

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:	RISHAILA RONALD	Student ID number:	2321920
Programme:	BA Accounting HNC/HND/BA Business Management (HRM / Finance / Marketing / Digital Marketing)		
Module:	Changemakers: Building your Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment		
Module code:	BMBM5021	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	50%
Lecturer:	Robyn Griffiths	Internal Verifier:	Gwyneth Jones
Assignment Title:	Employability Skills and Semester Abroad Reflection	Word count (or equivalent):	2,000 words or equivalent
Submission deadline:	Friday 2 nd May 2025	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	Friday 6 th June 2025
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)

- Evaluate personal employability skills and their congruence with the skills required for professional practice in a real or simulated environment.
- Build a personal brand and promote a professional identity for a specific opportunity.

Reflective Essay

Purpose of Reflection

The purpose of this reflective essay is to analyse and critically evaluate the skills and knowledge I have gained from studying abroad, and how they relate to my future academic and professional goals. By using Rolfe's Reflective Model which is structured around the questions "What?", "So what?", and "Now what?", I will reflect on my personal and academic journey since moving to Swansea, Wales (University of Hull, 2024). This experience has significantly shaped the way I view learning, independence, and my aspirations in becoming a professional accountant.

What? (Description of the Experience)

I left Kuala Lumpur to study accounting in Swansea as part of a dual award programme. Although I came here with friends, it was still a completely new experience for me, especially because I was the only one in our group who had never left Malaysia before. Honestly, I've always been a homebody, so stepping out of my country, into a foreign country, far from family, culture and comfort zones was somewhat of a change.

When I first arrived, everything felt unfamiliar. The climate, food, daily routines, and even the education system. Unlike in Malaysia, where academic life often feels more guided, here in Swansea, there is a greater emphasis on self-directed learning (Wang & Cranton, 2014). However, some scholars argue that the effectiveness of self-directed learning can vary depending on cultural backgrounds, with students from more guided learning environments initially struggling to adjust (Dahal and Bhat, 2023). I had to learn to manage my studies more independently and get used to a quieter classroom setting. It was a small class with just three other students and as such we did not have large group discussions, yet I still learned a lot from interacting within the class. Each of us came from different backgrounds, and even within that small group, I was able to pick up different perspectives and study techniques.

As I did not take on a part time job while studying abroad, I wasn't faced with the challenge of working and studying at the same time. However, that gave me more time to focus on my coursework and personal growth. I learned how to manage my own schedule, plan assignments in advance, and live independently for the first time. These small things like cooking, budgeting and taking public transport on my own became learning opportunities (Gan and Kang, 2022).

Emotionally, it was not always easy. I missed home and the familiarity of life in Malaysia. There were times when I questioned whether I could handle everything on my own. But with time, I became more comfortable, and Swansea started to feel like a second home. During those early days, I remember one quote that really spoke to me: "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." - Winnie The Pooh (Valens, 1975). It reminded me of the struggle that came from leaving home and it was from a place of love and deep connection so this in itself is something to be grateful for.

So What? (Analysis and Significance)

Reflecting on my experience, I realise I have gained valuable skills that are applicable both academically and professionally. Adaptability was one of the most (or maybe the most) important lessons. Even with friends moving to a new country involved a lot of adjustment. I had to adapt to a new lifestyle, different learning methods, and a completely new environment. As you can see, having this adaptability is something I'll take with me into my future career, especially in accounting, which comes with having to adapt not only to working with new standards, calculations, and technology, but also with varying work environments (Pontoh et al., 2024).

Another important skill I developed is independent learning. With a smaller class size and fewer discussions, I had to rely more on my own efforts to understand the material. This pushed me to become more resourceful. For example, reading extra materials, reaching out to lecturers when I needed help, and using online resources. This kind of self-discipline will be crucial when I begin my ACCA qualification, which demands a lot of independent study and motivation. However, Saad, Al-Ajmy and Ali Al-Mutairi (2024) highlights that independent learning can sometimes lead to surface-level understanding if students are not regularly engaged through structured support or interactive feedback.

