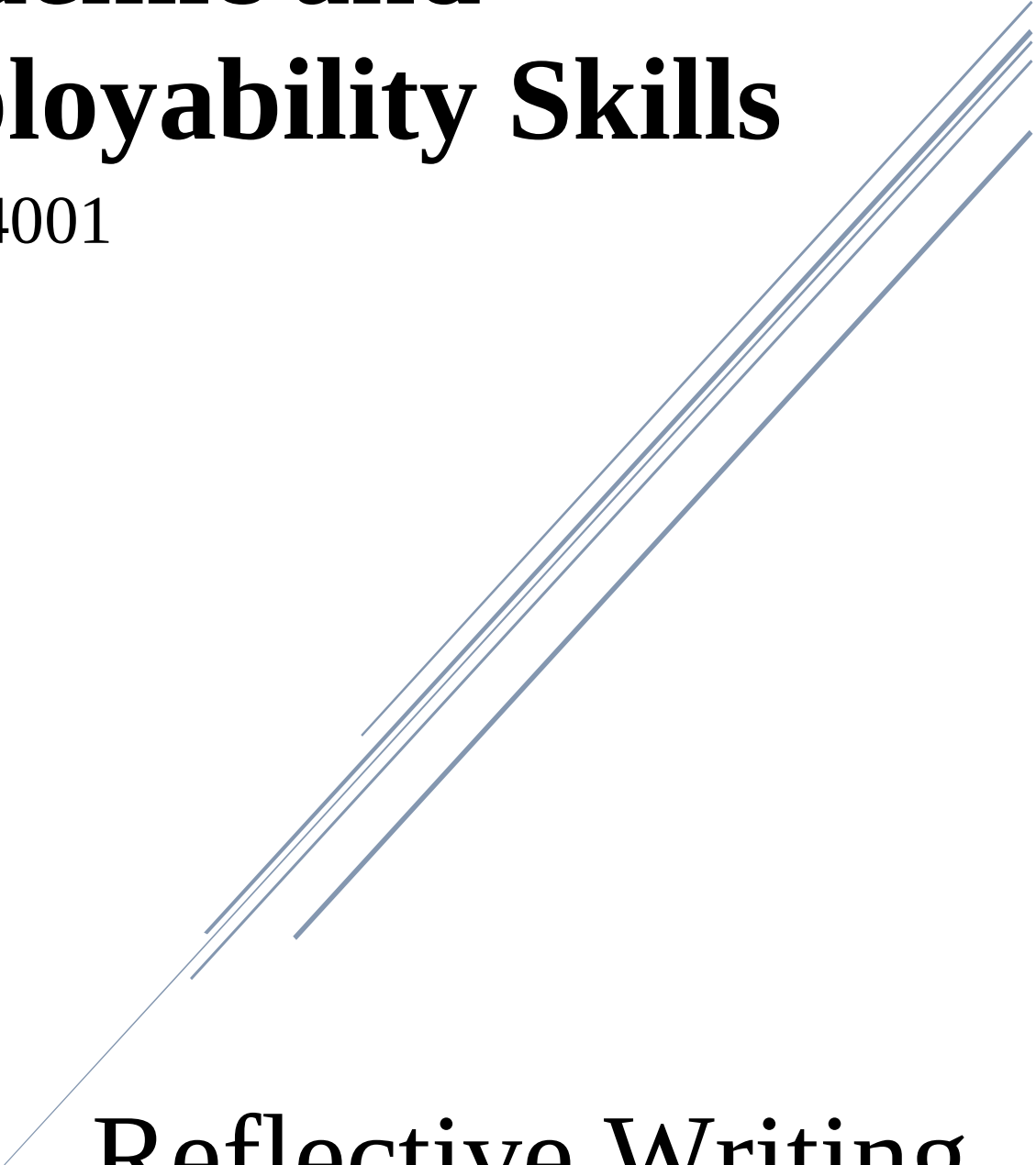




University of Wales
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Academic and Employability Skills

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Reflective Writing

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INTRODUCTION

Reflective writing is a skill we have developed that we use to evaluate from a personal perspective something that has happened to us, something we have witnessed, a thought or a feeling we had in a written form in order to interpret what we have observed, what was its impact on us or if we could have taken a different path or choice. We use this ability to identify a point of interest, learn from our experience and what will the result be from this experience. Several models for reflective writing have been developed: ERA Cycle, Driscoll's What Model, Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, and Gibb's Reflective Cycle, but for this report, I will be using Driscoll's What Model (University of Cambridge, 2021).

DRISCOLL'S WHAT MODEL – AN OVERVIEW

The model for reflective writing developed by Driscoll in 1994 was first intended for healthcare practitioners so they can develop a self-improving skill by learning from the experience they have written about. His model was based on Borton's Development Framework from 1970 (Essay Writing Service UK, n.d.). By answering three questions the writer can guide himself through the event or experience and learn from the resolution of the said instance. The three questions he posed are "What?", "So what?" and "Now what?". The first one addresses what kind of event has occurred and how would you describe it. The second question is an analysis of the said event and its different aspects. And the intention of the final question is to lead us to a resolution of the experience and how can this knowledge be implemented in future situations. The potential of this practice was noticed by other fields as well and now many university students use it to quantify their knowledge.

