

**THE DOCTORATE IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
REVIEW OF Professional LEARNING (BMPF7103)
HANDBOOK**

**WALES ACADEMY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND
APPLIED RESEARCH**

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the [Review of Professional Learning](#) module that is part of the first step towards the award of Doctorate in Professional Studies.

This module guide provides you with a description of:

- the learning outcomes for this module
- how you should develop your submission and what it should contain
- how your submission should be presented and how it will be assessed.

This module helps you reflect on the learning you have gained from work and other sources by guiding you through the writing of a critically reflective review of your professional learning to date.

Contents and layout of this guide

This guide will assist you in developing your submission for this module

Chapter 1 introduces the elements of the required submission. It also identifies the reasons why a Review of Learning is appropriate at this point in your programme and how it will be useful to you as you go forward.

Chapter 2 introduces professional studies and explores the nature of these studies. It looks at what we mean by work and the subjectivity you develop and bring to it.

Chapter 3 looks at learning and reflection in more detail and specifically introduces the current theories concerning how we learn.

Chapter 4 returns to the submission and how the work developed within chapters 1 to 3 enables you to write your review

Chapter 5 identifies the resources available to you as you develop your submission

Chapter 6 considers assessment, both the process of submission and the assessment that follows

Each chapter contains an introduction to relevant theories and concepts in professional studies as well as useful additional reading.

Key information about the Review of Learning

The purpose of this module is for you to:

- review your professional capabilities
- recognise and define your personal perspective on work and life
- develop your critical and reflective skills, and to use them to produce a piece of sustained and persuasive written argumentation, which lays out your credentials for work at masters or doctoral level.

Through the review you will identify the skills and capabilities you are bringing to your programme and how they shape your unique professional perspective. You will also identify why it is appropriate that you are considering doctorate level enquiry at this point in your professional development. The combined submission makes a powerful case for you as an advanced practitioner in your field capable of undertaking your proposed enquiry at doctoral level.

For a full list of the learning outcomes against which your work will be assessed, see appendices.

Materials to submit for assessment

- Annotated CV
- Job Description
- Training (learning) Needs Analysis
- Comprehensive Personal Development Plan
- A Reflective Review of Learning

Learning resources.

These study resources are available to you:

- The DProf teaching team
- this module guide
- the module leader
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David learning resources, including the library

Links between this module and other parts of the DProf programme

All candidates must obtain 180 credits at level 7 and these are usually gained within the first year of their programme. This credit tally must include the three compulsory modules:

- **Review of Learning** (30 credits)
- **Practitioner research proposal** (30 credits)
- **Approaches to research and academic communication** (30 credits).

These modules evidence the ability to critically review and plan research but candidates also require the capability to undertake work-based research. This capability is developed in **the modules dealing with quantitative and qualitative research methods**.

The **Review of Learning** is part of the starting point of your DProf programme. Its focus is on your professional past, on the learning and experiences that have brought you to this point. It also provides the underpinning for all future work you do on the programme. You will have to demonstrate here that you have the capabilities to undertake project work at masters/doctoral level.

Your **Review of Learning** review is thus both an analysis of your professional learning so far and a forward-looking document likely to be a useful aide-memoire when you come to develop this learning agreement.

Key sequence to the submission and assessment of this module

We suggest that you:

- First prepare your cv and job description
- Write your first draft of your Review of Learning (word count: 4,000 words) and submit for formative feedback from the module leader (make sure you do this in good time to allow them sufficient time to provide you with that feedback)
- Whilst you are waiting for your feedback prepare your training needs analysis and personal development plan and submit for feedback
- Finally amend and develop your submission in light of your feedback and submit in good time

Chapter 1

SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBMISSION FOR THIS MODULE

The submission for this module consists of the following elements:

- Review of Learning (word count: 4,000 words)
- Annotated CV
- Job Description
- Training (learning) Needs Analysis
- Comprehensive Personal Development Plan

In **Chapter 4** the requirements for the Review of Learning is considered in detail but below is a short introduction to all the elements, their size and content. Taking each in turn: Review of Learning Your Review of Learning is a substantial document (word count: 4,000 words) in which you argue a case for your ability to undertake work at masters/doctoral level. It is an overview of the learning you have achieved within your professional work and as such it should identify the capabilities you have developed with illustrative examples that serve to demonstrate the depth of this learning and your level of attainment within these capabilities. It should not be a simple narrative of activities and achievements but a critical and evaluative review.

Preparation for your review involves:

- reviewing and reflecting on the main themes/areas of your professional learning to date
- offering a persuasive and holistic account of your current professional self
- linking your past learning to your future intentions on the DProf programme

One way of considering this piece of work is that it provides a map of your professional learning. You only have 4,000 words so the map cannot cover all the details but it will still need to identify the major landmarks of your learning. This may include how you have developed new technical knowledge as well as methods of working and models of practice. It will identify how you have taken your experiences, formal learning, reading and other learning opportunities and developed your own 'signature' to the way you conduct your professional life – effectively your unique professionalism and practice.

Content of the Review of Learning

Relevance to the focus of your DProf programme rather than exhaustiveness is the key to the content of your review. Each person's Review of Learning is necessarily highly individualistic. However, you are likely to need to discuss and critically evaluate both theoretical and practical aspects of your learning:

- **Theory and knowledge**

- your perspectives, values and the areas of knowledge that underpin your professional field (you may wish to consider the issues raised in the text on epistemology and ontology)
- links between theory and your practice, particularly in the analysis of organisational development and change
- any literature which indicates the theoretical underpinning of your reflective approach to your professional context
- any relevant formal postgraduate learning (if you are in doubt about the level or type of award you have for any formal learning, talk to your module tutor).

- **Practice**

- the links between your past learning and your practice
- your research and professional capabilities
- your progression and development in your organisation and sphere of work over time
- your responsibilities and how you have increased them
- the authority you have and the resources at your disposal to undertake project work at DProf level
- your achievements
- any relevant non-employment activities.

Why a Review of Learning at the start of your programme?

The Review of Learning has a specific role within the DProf programme and it is useful to reflect upon the purpose of this module and why it comes at this point in your programme.

You should be aware that the programme in its entirety, that is including all the submitted modules, is a DProf programme

This may seem obvious but it is common to think of the project as the DProf and ignore the contribution of the other modules. The project is the final submission and it will take

the majority of the time of the programme but it is, in effect, the culmination of a programme of study that starts with the Review of Learning module. This module and the following ones dealing with research methods and academic communication are critical to designing the project activity and achieving its potential for successful implementation. Work-based research at masters or doctorate level requires researchers to be fully aware of their positionality within the workplace. This term encompasses the position of the practitioners-researchers within an organisation or working environment, their role, their influence, responsibilities as well as the subtler influences of the business culture, norms and the personal values and beliefs that they bring to this role. To conduct practitioner research at this level requires that you have undertaken a review of what you bring to the programme as a practitioner and researcher.

As a researcher you will have a specific stance informed by your beliefs about the nature of knowledge, how you currently use it and the criteria you employ to judge its appropriateness. This stance will also determine the type of knowledge you want to produce and why it is appropriate within your specific context.

As an advanced practitioner you will also bring your professional perspective to your research. This perspective is shaped by your experience and expertise. To be clear about your perspective as a practitioner you need to undertake what is essentially an enquiry into how your learning has developed within your career and what you bring to your role as a practitioner. As a candidate on this programme you will have achieved a significant degree of expertise within your work role and position. By expertise we do not mean purely the technical ability to provide a tested solution to a well-defined problem but the ability to work with uncertainty, ambiguity and limited knowledge of the issue, to arrive at a solution that will be applied to provide outcomes that are monitored and modified in light of the results. Expertise will also include the softer skills required to work and engage with your reports and stakeholders who are central to your work based learning.

All of these elements have been learned and are part of your continuing practice. They contribute to your habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) – the sum of life experience, which produces the unconscious ways of being and doing with which we inhabit our world. In other words, it is a set of dispositions which essentially constitute your world view or ontology; how each of us perceives the world and our actions within it.

Your ontological view is unique to you and will essentially be your ‘signature presence’ as a leader or advanced practitioner in your field. It will include the being and doing aspects of work as well as the knowing. It is what shapes every aspect of your practice from how you approach an issue, engage with colleagues and bring it to completion.

Uncovering this level of learning and how it informs the expertise, perspective and capabilities you bring to your work may seem daunting at first but this module and its submission have been designed to help you in that process.

In summary, a doctorate programme is concerned with the exploration, generation and development of knowledge. Every candidate's professional studies programme is uniquely their own. It seeks to develop new knowledge and understanding of the work context by building upon the professional skills and knowledge of the candidate themselves. It is therefore essential to develop a clear understanding of what constitutes knowledge in professional life;

- how we, as individual learners, have acquired it
- how we have, in turn, generated knowledge and learning in the past.

This learning will, in general, be highly contextualised and its form and function will depend on who we are as individuals and the environment within which we work.

For you this means that the first task in the programme is to review your professional learning up to this point – how you have developed skills and knowledge that allow you to do the work you do. This wealth of knowledge is what you bring to your programme and what you will build upon as you progress through your studies. It is clear that an exploration of the capabilities you possess at the start of your programme is critical in identifying the bedrock upon which the rest of your programme sits.

