

Written reflection

Requirement

Each recertification year, you will write a reflective account. The focus of your writing can be either

- Your choice of one of the three competencies nominated by Council for the year, or
- An experience or critical incident from your practice of pharmacy

What is reflection?

Reflection is thinking critically about your own experiences so you can learn from them, and adapt your practice and improve in competence and confidence.

Reflection is part of reflective practice which has three components¹

- Things (experiences) that happened to the person
- The reflective processes that enable to person to gain insights from those experiences
- The actions that result from the new perspectives

Why is reflection valuable?

Reflection enables you to gain insight for meaningful change and development and improve the way you work. It is a valuable skill to help you develop experience, confidence and self-awareness and enables you to invest in yourself and your development in a structured and constructive way.

Reflection helps individuals to shift the experience they gain into expertise. It helps practitioners make sense of challenging and complicated situations². This helps to optimise their work practice and improve interprofessional relationships.

Purpose of a written reflection

To encourage structured critical reflection on your experiences within your practice, to gain insights from them and assist in the transformation of experiences into expertise. The act of writing down your reflection gives a visible structure and sequence to your thought processes.

The more someone reflectively writes, the more likely they are to regularly reflect in their everyday life, think outside the box, and challenge accepted practices.³

¹ Jasper, M (2003) *Beginning reflective practice*. Nelson Thornes, Cheltenham

² Chapman, N., Dempsey, S.E. and Warren-Forward, H.M. (2008), *Theory of reflection in learning for radiation therapists*. *Radiographer*, 55: 34-37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-3909.2008.tb00085.x>

³ Helyer, Ruth (2015). "Learning through reflection: the critical role of reflection in work-based learning (WBL)". *Journal of Work-Applied Management*. 7: 15–27. doi:10.1108/JWAM-10-2015-003.

Models of reflection

There is no one right way to reflect - there are many models of reflection out there than can help you to demystify the activity. They can provide you with a place to start, some questions to prompt your thinking and guide you through the process. Four commonly used models are described [here](#) . We encourage you to choose one that works for you and the situation being reflected on. You may need to try more than one to find the one that works best for you.

These models are primarily designed to help you reflect on an experience or situation that has occurred – ‘reflection on action’. One of your options is to reflect on a competency which requires a slightly different approach which is covered in the section Reflection against a competency.

How to complete / document a written reflection

- Decide what you wish to reflect on - either one of the designated competencies for the year, or an experience or critical incident from your practice. You may choose to write about an experience you have already discussed at your peer support group
- Choose a [model of reflection](#) that you think will work for you. A template for each model has been provided in the Reflection on Practice page of your MyRecert portfolio. Alternatively, you may use a different model or structure of your own choice
- Choose the corresponding template for the model to help guide you through your written reflection. You do not have to answer all the prompt questions within the template, they are there to act as a guide
 - Gibbs
 - What?
 - ERA
 - Kolbs
 - Reflection on competency statement
- Reflect on your practice against the competency you have chosen, an experience or a critical incident
- Complete your reflection directly on the MyRecert page or if you have already completed a Word reflection, convert it to a PDF and upload onto the MyRecert Reflection on Practice page.

Reflection against a competency

When reflecting or assessing / evaluating yourself against competencies the various models need to be adapted. Once you have decided which competency you wish to reflect on work through the following steps using the Reflection on competency statement template

- What are your initial **impressions** of your competence?
- What make you think that? Consider what aspects or **examples** of your practice might contribute to demonstrating this competency. While doing this think about how you approach your work, the interactions that you have with other people and your personal values.
- Critically **evaluate** these examples considering how do they show your competence, what did you do well, what aspects might you still need to develop. You may find input from your manager, verifier colleagues, peers or team members useful in this process.

- From this **identify** areas of strength and development (which can be gaps or further development of your strengths).
- **Plan** how you will meet the development needs you have identified. You may need to prioritise your needs if there are more than you can realistically tackle at once.

Support

For many pharmacists, structured writing is not part of their routine work, and reflective writing that focuses on your own work may seem daunting, however it is a skill that can be learned and developed with practice.

Reflective writing doesn't have to be scary and there are things/steps to help you, such as

- Use one of the models which will guide you through your reflection
- Discuss your reflection with other people such as your verifier, colleagues, manager or peers
 - before you write your reflection to help you explore your practice and consider what you might write, and/or
 - during the writing process to help you develop your reflective writing skills

Links with other recertification requirements

Discussions within your **peer support groups** or with your **verifier** may be very useful to assist you in your reflection on your practice.

Your written reflection may inform the development of a goal within your **professional development plan** and consequently activities you need to undertake to **keep up to date**.

