

Reflective writing on my learning from Academic and Employability skills module

Module code: BMSW4001-Academic And Employability Skills

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In this essay I will reflect on my learning development throughout this module from when I started in June until now. My reflection is based on Gibb's (1988) Reflective Cycle. Gibbs (1988) stated: *"It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated and it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively"*. Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle model enables me to systematise my past experiences, emotions, and findings in order to support future learning and development. My aim is to identify my learning needs, to take a retrospective of what I have learn during this module and how I plan to apply this in the future. Thanks to this module I learn how important is to make a personal S.W.O.T analysis, to understand my strengths and identify my weakness. According to Marshall and Rowland (1996), evaluation can be performed by ourselves assessing and judging our work in a subjective manner or by others. My personal strengths involve my ability to be a great innovative and creative, as well as having good customers service skills. Innovation and creativity are valuable tools that can help me advance in my career. I believe that creativity is always in demand and important whether it is at workplace or at school place. I do believe others see my social skills and ability to adapt to situations as my strengths. According to Paul Lutus: "the most successful people are those who accept, and adapt to constant change. This adaptability requires a degree of flexibility and humility most people can't manage." I am a very flexible person. I always worked in hospitality industry. Working in hospitality required me to truly collaborate as a team member with my co-workers in order to complete a difficult task. I get to interact with customers I would not have met otherwise. I heard plenty of stories I'd never heard before. I nurture empathy for people who appear to be difficult on the outside but are very soft on the inside and have wonderful stories to tell. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the hospitality industry was forced to close pushing me to reinvent myself and my career. I applied for a job as a Covid test&trace operative in the hopes that, in addition to the pragmatic financial reasons, I would be able to play an important role during this global pandemic. Being able to find work during a difficult time, as well as change my field of work, gave me a lot of self-confidence. I am proud of my ability to be adaptable and of my will to not give up easily. This pandemic and the uncertainty of the current time made me want to develop myself improving my education. Studying in a language different from my native one is both frightening and exciting. My first assignment for this module was to create a ten-slide PowerPoint presentation about my intended career and to present it in front of the class. I learned how to structure a PowerPoint presentation following the classic academic scheme beginning with an introduction, moving on to the main body, and closing the work with a conclusion. I also learn what font size to use, what colour combinations to avoid, how to use bullet points, and how to avoid using large blocks of text. The idea of a speech illustrating my work about a so personal subject in front of the entire class was terrifying, I was afraid I would not be able to communicate in English fluently in front of my teachers and classmates. In spite of me practicing several hours, the day of the assessment the emotion played a main role. I would have been the second person to show the presentation, this contributed to increase my anxiety . I could find a lot of errors in my presentation because I am a natural self-critic, but the experience I gained from doing it helped me a lot for my second PowerPoint group presentation for another module. I learned how to control my emotions and boost my self-esteem. According to Latin phrases carved into stone somewhere in the former empire's sprawl *Repetitio mater studiorum est*: repetition is the mother of the learning. I am excited to give future power-point presentations and to use all of the skills I have learned. By conducting my own swot analysis I realised that one of my major flaws

