

ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to express my experience in the Academic and Employability Skills.

I will be discussing and analysing three topics as follows:

Time Management

Academic Writing

Online Learning

I will focus on these three learning models I have studied in my course and their reflection on my personal development and the impact they have brought to my life.

TIME MANAGEMENT

It seems that there is never enough time in the day because we are dividing our attention between so many different tasks. Some people still achieve so much more with their time than others. I have always asked myself what makes them successful? I was wondering why I am always short of time and still have so many things to do?

I have only heard about "The Time Management" concept before without knowing its meaning and importance. I have been thinking that it is something related to the big business and corporate world. Before my "Time Management" course at school I have never heard about "The Eisenhower Matrix" and how to set my priorities, how to plan my time and to eliminate stress.

This decision matrix helped me prioritize my important tasks and organise my time effectively. The Eisenhower chart helped me avoid wasting time and made me feel more confident about delegating tasks. The great challenge I accepted was to learn to say "NO". Now I know the massive role of Eisenhower concept in my time management skills and my personal and professional development plan.

Before the "Time Management" module at my school it seems to me abstract to study how to manage my time because life is unpredictable and always something unexpectedly could happen. At the same time I was feeling very curious and excited to learn more about this. Actually I found the "Time Management" course very useful and important for me. I gained a good knowledge of tools and techniques to become more organised, to increase my productivity and to boost my effectivity. I am so happy and pleased because I acquired new skills. I learned how to:

1. Prioritize work – to identify urgent tasks and focus on the essential and truly important things is a critical skill.
2. Create a schedule – to make a to-do-list of tasks that really need my immediate attention.

3. Set up deadlines – to set a realistic deadline and stick to it, to challenge myself and meet the deadline.
4. Start early – to strive to be early if I want to be on time.
5. Avoid multitasking – to focus and concentrate on one thing at a time, multitasking is not efficient. Being busy isn't the same as being effective.
6. Delegate tasks – to take no more tasks than I am capable to complete and if it is necessary to delegate tasks to someone who is able to help me.
7. Learn to Say No - an essential part of my time management skills. It means more energy to devote to the important things. Ultimately appreciate that!
8. Block out distractions – to find my focus and concentrate better. Eliminate time wasters - make technology work for me not against me.

I realised that "Time Management" is a process of organizing and planning how to divide my time between specific activities. The clue is to organize my tasks and use my time effectively in order to get more things done each day, to achieve my big goals and to free up time for myself, family and friends.

Successfully managing my time allows me to work in a more efficient, productive, creative and valuable way. I am determined to develop all mentioned above time management skills in a long-term as well as to improve my ability to function more effectively in order to become a better student and qualified professional.

Good time management enables me to work smarter – not harder – so that I get more done in less time. Good time management requires an important shift in focus from activities to results. Good time management benefits both my work and personal life. I believe that the knowledge of "Time Management" strategy and my sophisticated time management skills will have a great impact on my success in the future.

MY EISENHOWER CHART

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	▪ Go to work ▪ Do my university homework ▪ Check and respond all important emails ▪ Prepare a meal for my family	▪ Do my paperwork ▪ Give a call to my parents and see how they feel ▪ Visit my bank branch ▪ See my dentist
NOT IMPORTANT	▪ Food shopping ▪ Cleaning and tidying-up my house ▪ Car maintenance ▪ Go to post office	▪ Speak to my annoying friends ▪ Spend time on Facebook ▪ Watch TV novels

MY SWOT ANALYSE

<u>Strengths</u> • Active living person • Devoted to my family • Excellent communication skills • Ability to speak many foreign languages • Team player with proactive and positive attitude • Excellent organisational and multi-tasking skills • Strong ability to set correct priorities and meet deadlines • Ability to set and achieve goals • Dedicated and result-orientated person • Thrive under pressure	<u>Weaknesses</u> • My positive approach makes me always say YES to anyone who needs my help • Trustful and generous personality • Not well enough developed computer skills
<u>Opportunities</u> • Better knowledge of computer programmes and social media makes communications faster, easier and more effective • Investing in good education for better job and better life • Living in a big city like London gives a huge range of business opportunities and career development as well as meeting and making friends from all over the world	<u>Threats</u> • Financial knowledge • Business competition • Corona Virus Spread

