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Academic and Employability Skills Portfolio

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Presentation and Reflective Report

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Introduction Task 2

As I did not understand the requirements of this module, I originally had written a report reflecting very vaguely on my experiences throughout the school year. Hence, this is a resit of my original work. It is a second submission of my first try at a reflective report for my university module named "Academic and Employability Skills". The contents of it will be divided into 4 topics and reflective writing will be structured using "Graham Gibbs' Reflective Cycle". (University of Edinburgh, 2020) The first three topics I have chosen in order to satisfy the requirements of task 2 are; time management, second academic writing, third "paraphrasing" and fourth, as per the assignment brief a reflection will be made on the topic of public speaking or presenting. As I did not pass the presentation for task 1 of this portfolio, as well, there will be a lot to uncover and learn from this learning experience.

Time management

Description: The start of my learning experience was on the topic of how to better manage my time as a student and professional. We learned in one of our first classes that there are methods to enhance the quality of learning time, by managing, planning, and setting goals on how your time is utilised. Tactics such as setting SMART goals or developing an action plan after using Gibbs' reflective cycle were shown to us by our teacher. This prompted me to learn more on my own about how effective time management can benefit a student to work "smarter" rather than harder. (Rogak, 1999)

Feelings: Initially, my opinion of my time management skills was very high. However, after failing to organise my time properly prior to my original report submission, which resulted in a grade of 0, I felt uneasy and as if I had let myself down, due to not having the time to correct the draft of my original submission. Currently, I feel motivated to show my teachers I can deliver my assignments timely and up to standards.

Evaluation: With my first submission I failed, due to using paraphrasing too often. This was not just a result of poor planning, but as mentioned I wanted to learn how to work "smarter" so I read neurological peer-reviewed studies on things like the attention span and focus of a student, to better inform my development plans and time management. It is good that students get a resubmission, as this gives me enough time to combine all in-class and personal studies on the matter.

Analysis: Unfortunately, looking into personal interests did not leave me time to apply what I had learned in class along with these extracurricular practices in writing my first submission. As a result of not having enough time to structure the new ideas, I had learned, in my own words my first submission failed. In order to improve this, I will use time-logging and to-do lists at every step of the way to achieving the SMART goals I have set.

Conclusion: What I learned is that no matter how I feel about my time management skills, demonstrating them is the most important, not simply thinking I can and later not showing that practically. I should have used SMART method to organise my time for writing my reflective report earlier so that after doing the research on what I wanted to, I should have planned the time to not use paraphrasing tools, but rather write it in my own words completely.

Action plan: The above paragraphs and PowerPoint are proof of my latest action plan, drawn up as a result of failing the original assignment. I now leave 3 hours every other day to write segments of each assignment given to me by the university, with the goal of finishing each assignment within 5 days of starting it and submitting it at least 7 days before the final deadline, to allow for tutor feedback and ensure that I never leave my work until the last minute and have to resubmit.

Academic Writing

Description: A few weeks before the deadline for our assignment for this module, we learned in detail what academic writing is and what it is most suitable for. I already had collected information on what I wanted to write about in my reflection but did not account for referencing or the complexity of the text in my sources. This meant that I failed the assignment, as the ideas expressed were not clear and concise and ultimately were very hard to follow. (Wisconsin-Madison, 2022) My teacher told me this after giving me a grade of 0.

Feelings: I felt we should have studied academic writing earlier in the year, as I had already done research on what I wanted to write for tasks 1 and 2, but I did not leave enough time to reformat everything in the academic style, with evidence of what is being said and at the same time to adhere to the word limit of the assignment. I now feel much better prepared after trial and error.

Evaluation: It is obvious that failing an assignment is bad, but it turned out positive for me in the end, both due to being allowed to resubmit and this failure forcing me to learn more about academic writing, time management, and the other issues that occurred when writing my first drafts for this module.

Analysis: In order to make sense of the situation and what was needed of me when it came to academic writing, I spoke to one of my peers who showed me websites, such as Grammarly.com a proofreading platform to help students with grammar, punctuation and other aspects of academic writing. Why I failed the assignment is due to my, relying more on the machine than my own brain, as I did not have the time physically to go over my writing and correct syntax or the way ideas were formulated and presented.

