REVIEWING YOUR CURRICULUM: Student development, employability & careers

Supporting students' development, employability and careers involves all parts of the student experience. The curriculum has a critical role as it is core to students' time with the University and ensures all students are supported regardless of their background or context. How we do this effectively is an increasingly important question…

How well are you recognising and using the existing strengths of your curriculum to support students' development and futures? Where could you make improvements? How could you go about making changes and enhancements? What role could students play in this? How do you help students recognise and value the quality of your provision in this area?

These cards set out a series of interrelated curriculum design elements that will support your students' development, employability and careers – use these cards to review your current provision and plan enhancements. Please contact us if you would like support in reviewing, planning or implementing.

The cards are designed to be dynamic and to encourage reflection. They can be used by students and staff at any time and for curricular enhancement at any scale. The definitions and reflective questions presented on each card should be actively used rather than passively consulted or 'checked-off' – we'd recommend you use these in conjunction with the further tips and guidance available in the Curriculum Toolkit (details below). The reverse of each card presents an opportunity to reflect and plan around the element featured on the front. The planning grid that accompanies this set can be used to map activities and interventions across the elements.

These cards are adapted from a resource created by William Hasty at QAA Scotland during the 2017-2020 Enhancement Theme – Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience. You can download these cards, as well as access additional guidance, support, examples of practice and further reading from the Curriculum Toolkit for embedding student development, employability and careers at www.ed.ac.uk/employability/curriculum-toolkit

Embedding student development, employability and careers in the curriculum includes…
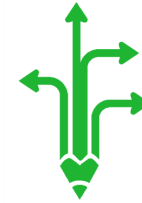
REAL-WORLD / APPLIED LEARNING

ACTIVE TEACHING METHODS

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

EMPLOYER AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND INSIGHTS

ENTERPRISE EDUCATION AND MINDSET

WORK EXPERIENCE

REFLECTION

EXPLICIT RECOGNITION AND VALUING OF EMPLOYABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

REAL-WORLD / APPLIED LEARNING

Subject teaching that is rich in **real-world** examples, context-based learning, research projects and opportunities to see how the subject and its methods are **applied** in different external contexts.
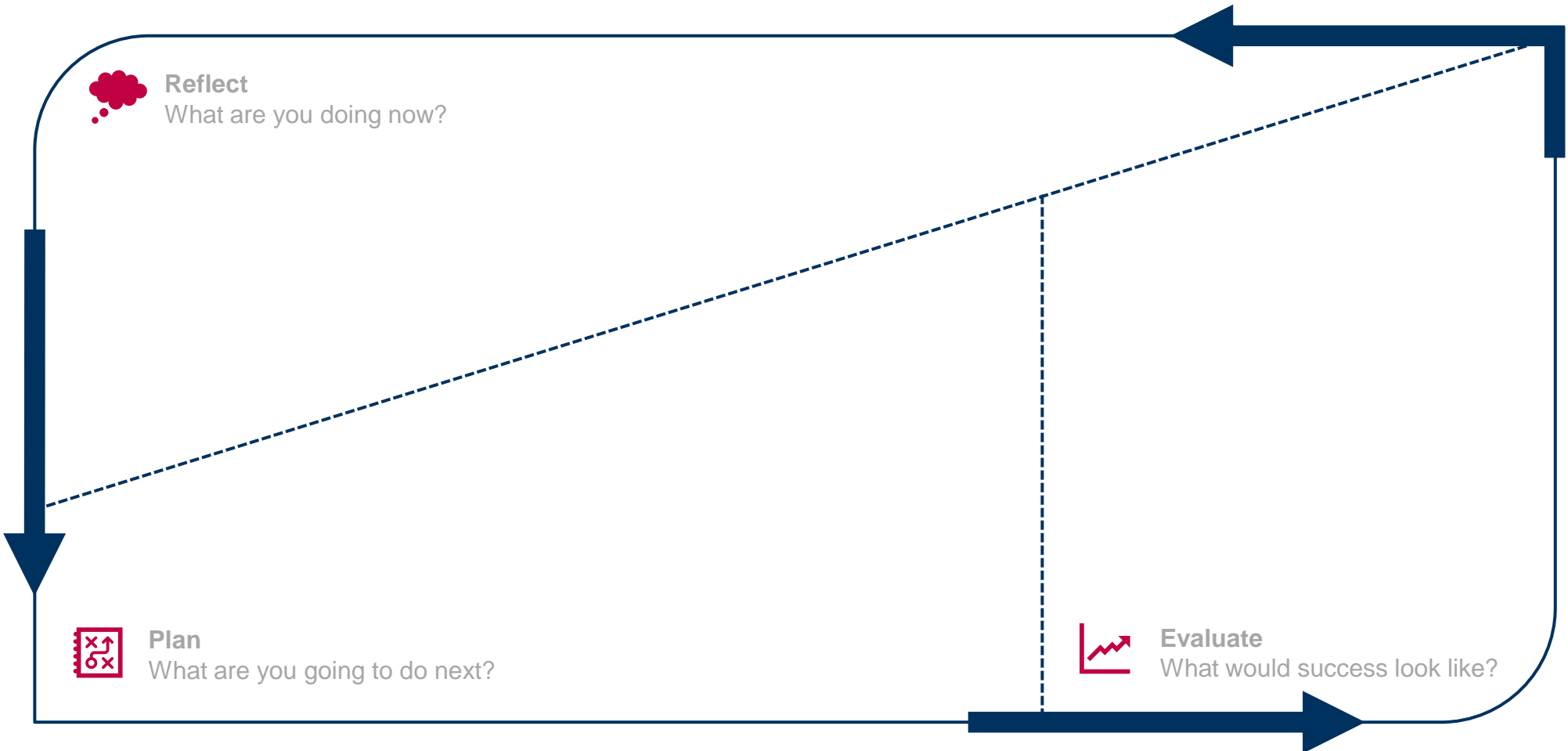
Something to think about…

Q: How can you connect your current material to students' prior knowledge of the topic? Can you make links to previous courses, real-life scenarios or case-studies that students can relate to?

