

ASSESSMENT 1

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Lecturer:	Emma Roberts	Internal Verifier:	Vic Saunders
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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark: Work which is submitted up to 1 week late will be capped at 40% for the first attempt and will be awarded a mark of 0% for re-assessment. Late submission penalties may be lifted only if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim. Work submitted more than 1 week late will be considered as a non-submission and will not be marked. The work may be considered as a submission for reassessment if offered by an Examining Board or if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your		

	submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.
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Module Learning Outcomes

(from module syllabus)

- Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of a research mindset, recognising the values and the contribution that research makes to addressing the problems of the contemporary world.
- Apply a research mindset within a work-based or academic context to develop a novel research proposal.

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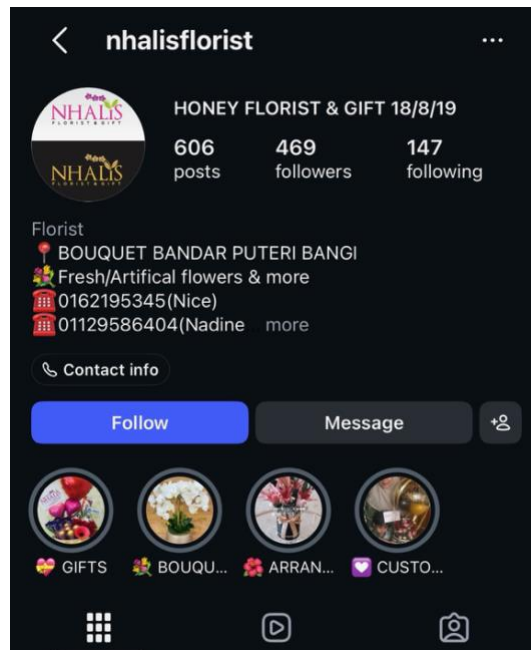


Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the flower business profile via Instagram

Task 1 – Problem Identification

One problem that I've observed is that my mother runs a small flower business while still working a full-time job, which makes it hard for her. She sells handmade flower arrangements on Instagram, such as flowers for house decoration, birthday flowers, flowers for convocations and etc. About 5-10 orders are received in the business weekly, and orders are received regularly throughout the month. As far as I can see, there is no shortage of demand or resources. The problem is that my mother simply doesn't have enough time to fulfil the orders.

Most of my mother's business is managed by her. She makes the flowers, prepares the orders and deals with the customers. She would rather produce them herself because she wants to get the most out of her profits and prefers her own craftsmanship. She also loves making the flowers, which is part of the reason why she's been doing it herself instead of hiring someone to do it for her.

But her full-time job makes it difficult for her to work on the flower business. She accepts orders and makes sure that they are completed within 2-3 nights depending on the orders. Although she is able to fulfil the orders, I have personally seen how tiring this can be after

completing her normal work. She has also experienced times when she could not take on any new orders as she had no time to deal with them.

This makes it difficult as she might need to let customers know that it might take longer for an order to be completed. This may restrict the number of customers and may prevent the business from expanding despite the constant demand of her products. Therefore, I think it is a problem that should be explored because the business already has customers and a product that is viable, but its growth could be limited by the availability of time and capacity of the owner.

AI Prompt

I'm creating a research proposal of a flower micro-business in a real home setting in Malaysia. Owned by one person, who works full-time. She's a handmade florist that sells arrangements on Instagram for birthdays, convocations, congratulations, home decor, and more. The business takes about 5-10 orders and orders are placed periodically, so the demand is not the issue. The owner operates the business by herself, making the flowers and taking orders from customers. She has a limited amount of time to dedicate to the business as she is working full-time. She generally fulfills orders that she has accepted within two nights, but this can be exhausting at times, and she has even had to refuse orders because she was too busy at times.

