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Introduction

My experience in my academic skills class has been incredibly rewarding, and I have gained many valuable insights and skills that have significantly improved my academic abilities. The class not only taught me the foundational tools needed to succeed in my studies, but it also provided a deeper understanding of how to approach learning in an organised and effective way. This report will discuss the key skills I have developed over the course of this term, specifically in the areas of notetaking, research, and academic writing skills. Throughout the term, I have been introduced to various techniques and strategies that have not only enhanced my ability to take effective notes but also refined my research process and improved my academic writing. By exploring the methods I have learned, I will highlight how each of these skills has contributed to my academic growth, allowing me to engage with and retain information more effectively, conduct thorough research, and produce clear, well-structured written work. This report will provide an overview of the most important lessons I have learned in these areas and reflect on how I plan to apply them in future academic endeavours.

Note taking

Before taking the class, I often found it difficult to retain information and stay focused during lectures. However, in week one I was introduced to various note-taking techniques, such as the Cornell method, mind mapping, Linear, Tabular and Diagrammatic note taking which have greatly improved my ability to organise and review my notes. Additionally, the class taught me effective study strategies, which have made my studying more efficient and helped me retain information for longer periods. I especially took a liking to the Tabular notetaking technique as it provides a clear, grid like structure that divides information into columns and rows. This strategy allows for easy categorization and comparison of different concepts, making the notes more digestible. Instead of writing continuously, which can become messy or disorganised, the use of tables helps ensure that notes are neat and logically arranged which maximizes the use of available space on a page. By organising information in rows and columns, there is less wasted space compared to free form note taking. This efficiency I find especially helpful for taking notes in fast paced settings, where you need to capture a lot of information quickly. As a decorator who needs to take quick and accurate notes while interacting with customers about their quotes, tabular notetaking is an incredibly efficient method and a way I will use on future jobs to capture essential information without getting overwhelmed by lengthy, unorganised text. “Note-taking was an essential prerequisite to both knowledge and textual production in early modern Europe.” (Springer, 2015)

Finding information and Research skills

The class also gave me a deeper understanding of how to conduct research effectively. I learned how to find credible sources, navigate academic databases, and critically evaluate information. Before, I often relied on general internet searches, but now I know how to search for peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other academic resources. This has helped me build stronger arguments and provide solid evidence in my assignments. In week three I learned about researching, referencing, citing and understanding both referencing and finding correct information are both essential for ensuring that academic and research work maintains high standards of integrity, accuracy, and credibility. Referencing helps acknowledge others work, avoid plagiarism, and support arguments, while finding accurate information ensures your conclusions are valid and based on reliable evidence. Together, these practices enable researchers to contribute meaningfully to their fields and ensure that their work can be trusted and built upon by others. Referencing also ensures that the original creators of ideas, theories, or research findings are credited. This acknowledges their intellectual contributions and gives them proper recognition for their work. Without referencing, it's impossible to trace the origins of ideas, and authors may go unacknowledged. Referencing also stops plagiarism, plagiarism occurs when someone uses another person's ideas, words, or research without proper attribution. I learned referencing is the most effective way to avoid this, as it shows that you are transparently acknowledging the sources that have influenced your work. "References may be the least noticed aspect of a scientific manuscript, but their proper use brings authority, credibility, and precision to scientific manuscripts." (Cohen et al., 2007)

Academic writing skills

A significant part of the class was dedicated to improving academic writing. I learned how to structure essays and research papers more effectively, including the importance of clear introductions, well-organised body paragraphs, and strong conclusions. I also became more comfortable with academic language, tone, and style. The class emphasized the importance of coherence and logical flow, which I applied to my writing to make my ideas easier to follow. "The characteristics of academic writing which together distinguish it from other forms of writing are that it is structured, evidenced, critical, balanced, precise, objective and formal." (EAP Foundation, 2013)

Additionally, I learned the significance of constructing clear and compelling thesis statements, along with developing well-supported arguments backed by solid evidence. I now understand how to avoid ambiguous language and ensure that each sentence serves a clear purpose. Furthermore, I gained a deeper understanding of the revision process, emphasizing clarity, conciseness, and proper grammar. These techniques have not only enhanced my writing abilities but have also increased my confidence in presenting my ideas in a polished and academic manner. As a student, I have come to realise that using academic writing is essential for presenting my ideas and research in a clear, objective, and structured way. It helps me express my thoughts with precision, encourages critical thinking, and ensures that my work maintains academic integrity. By adhering to the standards of academic writing, I am able to contribute meaningfully to the broader knowledge base while improving my ability to communicate

effectively and professionally. Whether it's for essays, research papers, or class discussions, academic writing helps me build a strong foundation for producing credible, well-supported, and impactful work that can be shared within the academic community. It also boosts my confidence in presenting ideas and enables me to engage more deeply with the material, making my learning experience more enriching.

Conclusion

One of the most valuable aspects of the class was the focus on self-reflection. I learned to assess my strengths and weaknesses and set realistic goals for improvement. The process of reflecting on my progress helped me identify areas where I could improve and take proactive steps to enhance my skills. This mindset of continuous learning and self-improvement has helped me become a more motivated and confident learner. Overall, my academic skills class has been an incredibly enriching experience. The lessons I learned ranging from time management and research techniques to critical thinking and communication have equipped me with the tools to succeed academically and professionally. I now feel more confident in my ability to approach assignments, collaborate with others, and present my ideas effectively. These skills will undoubtedly continue to serve me throughout my education and beyond, making this class an invaluable part of my academic journey.

Additionally, the academic skills class has fostered a mindset of continuous improvement. I've learned to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. This mindset has helped me become more resilient in my studies and has encouraged me to approach problems with a positive, solution focused attitude. The tools and techniques I've gained will not only benefit me in my academic work but will also be applicable in various aspects of life, from managing professional tasks to handling everyday challenges. I feel better equipped to thrive in any academic or professional environment, and I am grateful for the confidence and skills this class has instilled in me.

References

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