



Final submission for ANU+

During your time with ANU+ you have not only had a rich experience through your volunteering but you have also established the habit of reflective practice through your reflection submissions. Taking the time to sit down and look at what you've learned and make sense of the experience is a very useful and often under-utilised skill.

As you get closer to graduation, you'll notice there is a lot of talk about workplace skills, employability or skills for the future of work. It can be overwhelming to think of a long list of skills to build in addition to your degree.

Your final submission is a chance to realise just how many skills you have already developed through ANU+ and this guide will help you to organise your thoughts into a focused and future-oriented submission.

In the first part, we will focus on how to write a well-structured reflection and walk you through the key points by using real-life examples from ANU+ alumni.

In the second part, we help you to link your experience in ANU+ to your future career by drawing out how to take the skills you have learned through ANU+ into your career decisions and applications. Understanding yourself is the first step to finding a great career, and your final submission is a great chance to practise linking your knowledge of who you are to your thoughts about your future career.

Task details – What?

At the end of your ANU+ experience, you'll prepare a final submission. The final submission is an opportunity to reflect broadly on what you want your future workplace environments to be like. Your final submission should answer the question:

What do you want your future workplace environments to be like?

Why is the future workplace environment important?

Workplace culture is one of the most important factors in choosing a job. We tend to focus a lot on how our skills match the job in question but often neglect whether the culture in the organisation and its values are a good match for us.

Values guide our decisions, and when there is a consistent clash between what we consider to be the best choice for the organisation and what our employer expects of us, we will start to feel uneasy about our decisions at work and ultimately become disengaged. Finding a workplace that matches our values and preferences is not a luxury but a necessity for a happy and fulfilling career that lets us perform at our best.

Your Clifton Strength results have given you a good indication of where your innate strengths lie, and through your volunteering experience and reflections on key learning outcomes you have hopefully gained an understanding of what those strengths look like in the working world. Being in different workplaces should have given you an insight into what it feels like when your strengths and values are reflected in your work, and what it feels like when that is not the case. Experiencing a clash between your preferences and the reality of a workplace is quite normal and a great chance to learn how to overcome a less-than-perfect situation and figure out what to adjust. This could also be an experience that you have observed happening to someone else in your volunteering, and that is just as valuable an observation to reflect on.

How shall I write my final submission?

You can choose from the following formats:

- 1000 words written (+/- 10% of the word limit)
- video 5-10 mins
- presentation 10-15 mins

You may also have the opportunity to share your final submission with the organisations you have volunteered for.

Please refer to [one or two of the development outcomes](#) in your response. However, unlike the short reflections that you did during ANU+, for this piece try to reflect on how your entire ANU+ volunteering experience has helped to shape your ideas. Please don't

repeat the same kinds of ideas that you've written about in the previous reflections. Instead, think about the future and what is different about your understanding now. If you don't think it's relevant to your answer, you don't have to talk about your degree or what you studied. For example, it doesn't matter if you studied something that is associated with solitary, independent work – if you enjoy teamwork and fast paced, social workplaces then concentrate on that.

Some prompting questions to help you get started are:

- What does an ideal workplace culture look like to you?
- Have you seen examples of your ideal work environments in your volunteering experience?
- What elements of volunteering did you enjoy? How could this apply to your paid work?
- What have you learned from your entire volunteering experience, and what has this shown you about the work environments that you want to work in?
- What engages you as a person and how could a workplace support those qualities?
- What kind of workplace aligns with your strengths?

The [development outcomes](#) are:

1. Inclusion and awareness of diversity
2. Self awareness
3. Community and global engagement
4. Communication skills
5. Personal and social responsibility
6. Resilience
7. Leadership skills and understanding of organisational dynamics

The purpose of doing reflective practice for ANU+ is to develop your awareness about how you can best approach the workplace challenges you face. Reflective practice helps you to

- Identify your strengths and areas for improvement
- Evaluate strategies and plan for next time
- Manage yourself and your expectations
- Identify your achievements and goals

Tips on how to prepare your final submission

Regardless of whether you prepare an essay, video, presentation or choose another format, it is important that your final submission has a clear key message. Your key message is your direct answer to the question ***what do you want your future workplace environments to be like?*** Make sure that this key message is communicated clearly in the introduction to your submission. This makes it easy for your reader or audience to know what you are focusing on. Then, each of the main points throughout the submission should relate back to your key message.

