
CAPSTONE REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

Credit: Ashlie Delshad, B.A. Political Science, WCU

A liberal arts education prepares students to think and communicate as professionals, to understand the social and global contexts of their lives, to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another, to recognize difference and make informed decisions using reasoning skills, and to balance the various dimensions of their personal and professional lives. With these important goals in mind, West Chester University's General Education Program strives to provide students with the experiences necessary to achieve the following goals:

1. communicate effectively
2. think critically and analytically
3. employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
4. demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
5. respond thoughtfully to diversity
6. understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
7. make informed decisions and ethical choices

Drawing on your overall educational experience as informed by your major (s), minor(s), and general education courses, as well as your co-curricular activities at West Chester University, please explain how and to what extent your educational experience allowed you to develop the skills listed in the goals above. In doing so, please reflect on the integration of your major/minor and Gen Ed courses, and perhaps even your extra-curricular activities. Discuss specific courses and/or activities that were particularly instrumental in your development of each skill.

REFLECTION PAPER, DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Credit: Dan Forbes, B.A. Philosophy, WCU

Philosophy as a discipline involves interpretive and critical methods for thinking about our experiences, activities, and achievements. Reflect as a philosopher on your experiences, activities, and achievements here at West Chester University. How have you grown in your time here? How have your studies in philosophy and general education shaped your character, your perspective, and your sense of ethical responsibility as a global citizen?

The General Education curriculum at West Chester University incorporates a first-year experience, general education courses in diverse areas, a capstone experience, and a portfolio that incorporates artifacts of these experiences and achievements. These parts of the curriculum complement one's major(s) with the aim of producing a well-rounded experience that prepares graduates to take on the responsibility of becoming responsible global citizens. Take this time to reflect on how your academic journey at WCU has shaped you. How are you different now from when you first started at WCU? What new skills and perspectives do you take into the world, and what value do they have for you?

As a student soon to graduate from West Chester University, you have completed a journey that you have recorded through the artifacts incorporated into your General Education Portfolio. Take this time to reflect on your portfolio and the story that it tells of your journey at WCU. How have you grown since starting your educational journey here? What challenges have you faced, and how have you grown through facing these challenges? What new skills and perspectives will you take into the broader community, and what value do they have for you?

As you do this assignment, reflect thoughtfully on your growth along the 7 Gen Ed goals:

1. communicate effectively
2. think critically and analytically
3. employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
4. demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
5. respond thoughtfully to diversity
6. understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
7. make informed decisions and ethical choices

REFLECTIVE ESSAY: CASE STUDY (PUBLIC HEALTH)

Credit:

This assignment consists of **two parts**. The first part is a reflective essay that integrates your learning from WCU. This part will not be graded, but you must complete it and submit to earn credit for Part 2. As you complete this assignment, you will need to access your ePortfolio and your advising sheet, transcript, or Degree Progress Report.

Read this case study first:

You have been hired by the Chester County Health Department to develop a new smoking cessation program in the county. You and your team have the ability to choose any geographical location within the county to pilot your program. You may also focus on any priority population (age, race/ethnicity, gender, or other demographic characteristic). You will be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the program, as well as marketing and advertising it to the community to ensure participation. This project will require your knowledge as an emerging public health professional, as well as skills such as communication, critical thinking and analysis, understanding quantitative data, applying interdisciplinary perspectives, ethical decision making, managing diversity, and understanding the historical, cultural, and philosophical foundations of the problem.

PART 1: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

The project described in the case study will call on all of the skills you have mastered at WCU. Before you plunge into the project, it's a good idea to build your self-confidence to meet the challenge. Start by reviewing the accomplishments in your ePortfolio to see how far you've come as a professional.

For each of the general education goals, briefly describe your strengths in each area. Then, briefly discuss which major courses, general education courses, electives, and co-curricular activities increased your skills in each area. Highlight any artifacts in your ePortfolio that illustrate your growth in this area. Your response should be in essay format of at least 750 words (i.e, you are writing a paper, not copying each goal and writing an answer beneath it.)

Goal 1: Communicate effectively

Goal 2: Think critically and analytically

Goal 3: Employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods

Goal 4: Demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries

Goal 5: Respond thoughtfully to diversity

Goal 6: Understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions

Goal 7: Make informed decisions and ethical choices

PART 2: CASE STUDY PAPER

[Here is where you would describe your directions and requirements for the discipline-specific capstone project paper.]

REFLECTIVE ESSAY: DISCIPLINARY AND CITIZENSHIP INTEGRATION

Credit: Modified from Schrand, Jones, and Hanson; Jefferson University

In this assignment, I'd like you to reflect on your life as a thinker and learner. I am asking you to represent the viewpoints of your discipline and its relationship to global citizenship as reflected in the General Education goals:

1. communicate effectively
2. think critically and analytically
3. employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
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5. respond thoughtfully to diversity
6. understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
7. make informed decisions and ethical choices

This essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on why you chose your major, talk about what you learned in college, help others understand why you find your discipline a compelling framework for understanding the world, and explore the degree to which your experience at WCU has made you a global citizen. You must refer to at least 5 artifacts from your ePortfolio (at least two from the General Education courses, at least two from your major, and one co-curricular). You cannot copy and paste reflections you wrote for the folio. Instead, you need to draw new connections among the five artifacts that support your essay.

