

Certificate of Higher Education Employability Skills

Module: Professional Career Development

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Professional career development plays a massive role in shaping both future career success and personal growth (Anderson, 2023). In this reflective essay, I will go in depth into my experiences during the Professional Career Development lectures, using Gibbs Reflective Cycle as a guide to critically examine my learning journey (Adeani, 2020). In this analysis, I aim to uncover key insights, highlight strengths, and identify areas where I can improve my approach, preparing myself for greater professional achievement.

During the Professional Career Development lectures, I found myself slipping into a passive role, attending each lecture but failing to fully engage with the material. Instead of actively contributing to class discussions or asking questions, I remained a silent observer, simply listening without taking notes or interacting with my peers. This disengagement was

not just limited to the classroom, it stemmed from a deeper issue of insufficient preparation. I often arrived without essential materials like pens or paper, signaling a lack of readiness that limited my ability to absorb the lessons being taught. In hindsight, this behavior reflected more than just forgetfulness, it revealed a pattern of complacency and missed opportunities for growth, leaving me unprepared to make the most of these valuable learning experiences.

Looking back, I feel a deep sense of disappointment with how I approached these important lectures. Although I was physically present, my mental engagement was noticeably lacking, leaving me in a passive state that feels like a wasted opportunity. I realise now that each lecture presented a chance to build essential career development skills, yet I failed to understand their importance at the time. A consistent feeling of disconnection seemed to remain throughout the lectures, as though I could not see the immediate relevance of the content to my future. This disconnect stemmed from underestimating how important these skills would be in shaping my career journey (Jackson, 2020). As the lesson passed by, I felt a quiet frustration rising, knowing I should have been more engaged, more curious. The thought of 'I could have done better' still resonates with me, highlighting the gap between my potential and my actual effort at the time.

Despite the challenges in fully engaging with the Professional Career Development lectures, there were still positive aspects to my experience. First, I maintained consistent attendance, which reflects a level of commitment and discipline. Simply showing up ensured that I was present to hear and process the information, even if my engagement was passive. This steady exposure to the lecture laid a foundation of understanding, allowing me to familiarise myself with key career development concepts. Although I was not actively participating, the lectures still offered valuable insights that even at a basic level began shaping my awareness of the skills and knowledge needed for future success. By being present and listening, I was able to absorb important ideas, creating a framework that I can now build upon. This consistency of exposure still provided me with a steppingstone for deeper reflection and future growth. On the negative side, my lack of notetaking during the lectures left me without personal reference materials that could have been invaluable for future study and reflection. By not preparing properly, such as failing to bring basic writing materials like pen and paper, I showed a lack of professionalism that not only affected my learning but also my mindset. This poor preparation set the tone for missed opportunities throughout the lectures. My lack of participating in class discussions limited my ability to engage with the content and my peers, missing potential networking opportunities that could have improved my professional connections. Furthermore, by not actively engaging in the material, I passed

up chances to develop my critical thinking skills, which would have allowed me to challenge and deepen my understanding of key concepts. In reflection, these missed opportunities collectively slowed the depth of my learning experience.

Reflecting on my experience in the Professional Career Development lectures, it reveals a clear pattern of passive learning that could impact my long-term professional growth. While the lectures introduced valuable models and concepts that are important to shaping my career path, my approach limited their full impact. Instead of taking the opportunity to engage with the lecture, I allowed myself to sit on the sidelines, absorbing only the surface of what was being taught. Research consistently shows that active participation such as notetaking, asking questions and engaging in discussions can dramatically improve the understanding of the information at a deeper level (Mueller, 2021). By not involving myself in these activities, I missed out on the richness of the learning experience. More importantly, this passive attitude could become a barrier to mastering the skills that are essential for success in a competitive professional environment (Zhang, 2022). Knowing this pattern is a key step in adjusting my approach to future opportunities, ensuring I can fully capitalise on the knowledge presented to me.

Looking back, there are several steps I could have taken to significantly improve my learning experience. First, proper preparation, which means ensuring I had the necessary equipment such as notebooks and pens, would have set a more professional tone from the start. Taking detailed notes during each lecture would have created a valuable resource to revisit, deepening my understanding over time. Actively participating in class discussions could enhance my knowledge and sharpen my communication skills. These skills are essential in any professional environment. Engaging with peers would have opened doors to networking opportunities, developing connections that could help in the future. By taking these steps, I could have transformed a passive experience into one that truly supported my development.

Reflecting on my experience, I realise that my approach in the professional development lectures has often kept me in the background, leading me to discrepancies in how I felt. While my peers know me as a friendly and approachable person in a more formal setting, I may come across as reserved or introverted in the open area. According to the Johari Window, this suggests a gap between my natural disposition and the way I present myself in professional settings (Ali, 2021). This has highlighted the importance of applying models like SMART goals, emotional intelligence, and networking strategies, not only for career growth but also to foster a more open and engaged presence in professional settings (Clare, 2021). By actively embracing these tools, I aim to expand my open Area,

aligning my natural friendliness with a more visibly confident approach that allows me to build deeper connections and create greater opportunities.

Research shows the importance of action planning which makes everyone better in anything they want to be (Adams, 2022). To ensure continuous improvement in my professional development, I am committing to a more strategic and active approach moving forward. In terms of preparation, I will create a detailed pre lecture checklist to ensure I have all the necessary materials such as notebooks and pens. I will also review the lecture topics in advance to be prepared in the lectures. Research shows that a dedicated notebook for professional development will serve as a focused space to note down key insights and ideas (Bridgstock, 2019). For active engagement, I will set a clear goal to contribute at least once to every lecture, ensuring I am not only listening but also participating (Freeman, 2023). Developing a personal notetaking process that works for me will help me in noting key points, and positioning myself at the front of the classroom will help maintain focus and reduce distractions. In the post lecture review phase, I will schedule regular review lectures to revisit the notes I will make, creating summary notes that organise the most important concepts and models. I will also seek to identify practical ways to apply what I have learned and make my knowledge more relevant and actionable.

In conclusion, this reflection has illuminated the considerable gap between my current approach to professional development and the active engagement necessary for achieving career success. By implementing the action plan detailed above, I am determined to shift my learning strategy from passive to proactive, fully capitalising on the opportunities for growth that lie ahead. This journey has taught me that professional development is not just about attendance, it requires a conscious commitment to participation and self-improvement. I am dedicated to making these essential changes, recognising that they are important for my future success and fulfillment in my career.

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