

University Of Wales Trinity Saint David

The importance of study skills in higher education

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Introduction

In this assignment there will be explanations of the importance of referencing, critical thinking, the power of reflection and academic misconduct. The aim of this assignment is to gain information from relevant and reliable sources like academic books and websites. It will be assured that they are reliable by researching whether the source is non-biased and by evaluating the contents within the source. For example, Wikipedia will not be used as a credible source. The topics included in this assignment will be delved into in detail and this assignment will include statistical evidence to further support what is being discussed.

Referencing

It's very important to correctly reference when it comes to a student using sources in their work. Even if they chose a photo to use to make their work more visually appealing. It's important to reference because it shows whoever's reading a student's work where they got the information from and it also credits the person or people that worked hard to gain that information to then publish and allow the public to read, watch or hear. It can also mean the difference of non-plagiarised work and work that is plagiarised, and it could land a person in hot water if found. To support this a direct quote from *UWTSD students' union, 2023* website will be used to demonstrate how improperly referencing can land a student in hot water, 'this could be found as academic misconduct-and the penalties for this within the university's system can be quite severe (even up to expulsion)'. As stated, improper referencing can actually tie into academic misconduct, which as stated by University of Cambridge (2023), "Is to gain or attempt to gain information that gives the person unfair academic advantage,

this will be things like plagiarism, collusion, fabricating of data etc...” academic misconduct can lead to a few varying punishments. Referencing also shows an understanding of a student's work, this is because the person doing the research to support their ideas has had to find credible sources that are on topic and do show further evidence of said idea. The student will then expand on this information. As quoted by the *Library of Leeds (2023)* It shows a student has further understanding as they have given ‘support for their arguments, opinions and ideas’.

Critical Thinking

There's a survey online by Cambridge University that was done globally based on teacher's opinions on critical thinking and 93% of university teachers globally have all collectively agreed that students need critical thinking when joining university so, critical thinking is another very useful skill to have, not just for university but also life in general as there will be many instances where a person will have to use their critical thinking.

Critical thinking allows a person to make informed arguments and opinions as they have a deeper understanding than another that may not have as much of a developed critical thinking skill. It also allows a person to make less mistakes that can be easily avoided. A direct quote displayed on the University of Edinburgh website by (*Burns, T., Sinfield, S. 2016*) “critical thinking is the art of making clear, reasoned judgements based on interpreting, understanding, applying and synthesising evidence gathered from observation, reading and experimentation.”. Critical thinking also helps others to make informed judgements on the information they are gathering, for example, if a student is doing an assignment on global warming, they are going to run into a lot of information that may not be true, that student will have to take measures to allow them to deeper view what is Infront of

them, for example, if one of the sources gathered is not from a reliable source, then they shouldn't use it in their assignment as it may be exaggerated or all around not true, to further elaborate (Institute of academic development 2024) 'through a student's examination they may find that the evidence discovered is not robust' . The student would use their skill of critical thinking and see that the best sources would be sites like Government websites, non-biased websites around the issue that show evidence, e.g. graphs, books and for this instance, scientists that have studied in that field. Using reliable sources like this allows the information to be as is and not overexaggerated.

Also stated (*University of Edinburgh website 2023*) "critical thinking is gathering many sources and evaluating them to make conclusions that are informed, not just trying to find faults in those pieces of information" (*University of Edinburgh website 2023*). People could argue that critical thinking can cause a person to over evaluate certain things and can cause someone to be constantly looking for inconsistencies or anything wrong which could impact how a person's mentality is towards other things, but this is why it's important to have a balance and not be overcritical but to also use it at the correct times so a student's mind isn't constantly picking things apart trying to find a fault.

Academic misconduct

As academic misconduct was briefly mentioned in the above text it will be best to explore it next in this section. Academic misconduct can easily happen, especially if a person is new to university. Academic misconduct is a form of cheating in some instances like, taking work that is not yours but displaying it in a way where it seems it is. It can also be a completely innocent action like simply forgetting to accurately reference where you got a source of information. There are statistics out there

though of students who have committed academic misconduct like the study ICAI did in 2020. This study involved 840 students across multiple universities (not stated where) and one of the results found that 58% of those students admitted to plagiarism.

We live in an era of technology, and this has allowed gaining information to be quick, easy and simple, unfortunately, people do abuse this when it comes to gaining information for their work. They do this by using features like ChatGPT where it gives a person an automated response to any question, basically, doing the students work for them. Another form of academic misconduct is also paying others to do a student's university work these are called essay mills. Students will go to these essay mills and pay for their assignments to be done by another person. Due to it being not their own work, it is academic misconduct and can land them in a a lot of trouble, like getting kicked out of university. There is an interesting video about this on YouTube called 'Degrees for sale: Inside the essay writing industry: Students on the edge' that delves into the topic and gives a deeper insight on those that get paid to do assignments.

Power of reflection

This is an extremely important skill to have as it allows a person to look back and see their faults and grow from them. It also overall shows a level of maturity as they have looked back, realised what they did wrong or how they can better their work or themselves, and know how to avoid it in the future rather than refusing and moving on only to make the same mistake again. Making the same mistakes over and over again can easily demotivate a person and may even cause them to give up or not care about themselves or the work anymore and it goes in a cycle, they get a result lower than what they were hoping for again, they start to care less, do the work, get

a result lower than they hoped etc, a full cycle (*A conscious rethink*, 2018) 'cognitive bias can be negative and can impact decision making and lead a person to have negative perception of reality'. Reflection has also been proven to improve a person's performance From the Harvard Business review website, there is a quote where it states, (*Gino, Andy O'Connell*, 2015) "our research shows that if we take time to reflect on our work, we may be better off". If the time is taken to reflect, it allows room for growth and to spot out things that could've been done better, it allows the person reflecting to fully understand and acknowledge what has happened, to try and better themselves for the future.

There is also statistics to further support the power of reflection in a person, especially students in university. Self-reflection can also help with personal development, like allowing to expand on learning- It can also improve on self-confidence. It can be an argument that reflection is very time consuming and seeming as though 55% of students also have a job (as shown in a recent survey by BBC), it can be very hard to find time to feel the real benefits of reflection.

Not only that but a study done by Open accesses Government found that almost half of university students are extremely stressed by their degree. Stress can easily make a person overwhelmed and filled with anxiety and this in turn can make a student 'give up'. It may give them the mindset of 'this isn't working out for me so why bother to reflect?' A sad but a very true and a growing mindset upon university students. A BBC study showcases this where it is stated that as of 2022-2023, the dropout rate of students in university increased by 9,139 from 2018-2019.

Conclusions

To conclude, this assignment has covered the topics in detail of plagiarism, critical thinking, academic misconduct and the power of reflection using reliable websites to

gain information to further show the importance of each. It has also been found that all the elements that have been topics in this assignment accomplish a person towards becoming better at everyday things in life when it comes to scholarly work, and the topics discussed, academic misconduct, power of reflection etc are even more so helpful to a student as it allows them to grow and have a better understanding of themselves. The research used provides further understanding and statistical evidence to further support the topics involved in this assignment. Classes like study skills which teaches a student to develop these skills are essential in a student's growth and especially helpful to a first-year university student who is still trying to find the ropes of things- university is a massive step for anyone and lessons like study skills allow that extra help that everyone needs.

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