



**Module Name:** Academic Skills in the Digital Era

**Module Code:** BMSW4013

**Assessment 2:** Reflective Essay

**Student Name:** Elizabeth Keen

**Student Number:** \*\*\*\*\*

**Lecturer:** Tom Jones

**Deadline:** Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 23:59PM

**Word Count:** 1200

## **AI Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge the use of **ChatGPT** (<https://chat.openai.com>) on **1<sup>nd</sup> of March** to support proofreading and checking clarity, grammar, and academic tone within this assignment.

I used the following prompt(s):

- “Check this paragraph for grammar and clarity.”
- “Suggest minor wording improvements while keeping my original meaning.”
- “Check my writing for academic tone without changing content.”

I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated content as my own work and that all ideas, analysis, and written content are my own. I confirm that I have retained copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources used before and after the use of AI tools, which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

The transition into higher education requires students to develop a range of academic and digital skills to succeed in an independent learning environment. Skills such as academic writing, digital literacy, time management, and critical evaluation are essential during the first term of university study. This reflective essay uses Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1968) to examine the development of my academic and digital skills during my first term at university.

The reflection focuses on a specific experience: preparing and submitting my first written academic assignment. This experience is significant as it required the application of multiple skills taught across the module, including research, academic writing, Harvard referencing, and effective use of digital learning platforms such as Moodle and the online library.

### Description

The experience I am reflecting on is the preparation and submission of my first academic assignment during Weeks 2 to 4 of the module. This followed lectures on finding and using information, note-taking, paraphrasing, and academic writing. The assignment required independent research using the university online library, which was introduced in Week 2 during a session with Lisa Ellis. I was required to locate academic sources, evaluate them using the CRAAP Test, and reference them correctly using Harvard referencing.

I accessed Moodle regularly to review the module handbook, lecture slides, and assignment guidance. I attempted to apply time-management strategies from Week 1, including the Pomodoro Technique and Eisenhower Matrix, to balance research, writing, and other commitments. The assignment culminated in submitting my work digitally through Moodle.

### Feelings

At the beginning of the assignment, I felt overwhelmed and uncertain. Although the lectures provided guidance, I lacked confidence in applying academic conventions independently. I was particularly anxious about Harvard referencing and academic integrity, especially following the Week 5 lecture on academic misconduct and AI acknowledgement. This concern made me cautious and slowed my writing process.

As I progressed, my confidence gradually improved. Using keyword research techniques from Week 2 helped me locate relevant sources more efficiently, which reduced frustration. Structuring paragraphs using the PEEL method from Week 4 also increased my confidence in academic writing. By the time I submitted the assignment, I felt a sense of achievement, although I remained aware that further development was needed.

## Evaluation

A positive aspect of this experience was the practical application of lecture content. The CRAAP Test provided a clear framework for evaluating sources, improving the quality of my research (Blum, 2016). The Harvard referencing workshop in Week 3 was also valuable, as it reduced the risk of unintentional plagiarism (Pears and Shields, 2022).

However, a key challenge was poor time estimation. Research suggests that first-year students often underestimate the time required for academic tasks (Wingate, 2015), which reflected my experience. Although I attempted to use the Pomodoro Technique, I did not apply it consistently. An unexpected outcome was realising, as discussed in Week 9, that effort alone does not guarantee high grades; assessors prioritise evidence, structure, and academic quality.

## Analysis

This experience developed as it did because I was adapting to unfamiliar academic expectations. Research highlights that the transition to higher education requires students to shift from guided learning to independent academic practice (Lea and Street, 2006). Despite attending lectures, I initially struggled to transfer theoretical guidance into practice.

My anxiety around referencing can be linked to increased awareness of academic integrity, which is common among first-year students (Bretag et al., 2019). However, repeated engagement with Moodle resources and lecture materials gradually improved my competence. The experience demonstrates that academic and digital skills develop through practice, reflection, and feedback rather than immediate mastery.

## Conclusion

With hindsight, I could have adopted a more structured approach to academic planning by breaking the assignment into smaller tasks earlier. Applying the Eisenhower Matrix more effectively would have helped prioritise research and writing tasks. I could also have revisited lecture recordings sooner to reinforce key concepts, particularly around academic writing and referencing.

This reflection highlights the importance of actively applying academic skills taught in class rather than passively engaging with content. Earlier and more consistent use of these strategies would have reduced stress and improved my overall performance.

## Action Plan

| Goal                            | Specific                                  | Measurable                         | Achievable | Relevant                    | Time-bound                 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Improve time management         | Use Pomodoro Technique for study sessions | Minimum of 4 Pomodoros per session | Yes        | Supports sustained focus    | Weekly next term           |
| Strengthen academic writing     | Apply PEEL structure consistently         | Paragraph checklist completed      | Yes        | Improves clarity and grades | All written work in Term 2 |
| Improve research skills         | Use online library for all sources        | 100% academic sources              | Yes        | Supports credible writing   | Next assignment            |
| Increase referencing confidence | Use Harvard guide on Moodle               | No referencing errors              | Yes        | Prevents misconduct         | By next submission         |