Q: To what extent do students have a chance to apply the methods of your discipline? Would it be possible to create frequent small tasks that explicitly utilise these methods, e.g. research projects, work-like experiences or small in-class activities?

Q: Is the level of complexity right for your students' current stage? E.g. it can sometimes help to work with more definitive knowledge in earlier stages, but start to introduce greater complexity and ambiguity later on.

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

Reflect
What are you doing now?

Plan
What are you going to do next?

Evaluate
What would success look like?

ACTIVE TEACHING METHODS

Active teaching methods – this may include problem solving; discussions/debate; team activities; real-world activities (fulfilling a project brief, consultancy); opportunities for students to create; competitions; the pitching of ideas etc. In short, active teaching methods are any choice of pedagogies that increase active, rather than passive, learning in students.

Something to think about…

Q: How can you ensure time for students to think and engage in lectures? Are activities such as short paired or group conversations possible? Is there a technology that could help?
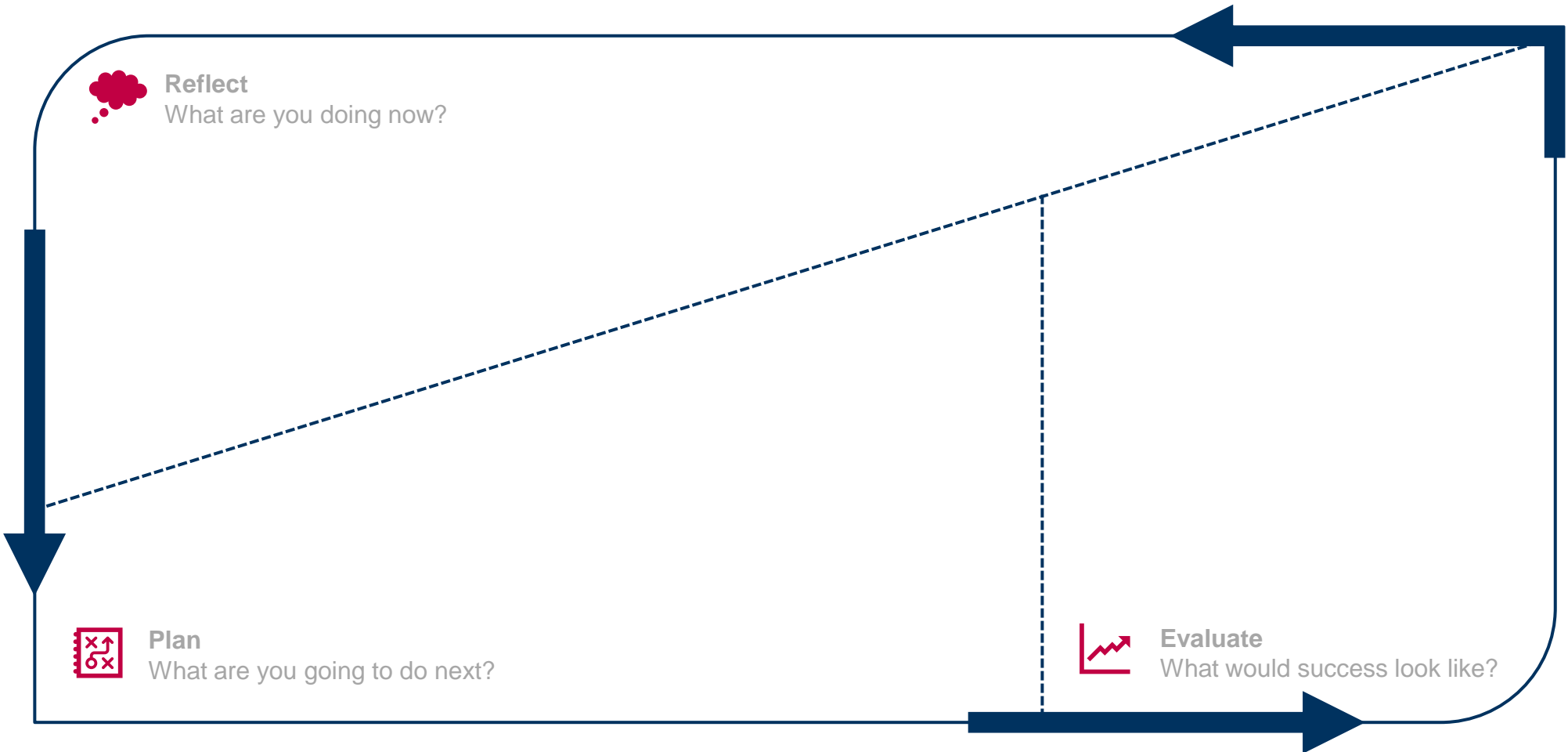
Q: Can you encourage students to ask questions about the material and provide opportunities for them to identify answers?

Q: How are your learning hours distributed between more- and less-active teaching methods? Is this the best balance to support your students' learning and development?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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Through the choice of learning, teaching and assessment methods, provision of a curriculum that enhances students' non-technical **skills and attributes** in a coherent and developmental way.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

