



# Critical Reflection

**Guidance including examples  
for final year STP trainees preparing for their  
submission for the  
Independent Assessment of Clinical Competence**

# Why critical reflection?

- It is highly relevant as you transition from training into practice
- It is particularly valuable during periods of unusual/rapid change to maintain safe clinical practice
- Will help with ensuring that you enter future practice with insight of what will be required of you and from you and foresight on how you will manage those expectations
- Will help you realise where you need to focus your energies as you continue to develop in your role as a Clinical Scientist
- Will support essential self-regulated, self-directed learning

# What is critical reflection?

Critical reflection involves a process of thinking which demonstrates your ability to:

- Explore, question, and analyse your experiences
- Use your knowledge to enhance your understanding of these experiences
- Use your knowledge to shape your future experiences
- Learn from past experiences, assess options and make decisions in presenting scenarios, and implement changes or routines to ensure future experiences will improve

# How is this different to description or reflection?

Descriptive pieces will give an account of scenario in context. It will describe who was involved and their feelings.

***WHAT HAPPENED?***

Reflective pieces will build on descriptions to analyse and unfold the account further.

***WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?  
WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS,  
CONSEQUENCES AND  
LEARNING POINTS?***

Critical reflective pieces will assess one's own capabilities (knowledge & skills) and further learning needs/ support.

***HOW DOES THIS REFLECT  
AND AFFECT MY OWN  
SAFE PRACTICES?***

# Useful tools to guide your critical reflection



There are many tools which have been developed to support critical reflective writing



University of Edinburgh offer useful outlines of these <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflections-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience>



Essentially, all critical reflection models will require you to:

1. Outline the context
2. Reflect on the reasons and impacts surrounding the context
3. Assess future needs for further development and support which can be implemented

## Points to remember when writing this:

- Writing this critical reflective piece should instill you and your assessor with confidence in your ability to practice safely
- You should demonstrate aspects such as self-awareness, self-regulation and a capacity to challenge your current thinking and disposition
- You should demonstrate that you are ready to register with the Health and Care Professions Council as a Clinical Scientist and that you can maintain this registration (i.e. uphold Standards)
- You should write concisely and logically to give a succinct overview of your self as a Clinical Scientist
- You should recognise your own stage of learning and continuing development needs

# Persuasive, successful narrative

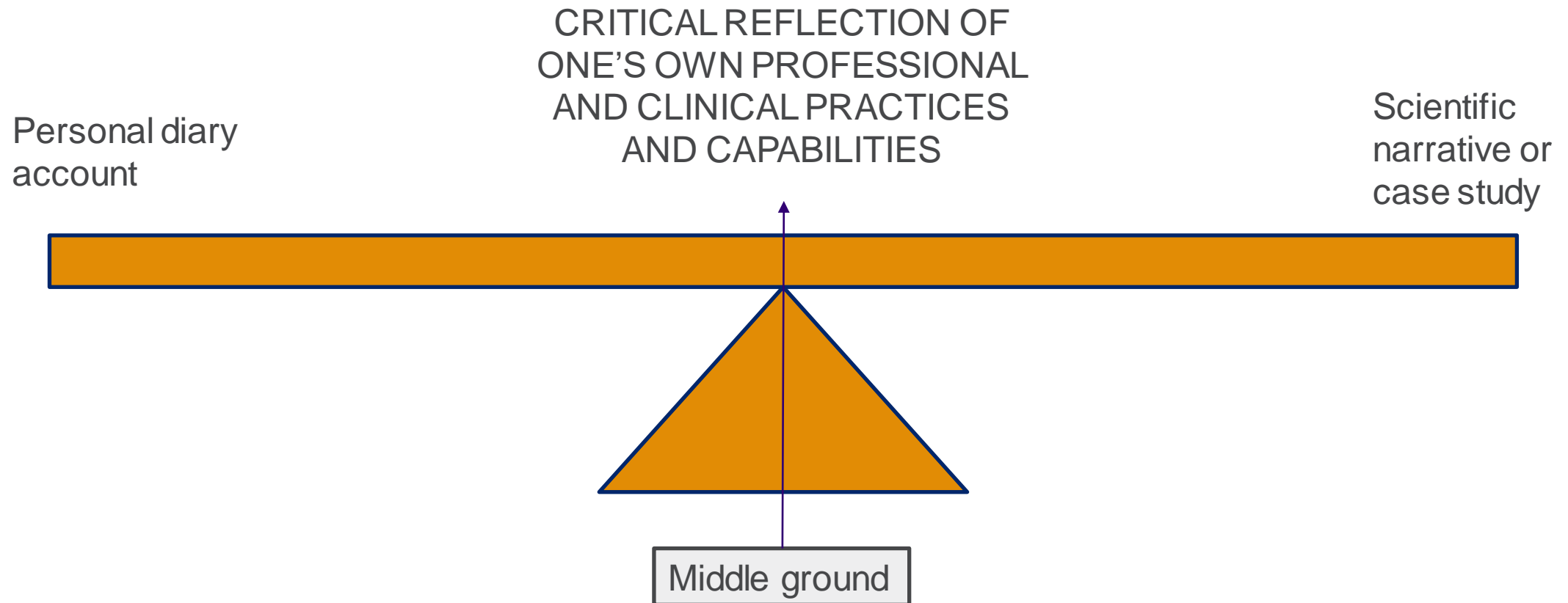
- Patient focus
  - understanding of what safe practice is and behaviours that have the patient at the heart of practice as a Clinical Scientist
- Good Scientific Practice
  - logical arguments on how you meet the described values and principles of each of the AHCS Good Scientific Practice domains
- Own stage of development
  - an individual and critically reflective account which recognises your own stage of development (as this will not be the same as any of your peers)
  - Focus on the essential competencies central to their specialty
- Instils confidence (in yourself and your assessor)
  - of you as a safe and competent (even if not fully formed) Clinical Scientist

