

# Academic Skills

Module code: LCLM 4001 LON

Reflective Report

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## 1. Introduction

This report aims to reflect on my experiences in enhancing academic skills during a university module. It focuses on improvements in note-taking, paraphrasing, and summarizing, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle as a framework. Gibbs' model provides a structured method for reflection, allowing me to examine my experiences comprehensively through the stages of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action planning (Gibbs, 1988). This framework supports ongoing learning by promoting a deeper understanding of experiences and facilitating systematic development. The academic skills discussed in this report are essential for achieving success in higher education, and the reflection process will show how I have progressed in these areas throughout the module.

## 2. Reflective Report on Academic Skills Development Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

### 2A. Note-Taking Skills

At the start of the module, my note-taking approach was unorganized. I would write down large amounts of information without determining its importance, which led to lengthy notes that were hard to review. I struggled to identify key points and often felt overwhelmed during revision.

This situation left me feeling frustrated and unmotivated. Despite attending classes, I frequently missed important details that were crucial for assignments and exams. My inability to create clear, useful notes negatively impacted my confidence and academic performance.

| Cornell Notes                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Topic/ Objective:<br><b>Purpose of Note taking</b>                             | Name:<br>Date: <b>2023-06-04</b>                                                                                                                                          |
| Essential Question:<br><b>What are different perspectives for note taking?</b> |                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Questions/ Key Points:                                                         | Notes:                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Learning</b>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- new skills acquired</li><li>- lessons learned from retrospectives</li></ul>                                                       |
| <b>Performance Reviews</b>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- detailed record of achievements</li><li>- projects delivered or contributed</li><li>- self assessment of goals achieved</li></ul> |
| <b>Research</b>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- collect data and facts</li><li>- save reference materials</li><li>- write conclusions</li></ul>                                   |
| <b>Development</b>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- brainstorm new ideas</li><li>- keep notes on progress</li></ul>                                                                   |
| <b>Customer</b>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- keep notes on discussions</li><li>- record requests, complaints</li><li>- validate needs</li></ul>                                |
| <b>Operations</b>                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- document workflows/ process</li><li>- write How to guides</li></ul>                                                               |
| <b>Product/ Service</b>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- capture requirements</li><li>- document use cases</li></ul>                                                                       |

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notebook

Figure 1. Note taking  
Source: <https://medium.com/>

Upon reflection, it became evident that my method lacked strategy. By focusing too much on capturing everything, I missed the opportunity to process and organize the information effectively.

As McPherson (2018) suggests, effective note-taking involves understanding and summarizing information in one's own words, rather than merely recording it. This method not only aids retention but also encourages active engagement with the material being studied, which is crucial for deeper learning.

To address this issue, I explored methods like the Cornell note-taking system, which divides notes into sections for key ideas, details, and summaries (Pauk & Owens, 2010). I also began reviewing my notes immediately after classes to reinforce understanding. Over time, I developed a habit of prioritizing main ideas and structuring my notes logically. Additionally, I experimented with color-coding my notes to differentiate between topics and themes, which made them visually clearer and easier to navigate during revision.

Moving forward, I plan to use digital tools such as mind-mapping software to visually organize complex concepts. Additionally, I will set aside regular time to revise and condense my notes, ensuring they remain relevant and useful for future reference. Regular self-assessment of my notes will also help me identify any gaps in understanding and address them promptly.

## **2B. Paraphrasing Skills**

Paraphrasing posed a challenge when synthesizing information from various sources for assignments. Initially, I would change individual words but retain the structure of the original text, leading to unintentional plagiarism. This problem was highlighted when a tutor commented that my paraphrasing lacked originality and did not demonstrate a deep understanding of the material.

This feedback was difficult to accept but necessary for my growth. I felt anxious about academic misconduct and frustrated by my inability to express ideas in my own words. However, it motivated me to improve my paraphrasing skills. I realized that effective paraphrasing requires not only rewording but also a thorough understanding of the original content and its relevance to the discussion. Developing this skill is especially important for integrating evidence seamlessly into academic writing, which strengthens arguments and demonstrates comprehension.

According to Bailey (2017), successful paraphrasing involves restructuring sentences, altering emphasis, and integrating the content into one's argument. This requires critical reading and analysis to fully grasp the meaning of the text. My initial struggles stemmed from reading texts superficially, which hindered my ability to paraphrase effectively. Additionally, I realized that inadequate planning before paraphrasing often led to disorganized and incoherent writing.

To improve, I adopted a step-by-step approach. I began breaking down texts into key ideas, rewriting them in my own words, and comparing them with the original to ensure accuracy. I also practiced paraphrasing short excerpts and sought feedback from peers. Over time, this practice enhanced my confidence and ability to convey ideas clearly. Another helpful strategy was to explain the concepts aloud in my own words before attempting to write them down, which ensured I truly understood the material.