Something to think about…

Q: What skills and attributes do you want students to develop during your course/programme? Are you explicitly assessing these? If not, what can you do to ensure students value them?
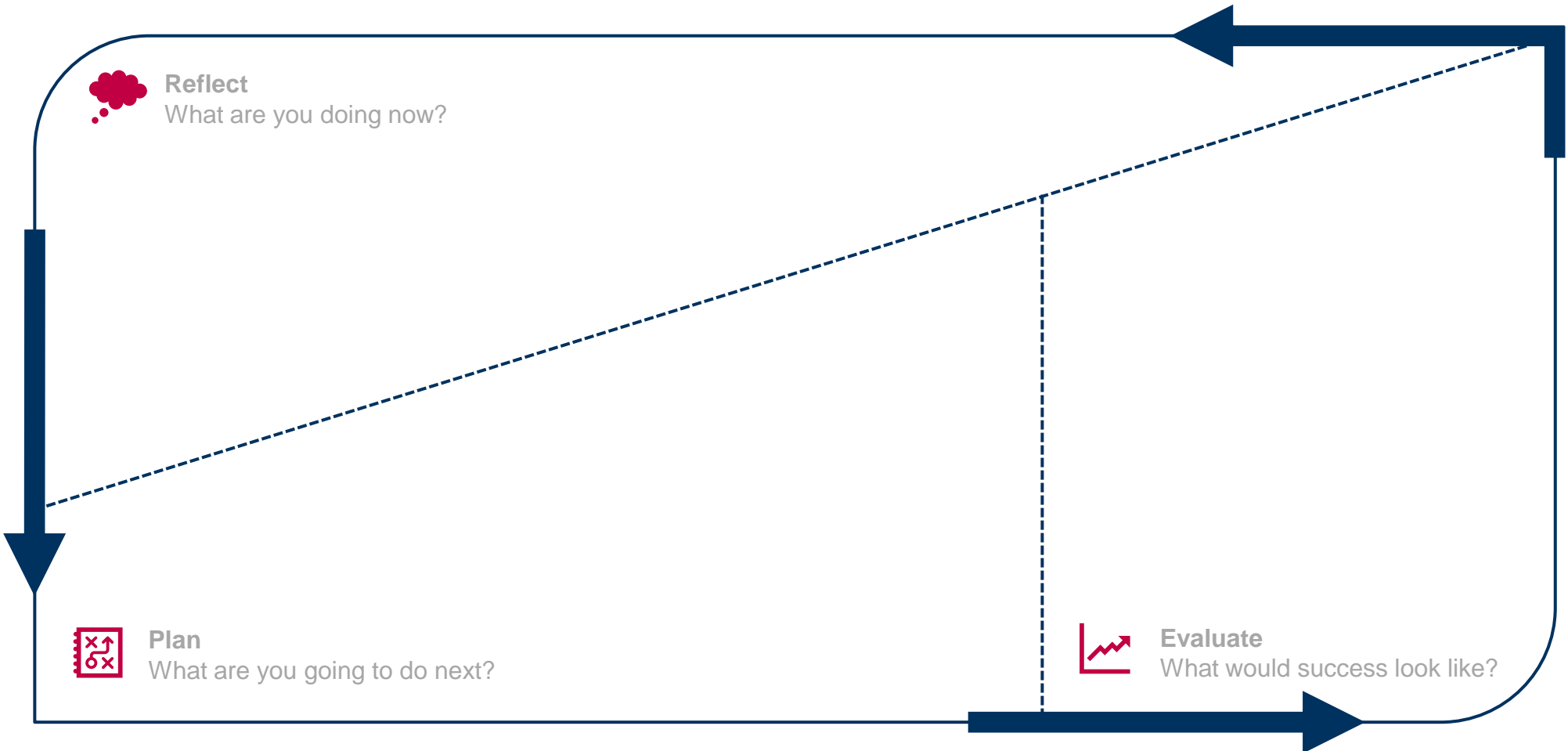
Q: What types of learning, teaching and assessment activities do you use that develop these skills and attributes in your students? Are the approaches diverse and therefore build strength and flexibility in these skills?

Q: Are the skills and attributes sufficiently supported and developed coherently over the course/programme? E.g. are they supported and developed prior to being needed?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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EMPLOYER AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Diverse and regular involvement with **employers** and **alumni** – not solely as guest speakers or providers of placements but also to help inform the curriculum, get involved with student assessment, provide case studies and project ideas, to act as mentors etc.

Something to think about…

Q: Where is it most appropriate for employers and alumni to shape and input to your curriculum? Where in the course and programme design process might it be valuable, and where within course delivery (e.g. guest lectures or offering projects)?
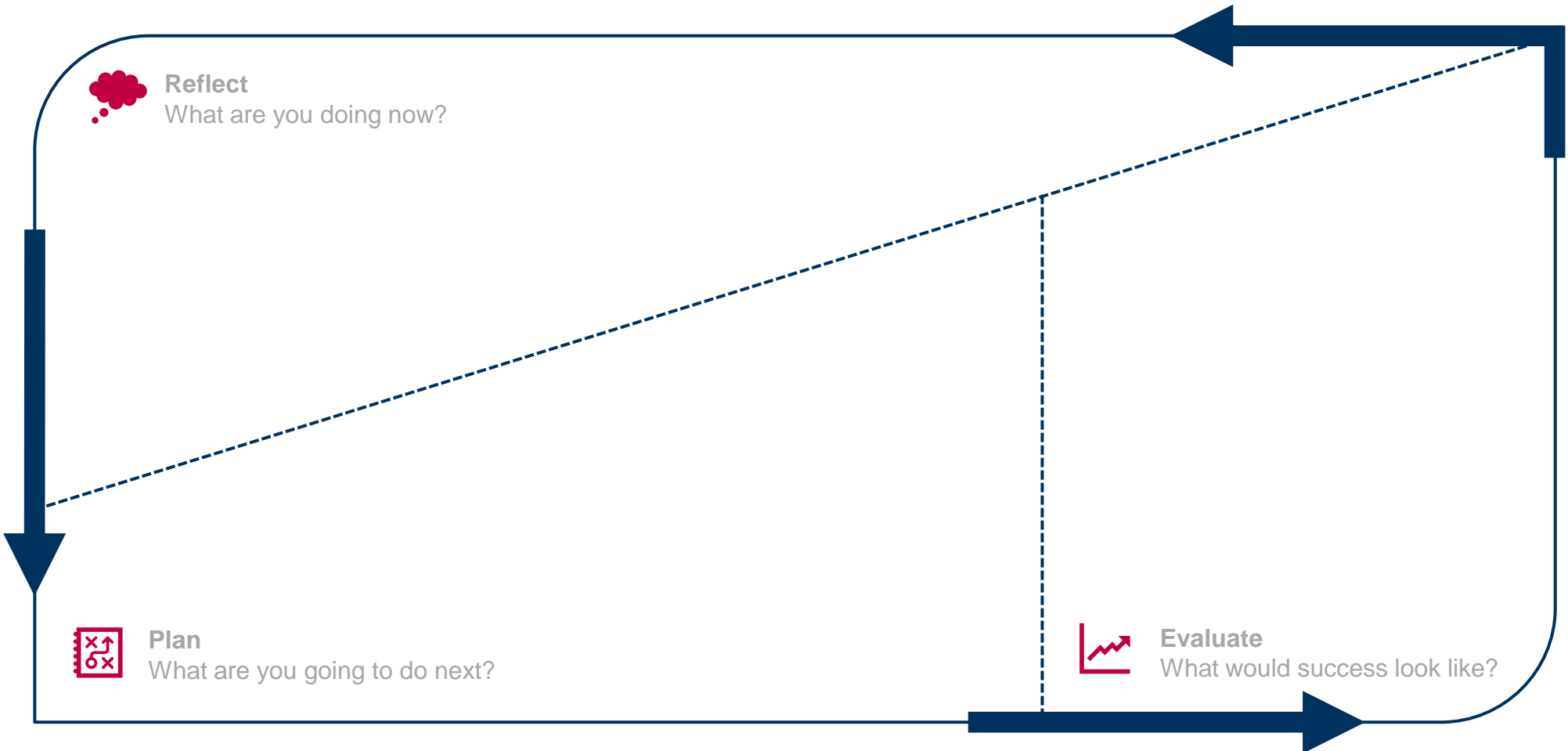
Q: Which employers/alumni might be useful to collaborate with? Can you get a range, so that students can get insight into different professional contexts?
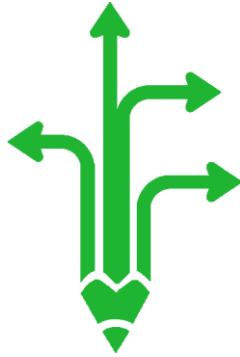
Q: How can you best identify employers and alumni to engage? Can you use your own or colleagues' networks, reach out to previous students, or seek help from elsewhere in the University?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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Planned space within the curriculum for students to gain **career management skills and insights** and to be encouraged to engage in timely career planning.

