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Reflective Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report aims to evaluate my learning experience in this module by focusing on three academic skills: academic writing, referencing, and reflection. To achieve this, I will use Gibbs' model of reflection, which has six main stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and acting plan. ¹ (The University of Edinburgh, 2020)

1. Description: This initial stage involves describing the situation or experience you are reflecting upon. What happened? Who was involved? When and where did it take place?

2. Feelings: This stage is all about exploring of the emotions and thoughts during the experience. How did it feel at the time? What were the initial reactions? Identifying and acknowledging the feelings. It is very important for the understanding of the experience.

3. Evaluation: It is all about accessing the positive and negative aspects of the experience. What went well? What did not? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the actions or the situation?

4. Analysis: This stage involves deeper examination of the experience, investigating the reasons behind the actions and feelings. What factors influenced certain behavior or the outcome.

5. Conclusion: Creating conclusions based on the analysis. What has been learned from the experience? Reflection on how this experience might informed the future actions or decisions.

6. Action plan: The final stage is about planning the future actions or change. Based on the conclusions, considering what steps might be taken to improve similar situations in the future. Set specific goals or strategies for personal or professional development.

I have chosen this reflection model because it provides a structured approach that allows me to explore every aspect in detail. By moving through these stages, I can get deeper into the experiences, self-awareness, and make more informed decisions.

2. Reflection

2.1. Academic writing

Description. In week four of my course, I have learned about academic writing. This is a style of writing which has been used in academic world such as universities, colleges, and research institutions. It is including different forms of writing such as essay, research papers, reviews, articles, and reports. Academic writing is different from other styles of writing by its formal tone, clarity, objectivity, and specific standards.

Feelings. Initially, I felt overwhelmed when learning about academic writing because I did not practice it in a while, and I was not sure how to make my writing fit academic style.

Evaluation. During class, it was beneficial to learn about differences between colloquial and academic writing, and having the chance to practice creating an academic piece was particularly helpful. (see appendice 1)

Analyzing. At first, my academic writing was not up to the standard because I was still using some informal colloquialisms and abbreviations like “didn’t,” “isn’t,” and “couldn’t.” Additionally, I was unaware of importance of paraphrasing and referencing in academic writing. However, having the opportunity to learn and practice has provided me with a clearer understanding of academic writing is and how to use it effectively.

Conclusions. I have realized that academic writing is not as challenging as I initially thought. I have learned and understand the importance of researching information before starting an academic writing project, and it makes complete sense to me what the structure of academic style writing should be like.

Action plan. I need to practice more to improve the quality of my academic writing. Returning to the university’s online platform, using the resource of the university library, and reviewing my notes will help to bring my academic writing to the higher level. Because academic writing is essential for raising cri knowledge, and critical thinking. It helps to drive innovation and advance careers.

2.2. Referencing

Description. In the third week of my studies, I learned about referencing skills, which are very important for academic and professional writing. It is all about offering the details about each source used, so if the readers want to check them out or learn more, they can easily find them. Referencing helps to avoid plagiarism by giving credit to the original authors. Using an in-text citation properly, shows where the information was taken from, which makes it clear that it was not trying to pass off someone else's work as your own. There are several types of referencing styles used in academic and professional writing. I have learned about Harvard referencing style which is often used in academic writing. This style uses author-date citation and at the end of the document, bibliography or the list of sources must be provided. 2 (University of Birmingham, 2024).

Feelings. I found it interesting to learn how to reference sources for my academic writing. It was informative, but I was a bit confused why Harvard referencing style is more popular in academic writing compared to styles like IEEE, which I have used before.

Evaluation. It took me a while to remember how to reference different types of information correctly. Finding the right sources was also a challenge. But practicing in class made it easier and clearer to understand.

Analysis. Lack of knowledge and practice with referencing made me understand that I need to put in more effort to improve my skills and make referencing second nature.

Conclusions. After using Harvard referencing more, I noticed that it helps me remember where I got information from and gets me better at referencing when I write things by hand. With Harvard style, putting citation in text stops me from copying information and helps avoid plagiarism.

Action plan. As a university student, I will be doing many academic writings. Harvard referencing will be my main style because it connects what I write to the evidence behind it. To make this process faster and easier, I need to practice Harvard referencing more, which means revisiting class notes (see appendice 2) and studying the style's steps.

2.3 Reflection

1. Description. During the sixth week of our course, we focused on the topic of reflection and common models of reflection. (see appendice 3). Reflective writing is an important tool for personal grows, self-awareness, and understandings. It is like looking back on something that happened and thinking about how it made you feel and what you learned from it. Reflection helps to understand and learn from the experience. It includes exploring personal thoughts, emotions, and experiences involving critical analysis.

2. Feelings. At first, we learned about different reflection methods, and they seemed similar to me. But I found reflective thinking and writing interesting because it helped me understand my experiences better.

3. Evaluation. This topic was helpful for my personal and academic learning. Even though I struggled with thinking deeply from different perspective at first, it turned into a valuable and enjoyable process. It allowed me to analyze my experiences and plan my next steps for the future.