As you go forward you will explicitly build on the work undertaken here. You probably already have an idea about what you would like to focus on in your research and development project. The design and planning of that project is undertaken in your proposal module where you explicitly use the reflections you develop here, namely:

- the personal perspective and values you bring to your project work and how they influence not only your professional life but what you are seeking to develop within your research
- your organisational context and how this impacts on the type of knowledge you use and will want to develop within your project
- How you can creatively and constructively combine your roles as researcher, practitioner and organisational member.

Annotated CV

From the Latin meaning 'course of life', a Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a document often asked for in a job advert. It helps the recruiter to sift applications to find those who (based on their CV) are a good fit for the vacancy and (on paper) are worth shortlisting for interview. Therefore a great deal of guidance is available on how to write a good CV to get you to the next stage of the recruitment process. All guidance revolves around keeping your CV short, punchy, linked to the person spec for the role you're applying for.

We realise that your CV is unique to yourself. No-one else will have the same combination of educational background/work experience/life experience/hobbies and interests. So what we

want in your submission is a celebration of your 'course of life'. Take your CV and expand on it – forget the single page rule! Explain what it means when you say for example: 'experienced in leading a team'. How big was the team? How long did you lead them for? In what context? Were there issues? How did you resolve them? What was the most memorable achievement? Etc.

As a suggestion, retain your original CV in black text and use a coloured text for the annotation.

Job Description

Hopefully a Job Description exists for your role. However, it's unlikely to cover everything you do! It is acceptable to add to your description the additional activities you carry out or additional responsibilities you have. As with your CV, retain the original Job description in black and use a coloured font for any additions

If there is no job description available for your role, then you will need to generate your own, for the submission. Please indicate that this is the case.

Training (learning) Needs Analysis

Carrying out a Learning Needs Analysis is the step between reviewing the content of your CV and the requirements of your Job Description, and leads to the generation of your Personal Development Plan.

The Learning needs analysis is not only informed by your job description, but also from many other sources such as:

- The person specifications for your current and future roles
- Your organisation's strategic plans
- Your department's operational plans
- Job evaluation data
- Professional Body requirements linked to your role e.g. CIPD, CMI, HEA, PSF etc.
- National Occupational Standards – competency frameworks
- Interviews with line managers
- Input from your team
- Appraisals
- 360 degree feedback
- Psychometric reports

Comprehensive Personal Development Plan

Having carried out a Learning Needs Analysis, the next step is to generate a plan to address these needs. Generally, this involves:

- Description of needs
- Prioritising
- Financing
- Resource allocation
- Assigning timescales and targets
- Gaining your line-manager's support.

You may already have a comprehensive personal development plan, whose structure/layout is dictated by your organisation. It is totally acceptable to submit this. If you do not have one and need to generate one, you can use any format as long as it includes the following as a minimum:

- A description of the need
- Timescale
- Target date
- Resources required

Preparation for the module

The core activity for this module is, as we have discussed, a review of your professional work. We are not asking you to develop a list of achievements but, instead, to explore and identify the learning that made them possible. This will be specific to you and will be dependent on a range of factors such as your background; culture; work experience and interests. In essence it is useful to reflect that:

“most of what we do, think, feel and believe is learnt”. Brockbank and McGill, 2006

Within this handbook you will consider what constitutes learning and what your learning reveals about you as an individual. You will illuminate the values, beliefs and the ethics that shape who you are. You will reflect on, not only what you learn from each situation in which you find yourself, but also on what you choose to use going forward into new situations.

There are several ways you can approach this task. You may feel confident to prepare a draft after conversation with your tutor and reading of the resources in this manual and on moodle. Alternatively, you may prefer to work to a given framework. If it is the latter then you will get most benefit if you work through the series of activities at the end of each chapter which, taken together, provide a framework for your critical reflections. Or, you may decide that you do not need all the activities but that particular ones support you in specific areas. In preparation for these activities it is suggested that you initially identify the main milestones and features of your career to date by doing the following tasks.

Activities

1

Draw up (either diagrammatically or in written form) a timeline of your professional life to date. If you are using a diagram the scale should be flexible and indicative only.

It should include:

- your starting point (first job, university course or independent role)
- significant events or milestones (personal and professional) which have impacted upon your work and its direction
- ethical issues/dilemmas that have impacted upon your role or career path
- formal learning programmes attended (in-house or external to your work environment) and their purpose

- significant individuals who have had an impact upon your working life. Why are they significant? What happen or what developed from your interaction which was impactful?
- volunteer or planned activities you have undertaken outside of work.

2

Review your current role description (from paid work, volunteer work or other planned activity) and identify the capabilities you need to do your role.

This will include:

- your core technical competencies; for example, financial management, clinical science or psychology
- your professional skills such as leadership, communication and project management.

3

Identify how you keep up-to-date with these capabilities, that is, how you maintain your learning and access new knowledge through your continuing professional development. Examples may include reading professional journals, coaching or attending workshops and conferences.

Comment You will return to this sketch of your professional life throughout the handbook. You will be asked to consider it from a variety of perspectives to draw out the learning you have achieved. First, however, in the next two chapters you will consider what work-based learning is and how you can develop reflection

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION TO REFLECTION IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Nature of professional studies as learning from practice

Adults may learn through formal taught means, such as university courses and through their own experience. Professional learning can be a type of experiential learning, in the sense that it is gained mostly through what people do at work. It focuses on individuals' work practices and on experience gained from their work roles, cumulatively, throughout their careers.

Of course, the learning from practice that makes up your Doctorate in Professional Studies programme has formal elements. Evidence that you have indeed learned from undertaking the programme is required in the form of coursework that is formally assessed for the quality of the learning it demonstrates. However, your DProf programme differs from many university courses because much of the content is experiential – it is focused on your own work and professional experience.

In the DProf, the content of your programme is not defined for you by others. It is acknowledged you have the expertise on the topic of your own professional studies learning. It is thus necessary for you to acknowledge the responsibility you have for learning from your work activities – in other words, you are a self-managed learner. This requires ongoing reflection and self-monitoring and is likely to be very different from other formal university learning experiences you may have had.

It is important to be clear that the focus of your DProf programme is on both your field of work itself and your learning through that work. What you learn about is learning itself – your own professional learning. It is not important what your field of work is specifically, but that it supplies you with the raw material and the work experiences which you can use to create knowledge relevant to your work. In essence you are being asked to reflect upon what you have learnt from your own professional learning.

You bring to this programme your own professional experience, as described above. The programme consists of a framework of three core modules and each of these asks you to consider an aspect of professional learning which you apply to the specific subject of your own work. What makes reflection so important in your DProf programme is that, as you will see later, it is a constitutive element in experiential learning.

Reflection – historical, cultural and spiritual significance

With the recent recognition of reflection as an essential element of professional and individual learning, it is tempting to believe it developed within Western cultures during the 20th and 21st centuries. Reflection and contemplation have, however, been at the centre of religious and cultural developments for the past two millennia. The great world traditions of Confucianism and Daoism in China, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, monotheism in Israel and philosophical rationalism in Greece developed from around 900 BCE in what has been called the Axial Age – a pivotal period in the spiritual and cultural development of humanity. The growth of Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam can be considered as flowerings of that original Axial Age (Armstrong, 2006).

Within each of these traditions, the practice of contemplation and reflection upon one's self and one's actions is considered central to the cultivation of a spiritual life and the well-being and development of the community as a whole. The sages demanded that every person become self-conscious and aware of their actions and their responsibilities to others and to themselves. Techniques such as mindfulness, meditation and guided contemplations developed to aid this practice and are an essential part of the lives of millions of people today. In recent years, psychology and neuroscience have developed the tools to cognitively understand the efficacy of such practices.

In all these traditions humans are challenged to be 'skilled interpreters' of life and the world (Veling, 2005). Interpretation remains a 'skill' and 'art' that needs to be guided and nurtured as we often face multiple and perhaps conflicting interpretations of our experience of the world. Hermeneutics is the umbrella term identifying the discipline that asks the question 'How do we become practiced in the art of interpretation?' It encompasses the sacred as well as humanist literatures and embraces the interpretation of text, artefacts and social events. You will meet this term again when we consider interpretation in the context of research.

To sum up, humans have used reflection and similar practices to make sense of our spiritual, physical and psychological worlds for centuries. You may already reflect deeply on everything you do as part of your way of being in the world or reflection may be something in a demanding world you find you have little time for, or it may be something you do but have never named it in this way. Reflection has a central role in the planning and carrying out of your professional studies programme.

Reflection – an essential element in professional studies

Much of the professional development in UK higher education is now influenced by Schon's (1987) reflective practitioner paradigm. Its implementation in a variety of contexts has led to reflective practice becoming an educational orthodoxy (Clegg et al, 2002). Professional studies, achieving workplace success and gaining academic honours are about meeting and exceeding our expectations often in creative and novel ways. It will produce new learning and will often challenge conventional or traditional thinking. It is not about orthodoxy!

