By the end of this chapter you will:

- Understand the term ‘portfolio’ and other associated terms such as ‘mind-mapping’, ‘reflective friend’, ‘reflexivity’, ‘learning style’, ‘continuous professional development’ (CPD) and ‘e-portfolio’.
- Be aware of portfolio development in nursing and the history of nursing portfolios.
- Understand why you need to develop a portfolio.
- Understand where you need to start.

In this introductory chapter we will begin to explore what it is meant by a portfolio, and what you might expect a portfolio to contain. The chapter explains the basic requirements for portfolio development, and begins to demonstrate how you can develop and structure your own nursing portfolio.

Whether you are working as a healthcare assistant, a student nurse, a newly-qualified nurse or have many years of clinical experience, at some stage of your nursing career you may choose or be required to engage in portfolio development and reflect on your nursing practice. Many nurses feel unsure about beginning a portfolio. However, most say that once they begin the process and engage with a facilitator or group to reflect on their practice, they find it enjoyable and beneficial. The majority of nurses are proud of the learning they have achieved once they have completed their portfolio.
Who is this book for?

This book is written for all nurses wanting to engage in portfolio development regardless of whether or not they are currently undertaking further education. This chapter presents an overview of the crucial elements of getting started on a portfolio and provides a step-by-step approach to help you begin and continue to develop your portfolio. As time goes by you will be able to expand on your portfolio and use it for promotional opportunities, performance appraisal, and personal and professional development. Moreover, during the process of reading this book you should develop self-awareness and self-assessment skills, as you become increasingly aware of your strengths and weaknesses.

The portfolio

The term ‘portfolio’ comes from the Latin portare, meaning ‘to carry’ and foglio, meaning a ‘sheet’. So in its most basic interpretation, a ‘portfolio’ is a receptacle for information. In nursing a portfolio is more than just a record of CPD containing certificates, diplomas and other relevant documents; rather, it is a collection of evidence summarizing what you have learned from prior experience through reflection.

In other words, portfolios are more than simple collections of documents that demonstrate learning achievements. A nursing portfolio provides evidence of previous experience and presents a dynamic record of your growth and professional learning over time. A portfolio is also an account of learning based on practice and critical reflection: ‘A portfolio is a . . . cohesive account of work based learning that contains relevant evidence from practice and critical
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

reflection on this evidence. Its primary purpose is to ‘display achievement of professional competence or learning outcomes and knowledge development’ (Timmins 2008: 115).

It is this more comprehensive interpretation that will be used throughout this book. We will also use the term ‘professional portfolio’ to denote that its function relates to your professional role as a nurse. While you may be quite comfortable with the notion of recording your attendance at study events, courses and programmes in your portfolio along with any certificates or awards you have received, you may feel that the prospect of reflecting on your achievements is a daunting one. In fact, the demonstration of learning achievements through reflection is often a cause for concern and uncertainly for practising nurses; and yet the skills of reflection and critical thinking are deemed crucial by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC 2004). It is believed that thinking about and reflecting on your practice, and developing a portfolio as a result, makes your learning more explicit as you translate your clinical experiences into documented evidence. You can then learn to critically examine the nature of your learning in relation to specific experiences in your nursing practice and demonstrate that you have learned from those experiences and how you have achieved or maintained your clinical competence as a result. Although undergraduate nursing students are required to develop portfolios in the UK (NMC 2004), your experience in this field may have been insufficient to prepare you to do so.

Portfolios are also very useful for ‘unpacking’ ‘invisible’ learning in the clinical arena, as well as helping you to maintain elements of ongoing clinical competence and accountability in relation to your nursing practice. They have been viewed as a vehicle for demonstrating reflective skills, critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills and interpersonal communication skills, as well as indicating your array of clinical skills (Twadell and Johnson 2007).

