

Skills for Learning

Guide to Employability Skills From Academic Writing, Essays and Reports

Skills from Study Activities

When you begin to apply for jobs and attend interviews, it is likely that employers will ask you to give examples of how you have gained specific skills from your time at university. This guide reviews the employability skills you can gain from writing academically, preparing essays and writing reports. It should be a useful aid to you when drawing up your CV or applying for jobs and work placements.

Academic Writing

Reading and writing at an academic level will both extend your subject specific and general vocabulary and develop your skills in putting forward a reasoned argument and discussing issues articulately. When in the workplace, the skill of acquiring and using appropriate language can be extremely powerful. Using the right choice of words or “talking the talk” to communicate clearly and effectively will often help you achieve the results that you want, for example when persuading and negotiating in business and even in the boardroom. Developing this ability will help you greatly in your career success and as part of your Continued Professional Development (CPD).

More generally, your fundamental writing and literacy skills will improve greatly through writing academically. Whichever profession you choose, any written documents that you produce will be expected to be of graduate calibre, whether technical specifications, staff or self-appraisals, reports and recommendations or business plans. Academic writing will help you develop your:

- Skills for CPD
- Excellent written skills
- Ability to research, find and use information
- Ability to put your point of view
- Problem solving and analytical skills

- IT skills

Report Writing

Whichever profession you choose, it is very probable that you will have to write a report at some point. It may be in a similar area to the subject you are studying, or for an entirely different purpose. For example, you may be required to do marketing reports or technical reviews of suitable technology for your company, or a staff performance appraisal.

Learning to gather, select and present relevant facts (and possibly figures) to support your findings is an essential graduate skill. When writing reports, you will be required to plan methodically, analyse information, develop your own ideas and draw conclusions. In doing so, you will develop problem solving and analytical skills which are the hallmark of a capable graduate.

Your awareness of any requirements in your assignment regarding layout and style of reports is essential. In many professions, the structure of reports and other documents must conform to specific guidelines. These may specify, for example, content, layout and formatting details (such as the headings, line spacing, font style and size). The IT skills you develop through doing this should enable you to produce reports correctly in the workplace, and to manage your own information for professional development.

- Preparing documents to specific guidelines
- Written communication
- Use of professional language / vocabulary
- Research, information and fact finding skills
- Problem solving and analytical skills
- IT skills – Word/Excel

Essay Writing

There is rarely a direct need for essay writing expertise in non-academic professions.

However, in writing an essay, you will not only deepen your understanding of your subject knowledge, but also learn to be pro-active in finding information and forming your own ideas. Often you will need to critically discuss other people's work, compare different opinions and express your own. This will develop your initiative and self-confidence, as well as your written communication skills. Learning to structure an essay to put across the key points you wish to make within a limited word-count is sometimes the most challenging aspect of essay writing; it requires analytical, decision-making and planning skills. You may do several drafts and have to make decisions about which points to include, which content to keep, and which to leave out. In fact, you are learning to design, structure, review and produce a piece of work

from very brief instructions. Being able to do so, often within short timescales, will give you several transferable skills:

- Written communication and use of professional language / vocabulary
- Intellectual / critical thinking
- Research
- Problem solving and analytical
- IT



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