Achieving your goals ought to be developmental and therefore stretching. Within your programme you will find many opportunities to stretch yourself and to evidence what you have achieved. However, the programme you are about to embark upon is much more than meeting outcomes and writing assignments. It is about change and, consequentially, changes in your work situation:

- how it connects to the relationship, tasks and resources of others
- how it critically changes you
- how you connect your various communities of practices and networks to achieve your own well-being.

This notion of change is not about the neutrality of some idea of truth, rather it is the kind of change that shapes you for the better in some moral sense and has a positive impact on your work situations.

Professional studies are all-encompassing requiring you to engage with those you work with and with the way you see the world. It concerns you making a significant difference or change that comes from reflecting on:

- what you are and might be
- what is and what ought to be
- what is speculated and turning that into action.

Past candidates in the programme have used their studies to address issues at the heart of their work. Examples have been as diverse as the design and implementation of telephone banking systems in Cyprus and the development of a model of practice for executive coaching of senior leaders. Each of these projects has challenged the candidates to identify what needed to change, to define their role within that change and then to bring it through to successful execution.

To do this you need to reflect on what you do, why you do it and how you might change the circumstance of your project in ways that lead to the achievement of your aims. It is a tall order and it is not easy but you will find it highly rewarding.

So what is reflection?

First it is about your engagement with a problem, a circumstance or a critical instance where you acted or refrained from acting and what you learned about yourself. Second, it is about going beyond simple feedback on what happened – it is about why it happened, what might have happened and what would have been a better way for the focused episode to have turned out.

For example, in considering if you might have behaved differently after the director's weekly communication meeting, you might first consider why it is they are being held. Are these meetings about communication or power; is the purpose benign or exploitative; why is what is being said, being said and why is what is not being said, not being said? Reflection on these issues and then acting, using your self-knowledge of your experiences, can lead to a form of praxis. Praxis is when we combine theory/thinking and practice. It becomes an attitude, a way of being that makes you not only a better colleague but enhances all the personal and professional roles in your life.

Many writers have attempted to engage with the notion of reflection and its role in personal growth through learning and critical pedagogies. Before exploring them in a little more detail it is important to be clear about what the consequences of reflection are. The consequences are central to the nature of work based learning. It is about becoming a good practitioner, about choosing the best option not the easiest and it is about respecting humanity. This is a large claim but professional studies are not about doing some simple exercises such as those you have rehearsed many times before at college or at the workplace. It is not about doing a task in tried-and-tested ways to achieve a result and it is not about being superficial and safe. Work based learning, through reflection, is about making a difference, taking a risk, treating people with respect and it is about achieving workplace goals. It is also about transformation – your transformation.

Work, subjectivity and reflexivity

Being effective in the work situation is a central concern for individuals, corporations and nations especially now with the many challenges the world faces. Individuals have to take more responsibility and be more proactive about the kind of world they want to live in. In this module you will bring together three key elements in your own agency. These are:

- the work itself
- your subjectivity and its related concepts of identity and reflexivity
- your learning through research.

Work

Work can be defined in many ways. A useful definition to employ is Billett's:

“work is individuals’ engagement in the goal-directed activities that usually emanate from social and cultural purposes, although these practices have particular meanings for the individual who engages with them and are often shaped by circumstances of their manifestation”. 2006, p.4

From this it follows that work done in the home, community, workplace and educational institutions are not conceptually discrete. What is important is how the individual negotiates with the setting that constitutes work. Work is therefore an important culturally driven practice in which the work acts to achieve goals which are implicit in the identity of the individual. Work itself, or the consequences of work, reveal the identity of the agent undertaking the practice.

Subjectivity

We all respond to situations differently. We perceive, think, feel and act from within our own experience and in ways that will shape how we will attend to the future. We have different dispositions, we see things in different ways and, although we don’t need to get too philosophical, what we create by our actions constitutes who we are. In many cases, we share understandings of the multiple constituents of the world and the behaviours of the creatures that inhabit it but we can react quite differently from each other to situations, even the same situation, depending on our experiences. For example, we all see the atrocities of war in the media but actual experience of war will change the way in which we respond to the representation on the news. Hence individuals’ subjectivities comprise a set of conceptions, procedures, beliefs and values and dispositions that are both conscious and non-conscious and are linked to our sense of who we are.

“Our understandings and approaches to life are deeply shaped by our particular contexts – our cultural backgrounds, our social conditionings, our economic realities, our personal histories, and so on. This is a fairly commonplace truth in today’s world [...] where we are increasingly exposed to a plurality of human ways of being-in-theworld”. Veling, 2005, p.23

The impact of our values and beliefs on our behaviour cannot be underestimated. Values are the ideals you hold which give meaning to your life and underpin your beliefs. However, values exist only in relation to other values so we tend to prioritise them. In this way, someone who values honesty may not always tell the truth. Their higher priority value of ‘being liked’ will mean that they may not give honest feedback for fear of alienating the recipient. When you value something you are motivated to achieve it. Therefore, if you understand your values you understand what motivates you.

Identities

The social experience of the workplace includes the subtle, yet ubiquitous, social suggestions that are encountered in the conduct of daily life. These interactions influence our way of seeing ourselves as well as others and develop our own sense of identity. We have an identity as child and student, employee or parent at different, but often at overlapping, points in our lives. They often influence what we do and how we feel and interact in the workplace.

The relationship of the social and the individual is compelling (see Archer, 2007). The role of personal agency and intentionality is held to be central in the relationship between thinking and acting. In the workplace, changes in one's own way of knowing become evident as you learn how to do things, notice what is critical, reflect on where you have changed your own relationship to the [situatedness](#) of your work and on how the personal, the social and the professional influence each other.

An example may be the development of your professional identity as you moved from being a new graduate having learned a single discipline to becoming an employed professional using a variety of learning from other disciplines such as business administration. You might understand your life differently; you may seek new opportunities or new networks all of which affect your personal epistemologies and ontogenetic development in the workplace. In order to own these changes, you need to reflect and understand reflexivity; who you are; what your goals are and how you might achieve them. The changes that come from your everyday life, from the repetition and from the novel, direct your intentionality and agency. This agency, and the action that flows from it, is based on your personal subjectivities – your perceptions, feelings and beliefs. In this way workplace practices are transformed by personal agency negotiated with the social normal prevalent.

Moreover, your assumptions about knowledge, that is, your epistemological beliefs, its nature, how it is created and its truth are also related to your personal agency and what you believe. Your epistemological beliefs therefore influence how you deal with reality and how you solve the problems that you encounter. For example, you might hold that knowledge is simple, that it is delivered by authorities so that it is certain. That view may provide you with a security which meets your ontological position. On the other hand, you might hold that knowledge is a social construct, therefore relative and questionable, which provides you with challenges and risk that suit a different ontological frame.

Reflexivity

According to Archer, reflexivity

“is the regular exercising of the mental ability, shared in all normal people, to consider themselves in relations to their (social) context and vice versa”. 2006, p.40

Expressly, this can mean silently thinking things through or mulling them over in one's head. It is, according to Archer, synonymous with an internal conversation. It is the mental activities that reveal themselves as self-observation, self-monitoring, self-criticism, self-evaluation and self-commitment in relation to others. It includes self-searching questions, the answers to which determine our action within the context we find ourselves. Yet reflexivity is not a vague self-awareness but a questioning exploration; it determines our conscious agency. Indeed, it is the process in which we all engage in the workplace when practices are innovative or fail or become boringly repetitious and where others work with whom we engage. Our engagement impacts them and their engagement with us impacts us.

Such reflections raise questions: where do you fit, what is your function, what is your identity, how do others respond to you. These are all questions relating to subjectivity, identity and reflexivity in the context of work.

The challenge is that we tend to be action-oriented, responding rather than thinking about our past actions or agency. This seeking a place for yourself, an understanding of whom you are and what this means to future actions is a central aspect of professional studies learning. A review of your previous learning is a place where the practice of reflexivity and reflection (a less directional form of reflexivity) can be undertaken and where the internal conversation is moved into the public domain. It is a place where you engage with your past reflexivity and, rather than lose it to memory or into the behavioural repertoire which is your subjectivity, you recall it and you record it as it integrates into the intended project you are to undertake.

Activity

Revisit your timeline from the preparation activity in this manual. In light of the concepts introduced in this chapter reflect upon the following:

- Have you identified all the work roles you have undertaken?
- How has your sense of identity (both personal and professional) changed during this journey? Did it follow your role description at work or did it evolve independently?
- How have your top 10 values changed or adapted during your professional life? What are the ethical issues/considerations that have informed this change?
- Evidence of how your subjectivity has changed during your professional life. Are there some issues that you respond to differently as a consequence?

Add these reflections to your timeline.

Comment These considerations illustrate the dynamic nature of your evolution as a professional. Throughout the course of your working life, the learning you achieve does not impact purely upon your capability to perform a technical activity but also upon your world view – your ontology. We will now consider learning theories and how learning brings about these changes.

Chapter 3

WHAT IS LEARNING AND REFLECTION?

A common definition of learning is a 'process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one's knowledge, skills, values and world views' (Illeris, 2000). This definition makes it plain that learning is not only a change in knowledge and skills but can, and probably will, also impact on your values and worldview. This worldview is essentially your ontology. How you see the world and what you consider to be reality.

