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Reflective report

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Introduction

Reflection is a critical process of self-examination that allows individuals to evaluate their experiences and learning, fostering deeper understanding and personal growth (Smith, 2011). It is particularly important in academic settings, where reflection helps students identify strengths and weaknesses, enabling continuous improvement (Smith, 2011). The current report aims to reflect on three key academic skills: academic writing, note-taking, and research skills. Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle as the methodology, each of these topics will be individually examined to understand how they have influenced my learning process and what steps can be taken to enhance these skills further.

Academic writing

Academic writing, defined as a formal style of writing used in universities and scholarly publications, requires clarity, structure, and critical thinking (Bailey, 2011). In the context of my academic skills module, I had to complete a written examination under time constraints, which involved two tasks: first, modifying a text by using synonyms, and second, writing about a chosen topic. Given my limited previous academic experience and the fact that English is my second language, I felt anxious about performing under pressure. However, confronting this challenge allowed me to overcome my fears of the unknown, and I was able to pass the task with a score of 17 out of 30. While this was a positive outcome, I realized that I could have performed better had I taken more time to carefully read the tasks and applied a higher standard of academic writing. I did not fully achieve the structured, critical approach necessary for academic writing, where each paragraph should logically lead to a conclusion (Bailey, 2011). This experience highlighted the importance of developing a well-organized approach to writing, as it not only clarifies the author's thoughts but also ensures that the reader comprehends the message effectively. Moving forward, I plan to continue reading extensively and practicing writing in an academic style to improve my skills.

Note-taking

Note-taking is an essential academic skill that involves recording information from lectures or readings in a structured manner for future reference (Cottrell, 2019). Throughout my university classes, I have frequently taken notes to aid my learning. I have generally felt satisfied with my note-taking abilities, as I can usually refer back to my notes and easily recall what was discussed in class. However, I sometimes struggle when encountering unfamiliar terms or when there is too much information to process at once. While my notes have been useful for post-class revision, I have noticed that when I attempt to capture too much information, I sometimes end up with poorly structured notes that are less helpful later on. According to Cottrell (2019), it is important to prioritize key points and technical terms, using bullet points to maintain clarity and conciseness. Additionally, skipping linking words can help keep up with the pace of the lecture without losing the overall meaning. Reflecting on my experience, I realize that effective note-

taking is crucial for reinforcing learning and that the quality of notes can significantly impact my ability to study efficiently. To improve my note-taking skills, I will practice using bullet points more extensively and focus on capturing the essence of the lecture rather than trying to record every detail.

Research and finding information

Research involves systematically seeking out and analysing information to support academic work, and finding reliable sources is a critical part of this process. For some of my academic assessments, I needed additional information beyond what was provided in class, leading me to search for sources online. The vast array of available information was overwhelming and led to confusion about the reliability of the sources I found. On the positive side, I was able to access related information quickly, but I often doubted the credibility of what I was reading. To address this, I attempted to filter sources based on academic guidance. For example, the University of Essex (2016) suggests that platforms like YouTube and Wikipedia are generally not reliable, while academic libraries and scholarly websites such as Google Scholar are trusted sources. The CRAAP test, which evaluates sources based on currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose, is a useful tool for assessing the reliability of information (Blakeslee, 2004). This experience taught me that while the internet provides easy access to a wealth of information, discerning reliable sources requires careful consideration and the use of appropriate evaluation methods. Moving forward, I will continue to apply the CRAAP test and follow academic guidelines to ensure that the information I use in my research is trustworthy and relevant to my studies.

Conclusion

This reflective report has explored my experiences with academic writing, note-taking, and research skills, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle as a framework. Through reflection, I have identified areas where I have both succeeded and struggled. In academic writing, I learned the importance of structure and critical thinking. My note-taking experience emphasized the need for clarity and conciseness, while my research highlighted the challenges of identifying reliable sources. These reflections have provided valuable insights that will guide my future academic endeavours, helping me to continuously improve and succeed in my academic journey.

References

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