Throughout this book we aim to improve your confidence with portfolio use. We will emphasize the importance of you, as a nurse, developing a portfolio. We will you take you through a step-by-step process so that you will be able to showcase your development as a professional nurse in a cohesive and concrete way as you travel from novice to expert in nursing practice.
Pause for Thought

- Consider the drawbacks of using a portfolio just to collect information about your professional experience and accolades. What are the advantages of using a portfolio in this way (just to contain information)?

- Consider the drawbacks of developing a more in-depth portfolio, one that critically reflects upon your professional experience and accolades, and includes more detailed information about you as a professional. What are the advantages of using a portfolio in this way (in-depth portfolio with critical reflection)?

Origins

During the last decade the term ‘portfolio’ has become very familiar in nursing education and practice. Portfolios were first used in nursing schools in the early 1980s (Cole et al. 1995) as a means of demonstrating – and more importantly evaluating – learning through establishing evidence of holistic learning achievements. Professional bodies in nursing practice have embraced the portfolio ‘movement’ and recommend that nurses maintain and develop a portfolio as part of their professional development. As mentioned earlier, in the UK nurses are expected to maintain a profile as a means of demonstrating CPD and this can form part of your professional profile. CPD is linked to the registration updating process in the UK through the Post-Registration Education and Practice (PREP) standards. The portfolio development process
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

thereby symbolizes an important part of work-based learning (NMC 2008). The concept of ‘work-based’ or ‘practice based’ learning is one that is well documented in the educational and nursing literature (see e.g. Quinn 1998; Gopee 2005) and can be demonstrated through the development of a professional portfolio.

Getting started

Considering there is no correct way to organize and develop your portfolio you may find yourself overwhelmed before you have even begun. Some authors argue that portfolios do not conform to templates and any attempt

Pause for Thought

• Consider what you think you might need to include in your portfolio. Write everything down in a list.

• What aspects of your nursing practice do you think will inform the development of your portfolio?

• What other aspects of nursing practice might you need to think about before embarking on portfolio development?
to standardize your portfolio would not do you or your portfolio any justice and may even curtail your creativity (Hughes and Moore 2007). However, we hold the view that, especially for the novice portfolio developer, it is critically important that you have a framework to help you structure your portfolio in a logical and coherent manner. We will include more discussion about this as the book progresses. However, for the moment, a little brainstorming is needed. Take a moment to consider everything that you think your portfolio should contain.

You may have provided a vast range of responses to the above exercise, and it is important to consider your own personal views of the portfolio – after all it is a very individualized document, with no set format. The important elements that we think need to be considered are outlined in the ‘mind-map’ shown in Figure 1.1.

In order to successfully begin to develop your portfolio you will need to spend some time considering what nursing means to you, and some pointers are shown in Figure 1.1. You may wish to consider your philosophy of nursing, or that of the department or organization within which you work. You may think about including some of your CV (your whole CV is unlikely to be appropriate for a nursing portfolio as it will include non-relevant items such as sporting interests and other activities such as your proficiency at the piano and so on: the portfolio must focus clearly on your learning achievements as a nurse).

Reflection (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) is paramount to the portfolio development process. Specifically, critical reflection is a conscious and deliberate strategy aimed at understanding and learning from clinical practice. Critically learning from and evaluating your nursing experience is one of the implicit aims of critical reflection. The lessons you learn from reflection can then be applied to your practice, providing a tangible link between theory and practice. In Chapter 2 we discuss the process of reflection and explain why it is such an important element of your portfolio. We describe a simple model of reflection that will guide you through your reflection on practice, and following this we hope that you will be in a good position to choose a model of reflection that suits you best for use in your portfolio.
Figure 1.1 A mind-map of the important elements to consider when embarking upon portfolio development.
During your initial brainstorming session you may also consider what challenges and enablers there are in terms of your portfolio of professional development. For example:

- Does your workload seem to prevent you from getting started on a portfolio?
- Are there ways that you could plan your time better?
- Could you approach your manager to get some protected time within your duty to work specifically on your portfolio?
- Can you engage a reflective friend to assist you?

