



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Module Name: Academic Skills in the Digital Era

Module Code: BMSW4013

Assessment 1: Reflective Essay

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Lecturer: Ffion Cumberpatch

Deadline: Monday 8th December 23:59PM

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

The significance of academic and digital skills for students in contemporary society cannot be overstated. As the world continues to advance rapidly, particularly in the field of technology, it is essential for students to adapt and evolve in order to remain relevant and successful. Developing the right set of skills is not only vital for academic achievement, but also for future career prospects.

Critical thinking, for instance, plays a fundamental role in enabling students to analyse information effectively and make informed decisions. Collaboration is another key skill, as the ability to work well with others has become increasingly important in both academic and professional environments. Additionally, being able to access and utilise appropriate learning resources is crucial for supporting independent learning and continuous improvement.

Many students find that higher education offers numerous opportunities to develop or enhance these skills. Through participation in various activities, students can refine their academic and digital competencies, preparing them for the demands of the modern workplace.

In my first term at university studies, I encountered several challenges, particularly with my first assignment. My understanding of what an essay entailed was limited, and I was unsure of exactly what was required. Referencing was entirely new to me, and I viewed it as a complicated but exciting opportunity to expand my knowledge. It took the first two weeks of my academic journey to realise these gaps. I was uncertain of the expectations and did not fully grasp the standards set by the university, which, as I anticipated, were complex and demanding. However, this challenge was exciting because I thrive on overcoming difficulties.

With time, by repeatedly reviewing the module materials and my notes, the content began to make sense. I recognised the need for extensive reading to enhance my understanding. Managing my time was also a struggle, especially as a mother of six, where effective time management is essential. Realising my approach was lacking, I adjusted by prioritising tasks, sourcing and saving information for later study, and applying the Pomodoro technique to avoid procrastination. I also learned to use the CRAAP test to determine the credibility of learning resources. By the fourth week, I discovered various learning styles—visual, aural, read/write, and kinaesthetic—and identified with the read/write category.

Reflecting on this period, I see that I have improved my time management skills, which are valuable both personally and for my future career as a teaching assistant. Mastering the Pomodoro technique was just one of the new skills I developed. I also learned how to analyse data effectively, and essay writing became one of the most significant skills I gained through this module. Writing essays was especially challenging because it involved using Harvard-style referencing, a process that required significant focus and concentration to succeed. Despite the challenges, the process helped me acquire new skills that will be valuable in my future career as a teacher assistant.

At the outset, I felt stressed and frustrated, largely due to uncertainty about assignment expectations and concerns that my health might hinder my progress. I was also disappointed in myself for not investing enough effort in understanding the requirements and worried I might fall behind. However, after overcoming initial stress and frustration, happiness returned as I realised that learning and acquiring new skills was simply a matter of time. As my knowledge grew, the stress faded away.

Before writing the assignment, I was nervous and worried, feeling as though defining concepts on paper was impossible. However, as the module progressed, I discovered that essay writing was not as difficult as I had believed. Completing assignments brought a sense of achievement, making me feel happy and proud for accomplishing what had once seemed impossible. This was made possible thanks to my lecturer's patience and clear, specific explanations, which made lessons easier to understand. The opportunity to ask questions at the end of each lesson further helped me gain knowledge and confidence.

The primary reason for my progress was consistent attendance at lectures, which helped me understand what was required and enabled me to learn effective time management strategies, such as the Pomodoro technique and the Eisenhower Matrix. These methods proved invaluable knowledge for balancing my studies and taking care of my family as a mother of six children. Although there were still some challenges, my regular engagement and willingness to learn allowed me to overcome most difficulties and continue developing new skills. According to Cottrell (2019) the experience of studying in higher education can be life changing. On the other hand, some aspects did not go as planned, but the overall experience was positive due to my commitment and willingness to learn. Throughout these weeks, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance that knowledge acquired, and this experience highlighted my needs to develop stronger study skills.

