

# **Guidelines / Frameworks to support reflection and reflective writing**

**These guidelines / frameworks are provided to support you in developing reflection and reflective writing. You may find one guideline / framework that you relate to better than another or you may choose to use different components from several frameworks.**

**An important component of developing your skills is to gain support from a QLP Resource Midwife.**

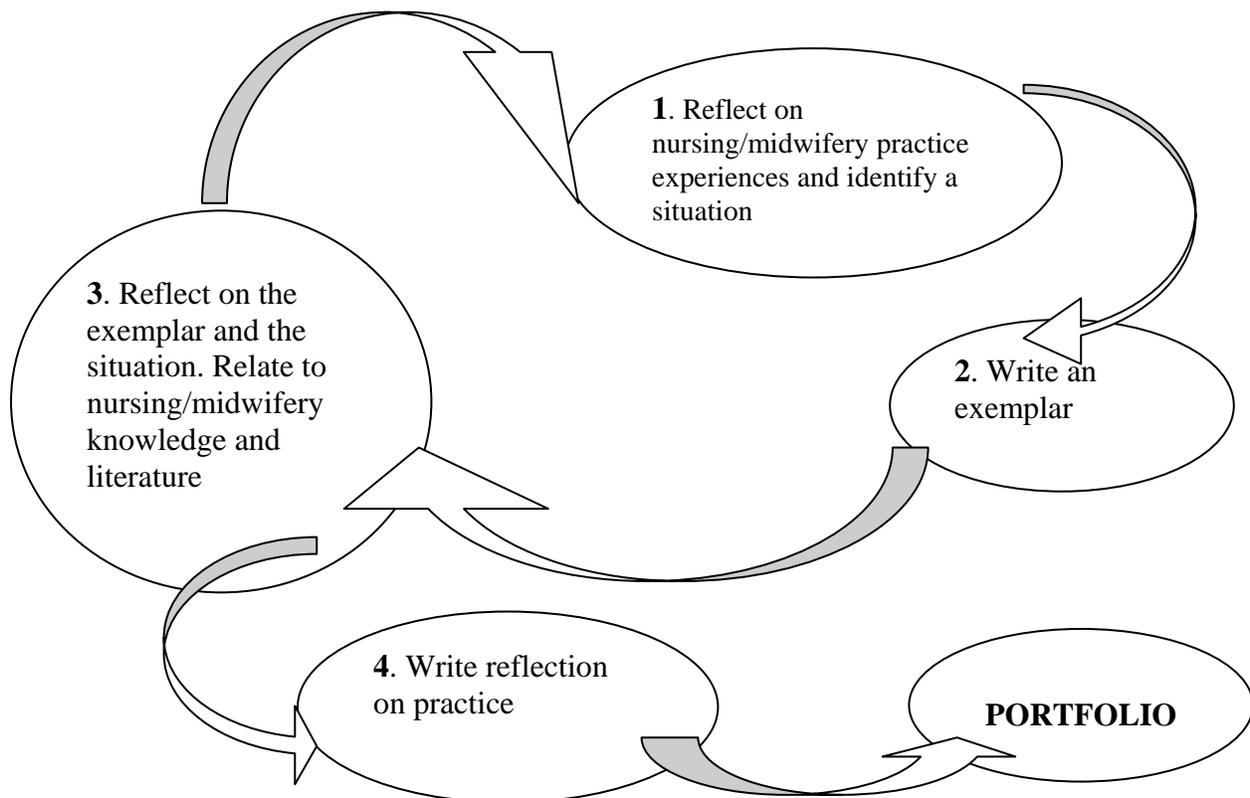
# Reflective Writing Guidelines

Direct observation is one of the best ways to assess how a person practices. However in health there are many occasions when being observed with clients is neither practical nor ethical, yet clinical expertise is built upon these experiences, critical incidents and turning points in a career.

Reflective writing or exemplars is one way of citing evidence of practice and learning in practice. It involves thinking about and reviewing events to try to make sense of them using already acquired nursing/midwifery knowledge and understanding.

NZNO (1995) defined exemplars as "written examples which provide an insight into the context, the emotions and energy; the matching of intellect, decision making and problem solving to the complex, dynamic situation."

## The Process for Creating Reflective Writing



### ***What might you write about?***

You may write about any aspect of your practice which:

- you feel your intervention made a difference in client outcome, either directly or indirectly (by helping other staff members)
- went unusually well
- was very ordinary and typical
- did not go as planned
- you think captures the essence of your nursing/midwifery practice
- was particularly demanding

### ***What should you include?***

**The focus should be on your nursing/midwifery practice.**

- what was going on (the context)  
shift, time of day, resources, clinical context
- what happened  
detailed description of situation/incident – not the people within the incident
- why this incident is important to you
- what your concerns were at the time  
what you were thinking and feeling during and after the incident  
what influenced your decision making  
what, if anything, was demanding  
what was unexpected
- what your learning was in the situation  
a reflection or evaluation of the situation showing the competencies and expertise you used (eg. skilled communication, teaching, leadership)
- what new knowledge and insights were gained identifying recommendations for change in practice
- references to show evidenced based practice

**If your writing is for publication outside the PDRP process those involved should read the description in full and provide written permission.**

## **Reflective Writing Guidelines Continued**

### **Format:**

As a minimum there should be:

- A heading
- A description of the context
- A description of the sequence of events
- An analysis of your clinical practice, and the relationship to the outcome and evaluation of the situation.
- Remember the assessors can not guess what your rationale was for your decisions; you need to state these in your exemplar.
- Recommendations for change in practice if applicable.
- Date and sign your writing, this links to currency of evidence. If you are using an exemplar which is more than 3 years old update it showing how your practice has developed since the incident took place.
- Reference the knowledge you used when making decisions to show links with evidence based practice.

