

2025
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EDITION

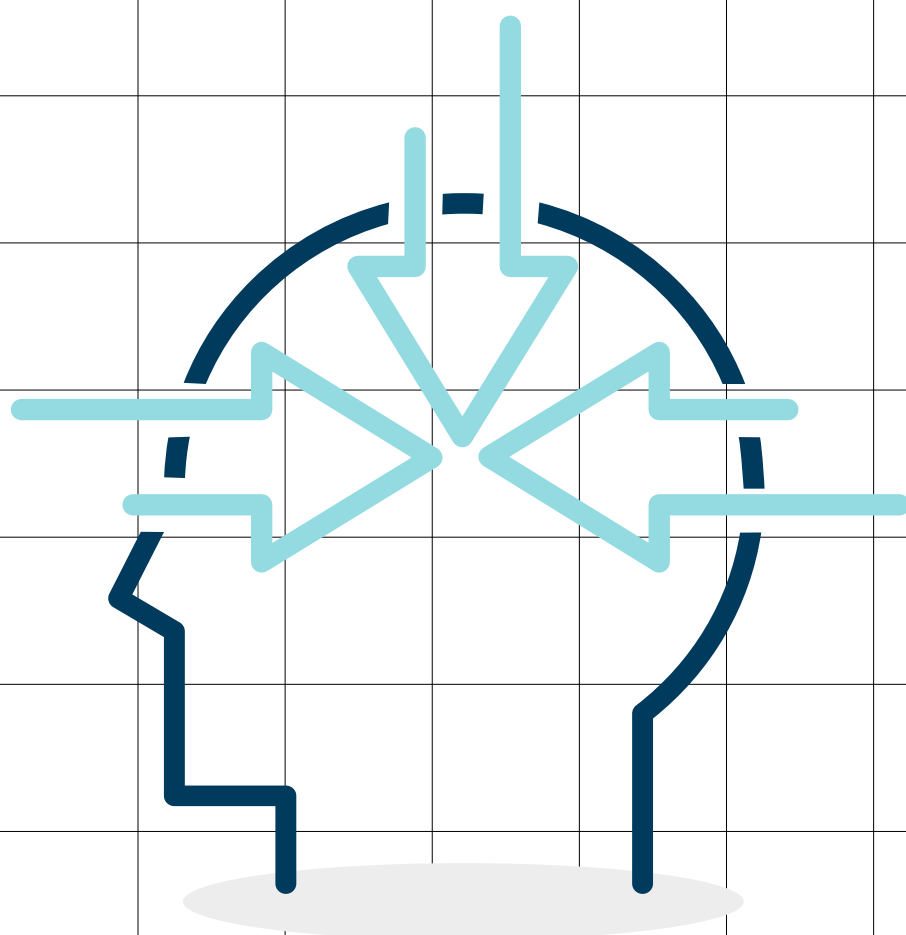


GCC Registrant Toolkit

Reflective Practice

Professionalism in chiropractic

Toolkit



Reflective Practice

What is Reflective Practice?

While reflection simply means to give serious thought or consideration to something, *reflective practice* is about reflecting on one's actions in order to engage in a process of continuous learning. It can thus be thought of as 'learning through reflection on doing', and includes

reflecting on what you have done (*Reflection-on-Action*), what you are currently doing (*Reflection-in-Action*) and what you plan to do (*Reflection-for-Action*) in the course of your professional development and clinical practice. The aim is to maximise the learning value of your experiences.

Reflection-on-Action

This is about reflecting on an experience *after* it has happened in such a way that it helps maximise the learning gained from that experience at a range of levels. It can be thought of as carrying out a structured debrief.

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| Value: | Helps enable professionals to reflect on their experiences and examine alternative ways to improve their practice. |
| Challenges: | Requires that you take time to step back and think about a learning experience that has already happened, and so represents a time commitment. |
| Notes: | Most effective if undertaken in a systematic manner and documented. |

Reflection-in-Action

This is about reflecting on an experience whilst that experience is ongoing, and so requires thinking *in the moment* and, possibly, changing or re-shaping what you are doing as you are doing it.

