



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BSc (Hons) Professional Police Practice

LEVEL 6 - 40 Credits

Workbook title: Competency Based
Workbook 3 (PCDA)
8000 Words

(SOUTH WALES POLICE, GWENT POLICE AND
UWTSD)

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FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT **PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMME**

Module title: Professional Police Practice 3 (PCDA) BMPP6000D

Workbook Guidance

Please read these notes carefully; they provide essential information.

What is the workbook for?

The purpose of this workbook is to enable learners to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they meet the learning outcomes set by the College of Policing, for the BSc programme. Essentially, you are being asked to outline your experiential learning based upon your theoretical understanding in a range of operational situations.

- Understanding the Police Officer role
- Modern Professional Police Officer
- Strategic Role of the College of Policing
- Communication Skills
- Social Media
- Leadership and Team Working
- Leadership style
- Flexibility and Leadership Strategy
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Professional and Organisational goals
- Assessment

You may wish to use the same incidents as you've outlined in the Occupational Competence Portfolio.

How should the workbook be presented?

Blank electronic copies can be found on Moodle of this workbook. You must submit this document electronically therefore it is important that you save your work regularly and upload the final typed version through Turnitin on Moodle.

Word count policy can be found in chapter 7 of the Academic Quality under section 7.7 (this applies to presenting work above and under the specified word count).

https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/academic-office/aqh-chapters/chapters---en/Chapter_07_Assessment-Taught_Programmes_Pages_72-79-UPDATED-05-11-2019.pdf

Reflective practice is a core aspect for your workbooks and although there is a variety of useful resources on Moodle, there is one particular book, that is specifically based on reflective practice in policing, here is a link to one chapter from Selina Copley's Reflective Practice for Policing Students:

https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/298870/mod_resource/content/1/Reflective%20Practice%20for%20Policing%20Students%20-%20Selina%20Copley%20Chapter5.pdf

How is the workbook assessed?

Advice and support about the completion of this workbook was provided by university staff as part of your initial training day and further help and advice is available on Moodle.

Your tutor constable and in-force training staff will not be involved in assessing or marking your workbook after it has been submitted.

Dates of workbook submission will be made available and posted on Moodle.

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Confidentiality

It is important that no individual can be identified either directly or indirectly from the information in the workbook. Therefore, you must:

- adhere to guidance in the Student Handbook about unfair practice and plagiarism.
- not identify individuals including witnesses, victims or offenders by name.
- not write information that enables any individual to be identified indirectly through the description you provide. This includes references to names, colleagues, places (including hospitals, schools, town, villages, streets) specific incidents which were high profile and could be identified due to past publicity, other professionals or any other personal information including medical or other conditions;
- take personal responsibility for adhering to confidentiality rules.
- not include any dates of any incidents or anything that specifically identifies an actual incident.

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Should any health and wellbeing concerns be raised because of disclosures made by the student within this workbook, the employer of the student will be informed.

NOTE

Your workbook will be submitted electronically via Turnitin on Moodle. Guidance on this is in the Student Handbook.

Remember that the workbook is YOUR responsibility you must not rely on the assessor or anyone else to pick up any confidentiality breaches as this is your work and you must accept full responsibility for confidentiality. Meeting all the confidentiality requirements is very important.

Dyslexia and other special circumstances

If you have any condition that you feel may affect your ability to deal with any part of the programme, please see the Student Handbook for further guidance. The University has a Student Services Unit that may be able to help but ***it is the learner's individual responsibility to contact them.***

Guidance:

- *Your workbook must contain the items specified in the table below (clearly identified and in the order given).*
- *You should use this document (electronically on Moodle) - insert your text / answer within each section of this workbook.*
- *You should upload your completed document as a saved pdf file of this workbook; if this is not possible then a Word Doc file is acceptable. Do not send a scanned file from a photocopier, an apple.dot file, or a Microsoft publisher file as Turnitin will not be able to assess them despite you being able to upload them.*

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Task 1

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Understanding the Police Officer Role.

You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened.

Critically evaluate the strategic role of the College of Police in professionalising policing in the U.K.

Evidence how you are working to fulfil the role of a modern professional police officer now that you are in your final year of probation.

Critically reflect upon how your final year of probation has seen your role as a police officer change.

Consider the strategic Policing requirement, Policing Vision 2025, the Workforce Transformation 2018 and the College of Policing's 5 Year Strategy.

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

The professionalisation of policing has been a key strategic objective for the College of Policing (CoP) since its inception in 2012. In turn, improving standards, embedding evidence-based practice, and building public trust have become central expectations of a modern police officer. This essay will critically evaluate the effectiveness of the CoP in achieving its aims of professionalising policing in the U.K., drawing on the Fundamental Review of the College of Policing (College of Policing, 2021b), academic literature, and my own experience.

Using Borton's Developmental Framework, I will reflect on an incident I was involved in, analysing what occurred ('What?'), its significance ('So what?'), and how it will influence my future behaviour ('Now what?') (Physiopedia, 2016). This reflection will be considered within the broader context of my final year of probation, providing evidence of how I am working to fulfil the role of a modern professional police officer.

The reflection will engage with key strategic plans, including Policing Vision 2025 (NPCC and APCC, 2016) and the Workforce Transformation strategy (College of Policing and NPCC, 2018), to contextualise how my personal development aligns with national policing goals for professionalisation.

The CoP defines itself as "a professional body for everyone working across policing." It was established in 2012 to replace the National Policing Improvement Agency with the mission of setting standards, advancing evidence-based knowledge and practice, and professionalising the police service (College of Policing, 2021a). The drive for professionalisation in policing is shaped by a range of pressures, including changing public expectations, increased operational complexity, and societal change (McCann and Granter, 2019). Historically, reforms have been prompted by crises or inquiries, such as the Scarman Report (1981), which followed the Brixton riots and led to the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Home Office, 1984). More recently, an increasingly diverse society and heightened scrutiny of police legitimacy have driven a renewed emphasis on

policing by consent and the need for forces to better reflect the communities they serve (NPCC and APCC, 2016).