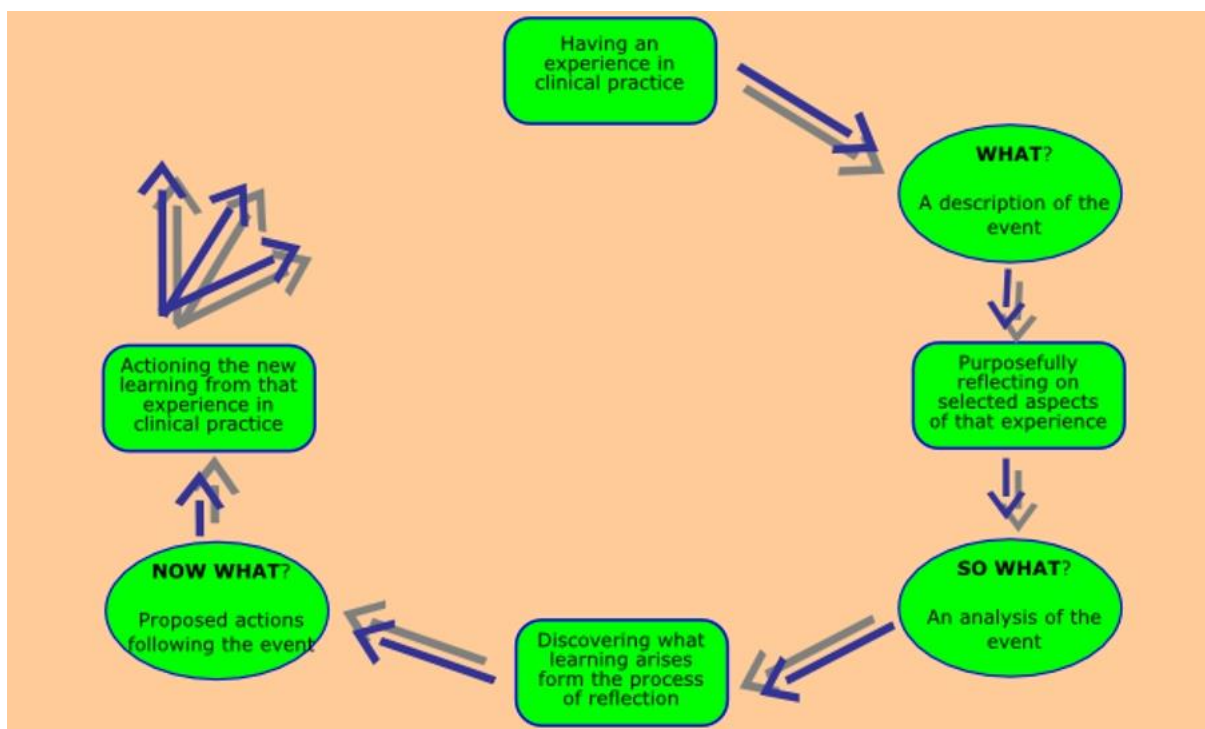


Fig.1. Driscoll's Model Of Reflection

Source: (Essay Writing Service UK, n.d.)

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is our ability to organize and prepare ahead of time for the tasks that we want to complete in an orderly manner. An approaching deadline can cause extreme levels of stress to a person who doesn't know how to manage his time properly and result in unfinished tasks that can have a negative impact on his career, studies, mental health or interpersonal relations with family, friends or work colleagues. With so many distractions that we are surrounded by, learning how to properly manage our time is a key skill not only in our personal life but also a key skill for any workplace nowadays (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.).

REFLECTING ON TIME MANAGEMENT

When I decided to enrol in "Business Management" or any other degree as a matter of fact I was perfectly aware that I would collide head-on with my old nemesis and his name is "time management". The thought of approaching deadlines would terrify me to the extreme and cause me an exorbitant amount of stress and my anxiety would get so bad that I would require medication just so I can calm down and breathe and sleep properly. This isn't my first attempt at getting a degree. It's my third attempt. The previous two I failed because of my inability to manage my time properly.

I struggled for a very long time not knowing why a simple thing like being on time for an appointment with a friend that I wanted to see and I had arranged would be so difficult or completing important assignments that my studies or career would depend on. This time though I was prepared because after many failed attempts at different degrees, careers and hobbies I sought help and discovered that my will to make a change and do tasks in sequence, meet deadlines and retain focus on tasks that require a sustained mental effort was being sabotaged by my Inattentive Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

Now that I knew what was causing all those pitfalls along my path I could finally learn how to manage my time properly by using the help of time management software and different techniques that will jumpstart my brain in work mode or force it to realize when a task has to be completed. The truth is it is still difficult managing time but knowing the cause of your failure is a battle half-won.

REFERENCING

Referencing is the written acknowledgement that you are using someone else's work in your own and providing the details on how to find the piece of information you have used so that others can reach the source (The Open University, n.d.).

