

# Graduate Teaching Assistants



## Session 1

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# GTA Training

By Andrew Davies

## SESSION 1

While we are waiting:

Make sure you have booked yourself in on the sheet.

Make sure you have a copy of the handout.

## Aims and objectives

To explore and gain a better understanding of:

- Reflective practise
- Self evaluation
- Keeping a PPP
- Learning styles

## Introduction

To teach all students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another, address misconceptions and accommodate different learning styles.

This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge, and that enables teachers to make learning accessible to others.  
(Shulman, 1987)

## Reflective Practise

### Reflective Practise

- **Memories** (page 3)

You cannot reflect on learning experiences that you cannot remember. Teachers need to be aware of how learning happens for them if they are to help their students learn (Minton, 2003).

- Task 1a
- Task 1b
- Task 1c
- Task 1d
- Task 1e

### Task 1a

Spend 10 minutes thinking about a teacher who has positively influenced your learning. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What did they teach?

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2. When was it?

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3. What made them special/good/standout from the rest of the teachers at that time?

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## Task 1b

Working in pairs, explain to your partner what it was about that teacher that makes them stand out.

Write notes about your partners choice:

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## Task 1c

Spend 10 minutes thinking about a teacher that negatively influenced your learning. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What did they teach?

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2. When was it?

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3. What made them poor/bad/different from the rest of the teachers at that time?

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## Task 1d

In pairs, explain to your partner what it was about that teacher that makes them stand out.

Write notes about your partners choice:

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## Task 1e

Look at your notes; are there any similarities with those of your partner or others on your table? As a group, see if you can come up with 10 traits that you think make a good teacher.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Task 2



Try to recall an occasion when you were aware of having learned something – You may have said “*Oh, now I see*” as the proverbial penny dropped. Perhaps you realised why someone was behaving oddly, or found out what that button was on the TV remote. You may have discovered something about yourself, an ability you did not know you had.

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In your pairs, explain your experience to your partner. Listen to their experience. Discuss what you think is going on, how did that happen, what was it that let the penny drop. Write down some ideas:

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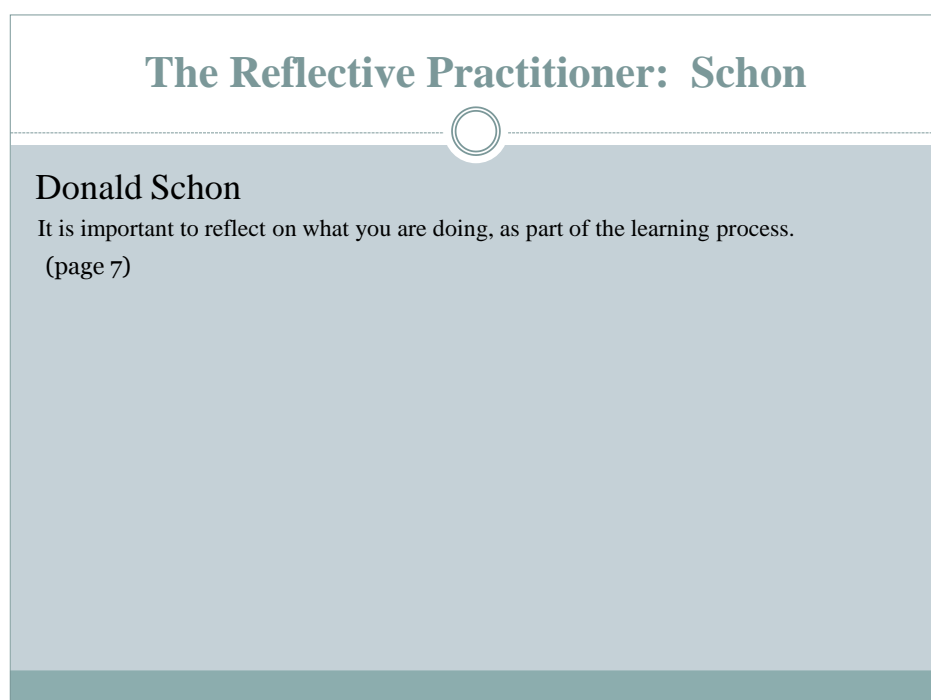
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Think about how you would present your findings to the group as a micro teaching exercise.

