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## Introduction

New students' university journeys are long and difficult. Teaching basic skills and ways to develop better is crucial for every student.

In that order, this module, Academic Skills, provides students with basic knowledge for their university journey. The purpose of this report is to analyse and reflect on my experience during this term in the Academic Skills module. By applying Kolb's experimental learning cycle, I intend to reflect on note-taking skills, paraphrasing skills, and referencing skills in my day-to-day life as a student more effectively. According to McLeod (2024) "effective learning occurs through a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation" and in this report, I will explain how these three academic skills helped develop my academic skills.

## Note-Taking

Learning something new can be overwhelming, we have to listen to our professor and remember what he says. Unfortunately, there is a limit to the amount of information we can retain while paying attention to the information presented to us.

To avoid losing crucial information during class it is important to create a strategy to retain key info and note-taking is the way to do it. According to Fiona McPherson (2018) the primary benefit of taking notes, according to studies, is its impact on how information is encoded in your brain, even though most people think notes serve as a written record of information they wish to remember. In other words, taking notes is more significant than the outcome.

Following that definition, we were presented with five different types of note-taking: diagram, mind map, linear notes, tabular notes, and Cornell note-taking.

During our classes, we had an activity in which we listened to a radio segment about personal motivation. Our goal was to take notes about the conversation and answer the following three questions:

1. What are the names of the people speaking in the podcast?
2. What sport does Louise compete in?
3. What key tips for improving motivation were shared?

My notes focused on how to deal with procrastination and how to motivate oneself. I noticed that I couldn't answer those three questions. I had the name of the host but did not know the name of the guests, I knew Louise competed in sports but did not know the name of the sport and couldn't remember all the tips for improving motivation.

I reflected on the activity and noticed that my notes should create a memory guide for my studies. Even when the information is dense, I need to focus on the key information presented and not just copy what it said.

McPherson (2018) adds that "note-taking is effective to the extent that you paraphrase, organize and make sense of the information while taking notes", in other words, when taking notes, it's crucial to express things in my own words so that I can remember it better.

## Paraphrasing

When creating new academic writing, it is important to research and gather information from various sources to give our academic work more credibility. Most themes are studied by different authors, and it is important to reference them to avoid plagiarism and copyright infringement.

There are two ways for students to use work from other researchers in their body of work without plagiarism or copyright infringement: quotation and paraphrasing. Paul Penn (2020) defines a quotation as an “explicit pointer to the presence of the words of another author”, in other words, a direct copy of someone's words with quotation marks although it is of a maximum of two lines.

Paraphrasing forces researchers to use their own words, even if they don't think they write well, and allows students to use three or more lines without losing the essence of the sentence using their own words (Cottrell, 2013).

To better paraphrase a text, we need to learn how to keep the essence of the text without changing completely the sentence. For better paraphrase sentences, Cottrell (2013) adds that certain words or sentences you have 'borrowed' need to be changed, or you rearranged them. Our lecturer supplemented that throughout our classes by switching the word form, the sentence's active to passive voice, and the sentence's positive to negative tone.

To practice paraphrasing and be better at it we were presented with three exercises to apply what we learned. Most of the students, including me, felt the difficulty of the task due to English not being our first language so changing sentences from active to passive voice was challenging.

Despite this predicament, we, with the help of our lecturer, managed to understand that it requires practice to be proficient in paraphrasing a sentence without changing it completely. Implementing synonyms and word changing requires one to know the language, and developing the confidence to do it can demoralize a beginner in the English language.

It is important to develop your vocabulary to get better results in academic writing and for those who find it hard to write in their own words Cottrell (2013) says "Use your own words, even if you don't think you write well - they count for more than copied text"

## Referencing

Every academic work development should have references to boost its credibility and cite the basis for words used in their academic writing.

Showcasing which work or book a student is inspired by is crucial for his academic writing, since it is misconduct to use other's work without crediting them. Penn (2020) argued that: "Realising the importance of ensuring authors get credit for their work is half the battle, but you also need to know how to achieve this appropriately", and for that, he introduces three styles which are Harvard, APA and Orford, which are different in details but with the same goal.

At the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the style chosen is Harvard and according to Judith Bell (2010), there are several benefits to using the Harvard method, which includes the author's last name and the date, as opposed to alternative approaches. It stays away from footnotes, which are difficult to handle, and every source cited in the text is included after the report rather than one chapter at a time.

We practice the Harvard style in the classroom by identifying how we should organize our referencing using the style. We apply the logic for different sources like books, web pages, articles, journals, etc. Practising referencing exercises taught me how to properly reference my sources and in case of doubts, we can use the website "cite them right" (2023) to avoid referencing mistakes.

It was clear that the University takes academic integrity seriously and every student must abide by those rules and every academic work should be well-referenced.

## Conclusion

Every journey comes with new challenges and university is no different. It is important to create strategic methods to take and use them as guidance for studies to have a successful path. This module provides students with basic skills to achieve that.

Basic academic skills are crucial to be successful in University, I chose these three skills since I believe they are the basic for every written academic work and I believe they complement each other in helping students avoid misconduct.

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