Below are some extracts from past submissions, along with tips on how the extracts are written and structured. If you choose to use a non-essay format, Academic Skills also has advice on preparing [Presentations](#) (this advice will also be relevant if you're preparing a video) and [Reflective writing](#).

Some extracts from final submissions

Below are some extracts from past students' final submissions for ANU+. These extracts demonstrate how you might develop a key message about the whole ANU+ experience in your own reflection.

Sample 1	Analysis
In this brief essay, I'm going to highlight some of the lessons I have learnt through ANU+. As you've seen from my reflections, volunteering has taught me many things. However, the most prudent lesson was the value of volunteers themselves. At the ANU MakerSpace, I aim to promote and solidify the value of volunteers in how the MakerSpace is run as a community space.	Notice how this introduction paragraph clearly states the key message. Here, the key message is that "the most prudent lesson was the value of volunteers themselves." The development outcomes that this reflection discusses are Community and Global Engagement and Self-awareness.
Secondly, I aimed to involve Mentors who had shared interests in the inclusivity of the MakerSpace. In my experience, volunteering emphasised my worth in professional environments by teaching me a plethora of technical skills and inviting me to enter into male-dominated communities. Not only did this build up resilience, but it also built up my voice. I	This paragraph (from further on in the submission) continues the key message about the value of the volunteers. Here, it talks about including the mentors by focusing on their shared interests. Notice how the entire paragraph concentrates on this main idea, and reflects on examples from the author's experience.

<p>have found that by inviting a more varied kind of Mentor into leadership roles in the space more different kinds of people can build up a sense of ownership for the MakerSpace and share this experience. As an organisation in the university, it is our goal to emphasises that the MakerSpace is a common area for every student and staff member equally.</p>	
<p>In conclusion, while ANU+ has taught me many things including resilience and a sense of community, the most valuable lesson was the value of volunteers themselves. While their intentions may be entirely philanthropic, I have become acutely aware of the responsibility for-profit institutions (such as the ANU) have when they ask people to volunteer for them. In my position as a volunteer coordinator now, I aim to use the lessons I have learned through ANU+ to ensure that the Mentors equally provide value to the MakerSpace community and find value in the experience as well.</p>	<p>Here the conclusion reiterates the main idea of the essay – that the author has concentrated on the value of the volunteers. The author also summarises the main reasons for their key message, and reflects on what they will do in future based on their reflections.</p>

