

Journal of Scholarly Engagement

Guide for Reflective Practice

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Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide potential authors with an outline of requirements that must be met to write a reflective practice article for the Journal of Scholarly Engagement (JSE). Editors of other journals are welcome to use this guide for reflective practice submissions. Consider contacting JSE@gcu.edu for more information on ways this guide can be revised to meet your needs. The focus of JSE is on faculty applying and integrating disciplinary knowledge in various scholarly activities (e.g., scholarly engagement in university activities and initiatives, local community involvement, and work with other organizations). Reflective practice is one way to analyze and evaluate such scholarly activities. There are many prominent theories on reflective practice, but the one chosen as the conceptual scaffolding for this guide is the seminal thinking of John Dewey (1933/1989). Reflective practice provides practitioners with an opportunity to understand practical problems in more detail and relate this deeper understanding to larger issues within their discipline. As such, reflective practice manuscripts are more than just opinion or a review of literature.

For purposes of JSE, rigorous reflective practice involves identifying a problem within the scope of a practical activity or project, exploring a deeper understanding of the context and participants in the activity or project, proposing working ideas to explain the problem, evaluating the working ideas with evidence (such as from models, theories, scholarly literature, and/or analyzed data), choosing the most plausible explanation of the problem based upon practical experience and the evaluated evidence, and engaging in a reflective critique of the activity of reflection. There are two general audiences for reflective practice manuscripts. First, other practitioners could benefit from learning about the tacit assumptions involved in practical decision making within a given professional field. Second, the broader scholarly community could benefit from the “exploratory” nature of such manuscripts, as they could provide viable starting points for empirical research.

Reflective Readiness

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Reflective readiness is an integral part of effective reflection, but effective reflection requires certain predispositions. As Greenberger and Or (2022) stated, “readiness refers to having the necessary attitudes to be effective at reflective practice” (p. 292). As noted in the following table, the necessary attitudes according to Dewey (1933/1989) include open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility.

Table 1

Attitudes for Reflection

Attitude	Description
Open-mindedness	Open-mindedness “an active desire to listen to more sides than one . . . to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize the possibility of error, even in the beliefs that are dearest to us. They (mental sluggishness, selfconceit, unconscious fears) can best be fought by cultivating that alert curiosity and spontaneous outreaching” (Dewey, 1933/1989, p. 136).
Wholeheartedness	When anyone is thoroughly interested in some object and cause, he throws himself into it; he does so, as we say, ‘heartily’, or with a whole heart . . . When a person is absorbed, the subject carries him on . . . a genuine enthusiasm [for a subject] is an attitude that operates as an intellectual force” (Dewey, 1933/1989, p. 137).
Responsibility	Intellectual responsibility secures integrity; that is to say, consistency and harmony in belief . . . To carry something through to completion is the real meaning of thoroughness, and power to carry a thing through to its end or conclusion is dependent upon the existence [of responsibility]” (Dewey, 1933/1989, pp. 137–138).

To describe your readiness to reflection requires articulating your orientation to the activity of reflection through the lens of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. For the purpose of this type of manuscript, open-mindedness means being receptive to gaining a different perspective about your experience, which requires outlining how you are going to stay open to transforming your thinking. Wholeheartedness means being totally committed to the reflection, completely absorbed in the topic. Responsibility means having the will to see the reflection through regardless of whether the outcome is one

that was expected, and having the ethical commitment to provide critical insights into one's experience even when the outcomes make one feel vulnerable.

Guide for Reflection Practice

The following table includes detailed information about the approximate page length for required sections, section headings, and suggested content for each section for reflective practice articles. Page length will vary, but roughly the recommended range is between 15 pages and 20 pages double-spaced, in addition to references. References of a scholarly nature are required to support general claims in the manuscript, but due to the emphasis on practical knowledge, first person singular ("I") and plural ("We") are acceptable in many of the sections of the manuscript. Lastly, authors should follow APA style to format their manuscripts.

