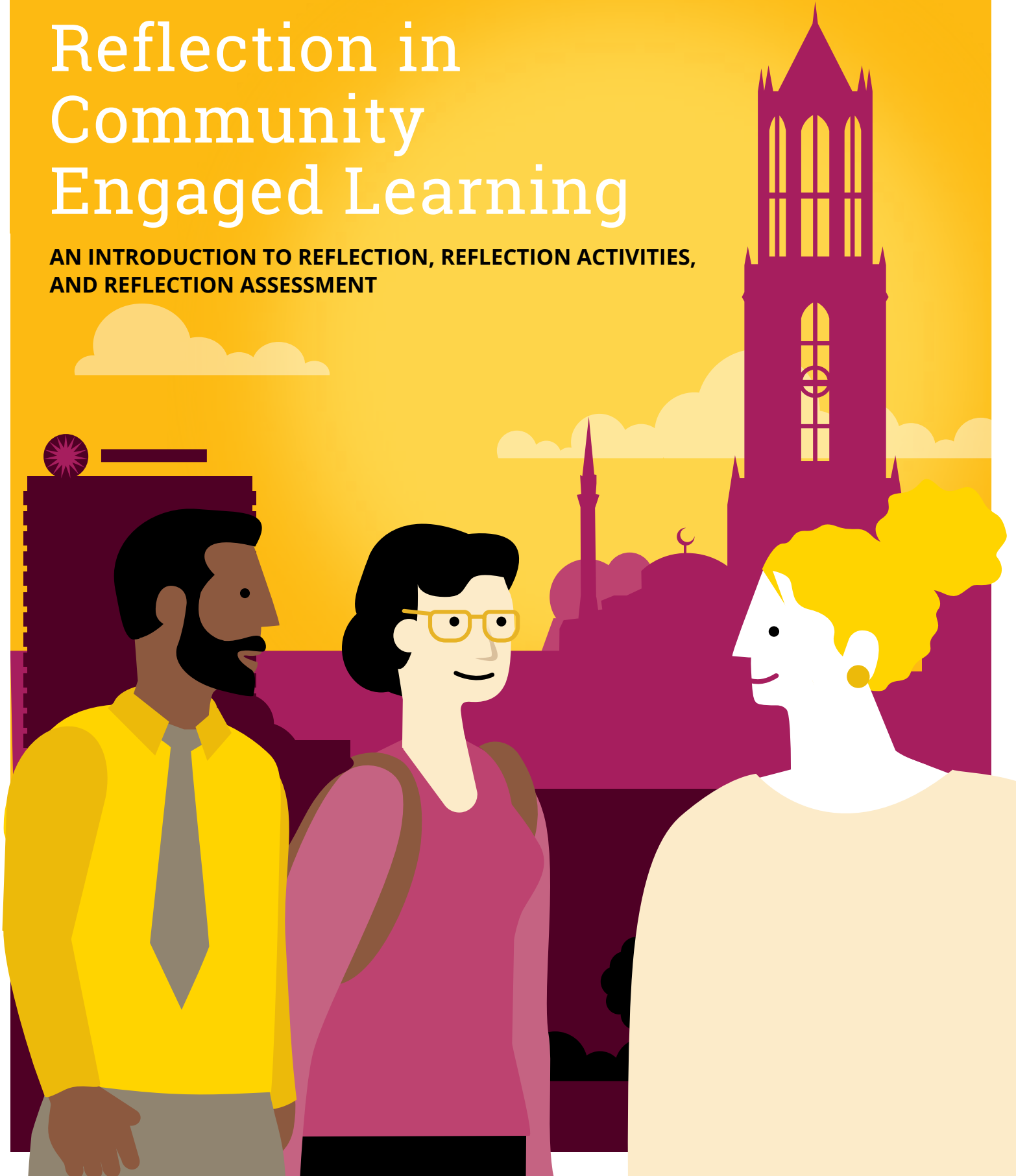


Utrecht University

CENTRE FOR
GLOBAL
CHALLENGES

Reflection in Community Engaged Learning

**AN INTRODUCTION TO REFLECTION, REFLECTION ACTIVITIES,
AND REFLECTION ASSESSMENT**



Reflection in Community Engaged Learning



In this booklet about reflection for Community Engaged Learning-projects or -courses, you can find information on:

