

Occupational Therapy Clinical Education Program

A clinical education guide to reflective
practice

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How can this guide be used?

This guide is intended for use by individuals who would like to learn about reflective practice, develop their ability to reflect on practice or are committed to supporting others to do so in clinical practice settings. As reflective practice is a way in which individuals can learn from experience, it can be used as a tool to support learning and education in clinical practice environments. This guide has been produced by the Occupational Therapy Clinical Education Program (OTCEP) who are committed to the support of Clinical Education Support Officers (CESOs), clinical educators, students, new graduates and their supervisors as detailed in their strategic plan available at: <http://paweb.sth.health.qld.gov.au/qhot/otcep.asp>

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice can be viewed and depicted simplistically (Kinsella, 2001) and can refer to a process that people engage in unconsciously (Moon 2001). However, literature supports the need to engage in more structured processes to facilitate reflection if learning from experience is to be maximised.

Reflective practice has been described as a: *'form of mental processing—like a form of thinking—that we use to fulfil a purpose to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding and possibly emotions that we already possess'* (Moon 2001, p. 2).

The quote above sets reflective practice apart from the recall and recollections which might occur unintentionally as part of daily work into an intentional, structured process which enables a clear outcome.

The literature presents a range of processes, stages, and levels to represent reflective practice. Following a literature review Atkins and Murphy (1993) identifies 3 characteristics of reflective practice commonly identified by the majority of authors:

1. Awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts
2. Critical analysis, examination of feelings and knowledge
3. Development of a new perspective on a situation

Schon (1983) suggested that there are two forms of reflection. Reflection **in** action involves thinking and processing whilst completing the task. Reflection **on** action is completed retrospectively and is most likely to be used as a teaching and learning opportunity in practice settings. Reflection in action is a more advanced skill which can be perfected over time.

Why should we reflect on practice?

In order to ensure the maintenance of competence across a practice lifetime, practitioners need to learn from experience (Mann et al 2009). In a systematic review of reflective practice in health professions education, Mann et al (2009) identified that reflective practice facilitates learning from experience by:

- Enabling the identification of learning needs
- Promoting an understanding of professional beliefs, attitudes and values, integrated within professional culture
- Enabling linking between new and existing knowledge
- Supporting the development of self-aware professionals who are able to self-regulate and self-monitor.

The ability to be a reflective practitioner has been described as an essential attribute for competent health care professionals working in complex health care environments (Boud et al 1985, Moon 2001, Schon 1983). Boud (1999) recognised the need for students to learn from practice experience as opposed to learning discrete theory to be applied while in professional practice. University curricula's have incorporated reflective activities to promote this approach to learning and practice.

For practitioners the value and necessity of continued learning in the workplace post-graduation has long been accepted. The need to demonstrate an ability to self-evaluate competence, learn from experience and record learning are now stipulated within the Continued Professional Development requirements for National Registration developed by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (Occupational therapy Board of Australia 2012).

What skills are needed to reflect on practice?

Atkins and Murphy (1993) identified the cognitive and affective skills necessary to engage in reflection. These skills are identified as follows:

- Self-awareness- enables the person to analyse their feelings, their effect on the situation and how the situation has affected them
- Description- the ability to provide an accurate account of what actually happened
- Critical analysis- the ability to examine components of the situation
- Synthesis- enables the integration of new knowledge with existing knowledge
- Evaluation- the ability to make a judgement about something involving the use of a standard or criteria.

When should reflection on practice occur?

Reflective practice presents an accessible learning activity which can be completed at any time. Obviously, dedicated time and space are needed and forward planning may be required to enable this to happen during a busy working day. Prompt templates can be kept close at hand to enable a learner to be reminded of steps and stages.

Experiences are unique to the individual and therefore it is likely that this will be a solitary task. However, the importance of dialogue (Day, 1993) as well as seeking expert guidance and support (Donaghy & Morss, 2000) has been identified as important when reflecting on practice. Therefore discussion and feedback could be appropriately sought following a reflective practice activity which may be the focus of a peer group or within supervision.

How can learners be supported to reflect on practice?

