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1. Introduction – Resilience, Learning Agility and Independent Study

In higher education, it is highly demanding for students to develop resilience, adaptability, in higher education, students are required to handle multiple deadlines, analyze challenging learning contents, as well as manage constructive feedback. A resilient individual in learning is one who is able to handle learning pressures, resist difficulties in learning, and as well remain motivated during times of learning difficulties (Thomas et. al., 2017). Resilience in learning enables learners to be aware of their limits while seeking help, as opposed to disengaging in learning.

Resilience and learning agility are the other key components that can contribute to success, Learning agility is the willingness and capacity to learn from experiences and transfer the learning from known to unknown situations (De Meuse et al., 2011). Learning agility means that the learner is reflective, flexible, and receptive to change and development. Learning agility can be an important skill because it can help students adapt to suggestions and perform better with time.

The development of such skills can specific attention within the context of the BA Fire and Rescue Service programme. Fire and rescue have the task of keeping abreast of knowledge and reflecting upon incidents and applying such learning in the future. The enhancement of positive study skills during university education will ensure such professional needs are met.

The aim of this portfolio is to reflect on my development into a resilient, healthy, and independent learner during the Study Skills module. This portfolio shows I have developed core academic skills, learned to be a skilled learner through learning agility skills, while using appropriate technologies to enhance my learning. Working through a reflective process is a method used not only for academic success but for personnel development.

This portfolio has been broken down into five sections. In Section Two, the evidence for basic academic skills such as the effective use of time, goal achievement, note-taking, critical reading, and academic writing has been discussed. In the following section, learning agility in action and the ways in which the student adjusted to new environments for learning, getting feedback, and coped with setbacks have been analyzed. In the fourth section, the role of technology in improving learning outcomes will be discussed.

2. Evidence of Foundational Academic Skills

Foundational learning skills shows a grounding for successful independent learning and achievements. In higher education, it is expected of students that they will independently plan, research, and generate academic work of a high standard. This is to achieving academic tasks but also plays a key part in promoting personal confidence, learning for life, and learning resilience to help effective handling of difficult tasks (Beetham and Sharpe, 2020; Cottrell, 2019) Within this module, a range of foundational learning skills have been done, which have helped me develop my entrance into higher education studies, provided personal confidence with my learning, and advanced my personal learning capability to respond independently to complex information (Beetham and Sharpe, 2020; Cottrell, 2019).

To get the development of these skills, it was essential to implement a considerable amount of self-reflection as well as learning . At the initial stages, it was necessary to deal with the common issues faced by students entering a higher education setup, such as juggling a number of deadlines, adapting to the new requirements. The entire process of learning these foundational skills also involved a number of trial-and-error

situations, as well as the application of relevant feedback from the tutors, to ensure that i understood the links between the foundational academic skills, as discussed by Thomas et al. (2017).

2.1 Time Management and Self-Organisation

Time management is one of the most important challenges for students who enter higher education. Unlike structured learning, such as schools or colleges, university study needs people to manage their own schedules, competing demands, and juggle academic responsibilities with personal, social, and professional commitments . As expressed by Cottrell (2019),

In order to cope with these issues, I have come up with strategies to better my time management abilities. Firstly, I started organizing my study time using study planners and online organizers to plan my study week and going down to the fire station after my lectures to finish work and scheduling my lectures. In addition, tasks can be broken down into small, achievable objectives, helping me keep checks on my work performance so that I am not overwhelmed with tasks. And to take down notes so when I do my work at home i can look back at my notes to keep it fresh in my mind

2.2 Goal Setting and Self-Motivation

Setting a goal has been important to both supporting and reinforcing my development during the duration of the module. Therefore, having clearly established, realistic goals enabled a direction in my learning and encompassed motivation when faced with periods that were challenging. According to Cottrell (2019), for a goal to be effective, it needs to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

The accomplishment of smaller goals led to a positive reinforcement cycle. The successful of getting tasks on time helped me develop the feeling of achievement, which led to my frequent participation and enhanced my self-motivation. On the other hand, the failure to achieve the goals helped me develop a critical outlook towards the causes for that failure, which could be poor planning, underestimate time, or poor concentration, and then modifying my approach accordingly. Such an exercise helped develop self-regulation, resilience, and learning agility in my personality, which helped in managing the task effectively, as proposed by De Meuse et al. (2011). Moreover, goal setting has been helpful in terms of my well-being because it has given a sense of direction and minimized the feeling of uncertainty or feeling overwhelmed in academia.

By tracking progress and celebrating success, I have been able to keep myself motivated in situations when the pressure is high or when dealing with challenging topics.

2.3 Note-Taking and Active Engagement

Note-taking is very important for me to fully participate in lectures, seminars, and academic readings. At first, the style that I used in taking notes mostly involved transcribing material literally. However, through this module, new methods involved taking notes actively by condensing important information, rephrasing thoughts, and bridging thoughts among different texts.

Active learning through note-taking enabled a stronger focus on learning resources. This allowed for easier understanding of information. By reviewing learning resources through active learning, it was possible to recognize areas of misunderstanding. It also enabled effective learning for assessment. In a situation where I was to complete an assignment based on reflection practice, I was able to compare learning sessions with academic literature.

Further more, active participation in note-taking further encouraged my engagement in academic debates, thereby enabling me to participate confidently and critically. By interweaving concepts from learning sessions as well as readings, I was able to develop an enhanced learning of the subject matter. This is extremely important in a professional setting like the Fire and Rescue Service, as proper recording, critical analysis, and communication of information can influence decision-making (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2013).

