



Personal & Professional Development Unit 4

Personal & Professional Development

QQI Level 6

6N1949

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Unit 4: Personal Reflection and CPD

This final unit of the module considers the areas of Personal Reflection and CPD (Continuous Professional Development). Both of these areas are essential for professionals and as such, no module on personal and professional development would be complete without considering each of these areas. Over the course of this unit you will be introduced to these essential areas and also will have the opportunity to complete learning activities to support your learning.

Personal Reflection:

Personal reflection refers to the process of reviewing one's actions (work or learning), with the aim of determining actions which were beneficial and actions which require further development.

As a professional, you should regularly engage in personal reflection on all aspects of your role. A key factor in engaging in personal reflection on your role, is to have an understanding of your job description and the various tasks/roles which are your responsibility. Where an individual is not aware of the fine detail of their job description, a blurring of boundaries can occur with key elements of one's role neglected, while other tasks not specific to one's role, may be conducted regularly.

In addition to reflecting on one's role, and the performance (or not) of the specific tasks assigned to that role, an individual should also regularly reflect on how they perform their duties and in so doing, acknowledge a job well done and identify any areas which require development.

For many, personal reflection is not something which carries a lot of importance, with many viewing it as a waste of time and scarce resources.

However, regular reflection is essential for any and every role and professional – if we do not consider our job performance and review same on a regular basis, how do we know if we have skill gaps or how do we determine where we need to change our approach?

In addition, if we do not reflect on our day, how do we acknowledge a job well done?

Reflection can, for many, be a difficult process – many people do not like scrutinising their own performance and can feel uncomfortable with the process. However, even conducting an informal reflection on job performance can be beneficial.

There are many and varied opportunities to engage in informal personal reflection. For example, you may just ponder over your performance of a particular task over coffee. Or you may ask a trusted (and honest) colleague how they feel you performed in a given task, or indeed, how the task went.

Consider your commute home from work – this is a good opportunity to ponder over your day and note areas where you feel you excelled and any areas where you feel you may need to develop. Taking advantage of such opportunities can greatly benefit your work performance as you actively think about your skills set, your job performance and how the two match (or not).

Engaging in effective reflection should involve some element of challenge to your current thinking and your current method of performing various tasks. If your reflection does not challenge you, then it can be argued that you are merely remembering the activity rather than actually reflecting on it. An effective reflection process will usually result in new ways of thinking and/or new ways of performing tasks.

The essential, basic elements of an effective reflection involve identifying the areas in which you feel you excelled (and why), and the areas you feel you can develop (and why).

The following table shows the key elements of reflection:

The Four Cs of reflection:

Continuous: an on-going part of learning in the course that provides continuity through each event or experience; reflection occurs before, during and after the experience.	Connected: the link between service and the intellectual and academic interests of students, resulting in the synthesis of action and thought.
Challenging: an intervention to engage students in issues in a broader, more critical way; reflection pushes students to think in new ways.	Contextualised: appropriate for the setting and context of a particular service learning course or programme; reflection corresponds in a meaningful way to the topics and experiences that form material for reflection.

(Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, 1996)

So, from this you can see that in order to effectively reflect, you must reflect on a **regular basis**, ensure that your reflection incorporates all the skills and attributes required for **your role**, involve a thought process which **challenges** your current thinking, and finally, be **relevant** to your work and/or learning.

Activity:

Consider for a moment your current reflection activity and complete the chart below:

Do you currently engage in reflection? If no, what prevents you from doing this?	
How/where do you currently reflect on your job performance?	
Outline any changes you have made to your work practice as a direct result of your reflection activity.	
Outline any changes you will make to your reflection practice.	

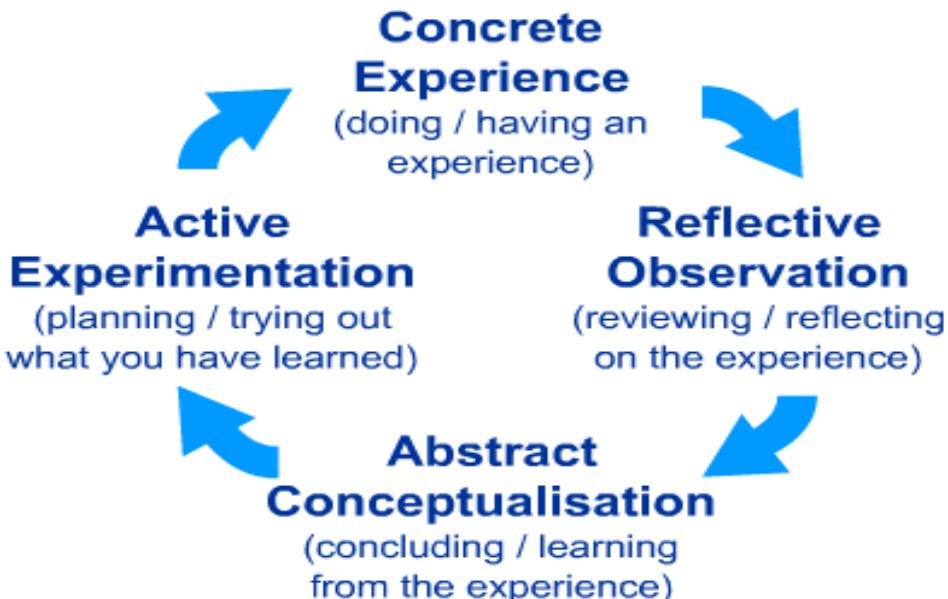
Reflection in Practice:

