ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

EMBEDDING ACADEMIC LITERACY IN FIRST YEAR UNITS OF STUDY

ACU | learning and teaching centre

This guide was prepared by Shannon Kennedy-Clark, Learning and Teaching Centre, Australian Catholic University for the use of ACU staff. Examples of student work are fictional and were developed solely for the purpose of this guide.

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Overview

The purpose of this manual is to provide casual and new academic staff at Australian Catholic University with background on the academic skills that first year undergraduates need to participate successfully in their university studies.

How to use this guide

The best way to read this guide is from cover to cover. Failing that, make sure that you are familiar with the sections on academic conventions and referencing so you can help any first year undergraduate students who are struggling with the academic writing genre.

Using this information elsewhere

While you are able to use this information for your own professional development and to help your students, please acknowledge the source when embedding into your unit of study materials.

Further guidance

If you would like more information or would like to embed academic literacy into your unit of study materials, please contact the Learning and Teaching Centre or the Academic Skills Unit.

1. Reading critically to evaluate information

> At university, students need to be able to read critically and think reflectively. Critical reading is an analytic and active activity.

Critical reading is reading to identify what a text says, what it does, and what it means by analysing the author's choices of content, language, and structure. The aim of critical reading is to move beyond a superficial understanding of the content in order to identify the author's purpose, to analyse the tone and persuasive elements of the text, and to identify bias.

When reading critically, a student may need to approach the text several times.

1. The first engagement with a text (**preview)** may be scanning for key words or skimming for a general idea.
2. On the next reading, students should be looking more closely at what the author is saying, making their own notes to analyse the **argument**, perhaps by using a critical reading checklist (see opposite).
3. A final **review** of the text as a whole allows the student to evaluate the author's perspective and assess the value of the evidence presented in the text.

Critical reading checklist

First-year students may benefit from a checklist of questions to guide their assessment of:

- the purpose of the text
- the genre of the text: this includes the type of text and intended audience. The purpose, audience and genre determine the way the text is written in structure, style, presentation of argument and use of evidence.
- the arguments and perspectives being presented, and
- the basis and foundations of the argument (research, logic, opinions and beliefs).

The answers to these questions can help the student decide on the **strengths and weaknesses** of the article.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL READING

The purpose of the writing

What is the author's purpose? Why has the article been written? – for example, to introduce a new idea, to explain, to persuade, to challenge?

The genre of writing

What type of publication is it? – for example, an academic journal, industry journal, promotional material, company report, textbook, newspaper, popular magazine?

Who is the target audience? – for example, academics, students, professional practitioners, shareholders, the industry, general public?

The arguments, themes and perspectives

First, what are the main ideas, arguments or themes?

What is the theoretical basis or framework of the argument or ideas? Are alternative views or possibilities presented?

Are there any underlying assumptions, either stated (explicit assumptions) or *not* stated at all (implicit assumptions)?

Do you agree (or partly agree or disagree) with the arguments? Why? Why not?

Is the article useful? If so, to whom? – for example, students, managers, other researchers?

Is the argument generally applicable or applicable only to particular situations, contexts or conditions?

Optional: You may also want to consider, based on your own experience:

- Are the arguments related to broader issues in the area?
- Are the arguments similar to or different from other texts on the subject?
- Are the arguments original or based on earlier thinking?

Foundations of the argument

What are the research, logic, opinions and beliefs behind the argument?

Identify how the argument is developed and supported. Is it:

- supported by empirical evidence?
- based on logical reasoning?
- a reflection of a personal belief?

What kind of evidence is used to support the argument? – for example, surveys, case studies, experiments, previous research?

How strong and/or valid is the evidence and argument? Are there any weaknesses in the evidence or arguments? – for example, is alternative evidence ignored? Is there simplistic interpretation of the evidence? Are there sweeping generalisations?

Is the argument convincing?

Comparative review

In a comparative review, also consider:

- What are the **similarities and differences** between the articles? (consider the purpose, target audience, genre, arguments, methodology and evidence used)
- What is their comparative usefulness?
- What are their comparative strengths and weaknesses?

Make an evaluation

Make a thoughtful judgment on the quality and usefulness of the articles based on your analysis and answers to all the above questions. Do you have any recommendations to improve the articles?

Source validity

Students should be encouraged to use the ACU Library's online access to databases. Please contact the library to arrange for a lecture or workshop for the students to demonstrate how to use these facilities.

Students need to know why a peer-reviewed journal has more credibility than Wikipedia. All sources of information may help a student to develop an idea, but they should steer away from using dubious sources in their writing. Below is a table showing the reliability of sources.

Table 1 Source reliability

Most reliable	Reliable	**Potential bias/dubious**
Peer reviewed journal articles	Journal articles	Newspapers
Government documents	Textbooks (make sure they aren't out of date)	Online newspapers
Published conference proceedings	Industry magazines	Corporate, private source documents
	Industry organisation publications e.g. WHO, UNESCO, CPA	Wikipedia
		Web-pages, blogs, web-articles

Evaluating information

Information should never be used indiscriminately. When looking at material there should be a continual evaluation process occurring. Students need to be encouraged to evaluate material. This process may include most, some, or a few of these questions:

1. What do I need to use this information for?

- to begin to focus my thoughts?
- as background information?
- to use as evidence?
- for locating other sources?
- as my central argument?