All these questions (and others) are worth considering and writing down. You also need to consider how you are currently developing and maintaining your clinical competence. Your choice of methods for this will ultimately affect the way in which your portfolio is presented. If for example you are attending a programme of study, your learning within this programme and your achievements (grades, certificates, diplomas) may be an important element in your portfolio. On the other hand, if you are attending a random range of locally or nationally run courses, relevant to your area, you might examine how you could link the learning you have gained from attending these to your reflection on the development of your ongoing competence, knowledge and skill acquisition, within your portfolio.

Finally, consideration of what constitutes evidence within a portfolio is extremely important. It is not the intention of the portfolio to merely house everything that you own; rather, you should be selective in the evidence you collect or retain. Evidence must be relevant and must fit with your portfolio’s themes. For the most part evidence should be objective. For example, an attendance certificate for a training day on managing aggression and violence in the workplace is objective evidence that you attended. Your simply reporting that you attended (without the certificate) is not. On the other hand, evidence generated from your reflections will by its very nature be subjective. However, you can support your reflections with objective evidence (such as certificates of achievement and so on) to further strengthen your conclusions.

All of this initial brainstorming may take a little time, and it is worth noting your thoughts down in a notebook or journal. This phase is to designed
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

to get you thinking about important elements that may form part of your portfolio.

Brainstorming over, you need to consider whether your portfolio is for professional and personal development purposes or for academic purposes. If your portfolio is part of a programme of study it may have different requirements to the professional portfolio of the type we describe in this book. In an academic setting you will usually receive detailed instructions for your portfolio. However, there will still be many common elements between your academic portfolio and a professional one, so it is still worth reading on!

A step-by-step approach

It is important that when embarking on a major task, such as developing a portfolio, you break the task down into manageable steps. This section describes taking a step-by-step approach to your professional portfolio and a summary of these steps is outlined in the list below.

1 Decide to engage in the process: the first and most vital step!
2 Commit: a good way to do this is to declare your intention to a chosen ‘reflective friend’ (see below).
3 Explore: use this book to consider different types of portfolio and methods of reflection.
4 Identify: pinpoint the approach that works best for you, along with potential barriers to success. Consider how you will overcome such barriers.
5 Negotiate: group discussions and reflection are very useful. Discuss your thoughts and decisions so far with colleagues or a reflective friend. Always be open to ideas and suggestions others make for improvement.
6 Plan: now plan your strategy based on realistic targets.
7 Implement: begin to implement your strategy in a disciplined manner.
8 Re-examine: as you progress, periodically question and examine your personal attitudes and values.
9 Persist: no matter what barriers fall in your way, stay determined, persist, and you will succeed.
Decide to engage in the process

You may be required to develop a nursing portfolio as part of a nursing programme or perhaps you need to develop one for registration purposes or for personal and professional development reasons. Whatever the reason, when starting a portfolio it is important to plan how you will approach the process in a methodical manner.

A portfolio has a beginning and a middle, but may have no end. As you engage in the process you will find yourself on a journey of self-development and discovery and furthermore, as you continue to evaluate and learn from your practice, your personal and professional development and your portfolio will develop as a result. The ‘end’, therefore, will be the product. However, even after you’ve reached the ‘end’, your journey will continue, especially if your aim is to develop both personally and professionally.

In order to get started you might consider using a framework or a ‘mind-map’ (All and Havens 1997; Baugh and Mellott 1998), as shown in Figure 1.1. This should help you to structure your portfolio, decide what information you need to gather and include and how you intend to present the portfolio. Mind-maps are a useful tool to develop critical thinking, challenge your thinking process and enable you to bridge the theory–practice gap. Furthermore, they are useful in helping you think critically about your clinical practice and synthesize your ideas, thereby facilitating meaningful learning.
Commit

Declaring your intention to develop a portfolio to a friend early on in the process not only helps you to visualize your goal, it also demonstrates self-determination. Having a ‘reflective friend’ (Bond and Holland 1998; Duffy 2008) is extremely useful because we are often so close to our own actions that we cannot see things clearly. For example, what is familiar and obvious to you may appear quite unique and unusual to a friend, and perhaps worthy of special attention in your portfolio. A reflective friend can assist you by supporting your reflections and interpretations of actions, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs in order to develop your portfolio entries.

