**Introduction: Why critical reflection matters!**

**Should I read this?**

Yes! Critical reflection will help you get the most from your learning experiences, from a teamwork assignment through to a formal work placement or an activity that didn’t work out. Critical reflection strategies can be the key to better results and more confidence. It can save you lots of time by focussing your energies on what matters.

**What is critical reflection?**

Through critical reflection, we draw on our experiences to question our conscious and unconscious values, beliefs and assumptions. Fisher (2010, p. 321) defines these as follows:

* ***Values*** are principles to live by: what is important to me as an individual;
* ***Beliefs*** are my understanding of the way the world works; and
* ***Assumptions*** are the premises or understandings that underpin my values and beliefs.

**Why am I being asked to engage in critical reflection?**

Critical reflection involves examining the past in order to learn from what happened. It enables all aspects of an experience to be taken into account. By reflecting critically, we can better understand how our thinking and behaviour enables or constrains our own practice and the practice of others.

**Why is critical reflection important for employability development?**

Critical reflection is a vital aspect of our self- and career-development throughout our studies and careers. Here are some of the reasons.

* Critical reflection underpins the self- and career-related identity work needed to conceptualise, create and sustain work that has meaning to us as individuals;
* Critical reflection helps us to make sense of our learning and experiences so that we can maximise the benefits;
* By looking for insights and maximising self-awareness, critical reflection contributes to our personal, professional and social identity; and
* By adopting critical reflection, we can make more informed decisions about our futures. This fosters continuous improvement and enhances our access to new opportunities.

You can find lots of examples of reflective writing [here](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/fch/work-experience/reflective-writing-guidance.pdf), in a resource from Pete Watton, Jane Collings and Jenny Moon at the University of Exeter (2001).