The owner would like to keep producing the flowers herself as she wants to maximize profits, loves the craft, is confident in her skills and feels the business is not yet big enough to hire workers. Given this context, find and explain the key academic terms, concepts and research insights from the past few years that can be used to precisely frame this business problem. Emphasise on issues of time constraints, capacity constraints, owner manager workload, order fulfilment and micro business growth constraints. Determine which concepts are most applicable to the problem and describe the connection of each concept to the problem. Propose the best ideas that should be included in a research proposal and justify them with respect to other less relevant ideas.

Include a minimum of 10 recent, credible academic journal sources, preferably peer-reviewed, and include all bibliographic information and DOI (if applicable). Never make up or speculate references. In each source, briefly explain what the study investigated, the main findings and

how it could be relevant to this particular home-based flower business. Also, note any restrictions in transferring the conclusions of the other countries, industries or other types of business to this Malaysian case. The aim is not to propose a solution to the business problem, but to formulate a precise problem definition for the next step in the research proposal. Differentiate between information found in academic research and assumptions made about the flower business, and don't assume that the business is not working or that customer demand is certainly greater than production capacity.



Figure 2 shows the customised orders requested by customers

Task 2 – Literature Exploration and Problem Definition

The first important concept is time constraints. My mom works full-time, so she doesn't have much time to spend making flower arrangements. Delecourt (2025) examined women's businesses and discovered that women who received the time-saving services reported seeing a 70.4% increase in business revenue when compared with the control group. The AI, therefore, saw the time constraint as a factor that could have an impact on the performance of the small business. The study was conducted on working mothers in Kenya, but the results can not be directly extrapolated to my mother's business in Malaysia.

The second and strongest concept is capacity constraints. When capacity utilisation is high, companies can find themselves at a stage where they need to either increase their capacity or decrease their activity, as Coad et al. (2022) describe. I want to share that I think this is a very similar idea to mine because my mom's business is always in need of orders and she can only take so much work herself. This is helpful because it helps relate the time problem to a broader business problem: meeting customer demand.

The third concept is owner-manager workload. Jumelet, Gorgievski and Bakker (2022) concluded that the demands of the job vary among small-business owners, depending on their personal, social and material resources. This is relevant because my mother would personally be doing the majority of the business activities and not having other people to share her duties with. Rodrigues et al. (2022) also investigated the relationship between people-management practices and micro-firms and found relationships between people-management practices and entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance. (ScienceDirect)

Lastly, there are constraints to micro-business growth. Gherhes, Vorley and Brooks (2021) explored the growth limitations of micro-businesses and the need to consider the context in which owner-managers are working. Mirkovski et al. (2024) also explored the question of how businesses can grow even in the face of their resource and capability limitations. (Springer)

Based on the AI-generated suggestions, I believe that the most suitable concepts for my research are time constraints and capacity constraints. The concepts of owner-manager workload and growth constraints for micro-businesses are helpful supporting concepts. These concepts were chosen because they provide an understanding of the immediate problem and its potential impact on the business. I also verified the academic sources with the information

supplied by the publishers or academic databases, and not just the AI-generated references. The verification was required because AI can fabricate or give inaccurate academic references.

The literature indicates that the issue is not merely that my mother is busy. Instead, her time constraint and being owned by someone else can effectively limit her capacity to meet extra demand from customers.

Task 3: Research Question and Research Approach

AI Prompt

I'm working on a research proposal that is based on a real flower micro-business in Malaysia that is operated from home. It is run by a single owner who also works a full-time job. She has been selling handmade flower arrangements since her birthday through Instagram since then for convocations, home decor, and other events. The business has around 5 to 10 orders every day, so there is no problem with demand. The owner runs the business by herself and is responsible for making the flowers and taking orders from customers. She has limited time to devote to the business as she is a full-time employee. She normally finishes orders within 2 nights, which can be tiring, and she has had times when she has not taken orders because she simply did not have the time. The owner would prefer to produce the flowers herself as she wants to maximise profit, enjoys the craft, has confidence in her skills and feels that the business is not large enough to hire workers. In view of this situation and the literature concepts of time constraints, capacity constraints, owner-manager workload and micro-business growth constraints, formulate five research questions and suggest the most appropriate research approach, philosophy, data collection method and sampling strategy for a small undergraduate research project (Level 5).

