

BMSW4001: Academic and Employability Skills

ACE Practical Portfolio

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Executive Summary

A practical portfolio is prepared for representing the importance of employability and academic skills in the workplace. The portfolio is divided into two tasks, an individual presentation and a report. Task 1 or individual presentation has elaborated academic and employability skills with a variety of tools and techniques. On the other hand, task 2 or report has covered three major topics along with public speaking/presentation skills. A model of reflection has been applied for analysing these four topics in the report. Moreover, the ways of further improving these significant skills have been discussed at the end of the report.

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Task 1: Report

1. Introduction

Employability and academic skills are important for the workplace because employers seek these abilities while recruiting employees. The current report is based on a model of reflection and its application. The three major topics selected are time management/organising study, academic writing, and referencing. Along with that, the fourth important topic is related to public speaking/presentations. With the help of the application of the chosen model of reflection, all these four topics are going to be analysed in depth. In addition, the chosen or recognised model of reflection is Kolb's learning cycle. Moreover, for more improvement in these four key areas, individual practical strategies are identified.

2. Findings

2.1 Topic 1: Time management/Organising study

Understanding: Time management or organising study is about planning proper schedules to ensure the completion of all learning materials effectively (Port, 2022). In this module, I have understood that the ability to manage time is not only important for academic sessions but also for professional development. I have realised that the way I organise my study materials will represent how efficient I am in sorting my professional responsibilities in the future. The module has helped me learn the significance of organisation or time management skills in strengthening my possibility to become a good leader.

Reflection on usefulness: Time management or organising study has been useful to me in terms of completing academic research studies in teams. For example, while developing a group research project, I have been capable of finishing my task within allocated time so that my classmates can complete their tasks and we can submit the project on time, as a whole. What I already knew about this topic is that time management or organisation skills come in the big list of academic and employability skills. By the means of organisation skills, an individual can maintain a systematic way in their working activities (Bangor, 2020).

On the other hand, with the help of time management skills, people may play the role of good organiser (Sheffield, 2022). Thus, by considering these aspects, I would like to state that organisation and time management skills are interlinked. The learning I undertook outside the classroom is the future requirement of these skills in my professional development. I have

identified that these skills are revolving around self-management, which is essential to achieving a managerial position as a career path in the future. Hence, I will make sure to keep enhancing these skills and abilities.

2.2 Topic 2: Academic Writing

Understanding: Academic writing is associated with the way of presenting structured, focused, concise, clear, and backed-up evidence (Leeds, 2022). In the module, I understood that the main purpose of academic writing is to aid my understanding of reading and learning. I have identified that for academic writing, maintaining a formal style and tone is indeed essential. However, I have recognised that academic writing should not be complex, with the use of long sentences, and difficult vocabulary. This module has helped me learn the importance of academic writing in developing the ability to write professional reports.

Reflection on usefulness: Academic writing has been useful to me in creating a number of textual presentations. Some of them include an annotated bibliography, literature review, research proposals, business reports, and essays. I already knew that academic writing is one of the academic skills, which can help me develop my ability to write professional reports, letters, and other similar textual contents. Academic writing is involved in shaping the non-verbal communication skills of individuals from high school and university days (Kramer, 2022). I have learnt that the use of simple language and vocabulary along with small sentences are necessary for academic writing due to the minimised possibility of errors.

The simple but formal style and tone in academic writing help both readers and writers to understand particular topics, concepts, or other similar aspects (Sheffield, 2022). The learning I undertook outside the classroom is that I can develop my professional writing skills by improving my academic writing skills continuously. By developing these skills, I will be capable of making formal yet easily understandable informational content. For example, as a marketing manager in the future, I can write and forward simple and formal emails to my subordinates to update them with the latest information in digital marketing.

2.3 Topic 3: Referencing

Understanding: Referencing is about acknowledging the sources in a body of academic writing and linking them to a list of cited sources. The acknowledgement in the body of academic writing is called a citation, whereas, the list of cited sources is termed a reference list (NU, 2022). In this module, I have understood that referencing is indeed essential to portray the authenticity and reliability of a written piece of academic writing. I have realised that referencing

allows us to give support to a written piece by the means of the key findings and conclusions identified in existing literary sources.

Reflection on usefulness: Referencing has been useful to me in giving significant support to my projects, assignments, reports, and essays I made throughout the academic sessions. For example, while developing research studies, I have made an individual section of the literature review. For composing a literature review, I have gathered a large number of academic journal articles. Through these articles, my core focus has been to give solid support to my literature review by acknowledging the authors of the articles in the body of the literature review and placing the sources in a compact and formal format in the list of references.

Three basic types of referencing can be Harvard, APA (American Psychological Association), and MLA (Modern Languages Association) system (TOU, 2021). I already knew about the Harvard system of referencing as I have used this particular type in most of my pieces of academic writing. As academic essays mostly revolve around the literary background, the use of referencing and citing is the maximum in such writings (Leeds, 2022). The learning I undertook outside the classroom is that ensuring reliability and authenticity is important for not only academic writing but also professional writing and thus, I will use this concept in the future.

