

Imperial College
London



IMPERIAL AWARD
REFLECTION GUIDE

Your journey

The key to the Imperial Award is self-reflection on experiences to find their impact on your personal development.

This guide provides tools, techniques, explanations and examples that will help you complete the Programme.

Each stage requires you to produce short reflective submissions that fulfil the Award criteria.

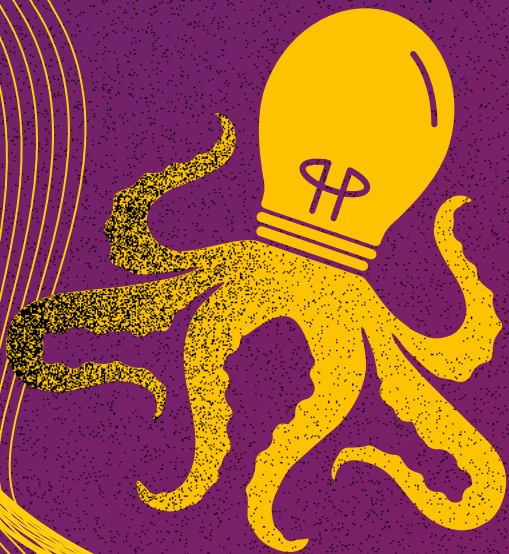
To produce those reflective submissions, you'll need to reflect on your experiences, understand their impact on you, and convert them into evidence about each chosen attribute. You'll need to structure your thoughts to present your evidence as you argue your claim, to fulfil Award criteria.

In addition to this guide, imperial.ac.uk/imperial-award has details of the workshops, video guides and more.

Process	Using these tools and support
<p>1 Recall and record your experiences in your private portfolio</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Use your memory, CV, calendar/diary to recall activities ▲ Use your portfolio as a journal, diary or notepad
<p>2 Read and reflect on the definitions of attributes and the Award Criteria used by the assessors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ See Student Guidance for Award Criteria, and this guide for attribute definitions. ▲ Use workshops, mentoring sessions, videos, talk to your peers to discuss them
<p>3 Choose the first four attributes you want to reflect on, depending on the experiences you already have or your career choice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Read ‘Choosing the attributes’ guidance to help you decide what attributes you want to reflect on ▲ Use the ‘Attribute selector’ tool to help you start reflecting on the chosen attributes, and assess how confident you feel in these attributes ▲ Attend our workshops
<p>4 Review your evidence per chosen attribute; select the submission method depending on your developmental needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Review your own reflections ▲ Check the submission methods in this guide and examples of reflective submissions available online ▲ Attend our workshop to improve your reflection skills
<p>5 Select the submission method; Produce your reflective submission, self-checking that it fulfils the Assessor’s criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Check the submission methods in this guide and examples of reflective submissions available online ▲ See Student Guidance for the Award criteria ▲ Attend a workshop and talk to a mentor
<p>6 Submit your reflective piece online. Reflect on the assessor’s written feedback. Re-use any prior steps to complete the full Award (optional)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Use the online system to submit or re-submit your reflective piece; reflect on and follow your assessor’s feedback; ▲ Attend a mentoring session.

Your portfolio

The purpose of having a portfolio is to freely record your experiences and reflections. You can use it as a private diary or journal to list activities, analyse experiences, map the links to attributes and prepare your reflective piece for the Imperial Award assessment.



Format

Many people use paper notebooks, or digital journals to record their reflections. Choose a format that works for you (can be digital or paper).

Your portfolio can be completely private, and is not going to be viewed by anyone, unless you chose to share the content e.g., with your mentor or personal tutor for feedback.

With many digital platforms you can add audio and video files, photos and clip websites. As they sync across all your devices you can always access your digital portfolio.