There is little agreement about what constitutes learning as different disciplines approach it from various perspectives. Most sources are in agreement that the evidence of learning is change. Change can be in reference to behaviours but can also include the way one thinks about a situation or person. Historically, learning was identified mainly as a cognitive process – the acquiring of new facts and understanding but this thinking has moved on to a more holistic view of the individual's learning in which there is a recognition that people learn by action and experimentation with new concepts. Scholars are now taking into account the emotional aspects of learning (Brockbank and McGill, 2006). Therefore, when considering what learning is, it is important that you consider the doing, thinking and feeling aspects.

Learning theories

The study of what happens when we learn has been the domain of learning theories. There are three main philosophical schools; they differ, for example, in whether they focus on the individual learner or on the social context in which learning occurs and in whether they treat learners as passive or active.

Behaviourism Research on adult learning first developed in behaviourist psychology. Within the behaviourist tradition, learning is understood as a change in behaviour, as the outcome of learners' responses to stimuli in the environment.

Cognitivism In cognitive learning theories, the focus is on the mental processes by which learning occurs.

Constructivism The passivity of the learner inherent in these two views is challenged by those who believe that learning is about individual growth and change as adults seek to construct meaning from their experience of the social environment. This is a constructivist view of learning. Humanist views assert that learning is guided by individuals' self-identified needs. Social constructivism draws attention to the constructed nature of what we accept as reality, which includes the social settings in which learning occurs, and the effects on learning of these social constructs.

The central notion of learning, adopted for work based learning, is one based on experiential learning, that is, learning where reflection on and in action is critical for change – personal, organisational and societal.

Further reading

Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (2006) Facilitating reflective learning through mentoring and coaching, Philadelphia: Kogan Page US.

Ways of learning

Deep learning and reflection

Deep learning has been identified as occurring when individuals take responsibility for their own learning to create their own constructs and meaning. They are able to describe the meaning they have achieved and justify how they have come to these understandings. Learning theories have identified that it is through reflection that this deep and significant learning occurs. You will find a comprehensive account of reflection in Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) and you may find the definition below very helpful when considering reflection in the context of work based learning:

Reflective learning is “an intentional process, where social context and experience are acknowledged, in which learners are active individuals, wholly present, engaging with others and open to challenge and the outcome involves transformation as well as improvement of both the individual and their organisation” Brockbank, McGill and Beech, 2002, p.6

The word reflection in this handbook is not simply being used as a synonym for ‘thinking’. Reflection is a thoughtful (in the sense of deliberative), consideration of your experience, which leads you to decide:

- what that experience means to you
- how it challenges and changes you
- what it means for your future practice.

The construction and assignation of meaning to experience then gives you the possibility of looking at your experience from other points of view. This embodies the idea that reflection can be critical, evaluative. It is critical reflection that you need to engage in on your Professional Studies programme.

Reflection enables you to learn more effectively because it develops your ability to evaluate your own experience – whether it is the experience of learning or doing your daily work. Reflection helps you to:

- look at an experience
- understand it better
- learn from it

Not everyone sees themselves as a reflective person. Nevertheless, reflection (even if we don't call it that) is a part of daily life because everyone needs to make sense of their experiences. You may find yourself reflecting in some of these types of circumstances:

When you have a new experience you often think more deeply about it, rather than take it for granted. When something is complex, or puzzles or surprises you, or does not go according to plan, you are likely to reflect in order to reorganise your thinking or feelings and so come to new insights about the issue.

Activity

Reflection in everyday life

Think of an event or an issue at work that surprised or puzzled you or was in some way unfamiliar or out of the ordinary. For example:

- You were given a difficult task and were surprised at how well you faced the challenges associated with completing it
- The people you needed to speak to were not responding to your calls. How did you respond in the situation you identified?

Comment For the examples given you might have asked yourself 'Why did things turn out they way they did?' This is a reflective question – one that helps you think purposefully about the unexpected. You may have followed this by revising your opinions or deciding to change your behaviour in some way. If you did, you were likely to have been reflecting – weighing things up and thinking them through – even if you didn't give this name to what you were doing.

The requirement to reflect critically on your learning is a way to evaluate the learning experiences you have during your programme. In addition to engaging in the activities required by each module on this programme, it is important for you to stand back and reflect on the learning that these activities result in. This is a valuable skill that you can then use to guide your engagement with all your future learning experiences.

The development of reflection skills is now an aim of higher education in many fields. It is particularly valued in fields where practical experience and academic study need to be closely integrated, but it is increasingly used in subjects right across the HE curriculum. One of the rationales is that reflecting on experience encourages 'deep' rather than 'surface' learning. This is an important skill that helps individuals to engage in the lifelong learning that rapid changes in work roles now increasingly necessitate.

Practical application

What are you being invited to evaluate, consider or reflect upon? The answer is – your own experience of work, your learning from it and how this learning has shaped how you see the world, approach work issues and achieve within your work setting. Reflection has some key characteristics. These will help you to recognise when you are being reflective.

First, to reflect involves practical and active engagement on your part. In the bullet list below the verbs (or 'action' words) that describe what reflection means, are highlighted. You reflect when you actively:

- **examine** and **investigate** your learning and working practices
- ask **questions** about your experience with a view to trying to understand it
- **probe** your assumptions and the values that underlie your behaviour
- **formulate** judgements and **develop** conclusions about your actions.

Clearly reflection does not just happen on its own!

Second, the purpose of engaging in these reflective activities makes you more aware of your experience and behaviour. They help you to interrogate it (for example, 'Why did I do that?'), evaluate it, make sense of it and give it meaning. As you become more aware of why you act as you do and the assumptions that underpin your actions, you are in a strong position to change them if you want to. The ability to change helps you to grow and develop – in short, to learn from your experience.

Several models describe how people reflect on their experience. Here are three well-known ones which approach reflection in different ways.

Reflective practitioner model (Donald Schon)

There are two types of reflection in this model:

- **Reflection-in-action** This is where you reflect on your actions while you are doing them and make immediate changes to your behaviour; for example, 'Something isn't working here – how can I improve things right now?'
- **Reflection-on-action** This is where you look back over what you have done, mull it over and review it; for example 'Why did that go so well?' 'What can I learn for next time?'

Reflective cycle (Graham Gibbs)

There are six steps to aid reflective practice in this model:

- **Description** First you describe what happened in an event or situation
- **Feelings** Then you identify your responses to the experience, for example 'What did I think and feel?'

- **Evaluation** You can also identify what was good and bad about the event or situation
- **Analysis** The ‘feelings’ and ‘evaluation’ steps help you to make sense of the experience
- **Conclusions** With all this information you are now in a position to ask ‘What have I learned from the experience?’
- **Action plan** Finally, you can plan for the future, modifying your actions, on the basis of your reflections.

Experiential learning cycle (David Kolb)

Reflection is a key element in successfully learning from experience in this model:

- **Experience** First you involve yourself in a task in an open-minded way
- **Reflection** Then you consider, that is reflect on, the experience; for example, by asking ‘What did I notice about my experience?’
- **Conceptualisation** This reflection helps you to make sense of your experience and to answer the question ‘What does my experience mean?’
- **Experimentation** Finally, you can check out the adequacy of the meanings you have arrived at by putting them into practice in the real world. You might start this process by asking ‘What do I want to do differently next time?’ This takes you on to a new cycle of learning as you immerse yourself in new experience again.

Kolb’s learning cycle (see Figure 4.1) is a model of the structural relations between these four modes of relating to the world, showing structural dimensions of ‘grasping’ and ‘transformation’ and resulting knowledge forms (after Kolb, 1984, p. 42). Kolb’s definition of learning is:

“the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” Kolb, 1984, p.41

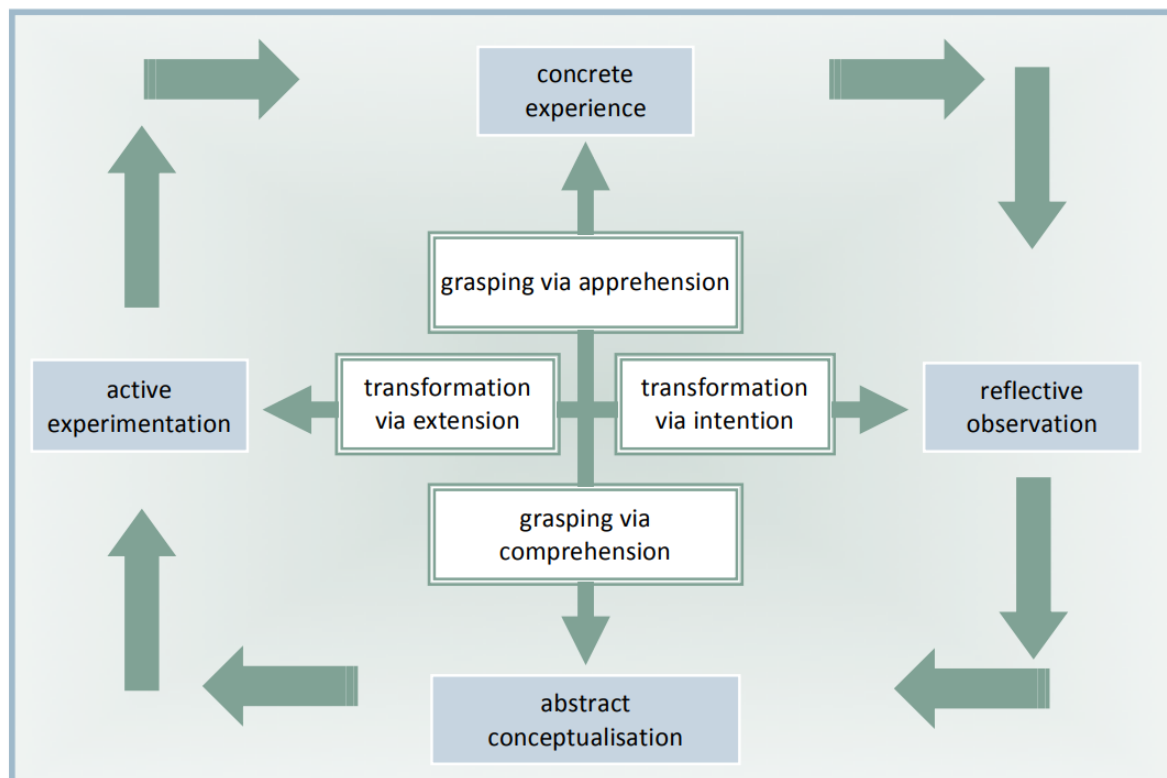
There are several critiques of Kolb’s cycle (see Kayes, 2002):