2.4 Topic 4: Public speaking and giving presentations

Understanding: Public speaking and giving presentations are the act of presenting an idea in front of the public using a good vocal tone (Indeed, 2021). In the module, I understood that representing personal thought processes is easier with the help of the use of PowerPoint presentations. I can either add my voice to these presentations or I can speak and make the audience understand what my concept is.

Reflection on individual presentation: Through the individual presentation in week 9, I have portrayed my ability to speak and present my knowledge of academic and employability skills. With the help of different tools, I have developed an in-depth analysis of my knowledge and understanding. I have used many images in the presentation to justify both textual and pictorial understanding of academic and employability skills. I also have included a tabular text in the presentation to speak out my approach to further developing these skills. Moreover, I have tried to maintain a limited number of presentation slides to represent my understanding compactly.

3. Analysis

3.1 Brief explanation of model of reflection

Kolb's learning cycle: Kolb's learning cycle is one of the widely applied models of reflection. According to Kolb, learners create knowledge by interacting with others in the environment (Growth Engineering, 2021). The principle of this model is that knowledge is created with the experience's transformation in the process of learning. There are four important stages in the process of learning, as per Kolb's perception. The stages are revolving around the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (IEL, 2021).

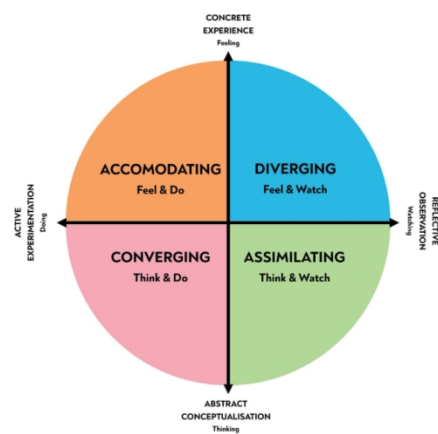


Figure1: Kolb's learning cycle

(Source: Brown, 2022)

A learner experiences something new in the stage of concrete experience. The learner reflects on this experience in terms of existing knowledge in the stage of reflective observation. This reflection results in a modification of existing knowledge in the abstract conceptualisation stage. Finally, the modified knowledge fuels future experimentation in the active experimentation stage (UPS, 2022).

3.2 Topic 1: Time management/Organising study

By applying Kolb's learning cycle, it can be analysed that I have encountered an experience of time management/organising study in this module, representing the concrete experience stage. My existing knowledge of time management and organisation skills has helped me reflect on my learning, showing reflective observation stage. In terms of the abstract conceptualisation stage, I have identified that I need to improve these skills with the help of self-study or external support

(for example, the support of my peers and tutors). The active experimentation stage has helped identify the futuristic requirement of these skills in professional life (CFI, 2022).

3.3 Topic 2: Academic Writing

Through the application of Kolb's learning cycle, it can be analysed that the module has enabled the experience of the significance of academic writing, indicating a concrete experience stage (Coventry, 2022). The reflective observation stage is when my existing knowledge of formal writing skills has helped me reflect on my understanding of academic projects and assignments. In case of the abstract conceptualisation stage, I have recognised to further improve (with training courses available) these skills for bettering my way of formal writing. Moreover, I have realised the role of formal writing in enhancing my professional development through the active experimentation stage.

3.4 Topic 3: Referencing

With the application of Kolb's learning cycle, it can be analysed that this module has helped me experience the importance of referencing in academic writing, showing the concrete experience stage. The existing knowledge of acknowledging authors has helped reflect on the understanding of referencing in the reflective observation stage (UWE, 2022). The abstract conceptualisation stage is when I have identified that I will keep improving my referencing skills by developing knowledge of APA and MLA referencing types. For the active experimentation stage, I have understood that these skills will help authenticate the statistical or non-statistical data I will use in business reports.

3.5 Topic 4: Public speaking and giving presentations

Based on the application of Kolb's learning cycle, it can be analysed that in the concrete experience stage, I have experienced the role of pitching ideas publicly through presentation tools like PPT. In the reflective observation stage, my existing knowledge of creating PPTs with relevant pictures and bullets has helped me prepare a 10-slide PPT in week 9. The abstract conceptualisation stage has pushed to continuously improve these skills for both academic and professional purposes (Kessler, 2022). Moreover, the active experimentation stage has supported me understand these skills needed for making professional PPTs of sales and profits.

4. Further improvement

- In order to improve my **time management/organising study** skills, I will concentrate on the approach of mentorship from my tutors and peers.
- For improving **academic writing** skills, my focus is on joining online training courses on how to become more efficient in writing formal formats of texts.

- In case of improving **referencing** skills, I will make sure to give paramount importance to self-study by researching online (for example, authentic websites and journal articles that define what referencing is) and offline (for example, academic books on how to cite and reference) sources of reference.
- To improve **public speaking/presentation** skills, my strategy is to work on my body language and prepare the talking or pitching points to ensure characteristic activeness while giving presentations.

5. Conclusion

From the findings and analysis, it can be concluded that time management or organisation of study, academic writing, and referencing skills come in the category of employability and academic skills. The report has elaborated on the three chosen topics with their usefulness. The fourth topic has also been discussed from the reflective context of the individual presentation in week 9. Kolb's learning cycle has been briefly explained and applied to analyse all the four key topics throughout the report. Moreover, at the end of the report, different strategies for more improvement of these skills have been figured out for continuous learning and development.

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