

MODULE CODE/ COD Y MODIWL: BMSK4001_LON
ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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1. Introduction:

Academic and Employability Skills module has been one of the most challenging and at the same useful modules during the academic year. The module itself, had not appeared to be difficult at first, but after several lectures, I realised that the challenging nature of the module was hidden in its core. The module's content appeared to be very specific and new to me, and therefore, I had found it difficult to learn.

During this module, I alongside my fellow students have learned various adaptive, academic, transferable and employability skills. For me personally, the most important skills were academic, transferable and employability, since in my opinion these skills form the ground for any task which I will have to do either during job or during my future academic studies.

According to Gibbs, the learning without reflecting upon what has been learned makes the learning process less effective and useful. (Gibbs, 2001) Therefore, I will partly apply Gibb's reflection theory within this reflective paper, because in my opinion this theory truly reflects more on my personal feelings and experiences about studying on the module.

2. Academic Skills:

Throughout the Module, I had attended lectures where I had learned about academic concepts that included: academic writing; research methods and referencing techniques.

2.1 Academic Writing

After studying the Module for two terms, I can say with certainty that Academic Writing so far had been the most difficult skills for me to learn and it is still the skills which I am trying to develop, because, since I am not the native English speaker, the Academic Writing for me is challenging. However, my tutors were very attentive and had explained everything in the relatively simple way.

As part of my learning process, we had group discussions where students in-class were able to share their views on how Academic Writing as a skill can be developed, but since the English language is not my native language I was shy to speak in front of the class and to share my views on the topic discussed.

Even though, I had had difficulties in being able to fully integrate into the class discussions, I have still found the learning process interesting and useful. This is because our lecturers had made the lectures more entertaining by showing various videos on the development of the skill in question and this had made the learning process more interesting and easier to understand.

Taking into consideration the difficulty of the skills and the diverse nature of students in-class for whom English language is not their native language, I can say with certainty that the learning process went well to the extent that I am now more confident in writing academic essays and reports. However, the more personalised approach to every student could have helped me to develop this skill to the better extent.

In my opinion, the Academic Writing is the skill that cannot be developed to the ideal level at all, because it can always be mastered to the better extent. I honestly believe, that in order to develop this skill, it is essential to constantly write essays, read various books on academic writing in order to master this skill. Since I will be studying GDL and LPC as part of my further learning, I am sure that by studying Academic and Employability Skills module this year, I will be in the better position of showing strong academic performance.

2.2 Research Methods

In addition to the academic writing, I have also learned a lot about the Research Methods used for creating academically strong and credible essays and reports. I have learned a lot about writing capstone; finding sources; identifying credible sources and evaluating sources. The topic itself appeared to be boring, because of the complicated nature of the Research Methods used at the universities. However, I realised that this skill is extremely important if I want to become the academically strong individual and to write the dissertation in my final year and to do well in my further studies.

Since there were many discussions and video resources integrated within the learning process, the topic had appeared easier to understand that it looked from the beginning and the lecturer had explained clearly with examples which research methods are better than the others. Considering the nature of the research methods as the topic, I believe that it is difficult to teach it in the way which is any different to the way that I have been taught it.

To conclude, I feel that I am now very confident in finding the appropriate resources for my academic works, but more importantly I feel that I am now better prepared for the future employment, because the legal career involves researching case law in order to find the applicable precedents which may help to win a case for the client.

In order to further develop this skill, I have purchased reading materials that talk about the most effective ways of finding the most credible sources.

2.3 Referencing Techniques

Learning about referencing techniques was not new to me, because I have already learned about it in my past academic studies, however, the application of Harvard Referencing Style was complicated for me to understand since I have learned OSCOLA before and sometimes had confused those two referencing styles. However, the lecturer had found a short video (University of Derby, 2012) where the speaker had talked about the Harvard Referencing style and I was able to understand it in the clear and concise form.

Throughout the course of the module, I felt that there was little practice of making correct citations for websites and electronic sources, which I think are very useful into the nowadays learning process and academic experiences. Generally speaking, I think that learning about Referencing Techniques was a very useful experience, because now I feel that I am capable of applying knowledge which I have gained for my dissertation writing and further studies on LPC.

3. Employability Skills:

Apart from the academic skills, I have also learned a lot about employability skills, that include time management, self-presentation, CV and Cover Letter writing, analytical and critical thinking.