*Take the first step.....just write about a situation or component of your practice.  
Worry about the format later.*

### **A Quick Guide:**

- What was going on (context)?
- What happened (situation)
- Why was this important?
- What were your concerns?
- What did you learn from the situation?

# Reflective Practice Model

## Introduction to Practice

- Identify key features of practice – concentrate on practice management NOT personal details ie client / colleague / community
- Give background / relevant details that impacted on practice management eg: support / resources available
- Relate yourself to identified practice eg new experience, team leader, community, new to area, enrolled nurse

## Exploration & Reflection of Practice

- What was your role?
- What actions did you take? – include not just what you did, but **more importantly** the rationale for your actions
- Did previous experiences have an impact on your actions?
- What were you trying to achieve?
- Were there challenges? - identify how / why you worked through these
- Were there any broader issues? eg professional, cultural, social, ethical – if so, identify how / why you worked through these; if resources were used
- How have the decisions you made in managing this practice impacted on you, your practice, others eg colleagues, client, whanau etc?
- Identify the knowledge you have used
- Has managing this practice had a wider impact eg team / unit
- Did you learn anything – if so what?
- Have you considered another way to manage this practice?
- Has your practice changed in any way?

## Knowledge / Evidence Based Practice

- Support the knowledge you have used throughout this process with references

### Points to remember

- Reflect on your own practice – NOT others
- Confidentiality - reflect on practice, NOT client, colleague, organisation etc
- Reflect on practice that demonstrates continuing competency
- Ensure reflection is current within 3 years

## References

- Fernandez, E. (1997). Just 'doin the observations': reflective practice in nursing. *British Journal of Nursing*. 6(16), 939 – 943.
- Benner, P. (1984). *From Novice to Expert: excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. California: Addison-Wesley.
- Burns, S., & Bulman, C. (2000). *Reflective practice in nursing: the professional growth of the professional practitioner*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Johns, C. (1995). Framing learning through reflection within Carper's fundamental ways of knowing in nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 22(2), 226 – 22

# Adapted from John's Model of Structured Reflection 1995

## Cue Questions

### **Aesthetics**

What was I trying to achieve?  
Why did I respond as I did?  
What were the consequences for:  
    my nursing practice?  
    patients?  
    others?  
    myself?

### **Personal**

How did I feel in this situation?  
What internal factors were influencing me?

### **Ethics**

How did my actions match my beliefs?  
What factors made me act in incongruent ways?

### **Emperics**

What knowledge did or should have informed me?

### **Reflexivity**

How does this connect with previous experiences?  
Could I handle this better in similar situations?  
What would the consequences of alternative actions for:  
    my nursing practice?  
    patients?  
    others?  
    myself?  
How do I now feel about this experience?  
Can I support myself and others better as a consequence?  
Has this changed my ways of knowing?

## **Reflective Writing – What to Include**

- Title
- Introduction – may include staff resources, practice setting
- A detailed description of what happened from the perspective of your nursing practice
- Why this incident is “critical” to you
- What, if any, your concerns were at the time
- What you were thinking about as it was taking place
- What you were feeling during and after the event
- What, if anything, you found most demanding about the situation
- What new knowledge and insights were gained
- Referenced to show evidenced based practice

## **Adapted from Stephenson's (1994) Framework for Reflection**

### **Ask yourself:**

- What was my role in this situation? – remembering this is from the perspective of your nursing practice.
- Did I feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Why?
- What actions did I take?
- How did others and I act?
- Was it appropriate?
- How could I have improved the situation for myself, others?
- What can I change in the future?
- Did I feel as if I have learnt anything new about myself?
- Did I expect anything different to happen? What and why?
- Has it changed my ways of thinking in any way?
- What knowledge from theory and research can I apply to this situation?
- What broader issues, eg cultural, ethical, legal, political or social arise from this situation?
- What do I think about these broader issues?

## **Skills That Are Helpful For Reflection**

<b>Self-Awareness</b>	Honestly asking how did this situation affect me and how did I affect the situation (identifying nursing practice not individuals)
<b>Description</b>	An ability to recognize, recollect & describe key features/events including feelings and thoughts
<b>Critical Analysis</b>	An examination, which includes challenging assumptions, exploring alternatives and asking how relevant certain knowledge, is to a situation
<b>Synthesis</b>	The amalgamation of new and previous knowledge in the move towards a new perspective
<b>Evaluation</b>	Making value judgments involving the use of criteria and standards

Reference: Adapted from Atkins & Murray (1993) in Fernandez, E. (1997). Just 'doing the observations: reflective practice in nursing. *British Journal of Nursing*, 6:16