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RESEARCHING, DRAFTING AND PRESENTING WRITTEN WORK FOR ASSESSMENT

A Guide for students undertaking courses offered by the
School of Design, Communication and Information Technology

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Students studying in degree programs and courses offered by the School of Design, Communication and Information Technology will be required to undertake a wide range of assessment items that demonstrate learning outcomes. While the School has a commitment to ensuring you experience a wide range of creative, critical and analytical assessment tasks so as to reflect the kind of problem solving environment you can expect beyond University study, the School has equal commitment to ensuring you develop an excellent standard of writing skills. An emphasis on the need for clear, lucid writing that is consistent in its observation of conventional academic style is a key objective of undergraduate programs in the School.

Whether you are briefing clients about a project; writing a report that explains a situation or a decision, presenting planning options; writing scripts, funding applications or press releases, you need to ensure that your writing is articulately expressed, factually accurate, suitable in tone for the purpose it seeks to achieve, free of typographical error, consistent in its form and well presented.

These guidelines are designed to assist you with the preparation and presentation of written assignments throughout your course. Generally, you will be required to submit two main types of written work:

- (i) **Essays** - which are concerned with the expression or discussion of ideas and issues; and
- (ii) **Reports** - which usually involve the presentation and analysis of factual or technical information.

These guidelines deal with reports and essays in turn, as well as specifying requirements which are common to both forms of written work. You should refer to these guidelines continually throughout your program of studies.

NB: Students should be aware that there are different referencing systems available. These guidelines, however, have been based on the Harvard system of referencing since it is the most commonly used system in Communication journals and literature. Students wishing to use other systems should discuss this possibility with course lecturers before submitting any written work.

Acknowledgement

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Section 1: Essays

1.1 **Introduction**

1.2 **Purpose of Essays**

1.3 **Essential Qualities**

1.4 **Planning**

1.4.1 Interpreting the Topic

1.4.2 Key Terms in Essay Questions

1.4.3 Devising or Selecting a Topic

1.4.4 Determining the Approach

1.5 **Research**

1.5.1 Sources of Information

1.5.2 Reading and Taking Notes

1.6 **Writing**

1.6.1 The Outline

1.6.2 Drafting

1.6.3 The Final Draft

1.7 **Presentation Requirements**

1.8 **Format**

1.8.1 Title Page

1.8.2 The Essay

1.8.3 Reference List

1.8.4 Appendixes

1.9 **Word Length**

1.10 **Style of Language**

1.10.1 Abbreviations

Section 2: Reports

2.1 **Introduction**

2.2 **Purpose of Reports**

2.3 **Essential Features**

2.4 **The Process**

2.5 **Presentation Requirements**

2.6 **Format**

- 2.6.1 Title Page
- 2.6.2 Table of Contents
- 2.6.3 Acknowledgements
- 2.6.4 Executive Summary
- 2.6.5 Body of the Report
- 2.6.6 References
- 2.6.7 Appendixes

2.7 Honesty in Reporting

2.8 Word Length

2.9 Style of Language

2.10 Planning your Work

2.11 Group Reports

Section 3: Common Requirements

3.1 Referencing

- 3.1.1 Within the Text
- 3.1.2 Reference List
- 3.1.3 New Technologies
- 3.1.4 General Note

3.2 Student Academic Integrity (Incorporating Plagiarism)

3.3 Correct Expression

3.4 Developing a Good Writing Style

Section 1: Essays

1.1 Introduction

The essay is one of the traditional learning and assessment tools of the education system and is concerned with the expression and debate of ideas. Essay, as a verb, means the action or process of trying or testing. It comes from the Latin *exagium* which means a weighing and it is to be compared with *assay*. Like a mineral assayer, or valuer, in writing an essay you are testing for what is of value in the vast terrain of information that surrounds a question or topic.

A good essay argues a case and supports its arguments with evidence; it is not simply a collection of data and feelings. It should be accurate in its facts, and correct in its language. Do not set out to write an answer to suit what you believe the person who set the question wants. The question itself makes its own demands. You should always address your answer to the question and don't try to anticipate what the questioner may want.

Read the whole question. Do not simply answer the part of the question you find most attractive. While you may question the question, you must still cover all the terms of the question.

1.2 Purpose of Essays

An essay is a formal piece of writing that is short, addresses a particular subject, and argues a point of view. An essay therefore allows you to express your ideas and opinions. However, any statements you make must be backed up by an argument and supported by evidence. Your main purpose in writing an essay is to convince the reader that your ideas and opinions are both valid and carefully considered. The process of arriving at the conclusion is, in many ways, more important than the conclusion itself.

1.3 Essential Qualities

A well constructed essay will possess the following qualities. It will:

- be clearly and concisely written
- display an awareness and understanding of existing knowledge on the subject
- display evidence of wide reading around the topic
- be based on a careful and appropriate interpretation of the topic
- be directed at the topic and not contain discussion of irrelevant matters
- contain a clear statement of your ideas and opinions on the topic supported by a logically presented argument
- display evidence of some critical thinking about the topic and the ideas or opinions of other writers
- address thoroughly and appropriately all the issues raised in the topic
- indicate clearly and thoroughly all sources of information utilised in preparing the essay
- be free from spelling, typographic, punctuation, syntactic and grammatical errors.

You should regard the above list as the general criteria on which your essay will be assessed. A serious shortcoming in any one of these criteria could lead to your essay being judged as unsatisfactory. Remember, an essay focuses upon your opinions and ideas. However, these should be informed opinions that have been developed through reading around the topic. These ideas and opinions must be clearly communicated to the reader and demonstrate your ability to think and argue logically.

1.4 Planning

1.4.1 Interpreting the Topic

In most cases, you will be required to write an essay on a topic set by an academic

member of staff. Your first and most fundamental task of this requirement is to ensure that you understand what the topic is asking you to do. There will invariably be a number of key words which you will need to interpret before starting work on your essay. Some of these will define the nature of the task, e.g. critically discuss, evaluate, analyse, examine or compare and contrast. Others will define the topic area or issues which must be addressed in the essay.

The importance of this step cannot be stressed enough. It is no use producing an otherwise brilliant essay if it does not address the set topic. Therefore, take active steps to ensure that your interpretation is appropriate: consult a dictionary and/or textbook to define key words; discuss your interpretation with fellow students and seek clarification from your lecturer if you are unsure.

1.4.2 Key Terms in Essay Questions

Discuss:

This term requires you to examine through argument. It also requires that you formulate and express an opinion, based on evidence presented in the essay. Expressing an opinion does not mean talk about what you feel, nor is it an open invitation to rave or simply cover the range of views held on the matter by experts. In discussing, you must come to your own conclusions and support these conclusions through rational argument.

Compare or Contrast:

These terms require you to show similarities and differences between things, ideas or entities and examine them.

Analyse:

In an essay when you analyse something it means you have to break up the whole into its parts to reveal internal relationships.

Critical:

This term means that you should establish a view, either favourable or unfavourable, through a reasoned assessment.

Relate:

If this word appears in an essay question it usually means that you need to find and describe connections.

Evaluate:

This term requires you to test and judge the merits of a view. Sometimes you will be given a choice of topics. If so, you would be advised to select a topic after considering:

- the relevance of each topic to your own interests - you learn more by choosing a topic which interests you
- the relevance of each topic to your past or future work
- the scope which each topic has for being developed into a worthwhile piece of work
- the kind of resources required by each topic and your access to these resources.