Mann et al (2009) concluded that there was some evidence that reflective practice abilities can be improved with systematic attempts. In addition Mann et al (2009) identified the behaviours of mentors and supervisors as important in assisting individuals with the ability to reflect as well as the following factors:

- A supportive environment
- Group discussion
- Free expression of opinions
- Relevant and positive prior experience
- Time for reflection

Supporting an individual in their ability to reflect on practice could focus on further development of the skills required, identified by Atkins and Murphy (1993). In a more recent text Atkins and Schutz (2013) developed a range of learning activities which can be completed individually, with a partner or in a group and are structured around the underlying skills of self awareness, description, critical analysis and evaluation. The chapter entitled *Developing skills for reflective practice* begins on page 23 and is available as an ebook via CKN.

A range of different activities and exercises could give learners an opportunity to practice their reflective practice skills. Moon (2004) advises on the introduction of exercises which involve:

- 'standing back from oneself'
- reflection on the same subject from different viewpoints
- reflection on the same subject matter from the viewpoints of different disciplines
- reflection that is obviously influenced by emotional reaction

James Cook University offer the following questions to assist the student to reflect on their practice. They advise that students should be given opportunity to reflect on practice as soon after the experience as possible and that this could be prompted with specific questions. The following questions and provided on the James Cook University website as examples:

- *What were you aiming for when you did that?*
- *What exactly did you do? How would you describe it precisely? Why did you choose that particular action? What theories/models/research informed your actions?*
- *What did you do next? What were the reasons for doing that?*
- *How successful was it? What criteria are you using to judge success?*
- *Could you have dealt with the situation any better? How would you do it differently next time?*
- *What do you feel about the whole experience?*
- *How did the client feel about it? How do you know the client felt like that?*
- *Did you give any advice? Do you think this helped the client? How do you know this?*
- *Do you think your knowledge was adequate in this situation? Was there anything you were unsure about? If yes, what could you do about this?*
- *Does your record of the consultation represent all the information someone would need to follow this client up? How do you know this?*
- *Have you seen a client with similar problems before? How did this consultation differ?*
- *Did you liaise with anyone after the consultation? Do you feel this communication was helpful to the other person, the client, yourself and how do you know this?*
- *What actions do you need to take after the consultation? Do you feel competent to tackle these?*
- *Did you keep to time? If not, what delayed you? How could you change this?*
- *What pleased you most about this consultation and why? What troubled you most about this consultation and why?*

[http://www.jcu.edu.au/wiledpack/modules/fsl/JCU_090342.html# Reflective questions](http://www.jcu.edu.au/wiledpack/modules/fsl/JCU_090342.html# Reflective_questions)

What processes or frameworks can guide reflection on practice?

Moon (2004) identifies the introduction of a framework which prompts the stages of reflective practice as helpful to guide learners. There are many pictorial representations of the steps and stages of reflective practice. Three examples are included in the appendices of this guide and can be used as a template.

Rolfe et al (2001) provides three simple questions; What? So what? and Now what? as a quick reminder of a reflective practice process (see Appendix I).

Gibbs (1988) reflective practice cycle has been shared widely and includes stages common to a range of authors identified by Atkins and Murphy (1993)(See Appendix II).

Fish (1991) identified strands of reflection which are featured on a template within the appendices (see Appendix III).

Learners may need additional information to enable them to work through Fish's strands. The second short video, referred to in the next section *Want to know more about reflective practice?* will provide further information.

Want to know more about reflective practice?

A 20 minute audio recording presented by Professor Matthew Molineux, Head of Occupational Therapy Program, Griffith University explores the what, why and how of reflective practice. It is available at the following link:

<http://youtu.be/84GK1zk9vmo>

Professor Matthew Molineux presents Fish's (1991) Strands of Reflection from slides 25-34 or 24:30 to 36:58 minutes in a recorded presentation at the following link:

<http://webcast.gigtv.com.au/Mediasite/Play/f1b7d4a66f404ec4aa00533c00e826621d?catalog=8238f9ea-4a82-4784-8101-1a9163df2f41>

The Occupational Therapy Practice Education Collaborative- Queensland (OTPEC Q) formerly the Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (QOTFC) have produced a wealth of resources related to practice education including a suggestion sheet: "How to encourage reflective practice and self evaluation" available at the following link:

http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/documents/suggestion_sheet_4_1.pdf