I also improved my interpersonal and communication skills, though in a more subtle way. While I didn't have big group projects, the small size of my class allowed for deeper, more personal interactions. I learned how to express myself better, listen to others' viewpoints, and adapt my communication style to people from different backgrounds. These interpersonal skills are essential in the workplace, where collaboration and effective communication are critical (Soid et al., 2025).

Living abroad has also strengthened my time management and problem-solving skills. Without relying on family, I had to figure out how to organise my time, plan meals, balance assignments, and handle unexpected challenges on my own like navigating unfamiliar transportation systems or local customs and different communication styles. These everyday experiences taught me how to take initiative and think ahead, both of which are important for a successful academic and professional life (Hempstead , 2025).

Perhaps most importantly, I developed emotional resilience. There were times I felt homesick or unsure of myself, but I figured out how to overcome those feelings, turn to friends for support, and manage a consistent routine. I also grew more confident in making decisions for myself, which is a big step for someone who used to depend heavily on others.

Now What? (Future Application and Planning)

This reflective process has helped me see how far I've come and what areas I still need to work on. I now realise how essential these skills are. Not just for university success, but also for my career as an accountant.

Looking ahead, I want to build on what I've learned here in Swansea. One area I still need to work on is professional networking. While I've improved in communicating within academic settings, I still feel nervous about speaking with professionals or attending networking events. With networking being crucial in the accounting field in terms of internships and even potential jobs further down the line, I plan to gradually expose myself to these situations. I aim to attend more career talks, join virtual industry events, and start reaching out to alumni or professionals through platforms like LinkedIn.

Another area I want to strengthen is technical proficiency, especially in accounting software. While I'm comfortable with the basics, I know that employers look for candidates who are skilled in tools like Excel, Sage, and other cloud-based accounting platforms. To improve in this area, I plan to take online courses and certifications that can enhance my CV and prepare me for real-world job demands (Shekhar, 2025). However, Fisher and González (2020) argue that while online certifications are helpful, they should complement and not replace hands-on experience, which employers often value more.

Academically, I intend to maintain my habit of independent study and critical thinking. As I move forward in my ACCA studies, these are key skills to bear. I will continue using planners, setting goals, and evaluating my progress regularly. Additionally, I want to read more about the current developments in the accounting profession, so that I can remain up to date and better prepared for future work in the workforce.

Lastly, I hope to support future students who are in the same position I was, especially those who are studying abroad for the first time. Whether it's by offering advice or simply sharing my experiences, I want to help others feel more confident in taking that leap.

Conclusion

Studying abroad in Swansea has been one of the most significant experiences of my life. It challenged me in ways I didn't expect, but it also gave me the opportunity to grow as a student and as a person. Through this journey, I've developed adaptability, independent learning, time management, emotional resilience, and interpersonal skills, all of which will be valuable in both academic and professional settings.

Reflecting through Rolfe's Model helped me understand not just what I've learned, but why it matters and how I can apply it in the future. I've also become more aware of the areas where I need to improve, such as professional networking and technical skills, and I have a clear plan to work on these.

If I could offer one piece of advice to anyone preparing to study abroad, it would be this: stay connected to your roots, but don't be afraid to grow beyond them, especially by stepping out of your comfort zone, even in small ways. Keeping in touch with family and friends back home gave me emotional strength during the tougher days, but it was just as important to fully engage with my new environment. Whether it was asking a question in class, joining a conversation, or trying something unfamiliar at the local grocery store. Those small moments of courage helped me build confidence and independence. Over time, they opened the door to friendships, new opportunities, and a sense of belonging. Finding the balance between staying grounded and embracing change is what truly made this journey meaningful.

This experience will always be a part of me, and I'm grateful for everything it has taught me.

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