

Module Name: Academic skills

Reflective thinking and Reflective Writing Activities

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1. Introduction

This assessment adopts Gibb's (1988) 'Reflective Cycle' to systematically map a pertinent experience and analyze it comprehensively. Subsequently, attention will be directed towards the linguistic tools necessary to articulate reflections effectively. Participants are encouraged to engage in writing exercises to facilitate learning.

2. Defining Reflective Writing and Practice

Reflective writing encompasses a process whereby individuals contemplate and analyze their experiences to derive deeper insights and meanings (Rodgers, 2002). It serves as a mechanism for enhancing critical-thinking skills by evaluating strengths and identifying areas for improvement within a learning context (London Business School, 2023). Unlike mere identification of successes and failures, reflective practice delves into the underlying reasons and mechanisms driving these outcomes. Rodgers (2002) describes reflection as a cognitive process enabling individuals to delve into the significance of their experiences. Reflective learning, as articulated by the London Business School (2023), entails a systematic examination of one's learning journey to foster critical-thinking skills and uncover underlying motivations. The paraphrasing techniques effectively capture the essence of the original texts while presenting the ideas in a different form. However, improvements could be made in terms of incorporating more diverse vocabulary and restructuring sentences for clarity and precision.

3. Useful vocabulary and definitions

"To delineate" encompasses vividly depicting an experience or concept, capturing its essence.

"To assess" entails critically evaluating or making informed judgments after comprehensive examination.

"To scrutinize" signifies meticulously examining data or situations to ascertain precise outcomes or insights.

"To infer" refers to deliberate reflection or drawing conclusive insights based on thorough analysis.

"To strategize" involves methodically outlining events or actions, typically in a sequential manner.

"To deconstruct" entails dissecting components to discern fundamental aspects or underlying principles.

"To deliberate" involves carefully weighing and evaluating the significance or quality of something through thoughtful consideration.

4. What do the experts say?

According to Gibbs (1988), his 'Reflective Cycle' stands as one of the most widely utilized models of reflection, renowned for its effectiveness in facilitating critical thinking and yielding detailed insights. Employing this model in reflective assignments not only aids in generating comprehensive analyses but also demonstrates adept critical analysis skills, potentially enhancing academic performance. Although alternative reflection models exist, the focus of this workshop remains on Gibbs' framework due to its proven efficacy. (Gibbs, 1988).

5.The reflective process

Gibbs' (1988) reflective model provides a structured approach to dissecting personal experiences. Through a series of steps, individuals delve into their encounters, emotions, and reactions, culminating in actionable insights for future growth. This discourse navigates through the six phases of Gibbs' model, unveiling the intricacies of reflection and its transformative potential.

5.1. The experience

A poignant narrative lies at the heart of reflective practice, capturing the essence of personal encounters. Crafting a topic sentence to encapsulate the experience sets the stage for introspection. Delving deeper, one examines the motives underlying the

experience, unraveling the intricacies of personal drivers. Detailed notes chronicle the lead-up to the experience and its unfolding, painting a vivid picture of the context and dynamics at play (Gibbs, 1988).

5.2. Feelings

Emotions form the fabric of human experience, coloring perceptions and shaping responses. From the onset, a spectrum of feelings emerges, ranging from anticipation to trepidation. Throughout the experience, emotions fluctuate, reflecting the ebb and flow of engagement. Post-experience reflections unveil a tapestry of sentiments, shedding light on personal growth and resilience. Each emotion, whether positive or negative, serves as a compass, guiding subsequent actions and decisions (Gibbs, 1988).

5.3. Evaluation

Evaluation serves as a pivotal juncture in the reflective journey, delineating successes and setbacks. A critical analysis of the experience unveils its multifaceted outcomes, elucidating areas of mastery and opportunities for improvement. From incomplete tasks to newfound knowledge, each outcome offers invaluable insights into personal development. By dissecting the reasons behind positive and negative outcomes, individuals glean wisdom for future endeavors (Gibbs, 1988).

5.4. Analysis

The crux of reflection lies in its analytical depth, unraveling the underlying dynamics of personal experiences. Through discerning analysis, individuals unearth the root causes of their successes and failures. Whether grappling with auditory distractions or reveling in newfound proficiency, each insight paves the way for transformative learning. By probing the impact of external factors and internal disposition, individuals chart a course towards continuous improvement (Gibbs, 1988).

5.5. Conclusion

Reflection culminates in a moment of synthesis, wherein lessons gleaned coalesce into actionable wisdom. By distilling key insights from the reflective process, individuals gain clarity on their learning journey. From the realization of preferred learning environments to the acknowledgment of personal stressors, each conclusion holds transformative potential. Armed with newfound self-awareness, individuals embark on a journey of intentional growth and development (Gibbs, 1988).

