**General Criteria for Assessing Service-Learning Reflection**

James Bradley (1995) characterized three levels of critical reflection that are useful in assessing the depth and complexity of students’ reflections. This tool is useful in providing feedback to students about the level of their current work and the criteria for increasing the level of their thinking.

**Level 1: Surface.** Reflection tends to focus on just one aspect of a situation, frequently uses unexamined and unsupported personal beliefs as hard evidence, and may acknowledge different perspectives without valuing or discriminating effectively among them. At this level, students likely list facts learned, places visited, and tasks completed. They offer examples of observed characteristics of the service site or behaviors of clients in the setting, but provide little or no insight into the reasons behind their observations. Observations tend to be one-dimensional and based on conventional or unassimilated repetition of what the student has heard from others or acquired from required readings.

**Level 2: Emerging.** Reflection provides a cogent critique from a single perspective but fails to see the broader system in which the issue or situation is embedded and other factors that may make change difficult to achieve. Students may provide some connections to the issue or discipline, but the connections are not deep or insightful. They perceive legitimate differences in viewpoint, interpretation, and choices and demonstrate a beginning ability to interpret evidence and draw reasonable conclusions. While students at Level 2 generally continue to use unsupported personal beliefs as evidence, they demonstrate a nascent ability to differentiate between the two. Observations are more thorough and nuanced than at Level 1, but they tend to be situation specific rather than tied to a broader context.

**Level 3:** **Deep.** Students view situations from several perspectives, demonstrate clarity of reasoning, and place their experiences in broader, nuanced, and complex contexts. They perceive conflicting goals and choices of the individuals involved in a situation and acknowledge that differences in ideas or choices can be analyzed and evaluated. Students reflecting at the highest level recognize that decisions and actions are situationally dependent and that many factors affect them. They articulate appropriate judgments that are based on strong evidence and sound reasoning. Students reflecting at this level can reasonably assess the importance of the issues facing the individuals involved in the service setting and of their own responsibility as part of it.

Adapted from: Bradley, J. “A Model for Evaluating Student Learning in Academically Based Service.” In M. Troppe, *Connecting Cognition and Action: Evaluation of Student Performance in Service-Learning Courses*. Providence, R. I.: Campus Compact, 1995. Excerpted from: Jacoby, B., *Service-Learning Essentials: Questions, Answers, and Lessons Learned* (Jossey-Bass, 2015).