Reflective Report

University of Brighton - Business School
Professional and Academic Skills – ML120
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1 Introduction

Until 2010 7.8% of UK’s population was unemployed and the number had risen since then (Economy Watch, 2010). In 2008 graduate vacancies were supposed to rise over 16% (Prospects, 2008), by 2012 they were expected to fall 1.2pc in contrast with the rise by 1.7pc in 2011 (Peacock, 2012).

This unstable economy and the rising unemployment rate reduce the chances of graduates finding employment. In 2011 21% of graduates could not find a job after graduation, a very close value to the 26% of 16-year-olds unemployed with GCSEs (Osborne, 2012).

![Figure 1-1: Unemployment Rate for Recent Graduates (%) (Sedghi, 2012)](image)

The increase of tuition fees in 2012 tend to increase the demand for two-year degrees, which should raise an alarm on employers that state that the heavy workload would reduce the extra-curricular activities and work experience time, stopping students from achieving important skills that employers value (Peacock, 2012).

This reflective report will analyze developments during the first year of my high education studies, explaining why the internship with Disney would be suited for me, my experience during the assessment center for that particular opportunity and reflect on the feedback given by my mentor. The objective of this report is to understand the importance of exceed during undergraduate years in order to secure one’s graduate job.
2  Reflective Report

2.1  The University Experience

2.1.1  Lectures and Seminars
Being an international student, my knowledge on the UK’s academic curriculum was limited. I learned that the classes would be divided by lectures and seminars, an overview of the subject would be given in the lecture while, after further development at home with individual study, the subject would be brought forward for discussion in a seminar, providing a deeper understanding on what was learned in lecture.

By that time, my main worries were the capability of adjusting to the different academic environment. In order to adjust easily I took any extra class available, including academic skills and academic writing workshops. These classes made me feel more confident and were vital on understanding how fully experience the academic year.

After the extra classes I had no difficulty adjusting to the routine. The subjects lectured were learned with no trouble and many subjects that I thought would be troublesome proved otherwise.

2.1.2  Assignments and Exams
Time management and planning are important when preparing for assignments and exams. My first assignment involved a lot of research; the experience helped me with other researches necessary for my extracurricular activities as well as other assignments.

By the second semester assignments would drive my interest in examining my knowledge. Knowing the subject and writing about it would give me a sense of achievement and I took enjoyment out of writing them.

One of my assignments was handed in earlier than the due date since I spent the Christmas break working on it. This assignment proved to be very disappointing since, for lack of examples and concrete data, my mark was much lower than expected.

Having never taken exams before my only experience was the IELTS exam and the half term exams that were taken in some modules. Using my organizational skills I managed to prepare my time in order to revise for the exams, but my understanding of what “revise” meant came after reading textbooks on how to succeed in university.

Smale and Fowlie (2009) state that reducing the topics taught into bullet points and mind maps helps the brain recall notes in a logical sequence. This should help visualize what can be on the exam and what should be revised.
The objective was to reduce the entire modules into linked bullet points in order to be able to visualize the whole module, McMillan and Weyers (2011) say that gaining an overview of what is to be learnt helps absorb it and remember the facts, seeing the big picture helps you better see its parts, then the bullet points can be associated to chapters in textbooks and mind maps created in order to better understand different topics.

2.2 Extra Curricular Activities

Early in the year it was advised to me that engagement is necessary in order to fully experience one’s undergraduate years. Standing forward as Seminar Group Course Representative, joining the University’s Business Society as a finance staff member and posing as student ambassador during open days were some of the ways I found to further engage myself. My organizational skills proved to be useful then since such activities required balance with any assignment or extra study that were conducted.
3 Personal Analysis Progression

3.1 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis conducted at the beginning of the academic year shows some of the weaknesses that needed strengthening in order to succeed in my university goals. The strengths I brought from my previous experiences were overthrown by my lack of knowledge in the subject and the challenge of study in a different country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Time Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dedication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Motivation</td>
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<td>• Organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Easy Distraction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Grammar</td>
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<td>• Academic Writing</td>
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Opportunities:

• Mathematics  
• Academic Skills  
• Course Subjects  
• Employability Skills  

Threats:

• Lack of Study Space  
• Distance from Library and University Facilities  
• Difficult Transportation (unable to drive)  

Figure 3-1: Personal SWOT Analysis October 2011 (Proposed by Author)

Threats were reduced by creating a practical working space at home. Opportunities like mathematics, academic and employability skills were developed throughout the course with extra classes and workshops. During the year I was able to work on my weaknesses using routine and time tables to reduce distractions and attending to extra classes in order to improve my academic writing.

This year my mathematics skills were reassured, but only practice will make it become a strength, though memory was a weakness in the beginning of the year I did not realise how it would interfere with my studies. To overcome this weakness I rely on daily agendas and planners so no appointments or dates are forgotten.