Activity recording

Experiences that you record in your portfolio can be linked to your activities, including but not limited to:

- ▲ Summer internships or any work
- ▲ Volunteering, any type
- ▲ Business, enterprise or hackspace projects
- ▲ Life experiences e.g. parenting or care-giving
- ▲ UROP or postgraduate research
- ▲ Conferences, presentations, outreach
- ▲ Mentoring, tutoring, training

Top tips

- ▲ Think of all your experiences which contributed to your personal development
- ▲ Only give enough context/ description to frame your reflections
- ▲ Record transformative, ‘surprise’ or ‘revelation’ moments
- ▲ Record the lessons you learn
- ▲ Discuss your reflections with your personal tutor/ mentor or peers
- ▲ Use the portfolio as a reference when applying for jobs ▲

Your portfolio can be completely private, and is not going to be viewed by anyone

Attribute framework

The Imperial Award attribute framework consists of twenty attributes grouped into five themes. Completing the full Imperial Award will require you to submit two or three reflective pieces addressing attributes of your choice. For your first submission, you can choose any four attributes you would like to reflect on (from any themes).

Personal Effectiveness



Proactivity: taking the initiative to act in advance rather than react

Adaptability: ability to adjust easily to new or changing conditions

Discovery mindset: curiosity-driven approach to self-directed learning

Creating connections: connecting with others, leveraging those connections, and aiming for synergies in collaboration

Independent Thinking



Strategic thinking: big picture thinking, planning & making decisions in a goal-oriented manner

Problem solving: intelligently approaching problems to which the solution is not immediately clear and justifying the chosen solution

Creativity and innovation: generating something new or novel and making it a reality

Critical thinking: analysis and evaluation in order to make a judgement

Effective Teamwork



Awareness of group dynamics: an understanding of how individuals within a group interact to overcome challenges and achieve the collective goal

Effective communication: managing the flow of information between individuals to ensure a shared understanding and reduce miscommunications

Leadership: motivating and inspiring others with an appropriate style to achieve a collective goal or vision

Collaboration: working together effectively as individuals each with unique strengths, weaknesses, aims and interests

Coaching and mentoring



Active listening: listening to fully understand what someone is communicating

Developing others: helping others develop by identifying areas for improvement and providing practical guidance to help them develop

Effective feedback: actively participating in feedback dialogue through providing practical advice and guidance and responding to the other person's needs

Motivating others: empathising with others to understand what motivates them and helping them to maintain their motivation

Valuing Diversity



Social conscience: being conscious of how the way you think and perceive the world impacts yourself and others

Open mindedness: awareness and appreciation of alternative perspectives, cultures and backgrounds

Global mindset: awareness of the wider world and your contribution to it

Emotional intelligence: the ability to understand your emotions and those of others

After completing the first stage of the Programme, you can decide to:

- ▲ continue reflecting on a further eight attributes of your choice (split into two submissions, each addressing four attributes)
- ▲ pick a 'Mentoring path', which gives you an opportunity to mentor other students, and then reflect on four attributes (preferably from 'Coaching and mentoring' theme)

Your reflective pieces can be submitted as one of the three methods below. Whichever method you choose, keep your submission simple and criteria focused.

The same assessment criteria apply to all methods (see the Student Guide for the full assessment criteria). Choosing the right assessment method is an opportunity to master your skills, e.g. a written submission will help you practice writing job applications; and a video can help you improve your interview technique.

You must submit your reflective piece through the Imperial Award system.

You must appropriately reference any media not created by you.

Your reflective submission is about your developmental journey so be intentional about any media that you ensure that they add value by illustrating your development and transformation.

You may choose a different submission method for each of the reflective pieces. Additionally, you may change submission methods when resubmitting your reflective piece. Keep in mind that assessors check past submissions to gauge whether you have understood and applied their feedback.

See the Imperial Award system pages for more guidance and examples.

Submission method options



Written submission

Developmental advantage

Practise reflective writing e.g. when producing personal statements

Limits

Up to 1000 words per reflective piece

Description

A reflective essay



Video submission

Developmental advantage

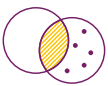
Practise speaking technique e.g. when being interviewed for scholarships or jobs

Limits

Seven minutes in total per reflective piece. It does not have to be one take, cutting is allowed.

Description

One video-call style video of you sharing your reflections.