As police officers are increasingly required to address broader issues, such as cybercrime, safeguarding concerns, and mental health crises, there is a growing demand for a workforce that is confident, knowledgeable, and adaptable (NPCC and APCC, 2016). As a result, professionalisation is considered a means of preparing officers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and judgement to meet the broader demands of modern policing (College of Policing and NPCC, 2018). However, Holdaway (2017) argues that efforts to professionalise the police are unlikely to succeed unless greater attention is given to critically examining what it means to be a 'police professional.'

To support the aim of creating a more knowledgeable and adaptable workforce, the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) was introduced by the CoP in 2016. The PEQF standardised recruitment across police forces in England and Wales by requiring a consistent level of education within policing roles (Strong, 2019). Research suggests that further education better equips recruits to manage the complex demands of the modern police officer role (Blakemore and Simpson, 2010). However, while university qualifications have been found to develop officers' knowledge and confidence, their ability to put this knowledge into operational practice can be limited (Norman and Williams, 2016). There are also concerns that the PEQF

could lead to the prioritisation of organisational skills over operational ones (Martin, 2021). However, more research is needed to draw definitive conclusions.

The CoP's strategic role in professionalising policing is also evident in its responsibility for setting and maintaining national standards. Through the development of frameworks such as Authorised Professional Practice (APP) (College of Policing, 2022a) and the Code of Ethics (College of Policing, 2024a), the CoP provides a reference point for consistent, ethical, and legally compliant policing across England and Wales. In 2021, the Fundamental Review of the College of Policing praised APP for providing clear and comprehensive guidance, particularly for high-risk departments where standardisation is essential for managing risk (College of Policing, 2021b). However, critics argue that applying standardised frameworks to emergency service work can oversimplify the complexity of frontline policing and reduce nuanced professional judgement to "checklist thinking" (McCann and Granter, 2019). Moreover, Roycroft and Roach (2019) argue that these frameworks are only as effective as the officers who interpret and apply them, making their real-world effectiveness dependent on factors such as training and experience.

The CoP has also played a central role in advancing evidence-based policing in the U.K., particularly through the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (College of Policing, 2022b). Research suggests that police-academic

partnerships are essential to the professionalisation of policing (Sherman, 2013) and can contribute to improved outcomes in crime reduction and for victims (Goode and Lumsden, 2016). The 2021 Fundamental Review found that meaningful progress had been made in fostering collaboration between researchers and frontline officers, helping to ensure that national guidance is grounded in evidence-based research (College of Policing, 2021b). However, Williams and Cockcroft (2018) argue that frontline officers are often excluded from research production, preventing the full implementation of evidence-based practice across the workforce.

Officer perceptions of the CoP's effectiveness vary. The 2021 Fundamental Review found that the CoP had "not yet lived up to [its] potential or fully delivered on the expectations that officers, staff and the public have of policing's professional body" (College of Policing, 2021b). It highlighted that only 25% of officers viewed the CoP's training as effective, and just 21% believed it provided meaningful support for career development. Moreover, only 20% felt that CoP leadership development programmes were effective, despite 48% believing they were helpful in theory. This raises questions about the CoP's ability to deliver on two of its core priorities: supporting professional development and improving access to policing knowledge (College of Policing, 2023).

The 2021 review also indicated a general perception that the CoP primarily serves "policing leaders and academics" rather than frontline officers,

undermining the CoP's claim to be a professional body for "everyone." Many officers were also unaware of the CoP's involvement in initiatives they did value, such as the Oscar Kilo wellbeing programme, which suggests that even successful projects are not enhancing its credibility among officers (College of Policing, 2021b).

These perceptions may reflect the resourcing constraints under which the CoP operates. In the six years preceding the review, the CoP's budget was reduced by 17% despite increasing demands linked to officer recruitment and the changing complexity of crime (College of Policing, 2021b). With just 0.5% of total police funding allocated to the CoP during that period, it could be argued that its capacity to deliver consistent professionalisation across forces is limited. Martin (2021) argues that training and development is often neglected in these instances, giving way to other operational priorities.

In response to the concerns raised in the Fundamental Review, the CoP launched the Corporate Strategy 2022-2026, which aims to enhance professionalism and promote consistency across forces (College of Policing, 2024b). It is possible, then, that perceptions of the CoP's efficiency have improved since 2021. However, without more recent research, it is difficult to assess the strategy's national impact to date. In the absence of this data, insights from frontline officers become essential in understanding whether the CoP's strategic goals are being achieved. My own experience during the final

year of probation is an example of this perspective, illustrating how national strategy intersects with frontline decision-making.

Borton's reflective model begins by asking, "What happened?" (Physiopedia, 2016). During my third year of probation, I attended a call initially recorded as a low-risk neighbourhood dispute involving noise complaints and verbal arguments. On arrival, I spoke with a woman who gradually disclosed that she was being persistently harassed by her former partner, who lived nearby. As the conversation unfolded, it became clear that the behaviour amounted to a pattern of coercive control, intimidation, and social isolation, none of which had been recognised at the call-handling stage.

The approach I took when handling this case was informed by the national frameworks that underpin professional policing in the U.K. The Strategic Policing Requirement identifies violence against women and girls as one of seven national threats, reinforcing the need for consistent and effective safeguarding responses (Home Office, 2023). This national priority informed my decision to escalate the case and consider it as part of a wider pattern of harm.

Policing Vision 2025 prioritises early intervention alongside an improved understanding of vulnerability (NPCC and APCC, 2016). The woman was articulate, well-presented, and lived in an affluent area. While her outward presentation did not immediately raise safeguarding concerns, my

understanding of vulnerability — shaped by APP and reinforced through academic research undertaken as part of my degree — prompted me to look beyond the surface. I discovered that she had recently become unemployed, was experiencing significant financial hardship, and had a history of childhood abuse, all of which compounded her vulnerability as a victim (Bowling, Phillips and Parmar, 2010). While her situation may not have initially triggered safeguarding flags, recognising her vulnerability enabled me to ensure that the necessary support was put in place. Without the academic learning delivered through the PEQF, my understanding of vulnerability might have been more limited, and the associated risks may have been overlooked.

