

Introduction to Psychology (Psych 1101)

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During the course of an online Psychology 1101 revision, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and designers

students are offered their choice of two informal “reflections” to write, weaving their own experiences in with the material. The overwhelming positive student response has reinforced the notion that personalizing learning engages an emotional aspect that helps students bridge what is frequently a developmental growth spurt, particularly as it pertains to their self-concept and relationship to academia.

Goals for the Formal Revision

Goals for the formal revision of Introduction to Psychology, which began in earnest in February of 2018, included increasing student engagement, updating course content, and addressing equitable educational outcomes.

as a metacognitive checkpoint, one we've leveraged in "Post-Assignment Feedback and Reflect on Plans," where students plan out and explain how they can use instructor feedback and change their study strategies to improve their own performance. We've also included four Reflect on Exercises in the development of HIST 2112, again offering students the option to tell how and where their families might show up in historical census data and other immigration documents, or discuss their surprise over the initial support for abortion among evangelicals, and what political forces worked to strategically change that. We've also, just this spring, increased the grade percentage of the PSYC 1101 Reflect on Exercises from 5 to 10%.

REFLECT ON EXERCISES

The reflect on exercises perform at both the personal and course content learning levels. Reflect on material was designed to be approachable — that is, non-directed for gender or SES — and to have broad appeal. Because students are prompted to reflect personally on their own experiences (on which they are experts), the reflect ons promote feelings of success and contribution to the course, and generally build academic confidence, as well as trust with the instructor (the only person with whom the reflect ons were shared) and a personal connection with the material. The reflect on exercises also promote an equitable tone in the online environment — implying that everyone's points are valued (though they might have more or less quiz points, or academic experience than others), and that their various and diverse life events "count" and not only add to the course but connect the students deeply to the curriculum. This result is in stark contrast to the idea that students' experiences need to be "corrected," or the idea that they take up too much valuable real estate in most face-to-face classes. Additionally, by becoming more familiar with personal aspects of their students' lives, professors are more prone to empathize with them, to reach out and respond to students, which not only supports students, but aids in their own development, both pedagogically and humanistically. We are enthusiastic about our future use of reflect on exercises as a pedagogical tool — this may be something of a panacea for the online learning environment.

⁶ Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 5-14.