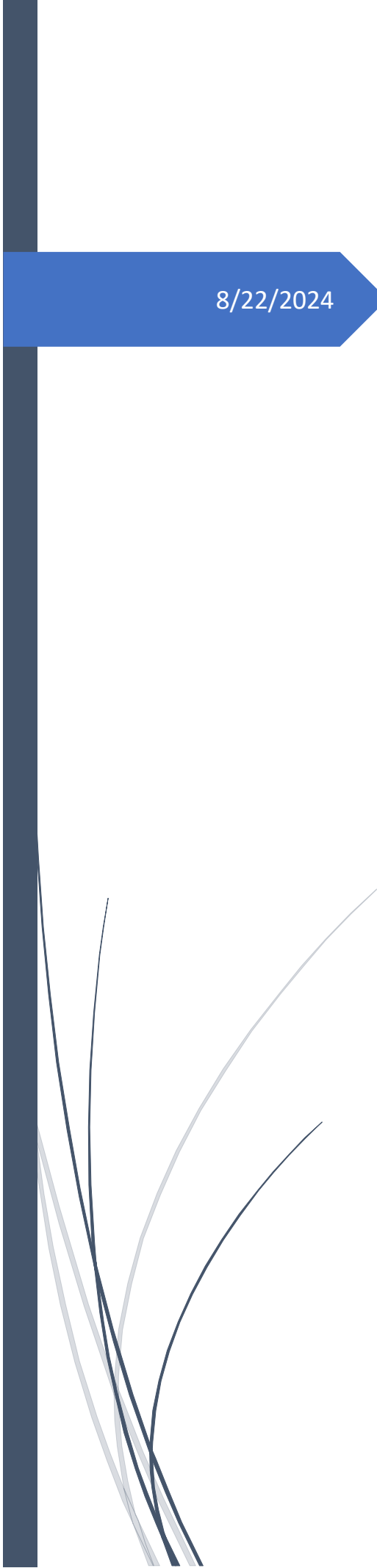




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Academic Skills

Reflective Report

MODULE NAME: ACADEMIC SKILLS

MODULE CODE: LCLM 4001_LON

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1. Introduction

This report focuses on reflecting upon my experiences in developing academic skills during my university module. The purpose of this report is to critically assess how I have improved in areas such as note-taking, paraphrasing, and summarizing through the application of the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988). The Gibbs model was chosen because it offers a structured framework that guides the reflective process, allowing me to explore my experiences in a comprehensive manner by moving through the stages of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action planning. This cycle promotes continuous learning and development by encouraging deeper thinking and a systematic approach to improvement. The skills covered in this report—note-taking, paraphrasing, and summarizing—are crucial for academic success, and the reflective process will demonstrate how I have enhanced these skills throughout the module.



Figure 1. Gibbs Reflective Cycle
Source: <https://www.structural-learning.com/>

2. Reflective Report on Academic Skills Development Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

2.1. Note-Taking skills

My experience with note-taking dates back to the early stages of the module. Initially, I relied on copying down as much information as possible without considering its relevance or usefulness. This approach left me overwhelmed with excessive notes that were difficult to review later. In the first few weeks, I struggled to distinguish between key concepts and minor details, affecting my ability to study effectively.

I felt frustrated and demotivated by how inefficient my note-taking was. Despite attending lectures and seminars, I often failed to retain the essential information needed for assignments and exams. My confidence in my academic abilities declined because I viewed note-taking as a fundamental skill I should have already mastered.

Reflecting on this, it became evident that my initial method was ineffective. By focusing too much on verbatim transcription, I missed opportunities to actively engage with and organize information meaningfully. However, this experience also highlighted the need for a more strategic approach, especially when dealing with dense material.

The issue stemmed from the fast pace at which information was presented and my struggle to prioritize key points. Fiona McPherson (2018) notes that "note-taking is a strategy for making information meaningful," emphasizing that the act of taking notes is more critical than simply recording information. Effective note-taking involves processing information, organizing it, and putting it into my own words instead of copying it directly. I realized that I needed to focus more on capturing key ideas and connecting them to broader concepts.

