

Title: Academic skills

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Introduction

This report outlines the progress I've made in developing key academic skills over the course of this module. I will concentrate on three main areas: paraphrasing, note-taking, and reflective thinking. These abilities have been essential in helping me better understand course materials, stay organised in my studies, and clearly communicate my thoughts.

To structure my reflection, I will be using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988). This model divides the reflection process into six stages: describing the experience, identifying feelings, evaluating the outcome, analysing what happened, drawing conclusions, and planning future actions. It provides a helpful framework for reviewing what I've learned, assessing what worked or didn't, and considering how I can continue to develop. I will apply this model to each of the skills discussed, explore the difficulties I encountered, and explain how I intend to build on my progress

2.1 Paraphrasing Skills

In this part of the report, I will reflect on how my ability to paraphrase has developed, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle as a guide. This framework breaks reflection into six stages: describing what took place, identifying emotional responses, evaluating the situation, analysing it in depth, concluding what was learned, and creating a plan for future growth.

Paraphrasing means taking someone else's ideas and restating them in your own words, while preserving the original meaning. During this module, I worked on improving this skill by rewriting academic content using my own understanding and language. One of the exercises involved reading a text and then summarising it without directly copying. I then compared my version with the source to ensure that the meaning remained accurate.

At the beginning, I found paraphrasing to be quite difficult. I didn't feel confident in my ability to rephrase content properly, and I often worried that I might accidentally copy the original text or change its meaning. This made the process feel a little overwhelming. However, as I continued practising, I became more assured in my approach. I came to understand that paraphrasing isn't just about replacing words—it requires fully grasping the source material and being able to explain it using your own interpretation.

The classroom activities were demanding but also incredibly useful. I was fairly good at identifying the main ideas in the text, which helped me reword them more effectively. Still, I

sometimes struggled to make my writing distinct enough to avoid plagiarism. One of the things that helped the most was the feedback I received from my tutor, especially when they demonstrated how to restructure sentences more clearly and in a way that better reflected my own voice.

One of the biggest challenges for me was believing in my ability to express someone else's ideas without sticking too closely to the original. I often found myself relying on the same structure or wording. But over time, and with the help of the strategies we learned in class, I became more confident and independent in my writing. I now recognise that successful paraphrasing means truly understanding the meaning behind the content and explaining it in a way that works for me. Overall, I've seen real progress in this area and plan to keep building on these skills in the future

2.2 Reflection Skills

In this part, I will reflect on how my reflection skills have developed, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, which includes six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

In one of our sessions, I was introduced to two key reflective frameworks: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. Prior to this, I had never used a formal method to evaluate my own learning. During the class, we were asked to reflect on a specific learning experience, using one of these models to guide us step by step through the process. At first, I found this quite challenging, as I wasn't used to thinking deeply or critically about my personal experiences.

When I was first learning how these models functioned, I felt uncertain and slightly confused. I didn't fully understand how to apply each stage and was concerned that I might overlook something important. However, as the session progressed, I began to grasp how these tools could support more structured and meaningful reflection. By the end of the lesson, I felt more comfortable using both models and started to recognise how effective they could be in helping me reflect more thoughtfully on my academic development.

What helped the most was the structure these models offered. Gibbs' cycle gave me clear steps to follow, which made reflection easier and more focused. Kolb's model also helped me see that reflection is not just something you do once—it's a process that helps you grow over time. Doing practical tasks with these models made it easier to understand how to apply them in real situations, both in and outside of class.

Looking back, I think the most useful part of using these models is how they break reflection into smaller stages. This helped me figure out what I did well, what didn't go so well, and what I could do differently next time. Gibbs' model, in particular, helped me slow down and think carefully instead of rushing to conclusions. I can already see how this will be helpful when writing future reflective assignments.

