

Occupational Therapy Clinical Education Program

**A clinical education guide to reflective
practice**

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Contents

How can this guide be used?	Page 3
What is reflective practice?	Page 3
Why should we reflect on practice?	Page 4
What skills are needed to reflect on practice?	Page 4
When should reflection on practice occur?	Page 5
How can learners be supported to reflect on practice?	Page 5
What processes or frameworks can be used to guide reflection on practice?	Page 9
Want to know more about reflective practice?	Page 9
References	Page 11
Appendices	Page 13

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) which strives for continuous improvement in, access to and the quality of clinical education for pre entry students and new graduates within Health and Hospital Services across the state. OTCEP provides support to students, their clinical educators, new graduates and their supervisors and produces high quality, evidence based clinical education resources. For more information and a range of resources:

<https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/occupational-therapy/education/otcep/index>

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice enables practitioners to process knowledge in order to learn from their experience, the importance of which is well documented (Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 1984).

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).

Reflective practice is more than the recall and recollections which might occur unintentionally as part of daily work. Reflective practice is 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) identified 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?

To ensure the maintenance of competence across a practice lifetime, practitioners need to learn from experience (Mann et al 2009). Reflective practice enables practitioners to develop competence when working in complex health care environments (Boud et al 1985, Moon 2001, Schon 1983).

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.

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:

- 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 can be undertaken in any moment and presents an accessible learning activity which can be completed at any time. For best results dedicated time and space are needed. Forward planning may be required to enable reflective practice 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, dialogue (Day, 1993) and seeking expert guidance and support have been identified as important when reflecting on practice (Donaghy & Morss, 2000). Therefore discussion and feedback could be appropriately sought following a reflective practice activity and may offer a task for supervision or be the focus of a peer group discussion.

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. Factors assisting individuals with the ability to reflect are:

- Behaviours of mentors and supervisors
- A supportive environment
- Group discussion
- Free expression of opinions
- Relevant and positive prior experience
- Time for reflection (Mann et al 2009)

A range of different activities and exercises could give learners an opportunity to practice 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

The **reflective practice cycle** (Gibbs, 1988) can be used to assist others to organise their thoughts and engage in a structured process of reflection. When guiding the reflection of others, prompt questions can be a useful resource.

A range of prompt questions have been sourced and are used within the following section. These have been organised into prompts which might be used to:

- a) initiate reflective practice
- b) provide examples of techniques to use during the session and
- c) provide example questions, arranged in a table consistent with the stages of Gibbs reflective cycle (Gibbs 1988).

Prompt questions used in this section are colour coded to indicate their original source listed below:

- **James Cook University website**
http://www.jcu.edu.au/wiledpack/modules/fsl/JCU_090342.html#_Reflective_questions accessed September 2015
- **Unique outcomes supervision course**
<http://www.uniqueoutcomes.com.au/>
- **Cunningham Centre Professional supervision guide**
<http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/cunningham-centre/docs/allied-health/ah-psp/sup-gde18jul.pdf>
- **Interaction between author and a mentee**

A range of questions are presented with the intention of giving suggestions and ideas of phrases which can be used and/or modified. Many questions below assist the facilitator to enquire about the same point, just in a different way. A range of examples are given which the facilitator can choose from. As an individual's skills as a facilitator of reflective practice develop, so too will their choice of phrases and questions suited to the needs of the reflective practitioner and the context.

a) Initiating reflective practice

If reflective practice is being facilitated within supervision, there is an expectation that the supervisee will develop an agenda including discussion topics. However, there may be instances when it is appropriate for the facilitator to assist with the initiation of reflective practice, setting the expectation for the use of prompt questions for the rest of the interaction.

What are your hopes for this conversation today? What do you want to strengthen, get better at or be better prepared for?

What do you find challenging/ confusing in your work?

Is there a situation you would like to feel better equipped for?

What do you want to understand more about or get better at?

Think of a time when something went really well....

b) Examples of techniques to use during the session

Sometimes there are recognisable patterns in the questions which are used which may provide a helpful format when developing alternatives.

