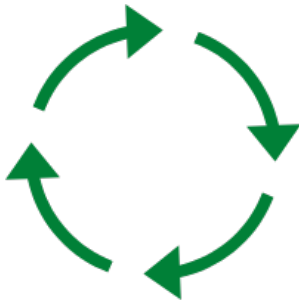


## Teaching Reflection Circles Overview



Finding time for self-reflection can be a challenge. Yet reflecting allows us to attend to what is important or needs attention in our teaching, our scholarship, and our lives as a whole. It can help us be more intentional in our work, assisting us with setting and achieving the goals we set. Reflective practice can also lead to insights about our teaching—what is working well, what needs improvement, and potential innovations we can consider. This program provides structured time for individual reflection while building trust with a community of colleagues.\*

## Recommended framework for each reflection meeting

Each meeting should include a full **30 minutes of individual reflective writing**. We recommend a **90-minute meeting**, with 30 minutes for check-in, 30 minutes for writing, and 30 minutes for debrief. However, meetings that are 75 minutes (20-30-25) or as short as an hour (15-30-15) can provide a Circle with sufficient time to reflect and connect.

### 1. Round Robin Check in (15-20-30 minutes)

Beginning with time for relationship building develops a space where all participants can determine what they are comfortable sharing, and prepares individuals to engage in their own reflective writing practices.

It can help to recall that these meetings set the stage for individuals to **discover and articulate their own priorities** rather than for the group to “solve” someone else’s problem. Groups may evolve into a fuller understanding of each person’s position and goals and become comfortable offering (and accepting) support, parallel stories, or suggestions, depending on the group dynamic and group goals.

#### **We recommend:**

- Starting in a speaking order, and maintaining it
- No responding in the first rounds, just deep listening
  - 1<sup>st</sup> round—How are you in this moment?
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> round—What is a highlight and or low point of this past week or since we last met?
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> round—Do you have anything to add?

If, after everyone has spoken, there is time to respond or comment, then the group may chime in with questions, comments, or connections.

### 2. Writing Time (30 minutes)

Repeated reflective practice—in this case, using written reflection—is the heart of this Circle. This is the part of the “workout” that busy professionals are most likely to skip if they’re on their own, so it’s crucial that the Circle holds firm to this time for everyone’s benefit.

- If online: Audio/video on or off, individual choice; if in person, stay in place or move to an alternate location
- One person sets a timer, or all members set timers, for 30 minutes

- This is designed as informal, private, reflective writing: There are no right answers, nobody is looking at grammar or sentences, there are no penalties for skipping a question or going off on a tangent, and everyone may write as much or as little as they wish

**Recommended:** Everyone writes using these same core prompts at each meeting

1. **What is the most important or pressing work for you right now?** How are you determining your priorities? What does this mean about your other work?
2. **Over the last two weeks, what have your feelings been about work, home and your wider context?** How have you managed those feelings? How have they complemented or taken away from your other priorities?
3. **Considering your priorities and emotions, can you identify where you have agency and where you lack agency?** Which aspects of how your work is defined, implemented, or received are inside or outside of your control? In what ways do you see yourself as able to make a difference through your actions or through your work?

**Recommended:** Participants can respond to any of these optional prompts through individual choice, or the Circle can identify one or more prompts to invite everyone to respond to at one or more meetings.

1. How are you balancing your teaching, scholarship, and service? How are you balancing your professional and personal lives? (selves?)
2. Where might you have agency to rebalance -- to delay some items in order to make more progress on others?
3. Where did you spend your time this week? Does your "time spent" align with your priorities? Your values?
4. What relationships have you formed with faculty within or external to your institution? How have these impacted your work? What collaborations might be helpful to form (or expand) and how might you do so?
5. What changes did you make to your **teaching** this year and how are they going? Are you achieving the aims you set out to reach? If not, what changes might you make?
6. What are your **scholarship** goals? What deadlines and timeframes are you working with? How are you organizing your time to support this?
7. How are you connecting your own scholarship with your teaching and your students? How would you like to? What do you need to make this happen?

### 3. Debrief time (15-20-30 minutes)

**Recommended:** Begin by debriefing about the **process** of reflective writing, not the content.

- Start in a speaking order, and maintain it
- No responding in the first rounds, just deep listening
  - How did the writing go?
  - What feelings/emotions arose for you during the process?
- If, after everyone has spoken, there is time to respond or comment, then the group may chime in with questions, comments, or connections.

### 4. Confirm next meeting: Time and date

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\* This reflection process draws on a structure that was initially presented at the POD Network Conference 2021 and published in *To Improve the Academy*: "[Fractal Reflection](#): Cultivating Community and Meaning in Times of Crises" by Deandra Little, Joshua Caulkins, Eric C. Kaldor, and Lindsay Wheeler.