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Module code : LCLM4001

Module : Academic Skills

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Introduction

In this report I will discuss my learning experiences from this academic skills module subject.

The module “note-taking” is an essential academic skill which has helped me organise my thoughts into words, aiding my ability to keep information reflect and analyse materials in class.

Reflection is a critical skill for university students because it involves deeply analysing experiences to find strengths, recognise weaknesses, and develop more skills for improvement¹.

¹ Boud, D., Keogh, R. and Walker, D. (2013) Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning. London: Routledge.

Description of experiences

My learning focused on note taking and paragraph writing, which helped me develop many more skills.

Note taking is a skill that requires to write down information, organise ideas

To improve learning and retention of information (Makany, Kemp & Dror, 2009)²

² Makany, T., Kemp, J. and Dror, I. (2009) 'Optimising the use of note-taking as an external cognitive aid for increasing learning', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 40(4), pp. 619–635.

Personal reflection

Note-taking was such an important skill I have learned in this module because it allowed me to capture essential ideas efficiently, review material later, and engage more actively with materials by participating in class for example the notes I took on the definition of the skill of note taking allowed me to explain in class what it meant and also remember it by heart.

Additionally in one of my tasks I tried summarising a text I found it hard to tell which points were important and which were extra details.

After talking with my classmates and getting feedback from my tutor, I learned to focus on the main ideas and use abbreviations and symbols. This made my notes easier to use later.

paragraph writing is another skill I have learned it pushed me to think more critically about the structure and quality of my writing, which improved the clarity of my academic work and gave me more confidence in expressing my ideas and putting my thoughts into words.

Paragraph writing is the skill of organising sentences around a single idea and linking them logically to create clear and coherent writing.

Evaluation

During the module, I practised turning my notes into paragraphs.

At first, I found it hard to write clear topic sentences and link my ideas together. After rewriting my paragraphs and talking with my classmates, I learned how to make my writing clearer, better organised, and easier to understand with consistent practice and help from my tutor in class.

Looking back at this module, I can see what went well and what was harder for me. With note taking, using the Cornell method helped me organise information and focus on the main points.

For example, I was able to pick out the important ideas from a text and write them clearly in my notes.

This made it easier to study later and gave me more confidence.

However, during timed listening activities, I tried to write everything, and my notes became messy.

This showed me I need to practise summarising quickly and choosing the most critical information.

Analysis

With paragraph writing, I used my notes to create clear and organised paragraphs.

In class exercises, I sometimes struggled with weak topic sentences and ideas that did not flow well.

After rewriting my paragraphs and talking with classmates, I improved the structure and clarity of my writing.

Overall, these experiences helped me see what strategies work best for me and what I need to improve, such as writing notes faster and linking ideas better in paragraphs.

The things that went well in this module mostly happened because I practised a lot and tried strategies that worked for me.

For example, with note taking, using the Cornell method helped me organise information and focus on the main points.

Research shows that structured note taking helps students understand and remember information better (Makany, Kemp & Dror, 2009).

This was true where my notes became easier to use for studying and assignments.

Sharing ideas with classmates also helped me see several ways to take notes and learn new techniques.

This made me more confident in my learning.³

Some things did not go so well because I was still learning how to manage time and choose what is important.

For example, in timed listening tasks, I tried to write down everything and my notes became messy.

Research suggests that students can get overloaded if they try to capture too much information at once (Piolat, Olive & Kellogg, 2005). ⁴

I felt the same and realised I need to practise picking out key points quickly and using abbreviations.

With paragraph writing, I sometimes had weak topic sentences and ideas that did not flow well because I had not planned properly before writing. Rewriting my paragraphs and talking with classmates helped me see how structure improved clarity and made my ideas easier to understand.

These experiences taught me that academic skills improve with practice, feedback, and reflection.

My strengths are being willing to try new strategies, learn from feedback, and organise information once I know what is important.

My areas to improve are summarising faster during note taking and planning paragraphs better so my writing flows smoothly.

To keep improving, I plan to review my notes after lectures, practise writing paragraphs from them, and keep reflecting on what works best for me. This will help me feel more confident and get better at my academic work in the future.

my own experience of using these techniques has been especially important to my personal progress and growth I made in the classroom.

³ University of Leeds (2020) 'Academic writing: How to incorporate evidence'. Available at: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/14011/writing/106/academic_writing/4 (Accessed: 1 November 2020).

⁴ Piolat, A., Olive, T. and Kellogg, R.T. (2005) 'Cognitive effort during note taking', *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 19(3), pp. 291–312.

Conclusion

In this report, I have reflected on my learning in the Academic Skills module, especially note-taking and paragraph writing.

I explained how using the Cornell method and practising structured paragraphs helped me organise information, understand my work better, and express my ideas more clearly and develop more as a student.

I also talked about challenges, like struggling with fast note taking and linking ideas in paragraphs, and how feedback and working with classmates helped me improve.

Overall, this module has been particularly useful for my learning, giving me more confidence and showing me the importance of practising, reflecting, and improving my skills for future studies and growth as a student.