A reflective friend can help you visualize alternative perspectives that you may not have realized on your own, and can change both you and your practice positively. However, you do need to choose this person carefully. You will be divulging very personal information and thus the wrong choice could lead to your ending up feeling self-critical, under-confident and defensive about your practice. What type of person makes a good reflective friend? A harmonious relationship is essential, therefore there needs to be a good ‘match’ between your personalities. You need to feel at ease with one another and have a mutual respect, both as nurses and as individuals. Carl Rogers (1961) considered the types of personal characteristic required of a facilitator. While the focus of the reflective friend is not necessary to facilitate your learning, these personal attributes, when present in the facilitator, bring out the best in the other person. For this reason they are useful to consider in the context of choosing your reflective friend. They are:

- Openness
- Curiosity
- Flexibility
- Supportiveness
- Consistency
- Self-disclosure
- Attentiveness
- Non-defensiveness
- Reliability
Approachability
Concern
Trustworthiness
Self-awareness
Congruency
Empathy

Pause for Thought

• Using Rogers’ characteristics listed above, consider what personal characteristics you might wish to find in your reflective friend.

• What is the most critical personal characteristic that your reflective friend should have?

• Who would you consider being a suitable friend for you to choose?

• Why would you choose this person?

• Does this friend have all the personal characteristics in your list?
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

The scenario below examines this part of the process a little further. Josephine has decided to develop her professional portfolio, and needs to choose a reflective friend to assist her through the process.

Scenario: Josephine

Josephine is a 34-year-old staff nurse with six years’ clinical experience in surgical nursing. The position of Junior Nurse Manager (F Grade) on the unit has been advertised and Josephine would like to apply for the position. She decides to develop her professional portfolio to demonstrate her clinical competence and ability to manage the unit in the absence of a more senior manager. She recalls a number of incidents that she could potentially reflect on to highlight her clinical competence in nursing management, writes about these and decides that she would benefit from the help of a reflective friend. She wants to develop her listening skills but is in a dilemma regarding the most suitable person to assist her in critiquing her practice. She narrows her choice down to two people:

- Jane is a 45-year-old registered nurse working part-time on the unit. She has over 15 years’ experience in nursing, has worked in two hospitals in the UK and has substantial life experience. Her husband died in a motorbike accident seven years before and her responsibilities include twin sons and a daughter, all attending secondary school. Jane has not advanced her nursing education since qualifying as a registered nurse because she feels she is too busy with life. Josephine often asks Jane’s opinion on issues relating to her personal life and takes Jane’s advice on most issues. She feels she can trust Jane.

- Maria is a new staff nurse on the unit; she started working on the surgical ward a month before. She had two years’ nursing experience as a theatre nurse before she accepted the
position of staff nurse in the surgical unit. Maria undertook a postgraduate diploma in theatre nursing and during the programme was required to develop a reflective portfolio. She is a quiet, very relaxed person. From Josephine’s observations she appears to be a very professional practitioner. However, the two nurses work opposite shifts and Josephine does not know Maria very well at the moment.

Questions

- Who should Josephine choose as a reflective friend to help her develop her portfolio? Why?
- Who should Josephine not choose? Why?

Suggested answers

- Because Josephine is developing her portfolio for promotional purposes she needs to be strategic about choosing her critical friend. She could, in fact, ask both of these people to assist her. Jane would be an ideal critical friend if she has the time to commit to the process. She demonstrates the essential qualities necessary and has the clinical knowledge to assist Josephine. Her nursing experience is vast, not to mention her life experience, so she will be able to empathize with Josephine. Josephine trusts Jane’s opinions and advice and is likely to respect her feedback. In addition, because guided reflection is a two-way process Jane may become more motivated to undertake further education and training herself.