3.1 Time Management

Time Management is probably the most important skill that I have learned about as part of the module, because it is applicable for both academic learning and employment. During the study process, I have learned about SMART technique that I am now using prior to beginning any tasks and analysing the best course of actions in approaching those tasks. As Brian Tracy said in his interview about time-management, it is important to stop doing unnecessary things in order to effectively manage your daily time. (Brian Tracy, 2008) Therefore, now, before starting every important task I tend to plan it before hand and I also create the weekly schedule using the Eisenhower method (Sweeny, 2008), by analysing things that I have and want to do, and then considering whether or not they are actually useful for me.

Learning about time management was interesting and easy for me, because the skill itself is used across everything what I do and as the result I was able to apply what I had learned into practiced immediately and to see the positive results of that. However, I had still found the Pareto's principle 80-20 rule difficult to understand, because it was explained in the complex and unclear format.

Considering the dynamic nature of the modern world it is not a surprise that the time-management is for sure the one of the most important skills, because apart from academic studies I also have to work part-time and to have my family life. For my future career, the time management will also be very useful, because the legal field involves many time limitations periods which every legal person should comply with.

The Module had developed my deep understanding in time management, and I have started to read books about effective time management techniques which I am sure will help me to master this skill.

3.2 Self-Presentation and Public Speaking

As part of the module, I have also learned about Self-Presentation and Public Speaking. This skill plays one of the most important roles in securing employment and being the successful individual afterwards. I have found learning about Self-Presentation and Public Speaking very interesting and motivational, because I as part of my other module I had to take part in the group project where I was able to apply the skills gained in this module and to produce a very good piece of work which had received the first class mark.

The fact that English is not my first language had had the negative impact on my confidence in speaking in front of others, but the lecturer had shown several videos to class where speakers spoke about the techniques of using the body language in order to keep the audience entertained and focus, and after applying those tips into practice I had developed my personal confidence.

Teaching style used by the lecturer which involved practical advice from various famous businesspeople appeared effective, because everyone in class had found it interesting, enjoyable and productive since grades from group project for another module were relatively high. I feel that this skill could have been mastered even further if I would have the chance of doing more presentations as part of the module, because I had only had one chance of putting everything what I learned into practice.

In my honest opinion, Self-Presentation and Public Speaking skill will help to do well during the interview process for the graduate jobs, because very often it helps to convince the employer that I am the right candidate (Corfield, 2009) and considering that I am planning to work within the legal field, public speaking is something which every successful legal person should master.

3.3 CV & Cover Letter Writing and Job Interview Techniques

Prior this module, I have already had the CV and the Cover Letter, however, after attending the first lecture on the topic I had changed my CV completely, because the lecturer had given useful tips on how to pass the ATS checks and how to ensure that my CV will be chosen from the pool of other candidates.

At first, I felt a little bit disappointed after discovering that the majority of CVs are never being read by employers because they do not pass the ATS checks and that 90 percent of candidates fail the graduate job interview because of inability to answer competency based questions using STAR technique, (Kessler, 2012) however, after lecturer had explained that use of bullet points and clear plain English will help to pass those checks I had not longer felt any stress and have begun to apply for jobs with confidence. I was also given literature to read about STAR Technique which clearly explained how the technique should be applied.

Taking into consideration the competitive nature of the nowadays job market it becomes apparent how important it is to have the well written CV, however, nevertheless it is extremely important to know how to answer questions and how to behave during interview. Therefore, I am certain that I will be in the strong position of securing the employment after graduating from the university.

3.4 Critical Analytical Thinking

As part of the module, I had learned about Critical Analytical Thinking, the skill which is equally important for both academic and employment. The lecturer had also introduced me to the Fibonacci Sequence which I had found confusing, because I could not understand how I can apply the sequence neither into my daily life nor into my academic routine. Throughout the course of learning about Critical Analytical Thinking I felt that I was missing the life-related examples which could had improved my ability to learn it more effectively, therefore, this learning experience for me was relatively difficult.

I feel that Critical Analytical Thinking could had been taught in the easier way, but I appreciate the complex nature of this skill and therefore, I realise that in order to master this skill to the great extent I will need to do more self-study. Therefore, I have started to analyse and critically reflect on various academic works so that I can develop this skill and to become good at it.

For my future career, Critical Analytical Thinking skill will be extremely useful considering that it helps to weigh up the arguments and evidence for and against. (Cottrell, 2013)

4. Conclusion

In my opinion, after studying Academic and Employability Skills module I have gained strong grounds for beginning successful career after graduation. The module had covered the most important skills which can be transferred to both academic and employment related situations. Even though, after undertaking SWOT analysis I have realised that I still have gaps in my academic writing, research methods and analytical skills, but the Module had helped to understand as to how I can improve those skills. At the same time, I have realised that I am strong in time management and job interview techniques which I feel will make me the successful individual within my future career and further studies.

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