Note: *'Career management skills' can be broadly defined as the skills, attributes, attitudes and knowledge that individuals require in order to manage their career.*

CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND INSIGHTS

Something to think about…

Q: What does a timely approach look in your context? What would be helpful to cover and when should career insights and career management skills be introduced?
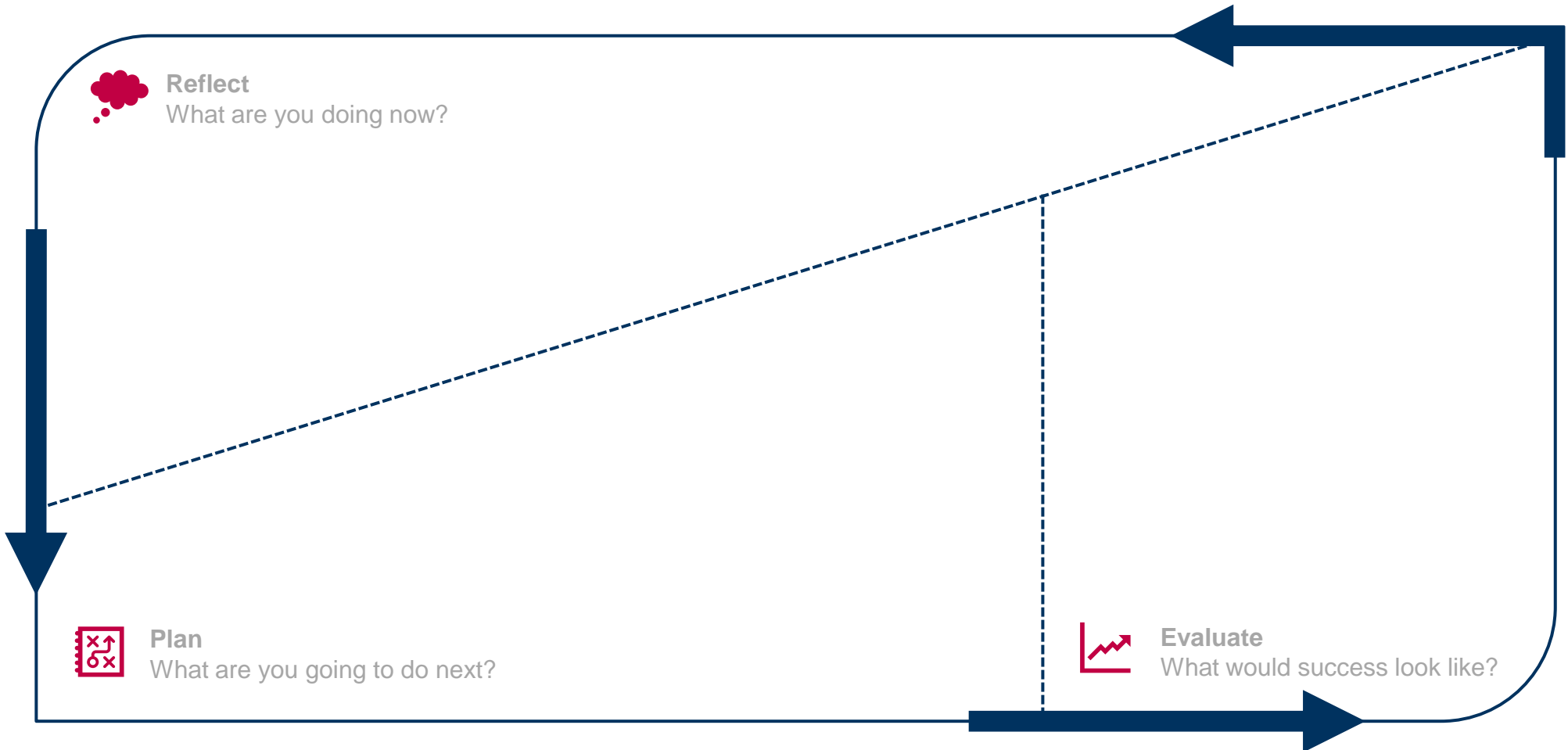
Q: Who can help you deliver content? For instance, career insights could come through courses or from external contacts; career management skills could be taught by internal colleagues and careers professionals.

