

Academic, Industry & Digital Skills

Week 11

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Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
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Today's Action Plan

- Recap: Feedback
- Reflection & Self-Reflection in Academic and Professional Practice
- What's next?



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Reflection & Self-Reflection in Academia and Professional Practice

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

- Define reflection
- Explain why reflective practice is essential in academia
- Understand key reflection models (e.g. ERA Cycle, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle)
- Apply a reflection model to an academic or professional experience
- Conduct a practical personal SWOT Analysis

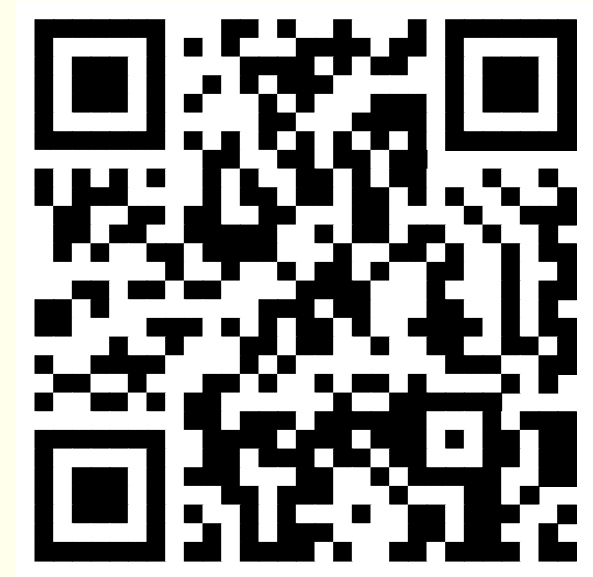
What is Reflection?

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Question slide

What is Reflection?



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Results slide

What is Reflection?

What is Reflection?

Reflection is the process of thinking critically about one's experiences, practices, actions or knowledge in order to gain insight and improve future understanding or performance.

Reflection moves beyond ***what happened*** to explore ***why it happened*** and ***what can be learned from it***.

In academia, reflection involves:

- Examining learning experiences (e.g. lectures, assignments, projects)
- Questioning how and why knowledge is produced
- Connecting theory to practice
- Identifying strengths, gaps and areas for development

What is Reflection?

When we reflect, we consider deeply something that we might not otherwise have given much thought to. This helps us to learn.

Reflection is concerned with consciously looking at and thinking about our experiences, actions, feelings, and responses, and then interpreting or analysing them in order to learn from them. Typically, we do this by asking ourselves **questions about what we did, how we did it, and what we learnt from doing it.**

The key to reflecting is spotting the patterns and links in thoughts that emerge as a result of your experiences in life and in learning.

Why Reflection Matters

We reflect quite naturally in our day to day lives, thinking about things that have happened, why they happened and whether we handled them well.

In academia, you may be asked to formalise your reflections to show that learning is taking place.

- **Identifies strengths and weaknesses** – Helps learners know what they are doing well and what needs improvement
- **Guides improvement** – Provides actionable suggestions for next steps
- **Enhances motivation** – Recognising progress encourages continued effort
- **Supports deeper learning** – Helps learners engage critically with content.

Learning Through Reflection

Reflective learning – implies a sense of ‘open exploration’.

Reflecting on academic or professional practice through questioning makes your personal beliefs, expectations, and biases more evident to you. Understanding yourself helps you to be more successful in your studies. You become aware of the automatic or uncritical assumptions you make as a result of your world view.

(Cottrell, 2019)

Becoming Reflective: Critical Thinking

We are all learning everyday through experience, trial and error and reflecting on how we could improve our performance.

Critical thinking requires you to ‘unpack’ whatever you are focusing on. You should never simply accept everything you hear and read at face value – you must always unpack it using the skills needed to reflect by looking, listening and pausing. This will allow you to identify things you may otherwise not notice.

Learning From Experiences: Reflexivity

In order to learn from your experiences, you must consider not only the practice of reflection, but also the process of **reflexivity**.

Your previous experiences, attitudes and beliefs influence your thought processes, and being reflexive involves being open-minded in examining the influence that these will have on your thinking.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on your actions in order *to engage in a process of continuous learning*.

