



Reflective Essay

Faculty: Natural Sciences
Department: Centre for Environmental Policy
Module name: Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Sustainability (B&E Option) and Infrastructure of Urban Environments (USE option)
Degree: MSc in Environmental Technology,
Options: Business & Environment (B&E) and Urban Sustainable Environments (USE)
Level: Master's level
Academic Years: 2019 - present
Format: Individual essay, submitted electronically on Blackboard
Approximate number of students: 20-26 per option
Delivery mode: In person
Duration: Spring term
Weighting and credit:
B&E: 100% of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Sustainability module (33% overall Spring Term)
USE: 50% of the Infrastructure of Urban Environments module (16.5% overall Spring Term)
Module ECTS: 7.5 (B&E) and 7.5 (USE)

Assessment overview

A reflective essay is a piece of writing, where students are expected to describe and reflect on their experiences regarding a module's activities and learning outcomes (for example, field trips, or consultancy experience). The reflective essay was designed as a term-long activity and as an end of term assessment to incentivise students to describe and critically analyse their learnings, experiences and contributions to group discussions, whilst consolidating knowledge and reflecting on activities conducted during the module.

Design decisions

Rationale for Reflective Essay

The assessment is embedded into two modules Business & Environment (B&E) and Urban Sustainable Environments (USE). The reflective essay was inspired by the convenor's experience as a student of the B&E option and has been chosen as an assessment to facilitate revision of module contents, and to consolidate knowledge, while providing a mechanism for students to self-reflect, emphasising students' preconceptions and critically analysing their own thought-process, challenging what they have learned. And for the USE option, the reflective essay was chosen to adapt the Infrastructure of Urban Environment module to COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time, and their impact on the field trips.

Alignment with other assessments and the programme/ module

This assessment contributes to distinct intended learning outcomes in both options. For B&E, the reflective essay particularly contributes to 'work effectively as individuals and as a team, taking responsibility for your own and group learning and performance', while for the USE option, the assessment contributes to 'Take field notes and transcribe summaries efficiently and clearly' and to 'Gather, analyse, and synthesise and critically evaluating information in an appropriate way'.

The reflective essay is complementary to the other assessments in the option's modules as it requires the review and consolidation of knowledge on such themes as consultancy-based projects, group presentations and peer-assessment feedback.

Practicalities

Preparing students for assessment

For the B&E option, the preparation for the reflective essay is on-going during the Spring Term. Students have three daytrips to companies with a high sustainability performance. After this, students are given the opportunity to write a 400-word (limit) critical reflection to see how their thinking has been challenged by the day trips. This constitutes the first assessment, which is purely formative, giving students the opportunity to receive feedback from the Convenor and practice for their final submission. These are followed up by informal Friday discussion sessions in a safe zone

Interviewees: Mike Tennant and Tilly Collins

Role: Convenors for the Business & Environment and Urban Sustainable Environments options of the MSc Environmental Technology.



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to help prepare for the reflective essays.

Similarly, in the USE option, the Infrastructure of Urban Environment module is based on between six and eight field visits, alongside practical sessions that provide technical context. These are supported by weekly Friday discussion sessions lead by either by one of the option Convenors or one of the teaching assistants.

Marking & Feedback arrangements

For this assessment, in the B&E option, the marking rubric has been replaced by a standard marking scheme co-created by the students and staff.

In the USE option, an adapted marking rubric is used to allow for additional flexibility and for the inclusion of subjective assessment criteria.

Online adaptations

The reflective essay is easily implemented online. Indeed, in the case of USE option, this assessment was chosen because it was better suited considering COVID-19 restrictions.