



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

School of Health Sciences

Occupational Therapy

**Reflective Diary
Handbook**

Reflective Diaries: philosophy and practice

The process of reflection is vital in professional education and practice. Without reflection practice becomes a routine rather than a challenge and the quality of service provision to service users may be diminished. Reflective practice is associated with the concept of an occupational therapist as a life long learner.

Reflection is also part of the process of learning and without it learning is carried out at a superficial level. Both theory and practice can be learned in a rote manner, where little thought is given to the process and content of learning.

Engaging in reflective practice allows you gain a greater insight into University and practice based studies and the integration of these thus enhancing the development of your professional competence.

The term reflection is often considered in relation to looking back but it can be used in preparing for a task, carrying it out and then evaluating how successfully it was completed.

What are the benefits of using a reflective diary?

A reflective diary will help you to:-

- prepare fully in advance for tasks allocated to you
- increase your knowledge and skills
- give you the opportunity to consider your actions and attitudes
- integrate theory and practice
- consider the factors which influence practice
- reflect on your own performance and learning
- develop a repertoire of appropriate responses/actions
- prepare for supervision sessions
- become a confident and competent practitioner
- form the foundations for your continuing professional development and role as a life long learner

Your reflective diary: getting started

Choose a notebook which you will use specifically as your diary. Select a notebook which gives you a lot of writing space.

Alternatively you could create your own personal practice placement Blog within the QMU E-portfolio system Pebble Pad. Further information about the University's e-portfolio system is available at: <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/>

Once you have selected the situations/tasks you intend to include in your diary note them at the start of the diary with dates when you will undertake them, this helps to identify time required to complete the diary. Inform your practice educator which situations/tasks you have selected.

The diary is your property and unless you choose to share the full contents with someone else you need not do so. You will however be expected to use information generated from the diary in relation to feedback and supervision.

Prospective reflection: reflecting before the event

Consider the following and make notes about each aspect.

- How do I feel about carrying out this task?
E.g. confident, anxious etc.
- Why do I feel this way?
For example I have successfully completed this type of task in another setting or I have not attempted this before. Identify as many factors as apply. You may be able to strengthen positive factors and/or reduce negative ones **before** you attempt the task
- What preparation have I done? What preparation do I still need to do?
- What theory will I incorporate in undertaking this task?
E.g. interactional skills, physiology, principles and practice. List all that apply and follow this up by thoroughly revising/reviewing the relevant theory.
- What stages are involved in preparing for and carrying out the task/session?
“Walk” through the task in your head and make notes about the stages. If you are unsure of any point either find out by reading or asking your practice educator.
- Have I thought of all the requirements/conditions necessary for successful completion of the task/session?
E.g. have I informed staff, booked rooms etc?
- If you are unsure of any aspect find out **before** you attempt the task.
- Consider the '**what ifs**' - discuss these with your practice educator.

<p>Consideration of all of these factors will significantly enhance your performance, increase your confidence and help to integrate theory and practice in a meaningful way.</p>
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Reflecting during the task

When you are carrying out a task it is often difficult to focus on much more than the task in hand. Should you need to change a plan of action however because things don't run according to plan, careful preparation will give you the confidence of having alternative strategies to use. The more opportunity you have to practice a particular skill/task the more confident you will become in your own abilities. As soon as possible after the task make some notes about how you felt about it.

Retrospective reflection: reflecting after the event

Take time to sit down and consider the following. Make notes about each aspect; think about knowledge, skills, attitudes and feelings involved. You should aim to capture the event as fully as possible.

- Write a description of the task and the main aspects of it. Consider the facts - what happened, who was present.
- What went well? E.g. good sequence of events, able to recall all requirements/stages.
- Why did it go well? E.g. you were well prepared, the service user co-operated fully etc.
- Over which factors did you have control? What contributed to you being in control?
- Over which factors did you not have control? Could you have had control of them?
- Which aspects of the task could have been improved on?
- Why were these factors less satisfactory?
- In what ways could you improve? What else might you have done, included etc.
- What theory did you use in undertaking this task?
- Was this sufficient? What else might you have considered/included?
- Given the opportunity to repeat this task what key points will you keep in mind?
- What have you learned from completion of this task?
- Are there any factors which you still do not understand? How do you intend to find out about these?

Using your reflections during supervision sessions

The process of reflecting before, during and after the task you have selected will help you prepare for supervision. You may wish to show your practice educator your full diary or extracts from it, the choice is yours.

Do use your diary to prepare for supervision sessions. You will be expected to have considered and reflected upon your knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to the tasks and everyday events you record in your diary. You are actively encouraged to prepare a summary of main points, document these using the proforma provided in this handbook and give this to your practice educator prior to, or during supervision sessions. An electronic copy of the proforma is available for downloading directly from the Hub.

Practice educators have been alerted to the requirement for you to keep a reflective diary from Practice Placement 2 onwards

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity of service users and others must be maintained at all times within your reflective diary/ reflective blog. Service users must be referred to by pseudonym, staff members by their role rather than name and the institution or service in general terms rather than name.

Brief description of the experience.

Date:

In narrative form, outline the actual event(s) that occurred. Record who was present, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of individuals present and what they did.

Important observations

Record in point form:

What I observed about the experience (situation, other people)

What I observed about my own behaviour and feelings

What others observed about the experience (if they told me)

What others observed about me (if they told me)

What have I learned (specifically) from this experience?

Be specific. It is useful to state your learnings as deviations from your expectations (previously formed guides to action) or as confirming your expectations.

How does this learning relate to appropriate theories or concepts I have read, heard about or constructed myself?

What specific behaviours would I like to change?

Again be specific. Concentrate on your behaviour and set objectives specifying behaviours, standards and conditions. Also note behaviour changes you would like to see in others.

How will I change these behaviours?

Outline specific procedures including timeframes and dates.

Further Reading

BLANK, A. 2009. Reflection and personal practice. In: ATWAL, A. & JONES, M. eds. *Preparing for practice in health and social care*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

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GAHYE, T. & LILLEYMAN, S. 2006. *Learning journals and critical incidents: reflective practice for health care professionals*. 2nd ed. London: Quay Books.

HEALEY, J. & SPENCER M. *Surviving your placement in health and social care*. Maidenhead: Open University Press McGraw -Hill. Pp21-33.

JASPER, M. 2003 *Beginning reflective practice*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.