- It takes very little account of different cultural experiences/conditions.
- The idea of stages or steps does not sit well with the reality of thinking,
- There is scant regard for individual learning preferences.

However, it has been influential in moving the focus of learning away from the ‘instructor’ to the learner and forms a useful way of understanding why you are asked to reflect on your learning throughout your Professional Studies programme.

Kolb's learning theory argues that learning is indeed a lifelong process in which personal development and work play as much a part as formal education. Ideally, experiential learning occurs when individuals involve themselves in new experiences in an open-minded way (have "concrete experiences"); then reflect on their experiences from a range of perspectives (by "reflective observation"). By integrating their observations into theories (into "abstract conceptualisations") they give it meanings, which are then tested out in real world problemsolving situations (by "active experimentation"). This provides the concrete experience for the next cycle of learning.

Figure 4.1 Kolb's learning cycle



He argues that effective learning requires contrasting abilities which he models as polar opposites on two dimensions of learning. Abstract conceptualisation and concrete experience are contrasting ways of what he describes as "grasping" experience. For example, as you progress through your professional programme you are likely to build up a mental picture of what being a professional studies learner means to you. You will develop a concept of 'workbased learnedness'. However, such a picture will be enhanced as you have individual concrete experiences of actually being a professional studies learner. So, in order to fully grasp your experience, you will probably need to utilise both abilities on this dimension.

Reflective observation and active experimentation are contrasting ways of what he describes as "transforming" experiences that you have grasped in either or both of the ways described above. For example, the internal process of reflecting on your thoughts and feelings about a

particular concrete work experience (say, a new administrative procedure you implemented two weeks ago), operates on that experience to transform it through the attribution of particular meanings to it (for example, “it doesn’t seem to be working as well as it should”). The **external process of acting** on the concrete experience is also a way of transforming it, by extending the existing experience in some way (for example, “seeing if it works better another way instead”). As this example shows, it is often necessary to utilise both reflective and active abilities in order to transform or elaborate or develop existing experience.

In other words, for learning to occur, experience must be grasped and then transformed, as described above. This involves interaction between the four learning modes of:

- concrete experience
- reflective observation
- abstract conceptualisation
- active experimentation.

In other words, for learning to occur, experience must be grasped and then transformed, as described above. This involves interaction between the four learning modes of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

Further categorisation: Single- and double-loop learning and transformational learning

When people learn, they do so at several levels. It may be learning to deliver improvement of work – ‘doing things right’ – or they may go further and consider their work in more strategic terms and find themselves questioning established norms and assumptions – ‘doing the right things’. This is identified as transformational learning (Flood and Romm, 1996:10).

A good example of single-loop learning is identified in the Kolb cycle (1984) considered before. For maintenance learning, this represents an effective cycle of improvement. His work on the processes by which experiential learning occurs and on individual differences in styles of learning has been much used, particularly in management education, often through popularisations of it such as the learning styles questionnaire of Honey and Mumford (1992).

But what about transformational learning? Here new knowledge is created by reconsidering the assumptions or ‘norms’ inherent in single-loop learning. Characteristically old paradigms or ways of thinking are changed and redesigned. This is double-loop learning.

“Double-loop learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organisation’s underlying norms, policies and objectives”. Argyris and Schön, 1978, pp. 2–3

Activity

How do you reflect?

- Are there similarities between the three models of reflection above?
- Do they help you to understand how you reflect on your experience? If they do, in what way? If not, try to construct your own model of how you reflect.

To find out more about different models of reflection, you may like to look at this website, go to <http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/Reflection>

Reflection tools

This section introduces you to some reflective activities.

Reflective activities involve self-evaluation. When you engage in them remember to:

- be fair to yourself and note both your strengths and areas needing improvement
- reflect on how you are doing periodically (not just once) so that you can monitor your progress and note how you have changed over time.

Activity

Experiment with the following reflection tools:

1

Keep a learning journal in which you record your thoughts and feelings about your work or learning over a period, (see [appendix 1](#)).

Keep a critical incident diary. This is a type of learning journal in which you focus on specific events that are out of the ordinary (see [appendix 1](#), Gibbs and Angelides, 2006).

2

Use mindmaps to reflect more deeply on a topic by organising your thoughts about it in a visual way (see [appendix 2](#)).

3

Ask yourself questions about your experience when you face a new or complex situation. This helps you to approach it from other points of view and to identify what you can learn from it (see [appendix 3](#)).

There are many other creative activities that also may help you reflect. Here are some ideas you might like to develop yourself:

- Visualise how a difficult experience might have ended differently. Develop alternative scenarios. Be a playwright or storyteller. You are in charge of all the characters. How could they react to, or interact in, a situation you are facing yourself?
- Draw a series of pictorial stages (comic strip) of your own progress through solving a problem. The way a comic strip focuses on the extreme and the absurd can help identify core elements of a problem.

There is no right or wrong way of using these tools. You may wish to use them as they are, or adapt them, or use them as a starting point for documenting your reflections in some other way. When you have tried some of the exercises, ask yourself:

- Which activities were most helpful?
- What have you learned about the ways you reflect on your experience?

Comment People differ in how they prefer to organise their thinking and in how they reflect and learn. As you learn about your own preferences, you will be able to make increasingly

good use of the learning opportunities that come your way. More information about each of these tools is given in the [appendices](#).

Reflective dialogue

Reflection in this sense can be an individual experience, in partnership with trusted critical friends, or it can be undertaken in learning communities (see Angelides and Gibbs, 2004 and Nyhan, 2005). It is through the sharing of experiences and the contribution of others that the richness of understanding of one's own action can best be appreciated. Without an understanding of how your actions are perceived by others, can real change occur? It is a change that has its root in wisdom and it is a wisdom that we believe is the goal of reflection

For many people – specifically those who learn in a way that prioritises 'doing' and activity or those who do not use writing regularly as a reflection tool –individual reflection, pursued alone with a keyboard or pen can be difficult and at first counter-intuitive. It is a skill which takes some time to develop and needs practice.

Reflective dialogue – reflection with another in a learning conversation, can help get you started by providing a more accessible route to developing reflective practice. By choosing an appropriate peer or colleague with whom you can have an 'open and trusting' conversation you can receive feedback 'in the moment' such as requests for clarification or a challenge to some of your assumptions. Past candidates have found it useful to record these conversations and use them to develop their Review of Learning. Such conversations are used by organisations to improve the quality of the decision making of their executives (Kline, 1998).

There are many models of how reflection works in practice. The important thing is to develop an understanding over time of how you reflect, because this will help you learn from your experience. Remember that you can also discuss any issues with your adviser.

You as a learner

In the final section of this chapter the personal perspectives of learning are considered: learning as a social activity, valuing of learning and learning styles and approaches.

Learning as a social activity

Any discussion of learning is not complete unless its social context is considered. Learning is not a solitary activity nor is it removed from the context within which it is occurring. Your way of being in the world is learnt. The clear consequence of that is how you draw learning from a situation or task is also shaped by your previous learning. The concept of habitus, field and disposition provides some description of this in practice.

Your habitus (see page 11) will, by its very nature, change as you learn more and indeed will be significantly influenced by the constraints, demands and opportunities of the social field within which you find yourself. A social constructionist stance would identify that learners create meaning through their interactions with each other. Our identities are constructed by the 'prevailing discourse' – the set of meanings, representations, images, stories and statements which act together to produce a version of events or categories of person (Brockbank and McGill, 2004).

We use this continually within our workplace by sharing our learning or experience with others. These can be 'water cooler' discussions or networking meetings. If we consider the types of conversation, we have within the workplace we can see that we are engaged in informal learning with our colleagues for a significant part of our time. This sharing of opinion and analysis provides a peer validation of our new learning. The social dimension of learning can lead to people forming communities of practice and similar networks (Wenger, 1998). These communities can be highly informal gatherings of practitioners with a shared concern or interest. Examples can include practitioner groups (such as midwives in a hospital) interested in sharing best practice or support groups of people affected by a common illness.