In the future, I will continue refining this skill by summarizing content before paraphrasing and using tools like grammar checkers to ensure coherence. I also plan to incorporate critical reading techniques to deepen my understanding of source materials. Regular practice will help me integrate this skill into my academic writing naturally.

## 2C. Summarizing Skills

Summarizing has been an essential skill for managing the extensive readings required in my modules. Initially, I found it challenging to condense lengthy texts into concise summaries that captured the core ideas. My summaries were often too detailed, making them less useful for revision.

This issue caused frustration as I worried about losing important information by oversimplifying the content. However, I recognized that summarizing is crucial for efficient study and comprehension. Effective summarizing helps identify the main arguments and discard irrelevant details, a process that enhances critical thinking and information management.

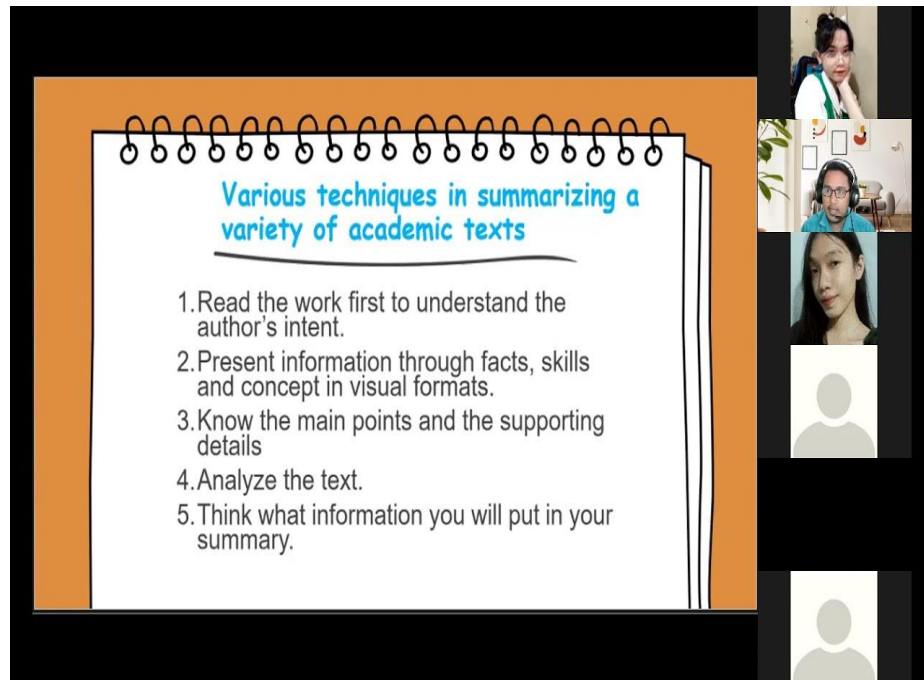


Figure 2. Summarizing techniques  
Source: <https://supersassandscienceclass.com/>

Bailey (2017) explains that summarizing requires a clear understanding of the material to ensure that the essence of the text is conveyed accurately. My initial difficulty lay in determining what information was essential and what could be omitted. Over time, I realized that this skill is closely linked to reading comprehension and analysis. Additionally, summarizing complex academic articles required me to focus on the author's purpose, methodology, and conclusions rather than getting lost in minor details.

To improve, I started using active reading strategies, such as highlighting key points and writing brief summaries after each chapter or article. I also practiced creating progressively shorter summaries, beginning with a paragraph and condensing it into a sentence. This exercise helped me focus on the most critical aspects of the text. Another technique I found helpful was comparing my summaries with those written by classmates, which provided insights into different perspectives and interpretations of the same material.

Moving forward, I will integrate summarizing into my study routine by regularly summarizing readings and lecture notes. I also plan to seek feedback from tutors to ensure my summaries are accurate and meaningful (Cottrell, 2019). I aim to use summarizing as a tool for planning essays and reports, as it helps distil large amounts of information into manageable sections.

### 3. Conclusion

Reflecting on my academic skills development through Gibbs' Reflective Cycle has been a valuable experience. This process has allowed me to critically evaluate and improve my note-taking, paraphrasing, and summarizing abilities. By applying this model, I have identified areas for improvement and developed strategies for continued growth. Effective note-taking now enables me to engage with information meaningfully, paraphrasing skills have improved my ability to communicate ideas clearly while avoiding plagiarism, and summarizing has enhanced my capacity to distil complex information. These skills will continue to support my academic success, and I plan to refine them further through ongoing practice and feedback.

### 4. References

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