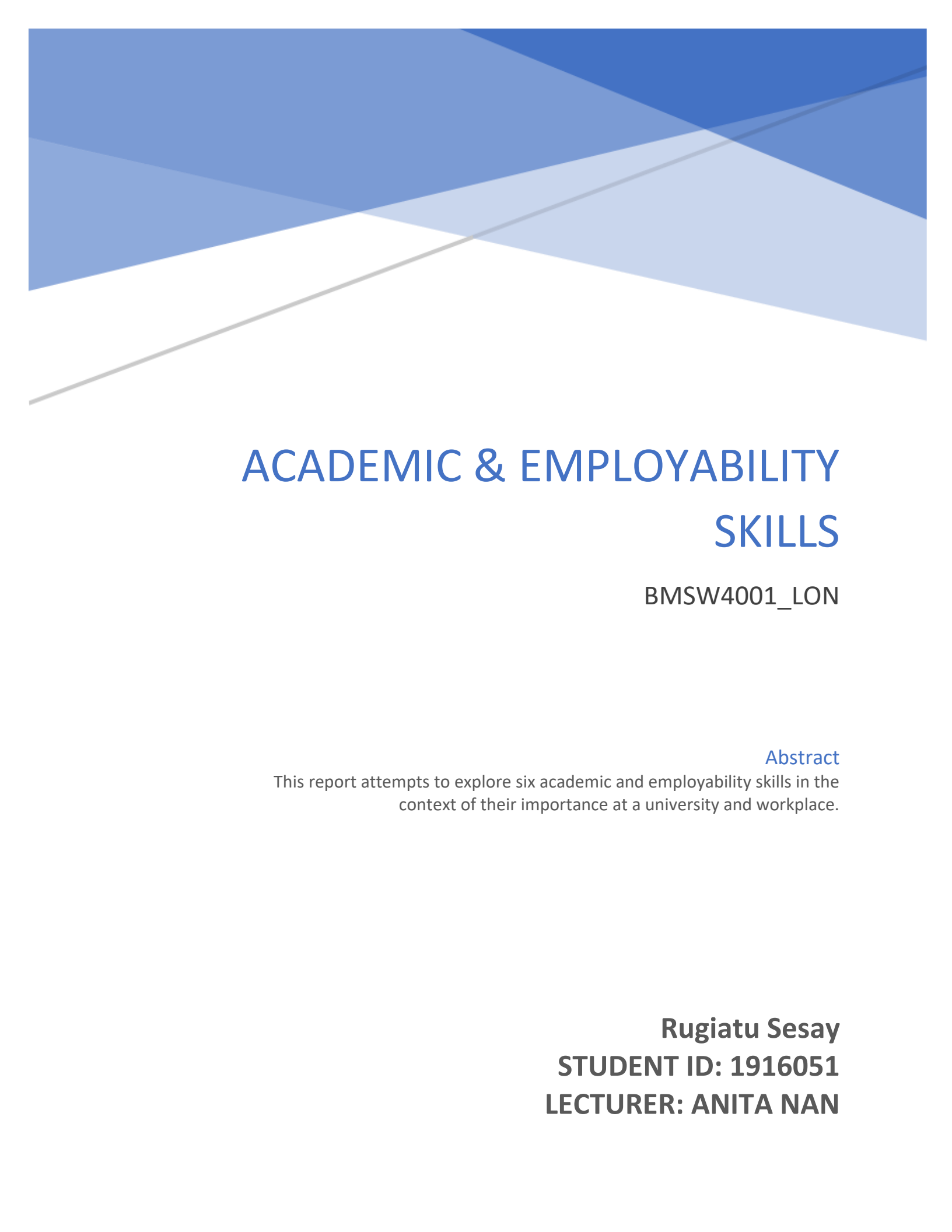




ACADEMIC & EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

BMSW4001_LON

Abstract

This report attempts to explore six academic and employability skills in the context of their importance at a university and workplace.

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INTRODUCTION

There are numerous types of academic and employability skills vital for advancement in career and personal development.

Both skills are intertwined, and they can be developed and taught to individuals at any given time either at school or the workplace. (Robinson 2000).

This paper attempts to explore six academic and employability skills in the context of how useful they are at a university and workplace as well as an analysis of whether I possess these skills.

To provide the underlying framework for discussion, it is primarily vital to consider the following questions: -

- What employability and academic skills do I possess and what skills do I need to develop?
- Why are these skills important at work or at university?