1.4.3 Devising or Selecting a Topic

In some cases, you will be given the chance to devise your own topic or choice of

topics, usually within some guidelines set by an academic staff member. Your choice should be influenced by the same considerations as previously stated. You need to be just as clear about the direction of your essay as if the lecturer had set the topic. Moreover, you need to define this carefully when you begin to write the essay and would be advised to select a topic after considering:

- the relevance of each topic to your own interests - you learn more by choosing a topic which interests you
- the relevance of each topic to your past or future work
- the scope which each topic has for being developed into a worthwhile piece of work
- the kind of resources required by each topic and your access to these resources.

1.4.4 Determining the Approach

Once you have settled on a topic and interpreted it, you need to think about how you are going to approach it. Basically, this should involve asking yourself the following questions:

- What are the key concepts or issues that need to be investigated?
- What is the relative importance of each concept or issue?
- In particular, which of these are fundamental to dealing with the topic?

The answer to this last question should determine the order of priority of your research.



1.5 Research

The basis for research on any essay will be reading literature which is related to the topic. You should read as widely as possible and seek to gain a number of different perspectives on the topic. You should not look for direct answers in the literature, but rather should use the work of a variety of authors to develop and shape your own ideas and opinions.

1.5.1 Sources of Information

Quite often your lecturer will provide you with a list of key references on the topic. Rarely should you confine your reading to this list. Rather you should actively seek out other sources of information by:

- using your library research skills to search through catalogues, reference works, online databases, and using each reference you read as a source of further references.

Make a note of any book or article, listed in the bibliography or a footnote, which appears to be relevant to your topic and locate these additional references. Through this process, build up your own reading list and try to assign an order of importance to each reference. You may not have time to read all potential sources of information, but by searching in the library and online, you will be able to come to a rational decision on why the sources you have located are appropriate to the task you are undertaking.

1.5.2 Reading and Taking Notes

Once you start reading the items on your list, you should always be thinking about

the topic. Remember that you are not reading the book or article for its own sake but for what it can tell you about the topic. Keeping that thought in mind will make your reading and note-taking much more effective. In taking notes you should:

- record the necessary bibliographic details so that you can cite the reference properly in your completed essay (see Section 3.1)
- concentrate on those points which have something to say about the topic - do not try to summarise the entire work if it is not all relevant
- read critically. Think carefully about the material as you read it, selecting points relevant to your essay, assessing the validity of the author's statements, research, opinions, arguments and conclusions. Do not accept what you read as being the exact truth just because the author sounds authoritative
- record your own observations as you progress through the reading. If you find a short passage that you think might be worth quoting in your essay, make sure you copy it down exactly (or photocopy it), and note the page number
- be careful to discriminate between exact copying down from the reference, your paraphrasing from the reference, and your own opinions and observation. Failure to do this can lead to inadvertent plagiarism (see Section 3.2).

1.6 Writing

You should go through at least three stages in writing your essay:

1. constructing an outline
2. drafting the essay
3. producing a final draft.

1.6.1 The Outline

This is where you attempt to put the knowledge you have gained from your research and your thoughts on the topic into an appropriate logical order. Before doing this, you should review your notes and record the main contributions made by each source and any of your own significant observations. Think critically about the information you have gathered. Your attention, then, should be focused clearly on the topic with the following question uppermost in your mind:

- what is the best way to construct an argument which deals with the topic?

You should, at this stage, have an idea of your conclusions and what you need to do is to construct an argument which will lead the reader to an acceptance of those conclusions. Ask yourself:

- what will be the main points of the argument?
- in what order should these points be introduced and discussed?
- what evidence, e.g. data, case studies or authoritative opinion, can be used to support each point?

The outcome should at least be a dot-point plan or an outline indicating the structure of your argument. Creating a structure, however, involves omitting some content. It is unlikely that you could include all the points made by all the authors whose works you have read. Use your judgment to determine which are the most significant and relevant points to include.

1.6.2 Drafting

Drafting is the writing process by which the essay develops. A first draft fills out the outline; successive drafts refine the argument and style. When drafting you should:

- follow the recommended format (see Section 1.8)
- reference thoroughly and correctly - it is difficult to do this after you have completed a draft (see Section 3.1)
- take care to avoid plagiarism (see Section 3.2).

When writing your essay, remember that it is not just a cut and paste job where you take one idea from one author and further ideas from other authors before joining them all together. Rather, the essay should be built around the structure you have defined in your outline. Use the ideas of other authors to support your points, not to construct the entire essay.

1.6.3 The Final Draft

This is the refined version of your earlier draft(s) - the one you hand in for marking. To arrive at this point, you need to critically and thoroughly edit your earlier drafts. Use the features outlined in Section 1.3 as a checklist for your revision. You should:

- check the clarity of expression - give it to a friend or member of the family to see if they can follow your arguments
- check all referencing and acknowledgement is correct
- check for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. If you have typed the essay make sure you or a friend proofread it. Do not rely solely on your spelling/grammar check program on the computer. Academic staff are often quick to recognise the spellcheck program's employment as a proofreader, and this is regarded as lazy work
- print two (2) hard copies - one to submit for marking and one to keep in case the former is lost or misplaced. Not only should you become adept at saving your work as you go, you also need to be sure to save the final copy onto disk and/or your computer hard drive. This point cannot be over emphasised. Both hardware and software crash, get stolen, get fried, refuse to cooperate with reasonable requests and generally torment users.



1.7 Presentation Requirements

All essays should conform to the following standards unless otherwise specified:

- essays shall preferably be typed at one-and-a-half line spacing on A4 paper. The University of Newcastle's Academic Senate encourage students to use both sides of the A4 page to lessen the burden of paper usage on the environment
- essay font should be 12 point Times New Roman, Arial, Universe or something similarly easy to read. Never present an italicised or completely bold font essay
- a margin of at least 4 cm should be provided on the left-hand side of the page to ensure that there is adequate room for the marker's comments
- essays must be typed or word processed

- all pages must be sequentially numbered
- essays presented with pages in individual plastic sleeves will be returned unopened. Simply paper clip or staple the essay in the top left-hand corner
- please do not submit your essay in a plastic folder. There are no marks assigned for aesthetically pleasing folder selection and such folders ultimately end up burdening the environment as landfill
- essays must have an assignment cover sheet that is filled in completely—ask where these can be obtained if you are unsure.



1.8 Format

The essay should include, in order, the following:

- cover sheet
- title page
- the essay: introduction, discussion and conclusion
- references
- appendixes (where appropriate)

1.8.1 Title Page

This should include the title of the essay.

The essay title should be a concise indication of the content of the essay. Avoid broad titles like Design in Australia or Communication Theory or Technology in the World. Such titles only tell the reader the general field in which the essay belongs. Be more specific. Let the title communicate what the essay is really about. Often, an essay will be based on a specific topic or question assigned by the lecturer. In such cases, the given topic should be written in lieu of a title.

1.8.2 The Essay

In most cases, essays are written in continuous prose, i.e. without breaking into sections with headings. Sometimes, however, it can aid clarity if you do break it up in this manner (e.g. Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion). Where headings are used, follow the conventions outlined for reports (see Section 1.6.5). Whether you use headings or not, the essay should possess a clear and logical structure. This usually emerges out of careful thinking and planning before you start writing.