Multimedia submission

Developmental advantage

Practise creative presentation of information e.g. when creating a visual portfolio for future employers

Limits

1000 words which you may distribute as you would like within the following parameters:*

1 min video is equivalent to 150 words

1 image is equivalent to 20 words

Icons, symbols & spaces can be used freely

Description

Text, images and/or short video clips to communicate your reflections.

***Example 1:** 3 × 1 min videos, six images and 430 words arranged as a poster;

Example 2: 2 × 1 min video, four images and 600 words arranged as a mind map

Imperial Award Criteria (as used by the Assessors)

Appropriate number of attributes was chosen for reflection and overall, the application demonstrates sufficient understanding of the attributes

MET

All (four) attributes are addressed

The student understands the attributes they chose and what they mean

This understanding is demonstrated by linking the attribute to appropriate experience

NEEDS DEVELOPMENT

There is insufficient number of attributes chosen for reflection

The student doesn't understand the meaning behind all of the attributes (or doesn't make their interpretation of it sufficiently clear to the assessor)

Overall the assessor doesn't see how the experience chosen for reflection links to the majority of the attributes.

Overall, the application demonstrates a sufficient level of reflection on the chosen attributes

MET

There are clear reflective elements in the application emphasising the rationale behind the student's thinking and providing more depth as to the experiences they focus on. The level of reflection doesn't have to be the same for all of the attributes but overall the submission is reflective

NEEDS DEVELOPMENT

The application is descriptive – the student lists all the accomplishments and experiences without really reflecting on why something happened and how they developed

There are some reflective elements, but they are sparse and superficial

Overall it is clear how the student transformed as a result of developing the attributes**MET**

The student reflects on the impact the transformation had on their future actions or decisions, i.e. there is some indication of how similar situations will be approached in the future having gone through this transformation.

The student comments on the impact that the development of the attribute had on them (for example through considering how they approached similar situations before and now). The depth of reflection on the transformative aspects doesn't need to be the same for all of the attributes but overall there are sufficient links to transformation.

NEEDS DEVELOPMENT

There are no references to transformation

OR

The references to transformation are superficial rather than meaningfully explaining the change that the student has undergone either in terms of before/ after OR in terms of approaching similar situations in the future.

Before submitting your reflective piece, make sure you carefully read the Imperial Award Criteria

Before you produce your submission, you should have already started reflecting upon your experiences in relation to the chosen attributes.

The portfolio, Gibbs Reflective Cycle and the Self-interview questions, are designed to help you reflect and make use of your reflection. The SCART model is designed to help you to structure your thinking so that you present an argument rather than simple description. Express yourself reflectively by using the reflective sentence and verb generators.



Reflective submission rules

This table lists Reflective Submission rules, based on the Assessor's Criteria (set out in the Imperial Award Student Guidance)

DO

- ▲ Do use all of the analytical reflective tools to reflect deeply, before you start producing your submission
- ▲ Do use your portfolio to select your best evidence for each attribute
- ▲ Do write using "I", "me", "my", "mine", keeping your focus on impacts of your experiences
- ▲ Do explicitly address each attribute, arguing in support of your claim, with experiences as evidence
- ▲ Do make sure that your reflective submission (or a re-submission) meets the Award criteria as a standalone piece.
- ▲ Do focus on the why, or the reasons behind your feelings and actions.

DON'T

- ▲ Do not produce your submission without reflecting on the impact of your experiences.
- ▲ Do not try to squeeze in a mention of every activity and experience. Be selective.
- ▲ Do not use assertions in lieu of argument. If in doubt attend an Award workshop or discuss with peers.
- ▲ Do not list achievements (successful results) instead of experiences.
- ▲ Do not stretch thin evidence to cover all attributes. Better to seek further, deeper experiences, if time permits.
- ▲ Do not focus on a factual description of your experience.

"It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively." Graham Gibbs

Reflection is the personal learning activity of looking back at your own experiences to see your own development. It helps you identify what you have learnt from your experiences, making them more meaningful.

Reflecting requires you to understand not only what you do well, but also to be critical of yourself. It is an analytical cycle enabling your personal development, and helping you become aware of it.

