

## Title: Self-Reflection Journey for a UCC PhD Candidate - A Good Practice discovery of Reflective writing to encourage engagement in research

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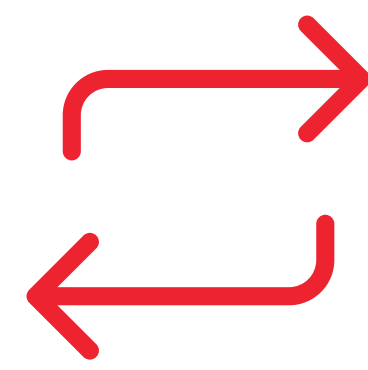
### Case Study Synopsis

For researchers to maintain a positive and productive environment they need to flow and flex between three desired areas: enthusiasm, dedication, and curiosity (**Figure 1**). The optimum area for the researcher to be in is where all three overlaps; however, that is not always the case, especially if the researcher is a PhD candidate. PhD candidates live in limbo between being a student and staff, and because of this uncertainty, many PhD candidates tend to flow outside of the desired areas and their research begins to decline as the positive and productive environment is no longer maintained. Once the candidate is outside of the optimal areas, how do they flow back into an environment that fosters the three desired areas? This is where self-reflection is needed. As researchers, we are taught to be objective rather than subjective, and this is an important part of research. However, subjective thoughts are crucial when undertaking research. Self-reflection is an important part of any research especially when creating a productive environment when analysing the topic at hand. For example, autoethnography, the study of a culture or persons habit from the personal view of the researcher, is a new methodology. Many disciplines, including medicine, have started to include subjective thoughts in academic articles and chapters to encourage engagement with the reader and researchers, both present and future. Self-reflection is an essential part of a researcher's notes, but many do not want to spend the time writing personal reflection if it's unlikely to be included in the final project, which can lead to uncertainty with writing.



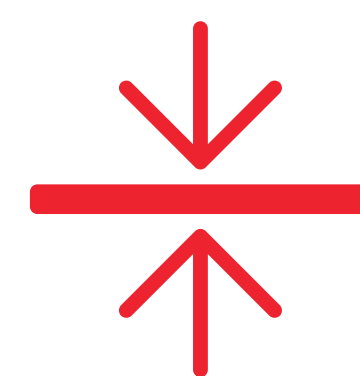
### Key Impacts

When discussing my processing plan with other PhD candidates during a UCC 'PhD Chats' session this last year, many became motivated to use personal reflections in their research. Including more options for PhD candidates to understand the concept of reflective writing and how to include it in fieldwork notes and academic articles would be advantageous to UCC as it would help them to stay within the optimum area for maintaining a positive and productive environment.



### Intended Changes

When creating a research plan, we need to encourage ourselves, researchers, and especially PhD candidates, to encompass self-reflection in their own research journey, which promotes analysis within their research. This includes writing reflectively when in the optimum areas outlined in figure 1, and especially when they are outside of those areas. It helps to reflect on a deeper level as the act of writing thoughts on paper often helps people to consider an experience and look back at past experiences to perform better in the future. .



### Area of Alignment

Learning & Teaching  
Student Success



### Video Links | Graphics



Figure 1: Desired Areas for Maintaining a Positive and productive Environment



Photo: Tomás Tyner - UCC Boole Library, Special Collections and Archives