

UTS  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

# GUIDE TO WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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# GUIDE TO WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Edition 3.1

UTS BUSINESS SCHOOL

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This 3.1 edition of the Guide to Writing Assignments owes a great deal to its predecessor edition which was the result of collaborations between the UTS Business School and other groups at UTS including staff of the UTS Libraries, the Faculty of Law and the former ELSSA Centre. Many staff from within the School of Business have contributed to ongoing development of this guide.

## FOREWORD

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Welcome,

We are very pleased to introduce the revised third edition of the Guide to Writing Assignments in the UTS Business School. Research and written communication skills are required competencies of all students and at all levels of study, and the UTS Business School is committed to encouraging and supporting students' development of communication competence as an integral part of their learning. We are equally committed to ensuring our students graduate with a high level of communication competence as part of their attainment of the core graduate attributes, equipping them to be work-ready. This guide is an important element in that commitment.

The guide is intended to assist students, particularly those in undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs, when preparing their written assignments. This revised third edition incorporates more examples of writing to illustrate the key characteristics of written assignments in the Business School. It is packed with information, UTS resources, ideas and advice, much of it based on feedback from users of the previous editions. We hope you will see this guide as your indispensable companion during your studies.

UTS Business School welcomes suggestions on this guide.  
Comments should be addressed to:

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UTS Business School  
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We commend the guide to you and wish you every success in your studies at UTS Business School

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## *Aims of the Guide:*

To explain the key characteristics of effective writing in university-level Business studies

To give annotated examples of both effective and ineffective writing

To offer advice about the processes of preparing written assignments

To provide links to other information and resources

## About the Guide

The UTS Business School Guide to Writing Assignments has been designed to support students of the Faculty in developing their skills and capabilities as writers. Effective written communication and research abilities are integral to university study and important tools for the modern business professional. As a student at UTS, you will have many opportunities to learn through researching and writing about your subjects of study, and a great deal of the assessment of your learning will depend upon your effectiveness as a writer.

What you write in your assignments is like a snapshot of your thinking at a particular point or period in time. This guide therefore talks about thinking as much as writing and, in particular, the kind of scholarly thinking and researching that is expected in university-level studies. The mark of good scholarship is more than having original ideas – ideas have to be presented and expressed so that they are understood by others. This guide aims to support you in demonstrating how much and how well you have learned through the written assignments you prepare.

Examples used in the guide have been taken from authentic writing. We know that many students learn a lot from the experience of other students, including both their successful and their less successful experiences. Therefore, as much as possible, we have drawn from the experience of students in Business studies.



Have you checked that you have received all the information about your subject and each assignment task?

## Your responsibilities

Please remember that students are responsible for finding out the requirements of each subject. These are stated in each Subject Outline, but you may also be given other specific information relating to individual assignments. Sometimes, this may conflict with information in this guide, for example, you may be required to present your assignment in a particular structure or style of language. It is your responsibility to check that you understand what the requirements are for each written assignment.

## Using the writing guide

Some students prefer to print only the sections they find most interesting or useful, and then keep the copies in a ring-binder of material related to preparing written assignments. Included in the guide are the web addresses of other internet-based resources, and these are 'hot-linked' in the digital version of the guide to make it easier to jump online straight to those resources.

Just click on the links throughout the guide when you see the hot-link icon:



We hope that you will find the guide to be useful all through your studies, and assist you to become a capable writer and communicator as one of the fundamental attributes you will achieve as a graduate of UTS Business School.

The Business School is committed to continuously improving the quality of learning and teaching. In the spirit of that commitment, we need your feedback on this guide so that we can make improvements to it.



## 2. WRITING IN THE FACULTY OF BUSINESS

### THE ROLE OF WRITING: Why is writing so important?

Writing is a very important activity and set of skills to develop as part of your academic study. In all programs of study in the Business School, and across all levels of study, your capabilities as a writer are very important. Here are the main reasons why the Business School considers writing to be so central to your learning.

*I find that writing assignments is the most difficult part about studying at uni... but it's also the most satisfying. I understand much better when I have to write about something.*

*When it's a complex topic, I usually am not sure what I really think until I start trying to write about it.*

*At first I didn't realise just how important it would be to write well.*

*As I got more practice, I found that my writing improved and so did my marks.*

#### **Writing is a process which helps you to learn more deeply.**

When you are engaged in writing for your assessment tasks, you are engaged in a process of learning. Writing is not just something that happens at the end of learning. Instead, the process of writing starts from the very beginning of tackling an assessment task. During the process, you will need to analyse the task, read material relevant to the task, make notes and clarify your understandings, draw together different views on the topic, critically weighing these up, and so on. All these activities contribute to your learning as you go about solving the problem that the writing task has posed.

The kind of learning that you are expected to engage in at university level is **deep learning**, in which you are expected to understand many dimensions of a topic, and how they are related to each other, to ask critical questions, and to develop your own perspectives and viewpoints. For many people, the deepest learning occurs when they try to put their thoughts into words so that others can understand. A common experience for many people is that they are not really sure what they think about a complex topic until they start writing down their thoughts. Thus the process of writing can be seen as a means for discovering and consolidating meaning and therefore a method for learning more deeply.

#### **Writing is a product which demonstrates the quality of your learning.**

Without being able to 'see' your thinking through the words you speak and write, your lecturers would not be able to assess what is in your head. Thus your writing is a crucial **product** of your thinking which provides the evidence of what you have learned. Your lecturers can use this product to assess the quality of your learning and give you feedback to help you learn more from the experience. This is a very important part of the learning cycle in a university course, and you should aim to learn from your assessment feedback on every task you undertake.

In most of your subjects for your degree, written tasks will constitute the major part of your assessment. Even if a portion of your assessment may be for a tutorial or seminar presentation in class, you will often be expected to prepare some written material, for example, a PowerPoint presentation, or a class handout, or even a tutorial or seminar paper. In some subjects, you may be required to prepare a piece of written work as a member of a group. In other subjects, you may have exams in which you have to write under more constrained conditions, or perhaps you may be expected to write something for a real workplace in which your learning is set.

In all these circumstances, your writing is the product which defines how much and how well you understand and can put your case, and which will constitute the substantial basis for your assessment grade.

#### **Writing is a way of engaging in a dialogue with your lecturers/tutors.**

As you progress through your academic career at university, your writing operates as a channel for **dialogue** with the academic staff you will meet. Through refining and further developing your writing as an integral part of

learning, the opportunity to engage in deeper discussions with staff can be enhanced by the written assignments and work you undertake. Academic staff themselves often find that such dialogue with students is the most satisfying part of their work and many report on the reciprocal learning that takes place through students' serious engagement in writing.

*Even as a postgraduate student, my writing skills have continued to grow and develop, and I am now writing an article as a co-author with my supervisor.*

*It's like having a little toolkit of writing skills that I carry around with me and use each time I meet a new kind of writing task.*

#### **Being a capable writer is an important outcome of your university studies.**

As a result of successfully undertaking university studies, you will have developed not just specific knowledge and capabilities in the subject areas of your program, but also a wide range of more generic skills including communication skills. The more advanced your studies, the more expert and versatile your communication capabilities should become. In the workplace, employers value communication skills very highly and often use these as a way of distinguishing between candidates for jobs or promotions. Thus, writing skills are a form of **currency** in the employment market.

#### **Writing is a routine activity in most workplace settings of business graduates.**

It is difficult to imagine a workplace setting in which a graduate would not be undertaking writing as a **routine work task** on a daily basis. Whilst the type and range of writing tasks in workplaces may not be exactly like those in the university setting, the writing skills you develop as part of your university studies are ones you can transfer to new tasks. For example, although you might not be expected to write an academic essay in your job, the skill of developing an argument and substantiating this argument by reference to evidence is one which you will use in many other kinds of writing in the workplace.

#### **Being a capable and effective writer is a valuable capability for life.**

Understanding how to manipulate words and language effectively when writing for different purposes and to different audiences is a fundamental **capability** which informs and enriches a person's engagement in and contribution to society. What you learn from your experiences of writing as a student in the UTS Faculty of Business extends on the skills you had already developed from your previous school, work, and life experiences. By becoming more aware about writing and more flexible and adaptable as a writer, you are extending much further your own 'kit' of portable writing skills for life.

### **ASSESSMENT: How is your written work assessed?**



*Below expectations:*

*FAIL (Z) = <50%*

*Meets expectations:*

*PASS = 50%+*

*CREDIT = 65%+*

*Exceeds expectations:*

*DISTINCTION = 75%+*

*HIGH DISTINCTION = 85%+*

All assessment tasks in UTS Business School subjects are designed to encourage and support your learning. The assessment of your work is carried out in accordance with the UTS Policy for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects:

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/assessment-coursework.html>

Assessment is based on criteria to determine whether you have achieved the learning outcomes stated for each subject – this is called criterion-referenced assessment. Your grades are based on your level of performance in achieving these outcomes. When your lecturers/tutors mark your assignments, they make professional judgments about the level of performance you have achieved, to decide whether it meets the expectations, or whether it is above or below them.

The assessors look at various dimensions of your assignment to help determine what mark to give your work overall. For example, your assignment might be strong in its structure and its critical analytical approach, but it might be weak



in its language choices, or its grammatical accuracy. Or perhaps your assignment is well written and presented, but does not actually address the topic/issue/question that was given.

The marker needs to take all dimensions into account in determining the grade. Also, the marker will take into account the level at which you are studying, recognising that the standard expected of written work increases as you advance in your studies. Here are some examples of the kinds of dimensions that are typically used in assessing written assignments. For each dimension, there are some examples of the questions that markers might be asking as they are reading your work to determine your level of performance. They will not just be asking 'yes' or 'no', but 'how much' and 'how well'.

SOME DIMENSIONS OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	SOME QUESTIONS THAT MARKERS MIGHT ASK
Purpose	Does the assignment address the topic that was set?
	Does the assignment address the purpose that was set, for example, to explain, to discuss, to evaluate, to recommend, etc.?
	Is there a clear statement of the assignment's purpose or goals?
Relevance	Are the ideas and information in the assignment relevant to the topic?
	Are there other essential ideas and information which are missing from the assignment?
Analytical and critical perspective	Does the assignment provide evidence of critical analysis of the topic area?
	Does the assignment's present a critical perspective or stance?
Supporting evidence	Is the supporting material used as evidence for the ideas and information relevant and appropriate?
	Is evidence from other sources correctly acknowledged?
Structure and coherence	Is the assignment structured in appropriate sections and in a logical sequence?
	Is the logical structure clearly shown, for example, by the use of topic sentences and language showing relationships between sections?
Language style	Is the writing style at an appropriate level of objectivity, formality and technicality for the assignment's purpose and audience?
Language accuracy	Is the assignment written in grammatically accurate sentences?
	Is the punctuation accurate and helpful to the meaning?
	Is the spelling accurate?
Presentation	Is the formatting of the assignment according to the stated specifications, for example, section headings if appropriate, correct word length?
	Are references to supporting material presented in an appropriate and consistent style?
	Is the presentation of the assignment professional and 'reader-friendly'?

### Quality and standards in assessment

Go to Section 3 to find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

An important element of the assessment process is the maintenance of high standards of academic quality, integrity and scholarship in work that is produced by students. Markers therefore have a responsibility to check carefully any instances where they suspect that a student may have acted dishonestly, for example, by plagiarising the ideas and/or words of others.

Go to Section 7 for advice on checking your own work with Turnitin. Also, check their website for useful student tutorials

When the marker is assessing your work, they may check its level of originality by submitting it electronically to Turnitin. This is done routinely with all assignments in some subjects, or with a random selection of them, or might only be done if the marker suspects some dishonesty.

Alternatively, a marker might simply copy phrases or paragraphs into a search engine such as Google to search for an original source, or might compare the original source with the student's version to check that acknowledgements have been done with integrity.

Subject coordinators might also put in place special quality assurance processes such as comparing assignments between groups where there are multiple markers to cross-check the assessment standards but also to ensure the academic integrity of students' submissions.

Go to Section 9 to find out more about learning from feedback.

### Feedback to support learning

As part of the assessment process, your lecturers/tutors will give you feedback on your assignments designed to help you learn from the experience.

## COMMON PROBLEMS: What are students' most common writing problems?

It is not surprising that students often experience problems with writing. After all, it is a complex process, dependent on a complex mixture of skills, and students are constantly being challenged by new situations and tasks. When students confront transitions, for example from school to university, or from coursework to higher degree research study, or from studying in their first language to studying in English, the new demands on writing skills within the new context can be very challenging indeed.

The staff in UTS Business School will do everything they can to help you understand the expectations, and will give you feedback on your assignments to guide and shape your development as a writer. Students are very diverse in their backgrounds, and their levels of skill and experience, and the staff will therefore respond to each student's written work accordingly.

However, there are some reasonably common issues and problems that students face in preparing written assignments, and that staff also face in assessing and giving feedback to help students learn.

Throughout this guide, you will find advice relating to each of these types of common problems, and examples showing how to improve your assignments in terms of these typical assessment dimensions.

Here are some typical examples of these problems from the perspectives of students and staff, and organised according to the most common generic dimensions of assessment.

FROM A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE		FROM A STAFF PERSPECTIVE
<i>How am I supposed to know what a business report looks like?</i>	Purpose	Although a business report does define and explain some things, it does much more than this. You should follow the structure and style that are set out in the Subject Outline.
<i>I wasn't really sure what the question was asking me to do, so I just wrote everything I knew on that topic.</i>	Relevance	You should spend more time in analysing the question and ensuring that you are using relevant sources and building a relevant argument. It is key that you stay relevant to the topic.
<i>I couldn't find anything in the Library that seemed relevant to the topic.</i>	Relevance	You have only referred to one of the key sources in this topic area. There are at least three other main aspects to this topic that you should have referred to also – see the Subject Outline for a list of references to start with.
<i>I just started writing because I didn't really know what I thought on this topic, but then I discovered what I thought on the way through.</i>	Analytical and critical perspective	Your essay wandered all over the place until the end, so there were many conflicting points in it. If you had planned it beforehand and then drafted it a few times your essay would have been much stronger and easier to read.
<i>How can I have an opinion on something I'm just learning about - surely no-one is interested in what a first-year student thinks?</i>	Analytical and critical perspective	We are very much interested in what you think. Your work is about your 'informed opinion' based on your knowledge of academic arguments and different theories, and your evaluations of them. For example, how are they similar to or different from each other? How useful are the theories in explaining the actual case?
<i>I knew quite a lot about this topic so it saved me having to find all those references.</i>	Supporting evidence	You seem to have a good general knowledge about this topic, but in academic writing you need to substantiate your statements and claims with evidence from reputable authoritative sources. You need to back up your claims with peer reviewed sources of information/research.
<i>There's no way I could write things better than the experts do, so I just use their words most of the time.</i>	Supporting evidence	You need to write about them in your own words and also, you are learning about writing in a scholarly way, and so you need to acknowledge other people's ideas and wordings – if you do not do this appropriately, you may be committing plagiarism.
<i>I know my assignment is supposed to have a beginning, middle and end, but I don't know what to put in these sections.</i>	Structure	There are lots of good ideas in this assignment, but I can't see any logical structure to it. You need to plan the outline effectively first.
<i>I can't seem to get an academic style into my writing.</i>	Language style	This assignment required you to write in an academic style, whereas you have used quite a lot of slang and everyday language instead of the more technical language of the discipline.
<i>I'm a native speaker of English but I've never learned anything about grammar.</i>	Language accuracy	Accuracy in your writing is crucial. Try to understand the mistakes you are making with your poor punctuation and spelling. You must improve these aspects of your writing because they are fundamental to communicating effectively in business environments.
<i>I always run out of time at the end and so I don't have time to check over my work and present it neatly.</i>	Presentation	Time management is essential. Start early and have time at the end to correct the many errors which you could have easily found if you had taken the time to proofread it carefully.

### 3. THE SCHOLARLY ETHIC IN ACADEMIC WRITING

#### LEARNING FROM SCHOLARLY LITERATURE: Why is the literature so important?

In all fields of study and enquiry, learning is based on knowledge which has been accumulated over time, and which is available through having been published in diverse formats and forums. A substantial part of your university learning is based on wide reading from the published work of those experts and researchers who have advanced understanding in the discipline and fields of study. As you become more expert yourself, you may create new insights and understandings which can be published to contribute to the pool of knowledge. The recognition of this accumulative nature of knowledge is the most fundamental aspect of the scholarly ethic.

The concept of scholarship also entails a commitment to evidence-based enquiry. From the earliest beginnings of your university study, you will be asked to justify your thinking with well-reasoned and logical rationales, and drawing from sources of evidence that are authoritative and verifiable. Your development of mastery and expertise in your chosen discipline(s) will depend not only on your understanding of knowledge in that field but also on your skills and capabilities to use that knowledge to justify and defend decisions and actions, and potentially to add to the store of knowledge – in other words, to engage in scholarly evidence-based enquiry.

#### HAVING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: What does academic integrity mean?

The concept of academic integrity is fundamental to scholarly work and study of any type. It depends upon personal integrity and respect for other people's intellectual property. Good academic practice revolves around respecting and acknowledging the original authors of information and ideas whose work you draw from in writing your assignments. In this way, you are respecting their intellectual property, and also distinguishing between what are their ideas, and what are your own ideas. This is important to allow your lecturers and tutors who are marking your work to assess your own efforts. If you do not do this properly, you may be committing plagiarism (see the next part of this section of the guide).