Overall, learning to use Kolb's and Gibbs' models has really helped me improve the way I reflect. At first, it felt hard to look at my own learning in this way, but now I feel more confident and better prepared. To keep improving my reflection skills, I plan to keep using both models after lessons and assignments. I want to focus more on the analysis part by asking myself deeper questions about how I can use what I've learned. With regular practice, I hope to make reflection a natural part of how I learn and improve in my studies.

2.3 Note-Taking Skills

In this section, I will reflect on how my note-taking skills have developed, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, which includes six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. During the module, I watched a video about the psychology of motivation and procrastination. I used this as a chance to practise my note-taking skills by identifying the main points and organising them clearly. I used strategies like bullet points and headings to make the notes easier to read and understand.

At first, I wasn't sure how to take effective notes. I felt unsure about how much detail to include and was worried about either missing important information or writing too much. However, once I started applying the techniques we learned in class, I began to feel more confident. Effective note taking requires identifying the main points and presenting them in a straightforward and organised format. Taking notes while watching the video was a useful exercise. It helped me stay focused and gave me something helpful to look back on later. I also learned how helpful it is to structure notes in a way that makes reviewing easier. One challenge I faced was knowing what to leave out. Sometimes I found it hard to decide which parts were not as important, but this got easier with practice. The biggest difficulty for me was finding a balance between writing too much and writing too little. I discovered that note-taking takes careful thinking and good organisation. Using headings helped me stay on track and focus on everything else.

This experience has helped me improve my note-taking skills. I now know how to create notes that are better structured, easier to review, and focused on the key points. This will be especially helpful when attending lectures, doing assignments, and revising for exams.

To keep improving, I plan to continue practising by taking notes from different sources like videos, readings, and lectures. I also want to try other methods such as mind maps and the Cornell note-taking system to see what works best for me. After writing my notes, I'll review them to make sure they are clear and complete, which will help me understand the material better in the long run.

3. Conclusion

Reflecting on the development of my academic skills throughout this module has been both meaningful and beneficial. Tools such as Kolb's and Gibbs' reflective frameworks helped me recognise the areas where I'm performing well and those where I still have room to grow — particularly in paraphrasing, note-taking, and personal reflection. Through working on paraphrasing, I realised it's not just about swapping words, but about fully understanding the content so I can express it confidently in my own language. The more I practised, the more comfortable I became, and I found myself less dependent on the original phrasing.

At the start, I found reflection difficult, especially when trying to analyse my own learning in a deeper way. However, the structure offered by Gibbs' and Kolb's models made it easier to break things down and reflect more clearly. These models allowed me to pinpoint what I was doing well, where I could improve, and how I might apply those insights going forward — particularly when completing future reflective assignments.

Note-taking was another key area I worked on. In the beginning, I wasn't always sure what information to include, but with practice, I learned how to identify the most important points and structure my notes more effectively. This has already made a difference in how I prepare for classes and manage my studies overall.

Overall, I've made good progress in these areas. I now understand how important these academic skills are, and I plan to keep practicing them so I can continue improving. I believe they will support me throughout my academic journey and help me become a more effective learner.

4 References

BBC. (2019). The psychology of motivation and procrastination. BBC Sounds.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0005t4x>
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0005t4x>)

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Note taking

- Step 1 - taking notes
- using your notes

Different kinds of note taking

A mind map diagram with a central cloud labeled 'topic'. Five lines radiate from the cloud, each labeled 'main point'. From each 'main point', two lines branch out, each labeled 'sub point'.

Linear notes

- taking notes as you go
- 10 subjects
- examples.

h Cornell Notes

	Title
Questions	Main notes
	Summary

Research skills

CRAAP

- Currency - when it was published
- Relevance - Does the info relate to your topic or answer
- Authority - is the contact info
- Accuracy - is the info supported
- Purpose - why are they writing the purpose / sell, persuade, entertain.

Paraphrasing Practice

original

Students often struggle with managing their time efficiently especially when they have multiple deadlines to meet at once!!

my version

Many students find it hard to stay on top of their time, especially ~~when~~ when dealing with several assignments.

