

ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Table of contents	PAGE
Introduction	2
Gibbs Reflective Cycle	2
3.1 Time management	3-5
3.2 CV Writing	5-7
3.3 Cover letter writing	7-8
3.4 Online learning experience	8-9
Conclusion	10
Reference list	11-12

1. Introduction

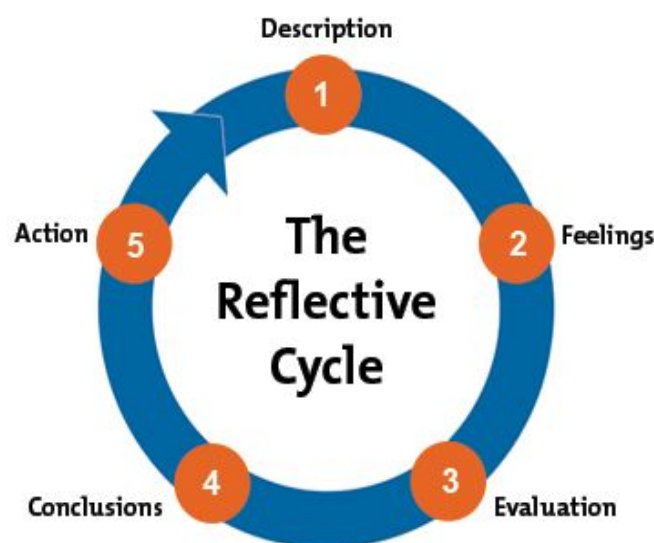
In my report I will reflect on four topics we covered during the term: Time Management, CV Writing, Cover letter writing and Online Learning Experience by using the Gibbs Reflective Cycle.

2. Gibbs Reflective Cycle.

In 1988, the American sociologist and psychologist Graham Gibbs published his Reflective Cycle model in his book "Learning by Doing". Gibbs Reflective Cycle encourage people to think systematically about the experiences they had during a specific situation, even or activity.

The Gibbs Reflective Cycle starts at Description and then continues clockwise to Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion and ends at Action plan (DuFour, 2016).

I have chosen Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) because it's not too difficult to understand and it will help me to improve by reflecting on my experience. Here the Gibbs reflective cycle is complete.



3.1 Time management

Time is an important part of our life. Before you start learning time management techniques, first explore what your relationship is over time. It seems that these are quite banal or obvious things, but rarely does anyone start planning with analysis.

This was the first unit I did and I was provided online using Microsoft Team. I had already done some research on the internet and found many books on the subject and many definitions. I particularly like this one: "Time management is the process of organising and planning how to divide your time between specific activities. Failing to manage your time damages your effectiveness and causes stress". (www.mindtools.com)

I didn't know what to expect and I was quite nervous as well as feeling stressed. As people introduced themselves I could tell the others were nervous too which gave me some comfort. The lecturer was calm and clearly spoken which helped me to relax and concentrate on the content. As the lecture went on I became more comfortable and the rest of the group were too, I could tell this as there was more and more interaction from everybody including myself. At the end of the lecture I was quite relieved and also happy that I'd completed my first online lecture.

This was my first lecture for many years and my first experience of online studying in groups. To start with the software seemed to have glitches and was a bit difficult to understand and navigate. But I noticed the students began to help each other and share knowledge. There were times when the internet broke down and caused disruptions for students, but as there were more than 10 of us on the lecture we could help each other recap.

