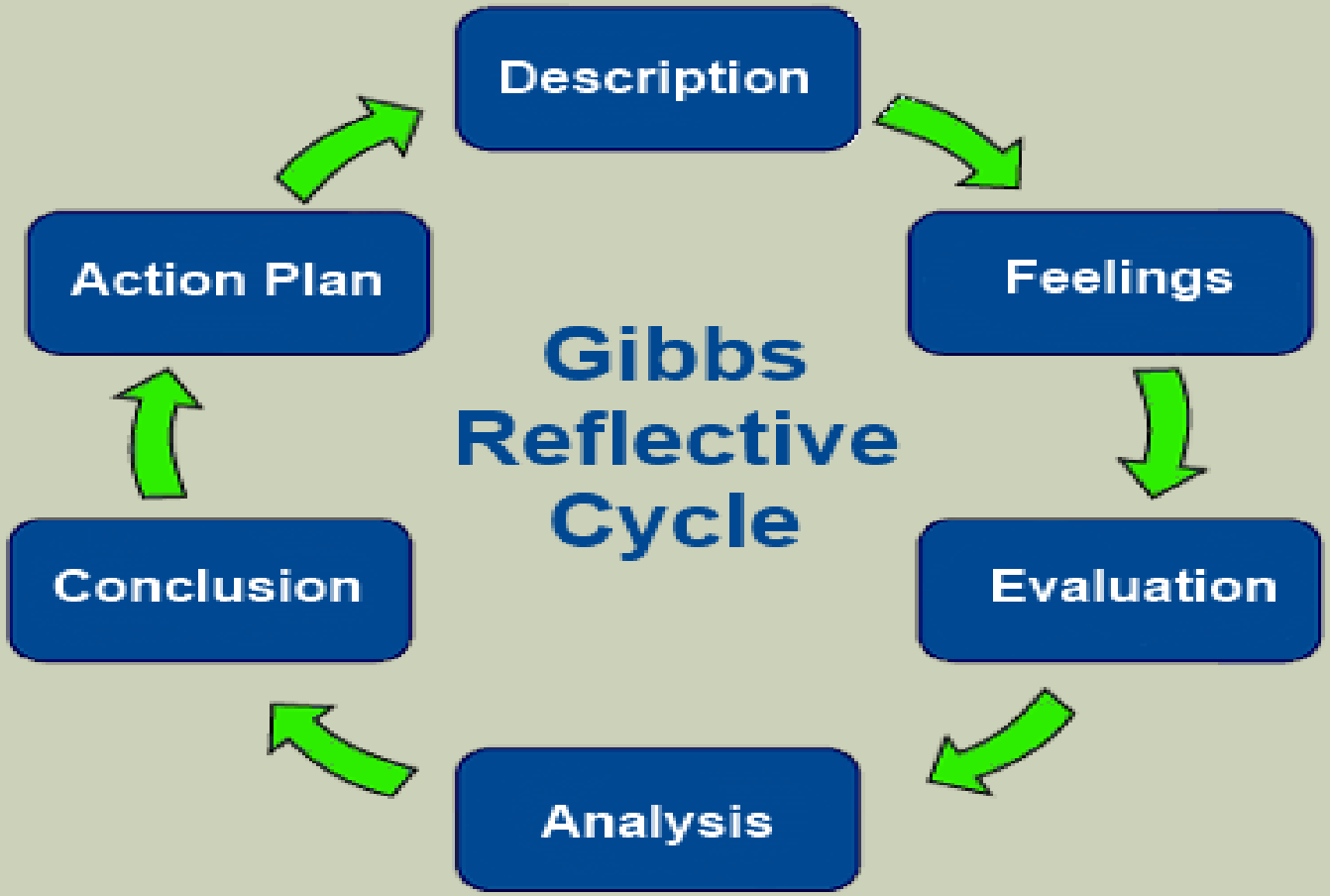
MSC PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH SKILLS MODULE

Reflective Commentary-Guidance

(Slides adapted from those kindly provided by Ruth Groff)

REFLECTIVE FRAME WORK: GIBBS REFLECTIVE CYLE



REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY OUTLINE/FORMAT

- Title page
- Description
- Feelings
- Evaluation
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Action Plan

Please write this in a reflective essay format using the 1st person and also anonymise if you use any persons name; along with a statement to that effect within the introduction of your essay.

Adapted from: Gibbs, G. (1988) Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods. Oxford: Further Education Unit.

DESCRIPTION

- In this section, you need to explain what you are reflecting on to your reader i.e., your experiences through the Professional Research Skills module
- include brief background information, such as what it is you're reflecting on, what career pathway you are relating your skills and development needs to, and tell the reader who was involved.
- It's important to remember to keep the information provided relevant and to-the-point.
- Don't waffle on about details that aren't required – if you do this, you're just using up valuable words that you'll get minimal marks for.

FEELINGS

- Discuss your feelings and thoughts about your experiences of engaging in various aspects of this module
- Consider questions such as: How did you feel at the time? What did you think at the time? What did you think about how well the session went afterwards?
- You can discuss your emotions honestly, but make sure to remember at all times that this is an academic piece of writing, so avoid ‘chatty’ text.

EVALUATION

- For your evaluation, discuss how well you think things went. Perhaps think about:
- How did you react to the situation, and how did other people react?
- What was good and what was bad about the experience?
- If you are writing about a difficult experience, did you feel that the situation was resolved afterwards? Why/why not?
- This section is a good place to include the theory and the work of other authors – remember it is important to include references in reflective writing.

ANALYSIS

- In your analysis, consider what might have helped or hindered the experience.
- You also have the opportunity here to compare your experience with the literature you have read.
- This section is very important, particularly for higher level writing.
- Many students receive poor marks for reflective assignments for not bringing the theory and experience together.

CONCLUSION

- In your conclusion, it is important to acknowledge:
- whether you could have done anything else;
- what you have learned from the experience; consider whether you could you have responded in a different way.
- If you are talking about a positive experience…discuss whether you would do the same again to ensure a positive outcome. Also consider if there is anything you could change to improve things even further.
- If the incident was negative…tell your reader how you could have avoided it happening and also how you could make sure it doesn’t happen again.

ACTION PLAN

- Action plans sum up anything you need to know and do to improve your research skills and wider professional competencies
- Perhaps you feel that you need to learn about something or attend some training. Could you ask your tutor for some advice?
- What can you do which means you will be better equipped to cope with a similar experience?
- What training needs have you identified?

ACADEMIC REFLECTIVE WRITING...

...**does not** address its reader using 'you'. You are writing about your experiences.

...**does not** use slang, contractions (*it's, don't I'll*) or note-taking abbreviations (*i.e., e.g., etc.).*

...**does** incorporate information from more passive learning, such as methods from textbooks, journal articles, social theories or procedures, policies or legislations, has to offer.

...**is** critical, given the above, it reappraises and reassesses what the writer thinks, believes and does so in light of an evaluation of theory and research.

...**does** reference its sources. It is not free writing. Now is the time to look up where something you have taken for granted all these years might be from.

...**does** use careful structure, paragraphing and good grammar, spelling and punctuation. It still has good-text basics such as a clear introduction and a conclusion.

...**does not** generalise. It is specific as it can be about experience and its relationships. It makes deep observations and links these to current learning, theory and research. It does not gloss over small but significant implications.

- **does** use 'I' judiciously. This is not to say it is simply free writing about your personal opinions and beliefs, but reflective writing cannot work if there is no ownership of the feelings, experiences and learning being explored.