

Reflective Writing

**Academic Skills for the Digital Era
(BMSW4013)**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the Concept and Importance of Reflection
2. Apply Gibbs' Reflective Cycle
3. Develop a SMART Action Plan for Future Improvement

What is Reflection?

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. – Schon (1983)

To start reflecting on an experience, ask yourself key questions about the experience.

- What did I learn?
- What do I need to learn more about?
 - Why did I feel the way I did?
 - What was easy?
 - What went well?
 - What was difficult?
 - What went badly?
- How can I improve in the future?
- I wonder what would happen if...

(Gibbs, 1988)

Is there more than one model of Reflection?

- Reflection is a process of thinking deeply about experiences to learn and improve.
- There isn't just one way to reflect – multiple models help guide the process, each with its own focus and approach.
- Each model provides a unique way to analyse and understand experiences, helping to extract valuable insights.

(Gibbs, 1988)

Models of Reflection

- **ERA Model:** *Focuses on the three stages: Experience, Reflection, and Action (Johns, 2000).*
- **Driscoll's What Model:** *Encourages a structured analysis of What, So What, and Now What (Driscoll, 2007).*
- **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle:** *Emphasises a continuous cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).*
- **Gibb's Reflective Cycle:** *A detailed model focusing on stages like description, feelings, evaluation, and action planning (Gibbs, 1988).*

Models

Activity

Investigation

What is the importance of Reflective Writing?

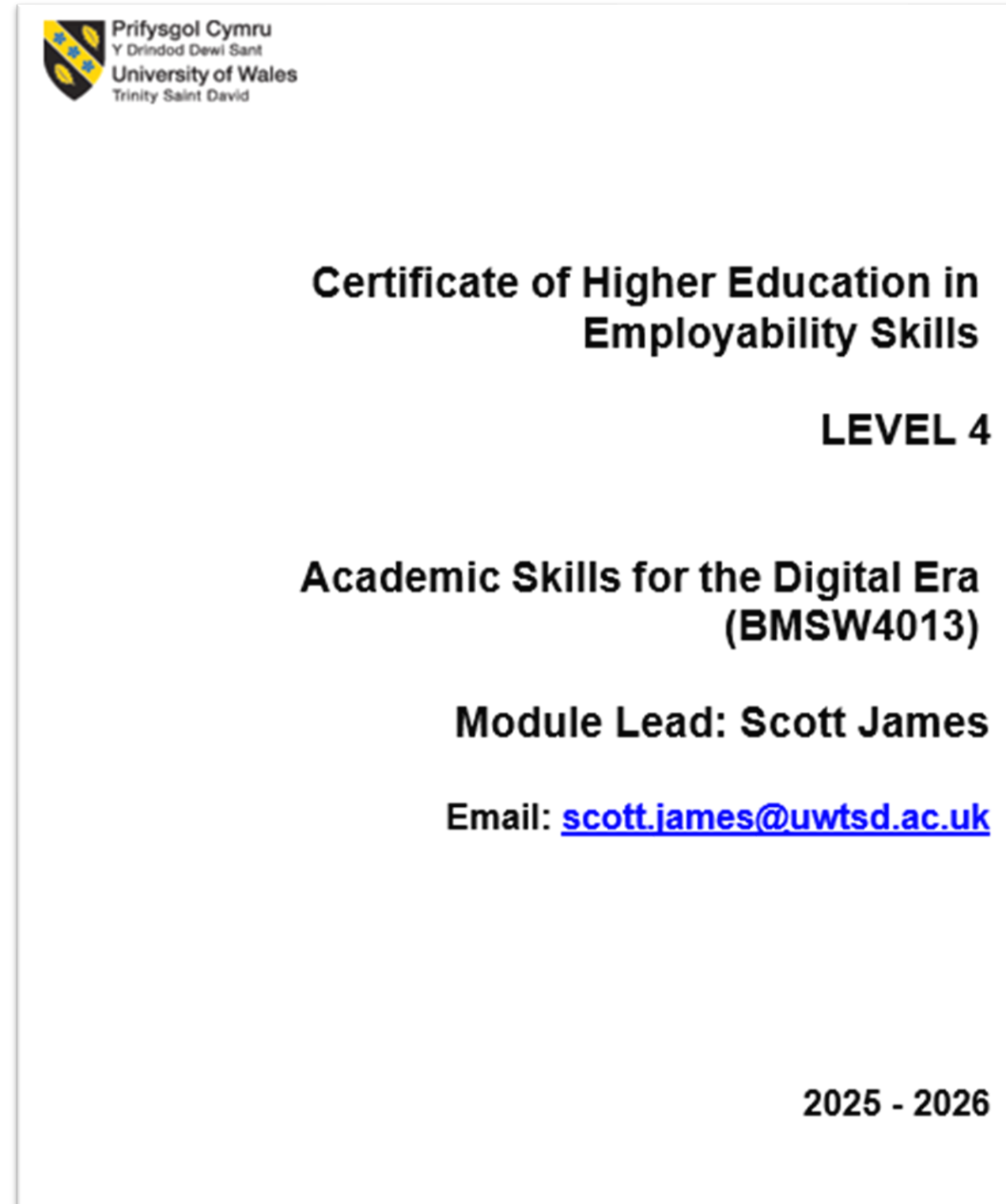
- **Deepens Learning:** Connects theory to real-world practice and helps you understand experiences on a deeper level.
- **Improves Critical Thinking:** Encourages analysis of your actions and decisions to enhance problem-solving skills.
- **Supports Personal Growth:** Builds self-awareness by reflecting on strengths, values, and areas for improvement.
- **Enhances Professional Development:** Strengthens transferable skills like decision-making, communication, and self-management.
- **Boosts Confidence:** Recognising progress and achievements helps build motivation and confidence.
- **Improves Academic Performance:** Helps identify knowledge gaps and keeps you actively engaged in learning.