To improve, I explored note-taking techniques like the Cornell method, which divides notes into sections for key points, details, and summaries (Pauk & Owens, 2010). I also practiced summarizing lecture content immediately after sessions to reinforce my understanding. Moving forward, I plan to regularly review and condense my notes, concentrating on identifying key concepts and organizing them logically. Additionally, I will use digital tools like mind maps to visually organize complex information.

2.2. Paraphrasing Skills

Paraphrasing became essential when working on assignments requiring information synthesis from multiple sources. Initially, I would simply substitute words with synonyms, leading to unintentional plagiarism and incoherence. This issue became apparent when a tutor highlighted that my paraphrasing was too close to the original text and did not show a clear understanding of the material.

This experience was challenging and uncomfortable as it exposed a significant gap in my writing skills. I felt anxious about committing academic misconduct and frustrated by my inability to clearly convey ideas in my own words. However, this challenge was valuable because it pushed me to actively improve my paraphrasing abilities. The feedback taught me that effective paraphrasing involves not just changing words but fully understanding the

source material and expressing it in a way that aligns with my argument. It also emphasized the importance of critical reading and analysis as precursors to successful paraphrasing.

My difficulty with paraphrasing stemmed from a superficial understanding of the texts. Bailey (2017) notes that successful paraphrasing requires not only changing words but also restructuring sentences and shifting emphasis. I learned that paraphrasing demands an in-depth grasp of the original content, involving breaking down the text, identifying its core message, and restating it in a way that reflects my interpretation while maintaining the original meaning.

To improve, I adopted a systematic approach, breaking down texts into key points, rephrasing them in my own words, and comparing them with the original to avoid retaining the same structure or wording. I also practiced paraphrasing small passages from readings and sought feedback from peers and tutors. Going forward, I plan to strengthen this skill by incorporating critical reading strategies and summarizing content before paraphrasing it. I will also use paraphrasing tools as a guide while ensuring they complement my understanding of the material.

2.3. Summarizing Skills

Summarizing has been vital in managing the large volume of readings required for my modules. Initially, I struggled to condense lengthy texts into concise summaries that retained core ideas. My early attempts often resulted in overly detailed notes, making it difficult to review key concepts for exams or essays.

This process was initially frustrating, as it felt counterintuitive to omit details I considered important. I worried that oversimplifying content would lead to losing nuance, affecting my understanding and application of the information. Nonetheless, I recognized that summarizing is essential for managing information efficiently.

Learning to summarize was challenging but ultimately rewarding. I discovered that effective summarizing involves identifying a text's main arguments while discarding irrelevant information. This practice not only helped me organize my thoughts but also enhanced my critical thinking by requiring me to differentiate between essential and non-essential content.

One issue I faced was deciding what information was crucial and what could be omitted. Summarizing requires a deep understanding of the material so that the essence is conveyed concisely without distorting the original meaning (Bailey, 2017). Over time, I realized that summarizing is closely linked to reading comprehension and critical thinking. By improving my ability to identify the purpose and main points of a text, I could produce more concise and effective summaries.

To continue developing my summarizing skills, I have adopted active reading strategies like highlighting key points and writing brief summaries after each chapter or article. I also practice summarizing complex texts in progressively shorter versions, starting with a paragraph and reducing it to a single sentence. This exercise sharpens my ability to focus on the core ideas. Moving forward, I plan to integrate summarizing into my study routine and will continue seeking feedback to ensure my summaries remain accurate and relevant.

3. Conclusion

Reflecting on my academic skills development using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle has been a valuable process that has allowed me to critically assess and improve my note-taking, paraphrasing, and summarizing abilities. By applying this reflective model, I have not only identified areas for improvement but also developed actionable strategies for continued growth. Effective note-taking now allows me to engage with information more meaningfully, paraphrasing skills have helped me avoid plagiarism and communicate ideas clearly, and summarizing has enhanced my ability to manage and distil complex information. I plan to continually refine these skills, ensuring they contribute positively to my overall academic performance.

4. References:

Bailey, S. (2017). *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students*. (5th ed.). ISBN: 1138048747 / 978-1138048744

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Pauk, W., Owens, R. (2010). *How to Study in College* (10 ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN 978-1-4390-8446-5. Chapter 10: "The Cornell System: Take Effective Notes", pp. 235-277