## Useful Hints & Tips...



**The Do's and Don'ts of critical reflective writing  
for the STP IACC assessment**





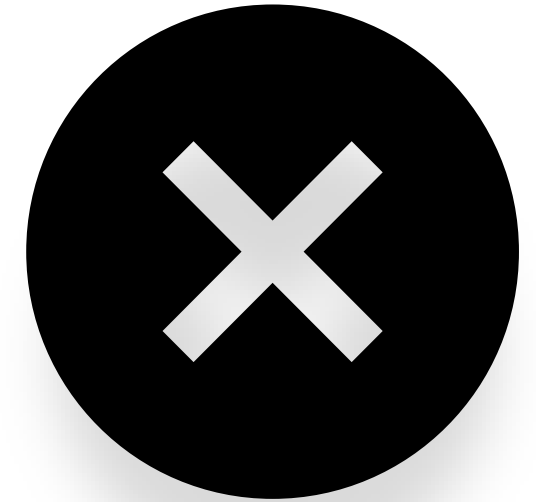
# How to write a good critical reflection:

- Use your critical analysis and judgement skills to assess your own practice
- Be thorough – reflect on your development over the entire STP training period
- Be honest and show accountability
- Say what went wrong – show that you are self aware and able to complete independent professional development throughout your future career
- Remember to say what went right – highlight the importance and impacts of your contributions to safe practice and excellent patient care
- Use your analysis of the outcomes to suggest future improvements
- Plan your writing before you start
  - What is the point you want to make?
  - What content do you want to cover to make this point?
  - What evidence do you want to refer to in the content?
  - How do you want to structure you content to make the best argument



## Mistakes to avoid:

- Avoid setting the scene using lengthy descriptions of the scenario
- Avoid complaining
- Avoid blaming (whether yourself, others, wider circumstances)
- Avoid being too emotional and non-critical – there needs to be a level of analysis
- Avoid being too objective and scholarly – this is still a personal account
- Avoid simple problem solving – there needs to be evidence of personal self-reflection



# Superficial, unsuccessful narrative

- a narrative that is not their own
- description, not critical reflection
- poor demonstration of patient centred and safe practice
- lack of insight into own scope of expertise potentially leading to harmful practice
- lack of understanding of the integral values of the GSP domains
- unequal emphasis given to each of the 5 GSP domains
- inconsistent or contradictory narrative
- no recognition of the essential competencies central to their specialty
- no portfolio citations to signed-off evidence in portfolio or
- portfolio evidence citations that do not match or back up the argument
- not adhering to the rules set out in the 'Requirements for the IACC submission' - see the IACC pages on the NSHCS website.

## Examples to learn from...



**Can you spot the good and bad elements of  
critical reflection in these examples?**

## Example 1

I have demonstrated that I have met GSP domain 4 to a high standard and can carry this forward in my future work. I know now how to conduct a systematic review and am happy to get on with this when needed.

# Feedback on Example 1

I have demonstrated that I have met GSP domain 4 to a high standard and can carry this forward in my future work. I now know how to conduct a systematic review and am happy to get on with this when needed.



Acknowledges self-perception of level of development in this area



Mentions plan for future and impact on practice



Offers no critical reflection of how they have developed and demonstrated this skill.



Also, no critical reflection on impact on self and others (i.e. who is benefiting from this skill and how, why is this important).



No critical analysis of area to further develop – there's always room for improvement!

## Example 2

I have done enough research/development/innovation elements to complete all of my Onefile competencies. I have completed two audits in my department (one on correct ordering of tests received and one in the correct pre-testing procedures carried out). I have also completed a systematic review of the literature at University on a very different topic. However, I don't feel confident with my research skillset and I think I need to focus more on developing GSP domain 4 in light of this. I was very much self-directed in doing all of these elements, so I'm not sure what I've missed in terms of learning the best way to do things from those with lots of experience. I feel quite disappointed that I've missed my opportunity to get advice and support in the best way to do research and audits and things. I think it was very unfair that other departments have supported their trainees and pretty much done their work for them, but I have had to do everything by myself with only a tiny bit of guidance. Also, I have completed all of these elements as independent pieces of work. I'm not really sure how I can use of these elements together in a research project. Overall, I don't feel confident with myself even though I've been signed off the relating competencies.