Length*	Section	Guidelines
1 paragraph	Abstract	Provide an abstract 150 to 250 words in length that describes the scope of your article (written last).
1-2 pages	Problem	<p>Overview: Describe what was unexpected or unknown about the problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief introduction to the experienced problem. • Describe what was unexpected or unknown about the problem (e.g., what prompted the inquiry).
1-2 pages	Readiness	<p>Overview: Describe your learning objective and discuss your readiness to reflect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your learning objective. What do you want to understand about the experienced problem? • Discuss your readiness to reflect to achieve the learning objective, including your open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility regarding the problem of practice. See Greenberger and Or (2022) for guidance.
1-2 pages	Working Ideas	<p>Overview: Propose three to five ideas for what might have contributed to what was unexpected or unknown about the problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on your professional experience and intuition, propose three to five ideas for what might have contributed to what was unexpected or unknown about the problem. • Differentiate the ideas (describe how the ideas are different).
2-5 pages	Reflective-Narrative	<p>Overview: Describe the details or facts about the context of the problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe actual events that occurred using a thick description. • Explore your intuitive feelings and describe your personal assumptions about the events that will help the reader grasp your orientation and/or unique perspective about them. • Describe the events using a narrative structure (plot, characters, setting) to portray the events as real and hence vibrant for the reader.
2-5 pages	Evaluation of Ideas	<p>Overview: Reason through and evaluate the working ideas by comparing them to alternative explanations, scientific theories, and/or scholarly evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the ideas to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each proposed idea. • Provide theories, models, and/or scholarly literature to support this evaluation. • If possible, conduct a formal or informal experiment to test your ideas.
2-3 pages	Decision	<p>Overview: Based upon the evaluation of proposed explanations, describe the most plausible explanation for what was unexpected or unknown about the activity/project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a judgment (decision) about the most plausible explanation for what was unexpected or unknown about the activity/project, and reiterate why you made this choice. • Consider providing a decision tree or summary of the process taken to arrive at your decision (potentially providing tables or figures to show this process).
2-5 pages	Reflective Critique	<p>Overview: Provide a critique of the reflective practice itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how this reflection transformed your beliefs about the nature of the problem, how it informs your decision making about the current and future state of the activity/project, and how it could inform other practitioners/researchers with similar activities/projects. • Propose one or more directions for future inquiry about this or similar activities/projects that practitioners/researchers could use to inquire about the topic, and list any limitations of the reflection (such as the evidence used to evaluate the working ideas).
Unlimited	Reference List	Provide a reference list.**

* Length refers to double spaced text in Times New Roman, 12 pt font. Listed page ranges are only recommendations. Section length for actual manuscripts may vary.

** APA style is required for the entire manuscript.

List of Useful Sources on Reflective Practice

- Anderson, A. M., Or, J., Greenberger, S. W., Maguire, K. R., & Martin, C. L. (2023). Reflective readiness: Character strengths for effective reflection on refugee simulations. *Reflective Practice*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2023.2183189>
- Dewey, J. (1989). How we think. In Jo Ann Boydston (Ed.), *The later works of John Dewey, 1825-1953, Volume 8: 1933, Essays and how we think, Revised edition*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press (Original work published in 1933).
- Finlay, L. (2008). Reflecting on reflective practice. *PBPL paper*, 52, 1-27.
- Greenberger, S. W. (2020). Creating a guide for reflective practice: Applying Dewey's reflective thinking to document faculty scholarly engagement. *Reflective Practice*, 21(4), 458-472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2020.1773422>
- Greenberger, S. W., Maguire, K. R., Martin, C. L., Chavez, T. E., & Delgado, G. (2021). Discovering reflective-narrative: Constructing experience in the Deweyan guide for reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 23(2), 147-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2021.1983423>
- Greenberger, S. W., & Or, J. (2022). Cultivating faculty readiness to reflect: Reconstructing Dewey's attitudes for reflection as character strengths. *Reflective Practice*, 23(3), 291-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2021.2015685>
- Mitchell, T. D., Richard, F. D., Battistoni, R. M., Rost-Banik, C., Netz, R., & Zakoske, C. (2015). Reflective practice that persists: Connections between reflection in service-learning programs and in current life. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 21(2), 49-63.
- Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 842-866.