Selected AI Output

Five possible research questions are:

- 1. How do time constraints affect the production capacity of a home-based flower micro-business?*
- 2. How do time and capacity constraints affect the ability of a home-based micro-business to respond to customer demand?*
- 3. How does owner workload influence the ability of a home-based flower micro-business to accept and complete customer orders?*
- 4. What challenges do home-based flower business owners experience when managing customer orders alongside other work commitments?*

5. *How do home-based micro-business owners manage their available time and production capacity when responding to customer orders?*

The second question is the strongest because it connects time constraints, production capacity and customer demand without assuming that the business is unsuccessful or that demand exceeds capacity. A qualitative approach is recommended because the research aims to understand the owner's experiences and decisions. An interpretivist philosophy is appropriate because the research focuses on individual experiences and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews are recommended as the main data-collection method. Purposive sampling could be used to select the flower-business owner and approximately three to five other home-based micro-business owners who personally produce products and manage customer orders.

Evaluation and Final Decision

After evaluating the AI suggestions, I selected the second research question:

“How do time and capacity constraints affect the ability of a home-based micro-business to respond to customer demand?”

This question is the most appropriate because it directly links the problem identified in Task 1 to the concepts identified in Task 2. It takes into account the limited time of the owner, her personal involvement in production and the regular orders of her customers. It also does not presume that the business is unsuccessful or that demand is greater than capacity. The question allows these issues to be investigated rather than assuming the outcome.

I will employ a qualitative method as I wish to know the experience of the owner in managing time, production and customer orders in detail. It is appropriate to use an interpretivist philosophy because the research is based on the owner's experiences and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews will be the main data-collection method. The primary participant will be the owner of the flower business and about 3 other appropriate home-based micro-business owners, if available, will be included for comparison.

Purposive sampling will be employed because the participants should have first-hand experience in manufacturing products and handling customer orders. This design is not only realistic for a small undergraduate project but also maintains the focus of research on the relationship between time, capacity and customer demand.

Task 4: Research Proposal



Figure 3 shows the flower stocks before assembled

Research Question

What impact do time and capacity limitations have on the capacity of a home-based micro-business to meet customer needs?

Key Terms and Justification:

This study concentrates on a flower micro-business at home which is run by a full-time worker. The business makes handmade flower arrangements for different events like birthdays, convocations, home decorating etc. The business is getting regular orders, but the owner's time is limited as she has to attend to her full-time job and the flower business.

One of the key concepts is time constraints, which are situations where the person's time is restricted from doing certain activities. The availability of time is relevant to business activity, as evidenced by Delecourt (2025), who finds that less time spent on burdens is associated with better performance of women-owned businesses. The study was however, performed on working mothers in Kenya and so the results cannot be directly translated to a home-based business in Malaysia. (ScienceDirect)

Capacity constraints is the second key concept. For businesses with low capacity, it can be challenging to grow without adding or restructuring resources, as detailed by Coad et al. (2022). Their study also reveals that companies with high-capacity utilisation are likely to adjust to the constraints in place or invest in extra capacity. For this study, capacity is defined as the owner's capacity to create flower arrangements and to meet orders within the time and resources available.

Other factors include owner manager workload as the owner is also the person who is producing the flowers and handling customer orders, and he/she is also employed full-time. Jumelet et al. (2022) conducted 20 in-depth interviews with business owners and determined that business owners perceive and assess work demands differently based on their personal resources, roles and circumstances. (University of Johannesburg)

The research question was chosen to link these concepts together without making any assumption that the business is failing or that demand will actually be greater than supply. It enables the research to explore if the time and capacity constraints affect the business' response to customer orders.