The learning considered here is often informal, arising from observation, coaching or active experimentation. It can be unplanned and incidental or part of an ongoing mentoring programme. However, it arises, it will be a significant part of the learning achieved within the workplace and part of the development of you as a practitioner.

Further reading

Senge, P. M. (1990) *The fifth discipline*, London: Century Business.

Valuing your learning

You may not consider all learning to be of equal value and you may hold assumptions or use criteria in designating learning as having more or less value. These assumptions and opinions will be informed by your habitus, peer validation and the social context within which you produce knowledge and achieve learning. This point is important in the sense that candidates are asked to show peer recognition in a suitable form and that professional learning is particularly undertaken in relation to others. It is assumed that your professional learning is complex, situated in the organisational and social contexts in which you operate (socially constructed) and often defined by an external authority. This means that other people have taught you and awarded you a masters degree; other people have promoted you and told you that your work is good. You are now at a point where your curriculum vitae (CV), in its broadest sense, puts you in a position of being capable of creating knowledge and making knowledge claims. You need no higher authority because your position, location, experience, qualifications and reflective capabilities enable you to think in a way that can facilitate new, creative and original connections, look forward and draw conclusions. Your experience validates your capacity to have a real sense of knowing about what you do, lessen reliance on external formulas laid down by others, develop yourself and your own autonomous thinking further and achieve self-authorship, as you go 'from a map reader to a map maker'.

If you have arrived at this point, you will not be requiring your tutors to tell you what to do and then you go off and do it. You will be in the self-managing position of asking them to guide rather than lead. In this module you are expected to articulate and develop self-definition and internal belief systems with consideration of your own views on how you have constructed your current viewpoint on what knowledge is and how it might be constructed and developed. It is strongly suggested that you undertake the options identified in the activity below. The purpose is to consider yourself as central to knowledge construction and how you define your own work situation. In this module you are expected to articulate and develop self-definition and internal belief systems, considering your own views on how you have constructed your current viewpoint on what knowledge is and how it might be constructed and developed.

The self is central to social construction and through these processes you will be able to engage with the complexity of knowledge. This is an attempt to consider your assumptions about your contextual knowing and internally defined sense of self. In other words, it is to 'know yourself' and feel confident about your own opinions and stance as a workerresearcher. In this sense, you may consider that you are defining your ontological development. Ontology is understood as your own situation in the world and how this influences your professional practice and gaining of knowledge. The two options you select can be used as part of your 4,000-word review so think about addressing the questions in a way that represents you personally and professionally within the context of undertaking doctoral-level work.

Activity

1

Read “Promoting self-authorship to promote liberal education” by Baxter Magolda. Available on the moodle site. This is an article arising from her book: Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001) *Making their own way: narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*, Sterling, VA: Stylus.

See also the related articles available on the Virtual Learning Environment and the short interview with the author.

From your reflections on these works write a short piece positioning yourself within the four principles of:

- to what extent do you consider yourself ‘validated’ as a knower
- how has your experience informed your higher level learning?
- how has your higher level learning informed – if at all – your professional practice and experiences today?
- in what ways do you define your learning in relation to others.

2

Try this task from Gestalt and then write up your thoughts about the outcomes of the exercise for yourself.

Select a person with whom you can have an ‘open and trusting’ conversation, and who is willing to be a silent support for you in the exercise. You are going to talk to the other person for 10 minutes but they are not to answer you or indicate any agreement or disagreement, they are just to face you and listen so you know you are talking to someone else who will be listening.

Choose a topic:

- for which you are looking for a solution
- about which you have uncertain thoughts/feelings
- with which you would like to move forward.

It does not have to be something overarching such as ‘Shall I change my job?’. You then talk for 10 minutes on the subject but you are not allowed to stop talking. After you think you may have exhausted the subject you have to keep talking about it bringing up any related factors or just anything that comes to mind.

Learning styles and approaches

Having considered some of the factors which impact on learning, the exercises above will have given you some insight into yourself as an individual learner. People tend to have preferences for how they approach learning tasks. Some prefer to make random associations; others like structured interpretations. Some prefer abstract interactions with ideas; others need a concrete experience to introduce a concept. Since the original work on individualisation of learning preferences in the 1970s, there has been a plethora of learningstyle questionnaires developed to 'assess' individual styles. There is debate as to the validity of these questionnaires as robust, evidence-based, reliable assessments tools. However, they are used extensively as effective reflection aids when considering how you as an individual prefer to learn. A good starting point is to complete one of the many learning-style questionnaires publicly available. You will be given one during the module workshop.

Learning approaches

There are many approaches to learning. For example, rote learning may be useful for learning key facts or a spoken script. Visual association may be useful for remembering names. Preparing and presenting a subject in public helps you remember and internalise that subject. Being coached helps you address specific objectives.

By reflecting on past successes and failures, you can identify the approaches to learning that have worked for you. It's important, where possible, to consider the personal learning context in which you used the approaches and the category of learning they worked for. You'll also want to identify new approaches that could be successful for tackling particular objectives.

Activity

Reflect on your learning style and your previous learning successes and failures. Consider in broad terms, the experiential learning you have achieved within your professional life to date as well as the formal learning from courses. General categories such as leadership, management capability or negotiation are sufficient for now.

Note on your timeline the main learning events which contributed to the development of your capabilities.

Have the learning approaches you generally use changed during your work life?

What were the merits (or otherwise) of the learning approaches that you have used?

Examples of approaches you should include in these reflections are:

- any mentoring or coaching you have received
- observation/demonstrations you attended
- shadowing or experiments you have carried out.

Identify where and why particular approaches succeeded, or might succeed in the future. Note these within your timeline.

Further reading

Schon, D. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, London: Temple Smith.

Activity

Return to your professional life timeline and reflect upon these questions.

When starting out on your professional life what were your dreams, aspirations and goals? Are you still following them or have they been diverted, expanded or transformed?

How did your professional trajectory change? Was it through planned decisionmaking, presentation of opportunity, serendipity, reflection or active change management by you? What were your motivators? How did you make the decisions that were required?

In what way has your personal ethics developed and changed during the course of your career to date? How is that evidenced in what you do and how you behave to others?

After reflection upon these questions consider your current goals and why this programme of study is congruent with them?

Comment You will have identified by now a rich picture of learning including both formal and classroom-based tuition as well as informal modes.

Chapter 4

WRITING YOUR CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE REVIEW OF LEARNING

Review of Learning

By completing the activities at the end of chapters 1 to 3 you will have broadly identified the formal and experiential learning you have achieved within your professional life, when learning occurred and how it occurred. You will have considered the knowledge you use to maintain and develop your practice and your role within work. You will also have considered the impact this learning has had on your ontology, identity and subjectivity. You will in effect have considered your learning from a variety of perspectives and it is your written critical reflection upon the material you have developed in the activities that forms the content of your Review of Learning submission.

In this chapter the development of your submission is considered in detail.

Criteria for assessment

The review should discuss and critically evaluate your learning so the following learning outcomes are clearly met (see DProf Programme Handbook).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- undertake an analysis of their professional experience and its operational context, and thereby identify the range and depth of their existing professional knowledge and capabilities.
- reflect on key learning points in their careers, and evaluate how they manage their own learning, solve problems and undertake leadership and project management responsibilities;
- demonstrate an awareness of the need to explore concepts, theories and models, including issues beyond their immediate area of workplace practice;
- synthesise this review into an argument for:-
 - how work already undertaken, is relevant to both the level and proposed focus of the doctoral work to be subsequently undertaken on the programme. (Professional Doctorate pathway) or
 - developing a focused personal development plan, to achieve their next position within their organisation.

Writing a review that fulfils these outcomes is not trivial and you will need to gain advice and feedback from your advisor on its development. As identified at the end of the last chapter your starting point for writing will be the critical engagement with your professional timeline and your reflections upon it. You may refer to some of the critical incidents and major dilemmas/challenges you have faced during your professional work and how you have learned from them and specifically how your practice changed as a result. In reviewing your professional life you will be able to identify patterns and correlations between learning, subjectivity, personal and organisational change.

Within your written review you are asked to critically reflect upon and analyse the interplay between these elements and how they have contributed to your achievements, your current role and what you are seeking to do within your doctoral programme.

Some considerations for writing reflectively

What you should aim to do when writing reflectively for assessment is to identify which aspects of a situation/critical incident or challenge are worthy of reflection. Your efforts to answer the questions raised, explore the motivations of yourself and others, and discuss the significance of unusual outcomes amount to an analysis (rather than just a description) of what happened. Such analysis is the key characteristic of reflective writing for assessment.

There is a great temptation to revert to descriptive writing which details every aspect of 'the story' but the review is not a story – it is an evaluative critical analysis of your learning to date. Only provide sufficient narrative to represent a context for the learning so its depth and impact can be assessed.

Considering an example here may be useful. In reflecting upon the learning needed to communicate well to large audiences you may describe the context as 'giving hour-long presentations to major internal scientific conferences with an audience of thought-leaders in your field'. The reader gets a clear picture of the capability required to do this effectively without needing to know how you were invited and who specifically was in the audience.

