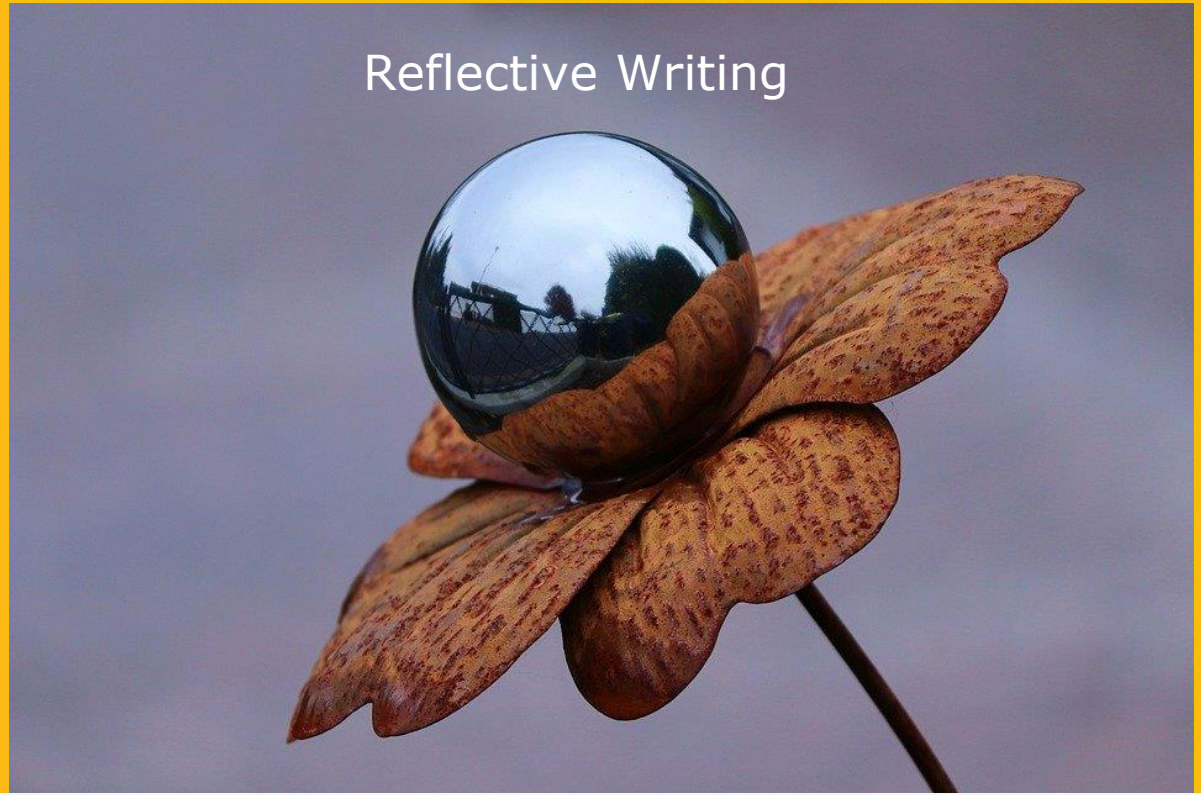
Reflective Writing



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What is reflective thinking?

