

Academic Report Reflection on Academic and Employability Skills

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Academic and Employability Skills – Nadeem Mirza

1.0 Introduction

In this academic report, I will outline a list of things which I have learned and adapted in my practice concerning academic and employability skills. Prior to the beginning of the course, I had worked as a store assistant, where I learned many things about customer service. However, the job was not satisfying, and I didn't believe it met my expectations or my potential. Therefore, I made the decision to go on and look for another job. In order to have a chance at a certain job you need to have a certain set of skills, which if you don't have a lot of past experience, you need to acquire. That's one of the main reasons I made the decision to enroll to the Skills For The Workplace Higher Education Course. I believed and I have now proven to myself that by taking this course I will acquire all those skills I need in order to succeed both academically and professionally. In this report I have summarized my personal improvement in the areas of:

- Organisation and Time Management
- Writing a Cover Letter
- Research
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Academic Writing

This report includes information about the prior knowledge I had on each topic, what I have learned and how I adapted the knowledge to my practice.

1.1 Organisation and Time Management

Before beginning my journey on this course, I had a lot of struggles when it came to having a lot of work done in a timely and organised matter. If I would have a lot of workload, I tended to procrastinate simply because I wouldn't know where to start. Therefore, organisation was a big problem for me most of the time. The lack of organisation would lead to lower quality of the work being done, in a hectic matter. It would also reflect on my personal life and reactions, as a lack of organisation at work, leads to a lack of organisation in life. I didn't know what to do in order to do everything I had to efficiently and produce a good quality of work. After I began the course, I was introduced to Google Calendars which is a software, where you can put all of the engagements you have by the hour. Once I found out it was already a part of my phone, I began writing my weekly engagements and if I had an assignment due in two weeks, I would write put it in the calendar. Furthermore, I would write at least an hour a day focused work upon the topic and whenever the time slot came, my phone would ring with an alarm which would

remind me to sit down and focus. Once I began writing down my assignments, I started to write down many other engagements, such as gym, shopping and any kind of meetings. Even if there was a last-minute engagement that would come up, it could fit well into my schedule, in such a way that I wouldn't over exhaust my body and mind. I can proudly say that Google Calendar seriously improved my time management and organisation skills. The quality of my work and my daily life has improved since I started writing down all my engagements and splitting my time in such a manner that whatever is most important, gets done first. I have learned to not sit for too long in front of the computer, as this exhausts my mind and doesn't leave me with satisfying results.

1.2 Writing a Cover Letter

To be honest, I never really understood what a cover letter meant. I knew I had to write it every time I was applying for a job and I read some articles about the topic, but never fully understood what the core of a cover letter was. Therefore, I was certainly extremely happy to find out that writing a cover letter was a part of the module. Prior to taking the lesson, I tended to include information in my cover letters, which wasn't necessary. Such information would include salary expectations, personal information, information that wasn't related to the job, even negative/ passive aggressive comments about previous employers. Furthermore, when I look at cover letter written in the past, I notice that paragraphs were long, and it looked more like a memoir than a cover letter. After taking the course, I can identify a cover letter as a short piece of introduction which you attach to the CV, for prospective employers to have additional information, except employment history. I know that in a cover letter, I shouldn't repeat information which was included in my CV, and it should be a summary of why I believe I am suitable for the job. It's important to write the cover letter in a professional form and write it directly to the hiring manager or the company itself. This way I show that I am not negligent, and I care for the job and the person who is reading the cover letter. I also understood that it's my job to show that I know the company and that I care for the beliefs and mission of the company I am applying for. Therefore, I should write a short paragraph about how I can help the company grow and become better. After this course, I have a lot more knowledge about the cover letter and how to "sell" my skills in the form of a letter.