Refer to the UTS policy on 'Advice to Students on Good Academic Practice':  
<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/academicpractice.html>

In the early undergraduate years, student research tends to be focused on learning from, and critically analysing, the published work of experts in the discipline(s) you are studying. But over time, and as you progress further in your studies, your research may entail undertaking some original independent work of your own which generates new research information and ideas. In the conduct of any research you undertake, you have a responsibility to be honest in the way you manage and report on your research, as well as continuing to acknowledge the work of others.



Refer to the UTS 'Student Charter':  
<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/studentcharter.html>

If your research involves humans, then it must be undertaken in accordance with guidelines established by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Depending upon the type of research, and particularly if you progress to studying at Doctoral level or Masters by research, you may need to obtain Ethics Approval.



See the UTS policies and guidelines about the ethical conduct of research:

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/hrecpolicy.html>

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/hrecguide.html>

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/researchethicpol.html>

## ACNOWLEDGING OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS: What is plagiarism?

If you do not acknowledge the original authors of information and ideas that you bring into your written assignments, you are committing an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a broad term referring to the practice of appropriating someone else's ideas or work and presenting them as your own without acknowledgment. Plagiarism is intellectual theft and, like cheating, is a form of academic misconduct, the penalties for which are very serious indeed.

Plagiarism can take a number of forms, including:

- copying the work of another student, whether that student is in the same class, from an earlier 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 as a quotation
- copying any map, diagram or table of figures without duly acknowledging the source
- paraphrasing or otherwise using the ideas of another author without duly acknowledging the source

In my previous studies, it was okay to just copy and paste from the internet. Everybody did it - it was the norm. I hadn't even thought about it as being theft.

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. **Any instances of plagiarism can therefore be expected to draw severe penalties and may be referred to the Faculty Student Conduct Committee.** The penalties for plagiarism may mean failure of the assignment, of the whole subject, or even exclusion from the University, thus preventing completion of the degree. The seriousness of these penalties reflects the University's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity and therefore the University's good reputation for the quality of its academic programs and its graduates.



Why is plagiarism treated so seriously?

The University and UTS Business School are committed to supporting students to learn about scholarly and professional integrity as part of their studies. To support students in understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, the University provides clear guidelines and resources for students to access independently. Additionally, in your coursework studies, there will be many opportunities to develop and refine your writing skills to demonstrate your academic integrity and scholarship.



Check your understanding of plagiarism

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/plagiarism/index.html>



**Take the avoiding plagiarism online tutorial:**

<http://web.uts.edu.au/teachlearn/avoidingplagiarism/>

Go to Section 7 to find out more about reading and taking notes.

Quite often, and especially in the first year of studying at university, students plagiarise by mistake rather than by intention. This is often simply because of not understanding what plagiarism is or why it is so inappropriate. Unintentional plagiarism can come about because a student might not know how to acknowledge other people's ideas in their writing. Other occasions of unintentional plagiarism might be the result of not having kept good accurate notes from the researching and reading stage of preparing an assignment.

Occasionally, students will deliberately cheat or plagiarise. Such dishonest behavior may be motivated by time-pressures, for example, students may have many demands on their time which make it difficult to complete an assignment by the submission deadline without plagiarizing. It is important to ensure you manage your studies well to avoid being seduced into dishonest practices.

The following information defines and explains the University's policies and procedures on plagiarism, including the investigation procedures and the penalties for academic misconduct:



'Assessment of Coursework Subjects' (UTS Policy):

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/assessment-coursework.html>



*How can I avoid plagiarising?*

The following practices have been shown to reduce the chances of accidentally plagiarising. Make sure that you are familiar with the style of acknowledgment that is recommended for use in the particular subject you are studying.

- Write the source on any notes or copies you make from any document or electronic sources such as the internet. Keep a detailed list of your sources throughout the course of your research.
- Sources that must be acknowledged include those containing the concepts, experiments or results from which you have extracted or developed your ideas, even if you put those ideas into your own words.
- Always use quotation marks when quoting directly from a work. It is not enough merely to acknowledge the source.
- Do not just change the odd word here and there, even where you acknowledge the source. Use a different form of words to show that you have thought about the material and understood it.

Go to Section 7 to find out about how to acknowledge sources.



These suggestions are outlined in the 'Advice to Students on Good Academic Practice' (UTS Policy):

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/academicpractice.html>

## BEING ORIGINAL: Do I have to be original in what I write?

Originality is a quality of scholarly thinking which your lecturers will be looking for in your written assignments all the way through your university studies. Even in the first year of a university level program, you will be expected to think for yourself, and to express your own views about a topic. As you progress through your academic career, there will be an increased expectation that you will show originality and creativity in the way you think and conceptualise a topic, and your assignment tasks will probably become gradually more open-ended to enable your originality of thought to emerge and flourish.





What does being original mean?

Being original in your thinking does not necessarily mean making new and important discoveries that could change the course of history (although there have been many important new ideas that have sprung from students in university courses). Showing originality in the way you think can instead be seen in the unique perspective you bring to a topic, in the way that you present the topic, and in the stance you take to arguing and justifying your point of view.

Even though you are expected to be original in the way you write, the assignment tasks can be quite different. Sometimes the task will be a relatively simple one that asks you to summarise a given article, or to explain a given concept. Such tasks still require you to present the ideas from your perspective and in your own words. These types of tasks can be thought of as 'knowledge-telling', or re-telling someone else's knowledge through your eyes and in your own words. The capacity to re-tell knowledge to make its meaning clear to someone else is a fundamental aspect of learning and of having your learning assessed in your subjects of study.

Other tasks can be much more demanding in terms of how original you are expected to be. For example, in writing an essay or analysing a case study, you have to draw together ideas from many sources. Often these ideas will conflict with each other, so your task is to present them in a way that supports your own point of view.

The more your own contribution takes over and drives your writing, the more you are engaging in transforming knowledge. More advanced researchers and scholars are not only engaged in transforming but also extending knowledge to disseminate to the whole community in a particular field of enquiry.

EXAMPLE WRITING TASKS		PURPOSE FOR ASSESSMENT
an explanation of a concept	<b>KNOWLEDGE-TELLING</b> <i>(Re-telling other people's knowledge in your own words)</i>	to demonstrate that you understand the concept and can explain it clearly
a summary of a journal article		to demonstrate that you understand the article and can explain it clearly
a report on a work placement		to explain and analyse what happened, and critically evaluate the relationship between the actual and the theoretical
a critical literature review	<b>KNOWLEDGE-TRANSFORMING</b> <i>(Creating your own knowledge by interpreting and re-shaping other people's knowledge)</i>	to demonstrate that you can find relevant literature, and that you can analyse the relationships between different ideas about that topic
a case study analysis		to demonstrate that you can identify key issues, relate theory and practice, identify implications, and propose a course of action
an essay	<b>KNOWLEDGE-EXTENDING</b> <i>(Extending on and disseminating new knowledge)</i>	to demonstrate that you can develop a clear and logical response that is your own interpretation but is supported by evidence from others
a research thesis		to demonstrate that you can make a significant contribution to knowledge as an expert in your field

## CRITICAL THINKING/ CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: In students' writing

Adopting a critical perspective is another very fundamental aspect of scholarly thinking which your lecturers will be looking for in your written assignments. Often the requirement to adopt a critical perspective in an assignment will be reflected in words like discuss or argue. This concept is very closely related to being original – indeed, often the critical perspective you adopt is the originality in your thinking.



What does being critical mean?

What does having a critical perspective or engaging in academic argumentation actually mean? Firstly, it is a positive activity of searching for meaning, in that the processes of debating, arguing, and critically evaluating are intended to open up greater understanding and insights. Secondly, the subject of critical enquiry is concepts and ideas, not the personal characteristics of the people associated with those ideas. Thirdly, the purpose of critical enquiry is to examine the validity or worth of something on the basis of evidence. To do this requires analysis to identify and understand the dimensions of something, and argument to make reasoned judgements about it which are well-supported from evidence which can be verified.

Not all writing assignment tasks require the same level of critical analysis. For example, if your task revolves around explaining a particular theory which might be complex but not especially controversial, then the main purpose of the task might be to show that you understand the theory. If, however, the assignment task revolves around a concept which is controversial and for which there are alternative and competing explanations, then the purpose might be to show that you understand the multiple perspectives and can make some critical judgements of your own about them.

In most coursework assignments that you will be asked to prepare, it is more appropriate to make direct statements about your point of view than to be very subtle. For example, statements of your point of view might be presented in the introduction to your assignment with phrases such as:

Go to Section 4 to find out about how to write an introduction.

'This essay, will outline that A is similar to B'

'As is demonstrated in the report, A is less significant than B in influencing C.'

## BEING AWARE OF DIVERSITY: How can my writing reflect respect for diversity?



What does diversity mean in academic life?

### Diversity in many aspects of scholarly life

Recognition of and respect for diversity is an important aspect of the scholarly ethic and your own learning will be enriched considerably by appreciating and acknowledging that diversity.

The community in which you are studying (both your fellow students as well as the staff) includes people from many different cultural backgrounds, whose diverse cultural perspectives can broaden and deepen the learning experiences that you share with them.

The disciplines and subjects of study in UTS Business School are also diverse in their assumptions and approaches and you may find that you need to develop special ways of thinking and writing according to each subject. Within any one field or topic of knowledge and scholarly enquiry, there are always diverse perspectives.

It was very enlightening to consider what a big effect people's backgrounds had on their perspectives. My assignments were a lot richer when I started to consider things from other points of view that were very different from my own.

For every theory, there are usually multiple alternative and competing theories; for every approach to solving a problem, there are usually multiple other approaches.

Your written assignment tasks will often be on topics that are controversial, and the task for you will be to sift through diverse and often contradictory perspectives. A scholarly ethic entails representing different points of view, whilst also presenting your own critical perspective in a reasoned way, substantiated by reference to scholarly literature.

The Business School takes seriously its responsibility to provide you with learning and assessment experiences that are culturally sensitive and that provide choices to help you prepare for your intended future contexts. You also have a responsibility to be aware of diversity in your approach to your learning and to your written assignments.

### Non-discriminatory language

The language choices that you make in your writing are as important as the ideas themselves in demonstrating your understanding and respect for diversity. Language is a major vehicle for the expression of prejudice or discrimination, and the use of discriminatory language is both a symptom of, and contributor to, the unequal status of diverse groups. The following are the main forms of discriminatory language which should be avoided:



How can language be discriminatory?

I hadn't realised just how often I had been referring to people's race or religion when it really wasn't relevant. I was glad that my lecturer pointed this out in the feedback on my essay.

- *Extra-visibility or emphasis on difference*

In many contexts it is quite unnecessary to mention a person's sex, race, ethnic background or disability. Yet for members of minority groups these characteristics are often mentioned. This type of gratuitous specification may result in overemphasis on a particular characteristic, thus creating the impression that the person referred to is somehow an oddity.

- *Stereotyping*

A stereotype is a generalised and relatively fixed image of a person or persons belonging to a particular group. This image is formed by isolating or exaggerating certain features – physical, intellectual, cultural, occupational, personal, and so on – which seem to characterise the group. Stereotypes are discriminatory in that they take away a person's individuality. Although they may reflect elements of truth, these are usually misinterpreted or inaccurate owing to oversimplification. The status of minority groups in society is often adversely influenced by prevailing stereotypes of them.

- *Derogatory labeling*

The discriminatory nature of derogatory labels used to describe members of minority groups is often obvious. However, derogatory labels are still commonly used, and must be avoided.

- *Imposed labeling*

A characteristic often shared by minority groups is their lack of power to define themselves. Often the names and labels by which they are known, whether derogatory or not, have been imposed on them. Imposed labelling may be inaccurate in various ways and may also be alienating for the groups it supposedly describes.

Gender-neutral language choices are preferable in your writing, and there is an expectation that students' assignments will not be written in discriminatory language. For example, instead of writing 'chairman' or 'spokesman', it is more appropriate to write 'chairperson' or 'spokesperson', since the gender of the person is not relevant. When using a pronoun to refer in general to people, there are many options available, but the preferred option is to use the plural form 'they', as shown in the examples below:

These are gender-biased and therefore **not** inclusive.

Everyone needs **his** own copy.  
Everyone needs **her** own copy.

Inclusive, and easier to read

Everyone needs **their** own copy.



Can my special circumstances be taken into account?

### Fairness and equity

As part of the University's commitment to equity and fairness, there are avenues available that take account of the diversity of students' backgrounds and circumstances of study. You may experience particular circumstances that make it difficult for you to complete a written assignment, for example, because of a disability, or your carer responsibilities, or some specific cultural or religious commitments. In such cases, it is possible that special adjustments can be made to the assessment requirements.



Refer to the UTS 'Procedures for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects':

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/documents/assessment-coursework-procedures.pdf>

### Students with disabilities or ongoing medical conditions

If you are a student who has a disability or ongoing medical condition that requires support services you are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Officers or Special Needs Service (9514-1177) for a confidential interview. Supporting documentation regarding your disability or ongoing medical condition is required if you wish to apply for assessment adjustments, including alternative assessment conditions. Each Faculty has appointed Academic Liaison Officers (ALOs) who are responsible for approving assessment adjustments. Meeting with the Disability Support Officers or Special Needs Service before seeking assessment adjustments from your ALO is required.



Refer to the UTS Special Needs Service:

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/sneeds/index.html>

You can find the names of the current ALOs for UTS Business School from the Special Needs Service website:

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/sneeds/services/assessment/alo.html>

## 4. THE STRUCTURES OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Sections 4 and 5 of the guide deal with the structures of written assignments, based on the PRODUCTS or OUTCOMES of writing. Here you will find descriptions and explanations of written assignments in terms of the characteristics that can be observed from examples of effective assignments. In Section 6, you will find explanations of the language and style of writing that characterise assignments, so again the focus is on the products or outcomes. This section of the Guide is complemented by Section 7 of the Guide which focuses on the PROCESSES of writing. You might prefer to begin by reading a process-oriented approach to writing, and then return later to this product-oriented section.



How is this assignment supposed to be structured?

Usually the written assignments in your coursework subjects will be described in terms of the type of assignment you are expected to produce. Assignment types that are common in UTS Business School include essays, reports, and case studies, although there is considerable diversity, especially as you progress through the years of study.

However, sometimes these labels are not always sufficient to clarify the structure and style of writing that is expected, or the labels may not be used consistently in different subjects. For example, one subject may ask for an essay, and another subject may ask for a research report, yet the two tasks may actually be very similar assignment types. Or sometimes a critical literature review may be called a research report at postgraduate level. For this reason, you need to see each assignment as distinctive and be aware of different contexts and purposes. In some subjects, there will be time in lectures or tutorials devoted to discussing the assignment requirements, or you may be given additional written information to clarify the task.

Go to Section 7 to read more about the process of analysing the task.

The purpose of the assignment will tell you a lot about how it might be structured. Some writing tasks, especially in the early part of an undergraduate course, are designed to ensure you understand some basic concepts in a new field. Their purpose might be for you to describe the concept, to define it, or to explain it. Perhaps you will be asked to summarise an article or chapter to demonstrate your understanding. More complex tasks could ask you to critically evaluate an article, or to compare two different articles about the same topic. Gradually, the written assignments you confront will become more complex and more intellectually demanding.

As the task becomes more complex, the process tends to shift from re-telling of existing knowledge, towards transforming that knowledge, and the scope of the task becomes more open-ended with you having a higher degree of autonomy in defining and scoping the problem to be solved. Even in the most complex of tasks requiring the highest level of transformation of knowledge, this process depends upon being able to clearly describe and define concepts, that is, re-telling what is known prior to reshaping this for your own purposes.

### STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS: What are the elements of written assignments?

There are many possible elements that can be included in the structure of written assignments, but each assignment task will have its own expectations about which elements need to be included. For example, a common structural

element for written assignments is an introduction, but not all assignments will require an abstract or synopsis. An important part of working out what is required for your written assignment is determining what the structural elements are. Equally importantly, you need to consider what the best sequence will be for these elements.

Often your assignment task or other information in your Subject Outline will explain particular requirements regarding the structural elements of your assignment, and in what order they should be presented. But on other occasions, a part of your problem-solving in preparing the assignment will be to determine for yourself what the structural parts and their sequence should be. Importantly, each written assignment task is different and may have different requirements for its structure, so you need to ensure you understand what is expected on each occasion.

The typical structural elements that are referred to below are presented in the order or sequence that they might normally appear in a written assignment, although no single assignment would have all these elements, so you need to analyse the task carefully to determine what elements are needed.

## A TITLE FOR YOUR WORK

At more advanced levels of study involving independent research, for example, in higher degree research studies, the written outcomes (final thesis dissertation, journal articles for publication, etc.) need to have a distinctive title created by the researcher.

By contrast, most coursework assignments do not require an original title to be prepared by the student since all students work on a common task. Instead, the assignment is usually labeled by the name of the subject and the particular assignment.