## The reflective practitioner – reflection-in- and -on-action



One of Donald Schon's contributions was to bring 'reflection' into the centre of an understanding of what we, as teaching professionals do.

The notions of "*reflection-in-action*", and "*reflection-on-action*" were central to Schon's efforts in this area. The former, "*reflection-in-action*", is sometimes described as 'thinking on our feet'. It involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings. It entails building new understandings to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding.

The teacher reflects on the phenomenon before them, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in their behaviour. They carry out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schon 1983: pp68).

We have been concentrating on the latter: "*reflection-on-action*". We have seen that the act of reflecting-on-action, be it ours or that of others, enables us to spend time exploring why we acted as we did, what was happening and so on. In so doing we develop sets of questions and ideas about our activities and practice.

Practitioners build up a collection of images, ideas, examples and actions that they can draw upon. Schon saw this as central to reflective practice.

## Learning styles

### The Reflective Practitioner: Schon & Kolb

#### Donald Schon

It is important to reflect on what you are doing, as part of the learning process.  
(page 7)

Reflective Observation is the second stage in the Kolb learning cycle.

#### Kolb

Kolb developed a theory of experiential learning that can give us a useful model by which to develop our practice. This is called The Kolb Cycle, The Learning Cycle or The Experiential Learning Cycle.

(page 8)

### How?

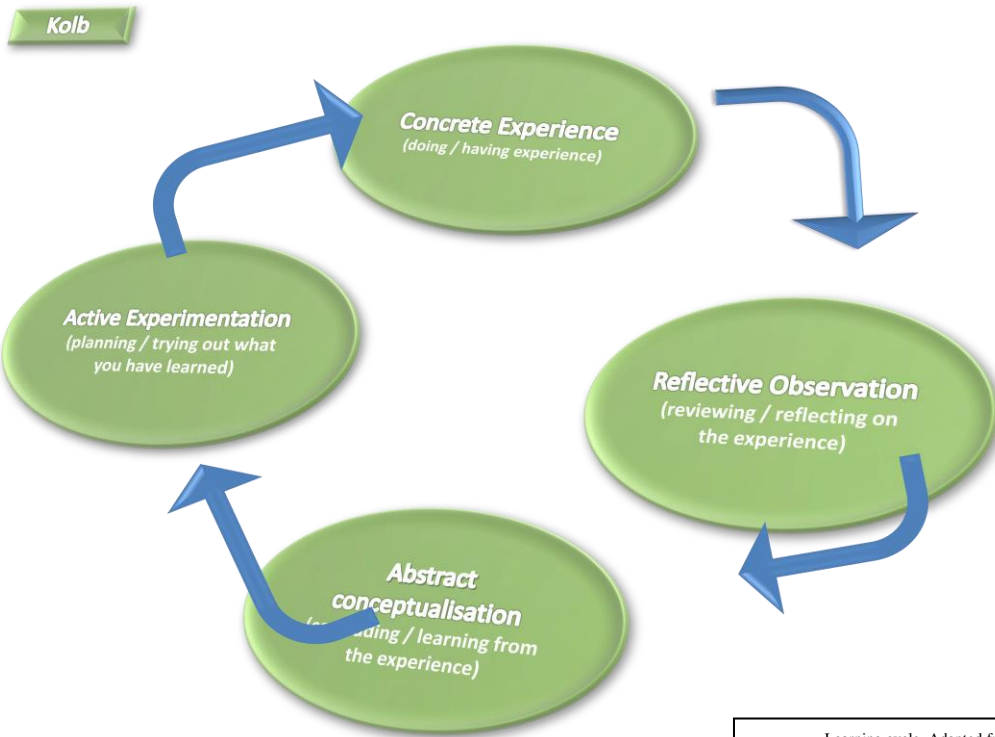
These can be achieved through a process of reflection.

