

ASSIGNMENT2: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

ACADEMIC SKILLS (BMSW4013)

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WORD COUNT:1569

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AI Statement

I confirm that i have not presented any AI-generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that i have copies of my drafts, notes, and other rescores i used, which i may be asked to provide in evidence.

The aim of this reflection is to check the academic and digital skills I have developed since starting my first term at university. In particular, it will focus on how these skills have supported but also challenged my learning experience. I will be using Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle to structure this reflection. According to Trimasse (2024), using this cycle can help to develop critical thinking skills and allow you to continuously improve.

Description

At the start of my first term at university, I had very basic academic and digital skills, especially as I had taken a long break from education. Since then, I feel that I have made improved in these areas. For example, before university, my research skills were limited mainly to using Google for research. I did not know how to find or use academic sources or realise the importance of evaluating the reliability of information. During my first term, I learned the importance of using academic sources such as journals and avoiding non-academic websites. I also learned how to search using academic databases such as Google Scholar and the UWTSD library database. This included using the advanced search option to narrow results and using the Ctrl + F option to find keywords within texts.

My digital skills have also improved. Before beginning university, I had only basic experience with using tools such as Microsoft Word and general internet searches. Since attending university, I have developed new digital skills, including creating presentations in PowerPoint, using Microsoft Teams for online lectures and meetings,

going through Moodle to access learning materials, and using the Outlook calendar to organise events, deadlines, and appointments.

Feelings

During the first weeks of university, I felt very anxious and overwhelmed, especially when I realised the amount of work involved. There was a large amount of information to take in during the early weeks and as the lectures went on, I started to doubt myself and questioned whether university was the right place for me. I have always struggled with low self-confidence in my academic abilities, mainly due to the difficulties I experience because of my dyslexia. For example, I often find that I can only concentrate for a certain amount of time before I lose focus, and when this happens, I begin to feel panicked and frustrated.

After a few weeks, I began to find ways to manage my stress levels, which helped me feel as though I was slowly getting used to university life. For example, taking frequent short breaks, not reading too much at one time and planning and working on my assignments in advance. I also started to feel more positive about being a university student. For example, after submitting my first assignment, I felt a sense of relief and accomplishment. This moment helped boost my confidence, and I started to believe in myself and in the possibility of achieving my long-term goal of developing business skills, so that I can eventually start my own beauty business. According to Smith (2025) students can reduce stress through breathing-centred exercises, using a mindfulness app and eating a healthy diet, which can increase energy levels.

Evaluation

In terms of challenges, I felt that I began at a disadvantage because I was using a Chromebook. Many of the functions required for my course were not fully compatible with the device. For example, using a Chromebook prevented me from sending PowerPoint or Word documents in their original formats, and I had to convert my work into PDF files so that my lecturers could access it properly when saving my work, it says to google docs and don't always show up. According to ERINVS (2021) This added extra

steps to my workload, which was frustrating and made completing tasks longer to complete.

A positive outcome of using digital tools such as Moodle was that it helped me to become more independent in my learning. Being able to go through online platforms on my own made me feel more confident and capable. It also helped me to take my time with tasks, which is important for me because of my dyslexia.

In relation to research skills, I found the reading part particularly challenging. Due to my dyslexia, I often read words that are not there or miss important words in a sentence. By the time I reached the end of a sentence, I had already forgotten what I had just read. This made the research process extremely time-consuming and left me feeling frustrated with myself. Dyslexia variance between individuals' according to Dyslexia concealment in higher education, (2024).

On the other hand, I realised that I have developed new academic skills that I did not have previously. For example, I learned about the CRAAP test, which is a method used to evaluate the quality and reliability of sources. The acronym stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose, and it gives a structured way to check whether a source is suitable for academic work (EBSCO, 2025). In class, we completed a practice activity where we were given a short article and had to answer questions about its relevance and credibility based on the CRAAP test criteria. This exercise helped me understand how to find trustworthy academic sources and improved my confidence when doing research.

Analysis

I realised that a lot of the challenges I faced during my first term came from not using learning strategies suited to the way I learn. At first, I tried to work at the same pace and in the same way as my peers, and I evaluated my progress by comparing myself to them.

Attending study skills sessions has really helped me, as it has allowed me to see learning in a different way. I realised that I could adopt strategies that made sense for my own learning style. For example, in the support sessions, I learned that writing an

essay can be done step by step: breaking down the essay question, planning a clear structure, and then finding research based on specific points rather than searching for general information. This approach not only made research more manageable but also improved my confidence, as I now knew exactly what I was looking for and how to apply it. I also learned that I could save time and reduce frustration by not forcing myself to read information that was hard to read and used complex words. Previously, I felt that I had to read every article and somehow rewrite the information, even if I did not fully understand it. In my support sessions, I realised that there are usually alternative articles covering the same topic, and it is more important to read for understanding rather than simply completing a task. This understanding allowed me to focus on the quality of learning, rather than the quantity of information.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my first term at university, I can see that I have made a lot of progress in both my academic and digital skills. I went from having very basic digital and academic skills, such as only being able to use the basic functions on Microsoft Word and simple Google searches, to developing my research skills, such as using CRAAP and academic databases and also developed new digital skills such as using PowerPoint creatively and Moodle to find materials. Although I initially faced challenges, such as having low self-confidence, difficulties with my dyslexia and Chromebook, I found ways to manage by accessing support IT and Study Skills Support. Overall, my first term at university has helped me to develop skills that I feel will be hugely beneficial to me in my future career and time at university.

Action Plan

Goal	Action	Measure Achievement	Time
Manage stress levels	Download a mindfulness app	Once I have looked into different apps that are available for needs.	March 2026
Take more notes	Start assignments in good time	Once I have a written plan for	February 2026

and mark them off in order as I'm going along to help me break things down into smaller parts to get a better understanding.	Maintain Healthy diet	the assignment.	January 2026
Change my laptop as Chromebook is causing me a lot of problems with PowerPoint, presentations uploading photos alongside assignments on the Turnitin	Go for 30 minutes' walk every day	Tracking intake and balancing carbohydrates, proteins, Fat, fibre. Meal prep.	January 2026
	Take short breaks during study time	Technical Specifications	January 2026
	Break tasks into smaller steps	To process, consolidate, and reinforce	
	Plenty of 1-1 support	Clarity, and Progress, Tracking.	
Keep attending my 1-1 study skills and any extra help support along the way that helps me with assignments	Keep attending as much as possible.	Quantifiable, outcomes of Learning.	January –July 2026

References

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