1.3 Research

Whilst in college, we were taught that extensive research and note-taking are extremely important for the gathering of efficient knowledge and information. However, nobody ever explained to us what the correct way is of notetaking and research, so whenever I would write notes down, I would try to write down everything the teacher/lecturer is saying. Furthermore, whenever I was in a lecture, I wasn't exactly sure what is the most important information and whether everything that is being said is of importance for my skills. I noticed in myself, that when I was purely listening or watching an informational film or video, my mind couldn't stay focused. On the other hand, if I was writing things down it was easier to remember. That's how I understood that I can't simply take down every single word a lecturer is saying as it wouldn't

always be a fact, or if I was reading something online, it wouldn't necessarily be relevant. So, in order for me to have a notebook full of relevant information I had to learn how to distinguish the information which I was reading or hearing. During the course, I understood that I had to understand the difference between facts, examples being used to understand those facts and personal opinions on the topic. Furthermore, I learnt that I didn't have to write each word fully, but at places I could use abbreviations or shorten the words in such a way that when I would read them later, I would understand what is meant. When reading on a certain topic, I would distinguish the knowledge – was I looking for general information on the topic, or was I researching upon a specific topic? That way I can now research and gather information in a shorter span of time and write down only information which I find necessary for my academic and professional knowledge.

1.4 Problem Solving and Decision Making

When it comes to finding solutions to issues and making important decisions, I have always struggled as I am always confused with what the best option is at the specific moment. This has proven to be an issue not only in my personal life, but it seriously reflects on my academic and professional life. Both problem solving and decision making are transferrable skills, which are useful for all kinds of situations in life. Therefore, I understood that it is a weakness in my life, which had to be transformed into a strength. Whilst learning about personal and professional skills, I understood that for easier problem solving, I should stop focusing on the problem and begin focusing on what the best solution is when a problem arises. Instead of panicking, I realised that I should remain calm and think critically upon the situation for better resolution of the issue. Prior to finding a solution however, I learnt that I must be able to define the core of the problem, as if I don't know what the core of the issue is, I cannot resolve it. Last but not least, I understood that when thinking about a problem, I shouldn't bring myself down, because the problem has arisen, but see it as a possibility. This couple of tricks have really transformed my way of thinking when it comes to problem solving. When it comes to decision making, I realised that instead of thinking about the infinite amount of options, I should narrow the list down to the most efficient ones at the time-being. Furthermore, I realised that I shouldn't decide on any topic, if I am not well-informed on the topic.

1.5 Academic Writing

In my academic experience, I have had a few situations where I had to write academic essays. Per my opinion, I had the belief that my style of academic writing was the correct one, however I never could achieve an excellent grade. Therefore, I realised that in order to perfect my academic writing, I had to learn more about the topic and understand the structure of an academic essay. Prior to my enrolment at the course at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, I had an idea, however I needed further proof. Whilst undertaking the academic and employability skills module, we had a couple of lectures which were solely about academic writing. At the university I understood that an academic essay portrays a person's argument upon a certain topic. For the essay to be adequate, a person has to understand the question

they are writing about and read as much as possible about the topic from places which are trustworthy. Furthermore, the process consists of a certain amount of brainstorming personal opinions on the topic, in order to formulate the argument which will be outlined in the essay. As I write academic essays now, I try to be as efficient as possible, quoting whenever necessary and referencing in the required style. I now realise, that one of the issues which might have existed before was that I never proofread my writings thoroughly prior to submission. Therefore, there could have been a lot of spelling or grammar issues which could have brought my grades down. I have now learnt to always proofread any type of work at least twice before submission.

2.0 Conclusion

To conclude this essay, I would like to say that I have noticed a serious amount of improvement since taking the Skills For The Workplace Higher Education Course. The above written topics are just a part of the overall knowledge I have acquired over the past year and put into practice in my education, as well as in my personal and professional life. I am glad and grateful that I had the opportunity to gather in-depth information and knowledge about so many different aspects of the skills that I will require in future. Furthermore, I am happy to say that all this knowledge will be continuously put into practice as my professional journey continues and I hope that I will be able to achieve all professional goals I have set for myself for the near and far future.

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