The description is sufficient to differentiate the event from presenting to peers in departmental seminars. Having identified the context for the reader you can then go ahead to describe the learning you have achieved about giving such presentations.

An important point of note is that reflection is also not about orthodoxy. It is about transcendence, going beyond what is known and seeking new innovative solution to problems. But first you need to reflect on the notion of what has happened; what do you understand as the phenomena you have experienced.

The difference between reflection as a dynamic purposeful activity and reflexivity or other forms of contemplation is to emphasise, positive, responsible actions based on the learning

experience context. It is based on a hermeneutic interpretation of experiences from a spectrum of points of view to gain an understanding which can improve future actions. Reflection in this sense does not just explore what was but considers what might have been, why it wasn't and how the personal actions of the individual can be brought to bear on similar situations to create a better outcome for all parties.

Activities to help you draft your Review of Learning

Question your experience

In the previous chapters you have started your reflection upon your learning to date. You will now turn your attention to writing your first draft of your review. As identified before the important thing is to begin to analyse your past experience for what you have learned through it. Focus on key issues, such as:

- major events, turning points and people
- constraints, reversals, transitions and opportunities
- changes in your organisation and/or professional field
- the networks of stakeholders with whom you interact.

Reflect on personal factors, such as:

- what motivates you
- values you hold as important in life
- what skills and knowledge you have developed
- what personal traits have helped you to arrive at your current level of authority, influence and ability to be a change agent
- future directions that you would wish your professional development to take.

Decide how to organise your material

Some candidates find it useful to organise the relationships between the many aspects of their professional learning around key learning events or periods. For example, you might analyse a key event in relation to:

- what happened/who was involved
- outcomes
- reflections on the event /period and lessons for DProf project work.

Note Some candidates adopt a thematic approach and discuss different areas of learning; others take a chronological approach and discuss how their learning has developed over time.

Decide what to prioritise

Candidates vary in their concern with detail versus the big picture, and in their focus on personal development versus professional socialisation and achievement. All these aspects of learning are important, but what you prioritise will reflect your own career and DProf intentions.

Writing up your Review of Learning

- Be evaluative and analytical rather than descriptive
- Rather than just stating what capabilities you have developed, illustrate your claims with examples of how you have used them. For example, a statement such as, 'I have developed strong leadership skills' would need to be supported by a critical evaluation of what you determine those skills to be together with examples in which you deployed those skills
- Remember that the focus is on the application of your specialist knowledge within your professional context (not on areas of specialist knowledge per se)
- Remember that you are seeking to link past and current learning to the projects you will go on to do on your DProf programme
- Specify the experience and learning for which you intend to make RAL claims
- Adhere to standard ethical guidelines, for example, by avoiding reference to named individuals
- Seek advice from your adviser before including any confidential material in your review
- Back up theoretical and reflective concepts you use with up-to-date references.

A model to assist in reflective writing

To help in the process of reflective writing Cox (2005) developed a model of structured reflection for writing which you may find beneficial. It has four central stages, the fourth of which links with the Kolb model we discussed earlier:

- description of experience
- reflection on action
- influencing factors
- learning

In the first section you might simply describe the phenomena or critical incident in your professional life you intend to reflect upon. At the second stage these types of question could form the basis of your reflection:

What was I trying to achieve?

What reaction did I get?

How did I feel about the experience as it was happening?

How do I know how other people felt about it?

The third stage considers what internal and external influences were revealed in the incident; what did they tell you about the legitimacy of the aims and goals of all the participants plus your own knowledge?

The final stage raises questions concerning practice:

Could I have done things differently?

How do I feel about the experience now?

How did it make me more self-aware of my own role?

How might I change my behaviour to enact the consequences of your reflection?

Getting started with reflective writing which is going to be assessed can be a bit daunting. Try not to worry! Remember that reflection itself is actually a familiar process we all engage in during our daily lives, even if we don't call it 'being reflective'.

Once you have a first draft of your review then pass it to your advisor for their feedback. Remember throughout the DProf programme your submissions are developed using an iterative cycle of feedback from your advisor. You may not worry too much about the format or presentation of the drafts you share with your advisor but do remember that it is critical to the success of your submission for your final submission to be presented in the correct format and with all required elements. Use the note below as a check-list to develop the presentation of your submission.

Note: This is an academic submission. Therefore, the usual protocols of formatting and referencing apply and these are:

- 1) A cover sheet for the Review of Learning (giving name, student number, module number and title of submission – 'Review of Learning')

- 2) A table of contents or index page to identify what is in the submission (there should be a separate listing of text headings, figures and tables)
- 3) A page number at the bottom of each sheet
- 4) The text to be broken up with headings and subheadings if appropriate
- 5) Any referencing should be in the appropriate Style throughout the text and listed at the end of the text.
- 6) A Bibliography should also be given if appropriate.
- 7) Finally the submission should have been proof read to ensure the absolute minimum of typographical errors.

These requirements are there to make your submission accessible and easy to read. They present your work professionally but are not meant to constrain you in style or content. Candidates have chosen a variety of modes to present their work and it is appropriate for you to develop your own style. If a submission is not formatted and referenced appropriately then its chance of successful assessment will be diminished.

In summary

You are now in a position to write your submission and we would offer this general advice:

- Do not expect to 'get it right' first time as critical reflective writing is a skill which requires practice.
- You are strongly advised to get feedback on drafts before submission as our experience is that candidates who submit without such feedback do not attract a positive assessment. Your adviser will be available to provide feedback on drafts of your work before submission.
- Start with your Review of Learning. The review will help you identify where your areas of specialisation or profound learning are.
- Be familiar with the learning outcomes required of your review so you can consider whether you have met these outcomes. Again discuss this with your tutor if you have any concerns.
- Plan your work to include time for your adviser to provide feedback to you on your drafts.
- Make sure you leave some time to fully prepare your final work for submission; checking references are in the correct format, the formatting of the documents is appropriate

Chapter 5

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Your reflections on your past learning in this module are supported by tutorials and discussions with your tutor, the moodle page and a range of materials.

Staff

Module leader

The module leader offers general support to all candidates registered on the module through face-to-face workshops or online activities on the virtual learning environment. These events and activities allow you to discuss issues, relevant literature and aim to enrich your understanding of research.

Handbooks

This Module Guide

This handbook provides general information about the DProf programme, such as information on assessment and a full module description for this module.

Moodle Page

You will find a range of materials posted in the Review of Learning resources area. We have included items that will appeal to a range of learning styles so you will find humorous interviews on epistemology as well as video presentations on learning theories. We have also included links to other websites that contain further reading, opinion and visual resources. These materials will be updated throughout the year so take a few minutes to explore them.

Chapter 6 ASSESSMENT

Formative feedback

Make sure that you request tutorials with your adviser so you get feedback on drafts of your review. Be aware that you are expected to develop this submission with input from your tutor. Our experience shows that candidates who do not get feedback prior to assessment have a much lower success rate at assessment. Try to plan your time so that you can obtain two cycles of feedback from your advisor prior to the formal submission of your module. Your work colleagues, mentor, manager or sponsor may also be able to offer invaluable feedback.

Submission of work

Once you have incorporated feedback from your adviser and others, you should submit by

Uploading to Turnitin on moodle.

- You can upload into the Draft submission link to view the Turnitin report and make corrections.
- Upload the **Final report** to the **FINAL** submission link

Assessment of your work

Your tutor will assess your Review of Learning against the learning outcomes for the module. It will then be passed to the module leader for moderation and finally confirmed at the assessment board when the External Examiner has had an opportunity to review a sample of the submitted work. You will receive a results letter with feedback once your grade has been considered at the assessment board.

We look forward to receiving your submission!

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Appendix 1 Sample topics for a critical incident diary entry

Date

Brief description of the incident or event

What actions did I take? What was I trying to achieve and how successful was I?

What went well and what went badly about the situation?

What alternative actions could I have taken to improve the situation?

How did I feel at the time? Have I received/do I need to get feedback from others?

Are there short-term implications?

Are there long-term implications?

Has my experience changed me in any way? For example, has it changed my feelings, assumptions, attitudes, behaviour?

Review of the incident a week/a month later. What I learned from the incident

How could what I learned improve my work or study practice?

Appendix 2 Mind-mapping

The value of mind-maps (also called spider diagrams) is that they help you to look at relationships between ideas. They focus on the process of organising information. They enable you to:

- get ideas down on paper
- identify connections between them
- get an overview of key points on a topic at a glance.

Mindmaps can be used to reflect on your own development, or on a topic or problem you are studying, or as a way of note-taking. They can make use of words, numbers, pictures, colours and shapes to sort or code the information you are trying to organise. You can indicate the relative importance of different ideas and easily expand a mind map to add new information.

