



# ACADEMIC SKILLS MODULE

Cohort 11 Student Guide

**REALISING  
OPPORTUNITIES**  
Working Together | Supporting Talent

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# Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Realising Opportunities (RO) Academic Skills Module on campus event will now be delivered online, by your host university, via a series of virtual events. These virtual events will then be followed by a self-guided online component. The Academic Skills Module (ASM) will still be subject stream based, which means the skills you'll learn will be related to the broad subject area you wish to study at university. The four broad ASM subject streams are:

1. Engineering and Physical Sciences
2. Life and Health Sciences
3. Creative Arts and Humanities
4. Social Sciences

Even though your ASM on campus sessions will now be delivered online, it will still be a great way for you to meet new people, get an insight into university and learn new skills, all of which will help you succeed in Higher Education. Your host university is really looking forward to supporting you through the online sessions and the self-guided online component - making sure you have a great experience on the ASM!

**The ASM is a compulsory part of your participation in the Realising Opportunities programme and does not count towards the two events and activities you take part in as an RO student.**

# ASM online events

The online ASM sessions will be delivered, by your host university, as three separate compulsory events, on three different days, with each event lasting approximately two hours. All the sessions will focus on developing your transferable skills for Higher Education and your current A Level (or equivalent) studies. The sessions which will be covered are interactive and include:

## Online event 1:

### Welcome session

This session will welcome you to the ASM and tell you what to expect from the three virtual events. This session will also give you an opportunity to test out the various online interactive functions we will be using, so when you're in the following sessions, you know how to interact and engage with them!

### Academic Note Taking session

This interactive session will equip you with the skills you need to be able to take effective notes at university and during your time at school/college.

The session will cover:

- Why take notes?
- Note taking in lectures and other teaching
- Note taking from reading
- Note taking styles
- Note taking principles and tips you can use now

## Online event 2:

### Academic Lecture (subject stream specific)

The academic lecture is delivered by a current academic to provide you with an authentic experience of a 1st year level university lecture. You will also have the chance at the end of the lecture to chat with the academic to find out more about your broad subject area of interest.

**The academic lecture is also your opportunity to put into practise your newly acquired academic note taking skills!**

## Academic Note Taking, small group work

This interactive session will provide you with the chance to reflect, in small virtual breakout groups, on the challenges of note taking during your academic lecture and what can be done to address them. Student Ambassadors will assist you in:

- Reflecting on your note taking
- Reviewing your lecture notes
- Planning for future note taking

## Online event 3:

### Referencing session

This interactive session will help you develop an introductory understanding of plagiarism, accurate citation and referencing skills - don't worry if you don't know what these are, as by the end of the session you will!

Also by the end of the session you will be able to demonstrate an understanding of research and the importance of finding appropriate academic sources. The session will cover:

- The benefits and disadvantages of a variety of information sources
- How to combine keywords to perform a search to discover relevant information sources
- How to define plagiarism and discuss the purpose of referencing
- How to accurately reference information sources within your academic work

## Round-up session

This session will wrap up everything you have learned from the previous virtual sessions and provide you with information about the next step of the Academic Skills Module - the self-guided online component.



# Self-guided online component

The self-guided online component, which you can complete at home in your own time, will give you the opportunity to reflect on the skills you learnt during the three ASM online events. The online component is not marked or assessed and there is no pass/fail mark associated with it, although you will receive feedback on one of the sections.

**In order to complete this compulsory part of the RO programme you must complete all of the three elements outlined below to the best of your ability.**

**Please note: The next element of the online component will only become available to you once you have completed the previous section.**

**You will have two weeks from your last online event (Online event 3) to complete the online component.**

All elements of the online component can be found on the RO student hub. We have created a handy RO student hub user guide, which you can find on the RO student hub, which takes you through all the self-guided online component elements step by step, these elements are:

## Section 1 - Online multiple choice quiz

The aim of the online multiple choice quiz is to highlight skills areas you may still require more information about or practice of after the three ASM online events and completion of skills4uni. The quiz is made up of 18 multiple choice questions, which are all based on information from the ASM online sessions.