- Maria may also have some of the qualities necessary to act as a reflective friend, but because the two nurses have not as yet built a trusting relationship she would not at this stage be the ideal candidate for Josephine. Nonetheless, as Maria has developed an educational portfolio Josephine could seek her advice about using a reflective cycle and writing up and presenting a portfolio.
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Whoever they may be, your reflective friend should be someone who will motivate and encourage you to pursue your portfolio development within a supportive but challenging relationship.

Identify

After deciding on your reflective friend you are ready to move to the next step of the portfolio development process. There are essentially two formats available for you to develop your portfolio. The first is the paper portfolio and the second is the e-portfolio.

The paper portfolio

This is probably the simplest way: essentially, all you need is a ring binder and some dividers to structure your portfolio in an organized manner. Endacott et al. (2004) discuss various types of paper portfolio, and these are outlined in more detail in Chapter 4. Briefly though, they are:

- the shopping trolley model;
- the toast-rack model;
- the spinal column model;
- the cake-mix model.

With the ‘shopping trolley’ model you simply place all your documents in any fashion into your portfolio. In the ‘toast-rack’ model you organize the content of your portfolio in a more structured manner by using dividers. However, there is still no connection between the sections of the portfolio. The ‘spinal column’ model improves on this by introducing an over-arching theme – for instance, ‘achieving competence in communication skills’, which would be a likely theme for Josephine to choose for her portfolio. Finally, the most advanced model is the ‘cake-mix’, whereby the nurse builds the portfolio based on an over-arching narrative and links theory to practice through reflexivity. This is the model you would expect to see an advanced nurse practitioner use. However, this book will focus on developing your portfolio to at least the level of the ‘spinal column’ model. Your portfolio will then have
a structure and an over-arching theme in relation to building and maintaining your clinical competence in your nursing practice.

**E-portfolios**

Alternatively, if you are competent at web-based work, you could choose to build an e-portfolio. An e-portfolio has been defined by e-portfolio portal (2004) as a web-based information management system that uses electronic media and services. The e-portfolio ‘movement’ has developed as a result of three main factors: the dynamic nature of learning; the rapid growth of knowledge; and the changing needs of the healthcare environment. An e-portfolio is a digital version of a paper portfolio, whereby you collect and demonstrate your work and provide a record of evidence to show your achievement of clinical competence and professional growth over a period of time (Banks 2004). Nursing e-portfolios can include all the elements of a paper portfolio, such as your CV, evidence of clinical and research skills, evidence of management and leadership skills, evidence of further education, evidence of your use of a recognized reflective framework and case reports, lists of published work and details of research projects, with the useful addition of video and audio records.

E-portfolios are similar to personal websites and are context rich: you can upload digital evidence (e.g. photos, videos, scanned documents), thereby presenting a greater range of material data than in a paper portfolio. Further advantages of creating an e-portfolio are that the exercise will help to develop your information technology (IT) skills and you will be able to scan or search your documents quickly and easily. In addition, e-portfolios are very easy to access from any computer connected to the internet, anywhere in the world, providing more opportunities to share your work with mentors, colleagues and potential employers, both for performance appraisal and accreditation purposes. The power of technology allows rapid archiving and offers a range of useful tools to present your work in different formats. E-portfolios also encourage collaboration as you can easily share information and reflections with others. With the advances in technology in healthcare, the e-portfolio is likely to quickly become an established means of maintaining professional accountability and demonstrating professional and personal development in nursing practice.
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However, it is not within the remit of this book to explain the process of setting up an e-portfolio, as our focus is on the paper portfolio. Clearly, all the techniques and strategies described in the following pages apply equally well to an e-portfolio, and if you are interested in developing such a portfolio further information can be found at www.pebblepad.co.uk/definitions.asp and http://mahara.org.

