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**Abstract**

This paper will consider the significance of emotion in assessment through reflective or experiential writing in the context of professional practice-based learning. It is based on a 12 month study conducted with undergraduate social work students undertaking what are referred to as 'reflective writing' assessments. This form of assessment is a requirement in social work education and commonly used elsewhere in professional programmes of study in higher education such as nursing, business studies and education. Drawing on text orientated interviews with students and tutors this paper explores some of the challenges of both producing and assessing reflective writing. Drawing on debates relating to the assessment of reflective writing (Boud in Soc work Educ 18(2):121-132, 1999) and the benefits of experimental or 'risky' writing (Berman 2001), the paper offers some strategies for recognising and managing emotion arising from the inclusion of reflective writing professional education. In particular, it will explore the benefits of creating a space for dialogue which can recognise social, educational and historical factors, which influence individual students' writing

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