**You can only take the quiz once, so make sure you consider each question carefully before answering.**

Once you have completed the quiz, if there are any gaps in your knowledge, you will be signposted to some online resources to further help your understanding.

## Section 2- Reflective writing piece

For this section of the online component you will be asked to write a short reflective piece (maximum 500 words) based on your experience of the three ASM online events, which a Reflective Tutor will provide feedback on within 5 working days of your submission.

We're asking you to complete a reflective writing piece as reflective writing is a great opportunity to gain self-knowledge, to achieve clarity and better understanding of what you are learning, it's a chance to develop and reinforce writing skills and it's a way of making meaning out of what you study. We're also asking you to do this as an increasing number of students across all disciplines are assessed on the quality of their reflective writing at university, so it is a good skill to have upon entering Higher Education.

**Top tip: You can write your reflective piece outside of the of the RO student hub and cut and paste it into the required box.**

### What is reflective writing?

Reflective writing is much more personal than other kinds of academic writing. You will think reflectively every day, but not usually in the same depth which is needed in good reflective writing. Effectively, reflective writing is:

#### 1. Looking back at something

(for example the ASM virtual sessions).

#### 2. Analysing the event

(thinking about it in depth and from various perspectives).

#### 3. Thinking carefully

(what did the event mean to you and how can it help you progress to HE).

People can have misconceptions about what reflective writing really is. Below are some of the common mistakes:

Reflective writing is NOT...	Instead IT IS...
Just descriptions of what happened.	<p>A description of what happened and how you learned from it.</p> <p>For example, 'I was very nervous about the group work aspect of the ASM virtual sessions, as I'm quite a shy person. However, once the session started I realised that other students were nervous too and recognising this helped me overcome some of my shyness and participate more in the session. I know now that my feelings about group work are not uncommon and if I remember this, I will get more out of these types of sessions in the future'</p>
A personal diary where you can say anything and use any language.	Reflective writing requires structure and formal language. Even though this is a personal piece of writing, think of it more as an academic assignment than a personal diary.
A place for self-disclosure - while reflection is personal, you will not get good feedback by merely sharing challenging experiences.	<p>The experiences you share must be used to help your learning and development, <b>AND</b> be appropriate for the audience.</p> <p>Remember, your reflective piece will be read by a Reflective Tutor from one of the RO universities, so make sure it is appropriate.</p>