Latrobe University have produced a libguide: *reflective practices for the health sciences*. This houses high quality reflective practice resources together and is

available at the following link:

<http://latrobe.libguides.com/content.php?pid=177292&sid=1498198>

McClure P (n.d.) *Making practice based learning work: Reflection on practice* was an outcome of a collaborative project between Northumbria University, Bournemouth University and the University of Ulster which aimed to make practitioners more effective in supporting and supervising students in the workplace across disciplines (including occupational therapy)

[http://supervisionandcoaching.com/pdf/Reflection%20on%20Practice%20\(McClure%20undated\).pdf](http://supervisionandcoaching.com/pdf/Reflection%20on%20Practice%20(McClure%20undated).pdf)

Want to know about using reflective practice to support new graduates professional development within a clinical learning framework?

Fitzgerald, C., Moores, A. & Coleman, A. (2015). Supporting new graduate professional development: A clinical learning framework. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 62 (1), 13-20.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=1d62e059-9cb4-4c28-ad00-e2d5f36af0c5%40sessionmgr112&hid=103&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLGF0aGVucyZzaXRIPWVkcY1saXZI#AN=2015-05345-003&db=psyh>

Want to know more about using reflective practice alongside evidence based practice within a model of professional thinking?

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Mann K , Gordon J & MccLeod A (2009) Reflection and reflective practice in health professions education: a systematic review. *Advances in Health Science Education*, 14: 595-621.

McClure P (n.d.) Making practice based learning work: Reflection on practice.

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[http://supervisionandcoaching.com/pdf/Reflection%20on%20Practice%20\(McClure%20undated\).pdf](http://supervisionandcoaching.com/pdf/Reflection%20on%20Practice%20(McClure%20undated).pdf)

Moon, J. (2001). *PDP working paper 4: Reflection in Higher Education learning*. LTSN Generic Centre. Retrieved September 8, 2015 from

<http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/Public/ER/Documents/Admissions/InterviewDocs/Moon2001ReflectivePracticeInterview-1.pdf>

Moon J (2004) *A Handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge Farmer, Taylor and Francis group.

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Retrieved September 14th, 2015 from:

<http://www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Continuing-professional-development.aspx>

Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (2007) Clinical Educator's Resource Kit. Part Four-The Feedback Process and Evaluation.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D. & Jasper, M. (2001) *Critical Reflection for Nursing and the Helping Professions: A User's Guide*. Basingstoke. Palgrave Macmillan.

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Appendix I

A reflection process (Rolfe et al, 2001)

<u>What?</u> Description of the event. Awareness of feelings and thoughts
<u>So What?</u> Critical analysis, examination of feelings and knowledge of event
<u>Now what?</u> Development of a new perspective on a situation. Proposed action/s following the event

Appendix II

A reflective practice cycle (adapted from Gibbs, 1988)

<p><u>Description</u>: What happened? Provide facts only, don't make any inferences or assumptions as to why things happened the way they did.</p>
<p><u>Thoughts/Feelings</u>: What were you thinking and feeling?</p>
<p><u>Evaluation</u>: What was good about the experience/what areas did I do well? What was not so good about the experience/what areas could I improve?</p>
<p><u>Analysis/Synthesis</u>: What sense can you make of the situation? What have you learnt? What does it mean?</p>
<p><u>Conclusion</u>: What else could you have done? What could you have not done?</p>
<p><u>Action plan</u>: If it arose again what would you do? Would you do things the same or different? How will you adapt your practice in light of this new understanding (what techniques/strategies will I use to improve my performance)? How will I know I have improved (what is my measure of success?)?</p>

Appendix III

The strands of reflection (Fish, 1991)

<p><u>Factual</u>: reconstructing the experience drawing mainly on procedural knowledge of it, “what happened”</p>
<p><u>Retrospective</u>: stepping back to identify anything that stands out, critiquing the experience as a whole based on the factual strand</p>
<p><u>Substratum</u>: explore the personal theory that underlies the experience and relate this to (and consider how it might be assisted by) formal theory</p>
<p><u>Connective</u>: based on the three previous strands what does this mean for when something similar happens in the future? Will you do things the same or change your approach?</p>