1. About reflection: What is it, why to do it, what do students find important?
2. Reflection exercises: Practical examples
3. Reflection assessment: Examples and resources

1. About Reflection

WHAT IS REFLECTION?

Reflection gives meaning to experiences. Through reflection, students can see their own thinking and acting from an outsiders' perspective, link past experiences with future experiences, evaluate their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to improve future actions, and link their experiences to academic study.¹ The most commonly used definition of reflection in literature is to *"integrate the understanding gained into one's experience in order to enable better choices or actions in the future as well as enhance one's overall effectiveness"*.²

WHY REFLECTION?

Reflection can dramatically improve student learning.^{1,3} Although the Community Engagement-experience itself might have a positive effect on personal development, to develop skills such as critical thinking, a deeper understanding of subject matter, empathy, and perspective transformation, reflection is crucial.⁴ Reflection forms the connection and integration between engagement and learning.

HOW CAN YOU STIMULATE SELF-REFLECTION?

Educators can stimulate self-reflection through multiple ways.⁵ A few are listed below:

1. By providing significant learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and challenge students (such as challenging readings, observations or experiences).
2. Educators can give prompts to students to guide their self-reflection (e.g. ask students to describe how they felt about their actions/experiences, ask them to put these in a larger context of theories and/or experiences).
3. Educators can ask students to make a product of their reflections: through an oral discussion, a written assignment or a combination of both. The benefit of paper reflection is that it requires the students to be more precise about their statements.

WHAT DO STUDENTS FIND IMPORTANT?

Studies⁶ outline a few criteria that students have for meaningful reflection:

1. Reflection should be **continuous** and not just an assignment or two at the end of a course.
2. Reflection needs to **connect** course content and the community experience explicitly.
3. Reflection should be **challenging**, and should lead to rethinking of own beliefs & assumptions.
4. Reflection should be **integrated naturally** into the projects and the course and not be viewed as an add-on activity.
5. Students sometimes get the idea that they should just fill out what the teacher wants to hear, to get a good grade.⁷ However, they would like to endorse reflection exercises that are **centered around their own idea** of learning.

A tip is to give every student individual feedback. This does not have to be a long answer or markings in the text, but just to thank the students for their reflection exercises or give them a feeling of understanding of their work. For example, saying "I agree with you that...", will make them feel that you have read the paper and understood their thinking.

"In addition to the assessment, try to provide the students with individual feedback or a personal note."



HOW DEEP SHOULD THE REFLECTION EXERCISE GO TO BE MEANINGFUL?








At minimum, students should be able to describe the experience and try to make sense of the experience. This is usually done through separate steps. A first step is often to describe the situation/event itself. A second step is evaluate/analyze the situation in relation to, for example, theory or personal assumptions. A third step is to reflect on how this experience will alter future behavior and assumptions. Below you find three frequently used reflection-models that can help the students guide through these steps:









- **What? So What? And Now What?- model.**⁸ Visit for example: <https://cetl.uconn.edu/what-so-what-now-what-model/>
- **The DEAL (describe, examine, articulate learning)-model.**⁹
- **Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle.**¹⁰ For more details see for example: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>









2. Reflection activities








Reflection is most meaningful if it is carried out prior (pre-reflection), during and after the community activity or activities. Furthermore, reflection can take place alone, with classmates or together with community partners. Many types of reflection activities exist. Below you find examples from the literature and UU colleagues. Exercises can be used apart, but also combined into a 'reflection roadmap/portfolio'. Eyler¹¹ presents an example of a Reflection roadmap, designed for reflection throughout the course, in Table 4.1. We will highlight a few exercises below. We will end this section with two examples of ongoing reflection exercises throughout the course, from UU-colleagues.