However, there may be occasions when you are required to prepare a title for your work. Here are some general principles to guide your choice:

- A title's purpose is to attract a potential reader, and to help make the work discoverable through electronic searching.
- An effective title should include the main key words which indicate the topic area(s) of the work. That is, the title needs to convey WHAT the work is about.
- As well as the main key topic words, an effective title can also include something about WHY or HOW the work was undertaken, and/or indicating what were the significant or distinctive findings from the work – or SO WHAT.
- It can be useful to separate the title into two segments – the WHAT segment, and the SO WHAT segment – with the two parts separated by a colon. This can convey a significant amount of detail to help the reader determine whether the work is likely to be interesting for them.
- For a title to endure, it may be advisable to avoid titles which depend upon local knowledge or highly topical events or issues.

Here is an example of a title which began as a simple WHAT title, and finished as a more focused, precise and informative SO WHAT one. The first title is a simple knowledge-telling title, suggesting the work will be like an encyclopedia entry (summarising everything there is to know about the topic). By contrast, the final title indicates that the work will provide an analytical and critical perspective.



### Example of an evolving title

*Focus on WHAT the work was about*

The COP Registration System

*Focus on WHY/HOW the work was done, that is, its purpose/method*

An Evaluation of the COP Registration System

*Focus on WHY/HOW the work was done, and WHAT sub-group the work investigated*

An Evaluation of the COP Registration System: The Perspective of Service Providers

*Focus on SO WHAT, that is, what the impact of the work has been*

An Evaluation of the COP Registration System: Service Providers Creating Partnerships to Improve Quality

## TITLE PAGE

Go to Section 8 to find out more about attaching a cover sheet.

A title page is not normally necessary for coursework assignments if you are required to attach an assignment cover sheet to the front of your submission. Check your Subject Outline for details about these requirements. The assignment cover sheet includes all the information that would normally be included in a title page, and also provides a declaration that you sign certifying that the work is your own and the assignment was prepared in accordance with the principles of academic integrity and scholarship.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Table of Contents is usually needed when an assignment is quite long and complex, as a guide to help the reader see the structure at a glance and find sections by their page number. It is commonly used for reports, and sometimes discussion or position papers, but not often for essays and literature reviews. As well as listing the sections and sub-sections of your assignment with their page numbers, the Table of Contents should also include tables, figures and other visual material, as well as Appendices. Normally, two levels of internal headings would be included, although very long reports may show three levels of headings. This Guide has a Table of Contents which shows three levels of headings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An acknowledgements section would normally only be included in an assignment or research report of substantial size, or in a thesis or article for publication. An acknowledgements section can simply constitute a list of names of those who have contributed in some way, or a brief summary of the nature of the contribution may also be included. It is usual to acknowledge:

- Individuals who have assisted substantially with the research or writing

- Organisations which have provided financial or other support (for example, a scholarship or grant)
- Your supervisor (for research higher degree students)
- Individuals who have provided peer review and/or editorial feedback

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inclusion of a brief summary ('Executive Summary') is standard reporting practice and is meant to act as a guide to the contents of the report and to highlight major conclusions and recommendations. The Executive Summary derives its name from the practice of providing the executives of an organisation, that is, those responsible for making decisions and taking appropriate action, with a concise outline of the major points in a report to save them time. The detail can be pursued in more depth later by a complete reading of the report. The structure of the Executive Summary should follow the structure of the report and include brief statements on the following:

- definition of the problem
- aims and objectives
- methods/data sources
- key findings
- conclusions
- any recommendations for action.

The Executive Summary should be brief and succinct, and may use point form to achieve this. As a rule-of-thumb, allow one page for every 5,000 words up to a maximum of five pages, and using headings in longer Executive Summaries. The inclusion of an Executive Summary is not a substitute for discussion/exposition in the full report.

### Example of an Executive Summary

<i>Problem context &amp; Purpose of report</i>	{	This report provides an analysis and evaluation of the current and prospective profitability, liquidity and financial stability of Outdoor Equipment Ltd. Methods of analysis include trend, horizontal and vertical analyses as well as ratios such as Debt, Current and Quick ratios. Other calculations include rates of return on Shareholders' Equity and Total Assets and earnings per share to name a few. All calculations can be found in the appendices.
<i>Method</i>		
<i>Results</i>	{	Results of data analysed show that all ratios are below industry averages. In particular, comparative performance is poor in the areas of profit margins, liquidity, credit control, and inventory management.
<i>Conclusions</i>	{	The report finds the prospects of the company in its current position are not positive. The major areas of weakness require further investigation and remedial action by management. Recommendations include:
<i>Recommendations</i>	{	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving the average collection period for accounts receivable</li> <li>• improving/increasing inventory turnover</li> <li>• reducing prepayments and perhaps increasing inventory levels</li> </ul>
<i>Limitations</i>	{	The report also investigates the fact that the analysis conducted has limitations. For example, as current information was not available, the results are based on past performance, and forecasting figures are not provided.
Adapted from Woodward-Kron, R. 1997, <i>Writing in Commerce: a guide to assist Commerce students with assignment writing</i> , (Revised edition), Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, The University of Newcastle.		

## SYNOPSIS/ ABSTRACT

An essay assignment sometimes requires a Synopsis or Abstract, in a similar way to the use of an Executive Summary for a report (see above). An abstract is often just a single paragraph. Your Subject Outline or other details you have been provided about the assignment task will clarify whether you need to include this.

Like an executive summary, a Synopsis or Abstract serves the purpose of helping the reader to see in advance what the main points of the essay will be. It is important to ensure the key critical perspective or point of view is included in the Synopsis or Abstract, which typically follows a structure made up of brief statements on each of the following:

- purpose of the essay
- structure of the essay
- main critical perspective / point of view / thesis
- conclusion

The Abstracts that typically preface articles published in academic journals usually provide a good model of the way that an Abstract should be written for an essay. The following example is the Abstract for a published journal article about an empirical research study with statistical findings, but its structure is basically similar to an Abstract that would be written for an essay.

### Example of an Abstract

Abstract	
Orientation to topic (importance of topic)	There has been a lot of research done to better understand the effects of taxation on cigarette consumption. Since cigarettes are addictive, it could be expected that taxation would have little or no effect on the number of cigarette smoked per day or the percentage of smokers within a given population. This paper aims to investigate these effects and, more specifically, to differentiate between adult smokers and underage smokers. It will be shown that the percentage of adult smokers does not change with taxation whereas the percentage of underage smokers decreases significantly when excise taxes on cigarettes increase. In addition, it will also be shown that the average number of cigarettes smoked per day decreases as well.
Focus (hypothesis)	
Purpose/goal	
Key findings	
Sylvain, S. 2008, 'The Effects of Excise Tax on Cigarette Consumption: A Divergence in the Behavior of Youth and Adults', <i>Michigan Journal of Business</i> , vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 87-109.	

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

If your written assignment contains many specialist terms or ones whose definitions are very particular to the assignment and therefore requiring special explanation, it may be appropriate to list all such terms in a glossary, which should sit on a separate page. This is unlikely to be required for most smaller-scale coursework assignments.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

If your written assignment contains many specialist abbreviations or acronyms, it may be appropriate to collect together a list of these to sit on a separate page, allowing the reader to cross-refer to the list to check the meaning. In the body of the assignment, you should always provide the full wording of any such specialist shortened terms on the first occasion that you use them, but then subsequent reference to that term can be by use of the shorter form.

## LIST OF TABLES/FIGURES

If your written assignment makes use of a lot of tables, figures and other visual material, it may be appropriate to collect together a list of these to sit on a separate page. Such a list should include the number and title of each item as well as their page number.

## INTRODUCTION

An introduction is an essential element of any complete written assignment, whether it is an essay, a report, an oral presentation, etc. The introduction serves as a map for the reader to the whole assignment, and would normally be no more than 10% – 15% of the total length of the assignment. In longer assignments, the introduction may comprise multiple paragraphs, whilst in a research thesis it would normally comprise an entire chapter.

An introduction to an essay will normally comprise at least one full paragraph or up to several paragraphs for longer essays. Essay introductions often achieve several purposes, as demonstrated in the example below, although not all these stages are necessarily present in every introduction. Most essay introductions also include a statement of the 'thesis' or point of view that the essay will argue. Often lecturers will prefer you to include such a statement to help them understand your essay better.

### Example introduction for an essay

*Orientation to topic  
to establish interest,  
and identify a problem  
to be solved.*

*Focus (or sub-topic)*

*Scope (or limitations)*

*Purpose*

*Outline of essay*

*Point of view argued*

*Definition of terms*

Every manager has probably experienced ..... at some time in their career, and has probably wondered why it has occurred. Smith (2002) has commented that in spite of the hundreds of studies that have been reported, managers are nowhere near having a complete understanding of ..... Indeed, a survey conducted by Jones (2004) concluded that 73% of business failures were caused at least indirectly by ..... This paper will focus upon one of the more recent of....., The paper will review the research conducted upon the use of behaviourally anchored rating scales during the period from 1999 to 2005 in small and medium sized enterprises. The review is motivated by the search for practical methods that managers can use.

The first section of this paper will deal with the general confusion surrounding transactional leadership by raising problems of the diversity of definitions, lack of proper research designs, the cultural embeddedness of the concept and an over-reliance on anecdotal evidence. The review of literature will show that... While a variety of definitions of the term ..... has been suggested, this paper will use the definition first suggested by Brown (2001), who saw it as .....

## Introduction to a report

It can be said that there are various stages that might be included in the introduction section of a report in Business:

- the background to the issue (i.e. why was the report commissioned),
- the objective or purpose of the report
- a definition of the research problem/topic
- a definition of the report's terms of reference (the what, where, and when of the research problem/ topic)
- an outline of the report's structure
- an overview of the report's sections and their relationship to the research problem
- an outline and justification of the scope of the report (the boundaries the report is working within)
- a description of the range of sources used (i.e. personal investigation, interviews, statistics and questionnaires)
- acknowledgment of any valuable assistance received in the preparation of the report

In the following example report by a student, only some of these stages are present, because the report is actually a case study analysis and does not therefore entail the collection of new data and so on.

## Example introduction for a case study report

Introduction	
Objective of report	This report provides information obtained through ratio analysis, regarding the profitability, liquidity and financial stability of Outdoor Equipment Ltd for the years 1993 – 1995.
Scope	This report will pay particular attention to the earning power, liquidity and credit management, inventory management and debt management, and will highlight major strengths and weaknesses while offering some explanation for observed changes.
Outline of report structure	The report will comment on the prospects of the company and make recommendations that would improve Outdoor Equipment Ltd.'s current performance. These observations do have limitations which will be noted. This report will explain how a cash flow statement and a prospectus could enhance analysis.
Forewarning of recommendations made	

Adapted from Woodward-Kron, R. 1996, *Writing in Commerce: a guide to assist Commerce students with assignment writing*, Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, The University of Newcastle.

## THE BODY OF AN ESSAY/REPORT

Go to Section 5 to find out more about essays.

The body of an essay/report constitutes the major part (perhaps 80%) of the whole assignment, and is made up of its own internal structure (series of paragraphs) which the essay writer must develop. This is usually the most challenging part of essay/report writing, since the structure and sequence of ideas in the essay constitutes the student's original way of looking at the topic and developing their particular point of view about it. It is useful to remember that each paragraph should ideally discuss/ analyse **one controlling idea**.

How to structure your paragraphs within your work.

Essentially body paragraphs for academic writing can be formed in the following way:

**Topic Sentence** = outlines the main idea of what the paragraph will discuss,

**Support sentences** = here the writer starts to outline opinions, and builds up the field of the argument/ discussion taking place within this paragraph.

**Support sentences** = here the writer outlines their opinions, analysis, discussions along with 'supporting information' such as relevant facts, quotes, useful statistics or data etc.

**Support sentences** = here the writer further outlines opinions, and building up the argument/ discussion taking place; as well as drawing/critiquing the literature on the topic.

**Support sentences** = Furthering the argument and line of discussion, embedding critical analysis, critical reflection, drawing upon the literature, critiquing ideas and expanding the discussion.

**Concluding sentence** = Here the writer summarises their thoughts, concludes their ideas, makes some poignant observations and also reinforces their line of argument that has taken place within this paragraph.

Some general guidelines here regarding the length of paragraphs: The length is up to the student, but essentials for most degree subjects it is good to not make them too short (under 6 sentences or so as a general guide) nor too long (over a page of A4), as a general guide (research students excepted).



See the following link from the HELPS Centre of paragraph writing in academic writing: <http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/paragraph.html>

Check the HELPS Centre Writing Resources

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/index.html>

Check UTS Library Study Skills Writing resource:

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/writing-reading-speaking>

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Go to Section 5 to find out more about literature reviews

Some assignments require a separate element for the review of literature. This is quite common in research reports or position papers. Essays, by contrast, do not have a separate element for the review of literature, because the evidence from literature is woven throughout the structure of the whole essay.



## METHODS (METHODOLOGY)

A Methods or Methodology section typically occurs in formal reports of some original research conducted by the author of the report. For example, a marketing assignment that involves collecting some information about people's perceptions would probably have a standard report structure which would include a Methods section. However, other types of reports may also include a Methods section, for example, where data sources and analytical methods could be outlined. In other assignment types, it is not usual to include a Methods section. Essays never have a methods section. The Methods section provides an account of the procedures used in the research in sufficient detail to allow another investigator to repeat the study to verify results. Included in this section could be a description of:

- the research subjects and how they were chosen
- any equipment or instructions used
- exactly how the study was carried out
- descriptions of surveys or interview formats (with a copy provided in the Appendices of each instrument)

The Methods section may also:

- indicate the theories and principles underlying the approaches adopted
- indicate any assumptions or limitations of the methods
- highlight any ethical issues or dimensions raised by the methods and how these were dealt with

## RESULTS

A separate Results section is normally only included in a report on empirical research conducted by the author. Results should be summarised using tables or graphs or other visual representations wherever possible, and all such material must be clearly labeled. Other library-based research reports, or case-based investigations would not normally be expected to have a separate section for Results.

## DISCUSSION (FINDINGS)

Those reports which have a Results section would normally have a subsequent section for the Discussion of those results. Otherwise, this section might normally be termed Findings or Key Findings. Sometimes the Discussion or Findings section of a report may also include the conclusion, or otherwise the conclusion can be a separate section (see below).

In presenting and discussing the Findings, some of the following prompts may help to consider what to include:

- What were the most significant findings and how are they explained?
- Were there any unanticipated outcomes and how can these be explained?
- How do the findings compare with those of other researchers?
- Was the method appropriate for the research?
- How could the study design have been improved?
- What deductions or conclusions can be drawn from the findings?
- What implications do the findings have for theory or practice?

## CONCLUSION

Just as any complete piece of writing needs an introduction, so too does it need a conclusion. What is common to all conclusions is that no new information should be introduced. Instead, everything in the conclusion must be related in some way to what has already been included in the whole assignment. This could be in the form of a consolidation of key points made, specific answers to questions asked at the beginning, particular implications of matters raised in the assignment, and so on. Thus the conclusion draws together and consolidates all the threads in the assignment to bring them to a point of closure about what has been learned.

### Example of a conclusion to a research article

	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
<i>Summary of topic, purpose and focus of the study</i>	<p>This study reports insights into the culture of management in the technical arm of a major Australian financial institution. The focus has been the ways in which leaders in corporate settings are identified and developed. As is evident from the results, the processes whereby managers secure career advancement appear to have little or nothing to do with HRM approaches to leadership identification and management, and a great deal to do with networks, patronage and group loyalty. In particular, the practices of ‘tapping on the shoulder’ and of sponsoring have been elucidated as being extremely important within corporate culture concerning the emergence of leaders, even though for the most part these processes are tacit in nature and are not part of the espoused HRM strategy.</p> <p>The study draws on one set of data only. Though these data are rich, in terms of the number of managers interviewed and the quality of the data elicited, the themes identified from the results will now need to be further explored in other settings. One methodological conclusion from the data is, however, inescapable: it is not until managers are encouraged to talk about the various dimensions of their work culture that there is an in-depth understanding of what is really going on in terms of the structures and processes that support the emergence of corporate leaders.</p> <p>Richards, P. 2008, ‘Organisational Leadership: A Case Study of Identification and Advancement of Managers in an Australian Corporation’, <i>Research and Practice in Human Resource Management</i>, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 122-130.</p>
<i>Summary of key findings</i>	
<i>Limitations of the study</i>	
<i>Implications for practice</i>	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future actions may be required in certain types of written assignments, and particularly in reports. These can be included as a separate section before or after the conclusion, or they sometimes appear as a part of the conclusion section, with a sub-heading saying 'recommendations'. Recommendations should state what actions should be implemented based on the findings of the report. They must be logically justified by specific findings and therefore cannot just appear without the premise having been established by the report's findings. Recommendations are usually framed from the perspective of what needs to be done, who needs to do it, and by when; that is, these are actions for people to do, rather than reflective thinking by the author.

## REFERENCE LIST

Go to Section 7 to find out more about setting out your references.



The Reference List provides the full bibliographical details of every source referred to in the written assignment. **Reference lists are arranged alphabetically by the author's surname**, making it easier for the reader to locate them in the list. Also all items (whether journal articles, web sites, online reports etc.) are listed together and **not** separated by format. The reference list is not a bibliography (see below).

See the UTS Library resources on reference lists here:

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/node/5344>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Bibliography is like a Reference List except that it also includes source material that the author read and found to be helpful, but did not actually cite in the written assignment. The purpose of using a Bibliography is to help the reader locate other relevant material on this topic. It is not usual to use a Bibliography in written assignments, however, as there is an assumption that students will consult many sources to help them understand a topic, but will make sure they cite in their assignment those sources which were of central relevance. This ensures therefore their inclusion in the Reference List.