The Workforce Transformation Strategy emphasises the importance of ethical judgement, collaborative working, and emotional intelligence (College of Policing and NPCC, 2018), all of which I believe were effectively utilised during this incident. After identifying the woman's vulnerability, I completed a Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour based violence (DASH) risk assessment, submitted a Public Protection Notice (PPN), and referred the case to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

Reflecting using the second stage of Borton's framework, I believe this incident challenged me to consider what it means to be a modern professional police officer. In 2025, the role extends beyond procedural competence. It requires emotional intelligence, strategic awareness, and the ability to interpret national frameworks and academic learning in real-world contexts

(NPCC and APCC, 2016). Frameworks such as APP and strategic goals like Policing Vision 2025 provided a structured foundation for my decision-making, while professional judgement enabled me to think critically about the situation. It was the integration of both elements that ultimately led to a positive outcome.

This incident does raise questions about the visibility of national guidance. Although the woman's situation fit the national threat priority of violence against women and girls (Home Office, 2023), this was not recognised during the call-handling process. Moreover, my ability to act confidently during this incident was grounded in my experience. Earlier in my probation, I may not have had the confidence to challenge the incident's original risk grading, despite my knowledge of national safeguarding priorities. This highlights a key limitation in the CoP's professionalisation strategy. While frameworks and priorities are clearly defined at the strategic level, their implementation in frontline settings is inconsistent (College of Policing, 2021b). This supports Roycroft and Roach's (2019) view that standardised guidance is only as effective as the individuals implementing it.

This experience challenged me to think critically about what professionalism looks like in practice. It reinforced the importance of applying academic learning and national policing frameworks in real-world scenarios, and I came away with a better understanding of how my decision-making aligns with wider organisational strategies. Following a positive outcome, I now feel more

confident in my ability to apply national guidance in a thoughtful and nuanced manner.

Considering the 'Now what?' element of Borton's model, I intend to continue using reflective models to examine my development as a modern police officer. I will also engage more critically with the CoP's resources, recognising that professionalisation is not a fixed endpoint but an ongoing, reflective process (McCann and Granter, 2019). I hope to support others, particularly new recruits, in understanding how national guidance can inform professional judgement in real-world scenarios.

Next time, I would also consider providing feedback to the CoP about where national guidance felt helpful or not in supporting frontline decisions, contributing to a culture of continuous professional development. By doing so, I will be actively contributing to professionalisation rather than relying on top-down strategies that may not always reflect the complexities of frontline policing (Williams and Cockcroft, 2018).

In conclusion, the CoP has made a significant strategic contribution to the professionalisation of policing in the U.K., particularly through its work in standard-setting. However, while frameworks like APP and the Code of Ethics provide a foundation for decision-making, their practical impact depends on how effectively officers can integrate them into real-world scenarios.

It can be argued that the CoP's role in professionalising policing is necessary but not sufficient. Limitations in visibility and resourcing challenge its overall effectiveness, particularly among frontline officers. However, my reflection demonstrates how national strategy and academic learning can effectively guide decision-making in frontline situations and lead to positive outcomes. That said, my experience also highlights the importance of experience and confidence in bridging the gap between policy and practice.

Ultimately, professionalisation is not a one-time accomplishment but an ongoing process that requires participation from both national organisations and individuals (McCann and Granter, 2019). As an officer in my final year of probation, I recognise my role within this process and will continue to reflect and contribute to the evolving professionalism of the police service.

Word count: 2,198

Task 2

**Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum:
Communication Skills, social media, Communication Strategy**

You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened.

Critically evaluate your experience of the use of social media as a means of informing and engaging with the community and promoting policy initiatives.

Consider the force policy on using social media for professional information and engagement purposes.

What social media platforms are used by policing?

What are the benefits and risks of using social media?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

Over the last two decades, social media has played an increasingly significant role in the police's communication strategy, shaping how forces across England and Wales engage with the public (The Police Foundation, 2014). Platforms like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) provide instant and far-reaching channels that the police can utilise to interact with their communities, with clear operational benefits (College of Policing, 2020). However, it is not without its challenges.

In this essay, I will critically evaluate the use of social media as a tool for informing and engaging with the public, drawing on an incident I experienced as a police constable. I will reflect on the benefits and limitations of the

approach taken and consider them within the broader context of social media use in policing, using academic literature to support my analysis. The essay will be structured using Borton's Development Framework, allowing me to reflect on the incident and its broader implications (Physiopedia, 2016).

Social media refers to websites or applications that "allow people to communicate and share information like opinions, pictures and videos on the internet" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). This includes platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube. While all of these platforms facilitate communication, some are more suitable for policing purposes than others, and their use varies depending on force objectives. X, for example, has been widely used by forces across England and Wales to provide real-time public safety updates, including during the 2024 U.K. riots (Robinson, Ralph and Aitken, 2025). Comparatively, YouTube is often used to share non-urgent video content, such as road safety campaigns, while Instagram is used to share insights into police officers' daily responsibilities. Facebook, on the other hand, plays a role in promoting the police's corporate identity online (College of Policing, 2020).

In 2025, there are an estimated 54.8 million social media users in the U.K., representing approximately 79% of the population (Dixon, 2025). It is, therefore, widely agreed that social media has significant potential as a communication channel for the police (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013). Despite this, there is currently no national, standardised strategy when

it comes to police content on social media. Instead, individual forces create their own strategies, guided by materials from the College of Policing and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

The College of Policing instructs that police-operated social media accounts adhere to several key principles to maintain professional and ethical online engagement. These include being credible, consistent, and responsive while encouraging "constructive feedback and discussion." Accounts must also reflect the professional values of the police force, presenting officers and staff as ambassadors for policing (2020).

According to the ACPO, appropriate social media use also requires a critical awareness of risk. Risks include breaching public trust, violating data protection, reputational damage, or disclosing sensitive information that could harm investigations (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013). Ethical considerations are also central to the guidance, with a clear expectation that officers avoid posting discriminatory or potentially harmful content online (College of Policing, 2020).