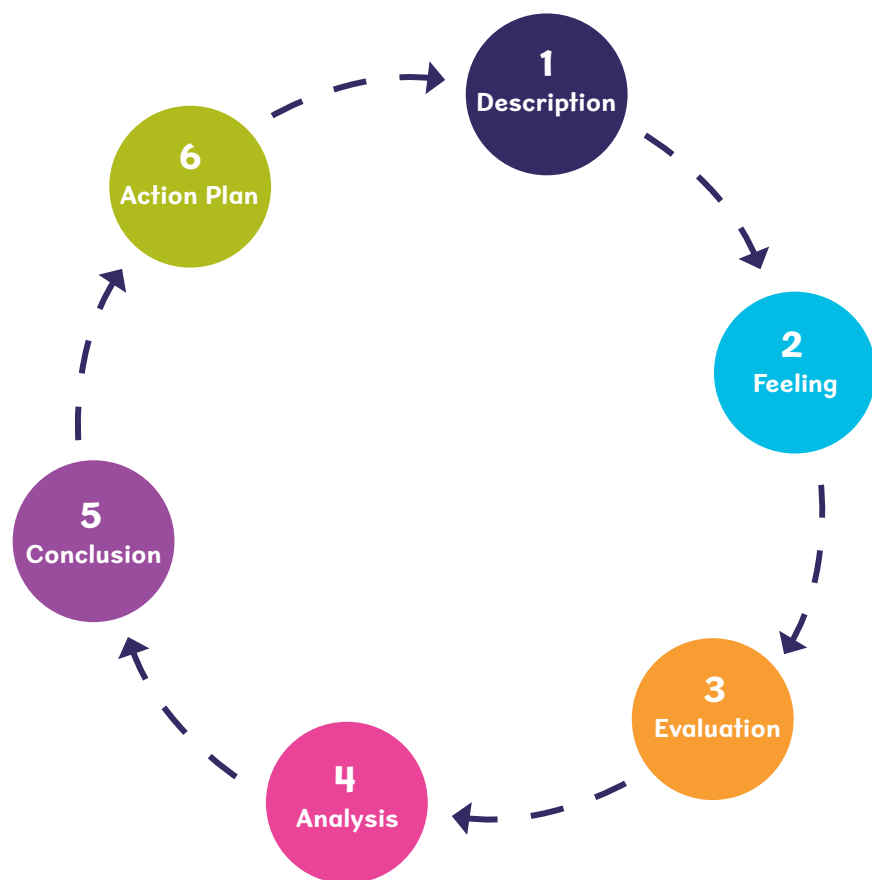
Reflective writing is NOT...	Instead IT IS...
A place for complementing the sessions or session leaders.	<p>You can mention the session leaders if they have impacted your experience, but be sure to show what it was about them that worked or didn't work for you. Remember, you will also need to show how you can apply this to your future learning.</p> <p>For example, 'I really enjoyed the academic lecture and being able to ask the academic questions at the end. I asked questions about the two university courses I was considering and their answers helped me decide on which of the two courses to pursue. Being able to speak to an academic and see that they are just normal people will really help me when I start university, as I won't be scared to ask them questions when I need help.'</p>
A place where you write your experiences without looking at them in a critical way and learning from them.	As well as writing about what has happened, you should also write how you have learned from it, what it means to you, and how you will use it in the future.
A waste of time	Done correctly, formalising and structuring reflection can help you evidence your personal learning and development, which in turn can help you to communicate your abilities and experiences effectively.



### How to structure your reflective writing

Reflective writing can take a number of forms and follow various structures. For the ASM reflective writing piece you will follow the **Gibbs Reflective Cycle**.

The Gibbs Reflective Cycle starts at Description and then continues clockwise to Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion and ends at Action plan. The various steps are explained in more detail below:



### Step 1: Description

During this step, you describe the situation, session or activity in detail, without drawing any conclusions right away. The most common questions that can help create an objective description are:

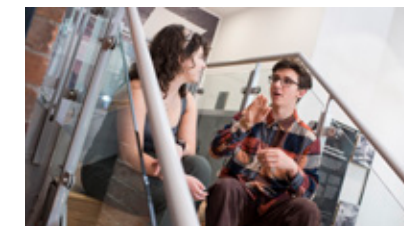
- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- What did you do yourself?
- What did other people do?
- What was the result of these actions?



### Step 2: Feelings

This phase is about the feelings that the sessions triggered, as well as what your thoughts were during the sessions, as described in step 1. The intention is not to discuss your feelings in detail, but to have an awareness of your feelings and how they impacted you. Helpful questions often used are:

- What did you feel leading up to the sessions?
- What did you feel during the sessions?
- What did you feel after the sessions?
- How do you look back on the sessions?
- What do you think other people felt during the sessions?
- How do you think others feel about the sessions now?



### Step 3: Evaluation

In this step, ask yourself whether the experience (outlined in step 1) was good or bad. Which approach worked well and in what way? Which approach didn't work as well? In order to still conduct a proper evaluation, the following questions may be helpful:

- What went well during the sessions?
- Why was that?
- What didn't go so well?
- Why was that?
- What was your contribution?
- What contribution did other people make?

It is also worth evaluating bad experiences, because the subsequent steps will help you learn from them.



### Step 4: Analysis

This phase is about what you have learned from the sessions. Because of the experience, you now know what to do in similar, future situations. This means that both positive and negative things and/or problems you experienced will be written down and analysed individually. After all, people learn from mistakes. This analysis is often done together alongside step 3.