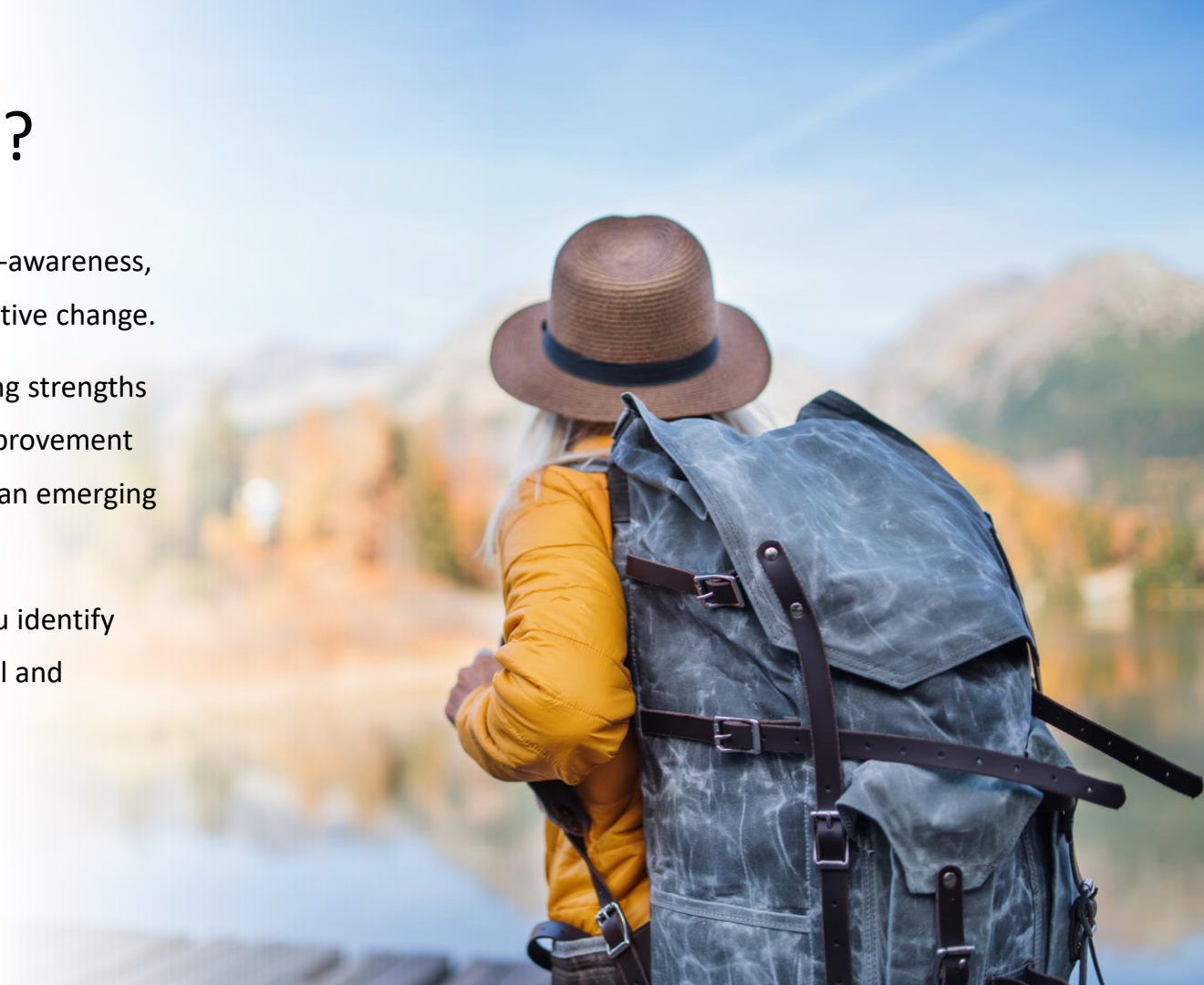
It involves

- Looking back at an incident or practice, analysing (thinking critically) and evaluating what this has meant for you and your ongoing progress as a learner.

http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/studentsupport/ask/resources/handouts/WrittenAssignments/filetodownload,73259,en.pdf

Why do we do it?

- Reflection can lead to greater self-awareness, which in turn is a first step to positive change.
- It is a necessary stage in identifying strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement either in a personal context or as an emerging or established professional.
- Taking time to reflect can help you identify approaches that have worked well and reinforce good practice.



How do you write reflectively?

Reflective writing is more than a description, summary or judgement.

It requires you to describe, analyse and evaluate your thoughts and feelings, for example in response to subject content or to an event, to develop new insights and perspectives.

You can improve the quality of your analysis by reading widely and thinking critically about what you are learning. When reflecting, it is important to

- identify and question your underpinning values
- challenge your assumptions
- recognise any bias you hold
- identify potential aspects for improvement.

