

# Developing criteria for assessing Pharmacy students' reflective diaries

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## AIM

The use of reflective diaries in Pharmacy education is intended to direct students toward the graduate outcome goals associated with personal and intellectual autonomy, research and enquiry, and ethical, social and professional understanding (Faculty of Pharmacy, 2006). Although some writers maintain that grading student reflections is inappropriate (Biggs, 2003, p. 189), feedback from both staff and students in our Faculty indicates a strong need for graded assessment of this type of assignment. The aim of this undertaking is to develop Pharmacy students' reflective skills through the use of a validated set of graduated descriptors, and a related student training package.

## METHOD

An iterative process has been used to develop and trial a set of graduated descriptors in one course unit within the Master of Pharmacy program. The process has included synthesis of existing grading forms in use within the Faculty, consultation with relevant Faculty members, and a search of the literature related to reflective practices. It is proposed in this session to summarise this work, and to discuss alternatives for validating the work to date.

## OUTCOMES

This process started with a simple four-point scale of self-referencing statements ranging from unsatisfactory to excellent (e.g. Excellent: "comprehensive reflections of learning experiences"), to the next iteration based on Biggs' SOLO (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) taxonomy (2003:49 – 50) that contained broad statements referring to characteristics of reflection (e.g. "demonstrates excellent ability to relate experiences to previous learning"). Gradually, more specific statements drawn from the literature on reflection have been added. The current iteration contains five grades (HD to F) with simple descriptions of required outcomes at each level. A student training package is in preparation, and validation testing is planned.

Biggs J (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Buckingham, UK. SRHE & Open University Press.

Faculty of Pharmacy (2006) *Contextualised Graduate Attributes*  
<http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/graduateattributes/facultyGA.cfm?faculty=Pharmacy>, accessed 3 Nov 2008