MY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

	Short-term Frame (in 3 to 6 months)	Mid-term Frame (in 6 months to 2 years)	Long-term Frame (in 2 to 3 years)
My Goals	➤ Good knowledge of my new university online programme ➤ Learn computer graphics ➤ Perseverance and confidence in my uni work	➤ Confidence in using all computer programmes, needed in my study and work ➤ Confidence and ability to present my projects in public ➤ Knowledge in writing reports	➤ Become a student in Westminster University studying Property and Planning ➤ Extend my private business
Skills and knowledge to be learned	• Basic knowledge of using university online programmes • Ability to communicate online freely with other students from my class and share information	• Ability to use easily different computer programmes • Confidence in face to face communication and solving problems in my profession • Ability to negotiate and persuade	• Commercial awareness • Ability to set correct goals, take the right decisions and develop leadership skills • Knowledge and experience in Property and Planning specialty
Next steps	✓ Attend regularly in my university classes ✓ Spend more time in studying computer programmes	✓ Search online information ✓ Read books in personal and professional development	✓ Meet people from the same professional field, share knowledge and experience ✓ Start a new job
Recourses	✓ Time ✓ Efforts ✓ Positive attitude ✓ Good ideas	✓ Patience ✓ Passion ✓ Knowledge ✓ Creativity ✓ Future vision	✓ Ambition ✓ Education ✓ Qualifications ✓ Hard work ✓ Finance

ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing is a language that no one is born speaking. Its purpose is to communicate better. Academic writing skills are necessary in today's world. Presentations, essays, assignments, reports, research papers or dissertation are just some examples of documents in the academic style.

Before I become a student I have only heard about the academic writing but I had no experience in this writing style. I have never been required to write a paper in academic style. I have used mainly casual language without even thinking about the power of words selection and arrangement and without realising that my communication skills and writing style create my image indeed.

Now I am a student and I know that academic writing is the formal writing style used in colleges and universities. This is what students are expected to produce for classes and what professors and academic researchers use to write scholarly materials and books. I think that I faced my next new challenge during the "Academic Writing" module which made me feel quite unsecure.

When I learned how to make citations and how to arrange references alphabetically in Harvard style, I was very confused and doubted I will be able to do it in a proper way. After doing some homework I realised it is not so hard at all.

I also learned that academic writing is part of a complex process of researching, finding, analysing, interpreting and evaluating information. What differs academic writing from other forms of writing and communication are the following characteristics.

Since I have started studying at the University and after the "Academic Writing" class, I notably improved my writing skills and my communication style in general. I strive to write in a logical order, to answer the questions accurately and to demonstrate understanding of the subject. I learned to support my opinion and arguments with evidence or verified facts and to use appropriate descriptive and objective language.

Now I express my thoughts, ideas and point of view in a clear and concise way and precise my word choice. I avoid casual communications and use more formal tone. I also learned that plagiarism is not allowed. I gained a massive knowledge of properly structured integration of citations, paraphrases, summaries, quotes and punctuation.

I quickly became familiar with this style of writing and realised that whenever I describe something in my own words, I actually display some critical evaluation, interpreting and selecting combination of words which most closely convey its meaning of me. Actually I evaluate, criticise, compare, analyse, predict, summarise, synthesise and apply, make a conclusion. The "Academic Writing" module helped me develop my writing skills and improve my writing work.

Understanding more about the academic writing style involves me in the real academic life. The impact of academic writing on my personal and professional development is remarkable. I am determined to continue express and present myself in a better way. When used appropriately, academic writing presents a polished and professional image. Needless to say, writing ability is highly prized by employers. Hope that my new writing skills will help me get my dream work and change my lifestyle.

ONLYNE LEARNING

New technologies have dramatically changed our life - from ordering food and shopping clothes to banking online, studying online or even finding a partner on a dating website. They have enormously transformed the whole world into a rapidly digitized global space. Today, digital learning has emerged as a necessary resource for students and schools all over the world. This model has become especially popular during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most oft-used terms after the pandemic is the term “new normal.” The new normal in education is the increased use of online learning resources. The new normal now is a transformed concept of education with online learning at the core of this transformation. As with most teaching methods, online learning also has its own set of positives and negatives.

