

Writing a program outcome reflection

Your reflection on a degree program outcome needs to include the context for the artifact, where you stand currently in relation to specific elements of the program outcome, how the artifact(s) you've chosen provide evidence for your assertion of progress, which elements of a given outcome you are continuing to work on, and how you plan in the upcoming year to make progress in that outcome.

A reflection will typically be between 300 and 450 words.

As an example from the MDIV program, perhaps you choose a sermon that you've given. MDIV program outcome B -- "Graduates, together with the communities they lead, will read the Scriptures faithfully, critically, and imaginatively" -- is one outcome for which you might match that sermon. In your reflection you might note that you believe that your sermon provides evidence that you are relatively strong on competencies (1b)¹ (4b)² (5b)³ and (6b)⁴. You might reflect that your sermon itself demonstrates this strength in competencies (1b) (4b) and (6b), and that your exegetical work in preparation for the sermon demonstrates (5b). Further, you note that you have been surprised by how your sermon was received in a congregation, which has prompted you to want to work more intensively on (2b)⁵ and (7b)⁶, which at this point you define as a "growing edge" for yourself.

Another example from the MDIV degree might be an essay that you've written in your history signature course. Here you might discuss how it illustrates your grasp of (2b) and (3b)⁷, as well as (1c)⁸ and (3c)⁹. Then you might go on to discuss how

¹ (1b) is "You will deepen your knowledge of the Scriptures and be confident in your capacity to engage richly with their witness."

² (4b) is "You will discern God's life-guiding law and God's life-giving promises for you, for others, and for God's beloved creation."

³ (5b) is "You will be able to use a variety critical tools in order to read the Scriptures in all of their complexity and promise. Deep engagement with the Bible raises hard questions about God, life, death, meaning, ambiguity, identity, community, and about the Bible itself. "

⁴ (6b) is "You will learn to be critical of too-easy answers and naive readings, recognizing the sometimes narrow perspectives that each of us brings to the text. The stories and characters of the Bible will help you see yourself, your neighbor, and your world differently."

⁵ (MDIV2b) is "You will understand the ways the Scriptures have been interpreted over the centuries and in various contexts, trusting that Christ is present in diverse contexts. This includes knowledge of ways Scripture has served as the church's norm and knowledge of interpretations that the ecumenical church has both commended and rejected."

⁶ (MDIV 7b) is "You will discover new readings from diverse communities that enrich your imagination. You will learn how to enter a biblical passage with imagination so that the passage helps you reimagine life and faith in light of God's word."

⁷ (MDIV 3b) is "You will understand the significance of the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the church for the ongoing interpretation of the Scriptures in changing contexts."

⁸ (MDIV 1c) is "You will understand the Christian tradition's witness to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and be able to think critically about that witness."

this historical exploration has helped you to feel, tangibly, how important competency (2a)¹⁰ is, even though at this stage of your progress through the program you feel ill prepared to name such opportunities. You might ask for help from your cohort mentor in suggesting ways to do so.

An example from the CML MA degree program might involve your reflection on program outcome C: “CML graduates will have a critical understanding of leadership and the development of one’s own gifts for leadership in particular ministry contexts.” At the end of your first year you might note that you feel that this is very definitely a growing edge, because you are only just beginning to articulate your understanding of leadership. You might write that you have started working with a spiritual director to discern more fully your baptismal calling, and that you believe (3c)¹¹ is perhaps the only competency from this outcome with which you can claim much familiarity, given what you’ve explored in the first half of the Learning Leader course process. Here you could point to your individual profiles from the StrengthsFinder and the IDI. You might suggest that you are searching for more opportunities to explore this outcome at Luther, and seek advice from your cohort mentor. This kind of honesty might well display (4c).¹²

As you can see by these examples, you could choose an artifact (or more than one) to illustrate your work with a specific outcome, or you could choose an artifact and discuss it in relation to more than one program outcome, or you could reflect upon processes in which you have been engaged by offering an anecdote from them. In each case the more direct and honest you can be in assessing your progress, the more effective the portfolio process will be.

As you prepare to submit your portfolio to the review team, please make sure that you go through and check that you’ve commented on each competency within the four outcomes (even if all you’ve noted is that you’re unfamiliar with it). Please also make sure that each reflection you write has a parenthesis at the end of it which lists the specific outcome competencies addressed in that reflection (this will simplify the review team’s task).

When you have written your reflection(s) you can sit down with your cohort mentor and talk with her/him about how they perceive your progress in the program. At that point your mentor might choose to use the portfolio evaluation rubric as an example of how they would approach you

⁹ (MDIV 3c) is “You will engage multiple voices from within the diverse traditions of the church and the wider culture as you teach, preach, and think about God.”

¹⁰ (MDIV 2a) is “With new urgency you will recognize the Holy Spirit’s new opportunities for mission here in ever more diverse North American contexts.

¹¹ (MA/CML 3c) is “You will discern your own gifts in relationship to others in the body of Christ.”

¹² (MA/CML 4c) is “These communities will experience you as a differentiated leader who encourages, equips, and empowers others for ministry.”