Pre-reflection








	Activity	HOPES & FEARS
	Source	Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. <i>New directions for higher education</i> , 2001(114), 35-43.
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	1-2 hours
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing students for the CEL project with logistics and details of the organization that they will be working with.• Coming up with strategies to address possible pitfalls and realize hopes for the project.
	Description	Organize a brainstorm session where students can articulate their hopes and fears about the community engagement activities, together with their classmates. Let the students list the answers on a flip chart (or white board) and then come up with strategies to address the fears and realize the hopes.
	Example	A group of students from a public policy class will soon be working with a vulnerable community of people that are living with HIV. The students discover during the hopes & fears discussion that many parents have concerns about this, and they themselves also weren't sure about the transmission of this disease. As a follow-up, the students did some more research to fill this gap of knowledge and wrote a letter to all parents, including this information and detailed safety precautions. ¹¹








	Activity	GIANT LIKERT SCALE
	Source	Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. <i>New directions for higher education</i> , 2001(114), 35-43.
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	1-2 hours
	Setting	Group
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making implicit assumptions about the community engagement project explicit. • Creating dialogue in order to stimulate research around assumptions prior to the activity. • Stimulating students to research the extent to which their assumptions are true and present their findings in class.
	Description	Create a giant Likert scale, with statements surrounding extreme assumptions ranging from "Disagree to Agree". With this Likert scale, you can test assumptions about the project or community that your students will be working on.
	Example	Examples of assumptions: <i>"Teachers in inner-city schools are less competent and caring than teachers in suburban schools."</i> or <i>"Voucher plans would allow any child to attend the private school of his or her choice."</i> Most students will be closely towards the beginning (Disagree) or the end (Agree) of the scale.

	Activity	ASSET MAPPING
	Source	McKnight, J. L., & Kretzmann, J. (1996). <i>Mapping community capacity</i> . Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	2-8 hours
	Setting	Groups
	Goals	To identify strengths and assets of the community as input for the community project planning.
	Description	In CEL, many students tend to think only about the problems and needs of a community. McKnight and Kretzman ¹² argue that it is more constructive to think about the strengths and assets of a community. This activity aims to identify institutions, associations, individuals or resources that the community can contribute toward development. This exercise can be an input of planning for the project with the community and can be done in collaboration with a contact person of the organization or community that you are working with (e.g. with the use of the capacity inventory that is in the Appendix of McKnight & Kretzman's article).
	Example	https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426499.pdf

	Activity	TABULA RASA
	Source	By UU-colleagues Stef Dingemans, Gerry Nijenhuis & Irina van Aalst
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	2-6 hours
	Setting	Individual
	Goals	To articulate student's expectations and perspectives towards the CEL project.
	Description	<p>Ask the student to describe their expectations and perspective on the course that they will follow. It should be a well-written narrative that outlines at least the answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you expect from the course as a whole? • What are your expectations about the collaboration between you and the community (members)? • How do you envision the citizens science process? • What do you expect from the community? • Which input can you expect from the community? • In advance, do you expect that any problems might occur during the process? • How do you plan to solve these problems? • Do you expect any pitfalls to occur during the process? • How do you plan to avoid these pitfalls?