You may choose the **cultural safety** of your practice as a topic for your written reflection.



Reflective models

Gibb's Reflective Cycle

Gibbs Reflective Cycle⁴ is a popular model which can be used to support systematic reflection on any situation and is particularly useful to help learning from everyday situations.

Gibb's cycle contains six stages and proposes key questions at each stage.

The model begins with a **description** of the experience being reflected on. It then encourages you to focus on your **feelings** about the experience, both during it and after. You then **evaluating** the experience - what was good or bad about it from your perspective? You can then use this evaluation to **analyse** the situation and try to make sense of it. This analysis will result in a **conclusion** about what other actions (if any) you could have taken to reach a different outcome. Finally, you build an **action** plan of steps which you can take the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.

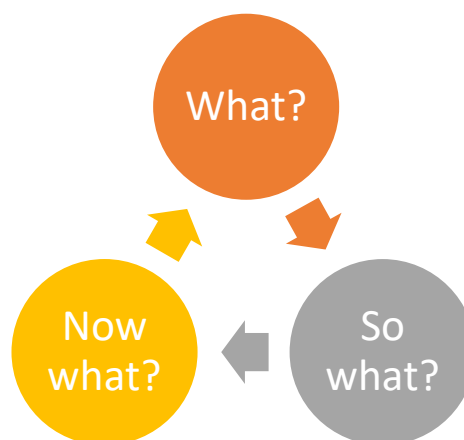


What? Model

This simple model of three questions was developed by Driscoll in the mid-1990s⁵.

By asking ourselves these three simple questions we can begin to analyse our experiences and learn from them.

1. **What?** Describe what the situation or experience was to give context and a clear idea of what you are dealing with.
2. **So what?** Reflect on the experience by asking so what did you learn as a result of the experience?
3. **Now what?** Think about the action you will take as a result of this reflection - will you change a behaviour, try something new or carry on as you are? It is important to remember that it may be that nothing changes as a result of reflection and that you feel that you are doing everything you should during an experience. This is equally valid as an outcome.



This model has been further developed in a nursing context by Rolfe et al in their framework of reflective practice with further probing questions to guide broader and deeper reflection as appropriate for an individual's level of practice.^{6,7}

⁴ Gibbs, G. (1998) Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

⁵ Driscoll, J. (ed.) (2007) Practicing Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach for Healthcare Professionals. Edinburgh: Elsevier.

⁶ Rolfe G, Freshwater D, Jasper M. Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professional: a user's guide. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

⁷ Rolfe G, Freshwater D, Jasper M. Critical reflection in practice. 2nd ed. New York, New York: Palgrave, 2011.

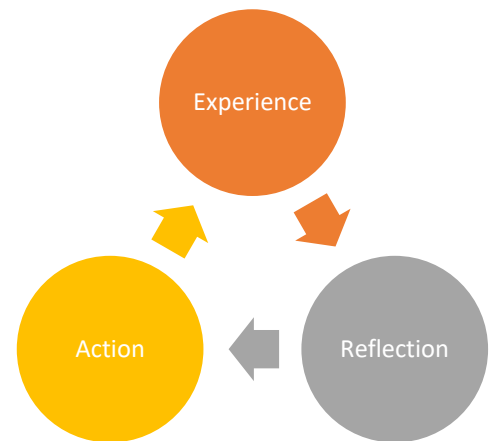
ERA Cycle

The ERA cycle⁸ is one of the simplest models of reflection and contains only three stages:

we start with an **experience**, either something we have been through before or something completely new to us. This experience can be positive or negative and may be related to our work or something else entirely.

Following this we start to **reflect** on what happened. We think through the experience, examine our feelings about what happened and decide on the next steps.

We then take an **action**. What we do as a result of an experience will be different depending on our own feelings and experiences leading up to it. This action will result in another experience and the cycle will continue.



Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Kolb's model⁹ (1984) is based on theories about how people learn and centres on the concept of developing understanding through actual experiences and contains four key stages.

Start with an **experience**, which may be a repeat of something that has happened before or something completely new to us, perhaps we are applying new learning

Reflection on the experience and noting anything about it which we haven't come across before. This is a chance to observe and critique what you did without judgement.

By **making sense** of the situation we start to develop new ideas a result of this new experience, for example when something unexpected has happened we try to work out why this might be. We do this by making judgements and asking questions such as 'What worked well, and why?' and 'What didn't work so well, and why?'. This is an opportunity to link theory with what you did or how you did it.

Finally, we **plan** how to apply these new ideas to different situations and so learn as a direct result of our experiences and reflections.



⁸ Jasper, M. (2013). Beginning Reflective Practice. Andover: Cengage Learning.

⁹ Kolb, D. (1984) Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.