This incredible university experience has made me realise how much valuable knowledge I have missed until now. Additionally, I've gained an understanding of knowledge in referencing—particularly the Harvard style—and appreciate its importance as a fundamental skill for both university and academic writing. CiteThisForMe (Birla, 2023) was used for Harvard-style referencing to ensure academic accuracy. I learned how to use time management using digital tool applications to set reminders and, plans dedicated to study sessions (Thompson, 2021). I also have learned how to use and find the right information building my academic skills and encourage my critical thinking skills. Learning how to use the online library resources and how to save them for later was very helpful for my time management. I have learned how to evaluate information effectively. I applied strategies such as the CRAAP test, the '5 Ws', and the PEEL method. Using the CRAAP test helped me identify the outdated sources in my research project, while the PEEL method improved the structure of my essay paragraphs. These approaches have enabled me to better understand authors' perspectives and the purpose behind the information presented. All this knowledge and techniques, I have acquired during my first term in university have been proven invaluable for my knowledge.

I also gain knowledge about the importance of having art in presenting a subject. This ongoing process of reflection and self-improvement has not only enhanced my confidence but also deepened my commitment to continuous learning. Building on these foundational skills, I have also started to develop a more nuanced approach to interpreting and evaluating academic sources. Altogether, these experiences and skills have contributed greatly to my academic growth in my first term at university. According to Cottrell(2024) in order to be able to manage yourself can make a significant difference to you as a student and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, participating in this wonderful module has been an honour. I am grateful to have been part of the class as a student. The experience challenged me and made me realise how valuable continuous learning and knowledge truly are. Upon completing my first term at university, I have come to appreciate the real value of being in higher education and learning new study skills. The journey so far has been very challenging and rewarding, pushing me to confront new difficulties and embrace opportunities for growth of my knowledge in study skill. Through unexpected obstacles, and unfamiliar academic expectations, learning and gaining new study strategies, and balancing my responsibilities, I have found the experience to be profoundly transformative. Despite the small and sometimes hard challenges I have meet, the sense of accomplishment and personal development gained throughout this period has made my university journey a truly valuable one.

Looking ahead, I am ready to continue improve these skills in the next stages of my academic journey. I recognise that university is not only about acquiring subject specific knowledge, but also about developing essential life skills such as adaptability, resilience, and critical thinking. By embracing each new challenge with a positive mindset, I am confident that I will continue to grow both personally and professionally, setting a strong foundation for a successful future in my career as teaching assistant. I do fell that maybe if I would practise more at home in referencing, or maybe if I could ask more questions in class this will help me even more in my learning process. The process of adapting to university level expectations has not only strengthened my academic and digital skills but has also fostered personal resilience and adaptability. Embracing new learning strategies, such as effective time management and critical thinking evaluation techniques, has equipped me with tools that are essential for both academic success and future professional career. This transformative experience was very helpful because now my knowledge in a solid foundation for lifelong learning and ongoing self-improvement as I will continue my educational journey in the next term at the prestigious University of Wales Trinity Saint David for the module certificate of higher education in employability skills level 4.

My SMART action plan is that

I will continue to improve my time management looking forward to apply the technique that I have learned and see how I can go even better.

I will save my notes so I can look at them and practice more in my free time.

I will set an proper schedule to balance the time between learning and the time spending with my children.

Learning how to manage my time properly will successfully support my learning time for future assignments.

I will complete my plan until my next assignment.

Birla, R., (2023). The challenges of media education in the digital era. Journal of communication and Management,2(04),pp.281-288.

Thompson, J.B., (2021). book wars :the digital revolution in publishing .John Wiley & Sons

Cottrell, S(2024).The Study Skills Handbook(sixth edition).Bloomsbury ,Academic, Bloomsbury publishing PLC.

Cottrell , S.(2019).The Study skills Handbook(fifth edition).Red Globe Press.

