

Portfolio Pathway reflective writing prompt sheet

Use this before uploading reflective evidence. It is designed for senior doctors building Portfolio Pathway applications: clear structure, safe wording, action-focused learning and evidence mapping.

The six-part reflection structure

1. Context

What evidence does this reflection sit with? What was the broad setting? Keep it anonymised and brief.

2. Why it mattered

Name the patient safety, clinical judgement, communication, leadership, teaching or systems issue.

3. What I noticed

What did this reveal about your judgement, assumptions, behaviour, limitations or leadership?

4. What I learned

Link the learning to Good Medical Practice, your curriculum, SSG, local policy or professional standard.

5. What changed

State the practice change: CPD, guideline review, documentation, escalation, teaching, team process or audit action.

6. How I evidenced it

Cross-reference follow-up proof: repeat audit, MSF action plan, supervisor note, patient feedback or updated process.

Before you keep a reflection, test it

- Does it show learning, not just describe what happened?
- Does it avoid patient, colleague, location and exact-date identifiers unless genuinely necessary?
- Does it name a specific change in practice or behaviour?
- Does it cross-reference a supporting document or follow-up action?
- Does it map to an SSG section, CiP, curriculum outcome or GMC domain?
- Would a supervisor or assessor understand why this evidence matters within two minutes?

Safe writing and evidence mapping

A reflection should be honest and useful, but it is not a private diary. Keep it professional, anonymised and focused on learning and improvement.

Remove before uploading

- Names, initials, NHS numbers, exact dates of care, bed numbers, ward identifiers and unusual demographic details.
- Colleague names or identifiable role combinations where the person could be recognised.
- Long clinical narratives that do not affect the learning point.
- Blame-focused language, defensive phrasing or speculation about other people's motives.
- Exact quotations from complaints, incidents or correspondence unless anonymised and necessary.

Evidence mapping prompts

Evidence type	Reflection should answer	Attach or cross-reference
MSF	Which feedback theme mattered most and what changed?	MSF summary, action plan, supervisor discussion
Audit	What did the gap reveal and how did you close it?	Audit report, re-audit, implemented change
CPD	How did the learning affect your practice?	Certificate, learning record, subsequent case/log note
Complaint/SEA	What did you learn about communication, systems or risk?	Anonymised outcome, supervisor note, action plan
Teaching	How did feedback change your teaching or supervision?	Learner feedback, revised material, repeat session evaluation

Phrases to avoid

- "This was a valuable learning experience" without saying what changed.
- "I would do the same again" unless you explain why that confirms good practice and how you know.
- "The system failed" without stating your own role, insight or escalation action.
- "I will be more careful" without a specific new process, threshold or follow-up evidence.

Final test: if this reflection disappeared, would the portfolio lose evidence of insight or change? If not, cut it or rewrite it.