### Step 5: Conclusion

This is the point where you take a step back and look at yourself from a distance and ask what else you could have done in this situation. The information gathered earlier is very valuable in this step and can encourage you to come to a good and useful conclusion. The following questions may be helpful:

- To what positive experience did the sessions, situation or activity lead?
- To what negative experience did the sessions, situation or activity lead?
- What will you do differently if the sessions, situation or activity were to happen again in the future?

- Which skills do you need to develop yourself in a similar session, situation or activity?

Watch this short video for more information on the Gibbs Reflective Cycle.

### Section 3 - Action plan

Although this is the sixth and final step of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, the action plan is separate to your reflective writing piece and you will not receive feedback on this from your Reflective Tutor.

For this element of the self-guided online component you are required to complete an action plan, based on your attendance of the three ASM online events, the outcome of the multiple-choice quiz and the feedback provided on your reflective piece, highlighting further steps you can take to successfully prepare for higher education.

We're asking you to complete an action plan as they can help you create a schedule or 'to-do' list to help you to plan and prioritise tasks, they can establish what you need to do to complete each task and finally, a well thought out action plan can make it easier for you to realise your goals.

The action plan contains the following four headed sections:

1. **Describe your planned actions.** (Your 'to-do' list)
2. **Why have you chosen these actions?** (What do you hope to achieve?)
3. **What is the timeframe of completing your actions?** (A day, a week, a month, a year, longer...?)
4. **How will you measure your success?** (When you complete an action? When you've implemented a change?)

For more information about setting goals visit: <https://www.brightknowledge.org/independent-living/setting-goals>

Once you have written your action plan you are able to save it and print a PDF copy to keep handy!

# Preparing for the Academic Skills Module

## ASM online events

There is no pre-reading or work to be done before attending the three ASM online events, but ideally you should complete the skills4uni challenge and quiz to help you prepare. You can read more about this below.

When attending the ASM online events we ask that you follow these simple guidelines:

- Appropriate classroom behaviour is expected at all times.
- Do not use your mobile phone during sessions (unless this is how you are viewing the events).
- If possible, please log into the sessions from a distraction free, quiet environment.
- Please keep your audio on mute until you want to speak. This will help to limit background noise during the larger sessions.
- If you would like to speak or ask a question, please raise your hand then unmute yourself after you are called on.

- If you would like to use the chat function, remember that it is public (everyone can see it) and that the conversation will be recorded.
- Please note that any 'private' chats conducted during the sessions, even between students, can be seen by the meeting host.
- Have a pen and some paper handy as you will be taking notes through the sessions
- Make sure your video is on so we can see you!

**If you experience any technical issues during the ASM online events we advise that you email your host university immediately.**

If you think you will have issues accessing the ASM online events either due to data capacities or lack of Wi-Fi, please **contact your host university** as they may be able to help with this. If Wi-Fi signal or equipment is an issue, please **contact your host university** to discuss your available options.

If you have any individual requirements which may make viewing and participating in the ASM online events difficult, please **contact your host university** to discuss your concerns **prior to the first online event.**

## Self-guided online component

In order to be able to complete the self-guided online component you must have attended all three ASM online events.

You need to work through the sections in order, as the next element of the online component will only become available to you once you have completed the previous section.

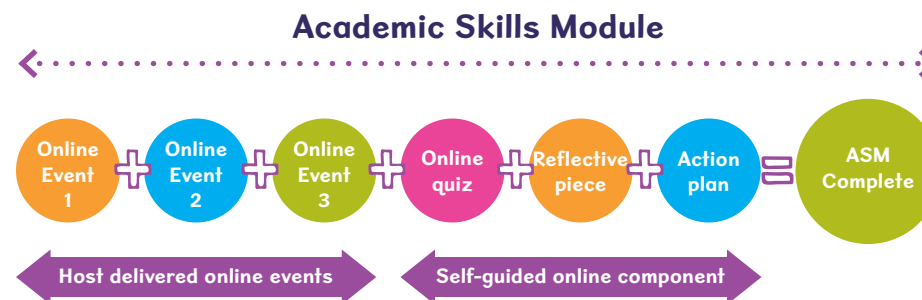
## skills4uni

skills4uni is an online challenge which will help you to develop practical

study skills to use now and later at university. The challenge includes interactive tasks, videos and information from real university students.

