Blogs and reflective logs

What is a blog or reflective log?
A blog or (weblog) is an online journal that students can use to record their opinions, activities, and experiences along with their reflections and comments. Bloggers often provide hyperlinks to other content on the web, and include images and videos. A reflective log, however, is a record often kept by students to record their reflections on their learning on a daily or weekly basis, typically identifying incidents that have occurred, the feelings they provoked, the learner’s evaluation and analysis, and a plan of action for the future.

Minerva provides users with their own blogs, while other activities such as discussion forums, wikis and portfolios can often be adapted to support blogs. Blogs are usually seen by other students so they can see and comment on how their peers are interpreting ideas in the course or experiences of the workplace. However, reflective logs or journals are largely private communication for the learner, shared only with their assessor/tutor.

Where can I find out how to use a blog or reflective log?
Students can create a free blog on any of the commercial blogging platforms, for example, http://wordpress.com (note that this is different from the .org site); Blogger.com or Tumblr, which all provide help pages. Reflective logs often require a template, and MS Word is often used for offline reflective logs. These can be emailed to tutors or submitted online (e.g. via services such as Turnitin). An alternative is to use an online document stored in the cloud such as OneDrive, which allows the students to keep their logs private or share it with specific individuals.

How can blogs or reflective logs be used in learning and teaching?
Blogs can support students in sharing ideas and processes, disseminating information, or documenting their personal experience or research and development. If the blog platform is public (i.e. seen by readers outside of the educational setting) then the blog can be used to communicate with future employers or professionals.

Bloggers can build professional networks whilst studying and retain their work after successful course completion. This builds basic literacy, digital literacy and enhances employability. In addition, reflective logs deepen competence by encouraging students to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical situations, and develop self-knowledge as well as emotional literacy. They promote critical self-awareness, enabling continual professional and personal development.