

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

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INTRODUCTION

This reflective report critically analyses the research process undertaken in order to explore the impact of online learning on university students' academic performance post-pandemic. This report utilizes Gibbs's Reflective Cycle, 1988, for a step-by-step reflection on various phases of the research, which commence with the identification of the problem and subsequently wind up with the drawing of conclusions. The pandemic brought about a sudden shift in learning from face-to-face to online worldwide, which disrupted the traditional learning environment that had been in place, and this study aimed to show if such disruption was positive or negative on student academic performance.

The reflection covers major areas of the research process which include the choice of a proper method, identification and formulating a clear question, collection, and analysis of quantitative data, and presentation of findings. Each section elaborates on the decisions made, the challenges encountered, and lessons learned thereof. Through this reflection process, I contemplate having had an enriching understanding of how to conduct effective research, adapt to unforeseen challenges, and apply insights that will be useful for future academic and professional pursuits.

IDENTIFYING A PROBLEM

Problem definition marked the first stage of the research design. Observations indicated that online learning during the pandemic might have completely altered the students' academic performance. Since there was greater reliance on digital platforms, this study needed to determine whether this mode of learning had a positive or negative impact on the grades and overall academic engagement of the students.

This is relevant because the identified problem was a very important issue that many students faced. Then came the challenge of narrowing it down further to the post-pandemic era. It was hard to make it manageable between the broad impact of online learning on students and the narrow focus needed in conducting research. Nonetheless, the well-defined problem here provided a perfect base upon which the following steps in research were based.

Reflecting on this phase, this was an important phase because selecting an appropriate and researchable problem is of utmost importance. The practical implications for students and educational institutions generated interest in the research and a direction to make certain that the inquiry would be meaningful in nature as regarding the effects of online learning.

SETTING A RESEARCH QUESTION

This was followed by the development of the research question: "How has the shift to online learning impacted the academic performance of university students in the post-pandemic era?" The question was one that searched for answers to indicate how online learning had affected academic performance and was constructed in a manner that could capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

The issue became one of refining the question to provide a balance between specificity and generalizability. Of course, this required iterative revision with the many valuable comments provided by peers and tutors. Comments included the fact that the question needed to be specific, while at the same time being comprehensive to guide the research.

Through the situation described above, it was revealed to me that a clearly framed research question is most crucial. It lays the foundation for the research process, guides methodology, data collection, and analysis. In developing a clear and focussed research question, much importance needs to be attached to it, since the course and efficiency of the study will depend on this aspect directly.

DECIDING ON THE RESEARCH APPROACH

The choice of the research methodology was fundamental to the comprehension of the impact of online learning. I used a quantitative approach to achieve a deductive approach. In using such, the approach primarily involved testing well-established theories that relate to online learning and academic performance through the collection of data empirically.

The deductive approach allowed the testing of hypotheses based on pre-existing theories, while the quantitative methods allowed for data collection concerning the students' performances to be gained in measurable terms. It was balancing between the theoretically based framework and empirical data collection, which presented quite a challenging but necessary task in order to keep the research systematic and comprehensive.

Looking back at this phase, I valued a lot the power of embedding deductive reasoning in a quantitative approach. It allows one to have a sound basis on which hypotheses can be tested within a design that accommodates precision in measurement with regard to variables. The approach

underlined how research objectives need to correspond to methodological choices when one addresses the research question effectively.

DATA COLLECTION

This involved the collection of data through surveys and analysis of academic records to get information on performance and experience regarding online learning. Large samples of students were surveyed and academic records were also obtained to serve as objective performance metrics.

Conducting the surveys was both rewarding and daunting. Crafting questions that clearly captured the experiences of the students was laborious. Analyzing the academic records was tiresome since the data handled had to be accurate and treated with confidentiality.

Rapport was very helpful to have the participants give candid responses to the surveys. The process directed the need to ensure that data collection had been done in an organized and well-planned manner. For further research, it would be much better to allow an adequate period of time for data collection and incorporate appropriate technological tools to analyze the data, hence streamlining more efficiency and effectiveness.

PRESENTING YOUR IDEA

Presenting the research proposal to the stakeholders was a big step, as this entailed the formulation of the question, methodology, and preliminary findings to tutors, educators, and peers. I was initially afraid of the criticisms, particularly in respect of the design and methodology of the research.

The feedback was constructive and enlightening. Stakeholders recommended the expansion of scope into diverse student populations and, wherever possible, into a consideration of data longitudinally collected over time to capture long-run effects. Building on this feedback, several revisions were done to this research design, particularly in refining the sampling method and focusing on practical recommendations.

Looking back to this phase of the project, I realized that presenting research in its stages is important as it may allow for certain levels of feedback from outside entities. This allows, on the one hand, the improvement of the research design and any foreseen deficiencies. Researchers should be open to constructive criticism to revise their research to make sure that it is relevant and of quality.

ANALYSING DATA

Data analysis involved the coding of survey responses and interpretation of academic performance metrics. The identification of key trends and patterns in the data necessitated a systematic approach toward ensuring that accurate representation, either in experiences or performance, was made for the students.

With the volume and complexity of qualitative responses, analysis of data was thick, and coding was expected to be rigorous. Repeated review of data and consistency in coding had to be ensured to obtain reliable findings. The process highlighted the importance of detailed analysis which in the future could be supported by the use of qualitative data analysis software.

Data analysis requires a systematic reflection, where not only qualitative data needs to be dealt with in a systematic manner, such data analysis must be thorough and iterative to realize meaningful insights. Indeed, future research should use technological tools to increase the precision and speed of data analysis.

FORMULATING CONCLUSIONS

Formulation of conclusions required synthesizing findings from data analysis in light of the research question. To that effect, online learning impacted academic performance in several complex ways, inclusive of positive and negative influences.

The qualitative material does, indeed require careful interpretation, and thoroughness is an important aspect in making conclusions. Recommendations for future research are that analysis should apply technological tools in order to facilitate the analysis process for improvement of substantial findings.

Looking back at this phase, I am grateful that conclusions are best and most meaningfully reached after careful and detailed analysis. The whole research so far underlined the need to adopt systematic ways of approaching matters at hand and how technological tools can further streamline research.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, it has been a great insight into the problems and benefits of conducting research on online learning using Gibbs' Reflective Model to critically analyze the research process. The question that guided this research was appropriate. In addition, the use of deductive reasoning coupled with the quantitative approach ensured completeness in the approach. Feedback from presentations and insights from data analysis have improved my understanding of research methodology and its practical applications.

This shows the iteration of research and flexibility, or openness to feedback. It is expected that the skills and knowledge obtained in the course of this research will serve useful in further academic and professional work, affording me the ability to address such complex problems in a duly informed manner.