5.6. Action plan

An action plan serves as the bridge between reflection and application, translating insights into tangible steps for the future. By delineating actionable strategies, individuals fortify their commitment to personal and professional growth. Whether cultivating conducive learning environments or adopting stress management techniques, each action aligns with the overarching goal of continuous improvement. Through intentional practice and reflection, individuals navigate the complexities of personal development with purpose and resilience (Gibbs, 1988). In conclusion, Gibbs' reflective model offers a structured framework for navigating personal experiences with intentionality and insight. By traversing the reflective process, individuals unearth valuable lessons, cultivate self-awareness, and chart a course towards holistic growth and development.

6.Sentence starters and useful language

In the realm of reflective writing, achieving clarity and structure is paramount, akin to traditional essays. While reflective accounts pivot around personal experiences, they maintain a formal structure with a blend of academic discourse. This synthesis necessitates an adept use of language and an understanding of grammatical nuances (London Business School, 2023).

6.1. Formality

A reflective essay mirrors the formality of academic writing while embracing the subjectivity of personal narratives. Embracing the first-person perspective is imperative, anchoring the narrative within the realm of personal experience (Gibbs, 1988).

6.2. Tenses and Structure

A nuanced grasp of grammar is indispensable in navigating the temporal dimensions of reflective writing. Past tense lends authenticity to recounted experiences, while present tense anchors theoretical discussions. Future constructions illuminate pathways for prospective actions, bridging past reflections with future endeavors (Gibbs, 1988).

6.3. Constructing your sentences

Sentence starters serve as scaffolds for crafting coherent reflections, offering a repertoire of phrases to articulate thoughts and emotions. These linguistic tools furnish individuals with the means to navigate the intricacies of introspection (Rodgers, 2002).

6.4. Sequencing

Sequencing lends structure to reflective narratives, tracing the trajectory of events and emotions in chronological order. Transition words delineate the beginning, middle, and end of sequences, facilitating a fluid recounting of experiences (Gibbs, 1988).

6.5. Identifying the Main Issue

Dissecting the salient aspects of an experience requires astute discernment. Delving beneath the surface, individuals unearth the pivotal moments that shape their reflective journey (Rodgers, 2002).

6.6. Analysing the experience

Cautious language underscores the analytical process, acknowledging the inherent uncertainty of causal relationships. Modal verbs and tentative expressions navigate the labyrinth of possibilities, illuminating potential pathways of understanding (London Business School, 2023).

6.7. Concluding your experience

The denouement of a reflective narrative demands a synthesis of insights gleaned from introspection and theoretical discourse. Concluding phrases encapsulate the evolution of understanding, underscoring the transformative journey of self-discovery (Rodgers, 2002).

6.8. Planning Future Action

Future actions emerge as a natural culmination of reflective inquiry, embodying newfound insights and resolutions. Forward-looking phrases epitomize the spirit of growth and resilience, propelling individuals towards intentional action (Gibbs, 1988). In essence, mastering the art of reflective writing entails a delicate balance between formality and personal expression. Through adept language use and structural coherence, individuals navigate the labyrinth of introspection, emerging with newfound clarity and purpose.

7.Style Tips

Reflective writing draws evidence from two primary sources: personal reflections and academic literature (Gibbs, 1988). The integration of these sources elucidates the nexus between theory and practice, showcasing the evolution of ideas within the context of scholarly discourse. In striving for academic excellence, it is imperative to juxtapose personal experiences with theoretical frameworks, thereby demonstrating a deep understanding of the subject matter (Cleary, 2020). By elucidating the interplay between theory and practice, one can elevate the quality of reflective writing, thereby enhancing its academic rigor and earning a higher grade. Additionally, Cleary's (2020)

recommendation of the Eisenhower Decision Matrix offers a practical approach to prioritizing commitments, albeit implementation challenges may arise.

8.Additional activity

Reflection 1: The reflection begins with an engaging anecdote about attending a lecture on the "long tail theory" in digital business (Reflective Writing Tips, n.d.). The writer describes their initial surprise and subsequent realization about the theory's implications. They reflect on their previous assumptions, emphasizing the importance of approaching lectures with an open mind. The reflection effectively follows the stages of a reflective cycle, moving from experience to analysis and concluding with lessons learned. However, the informal tone and lack of integration with academic literature slightly detract from its academic quality.

Reflection 2: This reflection focuses on the writer's experience with time management and its impact on assignment completion (Reflective Writing Tips, n.d.). It references academic literature to support assertions about the importance of effective time management skills (Cottrell, 2008; van der Meer et al., 2017). The reflection demonstrates self-awareness regarding the need for improved planning and proposes a concrete action plan for future assignments. While the reflection lacks the engaging narrative of Reflection 1, it compensates with a more formal tone and integration of academic sources, enhancing its academic credibility.

Overall Assessment: Both reflections offer valuable insights into personal experiences and lessons learned. Reflection 1 excels in storytelling and personal reflection but lacks academic depth. In contrast, Reflection 2 provides a more structured analysis with references to academic literature but lacks the narrative appeal of Reflection 1. Combining the engaging narrative style of Reflection 1 with the academic rigor of Reflection 2 would result in a more comprehensive and effective reflective account.

9.Referencing:

Cottrell, S. (2008). *The Study Skills Handbook*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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