Finance and mathematics modules were learned with ease, but my weakness reside on Economics and Marketing modules which needed more attention in order to get the planned grades.
3.2 Personal Development Plan

Keeping specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed targets to be followed during the academic year helps concentrate your efforts on desired outcomes. Specific targets make what should be achieved clear; measurable allows one to measure its success; achievable targets are less probable to create disappointment; realistic and timed targets avoid procrastination and create an idea of completion (Smale, 2011).

Figure 3-3: Development Plan October 2011 (Proposed by Author)
Personal Development Plans were created three times during the academic year, as the year progressed the target set on the previous plan would be achieved and a new plan would be formulated seeking always a way to improve.

**Figure 3-4: Development Plan December 2011 (Proposed by Author)**

- **Aims:** • Get good grades on Assignments and Mid-Term Exams
- **Actions:** • Focus my breaks on writing essays and preparing for exams
- **Resources:** • Internet, Library, Student Central, Tutors
- **Measurement:** • The grades when assignments and exams are returned
- **Review & Time Scale:** • Keep a tight schedule of assignments due dates and exam dates

**Figure 3-5: Development Plan March 2012 (Proposed by Author)**

- **Aims:** • Finish my first year at university with at least 70% in each module
- **Actions:** • Study and revise for exams preparing specially for those which I had difficulties during the year
- **Resources:** • Past exams • PASTextbooks • Module Textbooks • Online resources
- **Measurement:** • Fully understanding and visualizing of topics and ability to complete past exams with ease
- **Review & Time Scale:** • Easter break and first few weeks before exams, review at revision seminars
4 Employability Skills

4.1 Communication Style and Team Role

During Professional and Academic Skills workshops different perceptions to which roles an individual could have in the workplace were formulated like the Belbin Team Roles, “used to identify peoples behavioural strengths and weaknesses in the workplace” (Belbin, 2012, front page). The role particular to me was of “Plant”, this team role is very creative and uses unconventional ways to solve difficult problems. Its weaknesses are communication, distraction and inclination to disregard protocol and practical details (Belbin, 2012).

The Belbin Team Role of “Plant” gives a good description of my characteristics; the inclination to disregard protocol and practicalities is a weakness that I have fought greatly to overcome by learning any protocol before the task begins. Once focused on the task at hand distraction cease to be a problem and communication skills can prove to be a challenge for me in many situations.

Other aspect that was discussed was the communication style, these were divided by amiable, expressive, analytical and driver. The best style to suit me was the analytical communication style; Smale (2011) states some of its features to be problem solving skills, objectiveness, organization, caution and data reliant. He also affirm that analytical communication style has the need “to be right” (Smale 2011, p.114), this was not a personal characteristic for me; my base need was to understand what drives the other communicator changing my perception of rightness.

These characteristics do not shape one’s character but can help identify strengths and weaknesses to be developed or overcome.

4.2 Assessment Centre and Disney Internship

The Internship presented to me by my mentor was a great opportunity to prove myself and further develop my skills. Disney is a great company and its history is common knowledge. Having grown up watching Disney films, an internship with the company would be a great opportunity to develop new skills and put in practice what was learned in university. My respect for storytellers like Disney would help me adapt to the environment easily.

The assessment centre was a very good experience to understand what is desired in a job interview, the fact that it was conducted by students relived the pressure one would usually experience in this environment, the decrease in pressure makes it easier to evaluate one’s reactions during the assessment centre and better prepare for a real life situation.
Having participated in an assessment centre before the experience was not new to me, therefore my performance was satisfying.

4.3 Mentor’s Feedback

The feedback given by my mentor was very helpful; it was pleasant to discover that my performance at the assessment centre was satisfactory and that my conduct allowed me to be the one of choice for the role.

The feedback report praised my communication skills, though I believe those skills need improvement, being confident and passing an idea is different to developing an idea and clarifying it to others, I still find it difficult to fully express myself.

My employment and academic history prepared my professional qualities and created the practice of being professional when communicating with others. This common practice changes into a more informal way of communication when the person becomes acquainted.

The main fault stated by my mentor was my grammar and writing skills, this was reasoned with the fact English is my second language. Having studied English since young, I believe grammar and writing to be one of my major weaknesses regardless of English being my second language, and intend to develop those skills throughout my degree.

The feedback helped me reassure my strengths and confirm the areas that need improvement and gave good advise on how to improve those weaknesses and better use these strengths.
5 Conclusion

This reflective report tried to review and understand this first year of academic studies at University of Brighton. It reflected upon my expectations and what was delivered in classes, skills that were developed and how to increase my employability, overcoming my weaknesses and working on my strengths.

During this first year my expectations were to learn about UK’s academic system, to develop my academic writing and skills, to develop my mathematics skills and to learn the course module’s subjects and topics.