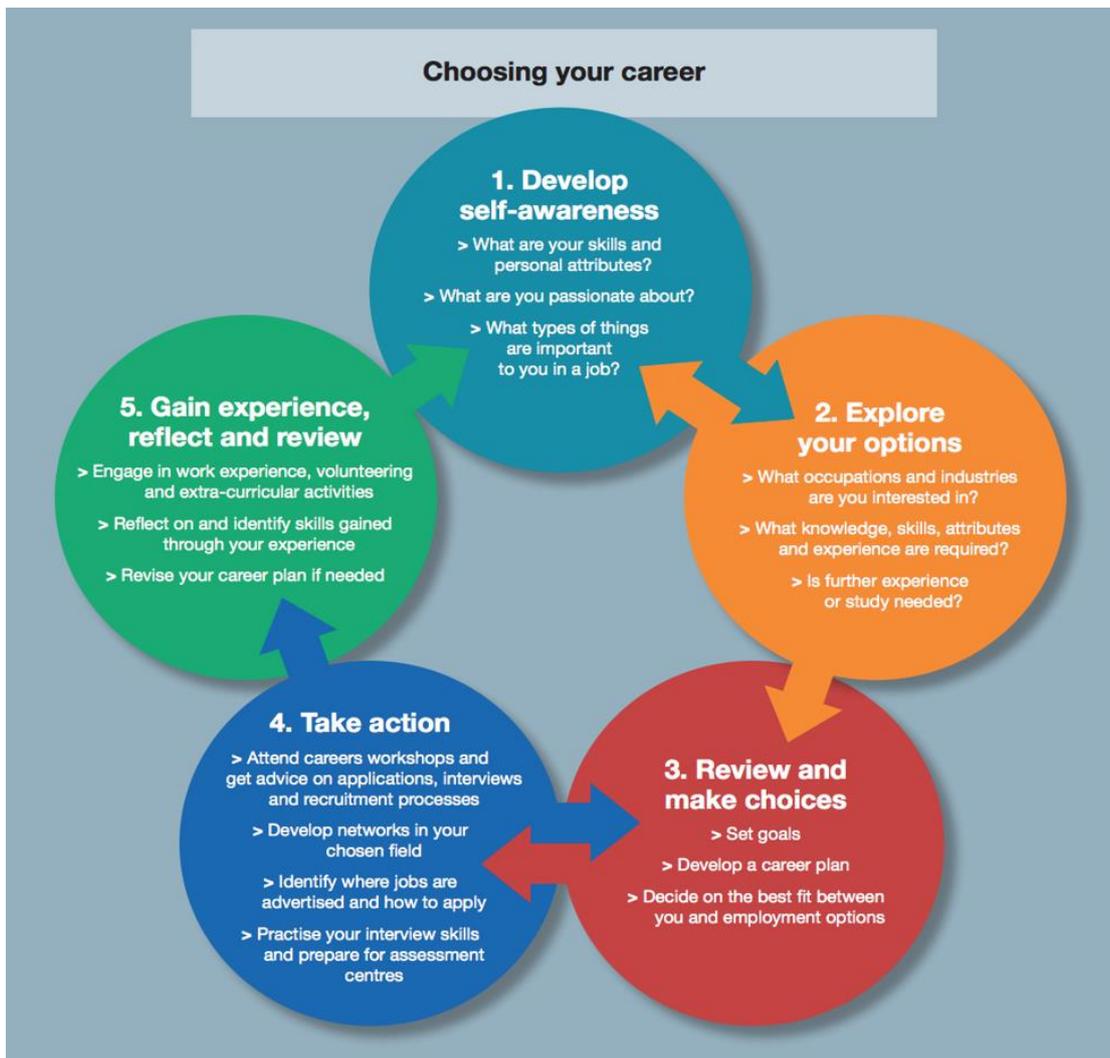
Sample 2	Analysis
<p>Leadership does not come naturally to me. In group projects, I would let others take the lead; at work, I would turn down opportunities for advancement to avoid having to take charge. I did not feel comfortable being the centre of attention, and I did not enjoy ordering people around. Yet the ability to take initiative and lead others towards a set goal is a necessary skill in any career, and I could not evade it forever. ANU+ gave me the opportunity to challenge myself by being placed in an unsupervised environment where I had no choice but to take the lead. This was an invaluable experience that has helped immensely in developing my leadership skills. As I near the end of my degree and begin applying for graduate positions, my volunteer work has helped me to showcase my ability to lead and solve problems independently. More importantly, it has given me the confidence to continue stepping outside of my comfort zone and has equipped me with the skills to</p>	<p>This introduction to a final submission sums up the student’s overall key message about how their ANU+ experiences have helped them to think about their future career. Notice how the student talks about the work environment (“an unsupervised environment”), and how that both challenged and extended them personally and professionally (“has helped immensely in developing my leadership skills”).</p> <p>Two development outcomes are addressed in this introduction: leadership skills and resilience. At the start, the student outlines how they felt about their leadership skills before doing ANU+. In explaining that they had a lack of confidence in leadership, the student also shows that they did not feel very resilient at the start. The introduction then shows the student’s key message that volunteering has helped them to develop their leadership skills and thereby given them confidence and a stronger sense of resilience. The introduction also demonstrates that the student has strong self-awareness. Self-awareness is shown through the very honest</p>

<p>reflect on all that I have learned while doing so.</p>	<p>reflection about how volunteering has changed their views on leadership.</p> <p>The remainder of the student's submission reflects in detail on how various volunteering experiences have helped them to develop their leadership skills and resilience.</p>
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Linking your ANU+ experience to your future career

Career development is something we all do throughout our life. It means making choices about our career as we move through life and moving from one role, whether it is paid or unpaid, to another. More often than not, this is an unconscious process of moving from one job to the next based on opportunities, life circumstances or happenstance. This is not necessarily a bad thing and can put us into interesting and challenging situations that we would not have chosen by ourselves. However, leaving something as critical as the work we do every day to chance means we are also leaving our potential for growth to chance. Regular reflection is what lifts this process from the subconscious to the conscious and allows us to make better decisions based on our experiences, learnings and motivations.

