

Academic Skills in the Digital Era

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Reflective Essay on the Development of Academic and Digital Skills

1. Description – What happened?

During my first term at university, one experience significantly shaped the development of my academic and digital skills, learning to use the university's virtual learning environment (VLE) with the collaboration of IA to complete my first academic assignment. This occurred in my first essay submission, when I was required to submit an extremely large academic task through the online platform with just one week notice towards the death line, I fail gaining zero and being penalized with misconduct. Although I had used digital tools before, I had never worked with a university level VLE and assistance tools, nor had I previously submitted academic work through an online system. The task required me to locate the correct assignment brief, download the template, complete the work, and upload it correctly before the short deadline.

The experience became challenging when I realised that the use of Copilot assistant tool led me to gain ZERO on my results. Some instructions were under "Module Content," others under "AI GUIDENCE" and additional guidance were posted as an announcement. I spent a long time navigating the platform, clicking through different menus, and trying to understand where everything was located. At one point, I downloaded the wrong document and completed a version of the task that did not

match the correct instructions. I only realised this when I attended student support meeting with Claire where she explained the brief in more detail. This forced me to restart the assignment with limited time remaining.

This experience was the first moment in my university journey where I recognised how essential digital skills were for academic success. It was also the first time I felt genuinely challenged by the digital expectations of higher education.

2. Feelings – What were you thinking and feeling?

At the beginning of the experience, I felt confident and motivated. I believed that navigating the Moodle would be straightforward, and I assumed that my existing digital skills would be enough. However, as I struggled to locate the correct documents and understand the platform's structure, my confidence quickly decreased. I began to feel frustrated and overwhelmed, especially when I realised I had completed the wrong version of the assignment.

Emotionally, and physical debilitated to the point had to use crutches to move around, I felt anxious about falling behind and worried that I might miss the deadline. I also felt embarrassed, wanted to give up as I assumed other students were managing the platform more easily than I was and my disability affected me much. This led to self-doubt about whether I was adapting well to university life. At the same time, I felt determined to overcome the challenge. Once I realised my mistake, I focused on correcting it and completing the assignment properly. Although the experience was stressful, it also made me more aware of the importance of digital literacy and organisation.

3. Evaluation – What was good and bad about the experience?

There were both positive and negative aspects to this experience. On the positive side, it forced me to engage deeply with the Moodle and become familiar with its structure. Without this challenge, I might have continued using the platform superficially, without fully understanding how to navigate it. The experience also encouraged me to attend support sessions with Claire and Afifa and ask questions during Teams sessions and on one to one, which helped me build confidence and connect with my lecturers.

Another positive aspect was that the experience highlighted my resilience affirmed by Jonathan that become one strong tool. Despite feeling overwhelmed, I did not give up and scream within "I CAN DO THAT". This gave me a sense of achievement and showed me that I could adapt to new digital environments and face the challenges the

Ffion imputed even kindly support her on completing the questionnaire for her future research.

However, there were also negative aspects. The confusion caused by the 365 Microsoft organisation with multiple documents made the task more stressful than necessary, I could find way to input a UWTSD logo. My lack of familiarity with the platform resulted in wasted time and unnecessary anxiety. I also realised that I had not read the instructions carefully enough at the beginning and was begging Ffion to please let me use copilot I can't navigate online on my own which contributed to my misconduct on the first place.

4. Analysis – Why did it happen that way?

Several factors contributed to the difficulties I experienced. Firstly, I underestimated the complexity of the VLE and use of AI. Although I had used digital tools before, university platforms are more advanced and contain multiple layers of information. My assumption that it would be simple myself and copilot we are MASTERS.

Secondly, I relied too heavily on my existing digital habits. Outside of university, I was used to Copilot designed for quick navigation. This mismatch between my expectations and the use of AI design contributed to my confusion and shame when facing the Afifa or Claire.

Thirdly, I did not initially use the support available as it should be but manipulative on my way relying on IA tools. The university offered digital skills workshops, online guides, however I never used the tools as Find my flow, Talk Type or Genius Note. I felt hesitant to use douse tools I didn't know how to use them. This reluctance delayed my learning and made the experience more stressful.

From an academic perspective, the experience aligns with theories of digital literacy and self-regulated learning. My struggle demonstrated that digital literacy is a skill that must be developed intentionally. Additionally, self-regulated learning theory suggests that students must plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning (Zimmerman, 2002). In this experience, my initial lack of planning and monitoring contributed to the difficulties I faced.

The consequences of the experience were significant. It made me more aware of the importance of digital organisation, careful reading of instructions, and proactive help seeking. It also highlighted how digital challenges can impact academic confidence and performance.

5. Conclusion – What else could you have done?

With hindsight, there are several things I could have done differently. Firstly, I could have explored the Moodle more thoroughly before starting the assignment and not use the quick fix Copilot AI. Spending time familiarising myself with the platform would have reduced confusion and helped me locate the correct documents more quickly.

Secondly, I could have read the assignment instructions more carefully. My mistake in downloading the wrong document was partly due to rushing and assuming I understood the task. Taking time to read instructions slowly and check details would have prevented this error.

Thirdly, I could have sought help earlier. Asking questions during induction or attending digital skills workshops would have given me the confidence and knowledge needed to navigate Moodle effectively. Instead of struggling alone, I could have used the support available to me.

Finally, I could have used digital tools to organise my work more effectively. Setting reminders, creating digital notes, or bookmarking important sections of the VLE would have helped me manage the task more efficiently.

6. Action Plan – What will you do next time?

To improve my academic and digital skills in the next term, I will implement a structured SMART action plan.

SMART Action Plan

Specific: I will attend one digital skills workshop and spend 30 minutes each week exploring and organising the VLE, including bookmarking key sections and reviewing updates.

Measurable: I will track my progress by keeping a weekly log of what I have learned and how confidently I can navigate the platform.

Achievable: The plan is realistic because the workshops are free, and 30 minutes per week fits easily into my schedule.

Relevant: Improving my digital literacy will help me access academic materials more efficiently, reduce stress, and improve assignment quality.

Timebound: I will complete this plan by Week 6 of the next term and review my progress with my academic tutor.

Reference List (5 sources)

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