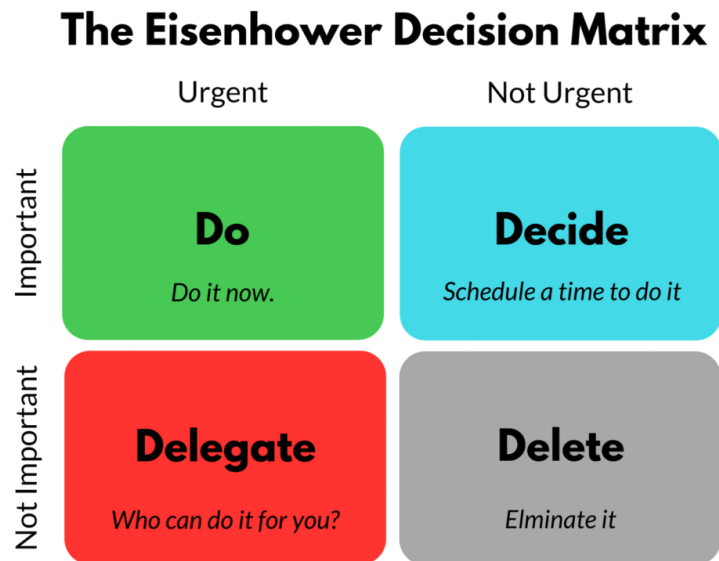
There were many times when several people tried to talk at the same time probably because we couldn't see people's body language and expressions. I found everybody's contributions useful as if they were wrong then somebody within the group would know the answer or the lecturer would coach us to come to the correct answer.

I searched through some literature on time management and found many many articles on the internet one quote I particularly like is: "The key is not spending time, but investing it" (Covey, 1995)

I learned that sometimes we take time for granted, but if we invest in time we can work more productively and efficiently. We would work smarter not harder. An effective time management strategy allows me to balance important aspects of my life such as work, leisure and family relationships. This is important primarily because the constant feeling of lack of time can lead to the accumulation of stress, which will inevitably affect me and my relationship with others.

Another strategy for taking action and organising your tasks is simple. Its called Eisenhower's matrix (1953-1961). Using the description matrix below, you will separate your action based on four possibilities (Alvarez and Ferrero,2019).

- urgent and important(tasks you'll do immediately)
- important,but not urgent (tasks you'll schedule to do later)
- urgent, but not important (tasks you'll delegate to someone else)
- neither urgent nor important(tasks that you'll eliminate)



I have discovered I can be more productive and efficient by planning and managing my time, and also that there are lots of simple suggestions available online. I am therefore going to make it part of my ongoing home study to continue to research this topic on an ongoing basis.

3.2 CV Writing

In week 7 our group discussed CV writing and the importance of getting it right, what a CV is and how you can create your own brand to market yourself specifically to your chosen employer. Again, we used the Microsoft Teams platform that we are all now more familiar with.

I learned how to structure my CV in a format that is eye catching, easy to read and emphasises the parts employers want to review. "As it's a document in which an applicant provides brief information

about education, employment, professional skills, experience and achievements” (Rimmer, 2019)

I have written some CV's but I was still nervous as I was unsure what to expect. Being a positive person I was also keen to learn more and also excited to know I will be able to produce an effective CV that will appeal to prospective employers.

During the lecture I felt quite comfortable and also confident as I understood the topic. I also knew that there would be more useful information on the internet if I needed it and all this information will help me be able to produce a well presented CV that will help my career. As Mills (2019) said, “the quality of your working life and the career opportunities that you can access are likely to be influenced by the effectiveness of your CV.”

This lecture actually went very well, my colleagues all produced some good, positive interaction. The conversation flowed naturally and I came away with a good understanding. The tutor gave me self confidence that I will be able to express myself in my chosen job.

The tutor explained the topic very well and all of the group asked questions on how CV writing could help their career. The tutor encouraged us to do things to the best of our ability as it could affect our futures negatively as well as positively.

We found that a traditional format CV essentially has blocks of texts, paragraphs presented in a concise and logical form (Costello, 2019). The tutor explained to us it should clearly summarise why you're suitable for the job.

I learned a great deal from this module even though I thought I was fairly competent. It shows us that by doing research and actively

taking part in lectures, improvements are always possible. I can say now that having a well structured , easy to read and well presented CV is an obvious asset, but before the lecture I realised my CV may not have even been read. In order for a potential employer to appreciate all your professional qualities and experience, it is necessary to properly present them, highlight all the main achievements and skills needed in the work of the manager.