It can:

- ✓ **help you challenge assumptions and become more creative**
- ✓ **help you identify your strengths and weaknesses**
- ✓ **help you identify personal and professional goals**

(Cottrell, 2019)

That's My Goal

- We can make changes by reflecting on the 'self-destructive patterns' which are impacting on our progress. This can enable us to 'focus more productively on reaching goals'.

we all have goals – the question is...how do we get there?



- *‘One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one’s mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one’s leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.’*

(Rowling, 2000, pp.518) Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Models of Reflection

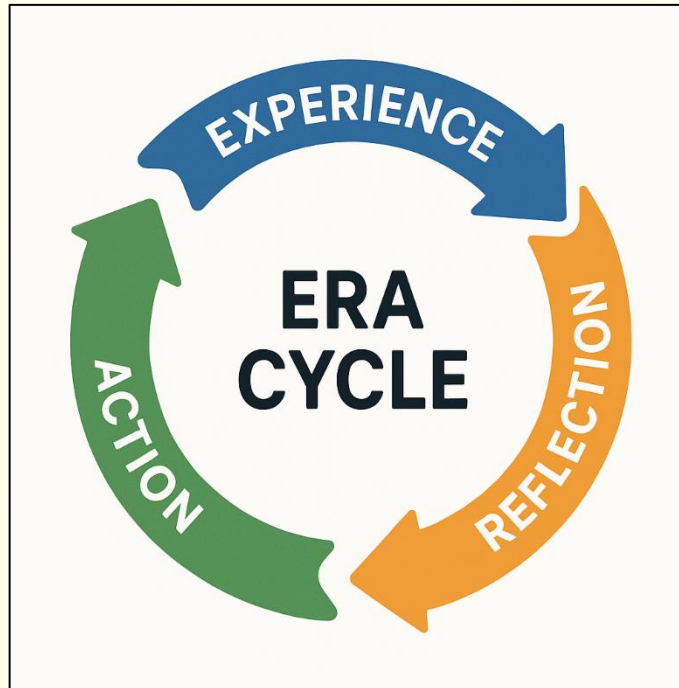
- Models of reflection can also help us identify our strengths and areas for development. For example, the **ERA Cycle** is a simple model and a good one to start with.



- Examples of other models are included in a separate presentation (asynchronous learning).

The ERA Cycle

You can see that it is an **ongoing cycle** as we learn from our experiences and apply what we have learned.



The ERA Cycle (contd.)

- Using the **ERA** model (**e**xperience, **r**eflection, **a**ction) we can start thinking about an experience, either something we have been through before or something completely new to us. This experience can be positive or negative.
- Once something has been experienced, we will start to reflect on what happened. This will allow us to think through the experience, examine our feelings about what happened and decide on the next steps.
- This leads to the final element of the cycle - thinking about what we have learned from the experience and how we will act in future as a result.

(Jasper, 2013)

1. Experience

Sets the scene – briefly explains the context:

- ✓ **Why were you in this situation?**
- ✓ **What did you hope to achieve before you started (initial goals)?**



2. Reflective Process

Feelings and thoughts on what happened:

- ✓ **Include positive and negative thoughts and feelings as negative aspects can help you learn.**

Evaluation and analysis:

- ✓ **Was it a positive or negative experience over all?**
- ✓ **Try to identify a deeper meaning to develop understanding – why did things happen the way they did?**



3. Action

Summarise your learning and talk about the future.

- ✓ Are there any skills you've identified that you need to improve?
- ✓ What else could you have done during this process to improve it for yourself and others?
- ✓ How can you use what you've learnt from this experience in future aspects of your life?
- ✓ How are you going to do things moving forward?



Example: ERA Cycle

❖ Experience:

During university lectures, I often chose not to ask questions when I did not fully understand the content.