4. Analysis. In the beginning, I thought the simpler reflection models like Kolb's and Driscoll's were enough for me. 3 (UWTSD 2024) But later, I discovered that Gibb's reflective cycle allows for a more detailed analysis helps me understand my experiences more clearly and make conclusions and plans.

5. Conclusions. It was a great chance to explore and improve my reflective thinking and writing skills. Despite the initial challenges, I truly value the knowledge gained from this topic and the overall class experience.

6. Action plan. I plan to apply this knowledge to my future academic development and personal growth. Reflective thinking and writing have become a powerful tool for self-understanding and personal development.

3. Conclusions

Getting good at academic skills like writing, referencing, and reflecting thinking and writing is important for me and my academic and personal development. These skills help me to do well in academic institutions and life. Writing academically is all about expressing the ideas in the way that make sense. By following the rules and standards of academic writing I can share my thoughts effectively and can join in on important conversations in my field. It makes me feel more confident.

Referencing is another powerful knowledge. I will apply these skills in my future academic writing and research. Knowing how to reference properly opens opportunities for me. It is about giving credit to people whose ideas and work I use in my own writing. Doing this properly shows that I respect other's people's work and helps others check the sources I used.

Reflective thinking and writing are all about looking back on what and how I have learned. It helps to understand myself better, decide what works best for me, and make a smarter choice.

Participating in the class and practicing these skills helped me overcome my lack of confidence and doubts about applying them professionally.

I plan to keep using the academic skills I have learned, along with other abilities, in my studies and daily life. I am determined to keep progressing and improving, using my notes and university resources to achieve my future goals.

4. References

1. The University of Edinburgh (2020) 'Gibbs' Reflective Cycle' Available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle> (Accessed 29 April)
2. University of Birmingham (2024) 'Harvard (author date)' Available at: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/referencing/icite/harvard/index.aspx> (Accessed: 29 April 2024)
3. UWTSD (2024) Moodle slides, week 6 'Reflective Writing' UWTSD, London (Accessed 28 April 2024);

Appendices

1.

Academic Writing Style.

In most assignments, you need to write in an academic style. However, there is no recipe for writing a perfect assignment, and different disciplines and subject areas have their own styles. For example, writing for the sciences, humanities or social sciences require different styles. Therefore, it is vital that you learn your discipline or subject area conventions. Also, writing is an inherently personal activity and everyone develops his or her own approach. Nonetheless, there are some broadly accepted ways of writing academically.

This handbook first outlines the basic elements of academic writing. Secondly, it provides a paragraph which has been written in an informal, colloquial style, which was then rewritten in an academic style.

Academic Style.

This is difficult to define, but we can perhaps identify five technical qualities that distinguish a piece of writing 'academic'. The acronym POCES can be formed from these qualities, which are being: formal, objective, cautious, succinct, and impersonal. In addition, all academic writing should be clear, concise and precise, especially in the sciences and technology, and in reports.

Formal. This means avoiding common colloquial or spoken language. You should not use casual, spoken language in your assignments. Words like 'stuff', 'really' and 'thing' and phrases like 'stuff and stuff' are casual language. Sentence fragments that are acceptable in everyday speech, and contractions, should be avoided. Examples of contractions are 'aren't', 'isn't', 'couldn't', 'wasn't', and 'won't'. You should not use 'etc' to stand for 'et cetera'. It is better to say 'for example'. You should avoid phrasing questions so that they have a question mark at the end of the sentence.

Objective. This means standing back from others' work and your own. Three key elements are: criticising your own work as well as others' work; writing in a more impersonal or neutral style, for example, not using 'I' and including and tackling material which you disagree with or which challenges your own work. Please note that being critical can be positive as well as negative, and therefore includes agreeing with arguments, finding alternatives, or challenging current debates. However, in some fields and for some types of assignment, this type of criticality may not be appropriate or may only be used sparingly. Nonetheless, most types of assignment require you to demonstrate that you have engaged objectively with all the material, and have stood back from your own ideas, perspective, assumptions and beliefs. Please also see the section below on being impersonal.

Being critical → being objective, not negative necessarily.

Critical → without passion.

Cautious. This means not being too black and white. Academic writing is often rather cautious. This is because we are dealing with complex areas of knowledge. Beware of words like 'should', 'ought' and 'must' and think carefully before using words like 'definitely'. Academic work is open-minded and enquiring; as a student you should generally question arguments rather than being too certain. Words like 'possibly', 'probably', 'likely', 'seems', 'may' and 'could' tend to feature in good academic writing.

Succinct. This means not being wordy. (Not using too many words). Some texts might make you think that academic writing should be complex and long-winded, but in fact the opposite is true. Readers of your assignments need to understand exactly what you mean, in as few words as possible. When re-reading what you have written, you should always check that you have been as precise and concise as possible. However, you need to ensure that you have provided all the necessary information and details. You have to decide what to prioritise: what to leave in or leave out.