Introduction

An introduction should:

- explain the aims and purpose of the essay
- introduce the reader to the ideas being developed
- explain how you interpret the topic and how you intend to approach it in the essay

Discussion

This section forms the bulk of the essay. In the discussion you should develop and present your ideas and argument in a logical, structured manner. Each paragraph should flow from the previous one and lead to the next one. The discussion could

well be divided into sections by headings. While this is less important than in reports, an essay still needs to be structured, and limited use of headings can help to make your structure clearer to the reader. Avoid cluttering your discussion with quotations. Overuse of quotations usually makes an essay less readable and its argument sometimes difficult to follow, and raises questions in the reader's mind as to whether such a tactic is being employed to obfuscate a lack of clear thought and focussed direction. Remember that your task is to communicate with readers and convince them that your ideas about the topic are both valid and well thought out. Quotations should only be used sparingly, to highlight or illustrate a point of argument, and not as a replacement for your own words.

Conclusion

This is a relatively brief section in which you draw together the threads of the previous discussion and round off your argument. Concluding comments should be directed at the topic and highlight the major points which have emerged from the discussion. Do not introduce new points in the conclusion.

Tables and Figures

These are less frequently included in essays than in reports. Where you have included them, you should follow the same conventions as for reports (see Section 2.6.5).

Citing Material

The sources of all ideas, opinions or data which have been borrowed, quoted or otherwise used must be cited or referenced in the essay. A recognised referencing convention should be followed. The Harvard or author-date system is recommended by these guidelines (see Section 3.1). Footnotes should not be used.

1.8.3 Reference List

Your essay must be accompanied by a list of references that accurately records all the books, journal articles, and other material that you have actively used in writing your essay. More details about how to construct a list of references are included in Section 3.1 of these guidelines.

1.8.4 Appendixes

These are rarely included in essays; but where you have done so, follow the same conventions as for reports (see Section 2.6.7).



1.9 Word Length

For most essays, a maximum word limit will be specified. This is both an indication of the depth of research and discussion required, and also a signal to you that concise, succinct expression of your ideas is crucial. Keep to the point and avoid padding out your argument with unnecessary detail or description. In many cases, your first draft will exceed the word limit. Part of the editing process should then involve cutting out unnecessary words or passages. Take special care to ensure that the amount of discussion devoted to any specific point or issue is in proportion to its importance in your overall argument.

Where a maximum word limit is specified, + or - 10% of the word limit will be acceptable, while beyond these boundaries, the essay may be regarded as unsatisfactory. Word limits are part of the requirement of the essay as a whole, and observing them is as important as answering the question. You may find the challenge to put forward your argument in 2000 words is more difficult in certain circumstances than being able to put forward an argument in 5000 words. Be

succinct, clear, focussed, build up your case and move towards your conclusion.

1.10 Style of Language

Remember, at all times, that you are writing for and seeking to communicate with an audience. For many of your essays, you will be writing within a particular academic discipline and it will be appropriate to adopt the appropriate discursive strategy, style and terminology of that discipline. But never sacrifice clarity. Your lecturer will be more concerned that you can reveal and explain your ideas about a topic, rather than use big words in a muddled fashion. Most importantly your essay should be written in an objective style. You should, therefore, write in the third person rather than the first person in order to maintain this air of objectivity.

Unless asked specifically, avoid using such phrases as I think that or in my opinion; instead use it is considered that or it appears that. This does not mean that you cannot express your opinion - it simply relates to the manner in which you express it. Where you do express an opinion, make sure that it is an informed opinion, i.e. it follows logically from the evidence you have gathered and considered. You should also avoid the use of colourful, emotive or clichéd language when describing or explaining something.

Describing SMS technology as a thriving sector of the information technology economy is not as clear and useful as simply stating that the number of SMS users, and the messages transmitted via major communication networks, has increased by 25% over the past year. Usually, report writers lapse into colourful language (sometimes referred to as journalese) when they do not have the facts and figures to substantiate their statements. Journalese is fine in magazines, but is never appropriate in academic essays.

An objective style should even be maintained when the purpose of the essay is to persuade or present a case. Your case will be much more effective if the reader is convinced that you have objectively and logically analysed a situation and formed your conclusions and recommendations on that basis. In addition, you should avoid using colloquial or slang terms, or making broad, generalised, sweeping statements you cannot substantiate. This does not mean that you cannot be speculative. For example, while you would not be justified in saying consumer choice of communication technologies in Australia is always determined by advertising, you could say advertising may be a significant influence on many Australian consumer choices concerning the use of communication technology. At all times strive for clarity and precision.

You are required to avoid using sexist or discriminatory language. Use terms such as spokesperson rather than spokesman. The University of Newcastle has a policy on Inclusive Language and students must familiarise themselves with this policy and adhere to its requirements. Details of this policy can be found at:
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/hrm/policy/inclusive_language.htm

1.10.1 Abbreviations

Where abbreviations or acronyms are used, the full name/title should be given in the first instance with the acronyms placed in parentheses. Thereafter, the acronym can be used whenever this organisation is mentioned. For example:

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), under direct instruction from the Minister responsible for the Communication portfolio, announced earlier this year that the remaining free to air television broadcast spectrum in all Australian capital cities will be awarded to the highest bidder. Both taxpayer funded television broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), have expressed objections to a commercial imperative being the sole criteria informing the decision making process. A spokesperson for

the ABA claims it has received unequivocal direction from the Commonwealth in this matter, and that while the organisation remains empathetic with the positions expressed by the ABC and the SBS, those organisations or individuals with objections should direct their concerns to the Department and the Minister.

Section 2: Reports

2.1 Introduction

Modern professionals need to be effective communicators. Their role, in many instances, is to provide advice and information designed to aid decision-making processes. Quite often that role is fulfilled by the preparation and presentation of a written report. The development of report-writing skills is fundamental to professional development and is, therefore, an integral part of the academic programs offered in the School of Design, Communication and Information Technology.

NB. The report format is different from the essay format and you must adjust your approach accordingly.

2.2 Purpose of Reports

Generally, the starting point for a report will be a set of instructions provided by a client or employer. During your studies you should regard the assignment requirements set out by your lecturer as equivalent to these instructions. The instructions will raise questions or pose problems which the report should attempt to answer or resolve. These effectively form the objectives that should be very much the focus of all content and discussion contained within the report. It is fundamental that the objectives of a report should be clear from the outset. Clients, employers, or academics may be guilty of providing vague or ambiguous instructions, and unless such problems are resolved, the writer of the report runs the risk of providing information that is not really required, or leaving vital questions unanswered. The first task, then, should be to clarify the objectives, as far as possible, with the individual or organisation for whom the report is being prepared.

2.3 Essential Features

The precise format and content of a report may vary depending on its nature and purpose. The guidelines contained herein should, therefore, be seen as advisory rather than prescriptive. However, a good report will possess the following features. It will:

- display a good understanding of the problem
- display some evidence of original or creative thought in dealing with the problem
- clearly present information, ideas, recommendations, etc.
- be concise, with no irrelevant material
- be as precise and consistent as possible
- be based on objective analysis and not unsubstantiated subjective judgment

- not be based on vague, ambiguous and contradictory information
- be logically presented so that the reader can see the reasoning behind decisions conclusions and recommendations
- explain the method of investigation and/or analysis which has been employed
- address thoroughly and appropriately all the questions/problems posed in the instructions
- indicate clearly and thoroughly all sources of information utilised in compiling the report
- be free from spelling, typographical and grammatical errors.

Deficiencies in any of these features can lead to the report not satisfying its objectives or causing concern about the validity and reliability of its findings. You should regard the above list as the criteria on which your report will be assessed. A serious shortcoming in any one of these criteria could lead to your report being judged as unsatisfactory.