When I became a student it was during the Covid-19 pandemic, so I could only learn online. This made me feel a bit sad because I know myself very well – I am a communicative type of person, team player, not solo learner. I like meeting my classmates, talking to them face to face, sharing information, discussing ideas etc. Contact in person with my teachers is very important to me because this makes me highly motivated and encouraged to study more. Having interaction with real people in real time makes me feel more involved in the education process and academic life. Additionally, it reduces the sense of isolation.

At first, I thought that distance learning is completely different to the study I have done before. I thought that online learning is more difficult because it requires very good computer skills. Basically I am not familiar with computing and new technologies in general. I am an old school person from the previous generation and online learning seemed me to a bit annoying. It took me some time to realise that online learning is similar in many ways with the classic learning style. Soon I embraced the advantages that online learning offers and discovered the disadvantages of this learning model.

Advantages of online learning:

- **Efficiency** – it offers an efficient way to deliver lessons to students. It is beyond the traditional textbooks including a number of online tools such as, email, videos, audios, forums, PPTs, PDFs, podcasts, videoconferencing and social media. Additionally, online lectures can be recorded, archived, and shared.
- **Accessibility** of time and place – online learning allows me to attend classes from any location of my choice. I appreciate that course materials are accessible online which means that I can learn anytime and from anywhere. This is what makes it great for students who need flexibility like me.
- **Affordability** - online education is far more affordable as compared to physical learning. It reduces financial costs of transportation, meals, and most importantly, real estate. All study materials are available online, creating a paperless learning which is beneficial to the environment.
- **Improved student attendance** - since online classes can be taken from home or location of choice, less students missing out lessons.

Disadvantages of online learning:

- **Inability to stay focused on lessons/screens** - one of the biggest challenges of online learning to me is the struggle with focusing on the screen or lesson for a long

time. There is also a greater chance for me to be easily distracted by social media or anything around me.

- **Manage screen time** - spending so many hours staring at a screen is one of the biggest concerns and disadvantages of online learning that I found.
- **Technology issues** - another key challenge of online classes is Internet connectivity. This is detrimental to the education process without a consistent internet connection for students or teachers.
- **Sense of isolation** – in my opinion students can learn a lot from being in the company of their classmates. However, in an online class, there are minimal physical interactions between students and teachers. This often results in a sense of isolation for the students.

I already explore online learning and the wide-ranging benefits it brings to me. I understood that online learning takes advantage of technology to simulate and improve upon traditional methods of teaching. I discovered the skills required for online study and evaluated my own study skillset.

I realised that reaching out to my classmates to discuss assignments and course material could be very beneficial. Also, I have plenty of opportunities to work collaboratively with them attending in some group projects. It is easier for groups to work together remotely and still being supported by dedicated teachers.

Being a working adult and a family person with 3 children, I understood that online learning is revolutionising higher education for the working adult. Thanks to online learning degrees, working adults like me can now further their education with minimal impact on their current lifestyle.

Now I know that an online learning degree provides a flexible study option for those with time commitments like me, as we are given the freedom to study at our own convenience. This allows me to fit studying around my personal schedule which is particularly ideal for me because I need to balance my work and my family responsibilities.

It is non-debatable that online learning has had a spike in popularity in recent years. Acquiring a degree online can be a lot faster and easier than taking the traditional route. This emphasis on flexibility is what is driving more and more people towards online education. Online learning degree has created an opportunity for me to enhance my skill set and gain qualification in a field of study which is great to advance and refocus my career.

Online courses have now become central to continuing professional development and give students an instant competitive advantage. Working adults like me find that the online courses make us better qualified for new roles which puts us in a strong position to increase our earning power and to upgrade our career development.

Today, getting a degree has become more important than ever before. In the last year the demand for online learning has risen significantly, and it will continue doing so in the future. Virtual classrooms have become a standard, while online universities are enjoying a much better reputation than just a few years back. It is only a matter of time before an online degree is weighed on the same scale as traditional degrees.

Conclusion

The integration of Time Management, Academic Writing and Online Learning skills benefits both – my personal and my career development. Mastered well, those key skills set is a guarantee for a better life. As a part of my education plan, Time Management, Academic Writing and Online Learning are the best investment I have ever done to increase my potential. These important skills will have a great impact on my success in the future and it is just a matter of time to prove it.

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