



# USING REFLECTION

## TO INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING IN ONLINE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### HELPING YOUR STUDENTS

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Incorporating some of the questions on the next page into your journal prompts or group discussions will allow students to:

- Think critically about the intersection of their educational experience and lived experience
- Recognize unique learning opportunities that online learning provides
- Access a safe space to explore any additional stress or burdens on their educational experience

### WHAT THE LITERATURE TELLS US

Reflection is an essential part of all experiential learning courses: The National Society for Experiential Education (2013) includes it as one of its 8 principles for EL, and the University of Tennessee's Experience Learning Initiative (n.d.) includes as one of its four learning outcomes, "Students will engage in structured reflection as part of the inquiry process." Reflection helps students both recognize and internalize learning (Moore et al., 2010, p. 46). Online experiential learning creates unique challenges and opportunities, and exploring those challenges and opportunities through reflection can increase students' learning and application of learning to real-world contexts.

Additionally, students participating in online courses often have additional demands on their time or struggles that they are facing at home, which can make completing their coursework more difficult (Patel 2020). Incorporating exercises that allow students to reflect on the intersection of their online educational experience and their lived experience outside of the class provides an important learning opportunity and, equally important, allows faculty to support students as they may be navigating their education with additional stressors. For example, faculty can include reflection online by using the Discussion Board in Canvas to create private journals where students have a space to reflect on their experience. In addition to written reflections, students can create video journals using Canvas Studio and embed those videos in discussion posts. For group reflections, faculty can use breakout rooms in Zoom or create group discussions on Canvas.

## REFERENCES

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Moore, C., Boyd, B., & Dooley, K. (2010). The effects of experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing on deep-level processing of leadership students. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 9(1), 36-52. [https://journalofleadershiped.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/9\\_1\\_Moore\\_Boyd\\_Dooley.pdf](https://journalofleadershiped.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/9_1_Moore_Boyd_Dooley.pdf)

National Society for Experiential Education (2013). Eight principles of good practice for all experiential learning activities. <https://www.nsee.org/8-principles>

Patel, V. (2020). Covid-19 is a pivotal moment for struggling students. Can colleges step up? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Covid-19-Is-a-Pivotal-Moment/248501>

University of Tennessee, Teaching and Learning Innovation (n.d.). Student learning outcomes. <https://experiencelearning.utk.edu/student-learning-outcomes/>

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS

### Prior to the Start of Class

- How do you expect your current life situation or any external factors to affect your learning in this classroom?
- What has your experience with online education been previously? How do you expect the online format for this class to affect your learning?
- What excites you about online learning? What concerns you about online learning?
- What challenges to your education have you faced (or are you currently facing)? How have you approached these challenges?

### During the Course

- What do you find frustrating about completing this work online?
- What would you be doing differently if you were completing this project through an on-campus course (or through an in-person experience)?
- How have experiences in your life affected the way you are viewing the course material and this project?
- Name one success you've had so far in this course related to completing it online. How are you building (or how can you build) off of this success?

### At the End of the Course

- What skills or knowledge have you gained through this course as a result of completing it online? How will you use these skills in the future, outside of an online environment?
- What challenges were you able to overcome in spite of completing the course online?
- What challenges were you unable to overcome because of completing it online? If you could go back and do it again, would you approach this challenge differently? How?
- Would you recommend other students undertake a similar project online? Why or why not?
- How did factors outside of the course (for example, childcare issues, job responsibilities, concerns about local or global issues, etc.) affect your learning in the course? What advice would you give other students undertaking a similar project in similar circumstances?