2.4 The Process

The report-writing process should be seen as a series of logical, sequential steps. The process can be described as if a client were issuing the instructions, in keeping with the principle of trying to encourage professional standards of reporting. You should regard your lecturer as equivalent to the client. This process may not be applicable to all reporting tasks. For example, the task may be so specific that it does not require a review of previous work in the field. In such a case, this step of the process is more likely to involve a review of available techniques for solving the specific problem. Similarly, the task may not require you to make recommendations as it may be directed at the general investigation of an issue or problem. The instructions should specify what is required in this regard.

It is important to realise that all the steps in this process are interrelated. In particular, the early steps set the foundation for the later steps. One of the most common mistakes students make when given a reporting task is to start gathering information in a rather haphazard manner. Insufficient thought is given to why the information is being collected and what pieces of information are really important. Working through this process carefully and thoughtfully should prevent such mistakes being made and ensure that you make the most effective use of your time. This is absolutely crucial if you are to produce a good quality report.

The report writing process:

- client's instructions
- instructions received & clarified
- review of literature & previous work
- problem(s) defined
- research method(s) formulated
- information collection
- problem(s) redefined
- analysis & interpretation

- conclusions
- recommendations

Briefly, the steps in the report-writing process involve the following:

Instructions

This basically involves the specification of the task that you must undertake. The level of detail will vary depending on the nature of the task and the organisation or individual issuing the instructions. The client's aims may be either implicit or explicitly stated in the instructions.

Clarification of Instructions

As mentioned earlier, this is the most fundamental step in the entire process. If you have misinterpreted the instructions, you run the risk of not satisfying the client's requirements. You should, therefore, take careful and deliberate steps to:

- analyse and interpret the instructions
- clarify any aspects which are vague or uncertain
- confirm your interpretation through consultation with your client

The outcome of this process should be a mutually agreed set of objectives designed to satisfy the broad aims of your client. In some cases, you will be required to formulate your own topic for a report. In essence, you will be issuing your own instructions, within broad guidelines set by a lecturer. You need to be just as clear about your objectives in these cases as if someone else had issued the instructions.

Defining the Problem

This is the thinking part of the process. It is best explained by way of illustration. Say your task is to analyse a consultation process for the local council to maximise public involvement in a council organised forum on spaces for people to walk their dogs. To complete that task you will need to understand the factors influencing involvement levels and the relative importance of each of those factors. The problem then becomes far more complex than this seemingly straightforward task. You need to define the nature of the problem thoroughly in clear terms and to understand the necessary underlying principles. Moreover, you may need to be aware of available techniques used to solve problems of this kind. A review of relevant literature or previous work in this area will assist you in this regard.

Review of Literature

This involves carefully searching for relevant published and unpublished work in the field you are investigating, obtaining and reading the relevant items, and drawing out salient points for your own report. The review is mainly designed to assist you in defining and understanding the problem by exposing you to existing knowledge in the area. It may also suggest appropriate directions or methods of investigation, and/or provide an organising theoretical framework for your own study. An effective literature review may save you considerable time.

You may discover, for example, that existing work has already answered many of the questions posed by the client. Your own research can then concentrate on simply filling in the gaps or updating existing information. It is possible that the literature review will shed new light on the problem warranting additional consultation with the client in order to further refine the study objectives. Your role as a report writer is, therefore, not a passive one. You can, and should, play an active part in shaping the instructions and setting the objectives in collaboration with the client.

Research Method Formulation

By this stage of the process you should have a good understanding of the problem and a clear set of objectives. The objectives represent the questions you intend to address. They should, therefore, be achievable. The research method should be formulated around those objectives. Basically, you need to ask such questions as:

- What information is required?
- How do I collect that information?
- What are my potential sources of information?
- What pieces of information should be given priority in terms of time and effort?
- How should information collection be sequenced in order to make most effective use of time and effort?

The outcome of this process should be a defined set of tasks with times set down for completing those tasks, i.e. your research plan.

Information Collection

This step simply involves putting your research plan into effect.

Analysis and Interpretation

This step involves analysing and interpreting the information you have collected in such a way that it leads to the satisfaction of your objectives.

This is the appropriate time for you to review your own progress. The key question to ask yourself is whether you have satisfied the objectives. If the answer is no you may need to return to an earlier step in the process. You may not, for example, have initially understood some of the more subtle aspects of the problem. Your own research may have given you more understanding and allowed you to re-define the problem to some extent. At this point it is necessary to devise the means of gathering any additional information that may be needed to deal with the re-defined problem.

Conclusions

Once you are satisfied that you have achieved all your objectives, you are in a position to write your conclusions. This should comprise a concise statement of your key findings in relation to the objectives.

Recommendations

Any recommendations should emerge directly from the conclusions and should be action-oriented. Whether you are required to make recommendations will depend on the client's instructions. The reader should be able to see clearly how you have arrived at your conclusions and recommendations. The structure of the report should reflect the above process in terms of both content and sequence.



2.5 Presentation Requirements

All reports should conform to the following standards unless otherwise specified:

- reports shall preferably be typed at one-and-a-half line spacing on A4 paper
- Academic Senate at The University of Newcastle encourage students to use both sides of the A4 page to lessen the burden of paper usage on the environment

- report font should be 12 point Times New Roman, Arial, Universe or something similarly easy to read. Never present an italicised or bold font report
- a margin of at least 4.cm should be provided on the left-hand side of the page to ensure that there is adequate room for the marker's comments
- reports must be typed or word processed
- all pages must be sequentially numbered
- reports presented with pages in individual plastic sleeves will be returned unopened. Simply paper clip or staple the report in the top left-hand corner
- please do not submit your report in a plastic folder. There are no marks assigned for aesthetically pleasing folder selection on behalf of students and such folders most often end up burdening the environment as landfill
- reports must have an assignment cover sheet that is filled in completely—ask where these can be obtained if you are unsure
- illustrative materials, particularly maps, included in the report should preferably be on A4 sized paper. Larger maps can be photo-reduced to this size. Where this is not possible, the maps should be folded appropriately into the report
- all illustrations should be neatly and clearly presented. Hand drawn maps and diagrams should be photocopied and the photocopies included in the report as they will tend to have a better finish than the originals
- reports should be free of spelling, typographical, punctuation and grammatical errors. Such features can create ambiguities or lead to a lack of clarity in the report detracting from comprehension. Lack of attention to detail creates an unfavourable impression that can lead to a lack of confidence in the report's finding. Reports should therefore be thoroughly edited and proofread before submission. Do not rely solely on a computer's spell checking features. These features are only meant to guide rather than replace proofreading.

Unless otherwise stipulated by your lecturer, the report should include, in order, the following sections:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Acknowledgements (where appropriate)
- Executive Summary
- Body of the report, including:
 - Introduction
 - Discussion/Analysis sections
 - Conclusions
 - Recommendations
 - References
 - Appendixes

Pages must be numbered consecutively throughout the report in the following manner:

- For the Table of Contents, Acknowledgements and Executive Summary, use lower case Roman numerals, ie. i, ii, iii, etc.
- For the remainder of the report, use Arabic numerals, ie. 1, 2, 3, etc.

2.6 Format

2.6.1 Title Page

This should include:

- the title or topic of the report

2.6.2 Table of Contents

This should list all internal headings in order and the page numbers on which they appear.

