Skills and qualities that support academic study

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INTRODUCTION

- Study skills are a range of different strategies that help individuals learn and take in new information quickly and effectively (Ball, 2011). University College Cork (no date) also describes these as strategies that assist in spending time efficiently, making the most of resources and fulfilling potential in academia.
- Effective study skills allow individuals to learn more effectively, strengthen knowledge and build confidence, leading to more desired outcomes, for example better marks (Zilionis and Kaiser, 2022). Cotrell (2013) also reinforces that study skills allow students to get better marks, leading to greater success in employment. She reinforces how it saves time and allows individuals to be in control of their studies, making the most out of their time at university (Cottrell, 2013).
- Study skills are transferable skills that can be used in any module or course, as well as the workplace (Grey, 2012). Transferable skills are universal - they are not confined to a specific task and are flexible in that they can be applied to other environments (Denicolo and Reeves, 2014).
- Some examples of study skills include research skills, note taking, critical thinking, problem solving, time management and communication skills (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).
- The CARR technique can be used to reflect on current skills and practices, and assist in identifying areas for improvement (Ingham, 2020).

ORGANISATION

- Organisational skills refer to the capability of using time and resources efficiently to achieve desired goals and outcomes (Cambridge Dictionary, no date).
- Examples of organisational skills include time management, prioritizing and goal setting (Indeed Editorial Group, 2023).
- According to University of Nebraska Omaha (no date), organisational skills are important as it means students can meet deadlines, reduce feelings of stress and increase free time.
- The University of Salford (no date) also highlights the importance of organisation suggesting that it allows individuals to priories daily tasks, without exhaustion or overworking. Much like the University of Nebraska Omaha (no date), they propose that organised individuals are able to meet deadlines and arrive on time for meetings leading to academic and workplace success (The University of Salford, 2023).
- A study by Gambill, Moss and Vescogni (2008) on the impact of study skills and organisational methods on student achievement reinforces the importance of organisational skills, with results showing that students with poor organisational skills, in particular poor time management, resulted in lower grades.
- Organisational skills can be developed by making lists, studying efficiently, continuing to partake in fun activities, prioritising and thinking ahead (Zorn, 2019).

CRITICAL THINKING

- According to Cotrell (2018) critical thinking is an activity based on cognition, where knowledge and understanding is acquired through thought and using the mind. To become an effective critical thinker, Cottrell (2018) states that individuals must be attentive, be able to categories and separate information and have sound judgement.
- Critical thinking allows students to make judgements about information and their sources to form personal views and present different perspectives more clearly (University of Edinburgh, 2023).
- To become a critical thinker, individuals should consider who, what, why, when, and how when evaluating sources of information (University of Edinburgh, 2023) .
- The University of Edinburgh (2023) suggest that there are six aspects to critical analysis. These include identify, judge, evaluate, synthesise, conclude and present.
- Raj et al. (2022) and University of the People (2020) propose that critical thinking skills increase creativity and reflection.
- Despite Res' (2019) study which argues that there is no relationship between critical thinking and academic achievement. D'Alessio, Avolio and Charles' (2019) study suggests that critical thinking has a positive impact on the academic performance of students.
- Elder and Paul (1996) state that there are six levels of critical thinkers. These include: the unreflective thinker, the challenged thinker, the beginning thinker, the practicing thinker, the advanced thinker and the master thinker.

(Ratner, 2020)

REFERENCING

- Referencing can be described as an action of recognising the sources of information used in academic study (Aberystwyth University, 2023).
- Referencing allows the reader to follow up on information, avoids plagiarism, shows the extent of the research undertaken by the student and that ideas are based on academically sound sources, making writing more persuasive (Aberyswtyth University, 2023).
- Referencing should be used when taking ideas from: books, journals, websites, videos, newspapers and so on. Referencing is also required when using any images or diagrams (University of New South Wales, no date).
- Much like Aberyswtyth University (2023), Ali (2016) argues that half of UK university students are losing marks for not referencing properly, highlighting how it is a basic exercise which has an impact on academic success.
- The University of New South Wales (no date) states that students should ensure that all sources used when researching for an assignment are recorded. By taking note of these as students work their way through an assignment, they are less likely to miss or forget the source of the information (University of New South Wales, no date).

CONCLUSION

- In summary, all skills are linked and allow individuals to succeed in any role or setting as they are transferable (Cottrell, 2013).
- Effective study skills also lead to better grades at university (Routledge, 2020).
- Skills are developed over time, with reflection and future planning (Cotrell, 2013).

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