**Appendix 4: What is a reflective journal?**

A reflective journal is a steadily growing document that you (the learner) write to record the progress of your learning. In it you focus on your reactions to what you've learnt whether that is directly through the training and reading or indirectly through your work or those incidentals moments which sometimes we realise ‘eureka!’ A journal is a record of your reflections and thoughts. It helps you to make sense of what you've been learning.

**Who benefits from a reflective journal?**

1. Primarily, You, the learner. The fact that you are keeping a record of what you learn is an incentive to keep pushing ahead. There's an old saying, "You don't know what you know till you've written it down". By telling yourself what you've learned, you can track the progress you've made. You also begin to notice the gaps in your knowledge and skills. Keeping a reflective journal will assist you in focussing your thoughts for clinical supervision.
2. Secondly, Me, the researcher. Your journal will form a collection of thoughts and views which can help me make sense of the learning you have undertaken, how it relates to your previous learning, how it relates to where you need to go next in your learning and how your learning experiences have impacted on your working practices.

**Entries in a reflective journal can include:**

* Points that you found especially interesting in the course, reading, discussions with other Teaching Assistants (TA), etc, and would like to follow up in more detail.
* Questions that came up in your mind because of the course, reading, discussions with other TA, etc.
* Your reflections on the course and how well it is meeting your needs.
* How your learning in this course is related to what you may be learning in other ways.

**What form should it take?**

Some people prefer to write at a computer keyboard while others prefer to write by hand. Since I would like you to be as honest as possible and, in order to do so, you may wish to protect your identity, it may be more useful for you to record your thoughts on a computer and email them to me using an email address where I will not be able to identify you.

**How much time should I spend on this? How much should I write?**

If you make notes whenever you think of something the only extra time will be typing it out (unless you are already using a computer).

It doesn't have to be all text. Feel free to use varied forms of writing, eg, quotations, tables, diagrams, and pictures (either sketched by you, or found elsewhere). These can be scanned into the computer.

**Suggested format for a reflective journal**

There are many possibilities. The one provided below is one example but it will give you some idea of the types of question that you can usefully ask yourself.

Complete this information after each time you do some work on the course. Answer only the questions that apply - but think carefully about whether each question applies or not.

* Session topic
* What were three main things I learned from this session?
* What did we not cover that I expected we should?
* What was new or surprising to me?
* What have I changed my mind about, as a result of this session?
* One thing I learned in this session that I may be able to use in future is...
* I am still unsure about...
* Issues that interested me a lot, and that I would like to study in more detail
* What I most liked about this session was...
* What I most disliked about this session was...
* Miscellaneous interesting facts I learned in this session...

It would be useful to add your reflections after working with a pupil as an ELSA especially whether the training you have undergone has made an impact (or not). You may also find it useful as a place to add your thoughts following meetings with other members of staff with regards to ELSA.

**NB: Please do not be overly concerned about:**

* Spelling
* Punctuation
* Grammar
* Need to write in any special style – just be yourself
* Whether what you have written is right or wrong