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Models of reflection

There are numerous models of reflective writing and you should use any guidelines or models supplied for your expected format. If there is no specific framework, a simple model to help frame your thinking is: What? So what? Now what?

What?	Describe the experience – who, what, why, when, where?
So what?	What have you learnt from this? Why does it matter? What has been the impact on you? In what way? Why? You can include connections to coursework, current events, past experiences.
Now what?	What are you going to do as a result of your experience? How will you apply what you have learnt in the future? Are there critical questions to further pursue? Make an action plan of what you will do next.

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Example of critical thinking and evidence to support analysis

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Code of Conduct and Nursing Standards determine the scope of practice for nurses and midwives, a key component of which is the provision of person centred care and the formation of therapeutic relationships between nurses and patients. This ensures patient safety and promotes health and wellbeing. The standards also discuss the importance of partnership and shared decision-making in the delivery of care (NMBA, 2018). Boyd and Dare (2014) argue that good communication skills are vital for building therapeutic relationships and trust between patients and care givers. This will help to ensure the patient is treated with dignity and respect and improve their overall hospital experience. In the case of Mary, the therapeutic relationship was compromised in several ways. Firstly the doctor did not conform adequately to the guidelines for seeking informed consent before performing the procedure as outlined in principle 2.3 (NMBA, 2018). Although he explained the procedure he failed to give the patient appropriate choices regarding her health care.

Critical thinking (the 'so what' comment) & concluding sentence

Relationship to incident

Language features of reflective writing

- People are added to the writing when the writer is expressing personal experiences or opinions e.g. *I, me, you, we, us.*
- People (i.e. I, me, you, we, us) are removed when referring to the theory.
- The actions (verbs) are usually those of feeling and thinking e.g. *feeling, felt, considered, experienced, wondered, remembered, discovered, learned, observed.*
- When reflecting the language is usually modified e.g. *may, perhaps, suggests, might.*

Adapted from: http://www.scu.edu.au/academic skills/

Sentence builders. “What” - aspects of the experience that you relate or connect to?

For me, the [most]	difficult meaningful, significant, important, Stressful disappointing	aspect(s) element(s), experience(s), issue(s), idea(s) learning situation	was... were... arose from… happened when… resulted from…

Sentence builders – these may help you expand on your feelings by adding more explanation of your thoughts

Previously,
At the time,
At first,
Initially,
Subsequently,
Later,

I

thought (did not think)...
felt (did not feel)...
knew (did not know)...
noticed (did not notice)...
questioned (did not question)...
realised (did not realise)
was not aware…

Sentence builders – more options to help you expand on your feelings by explanation of your thoughts

Alternatively, [Equally,]	this	might be could be is perhaps is probably	because of... due to... explained by... related to...

Sentence builders – “So What” - relating or connecting to the evidence

(literature you have sourced, e.g. textbook, journal article, website, primary source)

Author, (date)

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia NMBA, (2018)

discusses this issue of...