## APPENDICES

The Appendices are where other information which has been referred to in the main part of your report is attached. The advantage of using Appendices is that the report itself does not become cluttered with a large amount of detailed information, but can concentrate on the key messages and brief summaries of the full information. The inclusion of the detailed information is important to justify and substantiate these key message. Cross-references need to be made from the report to the Appendices to guide the reader to the detailed information which can include a wide array of material, for example:

Go to Section 7 to find out more about formatting visual information.

- Questionnaires /Answers to questionnaires
- Interview transcripts
- Consent forms
- Maps / Articles/clippings
- Data Charts/Tables / Diagrams
- Pamphlets
- Specifications

## PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE: How do I make the structure clear?



What is a paragraph?

Go to Section 7 to find out more about planning your assignment.

All written assignments are composed of paragraphs. They are the basic unit of longer pieces of writing, and they serve to break up the text into easily observed clusters or 'chunks' of related meanings. If a long text is just one long text with no paragraphs, it is very difficult to read. **They key feature of a paragraph is that it is a collection of sentences that develop a main controlling idea.** The length of a paragraph is not defined, although usually in an academic piece of writing, it will comprise at least several sentences. In essence:

Rather than defining a paragraph by its length, it is the logical clustering of the whole written assignment into paragraphs or 'chunks' of meaning which makes them effective. From the perspective of the reader, a page which has several paragraphs is likely to be easier to read than a page that has either no separate paragraphs, or too many. From the perspective of the writer, paragraphs are essentially formed by:

- **Topic sentence** (outlining the main idea of that paragraph)
- **Support sentences**
- **Support sentences**
- **Support sentences**
- **Support Sentences**
- **Concluding sentence** (summarising thoughts & main argument)

However, just having paragraphs representing logical chunks of meaning is not enough in itself. There are two key aspects of paragraph structuring that are equally important in making the meaning clear and obvious for the reader: the paragraph's own structure, and the transitions across paragraphs.

Paragraphs usually have their own internal structure of a beginning, middle, and end, and the first sentence of a paragraph is often a 'topic sentence' which tells the reader what the paragraph is going to be about. The clearer this structure is, the easier it is for the reader to understand what the paragraph is all about. The connections from one paragraph to the next are also critical to revealing the way that the argument is being developed. Effective writing uses many ways of signaling these connections or transitions.

### An example of paragraph writing:

Topic sentence outlining the paragraph

Despite the impressive gains of the era, there were problems and tensions. The rise of new economic and military powers caused much consternation.

Support sentences building the argument

European, American, and Japanese colonial expansion threatened the sovereignty and sense of national identity of many in the developing world.

Drawing on literature to support

Ethnic conflict also wracked the Balkans and the Middle East (Lawton 2010).

What one might now call anti-globalisation sentiment was growing, with movements against free trade (Clark 2011, Yu 2012) and importation of foreign goods.

In addition, and perhaps most worrying to residents of the industrialised world, cheap products were flooding into the richer developed countries from rapidly growing nations elsewhere, threatening the livelihood and employability of millions of people.

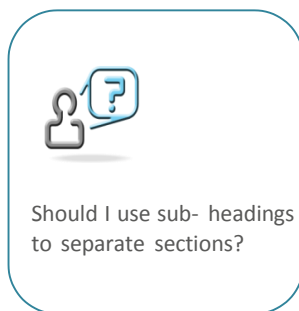
Concluding sentence of the paragraph (reinforcing the writer's argument)

In summary, it can therefore be stated there were severe tensions arising during this period which were beginning to destabilise both the economic and political landscape in the industrialised world.

Excerpt adapted from Frieden, J. 2006, 'Will Global Capitalism Fall Again', *EconPapers: Bruegel Essay & Lecture Series* available at <<http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:bre:esslec:22>>



**Model Example Academic Essay:** Take a look at the sample essay hosted on the UTS Library website. It gives you a fully annotated academic essay to see how the writer has crafted a piece of academic work:  
[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/essay%20original%20with%20notes\\_0.pdf](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/essay%20original%20with%20notes_0.pdf)



### Headings and numbering systems

Generally speaking essays will not require you to use headings or numbered sections (unless specifically asked for by your lecturers/tutors). Sometimes very long essays do benefit from having occasional headings just to break up the text and emphasise a change of topic perhaps.

However, many other assignment types (report writing and case study writing in particular) will generally require you to have separate numbered headings and sub headings within the document.

The use of sub-headings is particularly useful in longer, more complex written assignments, as they help the reader by giving visual 'road signs' that mark the different sections of the whole piece. For example, a report's structure might be illuminated by the sub-headings of the abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion and conclusion. The numbers make the report more visually appealing, easier to read, easier to skim and scan sections for areas of particular interest.

When sub-headings are used, they can be presented:

- as structural labels, which simply identify each element according to its role in the structure (for example, abstract, introduction, method, etc.)
- as meaning labels, which provide an idea of the meaning (what it's about) contained within each section, OR
- a combination of both structural and meaning labels.

Headings are normally single words or short phrases (noun phrases), rather than questions or sentences. For example:

**3.1 Implementation Of Marketing Plan: ✓**

**3.1This is the implementation of the Marketing Plan: ✗**

Numbering systems can also be used in combination with headings to enhance this visual map or picture of the structure of your assignment, and formatting features such as indented text for each sub-headed level can further clarify the relationships. When using sub-headings, it is important to ensure you choose wordings that are parallel in their logical meaning and grammatical structure, as highlighted in the examples on the next page.

### Example 1 Poor headings:

*This is a full phrase, whereas other headings at this level are only single words*

*There is no need for a sub-heading if there is only one item in the group*

*'Workplace issues' is not a cost and does not make sense as a sub-group of 'computing'*

- 1. PRELIMINARY COSTS
  - 1.1. Staff
    - 1.1.1. Substantial costs of recruiting staff
      - 1.1.1.1. Management and clerical positions
  - 1.2. Training
    - 1.2.1. Salaries
  - 1.3. Computing
    - 1.3.1. Workplace issues
- 2. SECONDARY COSTS
  - 2.1. Advertising
    - 2.1.1. Etc. etc.

### Example 2 with improved heading design

*Use 'white space' effectively - do not cramp everything together*

- 3. PRELIMINARY COSTS
  - 3.1. Staff
    - 3.1.1. Recruitment
      - 3.1.1.1. Management positions
      - 3.1.1.2. Clerical positions
    - 3.1.2. Training
    - 3.1.3. Salaries
  - 3.2. Equipment
    - 3.2.1. Computing
    - 3.2.2. Other
- 4. SECONDARY COSTS
  - 4.1. Advertising
    - 4.1.1. Relocation expenses



## 5. THE BASIC TYPES OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

### ASSEMBLING THE ELEMENTS: The most common type of assignments.

There are many possible types of written assignments that are set to assess learning in subjects within Business. In this section, you will find a summary of the main characteristics of the basic types of assignments in UTS Business School. Many assignment tasks may comprise a mixture of these basic types, hybrids that have characteristics from multiple types. Always the most important information that you need to refer to is your Subject Outline. If you are not sure about an assignment, always ask for help.

Look at the Assignment Types Guide: UTS library



<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/Academic%20Writing%20Guide%20Part%202%20-%20Assignment%20Types.pdf>

### Workflow of assignment writing

1. Look at the assignment question early on and try to **unpack** what the question is asking. If unsure how to proceed with answering the question, ask for help/clarification.
2. Take time to **analyse the question** fully. Circle key words; identify how many sections are there in the question fully understand what it is asking you to do.
3. Do **wide background reading and research**. Consult your notes, read other texts, journals and academic peer reviewed sources. Keep a note of all the useful sources you are engaging with, you may need to reference them later!
4. **Understand the structure of the assignment you have to write** e.g. (Essay structure, Literature review structure, Case study response) –you can easily discover this online or through an ‘academic writing textbook’ see the UTS library catalogue or the recommended texts at the end of this guide.
5. **Plan** (in bullet points) or short phrases **the entire outline** of your assignment. This will save you time and make your writing more effective and your arguments stronger. It is easier to see if you are answering the question if you do this also.
6. **Write your first draft**. Write a complete draft of your work. At this stage it will be somewhat rough, but you will be able to see if you are progressing on the right track. Double check the marking criteria as well as go back to the question again. Is this draft in alignment with those two documents?
7. Go through a **process of editing and re-drafting your assignment**. Make sure you are fully answering the question set and within the assignment guidelines stipulated by your lecturer in each draft.
8. Both native and non-native speakers benefit from some **peer reviewed feedback** on their assignment writing. Choose someone with good English writing abilities to give you some positive criticism about your work before you **submit** it.

## AN ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

An essay is a very common assignment type in disciplines taught within business studies. The writing of essays is very strongly associated with academic contexts of learning and assessment, although essays are also a familiar genre in literature and literary fields of endeavour. Essays are generally relatively short pieces (often 1,000 to 3,000 words although sometimes longer), and are generally written on a topic on which the essay-writer expresses their own **argument or point of view**.

The essay is a completely self-contained piece of writing which develops its argument through to a logical conclusion. Essays do not normally use headings and sub-headings to reveal their structure, although sometimes, especially in longer essay, a heading system can be used. This means that the reader needs to read the essay all the way through to understand the flow of the argument, rather than just dipping in to read particular sections in the way one might read a report. Sometimes, however, a synopsis or abstract is required to provide a map for the reader of what to expect in the essay.

Go to Section 4 to read more about the structural parts of an essay.

The main purpose in writing an essay is to convince the reader that your position or point of view is valid, well-justified, and well-substantiated by relevant research. The process of arguing the case to arrive at the conclusion is as important as the conclusion itself. The evidence from scholarly literature which is used to substantiate the argument is woven through the essay rather than being collected in a separate literature review section.

Go to Section 7 to find out more about the process of writing an essay

Writing essays tends to be seen by many students as being the most persistently difficult type of writing in that the structure of an essay is not pre-ordained, in the way that structure and sequence are more predictable for reports, case studies, etc.

Some helpful resources are listed here to help you with essay writing:



The UTS HELPS CENTRE essay writing guide

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/essay.html>

UTS HELPS center paragraph writing

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/paragraph.html>

UTS library assignment guide

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/Academic%20Writing%20Guide%20Part%202%20-%20Assignment%20Types.pdf>

UTS sample essay. Read an example academic essay here:

[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/essay%20original%20with%20notes\\_0.pdf](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/essay%20original%20with%20notes_0.pdf)

UTS Library Academic Writing Guide / Style & Grammar

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/Academic%20Writing%20Guide%20Part%201%20-%20Academic%20Writing.pdf>

## A REPORT ASSIGNMENT

Reports can serve many different purposes, but their basic purpose is to provide an account of something, for example, of an event or a situation. In business settings, reports provide advice and information designed to aid decision-making. There are many different types of reports including financial reports, annual reports, feasibility reports, incident reports, impact reports, project reports, research reports, and so on.

The common purpose of all reports is to present information. However, the type of reports that you are required to write at the UTS Business School will almost always require more than information. You will also need to analyse the information, and evaluate it using a critical perspective. You may also need to identify problems and offer solutions, possibly in the form of recommendations for action, and you might also be expected to speculate about future trends and impacts.

Go to Section 7 to find out more about the process of preparing a report.

Business reports are typically written for a non-academic readership, for example, in professional settings for 'insiders' such as a company director/board or a committee, or for 'outsiders' such as a client or the general public. Some assignment tasks specify the intended reader(s), and this is an important clue to you in determining the style of report required and the most appropriate structure and language to use.

However, it is important to keep in mind that your work will also be read by your marker, and a very important purpose for writing the report is so that an assessment can be made of your learning in the subject. Sometimes, your academic assessor will be more interested in the academic research side of your report than your imagined readers would be in an authentic business setting.

Reports of all types are typically structured using headings and sub-headings that make it easy for the reader to understand the structure, and to selectively read sections of the whole report rather than having to read the whole thing to make sense of it. In this way, a report is very different from an essay because the reader can just dip in to read its sections.

Go to Section 4 to read more about the structural parts of a report.

Report-writing assignment tasks will normally specify the elements making up the required report structure, although some elements are almost always present in all reports, in particular an Executive Summary, Introduction, Discussion of key findings, and Conclusion. However, the other elements in a report may vary according to its purpose. For example, a report on an empirical research study you have undertaken may have its main body framed in terms of its method, results, discussion.

By contrast, a library-based research report may be framed in terms of a discussion of the key findings from the literature and the implications for practitioners. It is therefore important to check the requirements of your assignment task carefully. You will find explanations about the common types of elements typically found in reports in Section 4 of the Guide.



The HELPS Centre provides a step-by-step guide to the process of 'Writing reports' <http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/report.html>

UTS Library Assignment Guide  
<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/Academic%20Writing%20Guide%20Part%202%20-%20Assignment%20Types.pdf>

UTS HELPS CENTRE, report writing worksheet  
<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/report.pdf>

## A CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

A case study is a written factual account of a particular situation explaining the development or history of that situation. Case study assignments are often used in business education to give students a feel for both the complexities of the real world and how the theories, models and research being studied can be used in practice. Generally speaking, case study assignment tasks require you to do one of the following:

- To analyse a given case study which is given to you for the assignment task
- To research a particular problem or issue, using case studies that you find from the published literature as examples to illustrate and analyse the problem
- To collect information for yourself inside a particular organization in order to prepare a case study

Go to Section 7 to find out more about analysing case studies.

In some types of case study assignments, you might be given a particular question to answer, for example, 'Is there a different work ethic amongst employees in Australian and Asian companies in the eco-tourism industry?' Your task would be to locate relevant cases that will shed light on the question. In more advanced study and research programs, you may become the researcher observing and recording the situation in an authentic business setting to develop up a new case study.

Whether the case study is given to you, or you have to develop the information for yourself, the type of analysis conducted in a case study assignment follows much the same course. **The approach is to diagnose what the problems or issues in the case are, and why they have occurred; to consider a variety of possible solutions; and finally to justify what you believe to be the best solution.**

Effective case study written assignments demonstrate clear and logical analysis of the particular case supported by relevant research to explain the analysis and proposed solutions. The analysis of the case requires careful and critical reading of all the details of the case. The research may include relevant theoretical perspectives, published data, and information from industry.

The written assignment for a case study analysis is essentially a type of report. You will probably be given a required way of structuring the assignment. If not, a common structure for presenting a case study assignment is:

Go to Section 4 to read more about the structural parts of assignments.

- Introduction
- Outline of problems/issues in the case, their causes, and factors affecting the situation
- Relevant theories, concepts, models to help explain the case
- Implications of the problems/issues
- Possible alternatives to address the problems/issues
- Conclusions
- Recommended solutions and reasons for these
- Reference list
- Appendices

You may also be required to include an Executive Summary, Table of Contents, and possibly other elements.

See this link for more help:

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/case.html>

## A LITERATURE REVIEW ASSIGNMENT

The process of reviewing the literature published in a particular field of enquiry is a fundamental part of any scholarly academic work, from the first stages of starting an undergraduate course through to the continuing work of expert researchers and scholars at the leading edge of their field.

In the early stages of an undergraduate course, you might be asked to locate one or two articles and critically review them. As your studies become more advanced, you might be expected to critically review many different sources on a topic and identify where their gaps and weaknesses are in order to justify that some research you are doing is worthwhile. It is important to understand clearly what the mix of objectives is for undertaking a literature review, but essentially there are two broad aspects:

- Reviewing published literature in order to discover (LEARNING)
- Writing a review of published literature in order to demonstrate and justify your point of view (DEMONSTRATING YOUR UNDERSTANDING)

As you become more expert and a more autonomous researcher, your purposes in reviewing the literature tend to move from telling, to transforming, and eventually to extending knowledge.

LEARNING		DEMONSTRATING YOUR UNDERSTANDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to learn about knowledge in a particular field</li> </ul>	Telling ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to demonstrate that you understand what is known in a particular field</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to learn who are the leaders in generating knowledge</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to acknowledge the work and achievements of others</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to discover how knowledge in a particular field has been developed and accumulated</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to explain how knowledge has been developed and accumulated over time</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to understand the differences in people's explanations and interpretations</li> </ul>	Transforming ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to explain how different pieces of research are related</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to discover how others have made their discoveries</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to replicate the approaches other people have used in your own research</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to identify what is still unknown</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to explain that there are gaps or weaknesses in current knowledge</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to confirm that your own research is worthwhile to do</li> </ul>	Extending ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to explain how your research is justified as needing to be done</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to identify which researchers to contact for exchanging views</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to present a deeper analysis and interpretation of your own research</i></li> </ul>

Literature reviews can constitute a whole written assignment in their own right, or they might be a part of a bigger assignment. Sometimes an assignment in the early years of undergraduate study might simply ask you to locate some relevant references on a particular topic and summarise their key messages, to help you learn more about that topic area. This type of assignment is sometimes referred to as an Annotated Bibliography, and it might be structured as a list made up of each reference, with notes or 'annotations' summarising its key messages. Annotated Bibliographies can be sequenced alphabetically by the names of the authors of each reference included, or they can be organised

into some sub-headings of relevant topic areas. Undertaking the development of a bibliography with annotations is a normal and fundamental part of the researching process, even at the most advanced level of study and research. The annotations that are written about each reference include both basic summary information as well as critical commentary.