2.6.3 Acknowledgements

All people who have assisted you in the research and preparation of your report should be included in a list of acknowledgements. This list should also indicate the firms or organisations to which these people belong. Effectively, this is the way you acknowledge information you have gathered from personal communication.

2.6.4 Executive Summary

Most reports should include an Executive Summary. The inclusion of a brief summary is standard reporting practice and is meant to act as a guide to the contents of your report, and to highlight major conclusions and recommendations. The Executive Summary derives its name from the practice of providing the executives of an organisation - i.e. those responsible for making decisions and taking appropriate action - with a concise outline of the major points in a report. The fine details can be pursued in more depth later by completely reading the report.

The structure of the Executive Summary should follow the structure of your report and should include brief statements on the following:

- definition of the problem
- objectives
- key findings which lead to conclusions
- conclusions
- recommendations for action

The Executive Summary can be presented either in paragraph or point form and should be brief and succinct. As a rule-of-thumb, allow one page for every 2000 words up to a maximum of five pages. For longer summaries it may be appropriate to incorporate a number of headings. The Executive Summary should not be seen as a substitute for a full discussion/exposition of any matters in the body of your report. For example, you will still need to fully outline and discuss your conclusions and recommendations in the final sections. Neither should it be seen as a table of contents where you simply list the topics/issues the report has examined, without revealing anything about your actual findings. It should be written after you have finished writing your report.

2.6.5 Body of the Report

The structure of the report should reflect the report-writing process outlined earlier and contain all the main elements of that process.

Sections and Headings

The body of the report should be divided into sections, each of which should deal with a major defined topic and possess an internal logic. Furthermore, it aids the reading of your report if each section is divided into sub-sections dealing with specific aspects of the main topic. You should adopt a logical and consistent hierarchy of headings. A suggested hierarchy might be as follows:

1st order heading- 2 SMS Usage in Australia

2nd order heading- 2.1 SMS Usage Growth Since Introduction to Australian Market

3rd order heading- 2.1.1 SMS Main Users

The numbering system included in the above example is not an essential feature. It is included in many reports because it allows for easy cross-referencing. The system of headings adopted, however, should clearly reflect the logic of your report. Before writing your first draft, you should prepare a point-form plan. The points in this plan would usually become the headings for sections and sub-sections. Each heading should clearly and unambiguously identify the content of the section or sub-section.

The Introduction

Particular attention should be paid to the introductory section(s). The introduction sets the context within which the information presented in the report is considered. At the very least, the introduction should:

- clearly establish the scope and purpose of the report
- define the problem
- specify the objectives

Early in the report the method of research should be clearly explained and an overview of existing literature and previous work in the field provided.

Acknowledgement of References

The source of all ideas and data that have been borrowed, quoted or otherwise used must be acknowledged in the body of the report. A recommended method of referencing is the Harvard or author-date system. Full details of this system are given in Section 3.1 of these guidelines. It is recommended that referencing systems that use footnotes should not be used unless otherwise specified by your course coordinator or lecturer. Be sure to incorporate proper and thorough referencing in all earlier drafts. It is a time-consuming and difficult process to go back over your notes checking on sources of information once a draft has been written.

Tables and Figures

Tables and figures should be used to illustrate significant points in the text or to present data on which the analysis and conclusions are based. They should not be used as mere window dressing; rather they should have some relevant, illustrative or analytical purpose.

You should carefully consider the placement of tables and figures within the report. The key to deciding where to place a particular illustration is its importance to the description or explanation. If, for example, you are describing a certain aspect of the flow of organisational communication in a company, you may wish to illustrate it by including a flow chart. That illustration should be included immediately adjacent to or after your written discussion of it. You should also direct the reader's attention to it. It

would be poor practice, in this case, to include your flow chart with a group of other similar illustrations at the end of the report. You would lose all immediacy and most of the illustrative impact by doing this.

Tables in the body of the report should be short, simple and relatively easy to comprehend. Longer, more complex tables should be confined to an appendix. Always consider whether the information presented in a table would make more impact or possess more clarity if presented in graphic form, and, if so, what form that graph should take. Different types of graphs are appropriate for different purposes. Your commentary on a table should not be merely a re-statement of the table's contents. Rather, it should concentrate on interpreting and highlighting significant points which emerge from it relating directly to the objectives of your report. The commentary does not have to be as precise as the data in the table; for example, if the table indicates that 52% of Australian mobile phone users use SMS messaging at least once a year, your commentary could be phrased in terms such as about half the Australian population...

A table should be given a heading that accurately and concisely defines its content. All tables should be numbered consecutively throughout the report. For longer reports with substantial sections, tables could be numbered according to section sequence; for example, the third table in Section 2 should be labeled as Table 2.3. The source of information contained in the table should be indicated immediately below it.

Figures (including maps, diagrams, graphs and photographs) should be treated in a similar manner in relation to heading, numbering and sourcing. All maps should include a scale, a north point and, where appropriate, a legend. These features are necessary to allow for accurate interpretation of the map.

2.6.6 References

Your report must be accompanied by a list of references which accurately records all the books, journal articles, and other material that you have actually used in assembling your report. However, information obtained verbally through personal interviews should not be included in the reference list but in the list of acknowledgements. More details about how to construct a list of references are included in Section 3.1 of these guidelines.

2.6.7 Appendixes

It is largely a matter of discretion when determining what should go into an appendix. Generally, an appendix should contain materials that support the argument in the text, but which are too voluminous, detailed or tangential to warrant inclusion in the body of the report. Do not use the appendix to show that you have collected a lot of information on the topic. The material included should be relevant and useful. The usual rules of referencing, sourcing, and formal writing, also apply to appendixes. Appendixes should be numbered consecutively and should be referred to in the text. For example:

This study involved a survey of telecommunication preferences of 18-25 year olds in Sydney. (A copy of the questionnaire used in the survey is included in Appendix 2.)



2.7 Honesty in Reporting

The quality of a report and the reliability of its conclusions and recommendations are heavily dependent on the method of research employed and the data collected. It is, therefore, imperative that you reveal your methodology and indicate your sources of information. A full discussion of the methodology allows the reader to evaluate the validity of your findings. Where the methodology has not been revealed, there is a natural tendency to doubt the findings. It is good practice to be honest about the

limitations of your method.

No research report is perfect - they are all done within time and resource constraints. It may be appropriate to point out where further research is needed to answer more fully the questions. Suggestions on how these questions may be approached may also be helpful. Similarly, acknowledgement of your sources of information is extremely important for specific reasons:

- it allows readers to check the source data and form their own conclusions
- it indicates the reliability of your information (there can often be a difference, for example, between figures quoted in a newspaper and those in an official government report)

It is simply dishonest to use someone else's work or ideas without acknowledgement; to do so would be tantamount to claiming it as your own. This practice, known as plagiarism, is equivalent to theft or cheating (see Section 3.2). The University of Newcastle has specific policies against plagiarism, and penalties can be severe for plagiarism.

2.8 Word Length

For most reporting tasks which you will be given in the course of your studies, a maximum word limit will be recommended. You should make a serious effort to keep within that limit for three reasons:

- a good report is one which is economical with words. You need to communicate as clearly and concisely as possible without omitting essential information or arguments
- you certainly need to ensure that all of your discussion is relevant to the problem you are addressing
- it is extremely frustrating for the reader to wade through masses of relatively unimportant information

The word limit is an indication to you of the depth of investigation and analysis required. Many of the tasks you will be asked to undertake could be attacked in much greater depth but staff and students must tailor expectations to total course requirements. None of this precludes you from researching and reporting on a topic in much greater depth. However, you should be mindful of the full range of commitments on your time and not get carried away with one specific task. The word limit is designed to assist you with the planning of your work.

