

Student name: Aleta Dimitrova

Student number: 2426751

Group - 2

Task 3 – Reflective Report

Module: Academic Skills LCLM4001

Lecturer name: Sylvia Hoffmann

Date: 23.04.2025

Introduction

This report reflective report aims to evaluate my personal and academic development throughout the academic skills module, which I finished in my first term of my foundation year programme. Having in mind that I am a first-year foreign student in the UK, this module played a major role in my adaptation to the academic standards. By using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) as a guiding framework, I will explore my performance in Task 1 (the academic quiz), Task 2 (the application of academic skills exercise), and selected classroom experiences. The module has been instrumental in developing my writing, time management, note-taking, and referencing skills—areas that are essential for my success at university.

Description of Experiences

Our first in class sort of exam was task 1 in week 5 when we had academic quiz which tested our understanding of academic writing, time management strategies, academic integrity, referencing and reading comprehension. The questions included: short answer, multiple choice and referencing task. I felt confident in recognising plagiarism but when I was asked to produce accurate references, I felt uncertain. That was a key moment in my academic journey as I realised the importance of mastering referencing guidelines.

In week 7 we had scheduled our task 2 which required from us to paraphrase information, take notes from a text, and write a paragraph by strictly following academic writing standards. This task was much more challenging for me due to the limited time and requirement to apply academic skills under pressure. My initial note-taking was chaotic, which negatively affected the structure of my paragraph. This experience was extremely helpful as after the task I was given very useful feedback from my lecturer on how to improve organisation and paraphrasing techniques.

During the module lectures we had few in-class activities which were really impactful. One of the activities was practising different note-taking methods, and I established that Cornell method is working well for me. This practical exercise increased my engagement and self-awareness in my learning academic journey, which I will analyse by using Gibbs' reflective model

Analysis and Personal Reflection

Applying Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) allowed me to break down my learning experience into six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. This approach allows me to reflect in depth on my academic development and challenges.

Starting with Task 1, I initially felt quite nervous as this was my first formal assessment in the UK academic environment. When I encountered referencing questions, I became aware of my uncertainty with formatting, especially for electronic sources. Despite revising beforehand, I realised I had only memorised examples and not fully understood the logic behind them.

According to Cottrell (2024), effective academic development requires both practice and critical understanding, especially in areas like referencing that require precision. This insight encouraged me to study "Cite Them Right" and begin using referencing tools more confidently.

The quiz also assessed time management techniques such as the Pomodoro method and the Eisenhower Matrix. I recognised these from our lectures and had already started applying the Pomodoro technique to improve my focus during study sessions. This part of the quiz went well, reinforcing that I was developing good study habits. My main takeaway was the importance of regular self-evaluation, something I now include weekly as part of my study routine.

Task 2 presented a different challenge. While I understood the assignment, I struggled to organise my ideas quickly. I used linear notes during the reading task, but they did not help me identify main themes effectively. After this experience, I began using the Cornell note-taking

system, which we explored in class. This structure helped me better organise information and connect key ideas, which has since then improved significantly my academic reading and writing.

Another skill I found difficult was Paraphrasing. My sentences were either too close to the original text or lost their meaning when I tried to change them. This is a common issue among international students, as noted by Bailey (2011), who highlights the importance of understanding both vocabulary and structure when paraphrasing. With help from classroom exercises and tutor feedback, I improved by practising more varied sentence structures and focusing on meaning rather than individual words.

Developing academic writing skills was a major part of my learning journey. In the beginning I often used informal language or showed weak or missing connections between arguments. During the module, I learnt how to structure arguments, use academic tone and link ideas logically. One of the in-class activities was to analyse model paragraphs, which helped me to understand what the teacher looks for in well-written academic work. I have discovered that time management is a must have skill and pushed myself a lot in developing it to a point where it became one of my strengths. In the early stages of the module, I was feeling overwhelmed by all deadlines, but by implementing Eisenhower Matrix I have learnt how to prioritise tasks and reduce stress. This model supported me into balancing my workload and setting realistic weekly goals. As Bedford (2020) suggests, effective time management is not just about creating schedules but also learning to adapt when things don't go to plan—a skill I am continuing to develop.

Reflecting on all these experiences using Gibbs' cycle has helped me to identify both my growth and areas that still require improvement. My referencing and paraphrasing still need to be further developed, and I plan to keep practising these areas in future modules. Nonetheless, I am proud of the progress I've made so far in writing, organisation, and independent learning.

Conclusion

In summary, the Academic Skills module has provided me with essential tools for academic success, especially as a first-year foreign student adapting to a new educational system. By applying Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, I was able to reflect critically on my performance in Tasks 1 and 2, as well as various class-based learning activities. My main strengths include time management and the development of more structured and academically appropriate writing, while referencing and paraphrasing remain areas for development. This module has helped me to become a more confident, reflective, and independent learner, and I am excited to continue building on these foundations throughout the rest of my academic journey.

References:

- Bailey, S. (2011). *Academic Writing for International Students of Business*. 1st ed. London ; New York; Routledge.
- Bedford, D. (2020). *Study Skills for Foundation Degrees*. 3rd ed. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York ;Routledge.
- Anon (n.d.) *Cite them right : the essential referencing guide*. London :, Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cottrell, S. (2024). *The Study Skills Handbook*. 6th ed. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit.