

Major Assignment Reflection

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Context: In class and out of class; Technical Communication

Keywords: assignment reflection

Student Activity Time: 5-10 minutes in class and 1-2 hours outside of class

At the end of major assignments, students reflected on their learning in the assignment.

Introducing the Reflection Activity

In a technical communication class that prepares students for their capstone design course, students engaged in a series of cumulative writing assignments (i.e. proposal, interim report, final report, and report poster) that mirror their senior design report sequence. After each of the major assignments in the project sequence, students reflected on their experience engaging in the class and its assignments. The purpose of the reflection activity was for students to think about their learning.

After each major assignment, the educator would use part of the following class period to engage students in reflecting on their experiences with technical communication as they completed the assignment. To introduce the activity, the educator spoke to students informally about the purpose of the reflection. Then the educator asked students to spend about 10-15 minutes in class thinking about and writing a response to these questions:

1. What have you learned about technical communication so far in this class that helped you on the assignment and that you think will help you in senior design next year?
2. What do you still need from this class to help prepare you for report writing in senior design?


At the end of the semester students completed a final reflection worth 10% of their grade. Again, the educator asked students to spend 10-15 minutes in class thinking about and responding to the following:

1. Assess your progress in this class, comparing your technical communication skills on the pre-proposal to the final report and the poster.
2. What did you learn about technical communication throughout this class? How will this knowledge help you in senior design next semester?

This final reflection could include information from the previous reflection activities or not; this decision was up to the student. The educator graded this final reflection activity out of 10 points—if students put in a good faith effort and created meaningful responses, then they received full credit.

In terms of outcomes, these reflection activities provide students with an opportunity to think about how the class content and the assignments build off of each other, to assess and analyze what they have learned over the course of an assignment and throughout the class, and to practice writing.

Recreating the Reflection Activity

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|  | 8.1 Reflection Prompts and Sample Responses |

| | Description |
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| 1 | After major assignments, engage students in short writing reflections during class that focuses on how they adapt their learning to the assignments. |
| 2 | Assign students to write final reflections, which focuses on assessing what they have learned in the class. |
| 3 | Grade final reflections based on effort and meaningful responses. |

In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration

Figure out the purpose of the reflection. I believe it is important to figure out the purpose of the reflection activity—is it about learning outcomes or teaching strategies? While I believe you can combine the two in a reflection activity, it can often be more effective to focus on one, and then switch off between the two depending on the time in the course.

Incentivize the reflection activity. To get students to take the reflection activity seriously, sometimes it can be important to grade it.

Help students see the importance of reflection. To help students see the value of reflection and to get students engaged in the reflection activity, talk to students about why reflection is important.

What was the inspiration for the reflection activity? This reflection activity was informed by my previous teaching of English 1101 and 1102 as a Brittain Fellow at Georgia Tech. In my teaching, I want students to check themselves and see how their classwork is relevant to the bigger picture of what they are doing. I want them to see how the various elements of communication work together in their writing. Finally, it helps me track the students' progress in the course. This information gives me insight into how well I am teaching the course, and I can use this data to make adjustments to the course and better help the students improve.