- Take opportunities to paraphrase content and feeling throughout reflective interaction, these can lead to a new question
 - It sounds as if there were some positive factors in the way you managed the situation? What did you feel went well?
 - Make observations about what you have heard and check for understanding:
 - When I consider what you have told me about the two scenarios it sounds that there may have been some similarities? Had you identified those? Was that the case? What were the key differences?
 - I can sense from what you are saying that you felt better about the situation when that happened- is that right?
 - Ask questions which identify commonality and differences with other experiences
 - Have you seen similar characteristics in other people you have supported?
 - Ask permission to share and contribute information. This technique ensures the facilitator doesn't share based on their own perceived expertise or seniority, promoting a non judgemental environment which values everyone's contribution
 - Can I give you a suggestion?
 - Can I give you an idea?
 - Would it be ok for me to tell you some things I've noticed about, you probably have thought about it too, is it ok for us to share together?
- c) **Example questions consistent with the stages of the Gibbs reflective practice cycle** (Gibbs 1988).

Description: What happened? Provide facts only, don't make any inferences or assumptions as to why things happened the way they did.

What would you like to bring to the session today?

Can you tell me a little more about the context? Where did this take place?

How well did you know the person?

What exactly did you do? How would you describe it precisely? Why did you choose that particular action?

Can you help me get a better understanding of the history of this struggle/situation?

Tell me what happened, who was involved and what you did?

Thoughts/Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?

At the time what sorts of things were you telling yourself?

When this situation first arose, what feelings did you have? What feelings did this situation evoke?

You clearly have a lot of experience within OT, did you feel personally challenged by what you were hearing?

What do you feel about the whole experience?

How did the client feel about it? How do you know the client felt like that?

Evaluation: 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?

What were you aiming for when you did that?

What did you do next? What were the reasons for doing that?

What impacts has this situation been having on you or others?

How have you or others been responding? What's been important in thinking about how you are handling this?

What pleased you most about this consultation and why? What troubled you most about this consultation and why?

How successful was it? What criteria are you using to judge success?

Why do you think that worked so well?

What were the things which went less well, which you might have felt more uneasy about?

Looking back on the situation- Are there any other conversations which you could have had?

How did you know to do this? Where did you get this idea? How did it come to you?

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?

What skills, intentions or knowledge were you calling on?

What theories/models/research informed your actions?

What would help you to solve that problem?

Did you give any advice? Do you think this helped the client? How do you know this?

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?

Analysis/Synthesis: What sense can you make of the situation? What have you learnt? What does it mean?

What have you found helpful in similar situations?

What would your ideal outcome have been? What would your ideal outcome be now?

Have you seen a client with similar problems before? How did this consultation differ?

Conclusion: What else could you have done? What could you have not done?

Could you have dealt with the situation any better? How would you do it differently next time?

What actions do you need to take after the consultation? Do you feel competent to tackle these?

Action plan: 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)?

If the situation arose again, what would you be more aware of, what would you have done differently?

What key actions would you take in the future if the same situation arose again?

Can you identify any learning needs in relation to this experience?

What processes or frameworks can guide reflection on practice?

Frameworks to prompt the stages of reflective practice are helpful to guide learners (Moon 2004) 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.

1. 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).
2. 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).
3. 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:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84GK1zk9vmo&feature=youtu.be>

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://otpecq.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65381>

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://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415537902/data/learning/8_Reflection%20in%20Practice.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.

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

Bannigan, K. and Moores, A. (2009) A model of professional thinking: Integrating reflective practice and evidence based practice. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 76(5), 342- 350.

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<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.

Schon D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*. Basic Books, London.

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)

Description: What happened? Provide facts only, don't make any inferences or assumptions as to why things happened the way they did.

Thoughts/Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?

Evaluation: 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?

Analysis/Synthesis: What sense can you make of the situation? What have you learnt? What does it mean?

Conclusion: What else could you have done? What could you have not done?

Action plan: 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)?

Appendix III

The strands of reflection (Fish, 1991)

Factual: reconstructing the experience drawing mainly on procedural knowledge of it, “what happened”

Retrospective: stepping back to identify anything that stands out, critiquing the experience as a whole based on the factual strand

Substratum: explore the personal theory that underlies the experience and relate this to (and consider how it might be assisted by) formal theory

Connective: 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?

