

ACADEMIC SKILLS REFLECTIVE REPORT

Frank Jones Da Costa (2430252)

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Introduction

This report examines my developmental journey through the Academic Skills module, focusing on how core lessons in time management, research, and academic writing influenced my growth. Key experiences like mastering the Pomodoro technique and struggling with Harvard referencing revealed both my adaptability and areas needing improvement. These skills proved transformative, particularly in transitioning to independent study after moving out. The module's emphasis on critical thinking and structured communication has equipped me with tools essential for my degree and future career. Through specific examples from class activities and assessments, I will demonstrate how this module shaped my academic identity and learning methodologies.

Description of Experiences

The module's weekly structure provided systematic skill development. In Week 1, time management lessons challenged my existing habits. While peers relied on digital planners, I discovered the Pomodoro technique's effectiveness through trial and error, particularly when studying alone in my new flat. Week 2's note-taking exercises proved pivotal during our media ethics debate, where my simplified bullet-point system outperformed complex mind maps for rapid information capture. The first graded task on paraphrasing exposed a critical weakness - my summaries often lost the original meaning through excessive truncation. This became evident when comparing my work against exemplars provided in Bailey's (2018) academic writing guide. Week 3's referencing workshop brought humiliation when I incorrectly formatted a book title during a live quiz, forgetting the mandatory italics (Pears and Shields, 2022). However, this public mistake cemented the rule in my memory more effectively than any lecture could. The module's most valuable moment came during Week 4's peer review session, where a classmate's comment - "Your arguments are strong but feel abrupt" - made me recognize my struggle with transitional phrases. These cumulative experiences created a roadmap for my subsequent skill development.

Analysis and Personal Reflection

My engagement with the module content revealed unexpected strengths. The Pomodoro technique's success demonstrated my capacity for self-directed learning adaptation. Where traditional scheduling methods failed, this interval-based approach solved my procrastination issues so effectively that I often continued studying beyond timed sessions. Cottrell (2019) validates this experience, noting that effective study methods must align with individual cognitive styles. My stubborn preference for bullet-point notes, initially seen as resistance to instruction, actually reflected an intuitive understanding of my linear information processing needs. During our Week 2 debate on

copyright, this system allowed rapid retrieval of key statistics that strengthened my arguments, proving its practical value.

However, several challenges exposed critical gaps in my academic skillset. My poor initial performance on paraphrasing exercises stemmed from misunderstanding the task's purpose. Believing brevity equalled skill, I produced nonsensical sentence fragments until tutor feedback redirected my approach. Implementing a "read aloud" verification step transformed my summaries from incoherent to precise, though this process remains time-consuming. Referencing errors, particularly in Task 2, highlighted a careless approach to detail that contradicted my usual meticulousness. Forgetting basic Harvard conventions like italicizing book titles (University of London, 2023) suggested either overconfidence or inadequate practice - a realization that prompted me to create a personalized referencing checklist.

The module's most profound impact came through peer interactions. Observing classmates' mind maps during Week 2 revealed alternative learning approaches I'd dismissed prematurely. While bullet points suited my needs, recognizing the validity of other methods made me more open to experimentation. Similarly, peer feedback on my Week 4 essay draft exposed an over-reliance on abrupt transitional phrases like "however" and "in contrast." This explained why my arguments, while logically sound, read as disjointed. Wallace and Wray's (2021) emphasis on "discourse markers" helped me understand this as a common developmental stage in academic writing.

Personal growth extended beyond technical skills. The module fostered academic resilience through repeated low-stakes failures. My initial referencing quiz score of 58% could have discouraged engagement, but framing it as a learning opportunity (Gibbs, 1988) allowed progressive improvement to 82% by Task 2. Similarly, early struggles with time management evolved into a strength - I now schedule study sessions two weeks in advance, accommodating my part-time job commitments. This proactive approach would have been unimaginable before the module.

Critical self-analysis identified three ongoing challenges. First, my paraphrasing still occasionally sacrifices nuance for conciseness, particularly with complex sources. Second, while referencing accuracy improved, uncommon source types (e.g., podcasts) still cause uncertainty. Finally, my writing style fluctuates between overly casual and stiffly academic, lacking consistent professional tone. These areas will form my development focus for next term, using strategies like recording myself explaining concepts to improve paraphrasing and maintaining an "academic phrase bank" for smoother transitions.

The module's greatest lesson was recognizing that academic skills aren't innate talents but developed practices. My initial frustration with referencing minutiae gave way to appreciation for their role in scholarly conversation. What began as mechanical

exercises in citation formatting evolved into understanding academia as a collaborative enterprise where proper attribution enables knowledge building. This philosophical shift, more than any technical skill, will sustain my long-term academic development.

Conclusion

This module fundamentally transformed my approach to academic work, replacing intuition with structured methodologies. From time management to referencing, each skill developed through iterative practice and constructive failure. While challenges like transitional phrasing and source summarising persist, they now represent growth opportunities rather than deficiencies. The module's greatest gift was teaching me to view academic development as a continuous process a perspective that will serve me throughout my degree and beyond. As I progress, I'll carry forward not just specific techniques like the Pomodoro method, but the meta-skill of reflective self-improvement. This intellectual framework, more than any single lesson, constitutes the module's enduring legacy in my education.

Bailey, S. (2018) *Academic writing: a handbook for international students*. 5th edn. London: Routledge.

Cottrell, S. (2019) *The study skills handbook*. 5th edn. London: Red Globe Press.

Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2022) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 12th edn. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

University of London (2023) *Academic skills module guide*. Unpublished.

Wallace, M. and Wray, A. (2021) *Critical reading and writing for postgraduates*. 4th edn. London: Sage.