❖ Reflection:

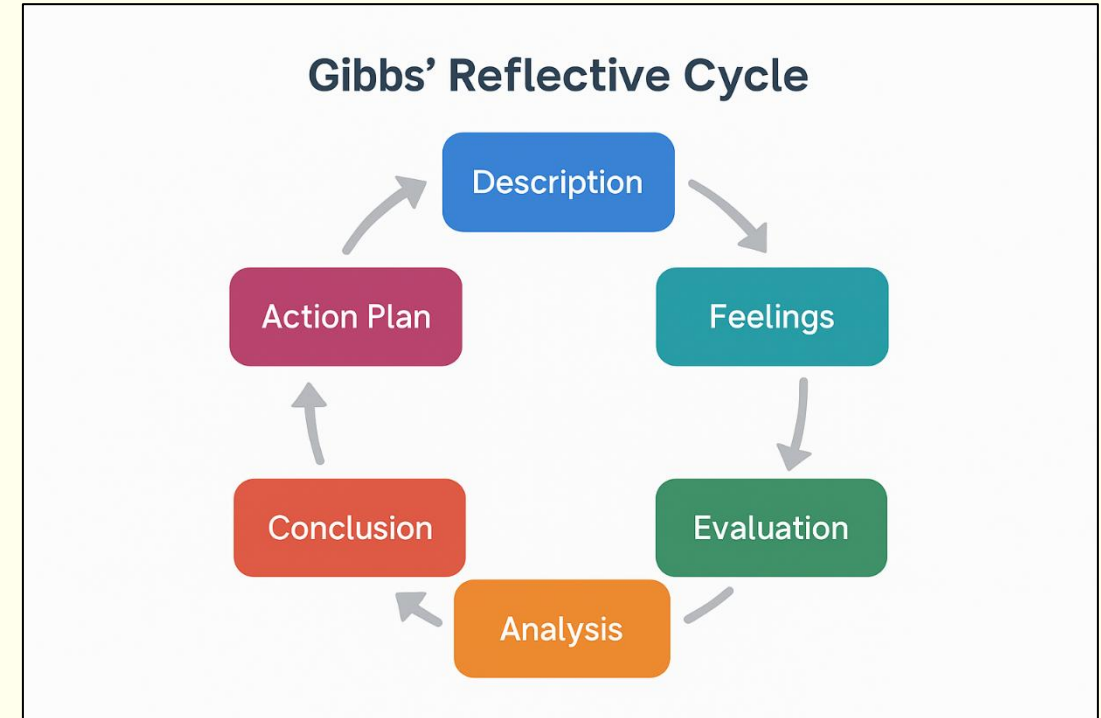
I realised that staying silent limited my understanding of the material and made later topics more difficult to follow. I also recognised that other students may have had the same uncertainties.

❖ Action:

In future classes, I will note down any questions I have and make an effort to ask them during lectures or discuss them with my lecturer afterward.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

- Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) provides a structured approach to learning from experiences.
- Its framework helps you examine events systematically, and because it is cyclical, it is especially useful for repeated experiences, enabling you to learn from successes/challenges and plan for future improvement.
- It covers 6 stages:
 1. **Description**
 2. **Feelings**
 3. **Evaluation**
 4. **Analysis**
 5. **Conclusion**
 6. **Action Plan**



1. Description

- **Describe the situation in detail.**
- The main points to include here concern **what happened**.
- Helpful questions:
 - ✓ **What happened?**
 - ✓ **When and where did it happen?**
 - ✓ **Who was present?**
 - ✓ **What did you and the other people do?**
 - ✓ **What was the outcome of the situation?**
 - ✓ **Why were you there?**
 - ✓ **What did you want to happen?**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Description

2. Feelings

- **Explore any feelings or thoughts** that you had during the experience and how they may have impacted the experience.
- Helpful questions:
 - ✓ **What were you feeling before, during and after the situation?**
 - ✓ **What do you think other people were feeling about the situation?**
 - ✓ **What do you think other people feel about the situation now?**
 - ✓ **What were you thinking during the situation?**
 - ✓ **What do you think about the situation now?**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Feelings

3. Evaluation

- **Evaluate what worked and what didn't work in the situation.**
- Aim to be as honest and objective as you can.
- For a thorough reflection, consider both the positive and negative aspects, even if one clearly dominated.
- Helpful questions:
 - ✓ **What was good and bad about the experience?**
 - ✓ **What went well?**
 - ✓ **What didn't go so well?**
 - ✓ **What did you and other people contribute to the situation (positively or negatively)?**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Evaluation

4. Analysis

- **Reflect on what happened and explore its meaning.**
- Consider the factors that contributed to successes or challenges and ask yourself why they occurred.
- If you plan to reference academic literature, this is the most appropriate stage to incorporate it.

