Individual Reflection

Rationale: Experience plus reflection equals learning. - John Dewey

Experiential learning transcends mere participation in activities, demanding reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis to maximize the effectiveness of your course experiences and prepare you for your future professional life. This guide aims to facilitate a deep, personal reflection on your journey throughout the course, inviting you to explore the learnings and insights gained from your diverse experiences, contemplate your professional and personal growth, and identify strategies to further enhance your learning. We encourage you to approach this reflection not as a routine task, but as a valuable opportunity to create a meaningful record of your experiences, consolidate your knowledge, and recognize your progress. By engaging in this reflective process, you'll be better equipped to connect theory with practice, identify patterns in your learning and decision-making, develop critical thinking skills essential for your professional future, and cultivate self-awareness and emotional intelligence. To make the most of this document, set aside dedicated time for reflection, review your course materials, notes, and experiences, consider both successes and challenges, be honest and specific in your observations, and focus on actionable insights for future growth. Remember, the depth and quality of your reflection directly impact the value you'll derive from this exercise, so embrace this opportunity to gain clarity on your progress and chart a course for your continued development as a professional. For more information on the significance of reflective practice in experiential learning, please refer to the annex.

# Design Thinking Mindset

Before writing the Individual Reflection, it is suggested that the Design Thinking Mindset questionnaire, available at <https://designthinkingmindset.unibo.it/>, be completed to support the reflection on different components of design thinking.

# Format

Your reflective paper should capture the essence of your learning journey throughout the course, highlighting both personal and professional growth. Aim to provide a comprehensive overview of your key insights, integrating practical experiences with theoretical knowledge. Focus on articulating your main findings, how you've generalized them, and their potential application in your future endeavors. To support your reflection, draw from your course diary, relevant readings, and literature that have shaped your understanding. While the paper should not exceed 1200 words (excluding references and appendix), you have the freedom to choose your preferred format, style, and presentation tools. We encourage the use of visual elements to enhance your narrative. This paper is more than an assignment; it's an opportunity to consolidate your learning and create a valuable reference for your ongoing professional development. Approach it with thoughtfulness and creativity to maximize its benefit for your future journey.

# Guidelines:

Below is a non-exhaustive list of guidelines to support your reflection:

* Remember that you are the protagonist of the story. Professors, classmates, and organizations are supporting characters.
* Tell what thoughts/methods/tools presented during the course inspired you and why. Make specific references and use examples.
* Think about the learning environment broadly: lessons occur inside and outside the classroom by professors, teammates, organizations, readings, etc.
* You could write a paragraph referring to the new concepts you have learnt. Which concepts? Why are they important to you?
* What was your role within the team? Why? What would you do differently?
* Describe your development: How have you changed since the beginning of the course (or from previous experience)? What have you discovered about yourself? What mistakes did you make? What did you learn from these mistakes?
* Consider the steps you could take to improve your learning after this course.

N.B. Remember, it is more interesting what you learned, what insights you gained, and how you relate it to existing literature rather than a detailed account of everything you did (better to avoid the ‘I did this... and then I did this...’ style)

ANNEXES

**Situated Learning** Learning is an implemented capability, a continuous outcome that emerges from everyday actions (Orlikowski, 2002; Reynolds, 1998). This is central to the educational environment of the course where we are creating a unique situation where each team tackles a different challenge with a different organization. With no pre-determined solution, this open challenge places all actors (students, teachers, and organizations) on an equal level where knowledge must be constructed collaboratively, and solutions are not known in advance. Lave and Wenger (1991) identify four key processes in situated learning: gaining legitimate access, engaging in discourse and practice, developing motivation and identity, and managing contradictions and change. These processes underlie situated learning by placing students, teachers, and organizations on equal footing, making assumptions and the common purpose explicit, and viewing knowledge as socially constructed, contestable, and provisional. Motivated by the common good, this approach benefits the learning interests of all involved.

**Critical Thinking** The use of critical pedagogy in the course involves delegating decision-making to students, creating an environment where they can question assumptions, problematize issues, analyze and negotiate relationships, and adopt a collective orientation (Dehler et al., 2001). This requires students to be technically competent, critically reflective, and proactive in designing change. This discourse is crucial for our students, encouraging them to be critically reflective and to break free from disciplinary constraints. The aim is to develop management skills and empathy together, improving learning and understanding by adopting and engaging with the perspectives of others. This process, based on humility and a deep understanding of the motivations behind organizational actions, is fundamental for effective design.

**Experiential learning** Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning centers on a dynamic learning cycle that resolves the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction. This cycle comprises four interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the initial stage, learners engage directly with real-world situations, gathering foundational information (Kolb, 1984). Following this, individuals reflect on their experiences, analyzing emotions and exploring underlying meanings. This reflective observation leads to abstract conceptualization, where learners synthesize their reflections into abstract concepts and theories. Finally, these newly formed concepts are tested in new situations in active experimentation. This cycle is particularly pertinent to just-in-time training (JITT), where reflection is key to enhancing learning even in brief faculty development efforts. John Dewey’s foundational work significantly influenced experiential learning theory, emphasizing that knowledge is constructed through active engagement with the world and the critical role of reflection in learning (Dewey, 1938). Reflection is pivotal in experiential learning, allowing learners to integrate new information with existing knowledge, encouraging metacognitive awareness, facilitating the transfer of knowledge to new contexts, and promoting continuous improvement. Both Kolb and Dewey underscore that reflection is essential for effective experiential learning, enabling learners to bridge theory and practice, enhance self-awareness, and continuously evolve their understanding and skills.

References

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