



**THE SOCIETY OF  
MUSCULOSKELETAL  
MEDICINE**  
putting theory into practice

## Guidelines for the Portfolio Reflective Essay

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Your essay requires you to reflect on your *professional development* through your progress on the 'Foundation in Musculoskeletal Medicine module', in relation to the learning outcomes listed below.

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. Rationalise and perform an expert assessment incorporating functional anatomy in order to critically analyse complex musculoskeletal problems.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to accurately diagnose musculoskeletal problems and administer safe, effective and appropriate treatment to the exact site of the lesion.
3. Demonstrate mastery of manual therapy techniques and comprehension of injection protocols and their application, and critically evaluate the effects of treatment.
4. Critically reflect on the effectiveness of their own communication with medical and allied health professional colleagues

Through your reflective essay you are aiming to demonstrate your achievement of each of the learning outcomes. You will need to provide evidence of their achievement, which should be attached and referred to as separate appendices.

Examples of this evidence include case studies submitted previously, or a short series of case reports, demonstrating your clinical reasoning in diagnosis and treatment, supported by critically appraised relevant literature.

Copies of evidence, such as feedback from in-service training sessions, letters communicating with other members of the multidisciplinary team etc are acceptable. We recommend that you do not enclose any important original information, as your essay will not be returned to you.

**Patient confidentiality is an important issue. Before you start writing your essay, please consult the section on 'Confidentiality' on page 5 of this document.**

When you are ready to write your essay, have a look at the marking criteria on page 4. You will see that most of them begin with the wording 'Provides and reflects on documentary evidence of...'. It might help you to use the individual marking criteria, or the learning outcomes themselves, as headings to help you to focus on what is required.

Ask yourself:

- *What* evidence have I got for achieving that learning outcome/marking criterion?
- How can I convince the reader that I have satisfied that learning outcome/criterion by reflecting on and cross referring to that evidence?
- If I completed the three units of the module and passed the practical examination and true/false paper over two years ago, have I demonstrated that my MSK practice is current?

Make an *explicit* link between the learning outcome you are trying to support and the evidence you are providing for that. You may use the same evidence to support more than one learning outcome/criterion.

Within your introduction to the essay you should include a short mention of what is meant by 'reflection', supported by one or two relevant references.

For the first criterion you might like to reflect on your feelings and anxieties in relation to your own development and progression and identify how these might have influenced your learning. The essay should be written in the first person to keep it centred on 'you'.

As the essay develops, draw from your evidence to cite and reflect on examples to support your claims. Make good use of the appendices but make sure that you do not rely on them to replace your reflections within the essay.

So, for example, it would not be explicit enough to say in support of learning outcome 1, 'I can perform an assessment (see Appendix 2)'.

Compare that with this actual example: 'The elderly gentleman assessed in Appendix 2 had a gradual, insidious and worsening 3 year history of hip pain. He complained of morning stiffness, pain on walking and difficulty with functional activities. He was avoiding weight bearing and extension of the affected hip, giving me a diagnostic tip that the problem was in the hip joint. After clearing the spine, assessment of passive movements enabled me to quickly ascertain a hip capsular pattern of most limitation in internal rotation, abduction and then flexion; with hard end feels and reproduction of his pain.'

Ensure that you reflect on a *range* of evidence to support your claims – one example isn't usually enough and you may need to provide some additional brief case reports, for instance, to provide additional evidence. As a guide, three or four short examples usually give a good spread to provide a sound demonstration that you have met each learning outcome. And they *need* to be succinct to keep within the word count.

The **word count** for the essay is **3,000** (+10%) words. This will not include any appendices or references you might add in a list at the end of the essay, although for this *reflective* essay, there is not the expectation of a vast array of references, as the support is provided more by the evidence you have produced.

As mentioned above, the criteria for marking your essay are given on page 4. The essay is assessed at FHEQ (2014)<sup>1</sup> master's Level 7.

Before you submit your work, please check your reflective style of writing, grammar and spelling.

As well as providing a reflective essay you will need to provide a **personal development plan** and the guidelines for that are provided below.

## **Guidelines for your Personal Development Plan**

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Your **personal development plan** will enable you to look forwards and to focus your learning for the future. Your professional development portfolio will have enabled you to build up an overview of your strengths and weaknesses in each of the intellectual, psychosocial, politic-economic, professional and ideological domains, some of which will be more relevant to your situation than others.

