Reflective Process

A work term report is a reflective document inspired by your co-operative education experience. It provides a forum to reflect upon and express your learning. Be proud of your achievements and insights. Write your report with the highest academic standards in mind (structure, format and content) and ensure you reference sources of information. A great report explores and analyzes your experience (e.g. explores why, how, now what, so what, and any recommendations, etc). A report that shows little thought is one that is an overview of general impressions or description of what you’ve done. While quality is more important than quantity, the co-op work term report should be no less than 8-10 pages of text (excluding Title Page, Executive Summary, Table of Contents, Appendices, etc). Presentation (clearly organized, 12pt font), quality of writing, and depth of analysis is the basis of assessing your learning. Reports deemed weak (poor grammar, spelling errors, point form, missing sections, and lack of analysis) will not result in a passing grade so will be returned to you for editing.

Consider the following questions relative to your co-operative education experience/task/project:

Part 1: WHAT? Describe your experience and Perceptions
Use specific and relevant details, give a concise description of your experience. This part is not analytical, it describes personal feelings and thoughts and actions (reactions)

- Where did you work in terms of location, organization, and specific department? What were your role and responsibilities?
- What was the project, task or issue your report focuses on?
- What were your goals / competencies? Did you achieve these? What did you want to learn or experience from this workplace?
- Did you work with others? In what capacity?
- How did you feel and what did you think prior to, during, and after the experience? How did you react during the experience?
- Did you enjoy the experience? What did you like the least?
- Were you surprised, anxious, excited, frustrated, or disappointed by anything?
- Did the experience unfold according to your expectations?

Part 2: WHY? Evaluation and Analysis
This part has both non-analytical and analytical parts. It makes positive and/or negative judgements about your experience including the people, organizations and processes involved. Focus on one or two important aspects and try to choose things that are most important, most relevant or most representative of your experience.

- What went well during the experience (what worked)? and (what didn’t work)?
- How did the experience end? Was it complete (was there a resolution) or incomplete?
- How did your academic studies help you? What theories and concepts can you apply? From understanding leisure and physical literacy to exercise prescription and program planning – does the theory play out in the field? Use academic references as appropriate.
- Reconsider the things that went well and/or badly. What factors (internal and external) influenced the outcome? What role did you play in the choices that were made?
- Did multiple perspectives play a role (e.g. stakeholders, theories, etc)? How did you or could you use ‘evidence’ for the role you played in the processes?

Part 3: SO WHAT? Analysis
This part is analytical, it does not describe. Try to explain the causes and consequences of things that happened, and ask questions like why, so what, and what if?

- What impact did the work have on others (people, organizations or society)? Have you been influenced or changed your views in any way by this experience?
- Can you think of any missing facts or information that may have been helpful? How were your beliefs acknowledged, questioned or challenged through this experience?
- How did your enjoyment or lack thereof impact your experience and the outcome?
Part 4: NOW WHAT? Conclusion and Action Plan

Reconsider your experience - what is now relevant and helps you plan for the future: This part sums up what you learned from your experience. Be specific, what have you realised about yourself; avoid making general statements like “I didn’t have adequate knowledge”. This part states actions designed to improve knowledge, ability, experience etc., think about the justification for and value of actions in the action plan (i.e. why you plan to do something)

- What did you learn about yourself during the experience? What competencies did you develop? Have your beliefs been acknowledged, changed or influenced as an outcome of your work term?
- What should or could you have done differently? What stopped you from doing this?
- How will this co-op influenced your career direction/path/plans?
- How will your workplace learning contribute to your academic knowledge and personal/career development? What do you want to learn more about as an outcome of this experience?
- What competencies do you need to do in order to be better prepared for the future? What specific steps can you take to achieve these goals?
- If you pursue work in this field, what further technical/academic knowledge would you need? What else will you need? (e.g. professional development, experiences, professional accreditation, specific/expanded network of contacts)
- What advice would you give to someone else embarking on a similar project or starting a similar role?

Based on Gibb’s Reflective Cycle in Learning by Doing (1998)