

ENssentials Quick Guide

Integrating Academic Skills into your modules

Students transitioning into university from school, college or overseas need to adjust to a different set of expectations in terms of academic skills and learning development.

Understanding and adjusting to these expectations is not only crucial to their success academically but contributes to their positive experience of university study at Napier. By continually signposting students to inclusive, accessible, and innovative resources that support their learning development, we successfully adhere to one of our core values to create an environment in which our students feel 'proud, confident, challenged and supported'.

Support Available

Opportunities for collaboration between the university's professional services and academic colleagues is fundamental to achieving these goals. In particular, the **Academic Skills Team** provide a crucial integrated and central student academic support service to the university, working in partnership with academics and other professional services teams.

Integrated Academic Skills Support

The academic skills team are available to provide **integrated support** within specific modules or programmes ([sample of programme-led integration map](#)), tailored to address assessments. Although academic staff are able to signpost students to the various resources of the academic skills central service (including appointments and open workshops), there are various advantages to integrating their provision with specific modules or programmes. These include helping students with:

Understanding the Task

- Assignment briefs and marking rubrics: Quite often students will zone in on the topic of the assignment brief, rather than how the question is framed. Consequently, they might produce large sections of text on the topic that is not relevant to the assignment. Academic Skills Advisers can help students to break down the task presented to them in the assignment brief and understand the key verbs that form the task. This is essential to helping students submit a well-structured relevant answer to their assessment. The team can also help students to interpret their feedback in light of the marking rubric they are provided with at the outset.

Understanding the Standard

- How the question is framed within an assignment brief will depend on the level of study. Students need to understand when and how academic standards shift in their assignments. The Academic Skills Team can help students understand what is required of them at different levels of study in line with the [SCQF level descriptors](#). In particular, at higher levels of study,

the team can help students to understand how to critically evaluate and analyse sources and form their own academic arguments.

Academic Integrity

- While each School has its own comprehensive guidelines for the expectations regarding citations and references, the Academic Skills Team in collaboration with library services, can give students an overview of the fundamental principles of when a citation is required and how to integrate sources appropriately into academic writing. In this way, the team can help students to avoid unintentional plagiarism pitfalls. The team can also communicate the detrimental consequences to students of academic misconduct committed more intentionally. Fundamentally, the team can help students to understand and value their opportunity for learning and professional development at Napier.

Learner Needs

There are a variety of academic skills resources available to equip students for their learning journey. In order to encourage students to access these resources, it is important that academic staff help them identify their learning needs. Here are some key needs in terms of academic skills that are common academic terminology, but perhaps need to be unpacked to students more fully:

ENssentials Quick Guide

Induction/Student Academic Development/Learning To Study Well

Being an independent learner

At university level, independent learning is a fundamental expectation for academic success. Students need to be equipped to be proactive in their learning to thrive during their studies. This involves:

- Understanding how Moodle works and how to engage with content (how to upload files, how to post to discussion forums)
- Time management
- Effective Reading and Note-making
- Knowing how to use LibrarySearch (support can be found in [the library event calendar](#))
- Understanding email etiquette
- Preparing to/understanding how to engage with their learning in lectures and tutorials.
- Engaging with their feedback to enable them to feed-forward

Thinking Critically

Learning outcomes, assessment briefs and assessment feedback are proliferated with the term 'critical'. Being critical is an invaluable skill that extends beyond university.

Academic staff are able to signpost students to helpful resources, including:

- What does it mean to critically analyse?
- What does it mean to critically evaluate?

Understanding different kinds of assessments

Whether students are tasked with writing an essay, a report, an annotated bibliography, a case study, or engaging in group work, or even a combination of these tasks within a

ENssentials Quick Guide

Induction/Student Academic Development/Learning To Study Well

portfolio, the academics skills resources provide links to fundamental principles that apply to various assessment formats.

- Planning for assessment
- Structuring an essay/reports/ lab report/lab log/dissertation
- Synthesis
- Paraphrasing and Summarising
- Redrafting, proofreading, and editing
- Reflective Writing
 - a. Introduction to Reflective Writing
 - b. Gibb's Reflective Cycle
 - c. Critical Reflection
 - d. Barton's Reflective Cycle
- The Dissertation!
 - a. How to write a literature review
 - b. Research Methodologies
 - c. How to write the Results and Discussion Section

An extensive range of resources encompassing the aforementioned academic skills as well as others not explicitly mentioned can be found in the Academic Skills Blog where you will get access to the [Resource Bank](#), an [interactive skills guide](#) and some open [video tutorials](#). The team is also accessible to students providing one-on-one appointments that offer comprehensive assistance throughout every phase of their writing journey, empowering them to approach submission with confidence.

Please contact AcademicSkills@napier.ac.uk to discuss this further.