A review of the literature is more than an Annotated Bibliography in that it focuses much more on the inter-relationships amongst the individual references. Its structure and sequence is not based on the individual references, but rather on the critical interpretation that the reviewer is making about these relationships. For this reason, a literature review assignment is often referred to as a Critical Literature Review. Usually such reviews in undergraduate subjects are intended to encompass what is known about a particular topic. However, in research programs, there is an additional intention for a critical literature review – namely, to justify that the researcher's own research will make a worthwhile contribution to what is already known by extending on it.

For written assignments requiring a review of literature, it is important to understand what the purpose of the review is, as this will help you determine how to structure it.

TASK		PURPOSE
Bibliography	<i>Organised as a list according to the individual references</i>	a collection of relevant sources
Annotated Bibliography		a summary of relevant sources
Critical Review of a few sources	<i>Organised as an argument according to your critical analysis</i>	a critical analysis of several sources showing inter-relationships amongst them
Critical Literature Review on a topic		a critical analysis of relevant sources showing inter-relationships amongst them, and intended to encompass the existing knowledge in this field
Critical Literature Review as part of a Proposal for your Research	<i>Organised as an argument according to how you will extend knowledge</i>	a critical analysis of relevant sources showing inter-relationships amongst them, and intended to extend the knowledge in this field

If a critical review of literature is required, it is very important that the structure of the review should not be as if it is just an annotated bibliography. The examples below show excerpts from two students' writing for a critical literature review assignment. The first example is structured according to each individual reference being reviewed. This example represents the important first stages of reading and understanding the different sources being reviewed. However, this is not a **critical** literature review, but more like a series of individual summaries (a kind of annotated bibliography).

### Example 1 (structured like an Annotated Bibliography)

The seven recent articles that were reviewed for this assignment are discussed in turn below.

(1) Smith (2003) reported on a survey of 287 senior managers in Victoria. Her study covered five major areas which were ... Smith's results are summarised below ... Smith (2003) concluded ... While I agree with points A and B, I do not believe that they have presented sufficient evidence that X and Y should be related in the way that Smith suggests.

(2) In a more detailed study, Jones (2004) carried out in-depth interviews with all middle to senior managers of an American insurance company. Jones (2004) was attempting to clarify the relationship between X and Y. Based on prior research, Jones hypothesised that ... and later concluded that ... Although Jones's (2004) study covers only one organisation, I would suggest that their explanation of the relationship of X and Y is more convincing than that offered by Smith (2003) or by Bloggs (2002). This is because ... Bloggs (2002) ...

The second example is structured according to the argument that this student has developed after having critically analysed all the readings.

### Example 2 (structured like a Critical Literature Review)

*Introduction to the piece*

*Topic one outlined*

*Writer compares and contrasts the literature on the topic*

*Writer analyses what this may mean*

*Introduces next topic for discussion*

*Comparing & contrasting ideas*

*Writer draws own conclusions*

The seven articles that were reviewed focused mainly on the following five major areas ... Each of these areas will be discussed below, with a sixth section briefly commenting on some minor points which arose in only one or two of the articles.

(1) Relationship between X and Y

The relationship between X and Y was the major concern of the in-depth case study of an American insurance company by Jones (2004), and it was one of the five major areas covered in the survey of 287 Victorian senior managers conducted by Smith (2003). Bloggs (2002) also discussed this issue at a general level and the theory outlined by Young (2003) is also of some relevance. In essence, there appear to be two basic positions on this issue. Smith (2003), Bloggs (2002) and Young (2003) can all be seen as maintaining ... Jones (2004), on the other hand discusses that ... Overall, Jones's (2004) position appears more convincing. This is because ... Therefore, it can be stated that the relationships between X and Y have fundamental tensions between them that could possibly have an effect on the way Senior Management review and implement policy changes within an organisation

(2) The importance of A

All articles reviewed emphasised the importance of A except Jones (2004), who did not address this issue at any great length in the literature, this could have been due to lack of research evidence at that time. However Bandoff (2011) and Jones (2013) both agree that the importance of ..... Similarly, Peuleve (as cited in Brack 2012, p4) states that the drive to improve this implementation within organisations is of critical importance. To summarise the arguments presented here it can be said that there are fundamentally two distinct school of thought....

See <http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/literature.html> for more help on writing literature reviews at UTS.



## 6. THE STYLE OF WRITING IN ASSIGNMENTS



How can I adjust the style of my writing?

The style of writing for your assignments is determined by the purpose of the assignment and its intended audience. Academic writing often has a fairly high level of technicality and formality, although every writing task will have certain expectations regarding just how technical and formal the writing should be. If the task is to provide a detailed explanation of a complex topic for an expert reader (for example in an essay or academic research report), then the level of technicality and formality of language would probably be high.

However, If the task is to maintain a personal reflective journal, then the style is less formal, less technical, and much more personal.

### ACADEMIC OR NON-ACADEMIC STYLE: How is the language different?

It can be helpful to think of writing style as being the result of choices made in the language from a spectrum of options along a continuum. The more to the left of the continuum, the more academic the writing is; the more to the right of the continuum, the less academic it is.

#### ACADEMIC STYLE

← Very impersonal

← Very formal

← Very technical

#### NON-ACADEMIC STYLE

Very personal →

Very informal →

Very non-technical →

The following example shows an excerpt from a student's essay which is written in an inappropriate style with non-academic language that is too personal, too informal, and not technical.

#### Example 1: a non-academic style/ too casual

*Focus on people and rather casual tone*

*Use of personal pronouns 'I' and 'you'*

*Use of informal words*

*Use of contractions ( you'll, can't etc.)*

*Complex clause structure with many small clauses (many verbs) making it more like speaking than writing*

*Note the inconsistency of spelling here. Sometimes with 's', sometimes with 'z'.*

Most people seem to think the immunization section of the record was okay, but you often hear people complain about how they use the vaccination record. As I said before, the Personal Health Record is currently being looked at by many health professionals as an immunisation record. Some time in the future, the law's going to change so that you'll have to show proof that the immunisation has been done, and then this has gotta be presented before you enjol your child in school which is what they are proposing, and then this immunization section of the record may shoot up in importance.

The second example shows the same ideas redrafted in a more appropriate academic style for an essay.

#### Example 2: same piece redrafted for an academic style

Features of an academic style of language

*Focus on the record itself which was the topic of the essay*

*People not mentioned directly but assumed as agents of these attitudes*

*Use of more formal words*

*More simple clause structure with ideas more densely packed into just 2 clauses*

*Drawing on literature to support the arguments*

The immunisation section of the record was generally well received and utilised, although the location of the vaccination record was a common complaint. As previously mentioned, the Personal Health Record is currently being regarded by many health professionals as an immunisation record. In the future, when legislation is ‘enacted’ that will require proof of immunisation status (or of conscientious objection) to be presented prior to school enrolment (Smithson & Greg 2013, Xiao & Robson 2013). Therefore, this section of the record may increase in importance, as well as increase in utilisation within .....

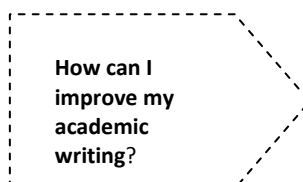
Sometimes particular lecturers might express their preferences about the style of language they would like you to use. For example, some lecturers might ask you to write in a more personal and subjective style about your ideas, whereas others may ask you to write in a more objective way.

Always check your Subject Outline carefully for any particular requirements regarding the style of language to use.



Take a look at the HELPS Centre advice on academic writing.  
<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/index.html>

**Useful text** (both for native/non native speakers): Academic Writing – A handbook for International Students –By Stephen Bailey, Routledge Press. Available for loan in the UTS library.



Remember that academic writing is meant as a professional, formal and clear way to articulate an argument, theory or thought process(es) in academia. If you are not sure of your academic writing abilities or that writing in this style is new to you –ensure your writing is:  
**well-structured / clear / meaningful/ polite & not casual / and seek help** on how to develop a more academic style (see the resources within this guide) to help you develop your skills.

## GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY: How can I make sure my grammar is correct?

Go to Section 7 to find out more about editing your own work.



Accurate grammar and sentence structure is essential in all written assignments you undertake, just as it is in professional business workplaces. If you are having problems with grammatical accuracy in your writing, it is important to find out what the problems are and to learn how to correct them for yourself.

To practise particular grammatical features, for example, verb tenses, and the use of the article ('a' and 'the') in English, try the 'Grammar' section of UTS Helps Centre which has some common grammar errors to help you identify an errors in your work

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/grammar/index.html>



The UTS library has subscribed to Grammarly (an online editing software tool). Grammarly can grammar check and help you edit your work. It is currently free of charge through the UTS library databases. You will need to sign in with your UTS student I.D to activate this software. See for details:

[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search\\_databases.py?search=grammarly](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search_databases.py?search=grammarly)

Go to Section 9 to find out more about support services at UTS

see <http://www.grammarly.com/> for more information



### Tips to ensure that your grammar is in good order for your assignment.

- Understand that poor grammar can cost your marks in an assignment.
- Get peer review feedback on your assignment work before you hand it in.
- Get a native speaker to read through your work before you hand it in –ask them to show you where you made mistake **NOT** correct the work for you.
- Use a software tool like Grammarly to show where you have made mistakes in your writing and grammar.
- Self teach yourself if you have particular grammatical errors –there are many resources in the UTS library to help you, or talk to the HELPS staff.
- Raymond Murphy's 'English grammar In Use' series is an excellent text resource to help you build better grammar (available for loan in the UTS library).

## 7. THE PROCESSES OF WRITING

This section of the guide explains the processes of writing, based on the STAGES or PROCEDURES in writing. Here you will find descriptions and explanations of the writing processes in terms of the characteristics that can be observed from examples of effective writers going about their task of writing.

This section of the guide is complemented by Sections 4 and 5 of the guide which focuses on the PRODUCTS or OUTCOMES of writing. You might prefer to begin by reading a product-oriented approach to writing, and then return later to Section 6.

### PLANNING FOR THE DEADLINE: How much time will I need to allow?

Not devoting enough time for completing written assignments is one of the most common problems that students experience, and this is often simply because of not realising just how much time was going to be needed. It can be very distressing to realise that you could have done a much better job if only you had had more time. Or of doing all the work of preparing an assignment, only to submit it unfinished because of running out of time, or to lose marks because of a late submission. **As a general rule, it may be prudent to allow at least three weeks for the completion of each assignment.** As you will often have to hand numerous assignments in at the same time, you will need to juggle the demands of each one within that framework. **So an early start is an absolute must.**

Ideally, you should begin your assignment **as early as possible** so there will be time to undertake all the stages from the initial researching and reading through to the writing and final editing. One of the most common causes of poor quality assignments is the lack of time invested in them. Indeed, many students could leap to a higher grade simply through undertaking a careful final edit and redrafting of their assignments. This may have required only one extra day to go back and re-read carefully. Given that so significant a part of the assessment in most subjects of study depends on written assignments, the investment of time from early in the semester on a well-planned development of each written assignment will usually be rewarded with better grades.

Go to Section 7 to find out how to use Turnitin to check your work

When planning your time, take note of special requirements in your Subject Outline or assignment task description. For example, you may be required to submit your assignment to Turnitin one or two days before the deadline, and to attach the report from Turnitin to your assignment when you submit it for assessment.

**Review page 28** which shows the stages required for completing an assignment. This can be a useful to help you plan and begin work on your assignments.

#### UTS -Assignment Planning Calculator

Use the UTS library assignment planning calculator which will process the stages you need to go through and the required amount of time for completion. See this link <http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/assignment-survival-kit>

## UNDERSTANDING THE TASK: How can I know what is required for assessment?

In trying to understand each assignment task, it is important to think about the bigger context of the task. Your Subject Outline might explain why the particular assignment has been set, or perhaps your lecturer/tutor may explain more about the role of the assignment in terms of what you are expected to learn. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to try to understand more about what is required:

- How will the assignment help you learn and achieve the subject's learning outcomes as stated in the Subject Outline?
- Which parts of the subject's content are most related to the assignment topic?
- Which lectures, tutorials, workshops, and readings seem to be most closely related to the topic?
- What do the assessment criteria for this assignment tell you are the key features to concentrate on?
- Are some assessment criteria weighted more heavily, suggesting that these are the most important characteristics to focus on?

Sometimes you will have to make a choice amongst assignment topics. Some questions you might ask yourself when selecting the topic are:

- How interested am I in this topic?
- How relevant is this topic to my future study or work directions?
- How much scope does this topic give me to extend my understanding?
- How available are the resources I would need for this topic?
- What is the potential for this topic to result in a worthwhile assignment?

Go to Section 5 to read more about the different types of assignments.

Some assignments will provide a clear set of instructions on what needs to be done, whereas others will be more open-ended. This mirrors what happens in authentic business settings, where employers or clients may provide either very detailed and precise instructions, or sometimes very vague or ambiguous ones. It is your responsibility to ensure the task is clear and unambiguous.

See UTS assessment grade information here (assessment tab)

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/assignment-survival-kit>

View the UTS library Assignment Survival kit here. Unpacks the stages you need to go through in completing an assignment.(Steps 1-5)

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/assignment-survival-kit>

## ANALYSING ESSAY QUESTIONS: How can I unpack the question?

In most cases essay assignments will be framed around a topic set by the lecturer. Understanding what is required can sometimes be a major challenge, particularly in the first year of studying at university. Most essay questions will require students to undertake a critical analysis of relevant literature and to develop their own argument, perspective or point of view from their reading and thinking about the topic.

Some essay questions are quite long and detailed, perhaps comprising a series of sub-questions. Others are single questions, or even statements that you are expected to discuss, but you could develop your own series of sub-questions to focus your thinking.

**Some learning resources on analysing essay questions are:**



The module on 'Analysing an Essay Question' published by the UTS HELPS Centre.

[http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/analysingquestionhandout\\_aug2013.pdf](http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/analysingquestionhandout_aug2013.pdf)

UTS Library YouTube video on unpacking the question: see Step 1.

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/assignment-survival-kit>



### **TIP:**

Ensure that you do spend some time initially analysing the assignment question, so that you fully understand what it is asking you to do. Failure to do so, can mean that you:

- Do not answer the question that has been set = 0 marks
- Failure to answer all of the set question = deduction of marks

Also, on completion of your first draft of your work, check once again that your work is answering **all parts** of the question. In addition, check your work against the marking criteria to ensure you have included all parts of your lecturer's requirements.

Analysing a case study and formulating your own response can consist of the following steps:

### **1. Gain an overview of the case**

Read through the case quickly to gain a general familiarity with the major events and characters and to note the central problem or problems.

### **2. Establish what has happened**

Go over the case again but in greater detail, trying to establish a clear picture of what has happened in terms of the **who, what, where and when** of the situation. If particular knowledge or theories etc. are to be applied to the case, these theories etc. may well be useful in indicating what is important information to look for. For example, a theory of leadership may indicate what are important situational factors to assess, or a model of management process may suggest what important functions need to be carried out. This analysis of what has happened should also clarify the major problem or problems in the case.

### **3. Determine the causes**

Determine why the situation has happened by considering a variety of possible causes to see how well they explain everything that has occurred. It is wise to guard against adopting stereotypes as causes. For example, assuming that all older workers or all female employees always act in a certain way is unlikely to be justifiable. The theories, research and other knowledge learned in the subject being studied are more likely to be useful than stereotypes and other simplifications. Given the complexities of the real world and the limited information available in most case studies, it may not be possible to establish a single cause for most of the events and the resulting problems. In many cases, several causal factors probably have interacted to produce the end results.

### **4. Develop possible solutions**

Having considered what happened and why, develop a number of possible solutions to the problem or problems. If particular knowledge or theories have proven to be useful in answering the questions of what happened and why, these same concepts are likely to be most useful in terms of generating possible solutions. Different solutions may need to be considered, depending upon whether the aim is to have prevented what has already happened, to salvage the present situation, or to avoid similar problems in the future. Unless you are being asked to focus on only one of these approaches, all should be considered.

### **5. Evaluate these solutions**

Consider more thoroughly each possible solution, detailing exactly what would need to be done to implement it. For example, how could the product be more efficiently marketed or worker motivation increased? Again, the concepts learned in the subject being studied are likely to be very useful here. As part of this process, you should note any constraints or impediments that are likely to make it difficult or impossible to implement any of the possible solutions, for example, technological constraints, personnel limitations, or a lack of resources.

### **6. Formulate recommendations**

Finally, you should now be in a position to recommend exactly what should be done about the problem or problems identified. The preferred solution may be one of those considered previously, or some combination of particular solutions that is most likely to work, given the circumstances. In making this final recommendation, a broad view of the situation should be taken. A preferred solution, for example, should not create more problems in other work sections



than it solves in the work section being studied. In some cases it may be best to try relatively simple and inexpensive solutions first, with a contingency plan to try more elaborate solutions if the first ones fail.

***Common errors in analysing case studies:***

Some of the common errors made when analysing case study assignments include:

- not understanding and accepting the facts of the case;
- not explaining exactly what the problems are and why they have occurred;
- making unwarranted assumptions to try to simplify the case;
- limiting the solutions to generalities, such as 'they must improve communication';
- not integrating the various points into a preferred solution;
- relying too much upon one's own experience or on 'common sense' instead of using the theories, research, etc. that are being studied in the particular discipline;
- seeking ways out of the situation (such as 'fire them all') rather than trying to solve the problems;
- suggesting theoretical solutions that ignore the practicalities of the situation. (Where practical difficulties are likely to occur in the implementation, you should discuss these and suggest how they could be overcome.)