## Example 2

I have done enough research/development/innovation elements to complete all of my Onefile competencies. I have completed two audits in my department (one on correct ordering of tests received and one in the correct pre-testing procedures carried out). I have also completed a systematic review of the literature at University on a very different topic. However, I don't feel confident with my research skillset and I think I need to focus more on developing GSP domain 4 in light of this. I was very much self-directed in doing all of these elements, so I'm not sure what I've missed in terms of learning the best way to do things from those with lots of experience.



Reference to competency completion as evidence without too much description



Comment on own feelings



Insufficient critical reflection of future planning

## Example 2 continued...

I feel quite disappointed that I've missed my opportunity to get advice and support in the best way to do research and audits and things. I think it was very unfair that other departments have supported their trainees and pretty much done their work for them, but I have had to do everything by myself with only a tiny bit of guidance. Also, I have completed all of these elements as independent pieces of work. I'm not really sure how I can use of these elements together in a research project. Overall, I don't feel confident with myself even though I've been signed off the relating competencies.

- ✘ Blaming others
- ✘ No planning of how to develop this to give them confidence
- ✘ No steps identified that will be taken going forward

## Example 3

Throughout the STP I have sought opportunities for involvement in research and innovation. Initially I assisted in departmental clinical audits, learning how these were used to drive change and constantly improve processes. One of these clinical audits generated the research question for my project, providing an exciting opportunity to delve further into this area. Performing the literature search generated some unexpected challenges, which were initially difficult to overcome, however I feel this built on my resilience and determination. I worked with my medical colleagues and scientists from other disciplines to set up the project and attended a patient participant group meeting to get feedback on my plans, giving me a better perspective of how others are impacted by research in the NHS. Due to COVID-19 I was unable to recruit the required numbers of patients to my study. Initially I was disappointed by this, however I adjusted the analysis techniques and was still able to interpret the data to provide useful findings. I was hoping to enhance my presentation skills and confidence by presenting my research findings at the STP Research Day and also to medical colleagues in my trust, to showcase some of the work being performed by scientists, but these events have been cancelled. Giving presentations still makes me more nervous than I would like to feel, so I will continue to work on this and have volunteered to give a regional video-conference presentation of our department's response to COVID next month.

## Example 3

Throughout the STP I have sought opportunities for involvement in research and innovation. Initially I assisted in departmental clinical audits, learning how these were used to drive change and constantly improve processes. One of these clinical audits generated the research question for my project, providing an exciting opportunity to delve further into this area. Performing the literature search generated some unexpected challenges, which were initially difficult to overcome, however I feel this built on my resilience and determination. I worked with my medical colleagues and scientists from other disciplines to set up the project and attended a patient participant group meeting to get feedback on my plans, giving me a better perspective of how others are impacted by research in the NHS.

- ✗ Relates to Domain 4 but does not state this
- ✗ Brief statement of their stage of development
- ✓ Recognizes emotional development
- ✓ Points out resources accessed for support

## Example 3 continued...

Due to COVID-19 I was unable to recruit the required numbers of patients to my study. Initially I was disappointed by this, however I adjusted the analysis techniques and was still able to interpret the data to provide useful findings. I was hoping to enhance my presentation skills and confidence by presenting my research findings at the STP Research Day and also to medical colleagues in my trust, to showcase some of the work being performed by scientists, but these events have been cancelled. Giving presentations still makes me more nervous than I would like to feel, so I will continue to work on this and have volunteered to give a regional video-conference presentation of our department's response to COVID next month.



Highlights area for development



Good end statement to give a plan for future

# Checklist



**Tip: Once you have drafted your critical reflection, please check that you have covered all these checklist points**

## Have you..?

- Considered an overview of your competency completion status together with your practical experiences
- Applied your knowledge, understanding, and feelings to your experiences
- Explored the wider impacts of your experiences
- Considered how your experiences to date can be used to shape your future thinking, behaviour, practices and experiences
- Persuaded the reader that you are a competent and safe practitioner who is ready to be registered with the HCPC
- Highlighted areas for further development
- Outlined feasible and timely action points which will enable you to develop further

# Do you have questions?

- FAQs to support your:
  - referencing portfolio evidence in your critical reflections
  - cross-referencing across sections of the IACC submission
  - which critical reflection to use (any that you find useful!)
  - requirements for the IACC submission (e.g. word count, document type)
  - other essential questions

are posted on the pages devoted to the [Independent Assessment of Clinical Competence](#) section on the NSHCS website



# We wish you success!

Ensure you review and understand the:

- [Regulations governing the IACC](#)
- [Policies that underpin the IACA](#)
- [Requirements for the IACC submission](#)

Do use to help you:

- the IACC Guidance for Trainees and Training Officers

Do submit within the allowed time period:

- 9.00am Monday 12 October 2020 – no later than noon, Monday 26 October 2020



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)