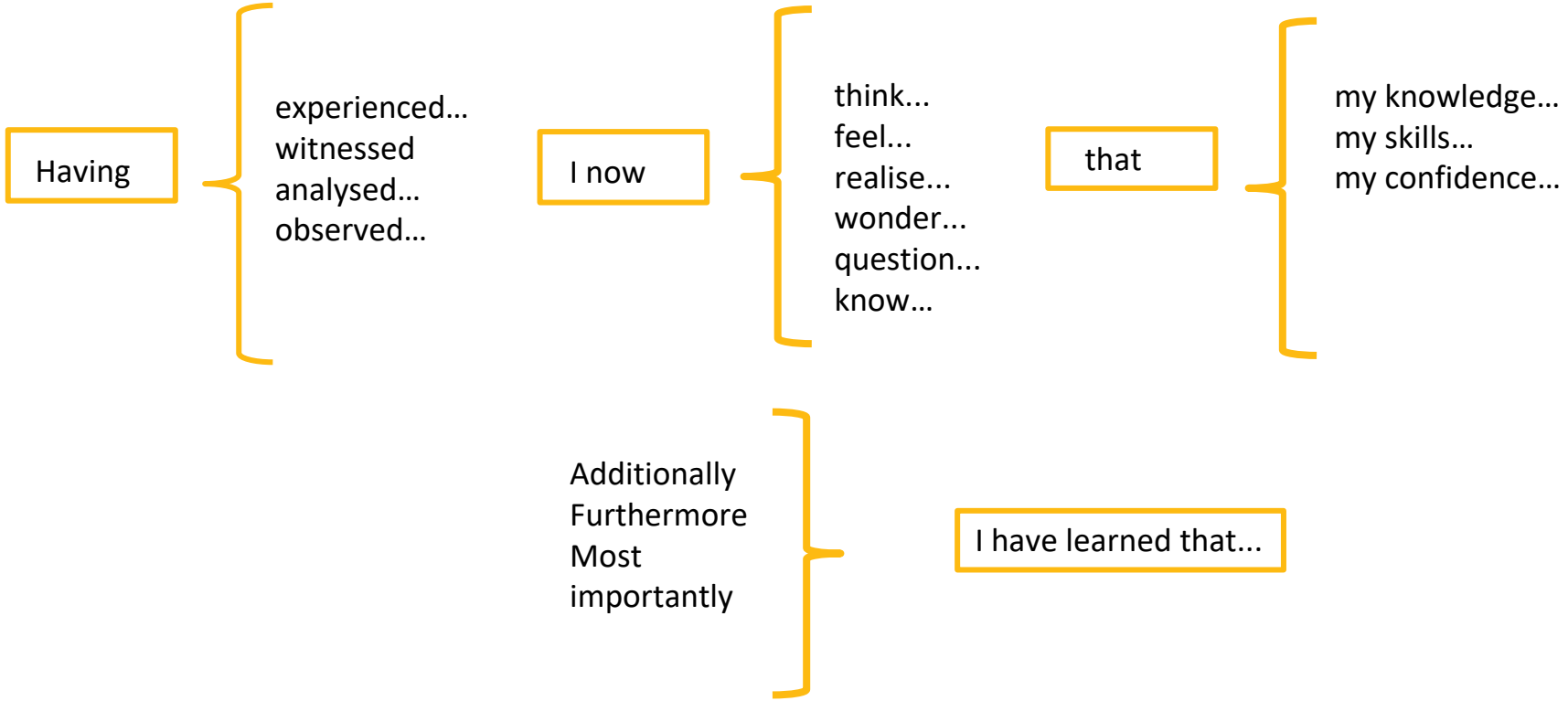
specifies guidelines for…

X

which highlights…

which demonstrates...

Sentence builders –”Now what” -thinking about what you have learned.



Sentence builders – “Now What” - thinking about what you could do better next time.

This knowledge
This understanding
This skill

- is…
- could be…
- will be…

- essential…
- important…
- useful…

- to me as a learner [because...]
- to me as a practitioner [because…]

Because I

- did not…
- have not yet…
- am not yet certain about…
- am not yet confident about…
- do not yet know
- do not yet understand
- I will need to know.

Reflective writing IS:

✓ your response to **experiences, opinions, events** or **new information**
✓ your response to **thoughts** and **feelings**
✓ a way of thinking to **explore your learning**
✓ an opportunity to **gain self-knowledge**
✓ a way to achieve **clarity** and better **understanding** of what you are learning
✓ a chance to develop and reinforce **writing skills**
✓ a way of **making meaning out of what you study**
✓ written in the **first person**

Reflective writing is NOT:

× navel-gazing, pure opinion or simply an emotional response
× just **conveying information**, instruction or argument
× pure **description**, though there may be descriptive elements
× straightforward **decision or judgment** (e.g. whether something is good or bad)
× simple **problem-solving**
× a **summary** of course notes
× a standard university **essay**