

Guide to Self Evaluation and Narrative Evaluation – Hampshire College

Narrative evaluation and self-evaluation have been important parts of a Hampshire education since the college was founded. If you are not used to them, it can take a little time to learn how to do a self-evaluation well and how to make sense of the narrative evaluations you receive. Both of these types of evaluation are useful to you in creating your educational plan and in developing the skills, understandings, and abilities that matter to you! This guide is meant to help you make the most of narrative and self-evaluations in order to improve your academic experience at Hampshire.

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SELF EVALUATION

Why Self Evaluations

Doing self-evaluation is not simply reporting what you have done. It is reflecting on the meaning you are making of your learning; it is about taking stock of what you have done in the past, making sense of your current accomplishments, and then looking forward to create new goals and plans for the future in order to get the most out of your experiences.

Doing a self-evaluation in a **course** helps put the course in the context of your overall educational plans (How does this learning affect my Divisional work? What do I still need to work on to be ready for the next Division?). Doing a reflective retrospective at the **end of each Division** helps you to look across a number of courses, to see patterns of growth, to see how your ideas have changed, and to set new goals.

Even if you are generally a reflective person and feel as though you have done enough reflecting and talking about your learning during the semester, the act of writing down your reflections is important. Doing so can spur new thoughts and ideas, help you notice patterns you didn't see before, and set goals and make plans in an explicit way. It creates a record for you to review and reflect on in the future.

How to Write Self Evaluations

In any given course, a faculty member might give you specific instructions about how to evaluate yourself for that course. You should follow their instructions. If they do not give instructions, or if you want to get better at self-reflection, below are a few different

approaches. Pick the prompts that get you thinking about your own learning and experiences in the course. In all cases, be specific and concrete.

1. *Consider the objectives of the course* as written in the syllabus and write about how you did with regards to each of them – what did you learn, what helped you, and what do you need to focus on for further improvement?

2. *Ask yourself a series of questions* to get you writing about your learning experiences in the course more generally. For example:

- What did I learn?
- How well did I learn it?
- What does my learning in this course mean for my Divisional work?
- So what now? What do I see as the next steps in my learning?

3. *Address a number of specific issues* by giving concrete, specific **examples**.

- Did I do more or less than expected by the instructor? By me? Why, or why not?
- What do I now understand best about this subject? Least well?
- What are my strongest and weakest points as a student? What did I do to improve the weak points? What will I do next?
- What do I need to learn next about this subject?
- What was most satisfying about the class? Most frustrating? Your responsibility for each?
- Has the course irritated you? Stimulated you? Has it made you uncomfortable about yourself, about society, about the future, about learning? Are you the same person who began the class ten weeks ago? What's different?
- What did you expect to learn? What did you actually learn? More? Less? Why?

Mid-Semester Self-Evaluations

Mid-semester evaluations are another kind of self-evaluation. You are required to write mid-semester self-evaluations in all courses in your first year at Hampshire – many faculty ask all students to do this every year. Mid semester is a perfect time to revisit the course expectations and goals on the syllabus. Think about how you are doing in the course (what are you *doing well*, what can you *do better*, and what *specific strategies* will you use?). Make an appointment with your professor if you have questions about how to improve your work!

How to Use Your Self Evaluations

Write a self-evaluation that is intentional and aims you towards the *future*. Make note of where your writing took you. Here are some **ideas for using what you learned through reflection**: Write the ideas you have about what to work on in your “*goals*” section in your Division II contract or add to your Division III proposal. Write a *letter to your advisor or committee* telling them what you want to work on. *Meet with professors* in their

office hours to talk with them about what you need to work on and make a plan for ways to use their course to advance your goals. *Start writing your Division I or Division II retrospective.* Keep it as an *ongoing file*, making note of your progress each semester.

NARRATIVE EVALUATION FROM FACULTY

Why Narrative Evaluations

At Hampshire, we believe that letter grades do not provide an adequate evaluation of your progress. Narrative evaluations help you identify your areas of *growth potential* along with your areas of *strength*. They are not necessarily “easier” to receive than a grade or “more positive,” but they are more useful because they provide details about how you are doing in a given learning activity. Since you are crafting your own path at Hampshire, you can use feedback from faculty to know what challenge to focus on next and to know what you have already accomplished.

What to Expect in Narrative Evaluations

Expect your course evaluations to be a paragraph or two (about 150 – 200 words) that really evaluate how well you met the aims of the course. Look at the syllabus to see what the *course goals* are and what the *requirements are for evaluation*. You will get frank feedback on how you did with regards to both of these things by the end of the course. You will want to read the feedback you receive on your early work in the course to be able to adjust over the weeks of the semester to receive the strongest evaluation you can.

How to Use Your Narrative Evaluations

At the end of each semester, read over all your course evaluations. Take note of what your instructors indicate are your strengths and where you still have to develop your skills and understandings. *Look for patterns.* Are there things that more than one professor are saying that you have to work on? *Make a plan* for working on that in the coming semester (e.g. plan on bringing work to the writing fellows or writing faculty; get time management help from OARS or workshops, create your own plan for getting drafts in earlier, etc.). Is there something that stands out as different from the rest? What can you learn from that (e.g. when I take a course with a professor who is strict with deadlines, I get work in on time. How will I keep *myself* to deadlines?)?

GOAL SETTING

Setting Your Goals

Using narrative evaluations and self-evaluations well is tied to setting goals for your own learning. Having goals and monitoring how you are doing with regards to your goals are a powerful set of practices for taking charge of your own learning. Your goals are apt to change over the course of your Hampshire career. Here are some questions and ideas to consider that might get you started.

Division I:

From the very first day on campus you might describe the **hopes** you have for your first year at Hampshire by answering such questions as: What do I hope to get out of Division I? What questions do I want to investigate? How will I develop my skills to succeed in college?

Division II:

By the time you file your Division II contract, you will know even better what skills and abilities you need to continue to hone (consider the **4 cumulative skills** among others). You will also have ideas about **content** you hope to learn more deeply or **disciplines** you hope to understand. You might also have an idea of the kinds of **research methods** you hope to develop or the **production skills** you want to gain, **languages** you want to learn, types of **community based learning skills** you want to work on, **collaborative skills** you need to improve, **project management skills** that will serve you in Division III, **analytic abilities, etc.** Any of these goals, can go into your Division II contract.

Putting your goals in your Division II contract helps you and your committee to select the right courses and activities to help you meet your goals.

Division III:

Remember, Division III is still a time for improving your skills – the process of Division III is just as important as the end product you complete! Put your **goals** in your Division III proposal.