The guidance is clear that social media use should not alienate the community (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013). Although its broad reach enables communication with traditionally hard-to-reach groups, including those who are unlikely to connect with police via traditional methods such as public meetings or community groups, the police must also be careful not to

marginalise those who do not find social media accessible (Knibbs, 2013). This includes individuals with limited internet access, residents in rural areas, older people, and those who choose not to use social media (Park, 2017). To continue protecting the public and to avoid creating new inequalities, a balance must be struck between utilising new technologies and maintaining traditional, non-digital communication methods (Roberts et al., 2017).

Despite the detailed guidance from the College of Policing and the ACPO, the understanding and subsequent implementation of these principles can be inconsistent (Akhgar, Bayerl and Leventakis, 2019). Interpretation can vary between individual officers and forces, resulting in discrepancies in how social media is used in practice (Dekker, Van den Brink and Meijer, 2020). This has the potential to impact the quality of content shared and increase the risk of public misunderstanding and reputation damage (Crump, 2011). When mistakes do occur, the fast-paced and far-reaching nature of social media means errors are amplified, which risks widespread attention and impact (Shahbazi and Bunker, 2024).

This is further complicated by the fact that individual officers can operate their own social media accounts. In 2012, a review identified 357 cases in which officers may have behaved inappropriately on social media over nine months. They were categorised as "offensive language or behaviour (132 instances), commentary on police protocol or procedure (119), negativity towards the police service (70), and extreme opinions on the government (36)" (HMIC,

2012). While these findings suggest that existing social media guidelines are insufficient in guiding officers, it is important to acknowledge that the HMIC review is 13 years old. It is possible that officers' social media literacy and understanding of the guidelines have since improved. However, without a more recent review, it is difficult to conclusively determine whether these issues have been addressed.

When used appropriately, the benefits of social media in a policing context can be significant. I experienced these first-hand during a high-risk missing person call, which I will recount using the first stage of Borton's Development Framework (Physiopedia, 2016). The incident involved a man who failed to return to a mental health facility following a period of authorised leave. He was vulnerable, and the standard procedures for locating him were quickly exhausted. The case was escalated to our force's social media unit, who posted a public appeal that included a recent photograph and the man's name, age, physical description and details of his last known location. It was posted via Facebook and X, where it was quickly and widely shared. Within a few hours, a member of the public contacted the police to report the man's location at a nearby bus stop, which led to his safe recovery.

This incident highlights several key benefits of social media use within policing, including the ability to share information instantly, reach a broad audience, and actively involve the community in urgent police enquiries (Meijer and Torenvlied, 2014). The process is efficient, far-reaching, and more

cost-effective than traditional methods (Dekker, Van den Brink and Meijer, 2020). Social media posts on platforms like Facebook or X can be published within seconds, with the added advantage of followers resharing onto their own platforms.

A successful social media strategy also has the potential to build public trust by creating a two-way communication channel that supports information sharing and intelligence gathering (Ruddell and Jones, 2013). This allows the public to engage directly with the police, creating a sense of an accessible and accountable organisation (Lee and McGovern, 2014). Police can also appeal for witnesses, request help identifying individuals, and seek tips from the public while also monitoring and responding to online feedback (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013). Moreover, the police can utilise social media to trace and monitor the profiles of known or suspected offenders, offering insights into locations, friendships, activities and behaviour patterns (College of Policing, 2020).

However, critics have questioned the extent to which this two-way engagement and the subsequent benefits are achieved in practice (Fernandez, Dickinson, and Alani, 2017), as many forces use social media as a broadcast channel rather than an opportunity for dialogue (Zavattaro and Brainard, 2019).

Anonymity, however, is one feature of social media that can support online communication between the police and the public. Research suggests that people may be more likely to engage with the police if their identities are hidden, which can be valuable in intelligence-gathering contexts ((Nunan et al., 2020). This is also beneficial when attempting to reach groups that are less inclined to engage, such as vulnerable people, victims, and young people (Knibbs, 2013). However, anonymity also presents clear challenges. It can facilitate the spread of misinformation and harmful commentary, and the lack of accountability can embolden individuals to behave inappropriately or abusively online (Kim, Ellithorpe and Burt, 2023). This risks complicating or undermining policing objectives and, in turn, eroding public confidence (Fowler, 2017).

The speed and scale of social media can complicate these challenges further. The ability to share information instantly and widely can be valuable during urgent scenarios, such as natural disasters, active crime scenes, or missing persons (Dencik, Hintz, and Carey, 2017). However, this immediacy also introduces risk. In an environment where information can spread quickly and without context, the potential for misinformation or harmful speculation is significant (Fowler, 2017).

My colleagues and I did not discuss the potential broader implications of publicising the man's identity and personal circumstances. The sense of urgency due to his vulnerabilities influenced our decision-making, and our

immediate priority was ensuring his safe return. Reflecting on this now, I recognise that our urge to give the case wider visibility may have overshadowed our consideration of the potential broader impacts.

In line with force policy, the social media appeal was deleted as soon as the individual was safely located. However, it had already been widely circulated, and members of the public had begun creating and sharing their own posts. Because the man was well-known within the community, the appeal attracted added attention, including speculative comments about his wellbeing and criticism directed at his family and the facility where he was staying. Additionally, the facility's location was disclosed by a member of the public, raising serious concerns about privacy and safeguarding. This highlights a critical limitation of social media as a policing tool. Once a post is released into the public domain, control over its narrative and reception decreases significantly (Fielding, 2021). As Fowler (2017) argues, this loss of control can contribute to reputational harm, increased public scrutiny, and the unintentional amplification of stigma or misinformation.

These concerns were evident on a large scale during the high-profile disappearance of Nicola Bulley in Lancashire in 2023. After she went missing while walking her dog, the case attracted widespread attention across social media platforms. Thousands of amateur sleuths shared unsubstantiated theories, and misinformation became widespread. The public response was described as a "carnival of hysteria" that ultimately hindered the police

investigation rather than assisting it (Brown, 2023). Lancashire Police faced significant criticism from both politicians and the public over its handling of the case, particularly its decision to disclose Bulley's personal health information, which many viewed as unnecessary and as a catalyst for the social media frenzy (Jermyn and Horeck, 2025).

