

Exam Number:	1G
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At the beginning of the Edinburgh Award, you chose three skills that you particularly wanted to strengthen. During the Award you’ve also looked at how you can increase the impact you have on others.

This process of strengthening skills and increasing your impact is central to the Edinburgh Award. In this submission, provide a written account that shows you have been purposeful and reflective in working on your skills and impact.

Your submission will be reviewed by students across the Award who are not involved in the same activity as you so please ensure your reflections can be understood by anyone.

If needed, further guidance, example submissions and the criteria on which submissions are judged are available at: www.employability.ed.ac.uk/Student/EdinburghAward/ACJ

***Note:** As part of the Edinburgh Award, your submissions will be reviewed by other students and staff, and may be used elsewhere (in part or in whole) – your name will never be attached and only the content you enter will be used.*

Instructions

There are four boxes below, one for each of the three skills you wanted to strengthen and one for impact you have had. In each box write about 200 words describing **what progress you have made** (if any), **what steps** you have taken to try to improve this skill and **what you have learned** from your experiences.

Don’t worry if you haven’t made as much progress as you would have liked; your description can include what has limited your progress and if there are different approaches you would take in the future. For example, you may have found that you initially overestimated your ability in one of the skills – that’s OK.

Write so that your text makes sense to someone who has had no connection with your activity.

Skill One:	Planning and Organisation
<p>I did this in several ways. Firstly I kept a single notebook for PALS activities where I planned sessions, worked through questions and recorded feedback. This prevented me from losing anything, allowed me to draw upon previous successful sessions to plan new ones and made it easier to tailor sessions towards the particular feedback received from the students. Secondly I aimed to go into every session with a full plan which included estimated timings for each activity. I achieved this for the majority of my sessions, and for those in which I managed to do this the sessions ran smoother; more material was covered and there was a general sense that we had achieved something as a group. Finally we tried to take feedback at the end of each session asking the students what they want to look at in the following session. As we were working a week behind the course, this meant if there was anything they still didn't understand after lectures and tutorials, we could address this problem and hopefully shed some light on it. I feel this was worthwhile as it allowed us to adjust our plans to fit what really needed to be looked over. I feel I have made a great amount of progress in this throughout the semester and have seen how planning can really benefit the quality of my work.</p>	

Skill Two:	Communication
<p>My main issue with communication was confidence, the main step I took to improve my communication as a PALS leader was to simply practice. I made sure that at least once a session, I drew the attention of the whole group towards a specific activity and moved them to the next once enough time had elapsed, or, the concept the activity was aiming to solidify was widely understood. As for the description of key concepts in the course, I spent time throughout the week thinking of a variety of ways these concepts can be approached and any connections which existed between the current topic and previous topics already established. This allowed me to come up with activities which looked at these from different angles and maybe allowed the students to discover the connections in the course which I had only discovered with hindsight. I feel this made learning easier, and from the student's point of view, much more active. This process has also solidified my knowledge of the basics in this course as a whole, which has been very helpful in my current position. I now feel comfortable talking to a group students on a regular basis, which for me is a big step forward. I also feel my ability to convey mathematical concepts has improved through the practice I have had whilst being a PALS leader.</p>	

Skill Three:	Leadership and Responsibility
<p>I improved my leadership skills by effectively facilitating learning and managing sessions, making sure everyone was on task and on board with what was going on. This meant that I could identify who was struggling and help them more, and encourage people to work together as a team to achieve combined success! I felt I was responsible for maintaining pace and focus in sessions, and helping the students adjust to the style and level of university mathematics. I found this very rewarding as I saw people growing in confidence at attempting the questions which at first were very intimidating. I took on a lot of responsibility in general with the PALS sessions as I created session plans weekly and distributed these to my co-workers. I also bought refreshments and dealt with expenses. At the end of the semester I organised two longer revision sessions with another PALS group leader, where we created a space for the students to come and work through past papers in small groups, as well as providing pizza - a very popular addition! I feel that, as said previously, by improving my communication skills I have become an effective leader and felt that the students really trusted me to help them to improve.</p>	

Impact on others

In my sessions, I got the students to make mind maps of mathematical concepts for which each student wrote in a different colour. This meant that I could identify those that weren't contributing so I could encourage them to add something. In the final weeks, I noticed the students become more confident at contributing even if they got the answer wrong or they are not sure in their own answer. I think this is important as in Mathematics we learn a lot from our mistakes and I could also help them to adapt their methods to get to the end goal of the problem. I saw them learn better strategies at solving problems and have a far more open attitude as to what maths can be rather than just tedious use of rules. In my final revision sessions I got to take a much more laid back role merely answering questions aimed at me rather than leading structured activities. This was because without any prompting they found people to work with, discuss with and together they tackled a whole paper over the course of an afternoon. It was lovely to see the difference in academic maturity between the first and final weeks. Between this and the feedback obtained at the end of the semester, I can say with confidence that both myself and the students involved benefitted enormously from this experience.