'We gave a presentation about our cycling trip along the River Elbe from Magdeburg to Hamburg. This is a summary of a power point demonstration we showed.

'Our original plan had been to do this in two weeks and camp out along the way. We managed to get to Magdeburg with our bikes after a seven-hour train trip and several changes. The first problem was in Magdeburg, where we had arranged to stay in a B & B and they did not have a secure place to put our bikes, so we had to take off the wheels and lock the frames to a tree in the back yard. This delayed our start by nearly half a day. We had planned to cycle 100 km that first day, but the temperature climbed to over 35° and this meant that we did not reach our planned destination until 10 p.m. We were both exhausted and asked a farmer if we could pitch our tent in his front yard. However, it took us an hour to erect our tent and it later collapsed, so we did not get much sleep. This was the start of a major argument that lasted for two days!

'This taught us the importance of starting early and not being quite so ambitious, and also that we needed to listen to each other better. This proved to be important as the trip went on. Hans suggested that we take an alternative route one day because it would save us a further 25 km on a long day. After the first couple of days we had managed to get over saddle-soreness. The only other drama we had was getting a puncture one day, and we discovered that our puncture kit no longer had usable patches for the inner tube. So I had to cycle 20 km to the nearest town with the inner tube to get it fixed. That took ages to get sorted out and when I returned there were a group of fellow cyclists there offering help. It made us realise how kind people can be.

'It was a great feeling to reach the Alder in Hamburg and realise how far we had travelled. The next trip planned is along the Canal du Midi from Toulouse to Narbonne.'

What are the different parts of the reflection process?

Here are some ideas to work through, with questions to guide you:

- **Describing the situations**: What has happened? What is happening?
- **Analysing them and unwrapping the experience. Each experience may have emphasis on different parts of your personality and contribute in different ways**: How have we (I) felt, or how do we (I) feel now? How do we (I) think others have felt? What were the activities carried out? What abilities and attitudes were put into action by us (me) and others? Why have we (I) acted this way? What did we (I) expect to accomplish by this experience? Who have we (I) worked with?
- **Evaluating situations and making sense of what happened**: What have been the outcomes of the experience? For us (me) and for everyone involved? For the environment? Have we (I) achieved our (my) objectives? What difficulties did we (I) encounter? How and what did we (I) do to overcome them? What else could we (I) have done differently?
- **Drawing conclusions and learning achieved**: What did we (I) learn from this experience? Which of the IB learner profile attributes did we (I) develop? Were we (was I) able to build or develop any good? For us (me), for others, for the community?
- **Changing perspectives, generating ideas, asking questions**: How did our (my) decisions impact on others' lives? What are the consequences of our (my) decisions and actions for us (me), others and the environment? What did we (I) discover about ourselves (myself), others, the community? Have we (I) changed our (my) perspectives? In what way?
- **Planning further actions and looking ahead**: How can we (I) apply what we (I) have learnt in other life situations?

This is not a linear process; these are moments that make up a whole reflection process. You can go through the different moments in different stages.

Reflection is the process by which you can metamorphosize an experience into learning.

Reflection helps you to see what you have achieved.

Reflection makes links between your experiences and the future.

Reflection gives you feedback and helps you to generate your own questions.

Reflection should help you to gain a better understanding of yourself, and of others.

It is a required part of the programme but it shouldn't be too arduous! You can reflect in any way which suits you…

If you like writing, then record your thoughts in the journal section.

If you love taking photographs, then take and upload photos - but try to also add a comment.

If you are into vlogging, then create, edit and upload a video.

Perhaps you are a good talker - then record an audio reflection.

If you do some other style of offline reflection, just make a note about it or photograph/scan it to add to your portfolio.

The focus of your reflection should be **affective**. Try to move beyond just giving a commentary of what your experiences and actions were. Talk about how you felt and how the experience will change you in the future.

A useful structure to follow might be:

- Describe what happened: retell your memorable moments, identify what was important or influential, what went well or was difficult, obstacles and successes.
- Express feelings: how do you feel about your experiences?
- Generate ideas: Re-examine the choices you made and actions you took.
- Ask questions: What questions do you have about people, processes or issues as a result of your experiences?

You could also reflect on which of the Learning Outcomes you think you are achieving, **and why**.

Reflection is very personal, but it doesn't have to be totally individual. You could undertake group reflection exercises or meet with a peer or an adult in order to reflect. Your CAS meetings can be an important stage in your reflection when you draw out learning that you have gained from your experiences.

An example of a group reflection could be a volleyball team meeting to review their performance in a tournament. With a whiteboard, they discuss and record what went well, what didn't, and why? They then brainstorm the things they need to improve upon and come up with a plan for their next few training sessions. One person photographs the whiteboard and shares the picture for all to upload as evidence. Another talks over training plans with the coach and adapts them to include the team's findings. This is good use of the CAS Stages.

Reflection does not **only** happen at the end of a process. Stopping to think before, during and after an experience can really add value to it for you.

Evidence is different to reflection. Evidence is just information that corroborates you have done what you are claiming. A photo is evidence; a photo with commentary explaining how you felt about it is reflection.

It is good practice to keep adding evidence and reflections little and often to your CAS Portfolio. However, the **quality** of your reflection is more important than a number of brief reflections. Don't let recording your evidence and reflection take away from the value of your experiences: it should add to them.