Identify

You have now decided on your reflective friend and on the format you intend to use for your portfolio. You now need to spend some time identifying your style of learning. This will help you to work effectively with your reflective friend and to plan well for the task ahead. Learning styles can be categorized into four types, shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 The four learning styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Diverger    | • Prefers to observe rather than act  
• Good at coming up with ideas  
• Has a vivid imagination  
• Has a sensitive nature   |
| Assimilator | • Rational in nature  
• Good problem-solver  
• Technical  
• Displays difficulties with social interaction |
| Converger   | • Logical  
• Concise  
• Theoretical rather than practical  
• Solution-finder  
• Displays difficulties with social interaction |
| Accommodator| • Practical  
• Intuitive  
• Enjoys challenges  
• Learns from practice  
• Weak analytical skills |
You may find, after you have worked through the Learning Styles Inventory presented in Table 1.2, that you are more suited to one style than another, or perhaps your learning style is a combination of one or more styles. Whatever your strongest category may be, it is also important to identify your weakest category and work towards balancing your learning style in order to balance your learning. The Learning Styles Inventory is derived from an experiential theory and model of learning developed by Kolb (1984) and is based on the contributions of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget, three educational psychologists. It is a practical self-assessment instrument that will help you to assess your unique learning style, and only takes 30–45 minutes to complete. Try it out!

So how can this information help you to learn more effectively? Knowing your learning style will:

- Make you aware of your preferred style of learning, which you can then use to your advantage when learning new skills. For instance, do you learn better by doing or observing? Do you need structure to learn, or do you prefer to be creative?
- Motivate you to learn more effectively and achieve your learning goals.
- Expand on the way you learn by encouraging you to learn in new ways and not just using your preferred style. Try developing a relationship with someone whose learning style is different from your own and who can offer a different perspective on your learning and help you to develop a more balanced approach to the way you learn.
- Help you to work on your weaknesses and develop your learning and problem-solving skills in a holistic manner.
- Enable you to use your learning strengths to make better decisions and choose better courses of action to solve problems.
- Help you to change your learning habits or study skills to fit with your learning style.
- Make you more self-aware. By recognizing your strengths and weaknesses you will become more confident in your ability to learn and hence boost your learning potential.
**Table 1.2 Learning Styles Inventory**

Place in rank order each set of four words shown below. Assign a ‘4’ to the word which best characterizes your learning style, a ‘3’ to the next best, a ‘2’ to the next and a ‘1’ to the least characteristic word. Do not ‘tie’ any words: every word in each line must be assigned a different score from 1–4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>involved</th>
<th>tentative</th>
<th>discriminating</th>
<th>practical</th>
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</table>

(for scoring only)  
(CE)  (RO)  (AC)  (AE)

Now add all of your scores in each column. The sum of the first column gives you your score on ‘concrete experience’ (CE); the second column gives you your score for ‘reflective observation’ (RO); the third column gives you your score for ‘abstract conceptualization’ (AC); and the final column is your score for ‘active experimentation’ (AE). Now transfer your scores to the Learning Style Profile below (Figure 1.2) by placing a mark by the number you scores on each of the four dimensions. Connect these four marks with straight lines – the resulting diagram should look like a kite and gives you the profile of your learning style.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete experience</th>
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<td></td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodative</strong></td>
<td><strong>Divergent</strong></td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reflective</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Convergent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assimilative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>conceptualization</td>
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</table>

*Figure 1.2  Learning style profile.*
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Negotiate

An extension of working with your reflective friend is to use peer learning or learning in groups. Some nurses find this very helpful in assisting with reflection on professional practice. Having numerous perspectives can aid understanding. Learning occurs through active engagement with peers and colleagues who may have experienced similar incidents and can empathize with and understand the issues that have caused you concern.