(Grove,J. 2017)

This is another topic where I have found many examples of CV's on the internet. I have learned enough from this course and combining this knowledge with all the available content on the internet I am going to produce myself a minimum of two CV's that can be adapted for my chosen career path emphasizing the different skills I have that relate to my career. I plan to do this by the end of February 2021.

3.3 Cover letter

In this module we discussed what a covering letter is and should be able to do. It's a very important link to my CV that complements it and does not duplicate it. "Your cover letter should not be a regurgitation of your CV. Instead, it should zoom in on a few key skills and experiences on your CV that the employer values the most". (www.standout-cv.com)

As with anything new especially with an audience I was feeling nervous again, but knowing it would only be for one page I was also confident that I would be able to understand and use the techniques (Augustine, 2019). During the lecture I was familiar with some of the content and began to feel more relaxed especially as my colleagues were asking the same questions I was thinking of myself. By the time

the lecture was over, I was feeling very motivated as I think I had absorbed a lot of the content of the lecture.

Overall I was satisfied with this module as the lecture was clear and precise making everything simple and easy to understand. I was able to contribute with confidence and had no problems in discussing this subject with my colleagues. The positive contribution by everybody in the group was very motivating which was an enjoyable experience for me and I believe everything went as well as possible (Permana, 2019).

I think this was successful learning for me as the module had already grabbed my attention. I had written cover letters before but in Ukrainian style. I was quite blunt, short and really did not give the employer any indication of my abilities or how I could benefit their organisation. The style I was learning now is more logical and I can see how it would grab an employer's attention.

A cover letter typically highlights what you have done in a previous position whereas a value proposition letter explains what you will do if you are hired for a current position. ([www. livecareer.com](http://www.livecareer.com))

I am going to use the knowledge I have gained along with my CV's and start applying for vacancies adapting the covering letter to suit the particular vacancy. I will apply for suitable vacancies almost immediately.

3.4 Online learning experience

The current situation with Covid-19 has forced us to study online. At first I did not understand how to get knowledge remotely. As soon as

the lectures began, my group and I received a huge baggage of knowledge that would develop and motivate us.

The lecturer followed the slides on Moodle where you can return to a topic that you missed or did not understand, as a couple of times we faced some issues because of the quality of our internet connection.

I was very worried about how the online training would take place and even in the beginning I had problems with some settings, but soon I sorted it out and later I realized that it gives us a sense of adaptability and independence.

Online learning gives us much more than academic knowledge. I felt that training could help me expand my area of interest, competencies or even find my vocation which will help me in the future in choosing the right direction or a new direction with my employment.

Develop the skills that I need to evaluate the success of my online teaching and enhance my students' remote learning experience. (www.futurelearning.com). All my knowledge is simply a process of gathering information on what I know based on my educational experience.

Understanding factors in successful online course experiences can provide suggestions for instructors and students to promote improved learning experiences.(Rodriguez and Ooms, 2008)
For me as a student, the online-learning experience, my comfortableness with technology and my motivation to learn technology skills made this enjoyable and very satisfying.

I can only say that I miss going to the university physically, but I love to see all my colleagues online. From my point of view, the University did an amazing job switching to online learning. Our studying is structured much better than I expected. I am generally not good with IT skills, therefore it was very helpful for me to receive clear instruction on what to do. Now the popularity of online education continues to rise, many Universities are interested in how to best deliver course content for online learners. (Dumford and Miller,2018)

It's a great honor to be part of this special course. It seems that everything is complicated and confusing, because you are not familiar with the system but as soon as you start to be engaged in online courses, everything becomes clear. I learned a lot of platforms in my country, but UWTSD has improved a lot further on these and I can definitely use the tools that you have provided and taught us.

Although online education is growing as an option for students and universities, colleges, schools. It has been much quicker to develop and provide online courses and incorporate them into their curricula. (Ash,2009)

I intend to continue my studies even after this course and I would like to improve my interaction. I feel that by being more involved, sharing my strengths, opinions and concerns I can further develop myself from my colleagues knowledge and strengths.

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