



Module Name: Academic Skills in the Digital Era

Module Code: BMSW4013

Assessment 2: Reflective essay

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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

The shift into higher education requires a developed framework which involves the use of academic and digital competencies. This resonates for students who wish to succeed academically within an independent environment. During the initial term of university, it is crucial for students to develop core skills such as academic writing, digital literacy, time management and critical evaluation. This reflective essay will include the use of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1968) to examine the development of my academic and digital skills acquired throughout my first university term.

The experience I am reflecting on is my difficulty in maintaining motivation while completing my first academic assignment during the first weeks of my university term. The task required independent engagement with academic research, writing and referencing skills, alongside the use of digital platforms such as Moodle and the university library which was a key tool I used for my research.

Despite having access to structured lecture materials on Moodle and practice during class and independent study time, I found it difficult to begin the assignment and sustain progress. My approach was initially passive, relying on re-reading notes rather and forced motivation rather than engaging with the materials and reflecting on what I can improve. This aligns with evidence suggesting that passive study techniques are less reflective for long-term retention (Koolos et al., 2020).

During the course of the assignment, I searched and analysed different learning techniques which could help me, and I found that active recall is the most suitable for me. This method is centred on retrieving information from memory rather than simply reviewing content passively. I began incorporating this technique into my study

routine through self-questioning, exercising and recall based revision (Fjeldsoe et al., 2013)

In the beginning of my course, I experienced heavy low motivation regarding the course content as I didn't think it would be useful or relevant for me and uncertainty regarding how to approach the task and what are the right things to do. The tight deadline and the fact that assignments' deadlines from multiple modules were close, which contributed to overwhelm. As a result, my low motivation and stress led into procrastination. This reflects research indicating that task avoidance is often linked to perceived difficulty and low self-esteem. (Allen M., 2021)

On the other hand, I also felt anxious about meeting academic expectations, particularly in relation to finding relevant information and finding the relevant referencing. I felt uncertain about my ability to complete the assignment to a high standard, in relation to referencing. This uncertainty and low confidence reduced my motivation to begin writing, as I lacked confidence in my ability to produce work that met university standards.

However, a key tool such as the online library gave me the opportunity to ease my academic tasks as it contained a range of academic research I required for my assignments. The digital library contributed to finding reliable sources for my work faster and efficiently which eased of my frustration regarding the referencing.

Moreover, after adopting active recall technique, my engagement improved (Xu et al., 2024). Although the method required more effort, it enhanced my awareness of knowledge gaps, and it also increased my sense of control over the learning process. To conclude this point, the active recall revision kept me entertained and challenged my memory to make sure I understand the key points. This shift contributed to improved confidence and reduced anxiety over time. By the end of my assignments, I felt more in control of my learning. I experienced a sense of achievement in having adopted a more effective study method.

A key positive aspect of this experience was identifying and comparing the effectiveness of several learning techniques. Another key aspect is the adoption and implementing a more effective learning strategy. The use of active recall significantly improved my engagement and motivation with the material as it required me to participate actively rather than passively going over materials. These key aspects

align with research (Franzoi et al., 2025) which suggests that retrieval-based learning enhances long-term retention more effectively than re-reading or highlighting.

Moreover, a valuable aspect of my experience is becoming aware of my motivational challenges as it allowed me to begin addressing the issue rather than post pone it and ignoring it. The use of digital platforms such as Moodle and library also supported my learning by providing easy access to resources.

However, there were also noticeable weaknesses. My lack of motivation at the start of the assignment resulted in poor management and increased stress as I approached deadlines. Furthermore, a key factor that limited the effectiveness of my revision and contributed to my lack of confidence was the reliance on passive study techniques. An unexpected outcome was the moment of realisation that motivation is not solely dependent on discipline and effort but is also influenced by the methods used to study. By switching to a more active approach, I found that my motivation improved alongside my understanding. This highlighted the strong connection between cognitive engagement and motivation in academic learning.