Q: How do you protect time in the curriculum? Are insights and skills attached to the core curriculum in the form of assessments and activities, or is it more appropriate to have specific careers sessions? How might you get students to engage?

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ENTERPRISE EDUCATION AND MINDSET

Enterprise education and building an **enterprising mindset** for all students, not just those that wish to set up their own business. Enterprise activities allow all students to develop creativity, leadership, innovation, negotiation, and confidence; all of these attributes are highly valued in various work contexts.

Something to think about…

Q: How can you incorporate an enterprising mindset and enterprise education into your teaching? Can you incorporate activities such as group work, projects, outreach, pitches, or work experience? How are students supported in realising they develop relevant skills?
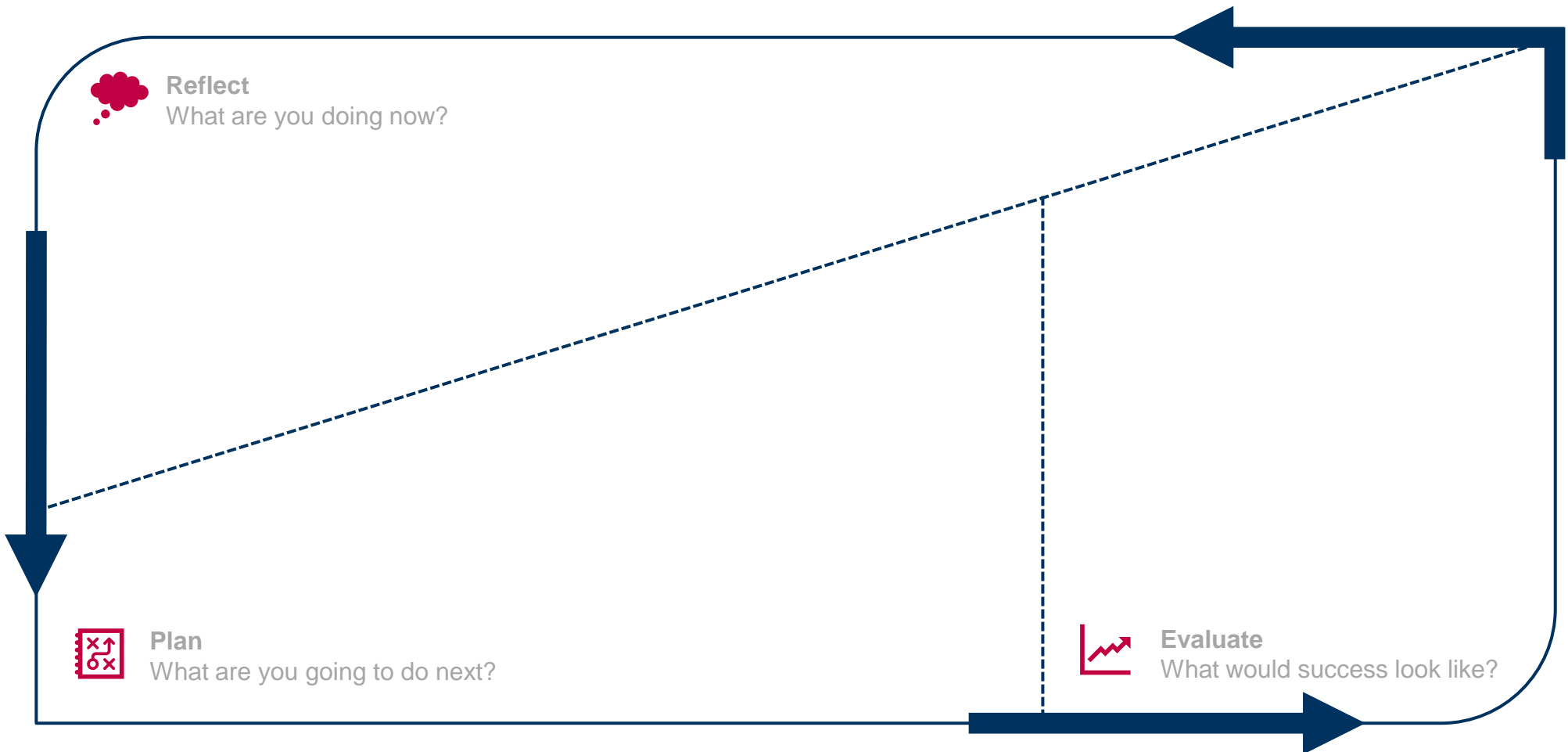
Q: What support do you have available? Could you use employers or the Student Enterprise team in Edinburgh Innovations to help implement this element?

Q: How do you cater to students who may be interested in entrepreneurship? For example, would it be feasible and valuable to have an 'Entrepreneurship in …' course that introduces students to entrepreneurial skills while focusing on your discipline?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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WORK EXPERIENCE

Opportunities for, and active encouragement of, **work experience** – developing students' expertise and attributes, and where possible building links with the rest of the curriculum. This could be in many different forms, for example: blocks of work-related experience; a short two-week work experience; a year-long industry placement; a volunteering experience; individual or group project work for an employer.