Research Design

The design of the study will be qualitative since the study is aimed at understanding the experiences and perceptions of business owners. The intention is not just to count the number of orders or working hours, but to gain insight into the way the owner organises production, decides whether to take on orders and how she reacts when she doesn't have enough time.

The interpretivist research philosophy is suitable as the study is about the participants' experiences and interpretations of managing their businesses. The time constraints may affect different business owners in varying ways, and the results of the research are dependent on the experiences of those business owners.

Data Collection and Sampling

Semi-structured interviews will be the major technique used for data collection. The main participant will be the owner of the flower business as she is the one who is directly affected by the problem being explored. For comparison, about three to five other home-based micro-

business owners could be interviewed. Ideally, the participants should be owners who are directly involved in product creation or customer orders.

Thus, purposive sampling will be employed. This enables the selection of the participants since they have first-hand experience that is relevant to the research question. The owner of a handmade gift shop, flower shop, bakery, craft or personalised product shop may be suitable.

Some possible questions to ask include the amount of time that the owner has available, how the owner processes any customer orders, how production is organised, if there have been times when they were unable to take orders, and what they do when they have less capacity available than they need.

Supporting evidence, including Instagram posts, simple order records or examples of when orders were temporarily closed, might also be taken into account where permitted. These sources would be helpful in giving background information without the need for participants to give out sensitive financial or customer information.

The reliability, validity and practical considerations are discussed and explained.

Consistency in the interview guide provided to all participants, permission to record interviews, and careful documentation of the research process can help to ensure reliability. Validity can be enhanced by including those who have first-hand experience of home-based production and by comparing the main participant with other appropriate business owners. Information obtained from interviews may also be compared with business records, if available.

There are a number of ethical considerations. The participants should be given informed consent and should be informed about the use of their information. Personal identities, customer information and commercially sensitive information should be kept confidential. Participants should also have the option to opt out of the research.

A potential limitation is that the main participant is a family member. This may lead to researcher bias as my relationship with the participant may affect the interview and the interpretation of the results. The small sample also would not allow for generalisation of the results into other micro-businesses in Malaysia. The research, however, is designed to give a specific focus on a particular problem of the home business and not an overall picture of all micro businesses.

The research is therefore confined to a small scale and realistic study that will investigate the relationship between the available time, the production capacity and the capacity to meet customer demand.

