

A Reflection on Discussion and Written Assignments on a Postgraduate Course in Computer Science

As a student at the University of Essex on a Postgraduate course and over the course of 2 modules I have developed knowledge and skills I have not considered in everyday use. I joined the course after building up several years of professional experience where I have had to be open and fluent in communication from writing documentation and communications to working with leadership and stakeholders on internal and external facing written pieces. Even after writing a critical piece for entry into the course, I did underestimate my ability to write critically. After feedback on earlier modules and the current module, I still have areas to improve on.

Upon starting the course and specifically the Object-Orientated Programming module I thought that the writing and language experience I have gained would serve me in delivering well-written and factual pieces of work however I quickly discovered the context and language of the writing in the industry was far from the qualities required in academic writing. Even being able to deconstruct an academic text or opinion varied or 'reading between the lines' proved a challenge. One specific experience was on a previous module for launching into Computer Science where I was heavily critiqued, and the feedback was that my writing was more aligned with a piece of marketing. I hoped I would be better prepared for this module. The assignments in this module have pushed me to think more critically and challenge my thoughts but I think I have improved. As a group, we were asked to contribute to a collaborative discussion forum. This presented the greatest challenge to me as what I was expecting to be a more informal exchange of ideas and thoughts as well as more social still maintained an academic approach which was very unusual. As a professional and using collaborative platforms like MS Teams to discuss and share ideas in a personal and social manner to have to write critically about specific topics was certainly a strange experience.

The module and previous experience have taught me just how crucial an academic style of writing is to this level of learning. Being able to be critical of one's self and others but constructively gives strength and weight to discussion and communication. Also, reading a lot of the course material and academic papers gives an insight into just how interpretive and opinionated a lot of published work can be. From a professional perspective, a lot of the language, terms and references in academic papers were at times amusing, inspiring and thought-provoking giving different perspectives to professional and industry experience.

I have never found it difficult to put pen to paper and although I still struggle with applying critical analysis of my own words I have grown and developed since the start of the course. I acknowledge there are still areas to improve on especially when writing to assignment criteria. I have been told numerous times to be more critical and analytical in my writing in my feedback and assignment grades. The skills I have learnt so far will certainly be applied to my professional writing. As a technical lead and architect by adopting this style or elements into my professional writing and communications, I will be able to convey a more reasoned explanation, instruction or clarification on system designs.