

# Reflective Teaching

Reflective Teaching (RT) is a self-assessment of teaching, wherein an instructor examines their pedagogy, articulates reasons and strengths for their strategies, and identifies areas for revision or improvement. RT involves an examination both of one's underlying beliefs about teaching and learning and their alignment with actual classroom practice, throughout a course and afterwards. RT operates as an umbrella term denoting a variety of practices, including teaching inventories and observation protocols, self-assessments, and consideration of student evaluations.

When teaching reflectively, instructors think critically about their teaching and problem-solve for solutions to recurring issues, rather than relying on unchanging, established personal norms. This critical analysis can draw on a variety of sources: Brookfield (2017) lays out four crucial sources, including “students’ eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, personal experience, and theory and research.” Instructors can use a variety of tools and approaches to learn from these sources and reflect upon their teaching, ranging from low-key to formal, and personal to inter-collegial.

## STRATEGIES OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING:

### Self-Assessment

- **Reflection Journals:** A reflection journal allows instructors to capture details of their teaching directly after class, and read an ongoing narrative of their teaching across terms and years. Taking 5 or so minutes after class, the instructor writes thoughts on the day's lesson (typing or handwriting works, although handwriting often supports better memory and reflection). Instructors might reflect on the following questions: *What went well today? What could I have done differently? How will I modify my instruction in the future?*
- **Teaching Inventories:** A number of inventories have been developed to help instructors assess their teaching approaches. These often consist of multiple choice questions on a Likert-scale and often take less than 10 - 15 minutes to complete. Inventories are usually designed to assess the extent to which particular pedagogies are employed (e.g. student-versus teacher-centered practices).
- **Video-Recorded Teaching Practices:** Instructors can video-record their lessons informally or formally, along with an observation protocol in order to self-assess their own practices. Video cameras installed in certain Yale classrooms can be utilized by instructors for recordings. Alternatively, instructors can utilize, or have a Teaching Fellow utilize, the Media Library tool Panopto for classroom recordings, or utilize a

small recording studio in the CTL (contact the [Media Library team](#) for more information).

- **Teaching Portfolio:** A more time-intensive practice, the teaching portfolio allows instructors to pull the various components of their teaching into a cohesive whole, starting typically with a teaching philosophy or statement, moving through sample syllabi and assignments, and ending with evaluations from colleagues and students. The portfolio does not capture classroom practices very well, but provides an opportunity for instructors to see their teaching in a “big picture.” The University of Washington CTL explores best practices of [reflective teaching \(link is external\)](#) through the teaching portfolio.

## External Assessment

- **Student Evaluations (Midterm and End-of-Term):** In many courses, instructors will obtain feedback from students in the form of midterm and/or end-of-term evaluations. Care on behalf of the instructor must be taken in interpreting this feedback, as the literature suggests that student evaluations can be particularly biased against women and minorities, and thus not always valid measures of instruction (Basow, 1995; Watchel, 1998; Huston, 2005). With this in mind, instructors can consider student evaluations as one data source in their instruction and take note of any prevailing themes. They can seek out other ways to assess their practices to accompany student evaluation data before taking steps to modify instruction. One option is to include external observation and anonymous discussion with students for more real-time, and often more honest, feedback. The CTL offers [midterm student course evaluations](#) and [small group feedback sessions](#), which provide non-evaluative, anonymous conversation notes with students in addition to the traditional survey format.
- **Peer or Departmental Observation and Feedback:** Instructors can ask a trusted colleague or administrator to observe their classroom and give them feedback on their teaching. Colleagues can agree on a protocol and list of behaviors to focus on, or utilize one of many [teaching inventories](#) available online.

## Recommendations

- **Use multiple data sources** - Considering teaching from at least two different perspectives (student evaluations and personal inventory, or personal inventory and peer observation) can provide a more holistic view of instruction. Instructors should be careful to compare and review outcome data carefully, and even reflect on it with a colleague, before making changes. Additionally, changes should be made slowly (the usual recommendation is one core change per term), and reflected on as well.
- **Take time to write** - If instructors wish to keep a teaching log, they may schedule dedicated time to write their entries, ideally soon after class ends, rather than hoping to

find a moment throughout the day. As in any new technique, habit formation is key to continual engagement.

- 
- **Find a friend** - Instructors should consider finding a colleague or two to meet with in order to discuss teaching efforts. This may include a faculty member who teaches the same or similar course, or any trusted colleague or administrator. Most observations are best followed up with an informal coffee meeting to discuss findings in a no-judgment, non-evaluative climate.

### **Inclusion and the reflective teacher**

Reflective teaching is a process whereby teachers analyse their lessons, methods and outcomes and use the insights to evolve a practice that enhances the learners' experience. Hobson describes the process as, 'teacher's story of her own journey'; in other words, an experiential insight into one's life as a teacher (Burnaford, Fischer & Hobson 2001). Hence, a teacher's self-reflection process is cyclical and recursive where one comes back to critically examine oneself and act again and again.

Every reflective teacher in an inclusive classroom is a learning facilitator, rehab counsellor, life coach and motivator. Being constantly in the limelight as a reference point, a teacher who is an inclusive practitioner has to maintain a high level of authenticity. Not only is she or he a role model who guides the development of the student, but the teacher also shares a moral responsibility to facilitate learning along with inclusion

## Purpose of Reflective Teaching

Reflective teaching is a personal tool that teachers can use to observe and evaluate the way they behave in their classroom.

Helps teachers in their professional development

self-awareness is a powerful ally for a teacher, especially when so much of what and how they teach.