- Helpful questions:

- ✓ **Why did things go well?**
- ✓ **Why didn't it go well?**
- ✓ **What sense can I make of the situation?**
- ✓ **What knowledge – my own or others (e.g. academic literature) can help me understand the situation?**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Analysis

5. Conclusion

- Summarise what you have learned and identify how changes in your actions could lead to better outcomes in the future.
- This should flow naturally from your earlier reflections.
- Helpful questions:
 - ✓ What did I learn from this situation?
 - ✓ How could this have been a more positive situation for everyone involved?
 - ✓ What skills do I need to develop to handle a situation like this better?
 - ✓ What else could I have done?

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Conclusion

6. Action Plan

- **Consider how you would act differently in a similar situation in the future.**
- It's useful not only to plan what to do differently, but also to think about how you will ensure it actually happens. Sometimes simply recognising the change is enough, while other times reminders or strategies may help.
- Helpful questions:
 - ✓ **If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do differently?**
 - ✓ **How will I develop the required skills I need?**
 - ✓ **How can I make sure that I can act differently next time?**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Action Plan

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle: Example

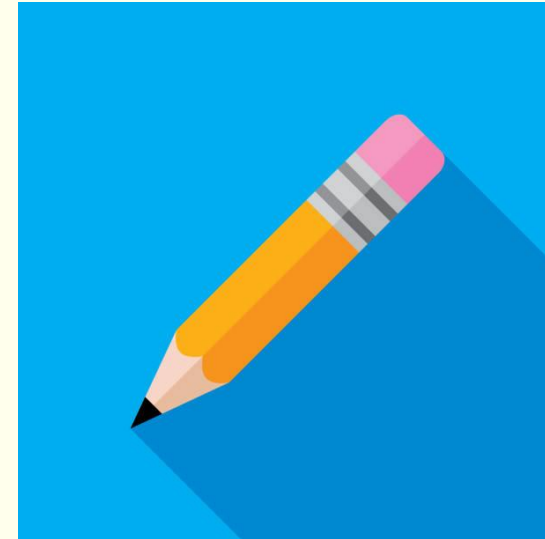
Scenario: A student receives lower-than-expected feedback on an essay.

- ❖ **Description:** The essay received a lower grade than anticipated
- ❖ **Feelings:** Disappointment and frustration
- ❖ **Evaluation:** Argument was strong, but structure and referencing were weak
- ❖ **Analysis:** Lack of planning time; limited engagement with academic sources
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Strong ideas need clearer structure and evidence
- ❖ **Action Plan:** Start assignments earlier; consult marking criteria; seek feedback

Reflection in Academia

“It is not sufficient to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting on this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.”

Gibbs, 1988, p.9





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Conducting a Personal SWOT Analysis

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Introduction

➤ A **SWOT** Analysis is a framework for analysing your strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that you face. This helps you focus on your strengths, minimise your weaknesses, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available to you.

(Mindtools, 2022)

SWOT Analysis Example

(adapted from: Mindtools, 2022)

Strengths	Weaknesses
What do you do well?	What could you improve on?
Opportunities	Threats
How could you turn your strengths into opportunities?	What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

Activity: SWOT Analysis

Conduct a personal SWOT Analysis, using the template below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
What do you do well?	What could you improve on?
Opportunities	Threats
How could you turn your strengths into opportunities?	What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

Top Tip!

- Don't be tempted to conduct your SWOT analysis from the top of your head. An effective SWOT analysis comes from deep reflection.
- Simply writing what you are good at and not so good at without considering the why, what, and how's are not going to allow for an effective SWOT analysis as you will struggle to come up with a realistic action plan.

***A Good SWOT Joins the Dots!**

Example

Strengths	Weaknesses
What do you do well? • Strong work ethic and commitment to completing assignments • Good time management when deadlines are clear • Willingness to learn and ask questions • Ability to work well independently and in groups • Basic research, writing and problem-solving skills	What could you improve on? • Procrastination when tasks feel overwhelming • Difficulty staying focused for long periods • Time management struggles when juggling multiple deadlines • Limited experience in some subjects or skills

Example (contd.)

