Reflective Writing

Reflective writing assignments are usually linked with an experience or event that you have encountered. For example:

- Your experience as a student
- Your experience during work experience (e.g. placement)
- Your experience after an event (e.g. attending a museum)
- Your experience of a situation (e.g. after working in a group)

Reflective writing enables you to draw links between theory and practice and help you consider ways to improve or change in the future.

Reflective models

For some reflective assignments, you may be asked to use reflective models to guide your response. Be sure to check your module study guide to see if you have been asked to do so.

Reflective models

- **Borton (1970)** - What, So what, Now what
- **Kolb (1984)** - Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract conceptualisation, Active Experimentation
- **Gibbs (1988)** - Description, Feelings, Evaluate, Analyse, Conclusion and Action Plan
- **Johns (1994)** - Description, Reflection, Influencing factors, Could I have done it better, Learning

Reflective models can guide you through the reflective process, so it is important that you correctly interpret what each stage of a reflective model is asking you to do. Some of the questions that you should consider when you are writing a reflective assignment are:

- What happened?
- What were the circumstances?
- What were you thinking about?
- What went well?
- What could you have done differently?
- How can it be explained using theory?
- What have you learnt from this experience?
- How can you use this experience to improve for the future?
Reflective Writing

Applying theory to practice

Simply detailing your experience is not enough with reflective writing. It is important that you are integrating academic evidence within your reflective account.

You should use academic evidence to confirm and explain some of the observations that you have made during your experience. This academic evidence may support your actions or suggest alternative course of action.

Scenario

You had to work in a group to deliver a presentation on how social media impacts mental health.

Example

One of the issues that arose within the group was poor communication. After several meetings before the presentation, it was still unclear what topics everyone had to report on. According to Cottrell (2008), in order to work effectively in a group environment, it is important that everyone is clear about what their role is and that tasks are allocated fairly.

Appropriate writing style

Whilst reflective writing is based on your experience, it is still important to remain as objective as possible and remember that it is still an academic piece of work that you are writing.

Unlike most academic essays, you may be able to write in first person (e.g. I, my, me).

When you are writing about of your own reflections, you should use past tense. When you are referring to theory, you should use present tense.

Reference