In both the case of Nicola Bulley and the missing man, data privacy was a significant concern. Public appeals often require the disclosure of sensitive personal information. While this may be justified in situations involving risk of harm, the ethical boundaries are complex and must be considered carefully (Williams et al., 2018).

The second part of Borton's Development Framework requires me to consider the result and what I learned. Overall, I was relieved that the individual was located safely and that the outcome was positive. However, I was uncomfortable with the public response, which included inappropriate and speculative commentary. The experience has led me to reflect more critically on the broader consequences of police outreach via social media, particularly where vulnerable individuals are involved. Although the appeal achieved its immediate objective, it came at a cost to the individual, their family and the police force itself.

It is important to recognise that my reflection is biased because the incident had a positive outcome. Had the individual not been found quickly or safely, I

might have questioned whether we had acted quickly enough. Decision-making in policing often takes place in conditions of uncertainty, and in this instance, I believe the choice to utilise social media was reasonable and proportionate.

The third and final element of Borton's framework requires me to consider how this experience will shape future practice. If faced with a similar situation, I would likely make the same decision again. However, I would advocate for more discretion when it comes to details like vulnerability and suggest a more active strategy to monitor online responses where possible. I am now more aware of the reputational, emotional and operational consequences that can arise from well-intentioned but poorly managed social media use. This will inform my future judgement, and I intend to contribute to broader discussions about social media use in ethically complex scenarios.

In conclusion, when utilised appropriately, social media has significant potential as a communication tool for the police. Its benefits include instant information sharing, the ability to reach diverse audiences, and valuable opportunities for intelligence gathering and public engagement. I have witnessed first-hand how social media can effectively support police investigations and contribute to positive outcomes.

However, my experience also highlights the challenges associated with police social media use. While the appeal achieved its purpose, it also exposed

challenges related to data privacy, reputational harm, and the impact of public commentary, particularly in cases involving vulnerable individuals or ongoing investigations.

Given its widespread use, police forces must continue to engage with social media. However, it is essential that communications remain grounded in the core values of policing — ethics, accountability, and the public interest.

Word count: 2,198

Task 3

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Leadership and Teamworking

You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened.

Critically evaluate and **evidence** your flexibility in leadership style.

Critically analyse leadership strategies that you have developed to manage a range of different operational situations.

Consider leadership models commonly used in policing.

How were you able to apply a change in leadership style/strategy to reflect changing circumstances?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

Modern police officers operate within increasingly complex organisational, political, and societal contexts. These pressures are shaped by heightened public scrutiny, the rapid pace of technological advancement, reputational challenges, and evolving societal expectations (Filstad, Karp and Rod., 2024). Alongside their responsibilities for crime prevention, officers are now expected to deliver on broader organisational objectives, including professionalisation, inter-agency collaboration, and community engagement (NPCC and APCC, 2016). As a result, police leaders must have the flexibility, emotional intelligence, and confidence to navigate this rapidly evolving professional landscape (College of Policing, 2024b).

Throughout my three-year probation, I have developed a more nuanced understanding of leadership, informed both by academic study and practical experience. This essay will critically evaluate how I have developed and applied flexible leadership styles and strategies, using a specific policing incident to evidence my progress. Structured using Borton's Development Framework (Physiopedia, 2016), this reflection will examine what happened, what it revealed about my development as a police leader, and what it means for my future practice. Academic literature and leadership models commonly used in policing will be incorporated throughout to assess the effectiveness of my approach.

Defining leadership is inherently difficult. It is often considered context-dependent, and what constitutes effective leadership can vary across settings and sectors (Cote, 2017). For the purpose of this essay, I adopt Bass and Bass' (2008) definition, which frames leadership as the ability to influence others through a combination of personal traits and behaviours that motivate collective outcomes. However, even this working definition is not without criticism. Pollitt and Hupe (2011) suggest that leadership is often promoted as a "magic concept" with broad appeal but insufficient precision or evidence to be truly meaningful in practice.

The theoretical value of leadership within public sector organisations is widely acknowledged. Effective leadership has been associated with

improved organisational performance (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006), increased accountability and transparency (Syafaruddin, 2024), and the ability to deliver successful reform (Stewart and Kringas, 2003). However, translating leadership theory into practical application remains a challenge, particularly in public sector organisations (Van der Voet, Groeneveld and Kuipers, 2015). Unlike other professions, police leaders are required to navigate an organisational structure that is hierarchical and controlled alongside an operational reality that is dynamic and unpredictable (Johannessen, 2015). Filstad, Karp, and Rod (2024) argue that this results in a challenging balance characterised by conflicting objectives.

Despite the challenges, leadership in policing remains a national priority. Policing Vision 2025 (NPCC and APCC, 2016), the Workforce Transformation Strategy (College of Policing and NPCC, 2018), and the College of Policing's 2022–2026 Corporate Strategy (2024b) all position effective leadership as a cornerstone of modern professional policing. Across these frameworks, flexibility in leadership style is repeatedly emphasised. This aligns with Davis and Silvestri's research, which suggests that no single leadership style is sufficient to meet the wide-ranging demands of policing (2020).

Pearson-Goff and Herrington (2013), supported by Filstad, Karp and Rod (2024), identified five essential components of effective leadership in policing: the ability to create a shared vision, foster organisational

commitment, care for subordinates, lead change, and solve complex problems. These abilities extend beyond technical skills to include interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, which are traits increasingly expected of all police officers – not just those in management positions (NPCC and APCC, 2016).

Using the first stage of Borton's Development Framework (Physiopedia, 2016), I will recount a specific incident in which I was required to utilise these traits alongside a flexible leadership approach. During a night shift with limited staffing, I was dispatched to an incident involving a group of teenagers who had reportedly been threatening members of the public and were suspected of carrying weapons. The nature of the call required immediate action and was considered a priority due to the potential threat to public safety. Although still in my third year of probation, I was the most experienced officer available to respond. My more senior colleagues were occupied, and the two officers accompanying me had each completed less than two years of service. Although I did not communicate it at the time, I was worried about the situation, and I sensed that my colleagues were also concerned. This sense of shared anxiety may have shaped how each of us went on to respond.