(Schon, 1983; Kolb, 1984)

Assignment Two – Reflective Essay

- **Title:** Reflective Essay
- **Word count:** 1500 words
- **Deadline:** Monday 8th
December 23.59PM 2025

Let's look at the
Module Handbook
together...



Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - DESCRIPTION

The first step in Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is all about describing the situation you experienced. This means telling the story of what happened in a clear way.

Questions to think about:

- What exactly happened?
- When and where did it take place?
- Who was involved?
- What did you do?
- What was the result?

(Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - FEELINGS

In this step, you explore your thoughts and emotions, being honest about how the experience made you feel and how that affected your actions.

Questions to think about:

- What were you feeling before the situation started?
- What were you thinking as the situation happened?
- How did you feel during the experience?
- Did your emotions change as things went on?
- How did your feelings affect what you did or said?
- How do you feel now when you look back on the situation?
- What do you think about the experience now?

(Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - EVALUATION

Now that you've described the experience and reflected on how you felt, the next step is to evaluate it. What was good and bad about the situation?

Ask yourself;

- What worked well and why?
- Were there any parts of the experience that didn't go as planned?

Try to look at it fairly — not too harsh, but not overly positive either.

The evaluation helps you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the experience. Why is this important??

(Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - ANALYSIS

You've already described the situation, reflected on your feelings, and evaluated what went well or not so well — now it's time to ask why.

- Why did things turn out the way they did?
- What influenced the results — was it your decisions, other people's actions, or the environment?

This is where real learning happens, because you're beginning to connect your experience to your knowledge and skills.

(Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - CONCLUSION

At this stage, you bring together everything you've reflected on so far. Think about what the experience has taught you overall. Consider both the positive points and the challenges, and what this means for your future learning.

- What have I learned from this experience?
- What went well, and what didn't?
- How has this experience changed my understanding?
- What could I do differently next time?
- What are the main takeaways I want to remember?

(Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) - ACTION PLAN

The final step is to think about what you would do differently (or the same) in the future. This is your action plan — a chance to use your reflection to improve your future practice.

For example:

- You might want to build on what went well or avoid something that didn't work.
- Maybe you need to gain more knowledge, develop a skill, or ask for support.

The action plan should be specific and realistic so that you're ready if a similar situation happens again.

(Gibbs, 1988)

Reflective Essay – Activity

Choose a specific experience from your first term at university where you either improved or faced challenges with an academic or digital skill.

For example, this could be related to referencing, academic writing, presenting, using AI responsibly, time management, or using the online library.

Use the worksheet provided to guide you through each stage of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle:

- 1. Description**
- 2. Feelings**
- 3. Evaluation**
- 4. Analysis**
- 5. Conclusion**
- 6. Action Plan**

SMART Action Plan

A SMART Action Plan is a way to make your goals clear and easy to follow. It helps you plan what you want to do next in a way that makes it more likely you will succeed.

What does SMART stand for?

- **Specific:** Be clear about what you want to do.
- **Measurable:** Make sure you can check your progress.
- **Achievable:** Choose goals you can realistically reach.
- **Relevant:** Pick goals that matter to your learning.
- **Time-bound:** Set a deadline to finish your goal.

(Clarke, 2017)

SMART Action Plan

How can I apply a SMART Action Plan?

Let's say I set myself the following goal; "Improve my presentation skills."

- **Specific:** I will work on improving my presentation skills by focusing on structure, delivery, and engagement techniques.
- **Measurable:** I will rehearse and deliver at least 3 presentations, each lasting 5–10 minutes, before my next in-class presentation.
- **Achievable:** I will dedicate 30 minutes every day to practice, watch presentation tutorials, and gather feedback from peers or tutors.
- **Relevant:** Improving my presentation skills will help me communicate my ideas more effectively in academic and professional settings.
- **Time-bound:** I will complete my 3 practice presentations and gather feedback before my next in-class presentation.

SMART Action Plan Activity

Using what you learned from your reflection, create a SMART target that focuses on one specific skill or area you want to develop.

Your target should be:

- **Specific:** What exactly will you work on?
- **Measurable:** How will you know when you've achieved it?
- **Achievable:** Is this goal realistic for you right now?
- **Relevant:** How does this goal help your learning or university work?
- **Time-bound:** When will you complete this goal?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES - RECAP

Today, we have...

1. Understood the Concept and Importance of Reflection
2. Examined Different Reflective Models
3. Applied Gibbs' Reflective Cycle
4. Developed a SMART Action Plan for Future Improvement

Next Week (Week 11)

Understanding and Using Feedback

Reference List

- Clarke, N. (2017) *Achieving Your Goals: A Practical Guide to Using the SMART Framework*. London: Pearson Education.
- Driscoll, J. (2007) *Practising Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach for Healthcare Professionals*. Edinburgh: Elsevier.
- Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.

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- Johns, C. (2000) *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Schon, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

If you have any questions,
then please do not
hesitate to reach out.

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