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| Value: | Allows you to learn as you do, drawing on all your senses and applying your experience to new problems. |
| Challenges: | Trickier to systematise than reflection-on-action. |
| Notes: | Requires similar skills to those used for clinical reasoning. |

Reflection-for-Action

This is the process of thinking about your learning needs and planning future experiences with the intention of improving or changing practice.

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| Value: | Helps guide future actions. |
| Challenges: | Requires taking time out to plan learning experiences. |
| Notes: | Plans might include participating in learning events or undertaking other actions/experiences. |

The GCC and reflective practice

Joint statement

The GCC is party to a joint statement on Reflective Practice agreed by the nine UK health and care regulators. This statement confirms the expectation that all health and care professionals engage meaningfully in reflection to support multi-disciplinary teamwork, foster improvements in practice and services and assure the public that health and care professionals are continuously learning and seeking to improve.

Education Standards

Domain C: Standard 11 of the GCC's 2023 Education Standards states that new chiropractors must use reflective practice as a tool for personal development, taking responsibility for their own learning needs in the interests of enhancing the care and safety of patients.

Code of Professional Practice and CPD

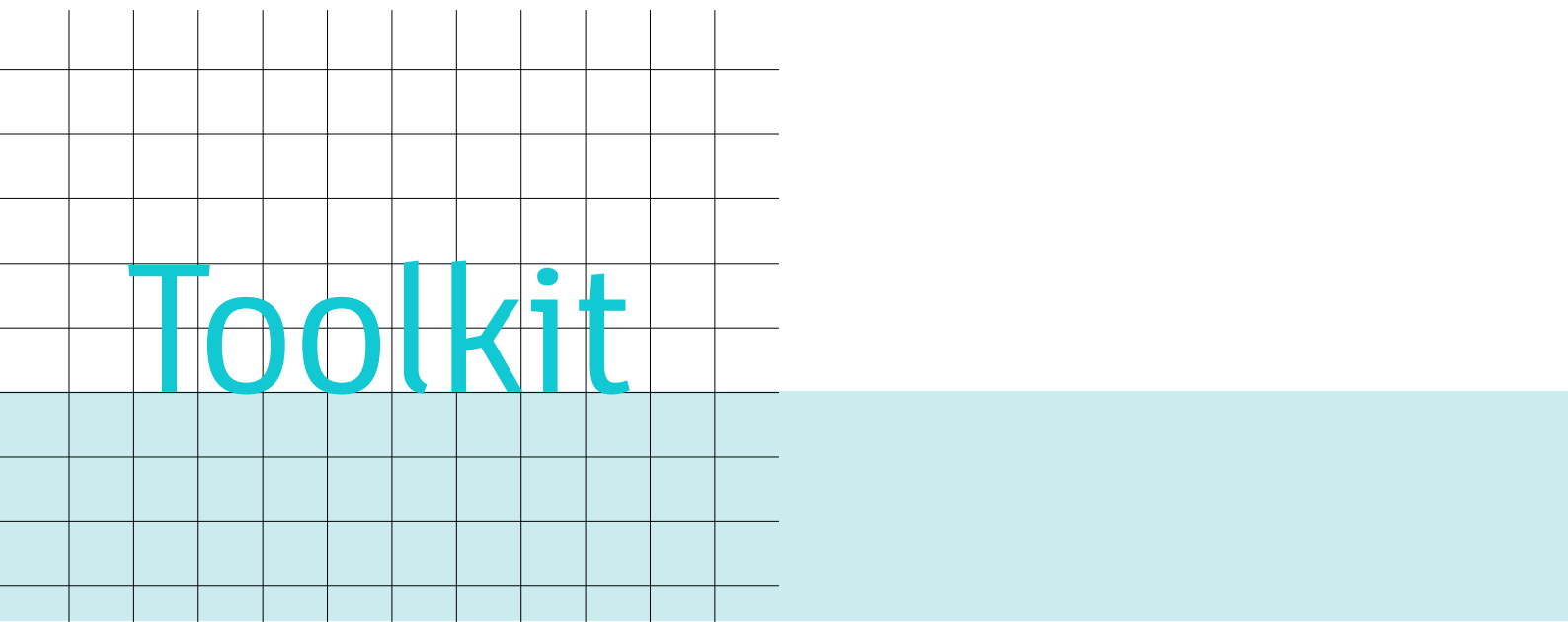
Chiropractic practice is a lifelong journey that requires registrants to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills in line with current professional developments. The Code of Professional Practice clearly states that chiropractors are expected to monitor their practice, adapt when needed, and take responsibility for remaining up to date and improving performance.