During the CEL-project








	Activity	CEL THEATER
	Source	Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. <i>New directions for higher education</i> , 2001(114), 35-43.
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	1-2 hours
	Setting	Group
	Goals	To explore critical incidents.
	Description	<p>In a CEL theater, classes explore critical incidents through role-play. In the play, the class explores an issue, tries to apply insights from their study, suggest a resolution to the critical incident and draw lessons from it. For example, the critical incident can be how to gain data from the community partner or communications issues between a student and a community partner, or something the students have observed in the field. Each session could involve a specific theme of critical incidents.</p>

	Activity	GROUP REFLECTION ON COMMUNITY INTERACTION
	Source	By UU-colleague Nadine Blignaut-van Westrhenen
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	2 hours
	Setting	Group
	Goals	To reflect on a specific interaction with the community or a community partner.
	Description	<p>Based on the What? So what? Now what? - format. Discuss the following set of questions below in project groups and write down the key concepts on a flip-over or post-it. Possibly, the discussion can be used as an input for a reflection essay or a presentation.</p> <p>What happened?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the interaction go? What did you see, hear or say? • What went well, what went less well? • Which things will you do differently in the future? • What did it feel like for you to have a conversation like this? • Has this interaction changed your knowledge/assumptions about this topic? If yes, how? • What surprised you, and what frustrated you? • What were the ethical considerations that you have made? <p>What did you learn?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn from the interaction? • What do you see differently now? • Which aspects do you now understand better than before? • How did this experience help to achieve the learning goals that were set for this course? <p>Why are these insights important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do others need to know about this? • What are the most important lessons that you drew from this experience? • How can you use these lessons? • Why is this relevant? For you? For others?








“I want to give creative freedom to my students, but my student gives shallow answers. what should I do?”










Not every student might be immediately convinced by the power of reflection or might not already have the skills to carry out deep self-reflection. On the other hand, some students want to use their own creative thinking to set up their own reflection narrative. One way of going around this is to vary the journal types you are asking your students to write throughout the course. For example, in the beginning you might want them to work with a Key-phrase journal or through structured questions, while at the end of the project they can choose their own critical incidents and topics to go into.




	Activity	REFLECTION JOURNAL
	Source	Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1999). Reflection in service learning: Making meaning or experience. Educational horizons, 179.
	Timing	Prior to the CEL project
	Duration	4-8 hours (flexible)
	Setting	Individual
	Goals	To reflect on a specific interaction with the community or a community partner.
	Description	<p>Bringle & Hatcher¹³ identified several types of reflective journals that you can ask students to keep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Phrase Journal: Students are asked to use a list of key terms and key phrases to discuss the experiences they gain during the CEL activities. For example, "I learned from.....". You can ask the students to highlight the key terms/phrases. • Double-entry Journal: In this type of journal, students are asked to describe their personal experiences and thoughts on a certain CEL experience, related class presentations, key concepts or readings, and the relationship between these two types of information. • Critical Incident Journal: Students are asked to focus on specific events that happened during the CEL interactions with the external partner. Educators give students certain prompts about their reactions, thoughts, reactions, and relevant course information, that guide reflection around this critical incident (e.g. how did you respond to this event? How does the course material relate to this critical incident?). • Three Part Journal: For each journal entry, students are asked to reflect on three things: (1) The event (the interactions you had, decisions you made), (2) An analysis of how the course material relates to this experience, (3) An analysis of how the first two answers relate to your personal life, such as goals, values, attitudes and beliefs. • Directed Writings: Students are asked to write a journal entry from the starting point of a specific presentation, theory, concept, or quote, and relate this to an experience during the CEL activities.








After the community-engagement

 Activity	INCOMPLETE SENTENCES
 Source	By UU-colleague Nadine Blignaut-van Westrhenen
 Timing	Prior to the CEL project
 Duration	2 hours
 Setting	Individual
 Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To stimulate more in-depth reflection on the community project.• To stimulate student's writing about the project experiences from different angles.
 Description	<p>As part of reflection at the end of the project, students can complete the sentences below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the CEL project I have ...• I expected that ...• The community (partner) told me ...• I liked ...• It was difficult to ...• What most surprised me was ...• I learned the most from ...• In future I would ...• I hope that ...