Word limits are often placed in the real world. Busy decision-makers often require the presentation of material in very concise form; long reports often do not get read. A useful exercise when planning your work is to allocate a certain amount of words to each section of your report. This will help keep you within the overall word limit.

2.9 Style of Language

Most of the points made with respect to the language in essays (see Section 1.10) apply to reports as well, but the style of language you adopt will depend to some extent on the purpose of the report and the intended audience. If your report is directed at a group of specialist professionals, your report may be written in a technical style with much use of specialist terminology (i.e. jargon). For example:

After decamping from the scene of the alleged incident at 21.00 hrs on December 7,

2003, the male offender made his way in a westerly direction to the lounge area of a Darlinghurst public house and was then followed to a nearby domicile by three police officers from the South Sydney anti-theft squad. The male left that domicile in the company of a woman at 21.55 hrs and returned to the same public house he had been at immediately before meeting the woman. Both the man and woman were confronted by the three undercover officers from the South Sydney anti-theft squad within the premises of the public house at 22.15 hrs. Both the man and the woman were searched in the presence of the three undercover officers and both were found to have trafficable amounts of the restricted substance cocaine on their person. Both denied to police officers any knowledge of the substance being on their person or in their possession. Both were apprehended at the scene and taken into custody. They were both conveyed in a police vehicle to the Surry Hills Police Station where they were charged with a number of drug related offences at 22.20 hrs.

The above might be appropriate if you are a police officer writing a report for a prosecution brief, but Police arrested a man and a woman in a Sydney hotel with a large amount of drugs would be better suited for many other purposes. This example is provided to demonstrate how specialist knowledge is appropriate to an audience that understands specific discourses.

Most commonly your report will be written for a wider audience that may not possess your level of specialist knowledge. In such cases, your report should not cloud the issues or confuse by over-use of specialist terms. Where these cannot be avoided, you should consider incorporating a glossary defining any technical or specialist terms. Remember your aim is to clarify and communicate, leading people to informed decisions. Always try to view your report from the standpoint of the potential reader.

2.10 Planning your Work

Completing a report requires gathering a great deal of information within a limited time frame. It is most important, therefore, that you plan your work beforehand. The process outlined earlier is designed to assist you in this regard but, in addition, your plan should:

- identify the information you require
- identify the ways and means of gathering that information
- establish the priority or importance of various pieces of information, and allot appropriate amounts of time to their collection
- establish your own time lines for the completion of the various tasks associated with the study, e.g. gathering information, taking photographs, writing the final report
- allow for contingencies which might arise, particularly with regard to gathering information and computer humbug
- ensure that you allow sufficient time at the end of your research for the preparation of the final report, including editing and proofreading of the typed copy

2.11 Group Reports

Group work is an inevitable aspect of University work, because it is an inevitable part of work for most students beyond the University. In some cases you will be required to produce a report as a member of a group. All of the above guidelines

apply to group as well as individual work. However, in group work there are a number of additional requirements, unless otherwise specified:

- the final report must be a true group report, not a collection of separate individual reports. Format and presentation must be consistent throughout
- the group assumes collective responsibility for the quality of the final report. The blame for any faults such as typographical errors or inadequate acknowledgement of references must be shared equally by all members of the group

Given the collective responsibility of the group, the work should be shared as evenly as possible amongst all individual members. It is a good idea to allocate specific tasks to group members at the start of a project as well as setting times for regular group meetings. Where an individual is not participating to the satisfaction of the other members of the group, this should immediately be brought to the attention of the lecturer responsible for coordination of the course. It is too late to notify the lecturer of group communication problems once the final report has been submitted and marked.



Section 3: Common Requirements

3.1 Referencing

All written work submitted must be fully and appropriately referenced. Although there are a number of alternative referencing systems available, the Harvard (author-date) system is strongly recommended by academic staff in CMNS courses. Acknowledgement of references must be in two forms:

- within the text
- in a list of references at the end of the text

NB: Even if you are not directly quoting an author, you must acknowledge authorship in the text of any ideas or arguments you use, and provide the appropriately referenced page numbers.

3.1.1 Within the Text

The basis of this system is to cite a reference by including the author's surname and the year of publication in the text. There are a number of conventions for using this system in different circumstances:

- in its simplest form the author's name and the year are enclosed in parentheses -

Recent research on the contribution of SMS technology to the rapid growth of direct marketing in Australia has been carried out utilising statistical samples from capital cities (Jones 2001)

- if the author's name is mentioned in the text, only the year is given in parentheses -

A recent study by Jones (2001) uses statistical samples from capital cities to gauge the contribution of SMS technology to the rapid growth of direct marketing in Australia

- where there are more than three authors of a cited work, the abbreviation et al. (meaning and others) is used with the first author's surname -

Recent research that attempts to analyse the impact of SMS technology on direct

marketing (Kracker et al. 2000) contends that privacy issues do not appear to be of major concern to consumers.

The full set of authors would then be given in the list of references.

- Where you are quoting directly from another source, the page number must be given in addition to the author and year: It has been suggested that regular users of SMS technology report that direct marketing is only a minor inconvenience, with 40% of the sample group stating that they did not feel such marketing was aggressive or intrusive to their privacy in any way (Smith 2000, p. 49).

Put in another way:

Smith suggests that regular users of SMS technology report that direct marketing is only a minor inconvenience, with 40% of the sample group stating that they did not feel such marketing was aggressive or intrusive to their privacy in any way (2000, p. 49).

- Quotations of more than four lines should be indented 2cm from the left hand hand margin and taken down a point in size:

Dibble argues the case for regulation by the Commonwealth to limit the use of SMS technology by direct marketers, claiming that it is:

... readily apparent that direct marketers based throughout the eastern seaboard of Australia have been able to access large lists of mobile phone numbers – through various means including corrupt telecommunication employees – and that there is an identifiable need for additional consumer protection that builds upon existing, but inadequate, government legislation (Dibble 2000, p. 49).

Notice that there are no quotation marks on indented quotes –these are not necessary, because, stylistically, the indent serves the purpose of quotation marks

- Where you have used more than one publication in the same year by an author, differentiate by appending a letter to the year:

Dibble (2000a) studied the impact of direct marketing on mobile phone users in Newcastle, which he based on a sample study carried out in Sydney some three months earlier (Dibble 2000b).

- Where you have acknowledged more than one reference in the same place, separate by using a semi-colon and list chronologically:

Various authors have attempted to demonstrate the link between direct marketing and corruption in the public sector (Smith1992; Pearce 1994; Yunupingu 2000).

- Where the date of publication cannot be established, use n.d. to denote no date:

Kennedy (n.d.) argued that...

- A work intended for but not yet in the process of publication may be cited as follows:

Johns (forthcoming) contends that...

- A work which is in the process of publication but for which the publication date is uncertain should be cited as follows:

Harrogan (in press) shows that...

- Where you have referred to the work of one author who has been cited in the work of another, but you have not read the original, you should reference the secondary source rather than the original:

Macdougall and O'Davis argue that by moving the SMS direct marketers offshore,

multinational companies have circumvented Australian law and therefore rendered privacy legislation totally ineffective (Waugh and Gilchrist 1997).

It is preferable that you first seek out the original source before using this option.

- Where an organisation (company, government department, etc.) has been responsible for producing a work but there is no identifiable author, you should treat the organisation as the author. All of the above conventions then apply:

Forty per cent of retail industry in Australia has expressed interest in direct marketing via SMS technology. (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000).