On arrival, I conducted a rapid assessment of the scene. No weapons were visible, but the teenagers were visibly agitated, and a small crowd of onlookers had gathered. Although I did not hold a formal management role, I

recognised the need for leadership. In high-pressure operational situations, the ability to demonstrate situational leadership — adapting your approach in response to unfolding risks — is essential (Campbell and Kodz, 2011). I was also mindful of the pitfalls of passive or avoidant leadership, characterised by indecision or failure to assert authority. This approach has been associated with reduced team effectiveness, lower morale, and increased operational risk (Hancock et al., 2021). In this instance, an avoidant approach could have escalated tensions, risked public safety, or undermined public trust — outcomes that are difficult to recover from in frontline policing.

As a result, I quickly delegated initial roles. I tasked one officer with engaging with the teenagers, while the other was responsible for managing the crowd. However, it quickly became clear that both officers were struggling in their respective roles. One appeared hesitant and overwhelmed and was unable to assert control when speaking to the group. The other adopted an unnecessarily confrontational tone with members of the public. Both responses risked escalating the situation and undermining public confidence.

I adjusted my approach accordingly. I spoke privately with the more assertive officer, advising a more measured tone and redirecting him to assist with engaging the teenagers, whose behaviour was becoming increasingly disruptive. I then reassured the more hesitant officer and invited

her to accompany me as I addressed the crowd. I led the initial interaction to model confidence and composure, but once I sensed that her confidence had returned, I stepped back, allowing her to take over.

More experienced colleagues arrived at the scene shortly after, and I was able to hand over the leadership role to them. No weapons were located, and both the teenagers and the onlookers dispersed without the use of force or arrest.

The second stage of Borton's Development Framework requires me to reflect on what I have learned and why it is important (Physiopedia, 2016). In terms of leadership theory, I employed situational leadership to tailor my approach to each officer's needs. The more hesitant officer required a supportive and collaborative leader to help build their confidence, whereas the assertive officer required a more direct approach, with stronger authority and boundary-setting.

Research suggests that effective leaders can adapt their approach to suit the context and the individuals involved (Davis and Silvestri, 2020). Initially, I relied on a transactional leadership style to provide clear expectations, which was appropriate given the urgency and risk. I later continued with this approach by addressing the assertive officer's behaviour directly, clarifying expectations and reinforcing professional standards.

The transactional leadership approach, which is generally characterised by performance monitoring and intervention when standards fall short, has been criticised for being overly rigid and failing to challenge organisational norms (Deluga and Souza, 1991). I tried to use this approach sparingly and proportionately, complementing it with more transformational strategies, such as confidence-building and supportive feedback. However, Campbell and Kodz (2011) argue that police officers in the early stages of their careers may react positively to leaders who offer task clarity and accountability, particularly in unpredictable environments.

I also utilised a transformational leadership approach, particularly in terms of inspiring confidence in the hesitant officer. Although transformational leadership within policing often involves a formal, long-term vision or strategy (Campbell and Kodz, 2011), it can also encompass characteristics such as supporting the growth of others, building trust, and creating positive changes (Cockcroft, 2014). Using this approach, I was able to inspire confidence and encourage learning through my behaviour, ultimately leading to a positive outcome. However, transformational leadership within policing is not without criticism. Cockcroft (2014) argues that it is often applied in an oversimplified manner, which does not reflect the complexities of policing culture and, in turn, dilutes its impact.

Another strategy I utilised was active leadership through role-modelling. By demonstrating how to manage the crowd, I enabled my colleague to

observe and mirror that behaviour — a strategy commonly used to build confidence in a supportive learning environment (Coleman, 2018). While this approach proved effective during the incident, I have since reflected on the assumptions I made. Research by Silvestri and Tong (2022) highlights that many informal expectations around police leadership are shaped by masculine ideals, presenting the leader as a heroic, composed, and masculine figure. As Alexander and Charman (2023) argue, this can inadvertently reinforce "machismo" norms, thereby pushing aside alternative forms of leadership.

Although my intention was to build confidence, I now recognise the importance of ensuring that role-modelling is not dismissive of alternative approaches. In future, I aim to support colleagues in ways that validate a wider range of leadership styles and responses, recognising that leadership can be expressed in diverse ways (Davis and Silvestri, 2020).

When considering "Now what?" as part of the final stage of Borton's Development Framework, I can lay out a plan for future improvements. I intend to continue developing my ability to adapt leadership styles according to the demands of each situation and the needs of my colleagues. While I felt confident stepping into a leadership role under pressure, the reflection process has reminded me to remain critically aware of how my leadership preferences may inadvertently exclude alternative and potentially equally effective approaches.

I also recognise the value of balancing different leadership approaches. Although transformational leadership is widely associated with positive outcomes within policing, transactional elements proved to be equally essential in this incident. Going forward, I will apply both models flexibly in a mixed-method approach, aiming to ensure that immediate operational needs are met while maintaining a focus on development and inclusion.

While the overall outcome of the incident was positive, I recognise that my response could have been improved. In retrospect, I missed an early opportunity to assume the leadership role before arriving at the scene. Although I sensed that my colleagues were nervous, I failed to act on that observation. By the time I took on a leadership role, their initial anxiety had already started to influence their behaviour and confidence levels. This experience has shown me that effective leadership often requires early adoption. In future, I will pay more attention to indicators that a leader is needed and will act more confidently and proactively in stepping up.

Going forward, I will also give greater consideration to factors such as my colleagues' experience levels, personalities, and emotional states when delegating tasks. In doing so, I hope to create a more stable and supportive operational environment from the outset rather than after difficulties emerge.

In conclusion, effective leadership in a policing context is increasingly understood as a dynamic process shaped by operational demands and broader societal expectations. It is possible to argue that no single leadership style is sufficient to meet the diverse challenges faced by modern police officers (Davis and Silvestri, 2020). Instead, a combination of approaches, including both transactional and transformational, is often required.

This reflection has explored how I developed and applied flexible leadership styles during a critical incident in my final year of probation, using Borton's Development Framework to examine what occurred, why it mattered, and how it will shape my future practice. Drawing on situational, transactional, and transformational leadership approaches, my experience shows how police officers — regardless of management status — can adopt leadership strategies that support operational outcomes and team development.