 Activity	FINAL REFLECTION REPORT
 Source	By UU-colleague Stef Dingemans
 Timing	Prior to the CEL project
 Duration	2 hours
 Setting	Individual
 Goals	Articulate learnings throughout the CEL project
 Description	<p>Ask students to reflect on the CEL project and to collect their learnings from the course in 1500-2000 words. Invite students to choose three specific situations to reflect on (for example, <i>What did you find the most difficult aspect? Which situations made you work harder? Which new situations did you encounter? What are you proud of?</i>). A situation could, for example, be a moment of interaction with the community, team collaboration within your project group, data collection, or interaction with the supervisors and/or teachers. The students were also advised to look back at earlier reflection exercises that were submitted in the first weeks of the course.</p> <p>For every situation, the reflection needed to consist of the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the situation: who, where, what, when, how?2. Describe the personal experience: how was this specific situation for you?3. How did you handle this situation? What did that bring you? What did this ask from you? What are your intentions?4. Will you change your behavior next time? If yes, on what ground? What would you advise to someone who is to still encounter such a situation?

Ongoing reflection exercises

 Activity	WEEKLY REPORTS + REFLECTION VLOG
 Source	By UU-colleagues Bert Weckhuysen, Brianne McGonigle Leyh, and Appy Sluijs
 Timing	18-20 weeks
 Duration	2 hours
 Setting	Individual
 Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reports: to help the teacher keep track of group dynamics and student progress, and help the student to paint a picture of non-linear learning when they look back over the course• Vlog: reflect on full experience in the course, learning journeys, and to translate experiences into a medium that allows for creativity
 Description	<p>Ask students to produce a weekly one-page reflection report and a reflection vlog of maximum five minutes at the end of the project. In the reports, the students were asked to consider reflecting upon the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What concept or skill you learned that week?• What strategies did you use to solve a problem?• What did you find confusing or unclear?• How does your learning connect to what you already know?• What would you like more time developing or understanding?• How are the group dynamics?• How do you feel when you are working on the course activities? <p>It could be a written report, but you can also encourage your students to use drawings or sketches instead.</p>

	Activity	REFLECTION PORTFOLIO
	Source	By UU-colleagues Joyce Brown and Judith van de Kamp
	Timing	Ongoing
	Duration	8-10 weeks
	Setting	Individual
	Goals	Reflect on different aspects of student's own perspectives/ways of thinking
	Description	<p>Students build a Reflection Portfolio by submitting five portfolio elements at various moments throughout their course, in which they are asked to reflect on different aspects of his or her own perspectives/ways of thinking.</p> <p>The portfolio elements are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [The topic] & Me: asks students to reflect on why [the topic] is important/ relevant to them. 2. Personal skills and preferences: ask students to reflect on their role within the group, personal strengths and weaknesses and preferences of collaboration with other students. 3. [Related topic] on a personal level: related to course material, asks students to reflect on (using the material's framework) personal level of [topic] (for example, equity). 4. Country/community analysis 'The Map': ask students to analyze a country/ community that they are familiar with, and to describe what is considered 'normal' behavior regarding a specific topic but considered differently elsewhere and how that affects cooperation/collaboration with people from this country/community (for example, culture). 5. Team dynamics reflection based on the group assignments.

3. Assessment of reflection

How to assess a reflection exercise is a concern of many educators. A clearly established reflection rubric that is known to the students prior to delivery of a reflection assignment, is necessary. On the internet, there are many (good) reflection rubrics available. Below you find an example of a reflection rubric used by UU-colleagues Joyce Brown and Judith van der Kamp.