- Where there is no identifiable author, or the work has not been produced by an identifiable organisation, reference by title and date:

As observed in *The Bradman Letters* (1951) ...

- Details of personal communications should be incorporated into the text:

In a conversation with Mr S. Warne on 19 February 1999, he said that...

As a less preferred option, they can also be cited as follows:

Warne (1999, pers. comm., 19 February) said that...

3.1.2 Reference List

All references cited in the text, except for personal communications, must be included in a list of references at the end of your work. Details of personal communications should be included in your list of acknowledgements. The reference list shall be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors. Anonymous works should be alphabetised under the first important word in their titles. The format of the entries should be consistent throughout and the facts given concerning any book, report or article should be sufficient to identify it unmistakably. The information required varies according to the type of reference you are dealing with. The examples given below should cover most types, and are based on the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (AGPS 1996).

A book:

Author(s),	Initials.	Year,	Title of Book,	Publisher,	Place of Publication.
McGrath,	G.W.	1966,	<i>Fast Bowling,</i>	Longman,	London.

McGrath, G.W. 1996, *Fast Bowling*, Longman, London.

Additional information may also be included where relevant, e.g. edition or volume as follows:

Smith, D.G. 1999, *Australian Telecommunication Policy – What Went Wrong?*, 3rd edn, Longman, London.

Note that the publisher is not the printer. You do not need to refer to the printer.

A journal article:

Author(s), Initials Year, 'Title of article', Name of Journal, Volume, Number, Pages.

Cunneen, C. and Lynch, R. 1988, 'The social meaning of conflict in riots at the Australian Grand Prix motor cycle races', *Leisure Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1-20.

A book which is an edited collection of readings written by separate authors:

Mercer, D. and Hamilton-Smith, E. (eds) 1980, *Telecommunication Policy: Theory and Practice*, Sorrett, Malvern.

A chapter from an edited collection of readings:

Author(s) of chapter (Year), 'Title of chapter', in Title of book, Editor(s), Publisher, Place of publication.

Smithurst, P. 2001, 'Surfing the telecommunications wave of uncertainty, in *Communication and Government Policy*, eds D. Mercer and E. Hamilton-Smith, Sorrett, Malvern.

Note that the year indicated is the year in which the collection was published.

The above format should be used even when the author of the chapter is the editor (or one of the editors) of the book:

Smithurst K., 1999, 'SMS Technology and Direct Marketing', in *The Axis of Evil*, eds D. Mercer and E. Hamilton-Smith, Sorrett, Malvern.

Where you have used a number of chapters from the same collection of readings each chapter must be referenced separately according to author. The first chapter in your list should include the full details as indicated above; all subsequent chapters should be referenced as follows:

Marriott, D. 1980, 'Traditional approaches to urban recreation planning', in Mercer and Hamilton-Smith, op. cit.

The term op. cit. means in the work cited.

Note that Student Readers should not be regarded as edited collections of readings. Items from one of these readers should be referenced according to the original source.

A conference report:

Parsonson, R. 1987, *Leisure Demand Surveys: Uses and Abuses in Management*, Seminar Proceedings, Publication No. 4, Centre for Leisure and Tourism Studies, Kuring-gai CAE, Sydney.

Individual papers from a conference report should be treated in the same way as individual chapters from an edited collection of readings.

A newspaper article where the author is indicated:

Condon, T. and Walkley, P. 1989, 'Japanese monopolise hotels and resorts', *Australian Financial Review*, 19 May, p. 65.

A newspaper article where no author is indicated:

'The Hyatt formula: breaking the mould' 1988, *The Australian*, 19 Aug., p. 24.

Unpublished works, e.g. theses:

Bloggs, G. 1983, *The impact of tourism on cane toads*, MA thesis, University of Queensland.

Note that the award for which the thesis was completed and the university are identified.

A government report published by the department/agency concerned:

Australian Bureau of Statistics 1985, *Domestic Travel and Tourism Survey*, Australia, 1973, Cat. No. 9216.0, ABS, Canberra.

A government report published by the Australian Government Publishing Service: (AGPS):

Bureau of Transport Economics 1986, Demand for Australian Domestic Aviation Services, Occasional Paper No. 79, AGPS, Canberra.

Material from on-line electronic journals, newsletters, conferences, discussion lists or any website on the internet or world wide web:

Foucault, Michel 1995, 'Madness, the absence of work', excerpts trans. P. Stasny and D. Stengel, *Critical Enquiry*, vol. 21, no.2, <http://www.uchicago.edu:80/u.scholarly/CritInq/v21n2.foucault.html>

The publisher information is replaced by the institution or group who maintain the computer upon which the www pages are located. This is usually indicated in the computer name section of the URL. The place of publication is replaced by the URL of the WWW page.

Other materials from internet pages such as personal web pages, commercial sites, government and non-profit organisation sites may lack detailed information. Nevertheless, these sites can be referenced using the same format as other electronic sources:

ORCAInc. 1999, *Outdoor Recreation Units of Competency*
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/orca/index.html>

Please refer to the next section regarding the legitimacy and worthiness of some of these world wide web resources.

3.1.3 New Technologies

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of resources available through a range of electronic media - the internet, world wide web, email, newsgroups, on-line and CD ROM databases. Although widely available, there has been some confusion about how and whether to use such material in academic writing. As with books, not all of these materials are worthy of citation. As a student, you need to be selective as to what you draw upon to support your work.

There is a great deal of difference between materials discussed on a recognised newsgroup discussion and discussions that may take place between individuals in a 'chat room' free for all. It is your responsibility to develop an ability to discriminate between different sources, their legitimacy and their relevance to your work.

On the other hand, there are some excellent, legitimate resources available to you through these new forms of electronic media. To know where to look for these resources, begin by becoming familiar with the university library resources and services. It is strongly recommended that you become familiar with these services by signing up for a course in CD-ROM based electronic data retrieval and on-line database resources. In addition, seek out information from academic staff as to which newsgroup or web-sites are appropriate for your field of study.

Remember that if you choose to use these new resources, you still need to use appropriate referencing techniques. Examples of appropriate referencing conventions for these resources are included in section 3.1.2 of this guide.

These new technological breakthroughs have led to major issues about plagiarism. Remember, no matter the source, if the material you are using is not yours, you need to cite the source! (For more details about plagiarism, see Section 3.2 and Appendix A.)

3.1.4 General Note

In all of the above entries, the italicised entry is the title that you would find in a library catalogue. You would find the name of the Journal, not the title of the article; you would

find the title of the whole book, not the title of one of the chapters or papers in it.



3.2 Student Academic Integrity (incorporating Plagiarism)

The University of Newcastle policy regarding Student Academic Integrity that can be at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policy/academic/general/academic_integrity_policy_new.html

'Plagiarism' is a broad term referring to the practice of appropriating someone else's ideas or work and presenting them as your own. The University of Newcastle regards willful plagiarism as a serious matter and a range of penalties will apply if a student is found to have committed plagiarism. Plagiarism can take a number of forms including:

- copying the work of another student, whether that student is in the same class, from a later year of the same course, or from another tertiary institution altogether copying any section, no matter how brief, from a book, journal, article or other written source, without duly acknowledging it through quotation copying any map, diagram or table of figures without duly acknowledging the source copying anything from emails, the internet and other electronic media sources without duly acknowledging the source
- paraphrasing or otherwise using the ideas of another author without due acknowledgement.

