

# SWOT Analysis

## Introduction

In this piece, I plan to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of my Harvard referencing skills. I will demonstrate how I plan to achieve my goal of adequately using Harvard referencing throughout my academic career. I aim to do this whilst critiquing my current skills and assessing how I can improve in the future. Harvard referencing is an essential academic skill, as it supports academic integrity and allows students to demonstrate evidence-based practice, which is particularly important in higher education and future professional roles. Referencing is also essential in avoiding plagiarism and maintaining academic integrity (Neville, 2010), highlighting its importance within higher education.

## Strengths

One notable strength in the student's academic development is their motivation to succeed. The student was able to acknowledge that despite not being able to attend classes physically, they remain motivated academically because they are able to access resources from home, which enables them to keep up with course expectations. Motivation plays a crucial role in academic performance. Dweck (2006, p. 6) notes that "effort is what ignites ability and turns it into accomplishment." This view is supported by Race (2015), who also emphasises the importance of active engagement in learning. Both authors agree that motivation is key to success; however, Race (2015) places more emphasis on the learner taking responsibility for their own development.

This suggests that motivation is not only beneficial but essential when learning challenging academic techniques such as Harvard referencing, which require consistency and attention to detail. Therefore, the student's motivation can be seen as a strong foundation for developing this skill.

Motivation is also beneficial beyond the university course and is a transferable skill that the student can develop throughout their academic career and apply to their future nursing career. Nursing demands resilience, self-motivation and the ability to persevere. Orem (1995) emphasises that "self-motivation and self-care are foundational to sustaining professional competence." This supports the idea that motivation is not only academically useful but also professionally important. Therefore, this strength will benefit the student both in their studies and in future practice.

Another key strength identified is the learner's determination and independence. Despite not attending class in person, the student still uses their time effectively by accessing course

content and online materials to remain informed. This aligns with Race (2015), who highlights “a learner’s willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own learning” (p. 42). Similarly, Cottrell (2019) suggests that independent learners often develop stronger academic skills. This indicates that the student’s independent learning supports their progress, particularly in Harvard referencing, which requires self-checking and attention to detail. Moon (2004) also supports this, suggesting that reflection and independent learning are key to deeper understanding.

## **Weaknesses**

Despite these strengths, the student faces several weaknesses that affect their Harvard referencing skill development. One significant weakness is the inability to attend lectures regularly, which limits opportunities to ask questions and clarify understanding in real time. Vygotsky (1978) argued that “learning is socially mediated; understanding grows through interaction with others” (p. 57). This view is supported by Race (2015), who also highlights the importance of discussion and feedback in learning. Both perspectives suggest that missing classes can negatively impact understanding. This is further supported by Biggs and Tang (2011), who argue that active participation enhances understanding and academic performance.

Because of this absence, the student often misses opportunities for real-time clarification, interactive discussions, and immediate feedback. This is particularly important when learning a rule-based skill such as Harvard referencing. Therefore, this weakness can be seen as significant, as it may lead to misunderstandings and repeated errors.

Another weakness is procrastination. When studying independently at home, the student occasionally delays starting assignments and struggles to stay focused. This reduces the time available for accurate referencing and can lead to rushed work. Steel (2010) describes procrastination as “a self-regulatory failure” (p. 35), while Cottrell (2019) also highlights that poor time management can reduce the quality of academic work. Both sources suggest that procrastination negatively impacts performance, particularly in tasks requiring accuracy such as referencing. Therefore, this weakness is likely to affect the student’s ability to produce high-quality work.

Anxiety also contributes to the student’s weaknesses. When attending class, the student sometimes feels unable to ask questions or participate in discussions due to anxiety. Williams (2016) explains that anxiety in learning environments can lead to reduced engagement and avoidance behaviours. This suggests that anxiety can prevent the student from seeking clarification, which is important when learning complex skills like Harvard referencing. As a result, mistakes may continue, which can reduce confidence over time.

## **Opportunities**

The student has many opportunities to strengthen their Harvard referencing skills. One key opportunity is the range of academic support services provided by UWTSD, including lecturer feedback, workshops, and online resources. Cottrell (2019) states that students who actively seek support develop skills more effectively. This is supported by Race (2015), who also emphasises the value of guided learning. However, these opportunities are only effective if the student actively engages with them.

Engaging with these services could significantly improve the student's accuracy and confidence in Harvard referencing. Additionally, digital referencing tools and university guidance can support learning. Pears and Shields (2019) highlight the importance of using correct and reliable referencing guidance, suggesting that these tools can be beneficial when used properly. Burns and Sinfield (2016) also highlight that using academic support can significantly improve study skills and confidence.

Improved attendance also presents an important opportunity. Attending classes would allow the student to engage in peer discussions, receive immediate feedback, and see practical examples. Vygotsky (1978) supports the importance of social learning, suggesting that interaction can improve understanding. Therefore, increased attendance could have a positive impact on the student's development.

Regular practice is another opportunity. By consistently practising referencing, the student can gradually improve accuracy and confidence. Race (2015) suggests that learning becomes more effective through repeated practice, indicating that consistent effort is key to improvement.

Finally, the student has the opportunity to develop strategies to manage anxiety. Williams (2016) suggests that structured approaches, such as preparation and time management, can help reduce anxiety. By managing anxiety, the student may feel more confident participating in class and seeking support when needed.

## Threats

There are several threats that could hinder the student's progress. One major threat is continued absence from lectures, which may lead to gaps in understanding. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, learning is influenced by social interaction, so ongoing absence may negatively affect development. This could also increase anxiety, making it more difficult to catch up.

Another threat is relying on unreliable online referencing sources. Pears and Shields (2019) warn that students should follow their institution's specific version of Harvard referencing rather than generic examples. This suggests that incorrect sources may lead to consistent errors and loss of marks. Therefore, this threat is significant and could directly impact academic performance.

Anxiety also remains an ongoing threat. If not managed, it may continue to prevent the student from asking questions or engaging in learning. Williams (2016) highlights that anxiety can reduce academic performance, suggesting this is an important issue to address.

Variations in Harvard referencing also present a challenge. Neville (2010) explains that differences between institutions can cause confusion. This means that even when referencing is mostly correct, students may still lose marks if the wrong format is used. Therefore, attention to detail is essential. This reinforces the importance of consistency and accuracy when applying Harvard referencing in academic work.

Procrastination also poses a threat if it continues. Steel (2010) suggests that ongoing procrastination can negatively affect performance over time. If not addressed, this could lead to repeated mistakes and reduced learning.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the student's Harvard referencing abilities show both strengths and areas for development. Strengths such as motivation and independent learning provide a strong foundation for improvement. These skills are also transferable to future nursing practice, where self-motivation and continuous learning are essential.

However, weaknesses such as poor attendance, procrastination, and anxiety impact the student's ability to fully develop their referencing skills. Opportunities such as academic support, improved attendance, and regular practice can support development, but they require active engagement.

Threats including ongoing absence, reliance on incorrect sources, and unmanaged anxiety may hinder progress if not addressed. Overall, by making use of available support and developing effective study strategies, the student has the potential to improve their Harvard referencing skills and succeed academically.

# References

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