GRADE/CRITERIA	Insufficient: fails to meet academic requirements	Sufficient: meets academic requirements	Excellent: belongs to top 10%
All exercises			
<i>Time management: submission of portfolio elements (6 including the report)</i>	One or more Portfolio Elements were submitted too late.	All Portfolio Elements were submitted in time.	-
Reflection portfolio			
<i>Reflective thinking</i>	The reflection attempts to demonstrate thinking about learning, but is vague and/or unclear and/or not specific. The reflection does not address the students thinking and/or learning.	The reflection explains the student's thinking about his/her own learning processes, as well as implications for future learnings.	The reflection explains the students' own thinking and learning processes, as well as implications for future learning and is exceptionally well / thoughtful formulated.
<i>Analysis</i>	The reflection attempts to analyze the learning experience, but the value of the learning to the student or others is vague and/or unclear and/or not specific. The reflection does not move beyond a description of the learning experience	The reflection is an analysis of the learning experience and the value of the derived learning to self or others.	The reflection is an in-depth analysis of the learning experience, the value of the derived learning to self or others, and the enhancement of the student's appreciation for the discipline.
<i>Making connections</i>	The reflection attempts to articulate connections between various learning experiences gained throughout this course and perhaps also outside this course linking it back to other/past learning experiences, and/or future with goals. However, the connections are vague and/or unclear and/or not specific The reflection does not articulate any connection to other learning experiences.	The reflection articulates connections between various learning experiences gained throughout this course, and/or with future goals.	The reflection articulates multiple connections between various learning experiences gained throughout the course, and perhaps also linked to learning experiences outside the course (other/ past experiences), and/or with future goals, and is exceptionally well/ thoughtful formulated.

Below you find an example of a reflection rubric used by UU-colleagues Bert Weckhuysen, Brianne McGonigle Leyh, and Appy Sluijs.

GRADE/CRITERIA	Not sufficient < 5.4	Sufficient (5.5-6.9)	Good (7-8.4)	Excellent (8.5-10)
Reflection Vlog	Doesn't show ability to reflect on personal performance in the project.	Shows ability to reflect on personal skills, insights and behavior in relation to problem solving in an interdisciplinary team. Shows ability to contribute to client goals. Shows adaptation of feedback.	Shows ability to reflect on personal skills, insights and behavior in relation to problem solving in an interdisciplinary team. +Shows initiative to enhance the performance of an interdisciplinary team. +Shows capability to convert feedback into improvement of deliverables.	Shows ability to reflect on personal skills, insights and behavior in relation to problem solving in an interdisciplinary team. Shows ability to contribute to client goals. Shows adaptation of feedback. + Shows initiative to enhance the performance of an interdisciplinary team. ++ Shows critical assessment of the value of interdisciplinary teams in relation to problem solving. ++ Shows resilience after receiving feedback by continuous improvement of deliverables in favor of learning process.

The Community Engaged Learning Toolbox was developed as a collaboration between the Centre for Global Challenges, the Centre for Academic Teaching and the Community Engaged Learning Taskforce.

Resources:

1. Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. *New directions for higher education*, 2001(114), 35-43.
2. Rogers, R. R. (2001). Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis. *Innovative higher education*, 26(1), 37-57.
3. Travers, C. J., Morisano, D., & Locke, E. A. (2015). Self-reflection, growth goals, and academic outcomes: A qualitative study. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(2), 224-241
4. Eyler, J., and Giles, D. E., Jr. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
5. Fines, B. G. (2014). Assessing reflection. Retrieved from: <https://www.smu.edu/~media/Site/Law/faculty/teaching-resources/Student-Reflection-Rubric.pdf>
6. Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2004). The articulated learning: An approach to guided reflection and assessment. *Innovative Higher Education*, 29(2), 137-154.
7. This was mentioned in a focus group among students from the Humanities and REBO faculty to gain insight in the students' perspective on CEL. A summary on the results can be requested at the Centre for Global Challenges.
8. Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., Jasper, M. (2001) *Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: a user's guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
9. Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education*, 1, 25-48
10. Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. London: Further Education Unit.
11. Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. *New directions for higher education*, 2001(114), 35-43.
12. McKnight, J. L., & Kretzmann, J. (1996). *Mapping community capacity*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.