Whatever the form, plagiarism is unacceptable both academically and professionally. By plagiarising, you are both stealing the work of another person and cheating by representing it as your own. Avoiding plagiarism is one of the main reasons why academic staff remain insistent on the thorough and appropriate referencing of all written work. Staff are here to help you with your studies - we would rather prevent it than detect it!

An explanation of plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of taking another person's words or ideas without acknowledging their work as your source. While the most blatant form of plagiarism is presenting another writer's sentences as if they were your own, it can also involve paraphrasing an argument as if it were your own, or presenting a particular sequence of ideas as if it were your own. Because the dialogue with other writers is such a fundamental procedure of essay writing at university, it is important that students in the School of Communication, Design and Information Technology learn the appropriate ways to bring their own work into contact with earlier work in their discipline.

Students should understand that using the words and ideas of others, and responding to them creatively, is an important part of their written-work in the School; however, it is equally important to acknowledge those words and ideas correctly, so that the reader is never in doubt as to their origin. You will never make mistakes by being over-cautious in this regard -- so when in doubt, acknowledge! Let us be very very clear here:-acknowledge, acknowledge and then acknowledge.

Whenever you use the exact words of another writer, even if only a short phrase, your assignment should indicate clearly where the quotation begins and ends, using inverted commas or indentation; should normally identify the writer quoted by name, in the text; and in addition should provide the reader with a note or full reference giving the exact source. This applies equally to information gleaned from books, lecture notes, audio-visual material, internet publications and any other source. Whenever you paraphrase another writer (ie present their argument in your own words), your assignment should tell the reader who that writer is, and should indicate clearly where the paraphrase begins and ends.

Two important, related points. First, as stated, whenever you quote words directly from another writer, those words should be indicated as quotations by the use of

quotation-marks or (in longer quotations) by the use of indentation: a note or in-text citation by itself is not enough. Second, likewise, whenever you paraphrase the ideas of another writer, you should indicate this clearly in the body of your assignment: once again, a note or citation at the end of the paragraph is not enough. It is in the body of your assignment -- through quotation-marks, indentation, and phrases like According to Jones... -- that you should indicate the relation between your words and those of another writer.

Example: The following paragraph is a passage from *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (Hebdige, D. 1979, Routledge: London, pp. 12-13): Most modern institutes of education carry within themselves implicit ideological assumptions which are literally structured into the architecture itself. The categorisation of knowledge into arts and sciences is reproduced in the faculty system which houses different disciplines in different buildings, and most colleges maintain the traditional divisions by devoting a separate floor to each subject. Moreover, the hierarchical relationship between teacher and taught is inscribed in the very lay-out of the lecture theatre where the seating arrangements -- benches rising in tiers before a raised lectern -- dictate the flow of information and serve to naturalise professorial authority.

The following sentence, without any form of documentation, constitutes plagiarism: Most modern universities contain implicit ideological beliefs, which are even reflected in their architecture -- in the way that different faculties are housed in different buildings, for example, or in the way that the seating arrangements in a lecture-theatre reinforce the authority of the instructor.

Whether or not you included a note or citation, the following would constitute plagiarism: Most modern universities contain implicit ideological assumptions which are structured into the architecture. The categorisation of knowledge into arts and sciences is reflected in the way that the various disciplines each have their own buildings. And the relation of teacher to student is inscribed in the lay-out of the lecture-theatre where the seating arrangements, with benches rising in tiers before a raised lectern, dictate the flow of information

However, with an appropriate note or in-text citation indicating the source, one could write the following: Dick Hebdige has argued that universities contain implicit ideological beliefs, which are even reflected in their architecture. Hebdige points to the way that different faculties are housed in different buildings, or the way that seating arrangements in a lecture-theatre reinforce the authority of the instructor.

With an appropriate note or citation indicating the source, one could also write the following: Dick Hebdige points out that most modern universities contain implicit ideological assumptions which are structured into the architecture. The categorisation of knowledge into arts and sciences is reflected in the way that the various disciplines each have their own buildings. Hebdige further argues that the relationship between teacher and student is inscribed in the very lay-out of the lecture theatre where the seating arrangements -- benches rising in tiers before a raised lectern dictate the flow of information.



3.3 Correct expression

Both essays and reports need to be expressed in a correct manner. They need to be written in properly constructed sentences and paragraphs featuring accurate spelling and appropriate punctuation. As much as anything, this aids the reading of your work and allows you to get your message across more effectively. No matter how good your ideas are, the quality will be lost if those ideas are not readily comprehensible. If a marker has to keep stopping to correct punctuation or apostrophe misuse, it is difficult for the marker to maintain a sense of flow in comprehending your work.

Students do get frustrated that their assignments are returned with marks all over them, sometimes complaining that academic staff are more concerned with exercising punctuation pedantry than engaging with the ideas expressed. It is the responsibility of academic staff to ensure graduates are capable of lucid writing that is not cluttered with mistakes, and such matters are important in academic writing. As a student, you are learning, and while academic staff recognise that, there is also an expectation that you care enough about the work required of you to pay detailed attention to all aspects of your work. Therefore, if your grammar is poor, take steps to improve it.

Refer to, and use, a standard grammatical guide such as: Hopwood, F. 1988, *Companion to English Grammar*, Pan Books, London. If your spelling is poor, use a dictionary. Many word processors have spellcheck facilities on them; however, many of these programs use American spelling. Remember Australian English is the appropriate form in Australia. If your punctuation is poor, refer to a guide book such as: Australian Government Publishing Service 1996, *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 5th edition, AGPS, Canberra. Recognise that a complete sentence must have a subject and a verb and that sentences should be grouped together in coherent, structured paragraphs. Each paragraph should have a distinct point, theme or topic and possess a beginning (introduction), middle (discussion) and end (conclusion). When you start discussing a new point, theme or topic, start a new paragraph.

Students often seem to have trouble with understanding the use of apostrophes. One way to assist yourself in such matters is to avoid the use of contractions – don't use don't, use do not, it's can be written as it is or it has. Be very careful with apostrophe use that signifies ownership. Again, look to a guide such as *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*. Assistance with essay writing skills is available from the Learning Skills Group (phone 4921 6606). If English is a second language for you, you may want to contact the Language Centre for additional tutoring. The Centre is located between the Shortland Union and the Auchmuty Library (phone 4921 5376).

3.4 Developing a good writing style

There is more to good writing than correct grammar, spelling and so on. It is a matter of style. You will find as you progress through the program that your writing style will improve through practice. However, there are steps you can take to hasten this process. The most effective way is to learn from the example of others.

Good writing is usually recognisable because it clearly and effectively communicates ideas or knowledge. The more examples of good writing that you read, the more your own style will develop and improve. This is not something you need to do as an additional task; extensive reading is, after all, an essential part of your studies. Improving your own writing is a matter of attuning yourself to recognising good writing and taking note of its stylistic features. It is often useful to look at examples of specific types of written work appropriate for your immediate purposes. If you are unsure about how to organise a particular type of report, look at examples. If you are unsure about how to write any part of a report, such as an Executive Summary, look at examples. If you are unsure about how to structure an essay, look at examples. If you are unable to locate appropriate examples, ask your lecturer for some.

Note also that lecturers will often return your work with corrections to spelling, punctuation, grammar and style. An accumulation of such annotations means that you have probably lost marks for poor presentation. You should take note of the comments and corrections, and clarify any unclear points with the lecturer, as part of the process of improving your writing style.

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