

LCLM4001 Academic Skills

Task 3 Report

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Introduction

Throughout this module, I learned so many different key academic skills which have been of so much use for me and helped myself to gaining more confidence in my abilities. The three academic skills I will reflect on include note-taking, researching information and paragraph writing as I believe they were most useful for my learning. For the method of reflection I will use the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, where I will include about activities I have done, further research I have taken, and evaluate what I have learned from those experiences.

Note-Taking

From the topic of note-taking, I learned many different concepts and strategies in this module that I was not aware of before.

In class, I did activities to develop and practice these skills, including listening to a conversation about procrastination, which we had to take notes about key facts or certain opinions we hear, and then had to answer questions about it. I decided to write the notes by hand. Firstly, I felt quite confident in writing all the information down, but as the recording continued, I found writing further notes to be somewhat difficult because the speed of the conversation was quite fast. I was quite frustrated as I was unable to keep up with the great amount of information.

Whilst I was able to successfully write down every bit of information that was said in the first part of the recording, this later affected myself not being able to note down the key points talking about the main topic of discussion. I should have simplified what I needed to have written. Also, it is even said that whilst it is most effective to write notes by hand, it shows that it is better to widen this method by using visual drawings to increase further understanding (Roessingh, 2020). Also, experts say that although longer notes is beneficial, “mindlessly transcribing content” takes away focus on understanding it (McGloin, 2015). Therefore I can say that I should have summarised the information in a way that is efficient and understandable to me, unlike copying word for word, which is what I had done.

I am a firm believer of writing notes down by hand in general, but I found this skill is difficult to do effectively. The way of writing notes should be done in a way that is understandable to the individual, and should be adapted based on what is being learned, which is why there is no single way of doing it correctly.

In the future, from what I have learned in this module and my research, I will aim to manipulate and summarise my notes in order to increase my understanding of learning things whilst also being quick with time – it may even help to use diagrams to view things better.

Researching Information

Secondly, another important skill I gained was learning to research information effectively. It is easy to find misleading or outdated information online, and I was used to using information that is easily accessible, which is not ideal. We learned many different techniques in class to ensure the information we research is credible.

In class, we had to do an activity to search for the most effective way to motivate staff using Google scholar, and then write about methods we found. It was very easy to find so much information regarding this topic as there thousands of articles available. Due to this, I felt confident and motivated to be able to write some methods easily. Although since these articles are found from the internet, this raises the real question then was how reliable this information was for the task.

In order to find the reliability, we learned about the CRAAP test, which is a series of questions that assesses information. They relate to asking about the timeliness, relevance, source, accuracy and purpose of the information (Emamzadeh, 2020). Therefore, for our second exercise, we had to use this technique to assess reliability of the articles we found. Through this, despite the articles I had found are accurate, they were very old and hence I would conclude they don't have much relevance now. From this I realise that I needed to have been more critical of how accurate and relevant the information was to my task, especially knowing that motivating staff can change over time.

Despite the vast amount of information openly available on the internet, I now understand there are many concerns that address their validity and truthfulness. I have also found there are alternative options, such as the library having many resources on books and data that is verified and checked by recognised standards, as well as being able to use reviewed academic articles. However they may not be as widely available, and the content and language used in these sources can be complex, which go beyond my learning. A good thing however, University of Essex (2016) say that online news and media can be considered credible if they have a history of citing their references. Therefore, this means as long as I am careful where and how to choose my information, it will always be reliable, useful and easy to find.

Therefore, knowing I have the tools, the knowledge and resources at my disposal, I will utilise them in order to research effectively in finding information. I will also ensure to avoid putting misleading or inaccurate information into my writing.

Paragraph Writing

Finally, another a useful skill I gained was paragraph writing. Previously, I never was aware of how to properly create or analyse paragraphs but the learning in this module helped me to tackle this weakness of mine.

I undertook some class activities to practice on writing paragraphs. One task was analysing a paragraph into its various parts, which I struggled with initially and felt clueless on. However, after having guidance on how to write paragraphs, it became easier to see how they are structured.

I have learned that when writing good paragraphs, there are generally three main sections. Firstly, it should always start with introducing a single main topic or point clearly. The second section is used to support the main point, followed by a concluding section that summarises or links back to the main idea. This later helped me breaking down the content from the first task into its main sections, as it provided simple guidelines on how they are organised. This also made me more comfortable and positive with understanding paragraphs.

Furthermore, I did another activity where I had to correctly order given sentences so that they make sense as a paragraph. This activity further increased my understanding, although I found it hard to go through some of the more complex ones. Therefore, having done further reading on paragraph structuring (The University of Sheffield, 2024), it can be said that the supporting statements may be split into more sections, including having an explanation, evidence and comment. The University of Sheffield (2024) even states that the comment is used to explain the evidence, which I felt was already necessary beforehand. Ultimately, this approach helped me further with being able to analyse longer and complex paragraphs.

In conclusion, I find that doing further reading and practice really helped with learning and increasing my paragraph writing skills. I now have the knowledge with understanding how paragraphs are written and can even start to include them into my writing correctly.

Conclusion

To summarise, I have learned a lot of techniques, and methodologies regarding the academic skills I have discussed, through reflecting using the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, and using my own experiences. In class I did many activities and in my own time I took research to learn more about the topics. Previously I used to struggle with a lot of these areas but now I managed to tackle them and increase my knowledge which I believe now will help with my academic career.

References

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