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MODULE TITLE: ACADEMIC SKILLS

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TITLE: TASK 3, REFLECTIVE REPORT

INTRODUCTION: In this reflective report, I will be discussing what I have learnt about Academic writing skills, Note-taking, and Finding information / Research skills in relation to helping me develop my academic skills throughout my university career and beyond.

Academic writing skills: I will touch on vital points that makes a great writing skill;

- i. Structured -
- ii. Evidenced -
- iii. Critical -
- iv. Balanced -
- v. Precise -
- vi. Objective -
- vii. Formal -

I will also be touching on acceptable sources of information.

Note-taking skills: I will be writing on note-taking methods, and their importance in my academic life now and in the future. I will also touch on challenges faced in the meantime and how I hope to overcome them.

Finding information / Research skills: I will be writing on where to find information, both primary and secondary sources, I will touch on the importance of the CRAAP test. My personal experience and challenges in this regard.

MAIN BODY

Academic Writing skills

Academic writing has distinct features that make it different from other forms of writing, as mentioned earlier. Here are some key features:

1. **Structured** – Academic writing must have a clear structure, such as introduction, body, and conclusion. Each section has a specification, and conveys the points or arguments being established.

2. **Evidence** – Arguments and claims are backed up with credible evidence, such as research studies, statistics, or established theories. Citations and references are crucial. Harvard reference recommended.
3. **Critical** – Academic writing often involves critical thinking and analysis, describing or summarizing the event is not enough. It requires evaluating the evidence, considering different perspectives, and presenting a reasoned argument.
4. **Balanced** – This entails that we are decisive, focused, and impartial. Considering all pros and cons before taking a stand on any issue.
5. **Precision** – Ideas are presented clearly and accurately. Points are supported with evidence and explanations are thorough to avoid misrepresentation.
6. **Objective** – The writing is unbiased and impersonal, always avoiding first person pronouns (like I or we). The focus is on the subject matter, not the author's opinions.
7. **Formal** – Strictly academic language, Avoiding informal language like slang, and contractions. Be precise in the choice of vocabulary and sophisticated language.

It is especially important to differentiate academic writing from other types of writing, as was displayed in the activities in the Moodle. In activity 1, there was a text message; 'R U out 2nite? It will be gr8' This would have been better if words were used instead of numbers and abbreviations. The next one was a Newspaper article; 'Hoodies are lowering the tone of our town centers' This makes assumptions and hold individual opinions; it does not back up points with references and uses quite colloquial language (hoodies)

In the book, Success in academic writing by Trevor Daly (2023), the importance of academic writing was explicitly explained, (page 2) 5 reasons were given as follows:

- i. Writing helps to remember
- ii. Writing helps to observe and collate evidence
- iii. Writing helps to think
- iv. Writing helps to communicate

The fifth point however resonates, and underpins the earlier four, which is:

- v. Writing helps to learn: This is indeed a fundamental way in which you reveal your knowledge and understanding to yourself as well as to others. It is a vital ingredient to my learning here and afterwards.

Note-Taking Skills

‘Notetaking is a strategy of making information meaningful...The act of taking notes is more important than the result’ (McPherson,2018, p6)

Effective notetaking is determined by several factors including; the density of the information, the speed at which the information is presented – a slower pace gives room for reflection. Working memory also comes in handy, this varies between individuals. Some people have high-capacity WM, holding up to 10 pieces of information per time. Most have an average WM, remembering up to 6 pieces of information per. Some will have a lower capacity WM, holding 3 pieces of information at a time. The important thing here is that you know what works for you, for instance I have come to understand that the third strategy works better for me, but I hope to improve on this by regular practice as I continue in my learning. In notetaking, listening is vital (Refocusing on listening skill and notetaking, article, 2022) however hearing is especially important, this will go a long way in improving the strategy and WM in notetaking.

Various methods can help to organize and retain information better. Here are some notetakings methods:

- i. Cornell Method
- ii. Mind Mapping
- iii. Charting Method
- iv. Sentence Method

The fourth is my favorite; sentence method, I simply write down each point as it is made, one after another, in a linear fashion. However, the challenge is the lecturer sometimes is too fast for me to comprehend as mentioned earlier.

Finding Information / Research Skills

The First point of call when carrying out a research project or finding information is the school library at www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library, followed by Google Scholar at <https://scholar.google.co.uk>. However, there are other types of sources such as

- i. Academic books
- ii. Journal articles
- iii. Reputable online news sources
- iv. TV, radio, podcast, and online media
- v. Personal and company blogs
- vi. Newspaper

These are some of the sources of finding information, in all, the credibility of the author is particularly important

The CRAAP Test is a method of evaluating the reliability and quality of Information sources, especially in academic research. It stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the journey of enhancing academic writing, note-taking, and finding information / research skills, I have gained a deeper understanding of how interconnected practices contribute to effective learning, and scholarly success. Reflecting on the insights and techniques I have acquired; I recognize that these skills are foundational not only in academic contexts but also in professional and everyday decision making. The integration of the topics has significantly improved my ability to engage with complex topics.

Looking ahead, the progress I have made in academic writing, note-taking, and information research has equipped me with a robust toolkit for academic success, I am confident that these skills continue to serve as a solid foundation for lifelong learning and effective communication.

REFERENCE

Trevor,D.(2023) *Success in academic writing*. 3rd ed. Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic

Article

Ngwok,F; Ugwuagbo, W; Nwokolo, B. (2022) *Refocusing on listening skills and Note-Taking*, Vol 12, No7, pp 1241 - 1251