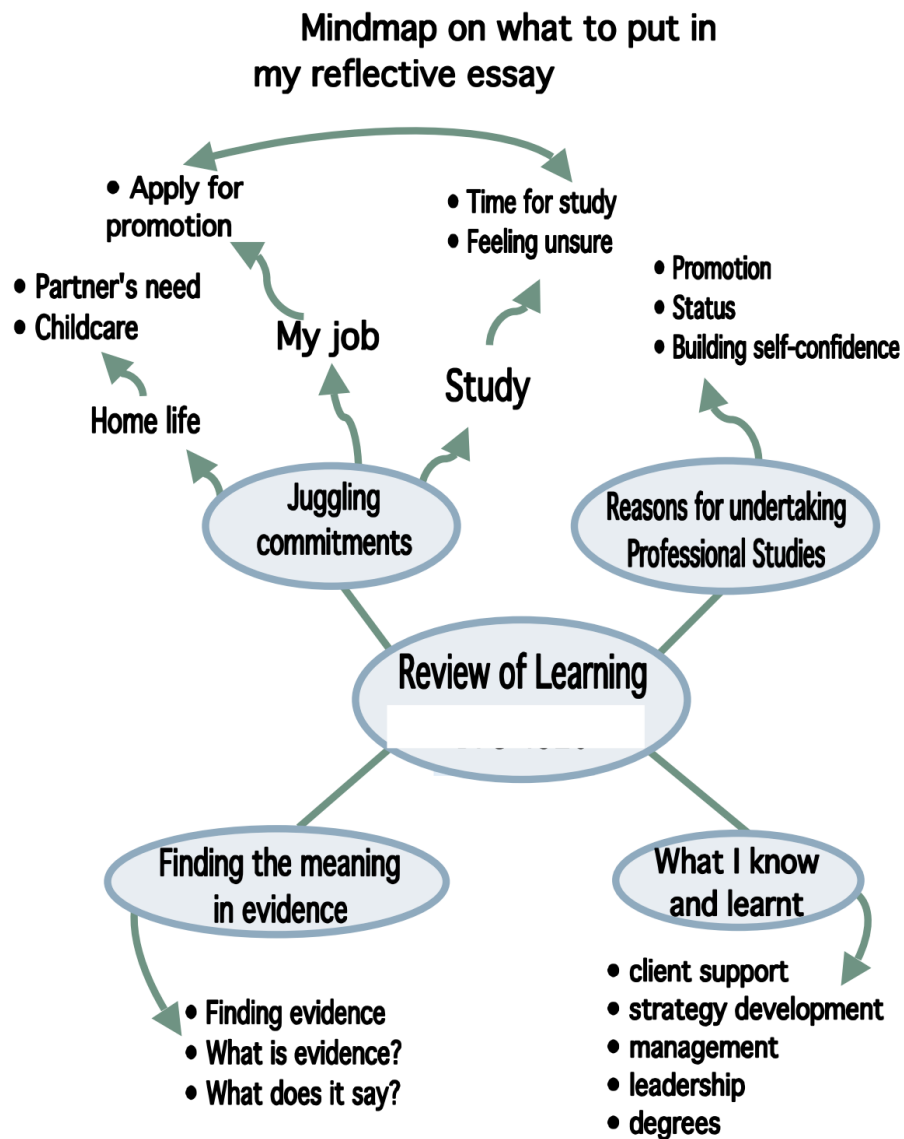
Drawing a mindmap

1. Start with a large blank piece of paper.
2. Write or draw a symbol for the main idea of your chosen topic in the centre of the page.
3. Let your mind flow freely around this topic and add the main related concepts that branch out from your core topic as they occur to you.
4. Now make connections between the concepts and the main idea.

Here are a few pointers:

- Use symbols that work for you such as lines, colours and other shapes. This will help you to understand and remember how the information is connected
- Use a new line for each idea
- Be consistent in your use of symbols
- Draw quickly – this will help you to think in a natural way and help your thinking flow creatively
- Leave lots of room – you may want to add more ideas later.

Example of a mindmap



Appendix 3 Sample questions to ask yourself or for another person to ask you

The value of asking questions is to help you reflect more effectively by:

- focusing your attention on what you want to reflect on
- developing your thinking
- raising your self-awareness
- helping you to recognise that there is more than one point of view on most topics.

How to use questions to help you reflect

You may wish to use questions to prompt your own thinking about a topic. Alternatively, you may wish to give some prompt questions to a critical friend, and talk them through together. You could also have an imaginary dialogue with someone. For example, you could write a play scene between two actors who are discussing the topic you are trying to reflect on. A real or imaginary question-posing person will help to give you alternative perspectives on what you are reflecting on.

Some useful types of question

1 Wh- questions that is, questions beginning with ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘what’, ‘why’ (or ‘how’) are likely to elicit more information than answers that only require a yes/no answer or a choice between alternatives. However, Yes/No questions can be useful initially to establish the focus of a dialogue.

Example

“What problems are you having with studying in the evenings?” is a ‘wh-’ question inviting you to elaborate, whereas “Do you have a problem with studying in the evenings?” only requires a Yes/No response.

2 Questions about feelings, thoughts or opinions will tell you more about your unique experience of an event than asking for ‘the facts’ or a description of the event.

Example

“How did you feel about the presentation you did this morning?”

3 Hypothetical questions can help you identify limiting assumptions.

Example

“If you knew you were vital to your organisation’s success, how would you approach your work?”

4 Questions about the future encourage projections and new ideas about how you might act before the event.

Example

“How will you respond if you get ‘writer’s block’ on your next assignment for your Professional Studies programme?”

5 Asking for examples can increase your understanding of your own resources.

Example

“Can you give an example of how you successfully managed to juggle your work and your home life commitments in the past?”

6 Questions that focus on options encourage thinking about alternative strategies and courses of action.

Example

“How many ways could you find out from your work colleagues what their views are on the new marketing policy, for your professional studies project module?”

Using provocative questions

Questions that help you reflect will tend to be provocative. They will make you think differently in some way. Here are some examples which you can adapt to your own circumstances:

What might happen?

What is your back-up plan?

What do you make of it?

What do you really mean by that?

What is your assessment of the situation?

What other angles can you think of?

How do you want it to be? How else could a person handle this?

What concerns you the most about it?

How is this working?

What is your conclusion?

What are your next steps?

Appendix 4 Example extracts from introductions to reviews of learning

Extract A

This assignment outlines my reflections on the development of my career to date as a nurse, manager and director working mainly with the National Health Service, in a chronological sequence. My professional and personal learning is grouped into the following sections:

- starting point
- developing credibility and expertise as a clinician
- becoming a leader
- transition to manager
- complexity and innovation as a director.

The final section explains the current change management programme I am leading which is developing services for people with a chronic condition. Within the work, several research themes have already been explored and some issues now require further investigation to determine their impact on health and social care delivery within the county, and potential transferability nationally. I will choose one of these to take forward in part 2 of the doctorate programme. They include:

- grounded theory approach exploring patient stories of their experience of self-managing their care
- further evaluation of the two newly appointed complex case managers' impact on the whole system needs to be assessed prior to further investment
- exploring the cost effectiveness of providing care for people with chronic conditions in different settings closer to the patient's home.

This assignment has provided an opportunity to reflect on my personal development both as an expert and as an individual; and how my development equates to levels 7 and 8 criteria in my field of expertise of 'developing and implementing new ways of working in the complex provision of community health and social care services'. It has also enabled me to recognise that I have the skills and knowledge to undertake study at doctorate level.

Extract B

This Review of Learning will explore the development of my learning over my career history. There will be both chronological and thematic elements within it to demonstrate my learning over the past 30 years in nursing and healthcare with particular reference to my career development in the last 9 years since I became a lecturer. I will identify specific areas of learning most of which I hope to include with the submission of this Review of Learning.

Career choice Although I shall be considering the last nine years particularly in this review, I need to start at the beginning of my career when I left school and decided to go straight into nurse training. I had had a privileged education at a select girls' school, and as a result did not appreciate that I had any academic ability as I was always 'average' among my classmates. I discovered I had a strong practical streak and that I found academic study boring if I could not apply it directly to some specific application. When making my career choice I could see no university course that interested me although I had briefly considered teaching, but had no obvious interest in any subject to study for its own sake. Having a number of teachers already in the family proved to be a complete deterrent so I decided that, although I knew nothing of illness or hospitals, I would go into nursing and undertake a training that I perceived would give me a balance of practical work and study and prepare me for a specific career. I had always been fascinated by human biology and historical accounts of diseases and had some romantic notion of how I could benefit humankind by becoming a nurse!

Extract C

This Review of Learning is to provide a summary and evaluation of my experiences and education to date, and an analysis of their relevance to my future learning and development, in the context of a Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf). Specifically, this review will focus on those aspects that are of greatest relevance to my chosen area of research for the DProf, which will be undertaken within my post as a policy development officer at the Environment Agency. The subject of my research will be to examine health benefits of environmental improvements, within the context of the Environment Agency's activities, and the methodologies and outputs will be related to policy development.

I have chosen to undertake this type of research as I believe it will allow me to acquire the knowledge and experience I need to make a personal contribution to sustainable development. I have a firm belief in the value of undertaking research in a practical, 'real world' setting, and the value of action research, to try and maximise both the usefulness and the use of the research.

My education and work experiences to date have reflected my personal development, as I have moved from an enthusiasm and interest for 'pure' science, to a more people-focused, applied way of thinking. I have become increasingly interested in the field of policymaking, as I perceive it as providing an interface between scientific knowledge and people, and an area where many different types of knowledge are valid