In the graphic below (taken from the [ANU Careers Guide](#)), you'll see the process of making career decisions, broken down into five steps. The key points are that the process is perpetual – you are always engaged in making decisions about your career in some shape or form – and that each step informs the next step.



Let's have a look at what this cycle might look like for an imaginary student.

Tom is a 2nd year finance and statistics student from a small town in regional Victoria. He is the first in his family to study at university and is keenly aware of the expectations his family have in him doing well. He thoroughly enjoys his studies but isn't sure yet if his future lies in corporate finance like his degree might suggest. He joined ANU+ to get a different perspective and deliberately chose organisations that are completely different to private sector companies.

Step one

The first step is always to **develop a good level of self-awareness**, and this is something you have already engaged with through ANU+. In addition, ANU Careers have a range of tools and resources available to help you explore your values, motivations, preferences and skillsets further.

In terms of skills, Tom is definitely a numbers guy, the more complex, the better. He enjoys using maths to solve real-world problems and feels strongly about a range of social justice issues. Because he is a confident speaker, he usually finds himself being the one presenting group work to the class or being the class rep. He seems to know everyone on campus, and his Clifton Strength assessment reaffirmed his talent for making people feel at ease. He is not good with conflict though and prefers to keep the peace at whatever cost. Career-wise, he wants a stable and well-paid job that doesn't require crazy hours. Helping people is a big thing for him and his ANU+ experiences have shown him a variety of options to help people.

Step two

Knowing what is important to you in a workplace and job, what skills and talents you bring and what you want to achieve, will help to inform your next step – **exploring your career options**. It is always easier to perform well in a situation where our natural strengths are utilised – not to mention it makes for a much happier working life!

Tom explores his career options by browsing graduate job platforms, reading other finance/statistics graduates' stories, looking at job ads and talking to his friends and family. He can easily see that he already possesses well-established skills such as "communication", "establishing effective relationships", "analytical thinking" and "quantitative analysis". Most finance and statistics-related jobs don't read very exciting though and he misses the link to making a real difference to people's lives which is important to him. He realised through his volunteer placements that he has a real knack for explaining complex concepts and is starting to wonder if teaching might be an option for him. The chance to work in regional areas, helping young people and having a relatively stable and safe job make this idea even more appealing as these elements of being a teacher align well with his values that he identified in step 1.

This step is all about researching what different career paths look like and understanding if they are a good fit for who you are and what you want out of your career. Use your ANU+ submissions to connect anything you find out about a possible career to what you already know about yourself. Reflecting is a key element of developing good self-awareness. As we accumulate more experiences and reflect on them, we learn what works and doesn't work for us, which we then apply to our future decisions on what type of jobs and work environments to focus our search on.

Step three

In step three, you are starting to narrow down your ideas to concrete actions by **reviewing and making choices**.

Tom found out that while teaching is an option, it does mean further study and after speaking to a few teachers in his local high school, he is surprised to hear that the work environment is highly structured and not as creative as he thought, which is important to him. He also didn't realise how much behavioural management skills are expected of a teacher, and he is not sure he would be good enough, let alone happy, managing conflicts. He does enjoy working with young people though and decides to reconnect with his team leader at one of his ANU+ placements who he remembers being well-connected in the youth work space. The team leader gives Tom a stack of resources on social work which gives him more ideas but none of these have much to do with finance and most don't sound like the stable, well-paid job he was envisaging. He is starting to wonder if maybe a public service job in finance could be a solution but he isn't sure that he is ready yet to give up on his idea of working with young people and making a difference to their lives.

This step can feel complex and overwhelming and it's important to remember that the decisions you make now are not set in stone, and most definitely not forever. Use your natural strengths and preferences to help you narrow down options and set goals.

Tom is a very creative person and can spend hours sketching designs. He decides to create a few visual boards on his career ideas, and suddenly seemingly disparate ideas start to make sense and he starts to see how he could combine his love for finance and teaching with youth work. He decides to approach debt help services for internship opportunities and also decides to investigate ideas for creating videos on how to manage finances well as a young person. He also commits himself to participating in two upcoming events where he can meet potential employers from the APS, just to check if his ideas of the public service are true.

Step four

Step four is when things get real – this is where you **take action** and apply for opportunities. Again, use your insights from your ANU+ reflections when you assess different job opportunities to check whether a certain employer or workplace is the right fit for you.

