

Introduction

Embarking on this academic journey in a foreign country has been both a challenging and rewarding experience. Coming from a different educational background where English is not the primary language, I found myself grappling with various aspects of academic life. However, this module has significantly contributed to my development in several academic skills, which are crucial for my success at the university. In this reflective report, I will explore how the module has helped me enhance my academic writing skills, note-taking skills, and research skills. I will use Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to structure my reflection, providing evidence from the tasks and activities I completed during the course.

Academic Writing Skills

Description:

When I first started this module, academic writing was one of the areas where I felt most vulnerable. In my home country, the style of writing required in academic settings is quite different, and I was not accustomed to the formal and structured approach needed for writing essays and reports in English. The first few assignments I submitted were not up to the standard, and the feedback I received highlighted issues with structure, clarity, and referencing.

Feelings:

Initially, I felt overwhelmed and somewhat discouraged by the feedback. Writing in a second language, while trying to adhere to strict academic conventions, seemed daunting. However, I was also determined to improve, knowing that strong writing skills are essential for my academic success. The fear of failing motivated me to engage more deeply with the resources and support provided by the module.

Evaluation:

As the module progressed, I participated in several workshops focused on academic writing. These sessions were incredibly helpful in breaking down the writing process into manageable steps. I learned the importance of creating an outline before starting to write, which helped in organizing my thoughts and ensuring a logical flow in my essays. The use of the PEEL (Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link) structure was particularly beneficial in constructing paragraphs that clearly communicated my ideas.

I also improved my referencing skills. Initially, I struggled with understanding how to properly cite sources using the Harvard referencing style. However, the guidance provided in the workshops and the practice exercises helped me grasp the concept better. By the end of the module, I was more confident in my ability to reference correctly, which not only strengthened my arguments but also avoided plagiarism.

Analysis:

Looking back, I realize that my initial struggles were due to a lack of familiarity with the conventions of academic writing in English. The support provided by the module, including the detailed feedback from tutors and the writing workshops, was crucial in helping me overcome these challenges. The step-by-step approach to writing and the emphasis on planning and structure were particularly effective in improving my skills.

According to Murray and Hughes (2008), the ability to write well-organized and clear academic texts is a fundamental skill for success in higher education. This module has enabled me to develop this skill, which I will continue to refine throughout my academic journey.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the development of my academic writing skills during this module has been a significant achievement. I have learned how to structure my essays more effectively, use evidence to support my arguments, and reference sources correctly. Although there is still room for improvement, I now feel more confident in my ability to produce well-written academic papers.

Action Plan:

Moving forward, I plan to continue practicing my writing skills by seeking feedback on my work and engaging with additional resources, such as writing centers and online tutorials. I will also make a habit of reviewing and revising my drafts to ensure clarity and coherence in my writing.

Note-Taking Skills

Description:

Note-taking was another skill that I found challenging at the beginning of the module. The pace of the lectures was faster than what I was used to, and I often found it difficult to keep up with the key points being discussed. My initial approach was to try and write down everything the lecturer said, which left me with disorganized and incomplete notes.

Feelings:

I felt frustrated and anxious about my ability to capture important information during lectures. This anxiety was compounded by the fact that I knew effective note-taking was essential for understanding the material and preparing for exams. However, I was also eager to find a solution that would allow me to take better notes and improve my overall academic performance.

Evaluation:

The note-taking workshops provided during the module were extremely helpful in addressing this issue. I learned about different note-taking methods, such as the Cornell Method and mind mapping, which helped me organize information more effectively. I also learned to focus on capturing the main ideas and key points rather than trying to transcribe everything verbatim.

One of the most useful strategies I adopted was the use of abbreviations and symbols to quickly jot down information. This allowed me to keep up with the pace of the lectures while still capturing the essential points. I also started reviewing my notes soon after each lecture, which helped reinforce my understanding of the material and identify any gaps that needed further clarification.

Analysis:

Reflecting on this experience, I realize that my initial struggles with note-taking were due to a lack of strategy. The workshops provided me with the tools and techniques needed to take more effective notes, which in turn improved my comprehension and retention of the material. As advised by Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall (2008), effective note-taking is not just about writing down information but involves actively engaging with the material and organizing it in a way that makes sense to the learner.

Conclusion:

The development of my note-taking skills during this module has been a valuable experience. I now have a better understanding of how to capture and organize information during lectures, which has improved my ability to study and prepare for exams. While I still need to practice and refine these skills, I feel more confident in my ability to take effective notes.

Action Plan:

In the future, I plan to continue using the note-taking strategies I have learned, particularly the Cornell Method and mind mapping. I will also make a habit of reviewing and revising my notes regularly to ensure that I fully understand the material and can use it effectively in my studies.

Finding Information/Research Skills**Description:**

Before starting this module, I had little experience with academic research. In my previous studies, we relied more on textbooks and less on independent research using academic journals and databases. As a result, I found it challenging to locate reliable sources and integrate them into my assignments.

Feelings:

I felt somewhat intimidated by the prospect of conducting research, especially given the vast amount of information available online. I was unsure where to start and how to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources. However, I was also excited about the opportunity to develop this skill, knowing that it would be crucial for my success in future assignments and projects.

Evaluation:

The research workshops provided during the module were instrumental in helping me overcome these challenges. I learned how to use the university's online library resources, including databases like JSTOR and Google Scholar, to find relevant academic articles. I

also learned how to evaluate sources for credibility and relevance, which was important in ensuring that the information I used in my assignments was reliable.

One of the most valuable skills I developed was the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources. This involved not only finding relevant articles but also critically analyzing them and integrating their findings into my own arguments. By the end of the module, I was able to conduct more thorough and effective research, which significantly improved the quality of my assignments.

Analysis:

Reflecting on this experience, I realize that my initial difficulties with research were due to a lack of familiarity with academic resources and research techniques. The workshops provided me with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate these resources and conduct more effective research. As Cottrell (2019) suggests, the ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources is a key academic skill that underpins successful essay writing and critical thinking.

Conclusion:

The development of my research skills during this module has been a significant achievement. I now feel more confident in my ability to locate and evaluate academic sources, and to integrate them into my writing in a meaningful way. This has not only improved the quality of my assignments but also deepened my understanding of the topics I am studying.

Action Plan:

Moving forward, I plan to continue honing my research skills by exploring new databases and resources, and by engaging in more independent research projects. I will also seek

feedback on my research process from tutors and peers to further improve my ability to conduct effective academic research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this module has been instrumental in helping me develop key academic skills that will be essential for my success at university. Through the support and guidance provided, I have significantly improved my academic writing, note-taking, and research skills. While there is still room for improvement, I now feel more confident and prepared to tackle the challenges of academic life. I am committed to continuing my development in these areas, using the strategies and techniques I have learned to achieve my academic goals.

References

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