Something to think about…

Q: What could appropriate work experience look like in your context? Placements, outreach, teaching opportunities, volunteering? What work-related activities can you incorporate (consultancy briefs, projects from employers, assessments) that mirror work students may do?
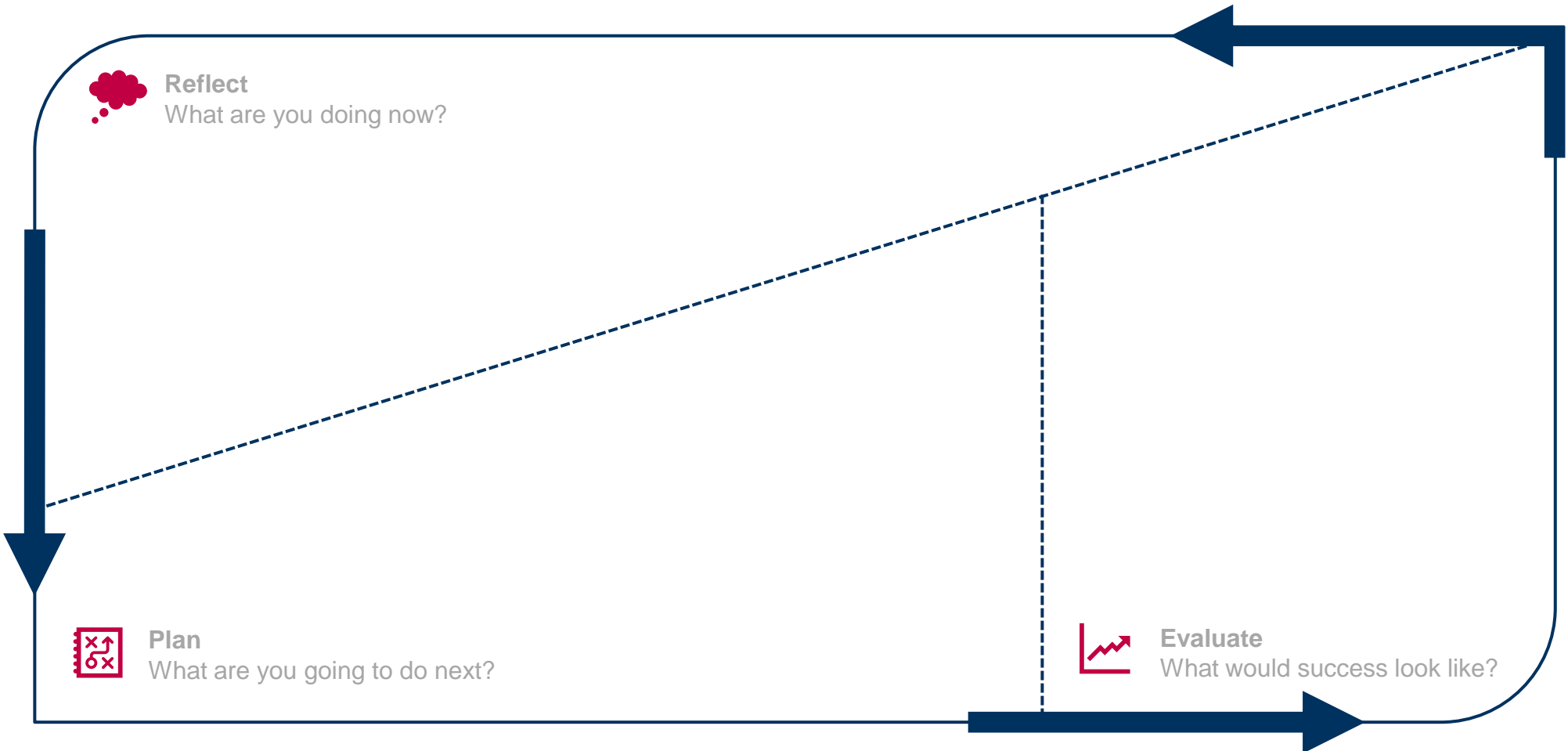
Q: At what point in your programme does work experience seem the most appropriate? When relevant, should work experience be multiple small or one/a few larger opportunities?

Q: How can you best support your students during their work experiences? How can you encourage them to make the most of their experiences and build their professional networks?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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REFLECTION

Regular opportunities for students to **reflect on and articulate their learning and development, and to plan further growth and learning opportunities**.

Something to think about…

Q: Where in your curriculum can you encourage and incorporate reflection? Do you use reflection in your contact hours to help contextualise learning, or as an assessment?
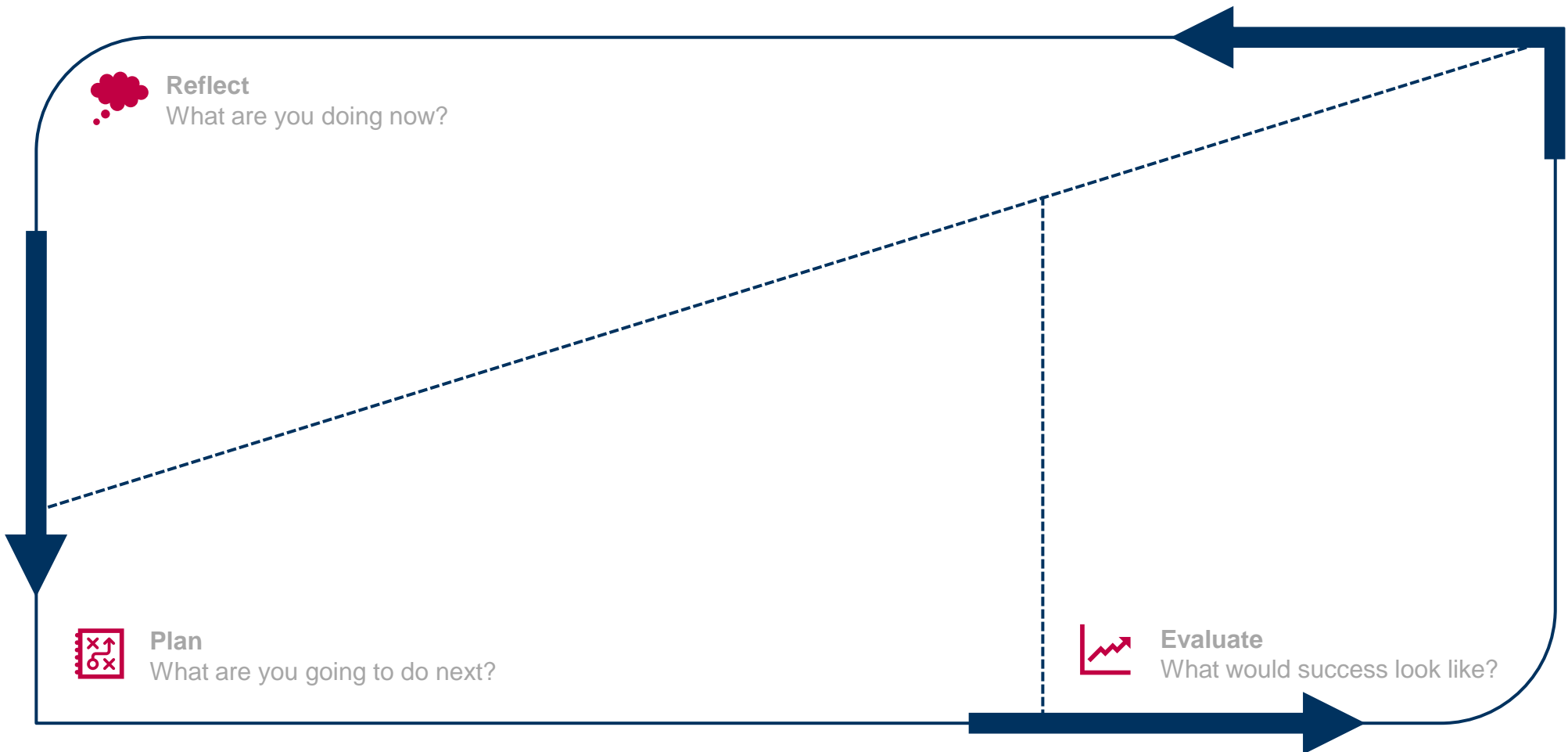
Q: How can you use reflection to help students see the value of their experiences and link them to their employability? Do you have students reflect on their development, on course content, or something else?