2.4 Critical Reading and Academic Literacy

Critical reading is a fundamental skill of academic literacy, involving the processes of analysing, judging, and information rather than accepting it. As stated by Moon (2013), critical reading involves assumptions, judging the quality and integrity of the evidence presented, and evaluating different perspectives. This skill is particularly vital for being able to engage with academic literature effectively and construct informed arguments.

In this module, I put into operation approaches to critical reading, such as the annotation of texts, comparing the arguments across sources, and summarizing the findings. For example, when reviewing the literature relating to reflective practice in

emergency services, I appraised the source credibility and identified any potential biases, and Synthesised viewpoints from opposing aspects into a balanced argument. Stronger construction of written arguments through coherent reasoning and evidence was a significant enhancement to academic.

Critical reading is also highly relevant to professional practice within the Fire and Rescue Service. These operational-level decisions can inform and involve analysis regarding incident reports, procedural evidence assessment, and risk analysis. Building academic-level critical reading skills can thereby contribute to better expert decision-making, as this ensures informed and evidence-driven, as well as best practice-informed, decision-making (Moon, 2013; Thomas et al., 2017).

2.5 Academic Writing, Structure and Referencing

One of the biggest challenges for many students in making the transition into higher education is academic writing, which demands clarity of expression, logical structuring, and integration of evidence to support claims. Being specific, I initially found it challenging to organize ideas and sustain a formal academic tone. Through practice, structured essay planning, and engagement with formative feedback, I gained the confidence and ability to perform better while writing academically. Using outlines for essays helped in ensuring logical flow and coherence, while drafting and redrafting enhanced clarity and argumentation. Thirdly, I also emphasized embedding evidence appropriately, critically analysing sources, and linking ideas to show depth of understanding.

Harvard referencing correctly was also a critical part of this. Pears and Shields (2022) state that accurate Harvard referencing is recognition of the efforts of others, prevents plagiarism, and enhances the solidity of an argument. The use of the referencing toolkit enhanced accuracy, as it eliminated the possibility of mistakes. Attainment of competency within academic writing and Harvard referencing not only enhances the success of further education, but it also corresponds with the FRS, as accurate reporting, documentation, and informed decision-making are vital within this profession as well, as pointed out by Cottrell (2019) and Pears and Shields (2022).

5. Conclusion and Future Development

This portfolio has demonstrated substantial development in my ability to learn independently, adapt to academic challenges, and build resilience throughout the Academic Study Skills module. Through structured reflection, I have critically examined how my foundational academic skills, learning agility, and effective use of technology have evolved over time. This reflective process has allowed me to recognise both strengths and areas for improvement, reinforcing the importance of self-awareness in academic and professional development.

A key outcome of this module has been the strengthening of foundational academic skills that underpin successful independent learning. Improvements in time management and self-organisation enabled me to manage competing deadlines more effectively, reduce stress, and approach academic tasks in a structured and proactive manner. Similarly, the development of goal-setting strategies enhanced motivation, supported self-regulation, and contributed positively to my overall wellbeing. These skills allowed me to take greater ownership of my learning and build confidence in my ability to meet academic expectations.

Equally important was the development of academic literacy skills, particularly note-taking, critical reading, and academic writing. Moving from passive to active engagement with learning materials significantly improved my understanding and retention of complex concepts. Developing critical reading skills enabled me to analyse sources more effectively, evaluate evidence, and construct balanced, evidence-based arguments. Improvements in academic writing and referencing further strengthened my ability to communicate ideas clearly, coherently, and with academic integrity. Collectively, these skills have enhanced my academic performance and prepared me for the increasing demands of higher-level study.

Learning agility emerged as a central theme throughout the module and played a crucial role in my academic development. By engaging constructively with feedback, reflecting on setbacks, and adapting my learning strategies, I became more confident in managing uncertainty and responding positively to challenge. Rather than viewing feedback or lower-than-expected outcomes as failures, I learned to see them as opportunities for growth. This shift in mindset supported the development of resilience and reinforced the value of reflection as a tool for continuous improvement (De Meuse et al., 2011).

The use of digital technologies also contributed significantly to enhancing my learning experience. Tools such as Microsoft OneNote, digital calendars, online academic databases, and communication platforms supported organisation, research, collaboration, and reflection. Developing confidence in using these technologies improved efficiency, reduced academic errors, and fostered a greater sense of independence. These digital skills are increasingly important not only in higher education but also in professional environments where effective communication, information management, and digital competence are essential (Beetham and Sharpe, 2020).

The relevance of these skills extends beyond academic study and directly aligns with professional practice within the Fire and Rescue Service. The ability to manage time effectively, respond calmly under pressure, reflect on performance, and adapt to evolving situations is fundamental in operational contexts. Furthermore, critical thinking, evidence-based decision-making, and reflective practice are essential for maintaining professional standards, learning from incidents, and ensuring public safety. Developing these attributes during university study provides a strong foundation for future professional competence and lifelong learning.

Despite the progress made, this portfolio has also highlighted areas for further development. In particular, I aim to continue strengthening advanced critical analysis skills and further improve my ability to manage workload during peak assessment periods. To address these areas, I plan to maintain the use of reflective practice, seek formative feedback proactively, and continue refining my study strategies. Engaging with academic support services and making effective use of digital tools will also remain a priority.

In conclusion, this module has provided a strong foundation for both academic success and professional development. By developing resilience, learning agility, and independent learning skills, I am better prepared to meet the challenges of higher education and the demands of a career in the Fire and Rescue Service. The skills and strategies developed throughout this module will continue to inform my approach to learning, reflection, and professional practice, supporting ongoing growth and lifelong development.

Reference List (Harvard)

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