Reflective practice is central to this. Standard I1 of the Code of Professional Practice requires chiropractors to engage in reflection by seeking feedback and analysing their practice to support continuous improvement, and Standard I4 emphasises the need to maintain competence through regular and relevant learning and professional development activities. Reflection, evaluation and planning of professional development activities are requirements of the statutory continuing professional development (CPD) rules and are essential elements of the GCC's CPD programme.

Each year, the GCC's CPD programme prompts registrants to reflect on their knowledge and skills and plan their learning in relation to a focussed area of CPD, and to reflect on their most significant learning experience. Doing this diligently demonstrates reflection-for-action and reflection-on-action in relation to some of your learning, but being an effective reflective practitioner means taking a structured and habitually reflective approach in relation to all your learning, including the reflection-in-action that can take place during clinical practice.

What are the benefits of Reflective Practice?

- Asking yourself questions about your learning experiences, and self-assessing your knowledge and skills in the process, increases self-awareness, helping you understand your strengths and recognise areas where further learning/development might be needed.
- Reflecting in action helps you develop and refine your abilities to solve problems. Questioning and changing the way you work will help you find new solutions and improve the quality of the care you provide to your patients.
- Reflective practice may develop your ability to understand how those around you learn and the best ways to support them, resulting in improved work processes.
- When you play a truly active part in your learning through reflective practice, you become more aware of how you learn and develop key skills and strategies to be a lifelong learner.



Toolkit

Being an effective reflective practitioner

Reflective practice requires commitment, but adopting a structured and systematic approach to reflection, and documenting your reflections, will help ensure the process is effective.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle provides a helpful structure for reflection-on-action. Adopting this approach after each learning activity/experience will help ensure you gain full value from it.



Consider producing a simple template to complete after every learning experience, focussing on evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action planning as the key reflective stages in the cycle.

To some extent, each patient consultation involves reflection-in-action. You are learning about the patient and, particularly if it is an unusual presentation, potentially learning about that too. During history taking and examination, pondering a differential diagnosis and making sense of the circumstances of the patient that may be contributing to their condition involves on-the-spot analysis, and reflection on prior knowledge and experiences in order to decide on next steps. This reflection-in-action becomes a part of true reflective practice if you are conscious of it in the moment, think about it systematically in terms of a learning experience, do it routinely and document it after the event.

A structure for reflection-in-action using SPINe:

Senses: What am I seeing/hearing/feeling?

Previous similar experiences: Can I relate what is happening to something I have experienced before?

Influencing factors: What is influencing my thinking and why?

Next steps: What is my plan of action, and is it the most appropriate?

The acronym, 'SPINe' may provide a useful aide-memoire. Use your Gibbs template to document things after the event.

While 'action planning' and 'next steps' are noted stages in Gibbs' reflective cycle and the SPINe model, prompting you to plan further learning, reflection-for-action is still an important, third component of reflective practice. Reflection-for-action is all about taking time out to think about your knowledge, skills and competencies in relation to particular areas of practice, perhaps prompted by the GCC's focussed CPD.

Diligently addressing the focussed-CPD questions posed by the GCC for your CPD return is a good example of effective reflection-for-action. Consider asking yourself similar questions, and jotting down your answers, across the full range of topics that you might address in the CPD year ahead.

Tips for reflective writing

Adopting a suitable structure or system to document your reflections (see above) is one thing. Actually compiling and committing your reflections to paper may be another. Writing reflectively is a skill, but the following tips will help you:

- Think 'diary' and use the 'first person'
- Write freely – structure later (if you need to)
- Don't worry too much about grammar/punctuation
- It is fine to be subjective – your reflections are personal to you and based on your own feelings and perceptions
- Avoid being descriptive – it is essential to be analytical
- When addressing GCC-focussed CPD, make sure you answer the questions as posed

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