

SKILLS AND LEARNING STATEMENT (SLS)

The Skills and Learning Statement (SLS) is the opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have developed the key 'graduate' skills of Self-Reflection and Communication.

You will provide evidence of self-reflection by answering a number of questions. Your communication skills will be developed through the preparation and delivery of a presentation to your Project Mentor. You will submit a copy of the PowerPoint presentation that you used in your presentation to your Project Mentor as evidence of skills development.

Your SLS Self Reflection must be based on the following four questions:

1. Reflect on what you have learnt from the meetings with your project mentor, including the presentation that you gave to your project mentor? *A diary of events is not required*
2. To what extent do you think you have achieved the RAP research objectives you set? *This is concerned with how effective your methods and models were, not a description of the findings in relation to your objectives.*
3. How have you demonstrated your interpersonal and communication skills during the project work? *A model of communication is not required*
4. Reflect on how undertaking the RAP helped you in your accountancy studies and/or current employment role? *This is about you personally*

What do we mean by reflection?

Self-reflection, or critical reflection as it may also be called, is a key academic and professional skill. Reflection requires you to review and evaluate the experiences you have had and the learning you have acquired. You should note the emphasis on evaluation. Your Skills and Learning Statement should not be a description of what you did – it must be an evaluation of your experiences of doing your project work. You must try to make some meaning of what you have experienced, and make a judgment of how well you have achieved your objectives, and come to a conclusion about the value of undertaking your RAP.

Your evaluation should be honest. There is no model answer or right answer to any of these four questions. Not all your experiences will necessarily be positive, as things may not always go to plan or happen in the way that you might want them. Your evaluation should reflect on what actually happened, not an idealised version of what you might want Oxford Brookes University to think did happen. We know that applied research can be messy and unsatisfying at times, though we strongly believe that what you learn from doing this research will be valuable to you. We hope this will be reflected in your Skills and Learning Statement.

Preparing your SLS answers

An important aspect of study or working life is to actively evaluate your own performance and to identify your own personal development needs. Have you achieved what you intended to achieve? If not, then why not and what do you need to do better in the future? You may have to work with others to achieve your work or study objectives and your ability to make the best use of your resources - and to communicate effectively - are important personal attributes. Your ACCA education will give you knowledge of accountancy and business, and undertaking research will enhance your practical skills. What have been the benefits for you of doing the RAP?

By answering the SLS questions you will gain some important personal insight into these issues. Although there are four questions with a total word limit of 2,000 words, you do not have to write exactly 500 words to answer each of the four questions. You may find that you want to write more about one or two particular questions. You may write between 350 and 650 words on each question within the total word limit of 2,000 words.

SLS Assessment

Your Skills and Learning Statement will be assessed Pass or Fail; it will not be given a grade. However you should give it equal importance to the Research Report since you must pass the SLS in order to pass the Research and Analysis Project overall.

To pass the 'self-reflection' component of the SLS, you have to make a reasonable attempt to address all of the four SLS questions. If you do not, then you will not pass the SLS. You must demonstrate your ability to reflect on the judgments that you have made and the actions that you have taken while undertaking your RAP work. We want to see you provide evidence that you recognise your strengths and weaknesses. If you only provide a description of what happened while you were doing your RAP, then you will not pass the SLS.

Sources of SLS evidence

When you plan your project research work you should also plan to collect evidence to contribute to your Skills and Learning Statement, so that some of your self-reflection will 'fall out' of the activities undertaken for your Research Report. One important set of activities will be the three meetings with your Project Mentor. If you think about what happened in each of these meetings soon after they have taken place and record your thoughts, then you will be well on the way to writing your responses to two of the four questions.

Other sources of evidence could include meetings with individuals who you may interview as part of your project research or conversations / correspondence that you may have during your information gathering. You should think of every aspect of your project research work and how this may provide evidence for you to write your Skills and Learning Statement.

Communication skills

You will give a presentation on your Research Report to your Project Mentor in your final meeting. The preparation of this presentation will further develop your ability to present the concepts and findings of an accounting / business research report to an audience. As evidence of this you must submit a copy of your presentation in your Skills and Learning Statement.

You will pass 'communication skills' if a copy of the Research Report presentation is included in the SLS and your presentation's structure and content is clearly linked to the Research Report findings. There are many sources of advice (online and hard copy) on how to prepare an effective presentation and we recommend that you follow best practice.

It is possible that your Project Mentor may comment on the quality of your presentation and suggest that improvements would be possible. If you wish to revise your presentation after the meeting with your Project Mentor, then that is acceptable to Oxford Brookes University. You should include a reference to this process and what you learned in your response to the first SLS question.

Presentations and slides

The SLS is also made up of two parts, one being a reflective statement covering four specific questions and the other a requirement to give a fifteen minute presentation to the student's mentor and provide evidence of this presentation.

There are two areas where students appear to be unclear regarding the presentation.

- It is not a presentation of at least fifteen minutes. Students are required to complete the presentation **WITHIN** fifteen minutes;
- It is not a presentation about how the student went about the process of writing the report, it is a presentation on the TOPIC of the report, for example *"The business and financial performance of Tesco plc for the years 2012 to 2014"*

The mentor will be asked to confirm that the presentation has taken place effectively and Oxford Brookes University will also require evidence to be submitted with the RAP. This evidence will consist of copies of slides used in the presentation. Usually, these slides use PowerPoint but they can also be copies of slides prepared using some other medium.

Contents of the slides

The slides should be designed to support the verbal presentation given by the student. They should also be designed to appeal to an audience which means that they must be clear and easy to read. Graphs, pictures and charts are always good ways of conveying information provided that it is clear what they are trying to portray. Slides that contain lots of words, perhaps taken straight from the Research Report are not very appealing and usually difficult to read.

The markers and moderators at Oxford Brookes see a whole range of slides from ones that appear to be trying to set a new world record for how many words can be fitted in one slide to very animated ones that are almost an entertainment package on their own!

So here are a few guidelines:

- Always start with a clear opening slide with the title of the presentation and the student's ACCA number to identify the presenter.
- It can often be helpful if the next slide lists the areas to be covered by the presentation.
- Remember that the presentation is NOT about how the topic was decided upon or how the research was carried out – that is part of the RAP. This is a presentation on the topic.
- Include relevant findings from the analysis carried out. This could be graphical (with explanations) or in chart or tabular form where key numbers are concerned.
- The analysis and findings will have led to conclusions being drawn by the student and recommendations being made. These conclusions and recommendations are a key part of the presentation so should be shown on the slides.

SO REMEMBER –

- In the SLS Self Reflection each of the **4 answers** should be approximately 500 words long, and the whole SLS Reflection must be between 1,800 and 2,000 words (from the start of the title page to the end).
- The SLS Presentation should be no more than 15 minutes
 - It should be about your topic not the process of writing the report
 - The slides should **SUPPORT your presentation**
 - The slides should be **interesting** and clearly **understandable**
- The presentation and slides should contain the results of your analysis, your conclusions and recommendations

Please note that there are no Page limits for the RAP, only file size limits.
Please refer to Section 8.b, of the Information Pack

Think Ahead 