Go to Section 5 to read more about the structure of a case study.

For more help see UTS HELPS Centre case study writing webpage  
<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/case.html>

## PREPARING REPORTS: How do I go about such a big task?

The report writing process can be seen as a series of logical, sequential steps. It can be helpful to think of the process as if a client was issuing the instructions, with the lecturer playing a role like that of **'the client'**. Importantly, report writing assignments can be very diverse, and so you need to be careful to note exactly what your requirements are. 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 may involve instead a review of available techniques for solving the specific problem.

Preparing a report can consist of the following steps:

### ***Step 1: Instructions***

This involves the specification of the task which must be undertaken. 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. In some cases you may be required to formulate the topic for a report, although this would normally be done within broad guidelines set by a lecturer. It is critical to be just as clear about objectives in these cases as if someone else had issued the instructions.

### ***Step 2: Clarification of instructions***

Misinterpretation of the instructions may result in the client's requirements not being satisfied. It is therefore essential to 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 the client.

### ***Step 3: Defining the problem***

This is the 'thinking' part of the process. Suppose the task is to forecast the level of demand for a particular product or service: To complete that task you need to understand the factors which influence demand and the relative importance of each of those factors. The problem then becomes far more complex than the seemingly straightforward task. It is necessary to define the nature of the problem thoroughly in these terms and to understand the necessary underlying principles. Moreover, an awareness of available techniques which can be used to solve problems of this kind may also be necessary. A review of the literature or previous work in the field will assist in this regard.

### ***Step 4: Review of literature***

This involves a careful search for relevant published and unpublished work in the field being investigated; obtaining and reading the relevant items; and drawing out salient points for the report. This is mainly to assist in defining and understanding the problem by exposing existing knowledge in the area. It may also suggest appropriate directions or methods of investigation and/or provide an organising theoretical framework.

An effective literature review may save considerable time. It may be discovered, for example, that existing work has already answered many of the questions posed by the client. Individual research can then concentrate on simply filling in the gaps or updating existing information. The literature review may also shed new light on the problem which warrants additional consultation with the client in order to further refine the study objective.

### ***Step 5: 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 intended to be addressed. They should be achievable and expressed in such a way that you will know when they have been achieved. The research method should be formulated around those objectives.

Basically, questions such as the following need to be asked:

- **What information is required?**
- **What are potential sources of information?**
- **How should the information be collected?**
- **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?**

Based on the answers to these questions, you should be ready to formulate a research plan that outlines the necessary steps to gather the information.

### ***Step 6: Information collection***

The next step is to put the research plan into action and gather the needed information. You will need to be prepared to vary the plan if unforeseen issues arise, such as the discovery of unanticipated relevant information or some information not being accessible.

### ***Step 7: Analysis and interpretation***

This step involves analysing and interpreting the information collected in such a way that it leads to satisfying the objectives. This is the appropriate time to review your progress. The key question to ask is whether you have satisfied the objectives. If the answer is 'no' you may need to return to an earlier step in the process, for example, if you realise that you did not initially understand some of the more subtle aspects of the task.

Alternatively, your individual research may have increased your understanding and resulted in the problem being redefined to some extent. You then need to devise the means of gathering additional information to deal with the redefined problem.

### ***Step 8: Conclusions***

Once you are satisfied that all objectives have been achieved, the conclusions to the report can be written. This should comprise a concise statement of key findings in relation to the objectives. This is not a place to introduce new ideas but to draw conclusions from the evidence presented.

### ***Step 9: Recommendations***

As indicated above, whether recommendations are required depends on the client's instructions. The reader should be able to clearly see how conclusions and recommendations were reached. Any recommendations should emerge directly from the conclusions and should be action-oriented.

## RESEARCHING THE TOPIC: How do I find relevant information?

Often your lecturer will provide you with a list of references relating to the subject or perhaps to the individual assignment. Additionally, material from lectures and tutorials can provide useful leads to other potentially relevant material.

If you are provided with a list of references, it can be useful to consider what the status is of the list, for example:

- It might be a short list with only one or two references which are the only readings you are expected to do for this topic.
- It might be a list of the most important readings you should do, and is therefore considered the minimum amount of reading required, but you are expected to find other relevant references yourself.
- It might be a long list with 10 or 20 references or more, and the expectation is that you will find and read all of them, and perhaps even more.
- It might be a long list, but you are expected to find and read only a selection of the references.
- You might even be given no reference list, and the main purpose of the assignment is for you to find appropriate and relevant references for yourself.

Such variations occur for all sorts of reasons, including what the purpose of the task is, how much independent research you are expected to do in your course, and how available are reference materials on the topic. Because the breadth of research required for a task is so variable, it is important that you clarify this early in your preparation.

**A great place to find peer reviewed sources of information are the UTS library databases.** There are numerous databases (not to be confused with the library catalogue) that are specific to your discipline area. These databases hold extensive archives of academic journals, conference papers, industry reports, academic papers and so forth. Using academic peer reviewed sources of information for your assignments is a must, and the UTS library databases should be amongst your first port of call when researching for information.

**View the UTS library databases here:**

[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search\\_databases.py](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search_databases.py)

### Focus on quality not quantity

Sometimes students face the problem of actually reading too much for the task. Ideally, you could never read too much as long as what you are reading is helping you to learn. However, when you have many deadlines to meet for all your units, it is important to arrive at a point when you have carried out enough research for each task to allow enough time for preparing your answer or solution.

You might find, as you really get into your topic, that you become so engrossed in reading that you almost run out of time to start writing. If this happens to you, it might be that you are not focusing on the task sufficiently, and developing and refining your plan for your writing whilst you are reading. Keeping your eye on the deadline is very important.

Some useful resources to help you locate material for your assignments are as follows:



UTS Library YouTube channel. Finding peer reviewed journals and papers  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB0u8-95Wgg>

UTS HELPS Centre worksheet – researching for assignments

[http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/Planning\\_Researching\\_for\\_Assignments.pdf](http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/docs/Planning_Researching_for_Assignments.pdf)

## READING CRITICALLY: How can I make sure I am reading critically?

Reading can be a very passive exercise in which the eye simply glazes over the words on the page without the brain thinking about either the meaning of the reading itself, or what purpose is driving your reading. Importantly, all reading should be done in an active and critical way, relating the reading to the assignment topic, and always searching for relevance and how it might be used to help answer the question.

Some processes that might help you to keep active and critical in your reading are:

- record the necessary bibliographic details in order to cite the reference properly in the completed assignment;
- 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, thinking carefully about the material while reading, selecting points relevant to the essay, assessing the validity of the author's statements, research, opinions, arguments and conclusions. **Do not accept what is read as being 'the exact truth' just because it is in print or because the author sounds authoritative. Record your observations about what you are reading;**
- copy down phrases and short passages exactly if they seem to be worth quoting in your assignment, and note the page number;
- be careful to discriminate in your notes between those words and phrases you have copied exactly (quotes), those you have paraphrased or summarised, and your own opinions and observations.



A useful UTS resource on reading critically and points to bear in mind in evaluating texts can be found here:

<http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/current-students-information-uts-business-school-0/study-and-assessment-resources-0>

## PLANNING AND DRAFTING: How much time should I spend on my plan?

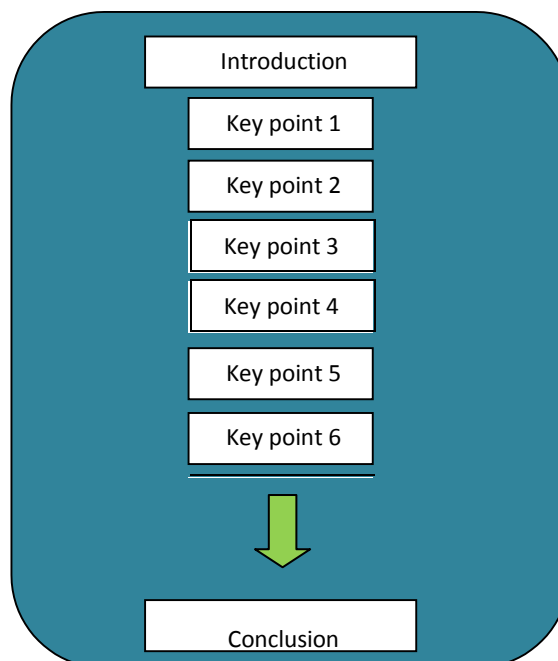
For many writers, the process of planning an assignment starts early and continues throughout their researching and reading stages. The plan changes as they develop their understanding of the topic and their own approach to it. For some writers, a plan that they develop on the computer can provide a structural framework into which they can start writing – that is, they use the same document and progressively ‘flesh it out’ – this is called ‘an outline’ of your assignment and is a very effective way of planning your assignment.

However, there are no rules about the best way of planning and when is the best time to start writing and people seem to develop their own approaches over time.

The plan for the assignment is a useful way of keeping the work within its scope and its word limit. One technique that many writers use is to estimate how many paragraphs their whole assignment is likely to be.

- If an essay assignment task specifies a word limit of 1500 words,
- How many key ideas do you want to discuss within your work?
- If the introduction is 1 paragraph, and the conclusion is 1 paragraph, then you may want to concentrate the other paragraphs on 4-6 key points of your overall argument
- That means there must be 4-6 substantial points or steps in the essay, with each main point being logically clustered into paragraphs.

This can help to guide the reading and thinking process and shape the development and consolidation of the argument. It can also help to keep the research within a reasonable scope for the scale of the task.



## QUOTING AND PARAPHRASING: When should I quote or paraphrase?

The basic principle in deciding whether to quote or paraphrase is that quoting is reserved for those occasions when the original author's words are the very best way of expressing an idea. You may feel that the authors whose work you are reading is almost always expressed better than you feel you can do, particularly because they are experts in their fields with years of experience in writing about their specialist areas and you are a novice. However, the critical learning and assessment purpose of your assignments means that your lecturers need to see if you understand the issues and can express them in your own words. For this reason, **you should not quote too heavily in your assignments. It is sometimes said that no more than 10% of your total assignment length should constitute quotations**, although some believe this should be much less.

Go to Section 3 to read more about the scholarly ethic in academic writing.

By paraphrasing, that is, rewriting in your own words, you can demonstrate your own understanding of the original concepts, but you can also critically present those concepts from your own perspective. For this reason, paraphrasing is a very important skill in academic writing because it satisfies the scholarly ethic of acknowledging the work and ideas of others, whilst it also enables you to add your own thoughts and perspectives and thereby contribute your original thinking to an ongoing debate. **Paraphrasing normally refers to rendering someone else's wordings into your own way of expressing the same meaning, or a close approximation of it.** Summarising (rather than paraphrasing) entails reducing that other person's meaning to its key points, and thereby reducing the number of words needed to express it.

In terms of your whole assignment, **it is recommended that summarising the work of others should constitute the major form of citing and referencing scholarship**, because this technique reveals your understanding and allows you to take control of the ideas you are developing in your assignment. If your assignment was filled with a high proportion of quotations, your lecturer has less opportunity to assess your understanding and the original perspective you are developing. The following diagram depicts the small extent to which your own ideas can be revealed when your assignment is dominated by quotations, compared with the higher input of your own ideas when summarising.



A useful resource for practice with quoting, paraphrasing and summarising is within the UTS website on 'Avoiding Plagiarism'

<http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/uts/avoidingplagiarism/tutorial/quoting.cfm>

<http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/uts/avoidingplagiarism/tutorial/paraphrasing.cfm>

<http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/uts/avoidingplagiarism/tutorial/summarising.cfm>



## CITING AND REFERENCING: How do citation and referencing systems work?

Of the various systems for presenting citations (acknowledgements within your assignment) and references (lists of sources used), the one favoured for use within UTS Business School is the UTS Harvard system also commonly known as the author date system. UTS Harvard is a relatively straightforward system to use as it records the family name and date of publishing within the body of the text, see examples below:

- **Jones (2010) argues that business intelligence gathering is an essential necessity in today's business marketplace....**
- **Recent data (Klein & Jenkins 2013 & Yu 2012) suggests that ....**
- **It can be argued perhaps that entrepreneurs have a certain drive to succeed that is often influenced by their early upbringing (Clark, Lewes & Belvour 2012).**
- **..... and this is supported by Smith (as cited by Levenson, 2011, p56) who states that economic difficulties often arise when nations attempt to .....**
- **When arguing the effectiveness of internet marketing Phelps (2010, p34) argued 'it is not so much the enhanced technology doing the job, but the people with the hands on computer keyboards' and therefore from this remark it may be assumed.....**

There are many referencing systems in use in academia, however you really only need to know the one for use within the Business School which is UTS Harvard.

Regardless what system is used, the key purposes for using any system are common to all assignment tasks and derive from the basic principles of the scholarly ethic:

- To acknowledge the intellectual ownership of the ideas/wordings of other people
- To distinguish between other people's ideas/wordings and your own
- To leave a trail of evidence which can be tracked down by a third party

To ensure those purposes can be achieved, the works of other people that you refer to must be able to be relocated by someone else based on the information that you provide through your citations and references. To do this, the details must be accurately and precisely recorded (family name(s) + year of publication- in most instances). They must also be consistently presented throughout the assignment, even down to the smallest detail of where commas and full-stops are placed.

**For paraphrased information** = (family name(s) + year of pub)

**For direct quotes** = (family name(s) + year of publication + page number)

Citations can come at the start, middle or end of sentences and your writing will become more effective if you can easily put citations anywhere within a sentence. Always having them at the start or end of a sentence soon becomes repetitive and can downgrade the 'style' of your academic writing and argument. You also have a choice of whether you wish to highlight the information first, or the author first then the information pertaining to them (see examples on the next page).

#### Author First:

- Jowanski & Shute (2013) argue that the marketing mix is an essential component in....
- Levin, Peterson & Mallard (2012, p13) state that 'corporations face uncertain times if they fail to adopt technology and social media in their business strategies', similarly it can be stated that....
- Interestingly, Burke (2009, p34) has analysed several ways in which business enterprises can 'adopt creative practices to enhance the user experience', this essentially means that....

#### Information first:

- Recent data regarding the difficulties that SME's face in the current global economy have been widely publicised (Lein & Jenkins 2013 & Lee 2012) and suggest that ....
- ...and this is an interesting anomaly, similarly research (Woods 2010, Blake 2009) has demonstrated that economic policies have shifted and will ultimately .....

#### Example text incorporating academic citations using UTS Harvard referencing style:

Writer's topic sentence

Draws on research from 2 separate authors to support the student's argument (paraphrased)

Student uses a 'direct quote' here to support the argument (note page number supplied)

Student's own analysis continues...

Unsurprisingly these days, effective communication skills are essential elements to the success of any organisation. It is not surprising however that effective communication skills are often quoted as being the most 'in-demand' skill within an organisation's internal framework, notably in its employees and policy initiatives. In discussing effective corporate communication strategies that promote this, research by Benn (2010) and Ellis (2011) shows that communication skills are tantamount to a company's success. 'Effective communication skills are essential, and any company that fails to plan its communications, will ultimately plan to fail when communicating with its stakeholders' (Mann 2012, p45). Therefore, organisations need to realise and implement clear coherent strategies that develop effective communication traits within.....

How you integrate the citations within your own writing can be a challenge in the beginning of university studies. Noticing how other writers do this in their writing can help to model the processes for you. **However failure to reference correctly, will cost you marks and result in a lower grade;** therefore this is an essential skill to master.



Some useful resources for practice with UTS Harvard referencing include:

UTS Library referencing guide (many resources)

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/referencing>

UTS Library referencing tutorial videos (YouTube)

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL33E43721BA8C2529&feature=view\\_all](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL33E43721BA8C2529&feature=view_all)

UTS Library interactive referencing guide

[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/UTS\\_Interactive%20Harvard%20Guide.pdf](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/UTS_Interactive%20Harvard%20Guide.pdf)

UTS Business School/ Harvard UTS referencing guide

<http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/current-students-information-uts-business-school-0/study-and-assessment-resources-6>

## WRITING IN A TEAM: How can I contribute as a member of a group/team?

Some assignments in UTS Business School revolve around working in teams or groups, and the assignment itself may be required to be prepared by the group. The collaborative processes of tackling a problem and preparing written work together can be a very positive learning experience, but it also brings some challenges, and it is important to ensure that collaboration and collaborative writing does not spill over into inappropriate or dishonest behaviours such as cheating.

If you do experience problems working with your team, do keep an accurate account of communications that happened with your team members (emails, telephone calls etc.) and speak to your lecturer and tutor for advice.