ACADEMIC SKILLS

Academic skills are parts of behavior adopted by students while studying that are obligatory to function successful at the level of higher education and primes towards development of employability skills including problem solving, effective communication and creativity. According to Cleeve 2018, academic skills inspire students to develop into proficient learners and are essential for success in any career. It comprises of fundamental skills, such as academic writing, presentation skills and referencing, which strengthen more complex skills, such as critical thinking and reflective practice. Some of these academic skills require more attention and development for example communication and data analysis. According to ACTE 2010, students need initial academic knowledge particularly in math and English language to assist them in pursuing education and career without remediation which need to be applied in context especially in authentic situations experienced in their careers.

Time Management Skills

Time management is defined as the method of organizing and planning the allocation of time successfully between specific activities. Lexico 2020 defines “time management as the ability to use one’s time effectively or productively, especially at work”. It encompasses a variety of other skills that help someone handle time in the best appropriate way.

Some of these skills require a great deal of organization, prioritization, planning, delegation, stress management, setting goals and communication. Staying organized (retaining an up-to-date calendar, capability to discover certain documents easily, taking conscientious notes) can help maintain a clear-cut picture of what you need to complete and when. (Indeed 2020). Prioritization and planning are crucial to time management as you can accomplish tasks faster and efficiently especially when you stick to a schedule. Setting goals like preparing a task plan or to-do-list allows prioritization for realization and accomplishment of end goals. For example, embarking on a research, setting both short and long-term goals can help the overall goal achievable and research work manageable.

This skill is important in the workplace because it helps you work smarter by having a proper structure which enables you accomplish important career goals, achieve greater productivity and efficiency, experience less stress thereby improving your career and increase opportunities for advancement including creativity, proper management, organization and proactivity in tasks.

This skill is essential at the university as it can help you manage your social activities alongside your busy program of study thereby ensuring completion of schoolwork or assignments in a timely manner with ease and less anxiety and stress thereby contributing to one's overall success and performance. It boosts student's morale, confidence, planning and better forecasting approach to life.

Research and Analytic Skills

According to NUIG 2020, research and analytic skills indicate the capability to investigate, detect, obtain, manage, and assess the utilization of current material available that is pertinent to a topic. Academic research is a specialized type of research: a process of exhaustive and systematic investigation into some area of study.

It encompasses intensive search, investigation, and critical analysis, mostly in response to a research question or hypothesis. It also involves a lot of reading and data collection to support research argument, paying attention to detail, taking notes, logical reasoning, in-depth analysis of collected data, accuracy, time management, problem-solving, drawing conclusions and communicating results. There are different types of researches including qualitative, quantitative, analytic, experimental, etc. Research and analytic skills include summarizing and categorizing, critical and analytic thinking, explanation skills, time management skills and IT skills. (White 2020). These skills allow one to find information and use it effectively and they are highly transferable and can be adapted, especially in the workplace.

This skill is essential at the workplace as it can help complete projects and add value to the company for example resolving a company issue, customer complaint or identifying customers' needs. It also helps employees foster critical thinking and locate appropriate information.

Research skills are good at university as it will enable students familiarize themselves to a very formal style of academic writing, synthesize and communicate ideas and empower them in undertaking larger pieces of research like dissertations in their final year of university which accounts for a grade in the completion and award of their degree.

Presentation Skills

Presentation skills are the skills required in producing valuable and appealing presentations to a variety of audiences. It is defined as the ability to communicate verbally with an alignment of the speaker to the audience or the skills required to create and deliver a clear effective presentation. (Dolan 2017)

These skills cover a variety of areas including the structure of your presentation, the design of your slides, the tone of your voice, the body language and movement you convey as well as verbal delivery. Several presentation skills include analysis, organization, nonverbal communication, presentation software, public speaking, research, verbal communication, writing. According to Dolan 2017, presentation skills are crucial to almost every aspect of academic/business life from meetings, job and academic interviews to conferences and job fairs.

This skill is important at the workplace as it will enable employees deliver briefings and reports to colleagues, conduct training sessions, present information to clients or perform any number of other tasks that involve speaking before an audience.