According to Boud, Cohen and Walker:

*“Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning.”— (1985:19)*

Kolb's learning cycle provides a useful descriptive models of the adult learning process.





Learning cycle. Adapted from Kolb, D.A (1984)

## Learning styles

# Learning Styles

In exploring how reflective practice can support and aid learning it is important to look at how we learn. The following points have been made about the process of learning:

- Learning is individual.
- Learning is contextual.
- Learning is relational.

In exploring how reflective practice can support and aid learning it is important to look at how we learn. The following points can be made about the process of learning:

- **Learning is Individual:** *All students start from their own position of knowledge and have their own set of experiences to draw upon.*
- **Learning should be Contextual:** *Students need to understand that the context in which they learn and operate affects how and what they understand.*
- **Learning is relational.** *In order to make sense and achieve a deep understanding of material and experiences students need to relate new information to existing knowledge and experiences.*

## **VAK visual-auditory-kinaesthetic learning styles**

The VAK learning styles model provides a very easy and quick reference inventory by which to assess people's preferred learning styles, and then most importantly, to design learning methods and experiences that match people's preferences:

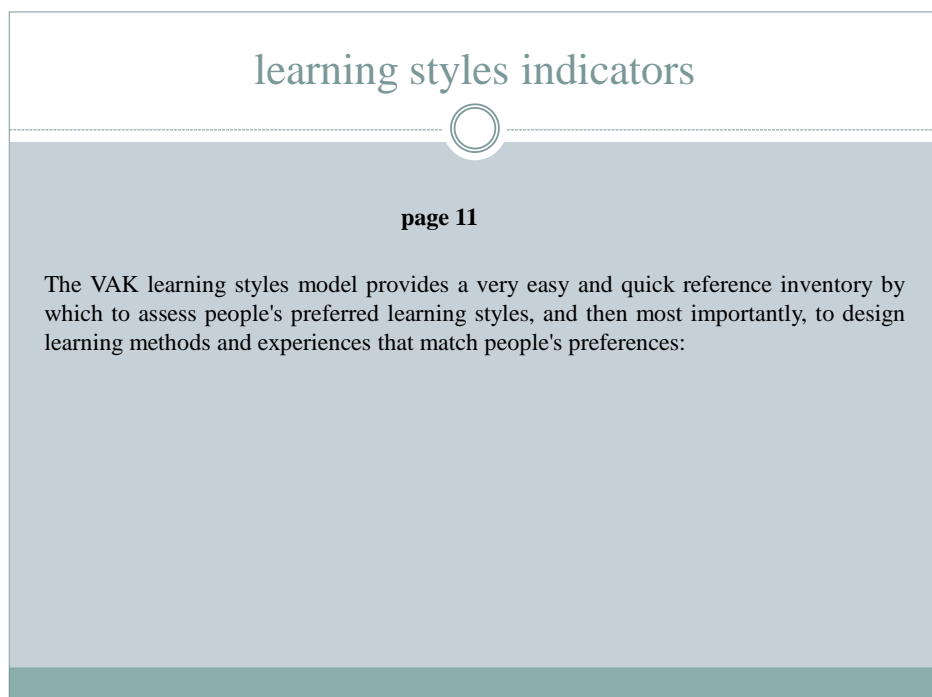
**Visual** learning style involves the use of seen or observed things, including pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films, flip-chart, etc.

**Auditory** learning style involves the transfer of information through listening: to the spoken word, of self or others, of sounds and noises.

**Kinaesthetic** learning involves physical experience - touching, feeling, holding, doing, practical hands-on experiences.