REFLECTING ON REFERENCING

My first encounter with referencing was during my second attempt at a degree. A lecturer not interested in teaching us this skill didn't bother delving into details and I remember her pointing at a PowerPoint slide for a minute and then changing it to something irrelevant and talking for almost ten minutes about how difficult referencing is and that she would make sure we don't pass our module if we don't do our references properly. That left a sour taste in my mouth and I ended up asking for help

from a friend of mine to do my references for her module just so I can pass. This resulted in me never learning what is the point of referencing and how to do it right.

In this university, I had an entirely different experience. A lecturer who enjoys teaching and answering questions and me being an annoyingly curious person allowed me to stay motivated and learn how to reference other peoples work. In addition, we had several assignments, including this one where I got to practice this skill and I found out that there are several styles of referencing like AMS (American Meteorological Society), APA (American Psychological Association), Chicago style referencing, Harvard style referencing, MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association), OSCOLA (Oxford Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities), etc. (University of Reading, n.d.) and that this is my favourite part of the assignment. I even started helping others do theirs and when we had a group assignment in another module I made sure every single rule was followed by my colleagues so that their references were perfectly correct.

During the years between my previous experience, I learned something very important. I learned about the importance and value of intellectual property and the amount of work and time one has devoted to creating the source you are about to use and I would never disrespect somebodys effort to contribute to humanities advancement of knowledge by being a thief and stealing something that doesn't belong to me. Now that I would be a part of the academic community and eventually contribute to this pool of knowledge by adding my work one day I know what the importance of referencing is and would dream for the moment that one day, my work will be referenced by a student that found my work useful in his pursuit of knowledge.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATIONS

Public speaking is a method of presenting information to an audience and it could be with the help of a visual guide like a PowerPoint presentation. The speaker is required to have researched and been fully informed on the topic he is going to present. He has to be confident, well-articulated, charismatic and fearless. Using additional means like PowerPoint can make the presentation more engaging and easier to understand by the group that it's been presented to (Spencer, 2021).

REFLECTING ON PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATIONS

Being extremely shy and anxious is two factors that have impacted my performance in the past to a point where I would forget I have learned and freeze. Knowing that being able to freely speak my mind and present my ideas or topics to an audience either small or big will be a big part of what I want to achieve so I had to overcome these hurdles. If I wanted one day to become a creative director, I had to learn how to present to people from different departments my vision and just doing that wouldn't be enough. Learning how to project confidence and be both charismatic and calm under pressure were all necessary skills I had to develop.

In university, I had the perfect group to achieve my target. Being surrounded by people with different backgrounds, from different cultures, different age groups and different dreams that they would want to achieve was the perfect test group that I can use to rebuild myself and be that person with the can-do attitude, who will be able to talk to everyone about everything with enough confidence that people would think that there is nothing I don't know or can't do. A pillar that the entire group can rely on.

The experience that those opportunities gave me can be implemented in my future career. The more you do of something the more good you become at it. In addition, the first time you try something new is the worst, but with every consequent attempt, you perfect your method and also gives you the confidence when you see your progress from the first time you tried and now. Although some say that practice makes perfect, I would disagree with them. I think practice makes you better and I intend to continue practising my ability to speak publicly and presentation skills by challenging myself even further with more difficult topics in the future and not just with the ones I feel comfortable talking about.

REFLECTION

Self-reflection is a method we use to learn from our experience by deconstructing bit by bit the memory of what has occurred and analysing it on a micro and macro level, so we can exploit it and gain knowledge that will give us an advantage in the future when we encounter a similar situation, event, feeling, etc. (Holstee, n.d.).

REFLECTING ON REFLECTION

As a human, I reflect on past events to analyse my mistakes and learn from them. I do it when I'm driving, I do it when I'm on the bus going to university, I do it in the shower and I even self-reflect while I'm trying to fall asleep and I do this in my head by using my internal voice and even rarely by talking to someone about it, so imagine my surprise when I was told in university I had to do this by writing it down. As a person with dyslexia and dysgraphia, I would have never thought of transforming my self-analysis process from internal to external and on a paper or a screen at that. I had never done that before.

Now I know that there are several methods of doing this and I'm even doing it at the moment by using one of them and examples from other people (Gladd, n.d.). Being a person that tries to organise his every thought from a swarm of angry bees due to my Attention Deficit Disorder I find this method quite useful because in this way I can track my progress and evolution. I don't have to remember everything because the next time I open this file, I'll be immediately transported to this state of mind. I will regain the knowledge I might have forgotten by just going back to the day that I wrote this.

This is a skill I would reuse many times in my life because I'll be able to revise different stages of who I was and who I am at that moment. I would remember lessons that I've learned but sadly forgotten due to my disorder or the passing of time. This is a way for me to create a book of lessons learned from personal experience and a way to always preserve that knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to this story is that learning can take many forms and learning new things is not the only thing there is in gaining knowledge, but learning new methods of studying and new methods of gaining that knowledge are as important as well. Self-reflection is important because it shifts the focus back to you and allows you to grow as a person too. And to quote Socrates, one of the greatest philosophers that have walked the earth, "*The unexamined life is not worth living.*".

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