### Some guiding principles for group work should include:

- Be encouraging and supportive to all members
- Treat everyone with fairness and respect
- Be professional /businesslike and goal driven to 'achieve the task at hand'
- Collaborate openly
- Be flexible and understanding of one another
- Be organised and businesslike in your approach to achieving the task
- Appreciate people's language differences and cultural backgrounds
- Appreciate everyone has different strengths and weaknesses and working styles
- Divide responsibility evenly –working with people's strengths
- Give positive criticism which seeks to build skills not deflate them
- Help & encourage others to better their skills & working approach
- Assign roles to each individual team member to ensure equal participation
- Set priorities of what needs to be achieved
- Be on time for meetings, respond to emails and timely submit drafts
- Ensure everyone contributes evenly to the team and the task
- Employ good communication skills in team gatherings
- Reflect occasionally on how the team is performing – how can it improve?
- Seek help quickly if the team dynamics fail/ students fail to participate
- Seek help if you fail to understand how to achieve the task



See the UTS Library Group Work website

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/group-work>

Download the effective group work handbook from the UTS library

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/Workbook28May.pdf>

## FORMATTING: How 'professional' should my assignment presentation be?

When preparing your final written assignment for submission, the overall aim should be to present your work in a professional manner, and taking care to meet any particular requirements specified for the assignment. In general, the format of your written assignments should help to make your written work easier to read, and easier to write comments onto, which is very important for your lecturer/tutor when they are assessing it. In business work contexts, professional presentation of written work is equally important to getting your meaning across, and so you need to be attentive to formatting to help your reader understand your message.

**(Note: Some assignments may require different formatting. You are responsible for checking the specific requirements of each assignment).**

	BASIC FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS
PAPER	Normally, pages should be A4 in portrait format (rather than landscape) Do follow lecturer's requirements however.
MARGINS	The left-hand margins should be approximately 4cm. The top, bottom and right-hand margins of each page should be about 2.5cm.
LINE SPACING	Line spacing should be 1.5 (or sometimes 2.0 lines apart) as a default. Between paragraphs, double the spacing so that the paragraphs are visually distinct. Do follow the guidelines in your subject outline.
LONGER QUOTES	If you are using longer quotes (more than 30 words), they should be indented and single-spaced to make them visually more distinct.
FONT & POINT SIZE	The type-face should be approximately 12-point in a standard font such as Times New Roman or Arial.
PAGE NUMBERING	Page numbering should be included at the bottom of every page, except the title page if you are including one.
WORD LENGTH	<p>Most assignment requirements will usually specify a prescribed word length. It is important that you ensure your assignment meets these requirements, by using the word count function within your word processing program. Sometimes you may be required to indicate the number of words on the title or cover page of your submitted work.</p> <p>Take careful note of the word length and any special advice regarding flexibility about the word length. Sometimes, you may be advised that marks will be deducted for assignments that are not within a specified range of that word length, for example, 10% shorter or longer.</p>
PRINTING	Printing of your assignments should be on white A4 paper, and printed on only one side of the page.
I.D. DETAILS	It is often a good idea to put your name and student number in the header or footer of each page, particularly for 'hard copy' submissions.



Here are some answers to common questions that students often ask about how to present their assignments professionally.

Common questions from students about presentation formats	General answers – REMEMBER to check for the particular requirements in your subject or assignment
<i>How should I deal with large-format visual material to include in the assignment?</i>	If possible, try to photographically reduce large-format material so that it can be incorporated in the standard A4 paper size.
<i>Should I buy a special presentation folder to present my assignment more professionally?</i>	In most cases, this is not required and will not influence the mark as it does not add to the quality of the assignment. You should therefore not use special folders unless you are required to do so for a particular assignment. From the perspective of your lecturers, presentation folders make a swag of assignments heavier to carry, and more cumbersome to read.
<i>Should I put each page of my assignment inside a clear plastic envelope to protect it?</i>	No. This makes it extremely difficult for staff to comment on your work as they need to take each page out of the envelope. When markers have a large number of assignments to mark, they do not want to waste their time on this unnecessary extra packaging. However, there may be special circumstances in which you are required to use presentation folders (see above).
<i>Should I staple together the pages of my assignment, or just use a paper clip?</i>	Stapling the pages together reduces the risk of losing pages, or of the pages getting out of order, and is more secure than a paper slide or clip. You should staple the pages at the top left-hand corner of the document.
<i>Should I use Dot Points or numbering systems in the setting out of my assignment?</i>	Formatting systems based on dot points or numbering can help to clarify relationships amongst ideas, and can make it much easier to read documents. However, for some assignments, it is not expected that you will use formatting systems like this, but rather that you will use topic sentences and word choices to reveal the relationships amongst ideas. You should check the requirements for each assignment.
<i>Should I use footnotes at the bottom of each page, or endnotes at the end of the assignment?</i>	Assignments in UTS Business School will normally be presented using the Harvard system of in-text referencing rather than references being placed within footnotes or endnotes. However, there may be other material which is interesting or explanatory but not central to the main point you are making. In such cases, the inclusion of such material in either a footnote or an endnote allows you to mention it and include a cross-reference to its source without interrupting the flow of your own writing.

## VISUAL INFORMATION: How should I present tables, figures, and illustrations?

Visual information has significant advantages for academic writing in that it enables a large amount of information to be presented concisely and with immediacy for the reader to see its meaning. However, all visual information needs to be clearly related to the assignment topic and purpose, and explicitly introduced and explained within your writing. To help the reader, it should be located as close as possible on the page to the section of your writing that refers to it. If there is any visual material which is not referred to in your writing, and introduced appropriately to explain its role and place in the structure and argument of your assignment, then it should not be there.



See the UTS Library website for useful visual software applications  
<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/graphic-tools>

## CHECKING AND PROOFREADING: How can I check my own writing?

It is very important that you leave enough time after completing your written assignment that you can re-read the whole work and make any changes that are necessary before submitting it. Ideally, you should finish your assignment several days before the due date so there will be time to undertake the proofreading and editing.

### Some suggestions that have been found to be helpful:

Print a copy of your assignment to read, rather than reading it on the computer screen. Many people find this to be an easier way to read longer pieces of writing, and to see their own writing 'with new eyes'.

- Read your assignment out loud to check on the logic and clarity of the argument, and to ensure that sentences are complete and grammatically accurate.
- Read your assignment several times, each time checking for a particular aspect, for example:
  - The meaning, logic and flow
  - The grammar and style
  - The accuracy of citations and referencing
  - The formatting and presentation
- Try to imagine reading your assignment from the perspective of someone else – your lecturer, the person marking your work, an employer – to change your focus from being the writer to being the reader.
- If you have a tolerant friend or relative who might be prepared to listen, read your assignment to them and ask them to point out anything that does not make sense.
- Arrange with a trusted fellow student to read each other's assignments critically and provide peer feedback, but be careful to ensure you undertake this collaboration with academic integrity.
- Use a spell-checker on your computer, making sure that it is set for Australian or British English, but check carefully any identified spelling problems before accepting the recommended changes.
- Use a grammar-checker on your computer, but check any identified grammar problems carefully before making changes as many grammar-checkers are not highly reliable.
- Check carefully that all material cited within the assignment is referenced correctly and included in the reference list at the end.
- Use Grammarly- the free grammar checking and self editing software available through the UTS library databases.
- Submit your assignment to Turnitin if possible, to receive a report on the originality level as determined by Turnitin's comparison with other material.



See UTS library for Grammarly database:

[http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search\\_databases.py?search=grammarly](http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/databases/search_databases.py?search=grammarly)

### A self-editing checklist

Putting yourself in the role of the person who will assess your written assignment can be a useful technique for checking your own work before submitting it. The following checklist for your own self-assessment of your work is derived from the general assessment criteria presented in Section 2 of the guide. Also check the marking criteria of the assignment.

A SELF-EDITING AND PROOFREADING CHECKLIST 1		Y ✓	N X	?
Purpose	Does the assignment address the topic that was set?			
	Does the assignment address the purpose that was set, for example, to explain, to discuss, to evaluate, to recommend, etc.?			
	Is there a clear statement of the assignment's purpose or goals?			
Relevance	Are the ideas and information in the assignment relevant to the topic?			
	Are there other essential ideas and information which are missing from the assignment?			
Analytical and critical perspective	Does the assignment provide evidence of critical analysis/critical thinking of the topic area?			
	Does the assignment's present a critical perspective or stance?			
Supporting evidence	Is the supporting material used as evidence for the ideas and information relevant and appropriate?			
	Is supporting material paraphrased or summarised enough rather than heavily quoted?			
	Are the supporting materials all from reputable and reliable sources?			
	Is evidence from other sources correctly acknowledged?			
Structure and coherence	Is the assignment structured in appropriate sections and in a logical sequence?			
	Is the logical structure clearly shown, for example, by the use of topic sentences and correct paragraph structure?			
Language style	Is the writing style at an appropriate level of objectivity, formality and professionalism for the assignment's purpose and audience?			
Language accuracy	Is the assignment written in grammatically accurate sentences?			
	Is the punctuation accurate and helpful to the meaning?			
	Is the spelling accurate and following Australian conventions?			
Meaning	<b>Is the language clear and 100% meaningful in English?</b>			
Presentation	Is the formatting of the assignment according to the stated specifications, for example, section headings if appropriate, correct word length?			
	Are sub-headings logical in parallel meaning and grammatical form, and correctly numbered (for report writing)?			
	Is formatting consistent throughout the document (for example, margins, indents for quotes, numbering, headers & footers)?			
	Are all materials cited within the assignment included in the Reference List, and presented in an appropriate and consistent style?			
	Is the presentation of the assignment professional and 'reader-friendly'?			



**Tip:** Print off a copy of this page and use it as an additional checklist to go through **before you hand in** each assignment.



## USING TURNITIN: How can I check my assignment for originality?

Go to Section 3 to read more about the scholarly ethic in academic writing.

The scholarly ethic is based on a principle of academic integrity, and respect and acknowledgement of the ideas of others. This means that your written assignments **need to be your own work**, and a representation of your point of view with substantiation from supporting material. Where you refer to the ideas and words of others, this must be done with integrity, and by observing the rules of citation and referencing. If you do not do this, or you do it poorly, you may be guilty of plagiarising.

Go to Section 7 to read more about quoting and paraphrasing.

The software application Turnitin is available at UTS to help you (and the staff) check written work in terms of its extent of originality. This is done by comparing your electronically submitted written work against a vast store of material on the internet and in the Turnitin database (which includes all previously submitted assignments). The comparison is then produced into an **'originality' report** that rates how similar your document is to other documents. As a very general rule, you should aim to have your originality report ideally somewhere **under 18%** or so.

**Here are what some random Turnitin originality report percentages may mean to give you some general idea:**

**0% overall originality score** = student has failed to acknowledge any peer reviewed sources in their work, this will usually result in a poor mark/ possible failure of the assignment.

**3% overall originality score** or thereabouts = a very low scoring showing that perhaps the student has failed to cite the literature sufficiently enough.

**20% overall originality score** = a fifth of the work can be linked to other external sources –this is starting to be somewhat on the high side, but may still be acceptable however. **Anything over 20% will not be favoured generally.**

**45% overall originality score** = this is a very high similarity score, meaning that the student has used **excessive** amounts of external sources within their work. The student needs to radically review their work to get the similarity report under 20%. Under no circumstances submit work with such a high originality report –it will most certainly fail and questions be asked regarding the student's integrity.

In some subjects, you may be required to submit your work to Turnitin prior to submitting it for assessment. Ideally, you would allow sufficient time for the Turnitin report to be generated (up to 24 hours) and to be able to make any adjustments to your assignment that seem necessary. On occasions, lecturers encourage you to submit your redrafted assignment as often as you like until the assignment deadline, so that you can make improvements to your work before submitting it. Sometimes you need to print the Turnitin report and attach it to your assignment. Students' assignments are routinely submitted to Turnitin as a way of ensuring that ethical behaviour is being observed, Staff responsible for making decisions regarding academic misconduct and appeals in cases of plagiarism may request and make use of evidence from plagiarism detection software or from forensic analysis of texts, computer code, images or other works.

Helpful websites [http://turnitin.com/en\\_us/training/student-training](http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/student-training)

See UTS library for the **Grammarly** database which can proof check your assignment for you.

## 8. SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

### ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET: How do I use the assignment cover sheet?

Usually written assignments in UTS Business School subjects of study are required to be submitted with an assignment cover sheet. You should check with your Subject Outline or other information provided about each assignment to find out the requirements regarding a cover sheet. As well as providing basic information, the assignment cover sheet usually includes a declaration which you must sign certifying that the assignment is your own work. Normally, you would print this cover sheet, fill in the details, sign it, and then attach it to your assignment in hard copy format.

Sometimes there are special requirements stated in the Subject Outline or other information from your Subject Coordinator. For example, you may be asked to attach to your assignment an assessment feedback sheet which the marker will use to provide your mark and any feedback to you. If you are required to submit your assignment electronically, you should note the specific requirements and instructions regarding the use of a cover sheet or alternative arrangements. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are meeting any special requirements.

If a cover sheet is not provided for an assignment, and no specific requirements are given, it is probably advisable to attach a front cover to your assignment outlining the following information:

- Student name
- Student number
- Contact phone and email
- Course name
- Subject name
- Subject number
- Tutor's name
- Tutorial group
- Assignment title
- Due date
- Date submitted
- Word count
- If Turnitin report submitted
- Declaration with your signature (I certify I hereby certify that this assignment is my own work, based on my personal study and/or research and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in the preparation of this assignment. I also certify that the assignment has not previously been submitted for assessment and that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of other students or authors.)

### SUBMITTING WORK: How can I submit my assignment?

All written assignments must be submitted in accordance with the requirements stated for the subject, course, or department. You should check in advance to make sure you know where assignments are to be submitted, for example, at a department office, and whether you are expected to have a

receipt acknowledging that you have submitted the assignment.

**If you believe you may not be able to submit your assignment on time, you should consult your lecturer as soon as possible.** Depending upon the reasons, an extension may be granted.

You should keep a copy of your assignment, and keep that copy safe until your marked assignment is returned to you.

It is your responsibility to find out and observe all instructions regarding the submission of your assignments.

### EXTENSIONS: What if I cannot submit my assignment on time?

Your assignment must be submitted by the due date. If you are experiencing minor difficulties meeting an assessment deadline, you should contact your Subject Coordinator and provide documentation supporting your request for an extension.

In more serious circumstances, for example, where you suffer from a serious illness or psychological condition, you may be eligible for special consideration. This must be done before the due date of the assignment, or in the case of exams, within two working days after the exam.

The UTS Procedures for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects outlines the details and how you can apply for **special consideration** in such cases: <http://www.sau.uts.edu.au/assessment/consideration/>

**Note:** If you are requesting an extension of time of one week or less to submit an assignment, you should contact your Subject Coordinator. Do not formally apply for special consideration in such cases.

### LATE PENALTIES: What is the penalty for late submission?

Assignments that are submitted late (with no extension granted) may incur a penalty. Your Subject Outline or assignment requirements will specify any penalties that may be incurred. You are responsible for finding out about any penalties.

## 9. LEARNING FROM WRITING AND ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK

### RETURN OF ASSIGNMENTS: When should I collect my marked assignment?

The learning that results from preparing written assignments can be amongst the richest of learning experiences that many students have at university, but this can be significantly increased by the assessment feedback that you receive from your marker. This feedback on your learning includes both the mark itself for the assignment, which gives you a reference point and overall standard of your performance, and also the comments that you receive about the strengths and weaknesses of your work.

You can only benefit from the marker's assessment feedback if you collect your assignment. The staff always aim to return your assignments as quickly as possible, and will tell you when you can expect to receive your assignment back, although it can sometimes take longer to complete all the marking in very large classes. Note carefully any information that is provided for you about when and how to collect your assignment. Assignments that are not collected after a certain designated period of time will normally be destroyed.

### UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK: What does the feedback mean?

It is important to take the time to read the comments that the marker provides on your assignment. Sometimes the comments may be provided in a generalised summary to all students, particularly if the class is very large and it is therefore not possible to provide detailed comments to each student. Even in this case, however, there is a great deal that you can learn from the generalised comments, and those comments directed to common issues or problems that your assignment demonstrated.

Assessment feedback may be provided in a range of different ways including individual written comments on your paper, generalised feedback to the whole group or to specific sub-groups, discussions in lectures and tutorials, and even through peer review discussions within the class. Assessment feedback may be used for different purposes including to assign a mark for summative purposes to assess your level of performance, to give formative feedback intended to help you learn but without providing a mark, and sometimes to 'diagnose' areas of weakness that you should follow up through taking part in particular support programs, or independent study.

#### **In any type of feedback you receive, consider:**

- What did you do well in the assignment?
- Was your self-analysis of your work 'in line' with what the lecturer thought?
- What are areas of the assignment could you improve or perform better in?
- What did not work so well and why was this the case?
- How can I perform better and what can I improve in my next assignment?
- Who at UTS can help me perform better and increase my skills and knowledge?

All assessment types are potential opportunities for significant learning and it is recommended that you take advantage of them as much as possible. Many students do not take advantage of such opportunities because they have moved quickly to the next assignment task without adequately giving time to learn and reflect from the previous one.