In group reflective sessions ground rules are imperative. These should include issues related to reflector confidentiality, mutual respect for members of the group, time limits per reflection and discussions to allow the expression of emotions. Furthermore, engaging a reflective model, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, can enable critical analysis of incidents by the group.

It is important to understand that reflections with others may not always proceed smoothly (Duffy 2008); therefore, group facilitators must be prepared to manage any challenges as they arise. Group reflections are often difficult to begin with. However, many clinical practice areas undertake group reflection and evidence from the literature reveals positive results (see e.g. Bailey and Graham 2007).

In order to prepare for group reflection, the facilitator must recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and know when to gently encourage the reflector to express feelings both positive and negative, and, very importantly, recognize when the reflector is not ready to move on. In these situations, the facilitator should be confident enough to adjourn the group session, giving the individual the opportunity to return to reflecting on the incident at a later date, once he or she has had an opportunity to consider the issues in greater depth. Important ground rules that should generally be observed in group reflection include the following (Bailey and Graham 2007; Duffy 2008).

• Protected time should be allocated for guided reflective sessions.
• Confidentiality must be agreed by group members (unless, of course, unethical and unprofessional practice issues are reported).
• Group members should have unconditional positive regard and respect for each other.
• The agenda should be prepared in advance and sometimes it is useful to undertake ice-breaking exercises to encourage the group to feel at ease with each other.
• Each individual must take responsibility for their own learning, either as a guide or as a reflector.
• If there are more than two people reflecting in the session, each individual should be given an opportunity to speak and to receive feedback from their peers.

Plan, implement, re-examine and persist

The final steps of the process require time for practice and commitment to develop your reflective portfolio. Even though you are critically examining your nursing practice and clinical competence, portfolio development should be an enjoyable experience, both cathartic and empowering. Once you plan and begin the process and witness your journey of self-development you will probably find yourself more prepared to deal with future clinical incidents as a consequence of reflecting on your practice. You will become more self-aware and more confident of your clinical competence. If you return to your reflections as you progress through your portfolio, you will notice your professional and personal development over time. Portfolio development is like most skills in that the more you practice the better you become, and the more energy you give to your critical reflections on practice and development of your clinical competence the more your clinical competence and professionalism will develop. Once you see this change emerging, you should feel more encouraged to sustain the process.

Overcoming obstacles

Once you have decided to develop your nursing portfolio, and having read this introductory chapter, you are probably aware of the challenges that might present as obstacles on this journey of self-development. Write down some challenges that you think you might face and try to come up with some possible solutions.
DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

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<th>Challenges</th>
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In addition to the issue of choosing a reflective friend, dealt with in this chapter, above, some of the other challenges that might concern you at this stage will be addressed later on in this book. For example:

- choosing a reflective model that suits you (see Chapter 2);
- deciding how to structure your portfolio in a systematic manner (see Chapter 4);
- overcoming ethical or legal issues that may be inherent in a portfolio entry (see Chapter 5);
- choosing a critical incident that is worthy of inclusion in your portfolio (see Chapter 6);
- deciding which competency underpins a reflection entry (see Chapter 6).

You need to have some knowledge of the nursing competencies that you are expected to achieve in order to demonstrate clinical competence. You are also expected to know how to use a model of reflection (discussed in Chapter 2), how to search the literature to assist you in linking theory to practice before you can begin to develop an evidence based reflective portfolio.

Conclusion

You should now have some idea of the process involved in developing your reflective portfolio, be it for personal reasons, to critique your clinical practice, to demonstrate your achievement of clinical competence, to learn more about yourself as a practicing clinician or to engage in portfolio development as a requirement of an academic programme.
WRITING YOUR NURSING PORTFOLIO

Summary

- The development of a portfolio is a process not a discrete task.
- The portfolio process is a journey of both personal and professional development.
- Engaging a reflective friend can be of huge benefit.
- The process may seem daunting, but start with small steps and begin with the ‘end’ in mind.

References


DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) (2004) Standards of Proficiency for Pre-registration Nursing Education. London: NMC.