Reflection also helps you to recognise, and gain confidence from, your own development. It helps you discover more about your potential.



The reflective cycle

Use your portfolio to record your reflection on experiences, assisted by this diagram of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle. Use the self-interview questions (on page 18) to convert that reflection into evidence for the Award ▲



Adapted from Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

We all change and develop during our lives, including during our time at Imperial. Our mindsets and perspectives shift as we learn from experiences. This also changes what we do.

During your time at Imperial, as undergraduate or postgraduate, full-time or part-time, you will acquire specialist expertise in your field but you'll also develop your existing or new values, assumptions, opinions and frames of reference. They will affect you, your interactions with others and how you do things.

The Imperial Award encourages you to identify not only the changes in you but also their cause(s).



Using transformation in your submission

The Award asks you to discuss the link between your experience, its transformative impact and the attribute.

You can fulfil the criteria by reflecting on:

- ▲ The definition of the attribute
- ▲ Whether the attribute matches your current ways of thinking/behaving and how your understanding of it changed
- ▲ The experiences which evidence your development of the attribute
- ▲ The reasons why your experience(s) caused you to develop Imperial Award attributes. ▲



Unpredicted one-off experience, that changes you or your understanding



Predicted one-off experience



A combination of varied experiences independently contributing to your development



Cumulative experiences sought from varied activities
(purposeful, ongoing and strategic)



Cumulative experiences within one activity
(progressing to greater responsibility/challenges)

- ▶ Adapting and extending Mezirow's concepts of epochal and cumulative experiences (Ahearn 2018)

These self-interview questions will help you to start linking your experiences to Imperial Award attributes. Use your portfolio to record these links and your reflections. If you're not sure what attribute your experience can be linked with, start by asking yourself questions about your experiences (this page). If you think you know what attribute you want to reflect on, you can start with the attributes (page 6). ▲

Self-interview questions, starting from your experiences

Primary Question	Key aspects
Which of your past activities would you handle differently, in future?	Reflect on activities that feel significant for you: what was the situation and context?
What specific experience caused you to re-think your assumptions, choices and actions?	Why did you need to change your thinking/actions? Did you seek advice/training? How difficult or easy was it to modify your thinking/actions? What helped/hindered you?
Does this experience show thinking/actions that match any of the attribute definitions?	Reading the definitions of attributes, what matches the thinking/actions evidenced by your experiences?
Why did the specific experience(s) helped you develop that attribute?	Why was that specific experience so transformational for you? How do you know?
How will you approach similar situations in the future?	What has been your impact on others, or on new situations, since you developed the attribute?
Ahearn (2017)	

Self-interview questions, starting with the attributes

Primary Question	Further reflective questions
Which attribute(s) do you think you can evidence most strongly when thinking about your experience	What is your understanding of this attribute?
Think of one concrete example for each of your chosen attributes.	Does your example show your independence of thinking and action in the activity?
What did you do (background and context)?	What was the context of the experience?
How did you do it?	Did you use any training, advice, trial-and-error, group discussions, personal reflection or research as part of your experience of handling the situation?
Why? Give a rationale for the change in you, before and after your experience.	What was your thinking/practice before you developed the attribute? What specifically changed your thinking/practice? What is your thinking/practice now?
What was the impact of your actions/choice/approach on others and on yourself?	What is the evidence of this transformative impact on you or others? Use feedback from others, from observers, from your own reflections, anecdotal evidence or your own observations to back up your argument.
What will you do in a similar situation in the future?	How will...you use the attribute to handle future situations/challenges/opportunities?

The SCART model provides a simple approach to structuring your reflective thinking.

You must be clear and concise, fulfilling the Award criteria. Remember that the Imperial Award is not about the volume or success of your activities; it is about recognising your personal development of attributes.

Situation/ Context

Briefly set the scene, explain how and why the situation arose, what needed to be achieved, and the context of your claim that you have developed the attributes.

- ▲ This scene-setting must be specific and not generalised
- ▲ Keep your explanation of the situation/task/context to an absolute minimum

Action

A brief explanation of what you did and how you achieved (or missed) your goal or handled the situation.