You cannot possibly write about everything you learned in college in 4-6 pages, so please stress the following:

- Why you chose your area(s) of study.
- What is it exactly that interests you about your discipline (be sure to be as specific as possible and include specific concepts, topics, methods, or perspectives of interest)?
- Which courses and co-curricular activities were most important to you? How do the artifacts reflect your identity as a professional?
- Your values, skills, and strengths related to the General Education goals. **[Required component]**

- What real-world problems do you want to solve, and how has your WCU education prepared you for the challenge?

You may find that you have difficulty selecting what to write. Some of you may not want to disclose certain things about your lives, while others may dwell on events or activities that may not necessarily be looked upon favorably by others. Remember, this is not an exercise in confessional writing. Your goal is to help other people understand how your WCU education guides the way you make sense of the world and how you came to adopt those perspectives.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- Assume a general reader who does not know you personally
- Do not dwell on the negative. If you find yourself wanting to discuss some major negative event, such as an accident or illness, try to emphasize what you learned from the experience rather than the disappointments or shortcomings it may have caused

How you structure this essay is up to you. There is no one right way to go about it. You might write it as a personal narrative. You might write it as a reflection on your goals in your profession or more broadly in your life. You might write in first person (so, you can use “I” in this paper!) You might write it in third person, as if you’re profiling someone else. You may decide to write in one smooth linear narrative, in a chronological but fragmented style, or in a way that jumps around in time and space. It’s up to you. Have some fun with it!

REFLECTIVE ESSAY: PROFESSIONAL FORMATION

Credit: Chiwo Tinago, BS Public Health, WCU

In the coursework for your BS-PH degree, you learned a great deal about the profession of public health, including the up-to-date science and the latest skill sets required for excellence in the field. You have just completed your internship, in which you had the opportunity to be evaluated by others, and to reflect on your own about your performance, and the value of your professional preparation.

This essay allows you to reflect differently on your professional preparation. Who you are as a public health professional has been shaped by far more than your courses in the Health department. You have been formed by your entire university experience, which emphasized a general education curriculum that, it is to be hoped, served you well in your internship.

Please write a 1,000-word essay in which you consider how you have used—maybe even relied upon—the education you received in the general education areas. Please comment upon your professional experience and the expected learning outcomes of the general education program. How did your Public Health Courses, general Education Courses, and co-curricular activities help you to:

(Please reference your ePortfolio for specific examples.)

1. communicate effectively
2. think critically and analytically
3. employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
4. demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
5. respond thoughtfully to diversity
6. understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
7. make informed decisions and ethical choices

Lastly, how important were these abilities in your internship experience?

REFLECTIVE ESSAY: ART

Credit: Modified from an essay by Alexis Carrozza, Instructional Technology Fellow, CUNY's Macaulay Honors College

A portfolio is a collection of pieces that are intended to showcase an artist's best work, and therefore it can only exist once the processes of creation, editing, receiving outside critique, and revision have been completed. Your ePortfolio is a showcase of your best work as an artist and scholar during your time at WCU.

Please answer the following questions in a reflective essay of approximately 1000 words

1. Describe the one strongest work and the one weakest work in your portfolio (these may or may not be art or design pieces). How did you determine what work was "strong" and "weak"?
2. Describe the easiest assignment to complete and the most difficult assignment to complete. What was the difference between an "easy" and "difficult" assignment?
3. If you could redo any one piece in your portfolio, which would it be and why? What would you do differently?
4. Reflect on what your portfolio may not reveal about the career at WCU. Do you think the work in your portfolio is an accurate reflection of your academic growth? Why or why not?

All students at WCU are exposed to a general education curriculum, which enables students to:

1. communicate effectively
 2. think critically and analytically
 3. employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
 4. demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
 5. respond thoughtfully to diversity
 6. understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
 7. make informed decisions and ethical choices
5. Reflect on how your major courses, General Education courses, minors/pathways and co-curricular activities enhanced your growth in these seven areas.

CAPSTONE ASSIGNMENT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Credit: WCU Psychology Department

Senior Seminar Capstone Assignment

Capstone Assignment Purpose: *The purpose of this capstone assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to practice communicating to prospective graduate schools and/or employers about how your undergraduate education has contributed to the development of your abilities. In other words, you will be asked to convey to prospective graduate schools and/or employers precisely how your academic record and extracurricular activities support the skills you have developed.*

Steps to Complete the Assignment:

1. Review your degree progress report (DPR) to see the general education and major/minor related courses you have completed at West Chester University.
2. Review the documents and artifacts that you have uploaded to your E-portfolio from these courses. You may also think about work you have done as part of extra-curricular activities during your time as an undergraduate.
3. Think about your future career goals. Do you plan to apply to graduate school or for a position in the workforce?
4. Write a one-page letter to a prospective employer or graduate school director describing how your educational experience allowed you to develop the skills listed in the goals below. In doing so, please discuss specific **general education and major/minor** courses that were particularly instrumental in your development of each skill. Please also feel free to discuss specific extracurricular activities that contributed to your skill development.
5. This assignment must be completed and uploaded to your E-Portfolio on D2L by the last day of class this semester.

Goals of WCU's General Education Program: West Chester University's General Education Program strives to equip students with the abilities to:

1. **communicate effectively**
2. **think critically and analytically**
3. **employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods**
4. **demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries**
5. **respond thoughtfully to diversity**
6. **understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions**
7. **make informed decisions and ethical choices**