With consideration for your clinical or work setting, and drawing from your portfolio, make an action plan to help you to focus on the skills you need to gain.

Your action plan should be:

- Specific in its objectives
- Measurable so that you know when you have achieved your goals
- Negotiated with, and agreed by, the people who are necessary to make it work
- Realistic and achievable within existing or available resources
- Time-specific to provide a definite end point. Three years is appropriate for a plan of this nature.

Your plan should reflect personal, organisational and professional development needs. You should also identify areas where you will need assistance, for example in funding or mentorship. Identify processes and people that might assist you in achieving your goals and involve those people in your plan at an early stage.

The assessment of your personal development plan is included in the criteria for marking the portfolio reflective essay, as shown on the following page.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk)

## PORTFOLIO REFLECTIVE ESSAY - MARKING CRITERIA

**Student's Name:**

		Pass	Fail
<b>1</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence to demonstrate effective use of portfolio to critically reflect on own professional development and to provide evidence of applying the knowledge and skills gained in the Foundation Module to enhance own professional practice		
<b>2</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence to demonstrate mastery of the skills necessary to undertake an assessment (incorporating functional anatomy) of clients with complex musculoskeletal disorders		
<b>3</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence of the utilisation of in-depth knowledge and understanding of musculoskeletal disorders in order to make an accurate diagnosis		
<b>4</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence of critical appraisal of treatment options and the administration of safe, effective and appropriate treatment to the exact site of the lesion, in a wide range of musculoskeletal disorders		
<b>5</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence to demonstrate mastery in the application of manual therapy techniques; critically evaluating the effectiveness of these techniques		
<b>6</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence to demonstrate comprehension of injection protocols and their application		
<b>7</b>	Provides and reflects on documentary evidence of utilising and critically appraising a range of interpersonal skills to communicate effectively with medical and allied health professional colleagues		
<b>8</b>	Provides a <b>personal development plan</b> that reflects personal, organisational and professional development needs. Goals to be specific, measurable and realistic over a three year time-span and agreed with appropriate parties, with identification of areas of assistance		

**Comments**

## Submission of the Portfolio Reflective Essay

The essay should preferably be submitted electronically by email. Alternatively, it can be presented on A4 paper typing on one side of the paper and using 1.5 or double spacing. It should be sent in a format that is easy to scan (e.g. please do not put individual sheets into plastic folders).

If you need further guidance towards its completion, please contact the SOMM Admin Team who will pass your query to an appropriate person.

Before you submit:

- ❑ Please contact the SOMM Office for a form and payment to be submitted with your essay: [admin@sommcourses.org](mailto:admin@sommcourses.org)
- ❑ Then email a copy of your completed essay to the address above or if in hard copy send to:

SOMM, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH

making sure that you enclose all appropriate contact details. The essay itself will not be returned.

- ❑ It is important to note that SOMM cannot take responsibility for any work that is mislaid during the assessment process.
- ❑ Your essay will be sent to a SOMM tutor for marking and you should receive feedback within 20 working days.
- ❑ If your essay has not met the required criteria, you will be given detailed feedback and advice in order to send a revised version, which must be received within eight weeks of receipt of feedback
- ❑ If the second submission fails, you will be required to pay a further processing fee on submission of a third version.

## Confidentiality

You must respect people's right to confidentiality. In written work any reference to the following MUST be made anonymous so that they cannot be identified by the marker or any other person:

- Names of patients
- Names of relatives/carers
- Ward/Department/Team names
- Trust/Hospital names
- Names of colleagues

The generic names of people and departments etc. should be used and if organisational documents are included as appendices in written work (e.g. care plans, observation charts, policies) then the names/titles of units/service users must be blacked out to ensure that the

organisation cannot be identified. Exemptions may apply if you are engaged in employer-initiated project work.

If you have been given express permission to identify a person or organisation then that signed permission must be included with your work.

Any instance where confidentiality is not maintained, may breach the HCPC or other regulatory body professional code, and as such, further action may be taken. This could take the form of either an academic or a professional sanction or both.

Any concerns about lack of confidentiality will be clearly identified and documented in students' assessment feedback.