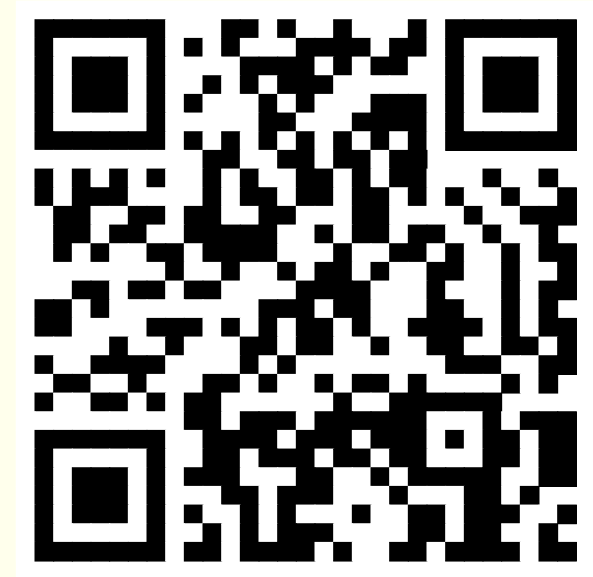
Opportunities	Threats
How could you turn your strengths into opportunities? • Take advantage of Study Skills, 1:1s, draft feedback or online learning resources • Join study groups to improve collaboration skills • Seek placements or part-time jobs related to interests • Develop new skills (technology, communication, leadership) through coursework	What threats do your weaknesses expose you to? • Procrastination may lead to missed deadlines or lower grades • Poor time management could cause stress and burnout • Lack of confidence may limit participation or opportunities • Distractions (e.g. social media) may reduce academic performance • Falling behind in difficult subjects without seeking help

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Which of the following areas would you like more support with?

Harvard Referencing

0%

Academic Writing and Structure

0%

AI Policy/Acknowledgement Statement

0%

Presentations and Public Speaking

0%

Research Skills

0%

All of the above

0%

None of the above

0%

Something else

0%



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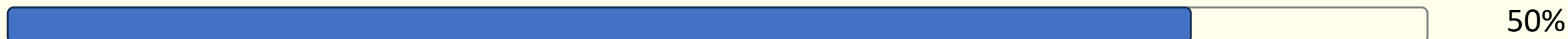
Showing Results

Which of the following areas would you like more support with?

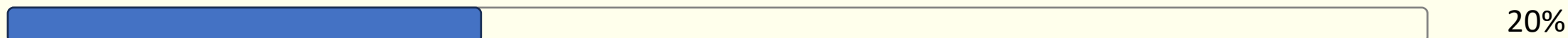
Harvard Referencing



Academic Writing and Structure



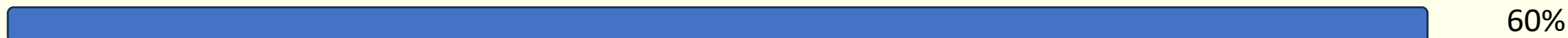
AI Policy/Acknowledgement Statement



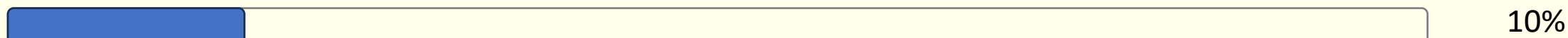
Presentations and Public Speaking



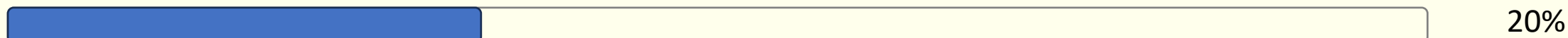
Research Skills



All of the above



None of the above



Something else





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**Our next lecture will take
place on Thursday, 29th
January, at 3pm,
in Room IM13
(Innovation Matrix).**

Enjoy your time in Paris! 😊

References

Cottrell, S. (2019) *The study skills handbook*. 5th edn. Macmillan International Higher Education/Red Globe Press.

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