Q: How do you support students when asking them to reflect? What resources are available, e.g. the Reflection Toolkit? What low-risk opportunities do you provide students to practise reflecting?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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EXPLICIT RECOGNITION AND VALUING OF EMPLOYABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Explicit recognition and valuing of employability across the curriculum – through employability-relevant learning outcomes and assessment; highlighting and encouraging students to recognise the skills being developed; encouragement to engage with curricular, co- and extra-curricular development opportunities (e.g. part-time work, volunteering, sports and societies, or caring responsibilities).

Something to think about…

Q: How can you support your students to see the value of the curriculum? Can you be more explicit regarding skills and experiences developed in your teaching? Can you be explicit around the skills and attributes needed to successfully complete assessments?
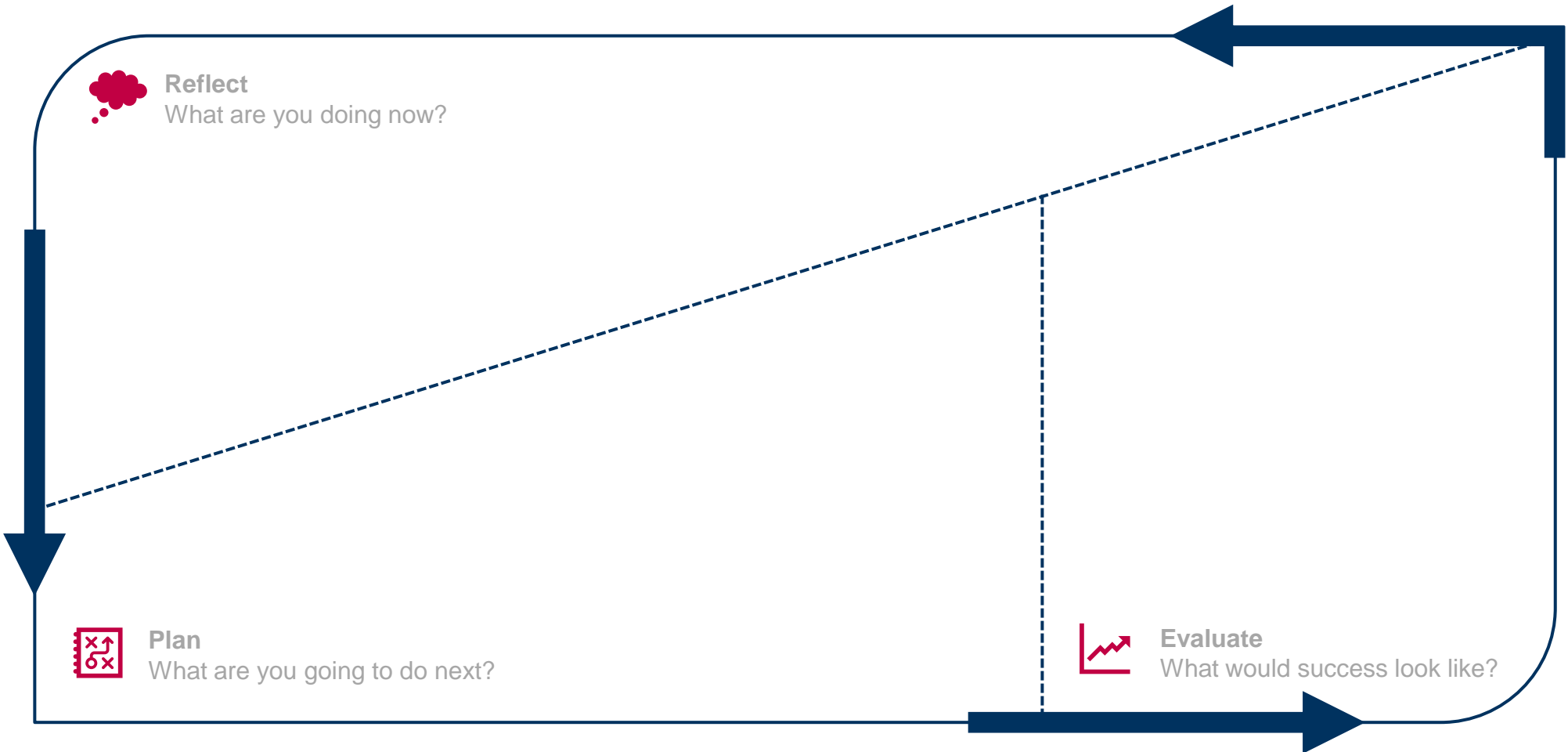
Q: In your programme or teaching, how can you encourage students to gain a range of experiences and engage with co- and extra-curricular activities? Are there relevant opportunities in your school, with student' societies or the wider community?