It is easy to begin to assess your own or another person's learning style within the Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic model.

## VAK visual-auditory-kinaesthetic learning styles indicators



Here are some common indicators.

Tick the statement which best applies to you. (See example).

Let's say, for example, you want to bake a cake. Your preferred method would be to:

"ask a cook", you would tick as follows:

|             | A                |                          | B          |                                     | C         |                          |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Bake a cake | Read recipe book | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ask a cook | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Have a go | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Each tick equals 1 point. Total each column to indicate dominance.

Remember, there are no right and wrong answers.

| <b>Task</b>                | <b>A</b>              |  | <b>B</b>                      |  | <b>C</b>                                  |  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1. Operate new equipment   | Read instructions     |  | Listen to explanation         |  | Have a go                                 |  |
| 2. Travel directions       | Look at a map         |  | Ask for spoken directions     |  | Follow your nose and maybe use a compass  |  |
| 3. Cook a new dish         | Follow a recipe       |  | Call a friend for explanation |  | Follow your instinct, tasting as you cook |  |
| 4. Teach someone something | Write instructions    |  | Explain verbally              |  | Demonstrate and let them have a go        |  |
| 5. You'd say..             | I see what you mean   |  | I hear what you are saying    |  | I know how you feel                       |  |
| 6. You'd say..             | Show me               |  | Tell me                       |  | Let me try                                |  |
| 7. You'd say..             | Watch how I do it     |  | Listen to me explain          |  | You have a go                             |  |
| 8. Faulty goods            | Write a letter        |  | Phone                         |  | Send or take it back to the store         |  |
| 9. Leisure                 | Museums and galleries |  | Music and conversation        |  | Playing sport or DIY                      |  |
| 10. Buying gifts           | Books                 |  | Music                         |  | Tools and gadgets                         |  |
| 11. Shopping               | Look and imagine      |  | Discuss with shop staff       |  | Try on and test                           |  |
| 12. Choose a holiday       | Read the brochures    |  | Listen to recommendations     |  | Imagine the experience                    |  |
| 13. Choose a new car       | Read the reviews      |  | Discuss with friends          |  | Test-drive what you fancy                 |  |
|                            | <b>A</b>              |  | <b>B</b>                      |  | <b>C</b>                                  |  |
| <b>Total ticks</b>         |                       |  |                               |  |   |  |

### Task 3

Based on the VAK learning style indicators, what type of learner are you and are there any occasions when that could change?

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Read back through your notes about your partner and see if you can identify their learning style from your notes.

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Discuss your efforts with your partner. Now, look at the others on your table and see if you can guess what their learning style is. Discuss with them when you have all made your choice.

Were you correct?    Yes     No     Some

How many of you have the same learning style? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the implications of this?

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How would you address this when planning teaching sessions?

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## Learning/reflection log

This log is a vital aid to recording your own learning and to developing your own skills as a reflective practitioner. I need not be shown to anyone. This is only <sup>14</sup> an example and could be adapted for your PPP.

| What have I learned?  |  |  | What am I going to do about it?  |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Experiences/Actions<br>What were the main experiences for me or the main things that I did since the last checkpoint. | Reflection<br>How did I feel during these experiences? | Learning<br>What did I learn about myself or about other people. | Goals<br>What do I want to do about this? What ideas would I like to test out? What skills do I want to develop? | Planning<br>What can I do to help me achieve goals? |
|   |  |  |  |   |

**Recap:**

**Know who you are teaching.**

**What do they already know?**

**Their preferred method of learning is?**

**Keep a reflective diary!**

**Reflect, reflect, reflect**

## References

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Morrison, K (1996), Developing Reflective Practice in Higher Degree Students through a Learning Journal, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol 21, No 3, pp 317-332.

\* *Influential book that examines professional knowledge, professional contexts and reflection-in-action. Examines reflection-in-action and studies the process involved in various instances of professional judgement. This has become a core reading in most teacher training programmes.*