Conclusion: Even with my peer showing me these websites, in the future I must not rely solely on them, but rather, allow for more time to improve my writing style or to learn from literature on the matter and put it in my own words, without the help of artificial intelligence. In order to shorten the amount of time it takes me to write academically, I must keep practicing and writing drafts for feedback, before the final submission date. Practice is the only way to improve this in my view.

Action plan: This ties in with the action plan for improving time management. By writing drafts or parts of assignments every other day, writing in such a style will become second nature. I must combine the websites to help with the finished assignment after I have written it, rather than using the software first to source literature on the subject, and later try to adhere to word limits and still keep the explored ideas clear. (Devet, 2011)

Paraphrasing

Description: While learning about academic writing, midway through the module certain techniques for incorporating sources and relevant literature were given to us by the teacher, to ensure students do not quote excessively any academic resource and subsequently have high percentages of similarity on "Turnitin" One of these is paraphrasing. We were given

many methods on how to achieve this, but in my first submission, I chose the wrong one. I chose to use word processing software instead of using the “chunking” or “tell a friend” methods, as I believed these ways would be slower than the computer. (Wisconsin-Madison, 2022)

Feelings: First, I felt happy that computers can speed up my writing process. After collecting the information online and running it through this software the amount of information I had to paraphrase after it had already been automatically paraphrased made me feel overwhelmed and numb to the fact that I will not have enough time to correct the paraphrasing and will fail the assignment.

Evaluation: The only good thing about this experience is that I get a second chance at submitting my assignment. Computer paraphrasing might get me around the similarity index of assignments, but it cannot write with the clarity of a human paraphrasing as it is not just about swapping out words or rearranging them.

Analysis: Things did not go so well for me due to putting my faith in computers rather than my own skill set and also, not planning in case the computer paraphrasing failed me. Which it did and I could not act quick enough to correct it and upload my desired assignment. The teacher which gave me this second chance encouraged me indirectly to go over everything learned throughout the year again and ensure a positive outcome this time.

Conclusion: In order to achieve a pass at minimum one must plan using time management and academic writing techniques, once you fail at one of these aspects, it is highly likely you will not pass your assignments, like with tasks 1 and 2 of this portfolio.

Action plan: Practice with mock assignments and drafts on different topics every other day, in order to create a routing in the brain to help analyse information faster and be able to determine which of the techniques for paraphrasing will serve me best in a given situation. (Hort, 2020)

Public Speaking and Giving Presentations

Description: Before our lecture in week 6 I had not had any training in public speaking and giving presentations. Our teacher was in fact utilising the theory as she was teaching us, things like tone of voice, and body language and ensuring preparation for the presentation was done, like switching off mobile phones or being dressed accordingly. (Osborn, Osborn and Osborn, 2014)

Feelings: During the experience of presenting, I was nervous, as in the back of my mind was the fact that I had not satisfied the requirements to pass the report part of the portfolio and felt discouraged to do my best, as I felt like I had already failed before I started and did not know that I will be given a second chance.

Evaluation: My first try at a presentation for task 1 was ok, but due to my lack of confidence things like my tone of voice, body language and other important aspects of public speaking were not up to pass the module. Regardless of this, my teachers are giving me a second chance, and hence I have reworked the presentation, as seen at the top of this portfolio.

Analysis: As the portfolio is graded in tandem with the public speaking aspect and report, I did not perform to my best when giving a presentation. With the power of hindsight, I am sure that this time presenting will be followed by a pass, as I have practiced how long it takes to present, as well as rehearsed what I must say and overall feel better prepared to show my employability skills and tackle this task.

Conclusion: Specifically relating to public speaking the conclusion I have reached is that I must have more confidence in my abilities. This can be achieved with practice and by adhering to the time management plan and using paraphrasing in my academic writing, which will in turn create a higher quality presentation for myself and the viewers.

Action plan: Attend public speaking extracurricular classes every weekend with a personal tutor. Further I will use my time before the resit presentation to practice in the mirror every evening and after I feel comfortable with that, to present in front of my partner or roommates.

Conclusion:

The reassessment of reflective assignments is great, as it helps with better understanding what skills are required to be polished in order to continue studying and improving, while also providing a chance for trial and error to occur, before real-life situations are explored.

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