The incident highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence, role modelling, and early intervention in shaping team performance. It also revealed the tensions between traditional leadership expectations and the need for more inclusive and reflective practice.

My experience suggests that effective leadership in policing requires both flexibility and self-awareness. National strategies emphasise the importance of strong leadership, but it is ultimately up to individual officers to implement

these ideas. As I transition beyond probation, I intend to continue developing my leadership style with greater emphasis on inclusion, proactivity, and emotional insight. In doing so, I hope to make a meaningful contribution to a modern policing culture that supports professional growth, enhances outcomes, and empowers officers to lead with confidence.

Word count: 2,070

Task 4

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Coaching, Mentoring, Assessment

Critically reflect upon your three-year probation:

How have you benefited from mentoring and coaching?

How has it helped you to meet personal, professional and organisational goals?

How has it aided you to learn, develop and perform in the workplace?

Consider relevant coaching and mentoring definitions along with current coaching and mentoring theories used in policing.

How do you provide and receive feedback?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

Mentoring and coaching are widely considered to be effective tools for developing an individual's skills, which in turn can benefit the organisation they work for (Arter, 2006). Throughout my three-year probation, both approaches have contributed to my development as a police constable, enabling me to improve core policing competencies alongside more general qualities such as resilience, confidence, and decision-making. In this essay, I will critically reflect on this period and discuss how mentoring and coaching have contributed to my personal and professional growth. I will use academic research to support my experience and structure this reflection using Borton's Development Framework, considering what happened, why it mattered, and how it will inform my future approach (Physiopedia, 2016).

Although similar in nature, mentoring and coaching have distinct definitions and key themes that set them apart. The definition of mentoring is multifaceted and, as Roberts (2000) describes, a "definitional quagmire." However, for the purposes of this reflection, mentoring will be understood as a developmental relationship between an experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced colleague (the mentee), in which the former provides ongoing guidance, support, and encouragement (Kram, 1985).

Coaching, on the other hand, refers to the focused development of specific skills or knowledge, typically delivered through short-term guidance or structured support (Parsloe and Wray, 2000). In a policing context, this often takes the form of practical feedback and performance-based reviews, like feedback after responding to an emergency call, reminders to manage caseloads effectively, or guidance on handling high-risk incidents (Staller, 2021). These interactions are generally more task-specific than those found in mentoring relationships, with an emphasis on immediate performance rather than long-term support and guidance (Parsloe and Wray, 2000).

Ragins and Kram (2007) identified two broad but complementary functions within effective mentorship in the workplace: career development and psychosocial support. The former includes job-related assistance, such as teaching and feedback, while the latter encompasses more personal elements, including emotional support, counselling, friendship, and role modelling (Kram, 1985).

The first component of Borton's framework requires me to reflect on the "What?" which involves considering what happened, who was involved and how I responded (Physiopedia, 2016). In this instance, I will focus on the mentoring relationship I experienced and the challenges I encountered during the early stages of the process.

During my three-year probation, I have been fortunate enough to have a mentor who has guided me through the process of becoming a police constable. Assigned to me during the tutorship phase, my mentor was a more experienced officer whose role was to support my development both as a police officer and as an individual navigating a demanding profession. While the primary purpose of mentorship is often understood as the transfer of experience and practical insights from mentor to mentee (Hamlin and Sage, 2011), Parsloe and Wray (2000) suggest that its actual value is in enabling a developmental process that challenges both parties, promoting growth and self-reflection on both sides. Likewise, Dennen (2004) argues that the relationship itself must remain central to the process, with helping, teaching, learning, and reflection forming its core principles.

For me, the early stages of the mentoring relationship were challenging. My mentor and I were previously unknown to one another, and it took time to build rapport and understand each other's distinct personalities and working styles. Having come from a previous role where I led a large team, I struggled to adapt from the "mentor" to the "mentee" role. I initially

experienced frustration and, at times, acted defensively. My research has since informed me that this is an emotional response not uncommon in mentoring relationships (Eby and McManus, 2004). Although negative outcomes in mentorship can sometimes be attributed to a personality mismatch (Eby et al., 2013), this was not the case for my mentor and me. Instead, we required time to develop a mutual understanding and find an approach that worked for both of us.

Reflecting further, the difficulties I experienced in relinquishing control and accepting guidance underscore an important transitional period in my role as a police officer. This prompts the second stage of Borton's model: asking, "So what?" and considering why this experience is significant and what it taught me about myself (Physiopedia, 2016).

Roberts (2000) outlines eight attributes of effective mentoring, including a supportive relationship, a helping process, a teacher-learning process, a reflective process, career development, formalisation, and a clearly defined mentor role. While it took a few weeks to build mutual trust and establish boundaries, once I had fully embraced my position as a mentee, the mentorship process began to reflect these attributes more clearly. From that point onward, the supportive and developmental aspects of the process became more evident, and the personal and professional benefits became increasingly clear.

Academic literature widely agrees that, when implemented effectively, workplace mentoring offers a range of benefits, particularly when introduced early in an individual's career (Carter and Francis, 2001). From an operational perspective, having a mentor has contributed significantly to my development as a police officer. My knowledge and understanding of the core policing competencies significantly improved, and regularly observing my tutor helped me to engage more effectively with members of the public. This, in turn, boosted my confidence and situational judgement and, therefore, improved my capacity to make decisions under pressure. This developmental progress is likely to continue shaping my career, as research indicates that employees with mentors report higher levels of job satisfaction, increased promotion prospects, and greater earning potential (Allen et al., 2004).

However, it was on a more personal level that I found mentoring most helpful. The human side of mentorship has the potential to foster confidence, enhance interpersonal skills, and boost self-worth (Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005), which can have socio-economic implications for the wider police force, such as reduced leave and improved workplace morale (Young and Perrewe, 2000). My own experience reflects this. The support I received through mentoring extended beyond operational development and became a critical form of personal and emotional support.