Q: How can you encourage students to see the value in activates they are already doing? Can you encourage reflection?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

A **student support system** that is motivating and supportive in the way that: personal and professional development is handled; career discussions are enabled; and further opportunities and services promoted and signposted.
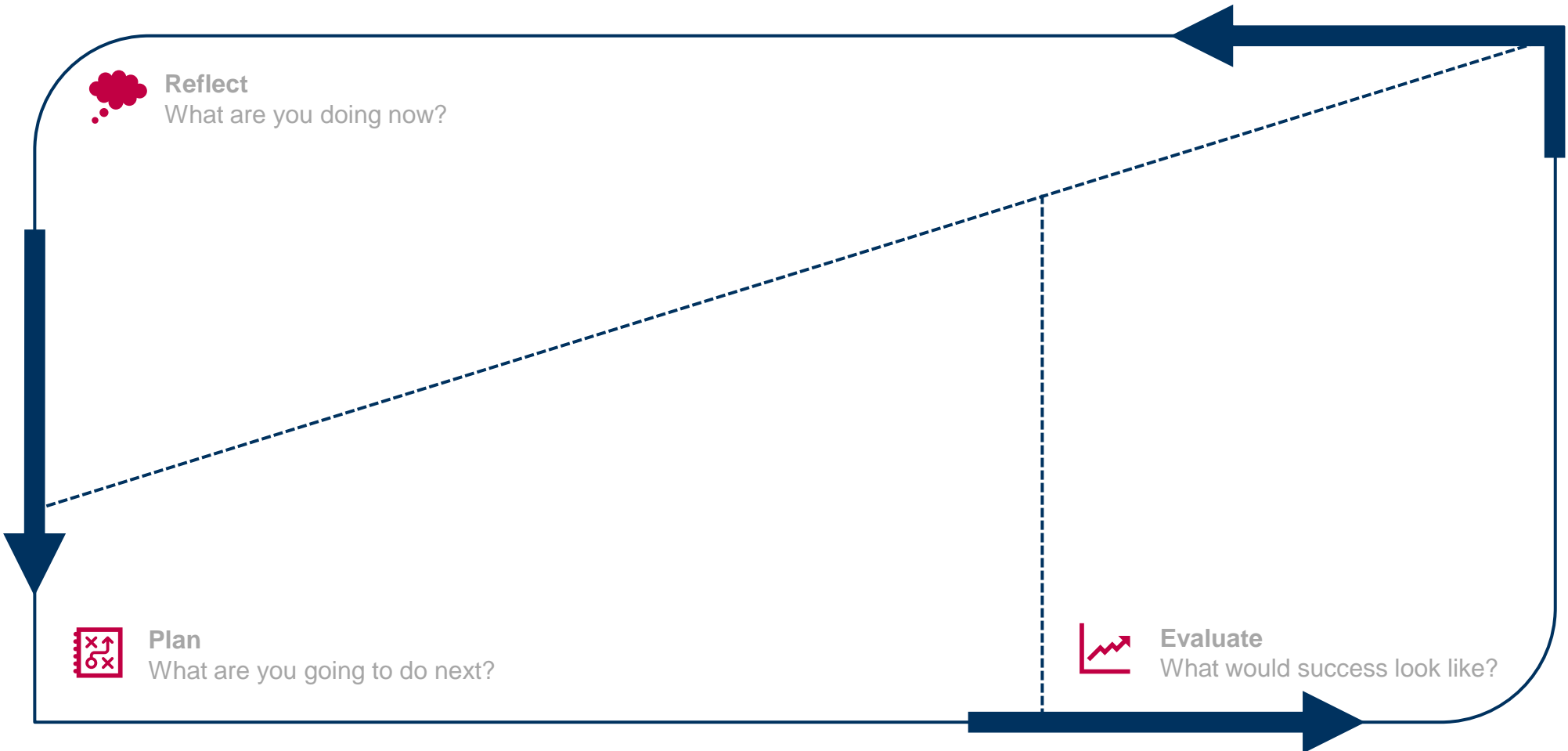
Something to think about…

Q: Are student support resources and training up to date? Do they include 'how to support PDP', or 'where to signpost for careers'? (Remember you don't need to be an expert to provide support.)

Q: How can you incorporate reflective questions into student support conversations, either in one-to-one meetings or group activities? Questions could relate to personal or professional development or seeding ideas about career thinking.

Q: Are you using the student support system to its fullest? Would it be beneficial and feasible to have group meetings on practical career management skills?

ACTION: Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards fulfilling this element.

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ACTION: Using the table below and the notes you have made on the back of each element card, you could produce a summary of proposed actions, interventions, and enhancements.

Element	Summary of actions / next steps			Review point(s)	Owner(s)
	Objective	**Activities / Outputs**	**Success / Impact Indicators**		
Real-world / applied learning					
Active teaching methods					
Skills and attributes					
Employer and alumni engagement					
Career management skills and insights					

ACTION: Using the table below and the notes you have made on the back of each element card, you could produce a summary of proposed actions, interventions, and enhancements.

Element	Summary of actions / next steps			Review point(s)	Owner(s)
	Objective	Activities / Outputs	Success / Impact Indicators		
Enterprise education and mindset					
Work experience					
Reflection					
Explicit recognition and valuing of employability across the curriculum					
Student support system					