I also learned that engagement is necessary to completely experience my undergraduate years and in order to develop my employability skills. I was able to find out more about my weaknesses and strengths and how to overcome and develop them.

This year was the first of my undergraduate degree; I plan to success in my future years and to not loose motivation, always keeping my plans and goals in mind. This first year gave me a good base in order to succeed in University, but what was learned need to be developed in order to graduate with honors.
References
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Appendixes

Company Report

Since its creation in 1923 Walt Disney Company has as its goals to “produce unparalleled entertainment experiences based on the rich legacy of quality creative content and exceptional storytelling” (Walt Disney Company, 2012). This has been accomplished with its astonishing motion pictures, parks and resorts, customer products, games and TV channel.

Walt Disney Company had in 2012 over $40 billion in revenue and 156,000 employees, with a variety of assets that accumulates to $73 billion and a net income of nearly $5 billion (Wolfram Alpha, 2012). The 89 year old company is a huge success and has the tendency to grow even greater.

Hoovers (2012) describes it to be “the world's largest media conglomerate”, the company is the heart of a huge family of subsidiary and affiliate companies that are responsible in creating, producing, distributing and bringing to life the wonderful worlds of fairy tales, fantasy and imagination. Its motion pictures have been present for many generations giving life to numerous fairy tales that before could be found only in books. Walt Disney Company was responsible for the first fully animated motion picture to be made, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and its mascot, Mickey Mouse is known worldwide until today.

Walt Disney Company created a legacy of dreams with its several motion pictures that, even though directed to the young, are entertainment to the whole family. In alliance with Pixar Animation Studios, Disney creates new animations every year using top technology.

These motion pictures are brought to life in the numerous resorts Disney has worldwide, where children can see their favourite characters in an unforgettable visit to Disneyland. The theme parks are present in many countries and continents making it possible to live the dream wherever you are. Besides the parks and resorts Disney is also present at sea, with the Disney Cruise Line. Wherever you are Disney deliver the experience of “turning ordinary into extraordinary” (Walt Disney Company, 2012).

Disney is also responsible for the creation of its own customer products, at first only present on the theme parks; one could make the fantasy last longer by taking home their favourite character, now Disney Shops are available around the globe with a variety of merchandise from t-shirts to customised mugs.

Disney Channel makes exclusive Disney productions available in one’s home and has a range of programs that provide entertainment to children, teenagers and even adults, when watching a classic Disney movie with the family.

Marvel Comics now is also wholly-owned subsidiary of Disney Company with its “iconic innovative characters and ground breaking storytelling”. The new films released are affiliated with Disney, still delivering the same product, but now expanding their market even further by adding the comics’ fans to their market and hoping to share its “successful business ventures” more than 70 years old (Marvel, 2012a & 2012b).
Disney Company is incredibly successful and keeps up to date with technology making sure its products are always in front of its competitors’. There is no other like Disney when talking about motion pictures, films and family entertainment.
CV and Cover letter

Cover Letter

101 Crescent Drive North
Brighton
BN2 6SG

February, 24th, 2012

Alborz Izadi, Company Director
Disney Company
Burbank, California, United States

Dear Mr Izadi,

My name is Mayra Maia Fiorini, I’m a hardworking, motivated, creative, self-starting University of Brighton student that loves a challenge and the chance to overcome them. I’m at my first year of Business Management with Finance studies and was very interested in your internship proposition.

Working with Disney is the perfect opportunity to make good use of my innovative and intra personal skills and at the same time learn what makes a big company like Disney “ticks”. It would allow me to put in practice what I’ve been learning at university and create a solid experience and career prospect.

I seek a challenging and rewarding role where I could make a difference within the company.

Please find attached my CV and Application Form. I’m looking forward to the interview.

Yours faithfully,

Mayra Maia Fiorini

Curriculum Vitae
Graduate Application Form
Mentor’s Feedback Report - Conclusion and Recommendations

You are a very capable and able student with excellent levels of professionalism and education/work history. You demonstrated all of the competencies we were looking for without realising it as you were unaware that we were looking for those specific measures. My primary concern for you is your grammar and punctuation; however I chalk this up to English not being your primary language and trust that with your work dedication and level of output, over the next few years of your BA, this will improve with practice. With your previous work history, extensive extra-curricular activities as well as being a linguist, I have no doubts that if you applied yourself a bit more to your reading and writing, you will finish your BA Hons course with a first class degree and be a top level candidate for a large majority of graduate roles. I hope that the mentoring experience has added value to your studies and abilities, helped you on a socio-economic level. (Izadi, 2012, p.14)

Personal Development Plan

Figure Appendixes-0-1: Personal Development Plan (Proposed by Author)
Self Assessment Sheet
Module Participation & Mentoring Participation Sheets