

Introduction This essay is aimed to convey how reflecting on my personal development has aided me in developing as a student in higher education in my first term, whilst studying 'Academic skills for the digital Era'. I will explain this using, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) as a guide. A simple explanation of what reflection is, as follows; "Reflection gives people a chance to look back on what they've done, notice how they felt, and figure out how to do better next time" (Schon, 1991). Since I'm using The Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) I will model this text accordingly. There will be six main aspects of this essay & will include; Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion, and Action Plan

Description During my first term, I engaged in team building activities with my peers that helped and encouraged me to gradually enhance my academic and digital skills through proactive projects. An example of a task we underwent, where I worked on improving in my digital skills as well as my comprehensive skills, was when me my peers worked together as team using Microsoft PowerPoint to create a presentation which was both informative and was compiled using attention to detail. This task required us to work rigorously to present credible academic sources after having analysed numerous digital databases; including, an array of websites, digital libraries and journal entries. After looking through many findings, the main thing I took away from this exercise was how to evaluate the reliability of online information.

Feelings In the beginning, the academic expectations were greater than I had anticipated however due to my experience in digital literacy I managed to gain a little confidence and traction which helped me in the group task creating the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. I felt as we all were striving to be valued team players but initially were not confident sharing ideas and were not providing informative content. This motivated me to overcome my fears of being criticised and become more outspoken in group conversations. Students often struggle with confidence in teamwork at first but improve significantly as they gain experience and support through structured collaboration activities. Westfahl, S. (2024). Following this I was able to present credible sources in our presentation draft and also tidy up the referencing & citation styles included in the PowerPoint presentation.

Evaluation Some areas of my performance in this module have seen improvement. Some remained stagnant. In areas of improvement not only did I aim to do better, but I encouraged and enabled my peers to also try & improve for the benefits of both our professional development and the benefits of our team's work rate and overall performance. Referencing, digital literacy, working

well together in a team and evaluating sources were all subjects we focused on. However, after reflecting, analysing and thinking critically I have established some noticeable areas which needed improvement. Time management was something I definitely need to focus on and try to improve. Without proper time management I struggled to put all the valuable information we deduced into a presentable format. This ultimately led to me being behind on the deadline for the presentation. Learning from this mistake I have also created an action plan to minimise the chances of repeating these errors and preventing them to form habits during my academic development. It is understandable why students like me struggle with time management as research by Smith (2019) suggests that students often struggle with time management in their first year.

Analysis Through the memorable experiences this term, I have learned the importance of being adaptable and able to operate digital platforms in this new era of learning technology. Ultimately this will aid my academic success. One hurdle I had to overcome was working in a group using digital platforms and not being overwhelmed by many different ideas and contributions in the making of presentations using Microsoft PowerPoint. Along the way I noticed weaknesses on my referencing abilities, however with some hard work and dedication I'm slowly improving my ability of citing text, evaluating that text and referencing that text in the Harvard style. This is a crucial part of my development as a student in higher education and one of five main focuses going forward. Lastly, my time management skills have vastly improved since my last failure however still needs a lot more work. Bringing structure and organised thoughts into my academic journey will help me achieve my goals more effectively

Conclusion During my first term, I discovered that mastering academic and digital skills doesn't happen overnight. It is something that evolves based on how much time and effort you put in. While I've become more confident working with others online and carrying out research, I've realised that managing my time effectively and referencing sources in my assignments 'accurately' definitely does have room for improvements. After identifying both what I do well and where I struggle, I have deduced, some practical steps which will aid me developing these skills in the future.

SMART ACTION PLAN

Target to be Achieved	Action Steps to Complete to Achieve Target	Potential Difficulties	Resources	Deadline	Comments

Improve time management	Use the eisenhower matrix and categorise tasks based on urgency and importance.	Overcommitting to too much workload can often lead to a burnout resulting in procrastination	Planners, reminders, sticky notes, digital notes	5 th October	Track weekly progress for next 3 months. Everytime you miss a deadline note it down and ask yourself why and how you allowed this to happen.
Enhance referencing skills	Read books dedicated to referencing and take some information and implement it in your academics.	Reading too much or not reading at all. You must take away something from your research. Not disengage because off too little or too much reading.	Referencing guides, library support	5 th October	Read atleast 2 books and implement the knowledge you gain from them in your assignments.
Develop digital collaboration skills	Participate in more group projects using Microsoft Teams or other digital platforms such as; zoom	Technical issues and others commitment to digital collaboration	University funded softwares and subscriptions for IT and digital support	30 th July	Schedule team meetings weekly.

Reference List

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Further Education Unit.

Westfahl, S. (2024). Teaching students how to build better teams. Cambridge, MA: Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning, Harvard University.