Impersonal. This means writing in a more impartial style. In essays and reports, you normally write in a more impersonal style, so you should avoid using 'I', 'my', or 'me'. You should also avoid using 'we', 'our' or 'us'. For example, instead of writing 'I am surprised that ... you might write 'It is surprising that ...'. There are some exceptions to this rule, for example in reflective writing assignments and portfolios. These more reflective assignments sometimes require you to evaluate your own experiences or attitudes, therefore a more personal style is appropriate.

Examples of colloquial and academic writing styles.

Colloquial Writing. - usual style. Informal style

There's a lot of arguing about the Spinnaker. Because it's so tall you can see it from all around, but does this mean it's a good thing for the economy etc? It's really late. It was meant to be ready for the Millennium (so much for the 'Millennium Tower', it's just been costing us money all that time too) and it's not going to employ as many people as lost their jobs in the dockyard over the years. And it'll take ages for them to get back the cost from people who go up it. (emotional, no references)

Academic Writing.

Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower is controversial in financial terms. At 170 metres (The Spinnaker Tower, 2014) it dominates the city's horizon and was expected to have a positive impact on the local economy. However, income from visitors to the tower, and the expected boost to the local economy from increased tourism and employment, was lost because the project was delayed several times (Gibbs, 2005, p. 14). It may take twenty-five years for income from visitors to equal the cost of construction (Dykhoft, 2005, p. 15), and the local economy will probably be unable to recoup the lost income.

(It has got referencing (citations) Formal writing.

Academic Writing

As writing for academic purposes.

- Notes - short, fast, efficient (for yourself) (Help process information; plan/structure)
- Essays - a tool for sharing and discussing ideas with other people (wider academic community)
- Reports
- Essay - an attempt to answer a question that asks you to show your knowledge of a concept

On the essay you might ask you to discuss a topic. (You need to discuss in a balanced way of both topics (not to create controversy in your own discussion).

Reports - An account of research into information about a specific topic.

Methodology: how the writer has approached his process (findings): what information they have found (conclusion): how this information may be interpreted (recommendations): suggested actions to be taken as a result of this new understanding.

2.

Understanding Referencing & Plagiarism

Who, what, when, where, why and how.

When you are asked to write an assignment on a topic, you will begin to research by reading to find the information you need.

- Your main sources will be: books, e-books, web article, journal articles
- Your assignment will contain references to the sources of information.

The references will:

- show your lecturers where you discovered this information
- whether you have understood what you have read.

Harvard (author/date system)

Referencing in your work

(Shorten version) In-text citation (Source/Reference)

doing form Reference List

Full reference (Reference list)

- Author's surname and initials
- Year of publication
- Title of book, paper or article
- And if it's a book: Place of publication
- Publisher

Use **TURNITIN** to submit all assignments

All submission **MUST** be uploaded to **TURNITIN** by **deadline** on the due date!

HARVARD REFERENCING

What would be the correct in-text citation for the book shown below?

Title: Study skills for foundation degrees

Author: Dorothy Bedford and Elizabeth Wilson

Edition: Third edition.

Publication Date: 2020

Place of Publication: Abingdon, Oxon New York: Abingdon, Oxon, New York

A) Bedford et al., 2020
B) (Dorothy et al., 2020)
C) (Bedford and Wilson, 2020)
D) Study skills for foundation degree, 2020

In the box, write the full Harvard referencing for the article details shown below:

CRAAP test (Source of info)

- Currency: - up to date
- Relevance: - importance of the information
- Authority: - is the information reliable (knowing the source)
- Accuracy: - source facts, reliability, trustworthiness
- Purpose: - reason for the information exists.

What is 'self-plagiarism'? - copying your own work.

Referencing a book

Surname/Name Year of publication Title in italics Initial/surname

Bedford, J. (2010) Doing your research project: a guide and reference if applicable Maidenhead: Open University Press

Place of publication Date Publisher

When referencing online article include the access date (when you accessed the article).

Beiley, S. (2011) Academic Writing for international students of Business, USA and Canada: Routledge

3.

What is reflection?

It is a purposeful activity in which you analyse experiences, or your own practice/skills/responses, in order to learn and improve.

Justify action
Solve problem
Changes

Assumptions
Values
Beliefs

Revisit experiences

You

What? 1
Now What? 2
So What? 3

Reflective thinking usually involves:

1. Looking back at something (something that happened)
2. Analysing the event or idea (thinking it through and from different perspectives, trying to explain)
3. Thinking carefully about what the event or idea means for you

Common Frameworks of Reflection

① **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988)** 6 stages

Initial Experience

Personal Action Plans

Conclusions (specific)

Conclusions (general)

Description

Feelings/Reactions

Evaluation

Analysis

② **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984)**

Concrete Experience (doing/having an experience)

Active Experimentation (planning/trying)

Reflective Observation (reviewing/reflecting on experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation (concluding/learning from the experience)

③ **Driscoll's Model (1994)**

Having an experience in clinical practice

Attaching the new learning from that experience in clinical practice

Now What? Thoughtful action following the event

What? A description of the event

So What? An analysis of the event

Discovering what learning arises from the process of reflection

Summarising

- Identifying the most important information from the text (short) Avoiding details.
- Requires referencing

Evaluating - what is good? - what is bad?