Learning Portfolio (2021/22)

name: Cathal O'Grady
email: cathal.ogrady23@mail.dcu.ie
group: 120
words: 1303

Introduction

This document comprises two reflective sections an **individual reflection** and a **group project reflection**. This module has focused on problem solving but also on our education in general, I learnt how to work in a group and solve problems behind a deadline. I felt the focus of this module on both our time in college and outside in the workplace and in this way I felt driven to apply myself as much as possible. In general I am excited to bring what I have learnt from this module and apply it to next semester modules, as well as work down the line. Reflection is key to self improvement and the following will hopefully demonstrate this.

Individual Reflection Section

words: 688
chosen topics of discussion: Decision Making, Problem Solving

1. Reflection on my Decision Making

Early on in the semester my group and I were assigned a decision making task. In the task we had to decide on the most appropriate method of communication , this would be achieved using a decision making grid. The decision making grid we used is **table 1.0**. It was a formality for me at the time, as I had already ignorantly made my mind up before starting the grid. Along with my group I felt I put little effort into assigning the proper weightings and scores and we were biased towards what we had priorly decided on(Instagram).

Table 1.0

Factors	Accessibility	Efficiency	Frequency	Popularity	Total
Weight	5	4	3	2	
Instagram	20	20	15	10	65
Skype	10	12	0	2	14
Discord	15	20	6	6	47
Email	25	4	9	6	44

I do however feel in general I have improved in my decision making and I now see a grid like the above as a useful tool in making a decision. I will now describe what I should continue, stop and start in regards to my decision making up to this point.

Continue

using decision making grids: I applied this tool specifically in another assignment, the screencast project. My group members and I had collaborated two problems, of which we needed to choose one of that we would solve. I did out a decision making grid, which allowed me to slow down and rationalise what was most important. I felt I had a more unequivocal idea of what was the right choice.

Stop

letting time pressure skew my sense of reasoning: Although under no time constraints I am able to use a grid like before. In exam situations I find my thoughts jumbled and unclear. I noticed this in some of the problem solving quizzes and I think it is a combination of stress and sense of urgency that brings me to this irrational state. I need to remember to stay calm and not rush solutions.

Start

journaling thoughts: I need to start appending to a journal daily. This would allow me to manage my thoughts and better learn from any mistakes I may have made during the day. Good decision making is a combination of using past experience and assessing evidence[1] and a journal would allow me to introspectively learn and gain experience.

2. Reflection on my Problem Solving

A couple weeks into this module we were assigned our first group problem solving task. There were two problems to be solved, employing the problem solving strategies we were becoming familiar with. I personally fell into pit holes for one of the problems and lacked enough testing of our solution for the other. In general I have improved and will reflect on what I should continue, stop and start in the following.

Continue

practicing in-action reflection: In group quizzes following the task above I felt I did well in adapting to situations and keeping the group on track. This allowed me to fail quick and efficiently attack the problems.

Stop

jumping right in: I think it is an effect of bad habits and laziness that I still do this. For example in web design I employed a trial and error method which led to ugly and purely functional code. I need steps that I can fall back on and re-anchor from.

Start

testing solutions more carefully: Specifically in programming we have a tool called einstein, **fig 1.0**. This is useful but tells you if your correct or not. In this way it doesn't endorse proper testing and when it came to problems solved in, for example, the end of semester individual problem solving quizzes I often had a lack of confidence in solutions and didn't have the experience to verify them with proper testing.

```
razor1 >
razor1 > ls -l hello.py
-rw-r--r-- 1 blott tutors 37 Sep  4 16:33 hello.py
razor1 >
razor1 >
razor1 > einstein hello.py
--------------------------------------------------------
file      : hello.py
module    : ca116
web page  : https://ca116.computing.dcu.ie/
task      : hello.py

uploading to Einstein (this may take a few seconds)...

*** test 1 passed
*** test 2 passed

***
*** passed 2 of 2 test(s)
***


***
*** overall result: passed
***


***
*** To view the full report, click, visit or reload:
***
*** https://ca116.computing.dcu.ie/einstein/report.html
***
razor1 >
razor1 >
razor1 > []
```

Figure 1: einstein upload[2]

Group Project Reflection

words: 359
chosen topics of discussion: Group Work

Reflection on our Groupwork

Communication is the key issue we faced in our group. It was not clear to some members what was expected of them and people sometimes forgot to mark work completed in the workspace. For context we used Trello as a platform for task management. I thought we worked very well together for the interim presentation however work slowed down from that point on due to other assignments. In general we could have had more scheduled regular meetings to keep the group on track. The following reflects on what I should continue, stop and start in my future group projects.

Continue

using a workspace: The trello workspace we used for the group project helped a lot in outlining to the other members what needed to be done. However we were too provisional in assigning who was to do what and this meant that people had to ask whether it was okay to work on something to ensure that work was not being done twice. We should have put more effort at the start in assigning work, this would have saved time in the long run.

Stop

not communicating for a few days: There were a few periods during the group project in which there was little to no communication between us. Granted we were getting the work done, however I feel we would have benefited from regular check ups ensuring that people were keeping up to a certain standard of work. As mentioned previously this could have been due to focus on other projects as well. Nonetheless in the future I will ensure we are not disjoint and check up every second day to review what is being done.

Start

assigning more specific tasks: People are more inclined to get clear and specific tasks completed. This was a problem as some of the tasks on our trello board were very vague, e.g. *"finish slides for screencast"*. I think what it comes down to is bad planning as a group. Down the line I will make sure there is proper planning and clear goals lain out before we even think of jumping in.

Conclusion

This module has taught me a lot and made me more concious of myself. This reflective piece has allowed me to review the past semester and highlight key areas for improvement. In general I need to continue reflection, implement changes discussed in the start sections and eliminate elements of the stop sections. I will strive for self improvement and ensure that myself and whom ever I may work with outputs the best work possible.

References:

[1]CA172 course material(2021/December 16) available at:
loop.dcu.ie/pluginfile.php/3942758/mod_resource/content/8/CA172PS_420DecisionMaking_v05_6up.pdf

[2]CA116(programming) screenshot(2021/December 18) available at:
ca116.computing.dcu.ie