Task 5

Presentation video link: https://youtu.be/huOyE8bHMyk?si=U9fJB8GCWfX_vOhi

Task 6: Reflection Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

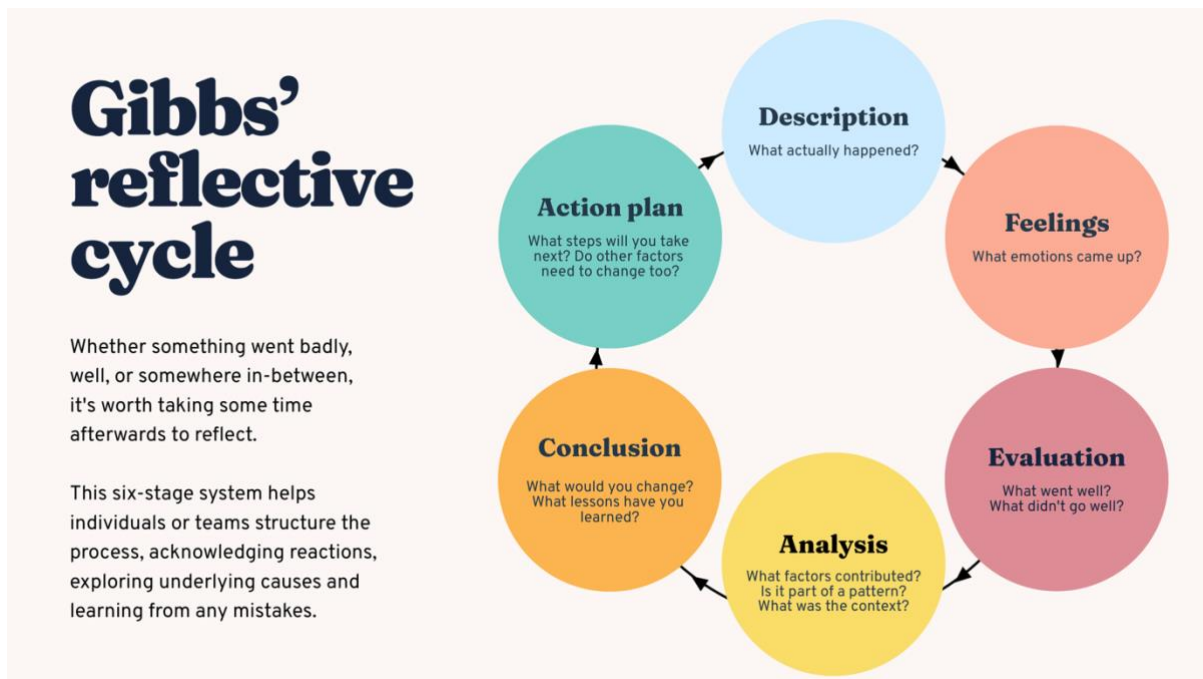


Figure 4 shows stages for Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Description

I did some research on a problem that I saw in my mother's flower business in Bangi for this assignment. Initially, I thought it was a time management problem as she has a full-time job and makes her own flowers and deals with customer orders. In the research process I gained a more specific understanding of the problem, taking into account time constraints, capacity constraints, owner/manager workload and micro-business growth constraints. Then I formulated a research question and suggested a qualitative research design involving interviews with pertinent home-based business owners.

Feelings

Initially it was easier to identify the problem as I had seen the business first hand. I did not feel as confident, however, in creating a research question that would be suitable for a real-life situation. At first, I thought it would be just a matter of hiring someone to help with the production, but I realised that this was an assumption, not a finding of the research. I started to get interested in the problem before proposing the solution. The research methodology was

also challenging; selecting the right participants and methods to be able to obtain useful information.

Evaluation

The positive aspect of this was that I could use a real business that I knew well, instead of picking a theoretical problem. This helped to pinpoint examples and to see the owner's situation. Another benefit of doing academic research was to relate the problem to a larger body of research. But one challenge was to focus on the topic. The business could be examined in a variety of ways such as Marketing, social media, Finance or Growth. The research was made more manageable by focusing on time and capacity.

Analysis

The research process helped me to gain a new perspective on the business problem. However, I learned that a small business does not necessarily have to take on every possible order from regular customers. In this instance, the owner's time is also valuable since she is the one who makes the flowers while working a full-time job. This enabled me to gain a better understanding of the link between time constraints and production capacity. I also found out that a business owner's tastes and preferences are important when taking into account potential changes. My mother likes to make the flowers herself as she enjoys it and doesn't want to lose control of the quality and profit so it should not be assumed that hiring workers is always the best answer.

Conclusion

In general, I learned that there is a distinction between problem identification and solution identification in the research process. Research questions should enable the researcher to explore the situation without assumptions about what they will find. I also learnt that a research proposal needs to be realistic. The study of a small number of relevant participants is easier to be achieved for an undergraduate project than the study of all Malaysian micro-businesses.

Action Plan

For future research or business-related activities, I will take more time to define the actual problem before coming up with solutions. I will also think about whether information I have is from first-hand experience, opinion or reliable evidence. The next step in this research would

be to interview the flower business owner and other pertinent home business owners. I would relate their experiences and then discuss how this can be applied in practice to manage time and capacity taking into account the owner's preference and the resources that are available to the business.

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