Reflection in practice refers to the capacity to reflect on our actions (work practice) in order to engage in a continuous learning process. Reflection can occur *in action* (as you work) or *on action* (after completing the specific task). The assistance of a mentor or supervisor can greatly assist the reflection process through appropriate questioning (Schon, 1983). The most effective reflection is that which is honest and realistic, and conducted regularly.

As a professional, you should aim to engage in reflection on a regular basis – many successful professionals would advocate for a minimum of weekly reflection, though preferably a daily reflective practice – by reflecting back on a particular activity/task/conversation/meeting you can identify where you excelled and where you need to develop skills.

Conversely, if you do not engage in such reflection, you will not be aware of your strengths or the areas you need to develop and thus your continued professional development will suffer as a result. In essence, if you do not look, you will not see and therefore cannot make the necessary adjustments.

A popular reflection tool is that of The Kolb Learning Cycle, which comprises the following steps:



(Google Images)

As this is a cyclical process rather than a linear one, your reflection can begin from any point in the cycle. So, for example, you could begin something new, review it, learn from it, and make a new plan or try out what you have learned.

You could also begin by learning from an experience, planning something new as a result of that learning, implementing the new plan, and finally, reflecting on the experience which will bring you back to the point of learning from your experience.

A simple way to remember this is the following:

Plan	Do	Review

Reflective Task:

Using Kolb's cycle, reflect on a recent experience from your workplace and complete the following:

Kolb's Step	What was positive with this step?	What required development with this step?	What changes will you implement in this step?
Concrete Experience			
Reflective Observation			

Abstract Conceptualisation			
Active Experimentation			

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

Continuous professional development (CPD) is the means by which professionals maintain and improve their professional knowledge, skills, and competence (CORU, 2014). In any profession, CPD is therefore essential in order to perform your job to the highest standards.

Activities which constitute CPD involve – though are not limited to:

- Training courses (accredited and non-accredited)
- Workshops
- Attending conferences
- Webinars
- Group discussions
- Peer learning
- On the job learning
- Reading journal articles

It is important that you keep a record of your CPD activities – this record can be either a hard copy/folder style of record or can be an online e-portfolio. Regardless of the recording method chosen, in maintaining a record, you can ensure that you are engaging in a wide variety of activities rather than just focusing on one type of activity; best practice indicates that a variety of CPD activities is best.

CORU, the regulation body for Health and Social Care Professionals, advocates for 60 credits of CPD activities over a two year period – as a guide, they suggest one hour of learning to equate to one credit. (The credits referred to by CORU are not academic credits.) CORU also recommend a minimum of eight different activities over the two year period.

The essential element in the CPD activity is that it is relevant to your role and that you gained learning from the activity. Many people can find it difficult to identify learning from experiences other than a formal training course. However, it should be noted that the different activities listed above, are all valuable learning experiences and as such, should not be discounted as legitimate learning experiences.

For example, a group discussion can result in different ideas and experiences being shared, which may provide you with different methods of conducting your work. You may attend a conference which not only provides you with networking opportunities, but the speakers may also provide valuable insight into work practices and make suggestions for alternative work methods.

Activity:

Think about the various experiences you have had in the last two years and identify the learning you gained from these experiences. If you cannot identify previous learning from these experiences, identify potential learning opportunities for future occurrences of these activities:

CPD Activity	Learning/changes to practice as a result of this experience	Potential learning from this activity
Training courses (accredited and non-accredited)		
Workshops		

Attending conferences		
Webinars		
Group discussions		
Peer learning		
On the job learning		
Reading journal articles		

This unit considered the areas of Reflection and CPD (Continuous Professional Development), outlining some of the key information in relation to these areas. The importance of reflection for best work practice was outlined and the importance of ongoing, recorded CPD was considered. A number of methods of conducting CPD were introduced. Learning activities were included to support your learning and development within these areas.

Personal and Professional Development Checklist:

Having completed the module, the following is a useful checklist for establishing and maintaining your personal and professional development:

Activity	Completed Yes/No/Ongoing	Steps to complete in relation to this activity
Career Plan (p.10)		
Skills Audit (p.34)		
Development Plan (p.35)		
CPD Record (p.95)		

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End of Unit 4.

This Concludes the Course Material.

Please proceed with your Assessment Briefs if not already commenced.

NOTES: