

# Learning journal

## Task Objectives

- To foster self-reflection on (a) the theory presented in the course, and (b) your experience in running a firm whilst being part of a management team.
- To help with your sense making (Weick, 1995) regarding this course.

A casual search using Google Scholar for *learning journals* provides a plethora of articles extolling their virtues. Broadly, learning journals foster high quality self-reflection and increase critical thinking. There are two components to this assignment. First, you are to maintain a weekly learning journal. Secondly, you are to use the your weekly journal as the 'data' for a summative journal/essay on your major learnings from this course. This final part of the assignment is a summative evaluation of your weekly journals.

## Weekly reflective learning journals

For each of the first ten weeks of the course you are to write a journal entry of **at least** 300 words. The more you write the more grist you will have for your Summative Learning Journal.

In your learning journal entries, you are to explore the linkages between the theoretical content of the course; e.g., the readings and class sessions with your practical experience e.g., of working in a multidisciplinary team and running a bike company). As well as content (theory) from this course, you may, if appropriate, draw on material from other courses.

Ultimately, you should be considering the real difference the course is making to your **thinking and behaviour**.



Learning is much more than the regurgitation of memorised facts and words. It is the ability to do something better than one might have done it before the learning. Thus it is about thinking and behaviour or, as Schatzki (2001) puts it "doing and sayings".

What does a good learning journal look like?

Let's begin by looking at the common problems. Based on experience with previous classes, the main problems are:

- Many people don't use the structure recommended by Daudelin, despite it being good one. This is the one most significant changes that most people could make when trying to improve their learning journals.
- When using theory in their journals, most people use it to label things; e.g., Mary is an effective follower. Very few (if any) people are using theory to either explain what is happening, or predict what might happen. This is closely tied to the structure of people's journals (i.e. not substantively addressing a real issue). My assumption is that this is partly because people aren't drawing on particular theory to address a particular problem; instead they are drawing on the 'theory of the week'. I really encourage you to use Daudeline's approach, select theory that supports that issue (and that won't necessarily be theory of the week), and finally, use theory for more than just labeling.
- Finally, many people write a 'stream of conscious', rather than reflecting upon the week's learning and writing up that reflection.

As you become more proficient in reflection and writing a learning journal, you might move away from Daudelin's method.

## Peer feedback on journals

Each week you must review and provide feedback on the learning journals of two of your peers. Over the course you will write 20 sets of feedback. You do this by *commenting on your allocated journals* directly on the wiki. Your goal in providing feedback is to help the author do a better job next time. If you feedback does not achieve that, then the author can rightly complain about the quality of your feedback. The feedback should, as a minimum, address:

- How well the journal meets the guidelines provided by Daudlin (1996).
- The extent to which the journal demonstrates achievement in the higher levels of Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy of the cognitive domain.
- The quality of the writing.

In all cases, you should suggest how they might improve their journal; it is insufficient to point out the weaknesses in their journal without **providing specific actionable ways** they might improve. For example, it is not good enough to say, "Check your grammar". Rather you explain the nature of the problem and how they might fix it. Having said that, items like grammar and spelling are 'hygiene' factors—you should first provide feedback on more material aspects of journals, and then move on to the smaller matters.

## Summative Learning Journal

Drawing on your weekly journal entries, you are to write a final, summative journal entry of between 2,000 and 3,000 words. You are to submit your final journal via Canvas. You should not submit your summative journal to this wiki. Your weekly learning journals are not graded; only your Summative learning journal will be graded.

A note on the word count: The word count includes everything; references, appendices, and anything else you include in the document. There is no +/- 10%; for those who think that way, see the word count as being 2,500 words plus or minus 20%.

Your summative learning journal is quite different to your weekly learning journals.

- It should focus on something that you have learnt throughout the course and demonstrate what you can do better now than what you could do before the course.

- The summative journal shouldn't focus on being too personal about your experiences throughout the course, but instead focus on how you can apply your learning in the future.
- It must demonstrate the breadth as well as the depth, of what you have learnt.
- It should provide good evidence of both evaluation and synthesis (Bloom, 1956).
- It should be based on the 'data' from your weekly learning journals, and possible insights you have had as a result of providing feedback on others' learning journals.
- It will probably focus on one, maybe two, 'learnings'. Certainly not three. These are the things that have changed the way you think about business and changed your behaviour.

The first two bullet points, form the 'container' into which the remain points fit.

Note, your summative learning journal should not be directly about your Mastery (or otherwise) of Mike's Bikes.

The best summative learning journals will probably link to the [learning objectives](#) of the course, and to the [BCom graduate profile](#) (or maybe another profile if you are studying for a different degree).

[Sample summative learning journals](#) are available here on the wiki. They are all B grade or above.



You should strive to meet the outline of what this course is about. The brief outline is:

"Explore and reflect on the realities of management theory and practice through critically examining management challenges, from small entrepreneurial firms to large corporations."

## Important notes on the learning journals

- For many in the class, this is the first time they will have had to undertake a reflective writing. As a result, some people will approach this assignment with some trepidation. For those people, the article by Daudelin (1996) will provide assistance. As you progress, you should find writing journals increasingly easy and natural. As a result, your later journals may be considerably longer than your earlier ones. Because of this, there is no upper word limit for your weekly journal entries. Indeed, you may, if you like, do more than one entry per week.
- By the due date, one journal entry each week must be of at least the minimum word length. You may not do three 100 word journal entries in a week and hope for it to be treated like one 300-word journal entry.
- For your weekly journal entries, and for the summative journal, using the first person (e.g., I, me, etc.) is acceptable.
- The quality of your writing matters. For instance, your weekly learning journals will be on public display, and like much of the Internet will be available long after this course is over.
- Although your weekly learning journal is not directly assessed, it can affect your grade for this course.



- Each instance of being late or missing a weekly journal entry will result in a 10-percent penalty being applied to your summative learning journal.
- Each instance of being late or failing to give meaningful feedback will result in a 5-percent penalty being applied to your summative learning journal.
- Failing to correctly cite/reference material in your journal can incur a 10-percent penalty being applied to your summative learning journal. You should correctly cite your weekly learning journal using an APA formatted references.

- If it looks like you have 'blown off' doing the weekly learning journals it is impossible to get a passing grade for the summative learning journals.
- In this context, meaningful feedback means that the recipient can unambiguously use it to improve their work within the guidelines provided (in the opinion of the recipient, other classmates, or the teaching staff). If you feel unhappy about the quality of the feedback you receive from your peers, let the teaching staff know.

## References

- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook 1 Cognitive domain*. New York: Longmans.
- Daudelin, M. W. (1996). Learning from experience through reflection. *Organizational Dynamics*, 24(3), 36--48.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sense making in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2001). Introduction: practice theory. In T R Schatzki, K Knorr Cetina & E von Savigny (Eds) *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. London: Routledge, 1-14.