- ▲ Explain what you did or what you experienced
- ▲ Highlight the aspects relevant to the attribute(s) by using key-nouns, key-verbs and key-ideas from the attribute

Include these in your submission

Situation | Context | Action
Reflection | Transformation

Reflection

Evidence that you have thought about what you have experienced, why it matters and that you understand what you did well, what you could improve and how it has affected your priorities, assumptions or viewpoint.

- ▲ Show understanding of the impact of your actions on yourself and, where appropriate, others
- ▲ Use the reflection tools (Gibbs Reflective Cycle; the Self-interviews) to generate evidence about your experiences and select examples directly relevant to the attributes you are claiming

Transformation

You must evidence (argue persuasively) that, as a result of your reflection, you understand the transformative impact of your experiences in helping you to develop the attributes, enabling you to perform differently in the future.

- ▲ Address attributes explicitly
- ▲ Explain how you know, personally, that your experiences have changed you
- ▲ Look carefully at the Award criteria to see what does / does not work as evidence
- ▲ Mention how you will approach similar situations in the future ▲

Use this sentence-generator to structure and express your thoughts.

If you wish to SHOW JUDGEMENT

For me, the (most)	important	event	happened when...
	meaningful	idea	arose from...
	relevant	learning	began after...

If you wish to CLAIM DEVELOPMENT

I have	developed	my	understanding of...
	improved		skills in...
	enriched		ability to...

If you wish to SHOW CHANGE OVER TIME

Previously,	I	thought...
Initially,		felt...
At the time,		noticed...

If you wish to SHOW SHIFT IN THINKING/ACTION

Having	read...	I now	think...
	explored...		realise...
	analysed...		know...
	learned...		feel...

Look at the themes and the verbs we've suggested. These are merely a starting point and may help you reflect on your experiences.

Achievement	achieved, completed, improved, enhanced, prevented, produced, implemented, delivered, closed-out, finalised.
Communication	advised, wrote, instructed, presented, edited, chaired meeting, persuaded, pitched, reviewed, listened, learned, adjudicated, claimed, justified, negotiated, reported, professed, acclaimed, counter-argued.
Taking initiative	created, designed, established, introduced, developed, set up, initiated, instigated, re-started, re-designed, convened, proposed, pitched, re-examined, re-evaluated.
Research	investigated, determined, searched, surveyed, examined, catalogued, classified, reviewed, published, wrote-up, analysed, compared, presented, queried, hypothesised.
Organising and planning	recognised, arranged, budgeted, verified, scheduled, planned, produced, checked, recast, replenished, delegated, devolved, involved, re-organised, accounted, reported, recruited.
Interpersonal	advised, facilitated, collaborated, proposed, trusted, evaluated, consulted, mediated, handled, negotiated, welcomed, hosted, consoled, cheered, commiserated, celebrated, diversified, recognised, acknowledged, introduced.

Advice and clarifications

Evidence (to support your claim to the Award) is composed of personal experiences analysed to discover why they converted you from your old set of assumptions and behaviours towards your newer behaviours, ideas and actions.

Definitions of attributes

The attribute framework is there to help you align your understanding of the attributes with the Imperial Award definitions. You can reflect on it, and decide on using your own definitions of chosen attributes. Include your thoughts in your reflective piece.

The Assessment Criteria can be found in this document (page 6). Produce and review your submission with these criteria in mind.

Private Feedback from the Assessor panel is given online on every submission, helping you decide what to do next.

There are multiple **Assessment Cycles** per year (the submission schedule is available on the Imperial Award system page). Different Assessors may contribute on different cycles. Students are free to submit and resubmit amended pieces at multiple cycles.

Your **Portfolio** can also be used daily/weekly as a diary or journal for capturing your thoughts/reactions to experiences as you have them.

Self-interview tools, the SCART Model and the **Reflective Sentence Generator** are optional tools to use and re-use when doing reflection and again when structuring your reflective piece.

Within a stage, your re-submitted pieces are considered as revisions of your initial submission, and thus there is no concern over self-plagiarism. (You can re-use earlier content) ▲

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