The challenges which I experienced is a combination of ineffective study strategies, low confidence, and difficulties adjusting to independent learning at university. The heavy reliance on less effective study techniques, instead of techniques which required more mental effort, limited my understanding. Research shows that these common strategies used by students are less reliable than active approaches (Rea et al., 2022). This explains why my engagement improved after adopting this technique.

In contrast, active recall involves engaging your memory, which strengthens understanding and improves long-term retention. Studies show that by challenging your memory through practice, it improves learning more effectively than repeated exposure to material (Al-Thaqib et al., 2018).

On the other hand, cognitive factors alone cannot fully explain my experience. By looking at my lack of motivation from another perspective, it is clear that it also effected my confidence in completing academic work as I doubted my ability to

succeed. Research indicates that low confidence is associated with procrastination and avoidance (Ramadhani et al., 2026). This resulted in a cycle I got stuck where lack of confidence led to avoidance, which then reduced progress and reinforced my personal doubts.

Overall, the experience occurred as a result of interacting factors including ineffective study methods, low confidence and limited self-regulation, all of which improved through adopting a more active and structural approach.

To conclude my reflection, there is a number of things I could have done differently. An initial step would be planning my assignments in a detailed manner from the start. To make the workload feel less overwhelming and reduce the stress I felt near deadlines, I would have to break the tasks of my work into smaller steps and create a timetable.

A second step would be to implement an active learning strategy sooner. Using techniques such as self-testing, spaced repetition and summarising ideas in my own words would give me the benefit of understanding the material faster and feel more confident. An additional step would be reaching out for help earlier. Talking to tutors, lecturers or classmate could have eased some of my uncertainty about academic expectations or areas where I had self-doubt. A key factor such as getting early feedback is something I learned is essential and has the authority to give you confidence and help you avoid mistakes before they become habits.

Finally, I could have made better use of my digital tools. Digital tools such as Moodle, online referencing guides and online libraries are tools which in present I see highly effective and reliable. Moreover, early use of the digital tools provided could have given me the opportunity to feel like I have the control and also feel less frustrated.

Looking back with my present perspective, I acknowledge that the combination of careful planning, active study techniques, support and digital resources would have made my experience smoother and would also increase my productivity.

Moving forward, I intend to approach assignments in a structured and smart way. A first thing to accomplish that would be to create a timetable for each task to break it into small and achievable tasks in order to motivate myself and not look at my work as a difficult task. This would also help me avoid procrastination.

Secondly, I will continue to use active learning techniques. Summarising ideas and self-testing are factors which have proven me that are effective in finalising my work. I intend to reflect weekly on what is working and what isn't in order to adapt my methods if needed.

Finally, I will attempt to keep an eye on my motivation and mental wellbeing. When completing tasks, I plan to use short breaks with focused study intervals. Moreover, I will also take a moment to reflect on my progress in order to adjust if I feel stuck.

By following this plan, I plan to stay motivated, feel more confident and learn effectively. My goal is not finishing assignments, but to develop habits and skills that will help me in the future.

SMART TIMETABLE:

goal	specific	measurable	achievable	Relevant	Time- bound
Improve study planning	Break assignments into smaller tasks with a timetable	Track each task weekly	Start one assignment at a time	Help reduce stress and procrastination	For all assignments this term
Use active recall/spaced repetition	Apply questioning and recall exercises	Measure accuracy weekly by reviewing	Practice at least 30 mins per day	Helps with long term memory and understanding	Throughout the semester
Maximise digital tools	Use online library	Number of reliable sources found/properly cited	Schedule time aside for research	Supports high quality academic work	Complete research before assignment draft
Monitor motivation	Apply focused study intervals	Reflect in checklist	Apply techniques daily	Prevents burnout	Before submission deadline

Seek feedback	Consult tutors earlier	Track feedback and actions taken	Contact tutor weekly	Improves confidence	Review progress weekly
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