

REFLECTIVE REPORT: DEVELOPING KEY ACADEMIC SKILLS

Module: Academic Skills, LCLM 4001_London

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I. Introduction

The module, 'Academic Skills,' has been instrumental in helping me develop the skills necessary to excel in higher education. Through engaging sessions and practical activities, I improved my abilities in referencing, academic writing, and paraphrasing. This reflective report uses the Gibbs Reflective Cycle to evaluate my progress, incorporating references to demonstrate my learning journey and provide academic credibility.

II. Gibbs Reflective Cycle

The Gibbs Reflective Cycle is a well-known framework used to guide reflective practice. Developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988, it helps learners systematically analyse experiences to draw meaningful lessons (Gibbs, 1988). The cycle consists of six stages:

- *Description:* This stage involves detailing the event or situation. Questions like "What happened?" and "Who was involved?" guide this stage.
- *Feelings:* Here, individuals explore their emotional reactions, including what they thought and felt during the experience.
- *Evaluation:* This step assesses the positives and negatives of the experience, focusing on what worked well and what could have been improved.
- *Analysis:* This stage examines why certain outcomes occurred, linking them to relevant theories or frameworks to make sense of the situation.
- *Conclusion:* The insights gained in the analysis stage help identify lessons learned and their implications for future situations.
- *Action Plan:* The final step outlines specific actions to improve or address similar situations in the future.

By following these steps, Gibbs' model encourages structured reflection, helping individuals gain structured insights into their actions and develop strategies for personal and professional growth.

this reflective report, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle will be applied to analyse and evaluate my experiences.

III. Developing Academic Skills

3.1. Referencing Skills

Description

Referencing was emphasized as a critical skill for academic honesty and credibility. During the Week 5 session, we learned how to use the Harvard referencing system and practiced identifying citation errors. For example, we analysed essays to spot inconsistencies, as presented in the Week 5 presentation on 'Incorporating Sources'.

Feelings

Initially, referencing felt daunting due to the various rules and formats required for different source types. I was nervous about making errors, especially with complex sources such as conference papers. However, with practice and guidance, I gradually gained confidence.

Evaluation

Activities like correcting citation mistakes were invaluable. These exercises taught me the importance of accurate referencing in ensuring the credibility of my work. However, memorizing the rules for non-standard sources remained a challenge.

Analysis

Accurate referencing is essential to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Using tools like EndNote and referencing guides proved helpful. This aligns with the recommendation from Kennedy (2003) that proper citation not only acknowledges authors but also enforces the quality of academic work.

Conclusion

I now understand how important accurate referencing is, and I feel more confident using the Harvard style. Referencing correctly makes my work more credible and helps me avoid plagiarism by giving credit to authors. This skill will be really useful for future assignments, especially when working on more complex projects.

Action Plan

To get even better at referencing, I will start using tools like EndNote to make citations easier. I will also check referencing guides regularly to keep updated on the rules.

Finally, I will practice referencing of less common sources to make sure I am fully prepared for any task.

3.2. Academic Writing Skills

Description

Academic writing was a significant focus of the module. Characteristics such as clarity, structure, and evidence-based arguments were emphasized. One exercise involved rewriting informal passages, a task outlined in the Week 4 presentation on 'Academic Writing Continued' (EAP Foundation, 2013).

Feelings

Initially, academic writing felt challenging due to its formal tone and precise nature. I worried about maintaining coherence and integrating evidence effectively. Feedback from the lecturer provided clear guidance, increasing my confidence.

Evaluation

The most beneficial activities included analysing model essays and learning about transitions and signposting. These exercises helped me understand the importance of logical flow and clarity in academic work (The Writing Center, 2020). However, balancing formality with readability required additional effort.

Analysis

Effective academic writing is about presenting ideas logically and supporting them with evidence. Feedback on my drafts highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in using transitions to connect ideas. This aligns with the advice from the University of Melbourne (n.d.) that transitions are crucial for maintaining coherence.

Conclusion

I have significantly improved in writing clear and well-structured essays that are supported by evidence. Feedback from my teachers has really helped me understand where I was going wrong and how to improve. Now, I feel much more confident in my academic writing skills and know what I need to focus on to keep getting better.

Action Plan

To continue improving, I will start using outlines to organize my assignments before I

write. I will also read more examples of high-quality academic writing to learn from them. Finally, I will practice using transitions and signposting to make my workflow better.

3.3. Paraphrasing Skills

Description

Paraphrasing was introduced as a crucial skill for maintaining originality while incorporating sources. In Week 5, we practiced rewriting sentences to capture their essence without copying directly (Royal Literary Fund, 2020).

Feelings

At first, I found paraphrasing intimidating. I was unsure about how to avoid replicating the original structure while maintaining accuracy. However, the structured exercises provided a clear framework to practice.

Evaluation

The paraphrasing tasks helped me focus on the main ideas of a text rather than its wording. This skill is essential for synthesizing information and avoiding plagiarism. However, ensuring that paraphrased text fits naturally within my arguments remained challenging.

Analysis

Paraphrasing requires a deep understanding of the source material. This skill aligns with Kennedy's (2003) recommendation that paraphrasing involves rethinking ideas rather than merely changing words. Feedback from the lecturer helped me refine my approach, particularly in simplifying and clarifying sentences.

Conclusion

I now feel more confident in paraphrasing and understand its importance in academic work. This skill will enable me to incorporate evidence effectively while maintaining originality.

Action Plan

To improve further, I will practice paraphrasing more complex texts and identify patterns in feedback to address recurring issues.

IV. Conclusion

Reflecting on my journey through the 'Academic Skills' module, I can clearly see how it has helped me grow in areas like referencing, academic writing, and paraphrasing. Each of these skills has been essential in building my confidence and preparing me for future academic challenges. For instance, learning to reference correctly has taught me the importance of academic honesty, while improving my writing has made my ideas more structured and clearer. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, has helped me integrate sources effectively into my work while maintaining originality. Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to assess my progress has allowed me to pinpoint my strengths and identify specific areas where I can improve further. By implementing the action plans developed in this report, I aim to continue building these skills and set a solid foundation for success in my studies.

References

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