

Information Sheet - Reflective Reports (Education)

1 June 2021

Preparation of a reflective report

If you have been the subject of a notification to Ahpra and the National Boards, you may be required by conditions to undertake education. This is usually accompanied by a requirement to provide the Board with a reflective practice report demonstrating that you have reflected on the issues that gave rise to the condition and outlining how you have incorporated the lessons learnt into your practice.

This information sheet provides guidance on developing a reflective report; the approach recommended in this information sheet is not the only acceptable format of a report. This approach is based on Gibbs' reflective cycle; see Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Oxford Further Education Unit. This information sheet is endorsed by all National Boards except for the Medical Board of Australia.

Why write a reflective report?

The purpose of a reflective report is to consider what happened that gave rise to the notification, what practice or conduct issues were raised by the notification, what education was undertaken in response to the conditions imposed, and what you learned. A good reflective report also looks at what changes (if any) you have made or will make to your practice following the completion of the education, the reasons for those changes, and how you would handle the same situation if it arose again in the future.

To write an appropriate reflective report, you could consider and discuss the following, which has been divided into four sections:

- your description of the original situation
- your responses in the situation, to the notification, and to the conditions requiring education
- your evaluation of the further education you completed, your analysis of the original situation and how the education you have undertaken related to it, and the conclusions or decisions you may have made since completing the education, and
- what changes, if any, you have made to your practice, what changes you propose to make, and, in either case, how those changes were or will be implemented.

Where appropriate make reference to registration standards, standards, professional codes and guidelines that are relevant to your practice.

A short description of these sections follows. As a general guide, 200-250 words per section should be sufficient; however, there is no strict word limit.

Step 1: Description

For the Board's purposes, this step has two parts.

In the first part, you should describe objectively and in detail the situation, event or activity which led to the notification without drawing any conclusions or making any judgments about it, preserving confidentiality of those involved. The most common considerations that can help create an objective description are:

- what happened?
- when did it happen?
- where did it happen?
- who was involved ie patients, staff, others (without identifying them)?
- what did you do yourself?
- what did other people do?
- what was the outcome of the situation, event or activity?
- what impact did the situation have on you?
- what impact did it have on other people?

Do not leave out relevant details including any relevant background information. All information that will help to understand the situation is relevant.

In the second part, you need to describe in detail the education undertaken and the salient lessons it involved.

Step 2: Feelings/response

This step requires you to examine your response to the original situation, the Board's conditions requiring you to undertake further education and your response to the education completed. Awareness of the content of the education and how you responded to it are important features of this step. Helpful questions to ask yourself include:

- what did you think and feel before undertaking the education?
- what did you think and feel while you were participating in the education?
- what did you think and feel immediately after you had finished the education?
- what do you now think and feel when you look back on the education and how it relates to the issues raised by the notification?

Step 3: Evaluation and analysis

In evaluating the education you completed, you should ask yourself whether the experience of undertaking the required education was of benefit to you or not and why that might be so. Was the education helpful to you? What did you learn - were there things covered in the education that you did not know or had forgotten? Did you gain anything new from the education? The following questions may be helpful:

- what was your involvement in the education you completed?
- what was the most valuable part of the education?
- why was that?

The analysis of the education you completed and how it relates to the original situation is about what you have learned, first from the original situation, event or activity and then from the education you did. Because of the experience and the education, do you now know what to do in similar, future situations? What were the critical features of the original situation? What did the education teach you about those?

Step 4: Conclusion and change

At this stage, examine what changes you have made or might make to your practice in view of the original situation and the education you have done since. This requires you to consider both positive and negative things, problems you experienced, and how you could deal with them in the future.

It is helpful to take a step back and look at yourself and your practice from a distance and ask what else you could have done in the original situation, what you have learned and changed since, and what approach you will take to your practice in the future. Consider what might be a more effective approach and what change you could make that will lead to actual improvement. The following questions may be helpful:

- what are the positive outcomes from this whole experience?
- are there any negative outcomes?
- what will you do differently if the event, situation or activity were to happen again in the future?
- how would you respond if you witnessed another staff member practice in a similar manner?
- which skills have you developed, or need to develop, in order to deal effectively with a similar event, situation or activity in the future?
- what steps have you taken, or do you propose to take that will help you ensure that you improve your practice?

Action plan

An action plan isn't required when you write a reflective report. However, an action plan can include concrete steps to address the issues arising out of the original situation, the education you did, and for dealing with future situations, events or activities. You may find it helpful to have one for these reasons. Your action plan might also include a timeline. You may already have taken these steps or be in the course of taking them. In the previous part, you should have decided on steps you will take to improve your practice in the light of the notification and subsequent events. The intention of making an action plan is to put in place measures to ensure you actually take those steps. This could be an opportunity to plan your continuing professional development (CPD) for the coming months.