The debt help service didn't have any openings at the moment, but one of the employer visits he attended sparked his interest in the public service and he investigates this route

further. After watching a few videos and reading graduates' review of their workplace, he decides to apply for internships at two state and one federal government agency which seem like a good fit in terms of values and culture. In his interview, Tom draws heavily on his ANU+ experience to illustrate his passion for community and working for the greater good rather than profit maximisation. He also used an example from his volunteer experience at a zoo to show how he had resolved a conflict situation in a team. Despite the example having nothing to do with finance or public service, his insights from this experience showed his capacity for adaptability and resilience – two key selection criteria for the department.

Step five

Step five takes you back to the reflective practice you have started to build through your ANU+ program. The key element here is to **review and reflect** – how did you go with the volunteering opportunities you took? Did the experience meet your expectations? What did you learn about yourself and that particular career? As you would have realised in your ANU+ experience, reflection – much like career decision-making – ideally happens continually. It is a good idea to keep a journal and note down surprises, challenges and your strategies to work with those challenges. These will not only inform your self-awareness for the next cycle, but also give you great examples to use in your future job applications and interviews.

Tom started his internship at a state department of finance. He is pleased to find his team to be a welcoming and funny group of people who are all keen to help him get settled, answer any questions he has and even invite him along to after-work drinks and social outings. His project is interesting and he is learning a lot. However, he finds the bureaucracy stifling and gets frustrated at how long everything seems to take. He reflects on his observations and the fact that he sees himself growing more and more negative in his comments about the department. Wondering whether this is another career dead-end, Tom decides to speak to his mentor to see if his perceptions are accurate. Tom's mentor sympathises with his experience, and shares her strategies of dealing with bureaucracy fatigue as well as insights into why the department is set up and acts this way. The chat is helpful for Tom to adjust his perceptions and he starts to try out some of his mentor's suggestions. Remembering his strength of connecting easily with people and his talent with visual content, he approaches his boss and suggests creating a suite of short videos recording stories of recent graduates about the culture of the workplace to help future applicants making a better-informed choice. He feels excited about the idea of helping people like himself and is starting to feel more ownership at work now that he can see how he could incorporate not just his degree-related skills but also his outside interests and his values into his work.

His experience has not altered his values and expectations of a good workplace, but it did improve his understanding of a public service organisation and helped him ask more specific questions of a potential employer in his future applications. He also learned how much power there is in taking responsibility and taking a proactive approach to creating a culture and work environment he enjoys working in.

While your ideas may not always work out or be accepted, the sense of ownership that comes with stepping up is a huge factor in how connected and motivated we feel at work. Take a moment to reflect on when you have been in a situation that challenged your resilience, and how you have overcome that. Those stories are not only a great reminder of what you are capable of, but are also very useful in job interviews when you get the dreaded question “tell us about a time when you had to overcome a challenging situation at work.”

ANU Careers can help you with each of these steps, and we encourage you to connect with us early – don’t wait until your graduation.

This guide is a collaboration between ANU Careers, ANU Academic Skills and ANU+. For more information on these teams, please visit the websites below:

<https://www.anu.edu.au/students/careers-opportunities/careers>

<https://www.anu.edu.au/students/contacts/academic-skills>

Marking rubric

Criteria	Satisfactory (SY)	Unsatisfactory (US)
Have answered the question: “<i>What do you want your future workplace environments to be like?</i>”	Clearly and succinctly responds to the question.	The focus deviates from the question, and there is little or no response to the question.
Reflected on at least one ANU+ development outcome and not more than two.	Has reflected on no more than two ANU+ development outcomes.	Has not reflected on any ANU+ development outcomes or more than two.
Demonstrated that you have self-reflected to develop your key ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear introduction of the key ideas and overview of what will be addressed. • Main part is well organised with clear links between sections, and flow is created between the key ideas. • The conclusion summarises the key ideas clearly and concisely, and highlights their significance. Findings are linked back to the larger context of the question being answered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction does not give context or cover what will be addressed. • Main part is unclear and/or disconnected, and the key ideas conveyed are often not fully developed. • The conclusion lacks a reiteration of the key ideas, and is unclear how the ideas support your overall answer to the question.
Met the word/time length criteria.	Delivered within the time/word limit.	Goes significantly over or under time/word limit.

NB: Participants need to meet all 4 criteria to receive a satisfactory pass.