## F.A.Q - Frequently Asked Questions From Students

Student Query:	UTS advice:
<b>I don't know how to start my assignment?</b>	If you are struggling to start an assignment –a good way to start is by firstly analysing the question. Underline and circle key words, identify the number of sections within and brainstorm some possible 'first ideas'. Move on to some initial background reading – which will hopefully illuminate the topic area for you. If you are still struggling, seek help early on from academic/professional staff who can assist you. The UTS library study skills website shows how you can get started. See p67 for details.
<b>How can I improve my academic writing skills?</b>	One of the best ways to improve is to get used to this style of writing. Read examples of well written academic texts (essays, literature reviews, case studies, reports etc.). Also refer to some of the excellent resources held at UTS which can provide 'model' examples for you. See some of the recommended texts and materials provided on p67-68 this document to get you started.
<b>Who can I go to for help if I struggle with an assignment?</b>	There are several things you should do if you are having difficulty with an assignment- and do all of them <b>early on</b> , and not leave issues to escalate. Firstly, talk to your lecturer/tutor and ask for clarification/assistance. Also, visit the UTS HELPS Centre. This service can get extremely busy, so it is always good to 'go early' in the semester for help and assistance.
<b>I'm not sure what style of writing is suitable for my assignments?</b>	Always check the assignment requirements with your lecturer/tutor as often they will have particular requirements that they wish you to fulfill. Generally speaking a clear, meaningful and professional tone of writing is best for your assignment writing. You do not wish to sound too pompous or be overly complex that may negatively affect the meaning of what you are trying to communicate. Clear and meaningful is always better than overly wordy, unclear and random writing. Try to get some feedback on your writing from UTS staff, so that you can learn how to develop your skills and improve. There are many workshops/individual consultations with UTS support services (HELPS) that can help you achieve this.
<b>Just what is academic style?</b>	Academic style is the style required in academia. In short, it is a clear, purposeful and <b>professional</b> way to converse with academic scholars and your peers. Effective academic writing should be accessible to a well-educated readership, in that it can communicate relatively complex and abstract ideas in a clear, meaningful and intelligent manner. Stay away from trying to sound 'overly pompous, verbose and wordy' thinking this will score you 'extra marks'; it often does not. <b>Effective academic writing is always clear, meaningful, relatively formal, engaging and communicative.</b> Look at good examples and try to imitate their style, as well as 'bad examples' as examples 'to avoid'. See our recommendations on p67-68 to help assist you with this.
<b>English is not my first language – what help is available for me?</b>	There is a lot of help at UTS for you. Contact the HELPS Centre which can assist you with strategies and advice on how to improve your English language skills at university. Also see the recommendations on p67-68 of this document. If you are experiencing issues in your lectures and tutorials, do talk to the academic staff who will be able to assist you.

I have never been to university before – how can I build my academic skills?	We have many students studying here who have never been to university before, so you are not alone. Often these students tend to perform extremely well due to bringing extensive life skills, work experience and solid work ethics into the academic arena. It may be wise however to get in touch with the HELPS Centre for advice early on, and also take a look at the recommended materials listed on p67-68. Also try to attend the many skills workshops around the university which can help you build your academic skills early on in the semester. Keep an eye on your email inbox, library and HELPS website and other useful support services designed to help you at UTS.
Just what is meant by critical thinking?	Critical thinking is a key stone of thinking at university in both undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs. It is an essential skill that you <b>must</b> employ. Essentially, it requires you to ‘challenge beliefs’ and to ‘search for your own answers’ and ‘trust no information’ until you feel that it is proved reliable and accurate (often subjective). It is your job to generally question, critique and analyse the information that you encounter and <b>not</b> just to passively accept the ideas presented to you. You are not here to be ‘spoon fed’ answers but to challenge the ideas in the classroom, find other research that challenges beliefs, question the research and peers/academic staff and then bring this critical analysis into your assignment writing. It is similar to ‘detective like thinking’ and it is an essential skill for you to employ if you are to perform well at university.
I am not fully understanding my lectures and tutorials –what should I do?	Act quickly and talk to your lecturers/tutors for advice and perhaps to recommend extra resources that can help you. In addition, do some wide background reading that perhaps may fill in any existing gaps. Also, your subject coordinator who may be able to suggest other resources or programs that may be able to assist you (UPASS/ Peer Tutoring for instance). Ask for help early on, as the weeks progress, it becomes more difficult to catch up, so do not hesitate to seek help. Also talk to HELPS about strategies to assist you.
Returning to study is very stressful – what should I do?	Yes, it can be a challenge, we appreciate that. For example, if you are working, studying and juggling family commitments we know things can be particularly stressful and challenging. Similarly if you are new to UTS and Australia. If you need help, come and talk to the appropriate support services who can assist you e.g. Counselling, HELPS, Disability office, Student Services, and the UTS library to name but a few.
How long should I set aside for completing an assignment?	It really depends on the nature of the assignment. Generally speaking, we would advise that you probably need at least 3 weeks to be able to do justice to each assignment that you write. This allows for understanding the question, doing research and background reading, planning your answer, writing drafts, editing and proofing sufficiently and handling in on time. If your writing skills are weak or English is not your first language, you may need more time than this. <b>The golden rule is to start as early as you can,</b> and seek help early on if you are facing difficulties.
How much study should I be doing on my own each week?	It depends on the nature of the subject and your understanding of it. There is a general rule of for each hour of face to face contact time, you should be doing at least 2 hours of additional reading and research. For some subjects which are more challenging however, you will need to allocate a lot more time to your reading and research. There should never be a week that goes by during semester where you have done no research or no extra reading for your subjects.

I want to improve my marks – how can I do this?	One of the best ways is to look at any feedback you have been given and act on the advice of the academic staff who have marked your work. You can also get some generic feedback on your work and how to improve it from HELPS. These services get busy, so is advisable to book in early for appointments/consultations.
What is meant by using ‘reliable sources’ and ‘peer reviewed sources’?	Obviously there is a huge realm of data and information available in the public domain all from varying sources and levels of reliability. Sources such as tabloid newspapers, blogs, wiki’s and word of mouth are generally considered relatively unreliable. At university students need to be engaging and accessing ‘reliable sources’ of information and research, usually from academic journals, industry papers, professional reports, government statistics, academic data etc. The UTS library databases (e.g. Proquest, EBSCO, ABI Inform etc.) are the best way to find and gather reliable research and reading material for your assignments and university studies. If in doubt, talk to the enquiry counter of the UTS library who can assist you, or look at the ‘ <b>find databases</b> ’ tab on the UTS library website.
How do I know when I’ve done enough reading for my research?	It is worthwhile to remember that you physically cannot read everything published about your subject. Therefore by definition, you need to be selective about what you are reading. Essentially, you may get a feeling that you have done enough reading when 1) you have sufficient information to be able to intelligently discuss the answer <u>and/or</u> 2) You find yourself reading the same type of information/data for a 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> time. This means that you have possibly come ‘full circle’ in your research and the time has now come to put your ideas onto paper.
How should I do research for my assignments?	There is a wealth of information to choose from in gaining information and background reading resources for your studies and assignment work. It is worth mentioning however, that the bulk of this material should be sourced from reliable academic sources. Therefore the UTS library databases (e.g. EBSCO, Proquest, ABI Inform) which host an abundance of peer reviewed journals, papers and industry reports should be the predominant place you are gathering information from for your research needs.
Can I use Wikipedia and other such sources for my assignments?	Wikipedia, Google, blogs, forums, tabloid newspapers, and unreferenced sources are all generally considered to be somewhat <b>unreliable sources</b> for academic purposes. Certainly you can access these information sources to help build your understanding but understand that they should not be your first choice of information and <b>never</b> reference them in your assignment work (unless specifically asked to do so by your lecturer). Instead try to reference from <b>peer reviewed sources of information</b> or good quality sources such as professional associations, government reports, industry papers and academic journals and textbooks.
What’s the difference between spelling with a ‘s’ organisations, or with a ‘z’ organizations? Which should I be using?	Australian spelling follows the British tradition of spelling with an ‘s’. Therefore in Australia you should be spelling in the following way, ‘specialise, organisations, theorise, conceptualise’ etc. American spelling is with a ‘z’ e.g. organizations. Ensure your word processing software is switched to ‘Australian spelling defaults.
What are some simple ways to help improve the structure of my assignment writing	The written structure of your work is of paramount importance. It not only helps develop the clarity of what you are communicating, but also aids the understandability and ease of reading. You should be familiar with how to structure the paragraphs in your assignment work as well as how to plan and write introductions and concluding paragraphs in your academic work also. Take a look at some of the recommended reading texts suggested on p 68 which will demonstrate this.



<b>I am procrastinating over an assignment and can't seem to get started. What advice do you have?</b>	<p>If you are struggling to start an assignment –think of why you are putting it off. Is it a motivation problem or a problem with understanding what to do? It is good to remember that you ‘just have to start’ and can be helpful to split this larger task into ‘more manageable bite size pieces’ which is more realistic and achievable.</p> <p>If you are struggling, a very good way to start is by taking time to analyse the assignment question. Underline and circle key words, identify the number of sections within and brainstorm some possible ‘first ideas’. Move on to some initial background reading – which will hopefully illuminate the topic area for you. If you are still struggling, seek help early on from academic/professional staff who can assist you. The UTS library study skills website shows how you can get started. Follow the link on p67</p>
<b>I'm overwhelmed with reading for my subjects. I can't seem to cope with the demands of reading in my degree. Any advice?</b>	There is an enormous amount of reading expected from students at university. However, academic texts are not meant to be read ‘as if you were reading a novel’. Inspect texts first, notice headings, length, read abstract, introductions and conclusions first to get a sense of the paper. Skim, scan the paragraphs and ‘scour’ the text for useful facts, research, quotes and data that help build your knowledge in the field. Take notes, highlight sparingly or underline as you go along to help you remember the useful parts of the chapters.
<b>My lecturer says ‘there is no strong argument’ in my writing. How can I improve this?</b>	The key to successful writing, and indeed the key to writing a successful and strong argument running through your paper are to ensure that you understand how to create ‘well-structured paragraphs’ within your work. Plan your paragraphs well first and understand how to structure your views. This will ensure that you are delivering a powerful and clearer argument in your written assignment work. See page 25 for paragraph structure.
<b>My lecturer says there is a lack of ‘critical thinking’ and critical analysis in my written work. What should I do?</b>	If you receive this type of comment or feedback in your work, what it may mean is that you are lacking ‘engaging’ with analysing the theories, models and arguments in your field. You need to be comparing, contrasting, evaluating, critiquing these arguments, as well as being able to weave your own discussions, thoughts and perspectives into the argument too.
<b>I'm finding the readings in my subject rather difficult, I am having trouble engaging with these texts.</b>	Academic texts at times can be challenging to read. Sometimes the formal language, terminology employed and style can make these texts particularly challenging. A good technique is to do some extra reading around the subject area, or to try to find a more accessible version on the same topic, which may aid your understanding. Once you have built this foundational level of comprehension, come back to the more challenging articles which hopefully will make better sense to you.
<b>How do I juggle writing a number of assignments -all to be handed in at the same time?</b>	Effective time management skills are essential. Prioritising your tasks and assignments is a must. Also breaking up assignments into smaller and more manageable parts helps make them more achievable. Develop a ‘factory production line’ process for each assignment that encompasses 1)understanding the question, 2) doing effective research and background reading, 3)planning your answer, 4)writing drafts, 5)editing and proofing sufficiently 6) getting external feedback before hand-in.



<b>Can I get someone to review or give me feedback on my work before I hand it in?</b>	You can also get some generic feedback on your work and how to improve it from HELPS. These services get busy and have limited consultations available, so is better to book in early for appointments. Also consider getting feedback from your peer group –perhaps another student in your class who is performing well. Other students can often give invaluable feedback on improving your work. You can also approach your lecturers/tutors to see if they might be able to advise you –but please appreciate that they may have limited time to do so.
<b>What is the difference between an essay and a report? I'm not exactly sure.</b>	Both are pieces of academic written work and both follow a very similar internal structure (see paragraph writing) but they both set out to achieve different purposes. Essays are predominantly written to express opinions, discussions or to build/present an argument. Reports on the other hand, are usually written to investigate facts and report on them. They also visually look different. Essays usually have NO headings, sub-headings, no table of contents or executive summaries and no appendices. Reports however, typically are broken into easily read sections with headings, sub-headings, figures and charts etc. as well as perhaps appendices at the back.
<b>I don't know if my referencing skills are correct – how can I know?</b>	It is essential that you do know the basics of Harvard UTS referencing. Not knowing or employing these skills correctly can easily result in you receiving lower marks. To find out if you are referencing correctly, there are many online sources to help you develop your skills in this area. An initial place to start is the UTS library referencing website see link on p68, as well as some of the recommended texts shown on the same page.
<b>What is the difference between a reference list and a bibliography?</b>	<p>A reference list should accompany most assignments upon submission. It is a complete list (in alphabetical order) of all the sources you have cited within the piece of work.</p> <p>A bibliography however, is a list of all the sources you have used in to aid your background reading and research in helping you to compile the assignment.</p>
<b>Is it OK to cut and paste information from online or other texts into my assignment? In my country that is OK to do, how about in Australia?</b>	Absolutely no. You should <b>never</b> be cutting and pasting information from any source directly into university work. If you do so, the chances are you will be caught and charged with plagiarism. You need to be using information sources wisely and with integrity. Most information that you may wish to use will need to be paraphrased and then cited correctly within your work. Also thoroughly check your work before you hand it in to ensure no plagiarism has taken place.



Need more help or assistance? See over the page for support services at UTS.

## GETTING SUPPORT: Where can I get extra help with writing?

Your lecturer, tutor, or subject coordinator are always the most important point of contact with issues relating to writing assignments. You should take careful note of information the staff will provide you about how to contact them and any extra support that may be available with written assignments.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICE**

**For students with disabilities or ongoing medical conditions**

If you are a student who has a disability or ongoing medical condition that requires support services, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Officers or Special Needs Service for a confidential interview. Supporting documentation regarding your disability or ongoing medical condition is required if you wish to apply for assessment adjustments, including alternative assessment conditions. Each Faculty has appointed Academic Liaison Officers (ALOs) who are responsible for approving assessment adjustments. Meeting with the Disability Support Officers or Special Needs Service before seeking assessment adjustments from your ALO is required.

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/sneeds/index.html>

Ph.: (02) 9514 1177

**Academic Liaison Officers in the Faculty of Business**

You can find the names of the current ALOs for UTS Business School from the Special Needs Service website:

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/sneeds/services/assessment/alo.html>

### **JUMBUNNA INDIGENOUS HOUSE OF LEARNING**

**Support for Australian Indigenous students**

Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning provides a central meeting place for Australian Indigenous students.

<http://www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au/>

### **UTS INTERNATIONAL**

**Support for international students**

A wide range of support services is provided for international students at UTS.

<http://www.uts.edu.au/international/prospective/about/managingstudy.html>

**UTS GRADUATE SCHOOL**  
**Support for graduate research students**

The role of the University Graduate School (UGS) is to promote innovation and excellence in research education.

<http://www.gradschool.uts.edu.au/>

**HELPS CENTRE**

**Support for all students  
with academic language  
and literacy**

The HELPS Centre provides academic language and literacy support to students and staff at UTS.

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/>

**UTS LIBRARY**

**Support for all students  
with the development of  
all aspects of information  
literacy**

The Library offers numerous resources and services to help UTS students.

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/>

**UTS CAREERS SERVICE**

**Support for all students  
with career development**

The UTS Careers Service aims to actively support the career development needs of all UTS students.

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/careers/>

**UTS STUDENT SERVICES  
PEER NETWORK**

The Peer Network is a voluntary program and performs a valuable role in assisting new students make a positive adjustment to university, and to improving student life.

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/peernetwork/index.html>

City Campus  
Student Services Annex  
Level 3 Concourse (CB01.03.13) Building 1 (Tower)

Email [peer.network@uts.edu.au](mailto:peer.network@uts.edu.au)  
Ph: (02) 9514 2463

**UTS STUDENT SERVICES  
U:PASS**

U:PASS is a program run by Student Services Unit designed to assist students who are studying subjects which are perceived as difficult or historically have a high failure rate.

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/peerlearning/>

**UTS INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES**

[http://www.itd.uts.edu.au/services\\_facilities/it\\_support.html#assistance](http://www.itd.uts.edu.au/services_facilities/it_support.html#assistance)

### UTS LEARNING RESOURCES ON WRITING:

HELPS Centre

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/>

HELPS Centre Writing Clinic

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/clinics/index.html>

UTS library study skills portal

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills>

UTS library Writing Guides

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/writing-reading-speaking>

UTS Business School Guide to Writing Assignments

[www.uts.edu.au/node/50946/](http://www.uts.edu.au/node/50946/)

### UTS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: Where can I find relevant policies?

Advice to Students on Good Academic Practice (UTS Policy)

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/academicpractice.html>

Assessment of Coursework Subjects (UTS Policy)

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/assessment-coursework.html>

Assessment of Coursework Subjects (UTS Procedures)

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/assessment-coursework-procedures.html>

Diversity Guidelines for Courses and Subjects (UTS Policy)

<http://www.equity.uts.edu.au/language/inclusive/classroom.html>

Ethical conduct of research policy: Human Research Ethics ....

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/hrecpolicy.html>

Ethical conduct of research guide: Human Research Ethics ....

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/hrecguide.html>

Student Charter (UTS Policy)

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/studentcharter.html>

Student Misconduct and Appeals (UTS Rules)

<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/rules/16-index.html>

## FURTHER USEFUL RESOURCES :

UTS Business Study Support resources:

<http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/study-support-and-resources>

UTS Business Study & Assessment resources:

<http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/current-students-information-uts-business-school-0/study-and-assessment-resources-0>

UTS Library Study Skills Portal

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills>

UTS Student Guide to UTSONline & other online resources

<http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/elearning/student/index.html>

### STUDY SKILLS SUGGESTED READING:

A list of highly recommended study skills texts are listed online here. All available in the UTS library.

<http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/current-students-information-uts-business-school-0/study-and-assessment-resources-9>