

Academic Skills - Academic Skills (LCLM4001_LON)

Student id : 2332522

Shaun Stewart

Lecture Name : Peter Allan

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	p 3
2. Academic Writing	p 3
3. Research Skills	p 4
4. Referencing Skills	p 4
5. Referencing Skills	p 5
6. Conclusion	p 5
7. References	p 6

Introduction

The development of my academic skills has been important to help achieve success in higher education and beyond. Academic skills, which included a range of abilities including academic writing, research, and referencing, has helped with my effective learning, critical analysis and communication. These skills are not only pivotal to my academic performance but also for professional and personal growth. In this reflective report, I will delve into the evolution of my academic skills through a structured academic skills module, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) as a framework for analysis.

Academic Writing

Academic writing is a fundamental skill that underpins higher education communication. It involves the ability to construct well-organized, coherent, and compelling written arguments. Initially, my academic writing was average due to lack of clear structure, depth, and coherence. My writing often lacked a definitive clear statement, and the arguments were not always well-supported by evidence. The module's academic writing classes aimed to address these deficiencies. Through the help of my lecturer, I learned the essentials of essay structure, including crafting a strong thesis, organising paragraphs logically, and presenting arguments persuasively. The emphasis on developing a clear and engaging introduction, a well-developed body, and a succinct conclusion was instrumental in transforming my writing approach.

The class also focused on critical thinking, which is crucial for developing arguments that are both logical and substantiated. We explored various strategies for critical analysis, including evaluating evidence and considering alternative perspectives. This approach not only enhanced the quality of my writing but also deepened my understanding of the subject matter. Practical exercises, such as peer reviews and drafting exercises, provided immediate feedback and facilitated continuous improvement. This iterative process allowed me to refine my writing style and adopt a more analytical approach, which has become an integral part of my academic practice.

Research Skills

Effective research is another cornerstone of academic success. Before this module, my research process was often inefficient, leading to the use of sources that were not always reliable or relevant. The research skills sessions introduced me to a range of advanced search techniques and tools that significantly improved my ability to gather and assess information. Learning to use databases and advanced search functions, such as Boolean operators and filters, revolutionized my research process. These tools enabled me to narrow down search results effectively and locate high-quality sources more efficiently.

Additionally, the module emphasized the importance of source evaluation. Understanding how to assess the credibility and relevance of sources is crucial for producing high-quality academic work. We discussed various criteria for evaluating sources, including authorship, publication date, and the peer-review process. This knowledge helped me to discern between reliable and unreliable sources, thus enhancing the overall quality of my research. The practical sessions involved hands-on exercises where we applied these techniques to real-world research tasks. These exercises were invaluable in developing my ability to conduct thorough and credible research.

Referencing Skills

Referencing is essential for maintaining academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism. Prior to the module, my referencing practices were inconsistent, leading to potential issues with academic integrity. The referencing skills session provided a comprehensive introduction to various citation styles, including APA, MLA, and Harvard. We engaged in practical exercises to identify and correct common referencing errors and to create accurate citations and reference lists.

One of the key aspects of the referencing session was understanding the nuances of different citation styles. We explored how to format citations for different types of sources, including books, journal articles, and online resources. This detailed instruction was crucial in improving my referencing accuracy and consistency. The hands-on exercises, where we practiced citing sources and compiling reference lists, helped to solidify my understanding of citation rules and

reduced my anxiety about potential plagiarism. The knowledge gained from these sessions has significantly enhanced the academic integrity of my work and increased my confidence in adhering to citation standards.

Conclusion

The academic skills module was designed to address specific challenges and gaps in my academic abilities. At the outset, I recognized that my writing lacked depth and clarity, my research methods were inefficient, and my referencing was prone to errors. The structured learning opportunities provided by the module were instrumental in addressing these issues and fostering significant improvement.

Through detailed workshops, practical exercises, and hands-on sessions, I have developed a deeper understanding of academic writing, research techniques, and referencing practices. The use of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) allows for a structured analysis of these experiences, highlighting both the progress made and areas for ongoing development. This reflective approach enables me to critically evaluate my growth and identify strategies for continued improvement.

In conclusion, the skills developed through this module have laid a strong foundation for my academic and professional future. The ability to write clearly and persuasively, conduct thorough and efficient research, and reference accurately are essential skills that will support my continued success in higher education and beyond. By reflecting on these experiences and acknowledging both strengths and challenges, I am better equipped to build on my academic skills and pursue further development in these areas.

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