At the university, this skill is important as it boosts students' confidence enabling them speak audibly, boldly, and concisely during presentations as part of program course and be familiar with speaking in public confidently.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

According to Robinson 2000, employability skills are generic in nature and they cut across all industry types, business sizes and job levels. They can be classified as those basics transferrable skills necessary for obtaining, maintaining, and excelling effectively at a job. It is often referred to as the workplace basics which include problem solving, innovation, professionalism, ethics, technology use, collaboration and teamwork and oral and written communication skills to name a few. (Lim et al 2009).

Problem-solving skills

Problem solving skills can be defined as our ability to solve problems in an effective and timely manner without any impediments. “According to the Collins English dictionary, it is defined as the act or process of finding solutions to problems, especially by using a scientific or analytic approach’. (ICAEW 2018).

It includes identifying a problem, prioritizing, and developing approaches and alternatives for a solution and implementing a solution amicably. It comprises active listening, analysis, research, creativity, critical thinking, communication, dependability, decision making and team building. These skills are vital for every career at every level.

This skill is good for the workplace as it influences successful result as complex and ill-structured work problem are solved as well as facilitating learning and achieving high performance. (Rausch et al 2015) It helps employees to be trusted with more responsibilities and consideration for a managerial role soon.

This skill is important at the university as it helps students identify risks or barriers within the environment and find possible ways to avoid or address these risks (while writing a dissertation or being part of a project team) and exert control over their environment by remaining calm in stressful situations and contribute to finding solutions. It helps students’ progress more quickly and boost career opportunities.

Teamwork skills

Teamwork skills can be defined as the ability to work harmoniously with other people from different disciplines, backgrounds, and expertise to realize a common task or goal. (Kumar 2020). Newer ideas and perspectives, higher efficiency and better quality are born out of teamwork.

Teamwork skill is essential at the workplace because it contributes to more encouraging work environment, increase an employee’s chance of employment as the said employee can help a company reach its goal more effectively. (Indeed 2019) It motivates employees to work harder, cooperate and support each other.

Teamwork skill is vital at the university especially considering engaging teams on project assignments as everyone will give in their best inputs within specified time, thus leading to better quality project work instead of relying on 1 student to do everything.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skill

According to Doyle 2019, ICT skill is described as one's capability to communicate with people via several technologies frequently for daily tasks including sending emails, making a video call, searching the internet, using mobile devices and more. It however also includes the skill to use older communication technologies together with newer technologies to facilitate efficient communication.

There are several types of these skills including email management and setup, online research, social media management, online collaboration, data management and queries, desktop publishing, smartphones and tablets, word processing, computer programming, data analysis etc. (Doyle 2019).

It is useful at the workplace as it can help companies save time and resources thereby guaranteeing greater productivity.

It is essential at university as it can instill in students how to be good learners, effective communicators and how to adapt to change as new technologies emerge from time to time. (Hanat 2020). Also, it will help students think constructively, critically, and reflectively. (Littlejohn & Stefani 1999)

SKILLS POSSESSION

This section depicts the skills I possess and those I do not.

Table 1 Skills Possession

Skills	Possess (Yes or No)
Time-management skills	Yes
Research and analytic skills	No
Presentation skills	Yes
Problem-solving skill	Yes
Teamwork skill	Yes
Information and Communication Technology skill	No

From table 1 above, it is observed that I lack two skills including research and analytic skills and information and communication technology skills. I will develop these skills by the following steps: -

- For ICT skill I will practice using technology I do not have knowledge in to equip me with the required knowledge and build my confidence in using them. For research and analytic skills, I will practice doing little research and analysis on my own to foster improvement.
- I will ask a friend who already possesses these skills to teach me basic tips that will enable development.
- I will watch free online tutorials on information and communication technology as well as research and analytic skills.
- I will attend a free or discounted class on courses covering these skills at my university or public library.

Conclusions

Blaxell and Moore 2012 explored the linkages between academic skills and employability skills stating that they are closely related and development of academic skills as a course can instantaneously lead to the development of employability skills. The alignment of both skills is necessary to be incorporated in the current curricula.

Both academic and employability skills are important in the workplace and at the university because of the overlap between these skills. Skills that are not acquired at the university can be acquired at the workplace, consequently they can be taught in both schools and the working environment thereby making room for improvement. (Robinson 2010)

Students must be provided with opportunities to gain these skills and taught how to apply them to real-world life including university and work situations.

From the research, certain skills are present while others are lacked by myself and I will embark on steps including practicing and taking tutorials to help improve those skills that are deficient.

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