During my probation, I experienced periods of work-related stress that adversely impacted my mental health. The high-pressure nature of policing, especially during the early months, was at times overwhelming. During this period, I leaned heavily on my tutor for support. Research has shown that the interpersonal aspects of mentorship can have a positive effect on the mentee's wellbeing, reducing stress and improving mental health outcomes (Eby et al., 2013). This is particularly relevant in policing, where officers experience high levels of stress and are especially vulnerable to mental health challenges (Bullock and Garland, 2017) yet operate within a culture that promotes stoicism and discourages emotional vulnerability (Bell and Eski, 2016). These benefits are not limited to the mentee. Some studies suggest that mentors themselves may experience improved mental wellbeing, mitigating some of the adverse effects of the occupational culture within policing (Gill, Roulet and Kerridge, 2018).

It was during this period that my mentor introduced me to the GROW model (Hancock, 2024). Together, we used this framework to unpack the stress I was experiencing, with the aim of identifying root causes and setting practical objectives to manage this differently moving forward. We followed the GROW structure (Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap-Up) to set expectations, assess the current situation, explore possible next steps, and agree on an action and support plan to help prevent the same situation from arising again. Although I initially felt hesitant, I found the process surprisingly beneficial. Through this reflection, I recognised that I had waited too long to

ask for help with my caseload, which allowed feelings of stress and frustration to accumulate. I can now understand that early intervention is key to managing pressure and that seeking support sooner is not a weakness but a proactive step toward maintaining wellbeing. Next time, I hope to be able to apply this model independently during professional challenges, particularly those related to stress and resilience.

The potential benefits of mentoring extend beyond my personal experience. Research has shown mentoring to be particularly effective for individuals from underrepresented groups, such as women or minority groups, particularly in fields like U.K. policing, where diversity remains limited and a "macho culture" prevails (Chandler and Ellis, 2011; Jones, 2017). However, effectiveness is not guaranteed. Critics argue that mentoring can reinforce the existing status quo rather than challenge it, limiting its potential as a tool for development (Gulam and Zulfiqar, 1998). Negative mentoring experiences can also undermine outcomes and lead to disengagement (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). This raises important questions about the consistency and quality of mentoring within policing, particularly in environments shaped by resource limitations and shifting organisational priorities (Bullock and Garland, 2017). While my experience was largely positive, more research is needed to understand the structural and cultural barriers that may inhibit the success of mentoring in a policing context.

I have also been supported during my probation period by my Sergeant, who has taken on more of a coaching role. His responsibility has been to guide me through operational tasks, such as supporting victims on my caseload, while also helping me to develop key competencies, including procedural knowledge, workload management, and decision-making. Unlike my mentor, whose focus included longer-term personal development and emotional support (Kram, 1985), my Sergeant's role focused on developing me within the police constable role specifically.

Comparatively, I did not find the coaching process as personally challenging as the mentorship. In reflection, this may be because it was a more formalised and task-specific process, with less emphasis on long-term personal development and more focus on performance within a work context. Meetings with my Sergeant were scheduled regularly and followed a consistent structure, during which we would discuss my workload, upcoming objectives, and specific areas for improvement. This regular, focused format provided clear expectations, making it easier for me to understand and measure progress over time.

Comparatively, the mentorship required more ongoing and open-ended discussions, regular feedback, and honest communication, which initially felt emotionally demanding, particularly before my mentor and I had established mutual trust. In reflection, I can recognise that I also found it easier to receive feedback related to professional performance as opposed to

personal attributes. Initially, I found it difficult to accept feedback on aspects such as my communication style, decision-making under pressure, or my approach to conflict resolution, as these felt like more personal critiques that provoked a more defensive emotional response.

In the final stage of Borton's Development Framework, the focus turns to what I have learned and how it will shape my future practice (Physiopedia, 2016). Through this reflection, I now realise that my initial discomfort with mentoring stemmed from insecurities around transitioning from a “mentor” in my previous role to a “mentee” as a new police officer. Research suggests this is a common experience in mentoring relationships and must be consciously addressed to achieve positive outcomes (Eby and McManus, 2004), which I will aim to acknowledge and manage in future learning environments.

I also found it challenging to receive personal feedback, particularly when it related to aspects such as communication style or decision-making. I have since learned that meaningful development requires vulnerability and openness to critique (Hamlin and Sage, 2011), which I will continue to practise across all aspects of my professional development. I recognise that I am not yet fully confident in separating personal emotion from professional feedback, and this remains a key area for growth.

Going forward, I intend to apply the GROW model proactively and independently when managing challenges, particularly those related to workload pressure. I also plan to seek support earlier rather than waiting until stress accumulates.

In the future, I hope to become a mentor myself, carrying forward the lessons I have gained so far throughout this process. My research has also highlighted the personal and professional benefits of mentoring others (Gill, Roulet and Kerridge, 2018), which has strengthened my motivation to contribute meaningfully in both roles.

In conclusion, mentoring and coaching have both played a vital role in my development during probation, supporting my ability to meet personal, professional, and organisational goals. Mentoring, in particular, offered support that extended beyond skills development and helped build emotional resilience — a quality that is especially valuable in the high-pressure context of policing. Coaching complemented this by reinforcing procedural competencies and providing a structured format for receiving professional feedback.

Through this reflection, I have explored how feedback, which initially caused discomfort, became a catalyst for growth. I now understand that meaningful development requires vulnerability, self-awareness, and the ability to engage constructively with critique, a lesson I will carry into the future.

This process has also increased my awareness of the limitations of mentoring, particularly in promoting diversity and inclusion. Although my experience was positive, I now have a better understanding of how ineffective matching, a lack of structure, or poor communication can undermine the mentoring or coaching relationship (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007), raising questions about consistency and access across policing.

I recognise that my decision to embrace my position as a mentee is what created the conditions for significant progress in my role as a police officer. It is, therefore, essential that I carry these lessons forward, continuing to learn and develop both personally and professionally.

Word count: 2,188

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The bibliography should only include sources referenced within the workbook using the Harvard referencing system. Information about referencing in written assignments and how to avoid plagiarism can be found on Moodle. It is important that you are aware of the importance of ensuring that the work submitted is your original work.

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