is poor time management. Thus, attending a time management lecture helped me a lot with this problem by introducing me to various time management aspects such as planning, SMART goals, and an important/urgent matrix. Learning to make a specific plan for my daily tasks and start creating a to-do list to make my day as productive as possible is something I learned during this course. Furthermore, I had always heard the term SMART, but I dismissed it because I assumed it would be ineffective like so many other time management techniques. However, the way this lecture illustrated this term or method was very unique, and it has helped me to implement this method in my daily life. A goal, for example, should be time-bound. For years, I used to set goals or tasks but never gave them a deadline or timeframe, so I kept procrastinating until I lost track of time and eventually finished the task in an imperfect or non-existent manner. As a result of learning about SMART goals, I now include a deadline or timeframe whenever I set a new goal or task. Another amazing thing I discovered during this course was the Eisenhower method. I learned how to prioritise important tasks and get rid of time wasters. I realised I was wasting a lot of time on social media and Netflix, so I decided to address the issue by deleting my social media accounts. After a particularly hectic and busy day, a half-hour of random internet browsing or watching a favourite TV show is exactly what my brain requires to decompress. With this in mind, I decided to keep my Netflix account active. I'm doing my best to apply everything I've learned in this course to help me with my assignments. It takes some time getting used to balancing self-priorities with assignments, but I believe that as the assignments become more frequent, they are going to become easier to manage. I believe that in the future a huge challenge will be to be able to go physically to university campus rather than only participating online courses. I will be forced to learn how to better manage my time. I am confident that putting in practice all the time management strategies I am learning is going to benefit deeply both my personal and professional life. The first assignment for this module was to give a presentation about our desired career. This made me consider what skills I need to develop and to look at the employment process from both the employer and the employee perspectives. It is crucial that I understand how to conduct an effective job search. Thanks to this module I learned how to look for a job and how to write a Curriculum Vitae. As I learned at this course having a good CV it is the best way of selling myself to the employer. I learned that in order to sell myself I will need to create my own personal brand by emphasising my knowledge, attributes, skills and my hobbies. I realised that in order to stand out from the crowd, I would need to write a personal statement summarising my experience and skills relevant to my desired job. According to the knowledge of the course, I will need to write about my hobbies and interests to add weight to my resume and make it more appealing to potential employers. During this course I also learned about the Cover letter. According to this course CV is the bones and a cover letter provides all the linkage and muscle. I discovered that in order to write a good cover letter, I must conduct research on the company's website, LinkedIn, and call the company to obtain the hiring manager's name. I also learned about STAR method. According to the Indeed career guide the STAR interview method is a technique i can use to prepare for behavioural and situational interview questions. STAR stands for: situation, task, action and result. This method will help me prepare clear and concise responses using real-life examples (Becoming a star using the STAR technique, 2021) Behavioural interview questions are used by interviewers to learn how i behaved in previous work situations. Employers are going to analyse my past actions and consequent responses to be able to predict how I could act in similar situations in the future. Instead of showing up to an interview unprepared and answering questions with yes or no, I will prepare myself and my responses using this method. It's always fun to learn new things, especially when it comes to write in English. I have been able to improve my writing skills during this module and to develop several critical thinking skills. I also learned how to express my ideas clearly and rationally respecting logical connections and determining the importance and relevance of arguments and subjects. In addition to critical thinking skills, I learned a lot about the academic writing process. I learned how to find, collect, and organise ideas and data. During the semester, I discovered to have several flaws and weaknesses when composing an essay, such as writing unclear ideas, having a bad sentence structure, a lack of a smooth transition between two paragraphs, fragments and run-ons, using quotes instead of paraphrases, using ideas sometimes irrelevant to the main topic, and focusing a lot on pathos. I still struggle with my English writing skills, but as I previously stated, repetition is the key to success, and I am confident that this knowledge will benefit me later in life. Our lecturer introduced us to thesaurus.com a tool that helped me to diversify my vocabulary improving my paraphrasing skills. What I learned in this course is extremely useful, but I could have learned even more if I had focused more on my classwork dedicating them more time, and asked my professor for feedback.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I recognise that everything mentioned above has improved my personal and academic skills, allowing me to better understand myself by identifying my strengths and weaknesses. In addition, constructive feedback on my work has assisted me to fill my lacks and to develop a solid structure to

face the future. Overall, I am pleased with my progress, but I am aware that there is always space for improvement. I believe my university experiences have increased my employability, and I believe I have a lot to offer to the employers as a result of my professional and personal development over the last two months.

Action Plan

My future action plan is to be more active in the classroom and to try to be more self-assured. I'm going to try to be more calm in my next Power Point presentation and not let emotion get the best of me. I also want to practise writing English more in the future in order to improve my writing skills. I am going to consider constantly teachers' feedbacks in order to build a pragmatic and continuous self-improvement.

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