Completing skills4uni is a great way to prepare for the ASM. It can help you develop transferable higher education skills that will help you in your current studies and once you're studying at university. It will also give you a greater understanding of what studying at university is like.

We strongly recommended that you work through the skills4uni challenge **before** you attend your ASM online events.





# Frequently asked questions

## Online live Q&A

You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the ASM via a live online Q&A session. During the session, you'll be able to get support and guidance from the RO Central Team and staff at the RO Partner universities. We will contact you with the date and time of this session shortly.

## Attending your ASM online events

The ASM is a compulsory part of your participation in the Realising Opportunities programme. If you are unable to attend any of your ASM online events, **you must inform your host university as soon as possible.**



## Support available

Throughout the ASM online events you will be supported by your RO host university, academics and a team of current undergraduate students who will be there during the group work sessions to help facilitate discussions and answer any queries you might have.

Student Ambassadors are also there to ensure you're making the most out of the sessions and to offer their unique perspective on university life.

For the self-guided online component your RO host university and the RO Central Team will be on-hand to assist you with any queries you may have.

## 1. How do I pass the ASM?

The ASM is not pass/fail. You will be given feedback on your written reflective piece, however, no aspect of the ASM is marked. In order to complete this compulsory aspect of the RO programme you need to attend all three ASM online events and complete all three elements of the self-guided online component to the best of your ability.

## 2. Can I change my ASM subject stream?

Being able to change your ASM subject stream will depend on how close it is to your first online event. If you wish to change your subject stream, we recommend **contacting your host university** as soon as possible.

## 3. How do I watch/attend my ASM online events?

Your host university will contact you shortly, via email, with instructions on how to login and view your ASM online events.

## 4. When will my ASM online events be held?

Your host university will contact you shortly, via email, with the dates and times of your three compulsory, two hour, ASM online events.

## 5. What do I do if I can't attend my ASM online events?

Attending all three of your ASM online events is one of the compulsory aspects of the RO programme. If you are not able to attend any or all of your events you must **contact your host university** as soon as possible.

## 6. Who do I contact if I'm having difficulty with the self-guided online component of the ASM?

If you're having difficulty with the self-guided online component, we recommend that you consult your ASM **student hub user guide** in the first instance. If the guide doesn't answer your question(s) you can either contact your **host university** or the **RO Central Team** who will be happy to help.

### 7. What do I do if I don't have a computer at home to attend the ASM online events and complete the self-guided online component of the ASM?

We understand that not all students will have a computer they can use at home. The ASM online events and the self-guided online component can be viewed/completed on a mobile phone, tablet or computer. However, if you don't have any way to access the ASM online events or the self-guided online component, please **contact your host university**.

### 8. What happens if I don't complete all of the ASM self-guided online component?

Completing the ASM self-guided online component is one of the compulsory aspects of the RO programme. If you do not complete the component before the deadline (the deadline will be given to you in your Round-up session) then you will not be able to successfully complete the RO programme and take advantage of extra consideration when applying to RO universities.

### 9. How is the self-guided online component quiz different to skills4uni?

The self-guided online component quiz is shorter than skills4uni (there are only 18 questions) and you only have one chance to take the quiz (you can take the skills4uni quiz multiple times). Unlike skills4uni the ASM self-guided online component quiz questions are all based on information you were given during the ASM online event sessions.

### 10. Will I meet my Reflective Tutor?

Your Reflective Tutor will only provide feedback on your reflective writing and you will not have the ability to discuss the feedback with them or see them in person.



## References

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