## Assessing reflective writing using Williams et al’s (2000) criteria

There are numerous tools in the literature to facilitate the process of assessing reflection. The tool detailed below is believed to be of particular relevance to discussing the SLER with physiotherapy students at UWE.

# Tool characteristics

* Based on criteria developed by Boud et al (1985)
* Describes the process of reflection, rather than merely categorizing the types of reflection
* Developed on physiotherapy students writing about their clinical placements
* Reliability assessed

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| **Level of**  **Reflection** | **Description** | Stage in the process |
| **0.**  **Non reflection** | Is descriptive in nature reporting on what is happening rather than analyzing the learning event, issue or situation | **No analysis** has occurred of the learning event, issue, or situation. |
| **1.**  **Describes learning** | Describes the learning event, issue or situation. Describes prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes with new knowledge, feelings of attitudes | What happened? |
| **2.**  **Analyses learning** | Analyses/re-evaluates the learning event, issue, or situation in relation to prior knowledge/feelings/attitudes | What is your reaction to the learning event, issue, or situation? Why did it happen? |
| **3.**  **Verifies learning** | Verifies/confirms the learning event, issue, or situation in relation to prior knowledge, feelings, or attitudes. | **What is the value** of the learning event/issue/situation that has occurred? Are the new knowledge, feelings/attitudes about the learning event/issue/situation **correct?** |
| **4.**  **Gains a new understanding** | Relates 1,2 & 3 to gain a new understanding of the learning event, issue, or situation. | **What is your new understanding** of the learning event, issue, or situation? |
| **5.**  **Indicates future behavior** | Indicates how the new learning event, issue, or situation will affect future behavior. Determines the clarification of an issue, the development of a skill, or the resolution of a problem. | **How will you approach** the same/similar event, issue, or situation in the future? |

* More understandable than the rest!!!

# Learning styles and reflection

To move smoothly through all stages of the learning cycle requires a balance in the learner of the four learning styles (Honey and Mumford, (1992)).

Unfortunately only 2% of the population has all four styles comfortably within their repertoire. The student is much more likely to be among the 70% who have one or two strong preferences.

It is therefore worth being aware of the relationship between the learning cycle and learning styles, as each style facilitates different aspects of the cycle.

A student who has a strong preference for one/two learning style(s) may benefit from understanding this influence on his/her passage around the learning cycle & therefore become aware of where he/she may ‘get stuck’.

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| **Learning Style** | **Preferred aspect of cycle** | **Relation to Williams et al**  **Criteria** |
| Activist | Have the experience | 1. |
| Reflector | Review the experience | 2,3 |
| Theorist | Conclude from the experience | 3,4 |
| Pragmatist | Plan the next steps | 5 |

## Student awareness

Personal barriers to reflection: (Platzer et al, 2000; Dewey, 1993 cited by Hagland, 1998)

* Lack of self-worth
* Personal problems
* Anxiety
* Poor self-awareness
* Lack of value for personal knowledge
* Lack of responsibility for one’s own education and practice

**Facilitator qualities**

Facilitator qualities that enhance reflection: (Donaghy & Morss, 2000; Martin, 1996, Getcliffe, 1996; Platzer et al, 2000)

* Provide expert guidance and support
* Open and equal relationship with the student
* Personal experience of reflection
* Clear facilitating structure/ agenda
* Sufficient time!
* Find a ‘safe’ environment for the discussion

The following are a general description of features of the following in professional practice:

**Non-reflector**

* Descriptive and makes assertions without real supportive evidence
* Makes assumptions without testing the validity of knowledge or reality of experiences
* Things are seen as being straightforward; unaware of contextual factors. Uses ‘all-ness’ – prefixes statements with general axioms e.g. Everyone knows that..; 'You would be a complete idiot if you don’t see that….'
* Language used to assert self rather than beliefs
* Is entrenched in existing knowledge and will not consider new ways of thinking
* May have fear of moving forward or changing view. Cannot accept challenge.
* Sees failure as personal rather than organisational. Does not use failure a positive stepping stone.

**Reflector**

* Does not exhibit the above non - reflective characteristics

# Attends to feelings of self & others. Can perceive effects of dynamics & process(s) of groups

# Can demonstrate empathy.

* Association demonstrated; links prior knowledge with new.
* Integration seen; accepts and uses new knowledge to gain more insights.
* Is prepared to revisit experiences in the light of new knowledge

## Critical reflectors

* Iterative; returns to the trigger or experience in the discussion
* Ability to frame the problem in context
* Adventurous in method of presentation
* Amenable to change
* Can see the contextual limits of knowledge, concepts and theory, e.g. is able to see when a concept would apply and in what situations it would be best to apply.
* Moves away from inductive reasoning where limited knowledge is applied to all experiences
* Is aware of meta cognition
* Can assess self and performance in a positive way
* Is able to accept multiple realities when required

Mezirow et al (1990)