2. How recent is this material?

- Is it the latest?
- Does it need to be the latest?

3. What authority does the author have?

- Is he/she one of a few writing in this field?
- Is she/he one of many writing in this field?
- Is this person an acknowledged expert?
- Is this person making an original contribution?

4. Does the source of this material add to its value or usefulness?

- Does this material come from a key research centre/university?
- Does this material come from a reputable source?

5. How understandable is this material?

6. Does this add to my knowledge?

7. Do I really need to use this?

- Have I already supported my argument or point of view well enough?
- Do I have enough information to begin my task?

Note-making and note-taking

Many students complain that they read the set readings each week, but by the time they get to class they have forgotten everything. Similarly, when it comes to writing an assessment they can't remember where they saw a particular quote.

The note-taking/note-making strategy below allows the student to reflect on the article and add their own views. This process help students write because they can review how they responded to the article and will be able both to develop a more sophisticated argument and avoid plagiarising.

Using a note-taking scaffold

A good way to use this scaffold is to set it as a task for seminar groups. You can either get students to develop their own scaffold or email a blank scaffold to the group to complete. Each week they need to bring in a completed scaffold for each of the readings. It will help students to remember what they read and to contribute to the discussion.

Note-making scaffold

Bibliographic details: Note down the author's surname and initial, the title of the book/article, publisher, place, key themes, journal and date read.		
Notes: This is where you write the main points from the text.	**Page number**	**Comments on information**
Paraphrased notes should form the bulk of the information that is included in this section. (Paraphrasing means to rewrite somebody else's ideas in your own words). Direct quotes also may be written here. Make sure that you put inverted commas around the quote to remind you that it is somebody else's words copied verbatim (word for word).	Always remember to include the page number.	This is where you think critically and reflectively about the text. • How does this information relate to other texts that I have read? • What important links can be made to the topic/ other research? • How is the information relevant? If it isn't relevant should I be reading it at this time? • Does the author say anything new or interesting? • Is there anything that I don't understand that I need to follow up? • Is the author saying anything that I disagree with, and why do I disagree with it? • Is the author saying anything that contradicts the findings/ opinions of other authors? • What conclusions can I make from the points being made?

Source: Adapted from Martins, R. & Catterall, J., University of Western Sydney, Macarthur

Note-making scaffold

Title .....

Author/s .....

Theme .....

Source .....

Date read .....

Notes	Page	Your comments

2. Academic genre, tone, modality and plagiarism

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of the genre of academic writing.

Many members of our student community arrive on campus with a wide range of academic, workplace and school experiences.

Students often benefit from being provided with clear guidelines about what academic writing is and what it is not – especially before the first assessment.

Academic genre

The academic genre of writing is unique to the university context and has its own style. Its formality and structure support the main purpose of many written assessment tasks: to build an academic argument. The students' use of references, topic sentences, quotes, paraphrases, synthesis and explanations shows to the audience (you, as the marker) that they have undertaken research, have thought critically about a topic and have built a logical response to a question. The formal structure of the academic genre makes it easy to verify these student activities: it also makes particular demands on a student's writing and textual organisation skills.

Characteristics of the genre

The academic genre:

- is formal in language choice
- uses complete sentences
- avoids colloquial language, spoken expressions and clichés
- uses complete paragraphs
- uses elaboration, explanation and synthesis of ideas
- is based on research-supported points
- uses subject- or field-specific language to the extent that it may be difficult for a person outside the area to fully understand the text

Tone

It is crucial that students understand how the tone of a piece of writing is reflected in the words they choose. Highlight the different levels of formality in writing between job applications and emails to friends or posts on Twitter or Facebook, explaining how audience and purpose determine our tone.

(Any academic writing is a formal piece of writing, although your research papers have a slightly different style to student papers.)

Characteristics of academic writing

Academic writing is

highly nominalised – this means using nouns or noun phrases instead of verbs:

> **General writing uses verbs:**
>
> *The audience* **believed** *that* **using** *cleaning products* **affected** *the environment* **negatively**.
>
> **Academic writing uses nominalisations:**
>
> **The belief** *of the audience was that* **the use** *of cleaning products had* **a negative effect** *on the environment.*

Academic writing is often in **third person**, avoids personalisation and uses a passive construction – don't use *I, my, our, we, you mine,* or *me*

> **General writing is usually personalised:**
>
> **We can** *see the changes on* **our society.**
>
> **Academic writing is personalised:**
>
> *The changes on* **society can be** *seen.*

Academic writing **avoids contractions** (such as *can't* or *haven't*).

The choice of words reflects the tone: **formal vocabulary** is used in academic writing. Academic writing avoids using punctuation, such as exclamation marks and typing in capitals, to show **emotion**.

Getting the tone to sound 'academic' takes a lot of practice, because students normally use informal language in their daily communication and so may also use an informal tone when they start writing at university. Be explicit, then, about your expectations, and show students some examples of the differences between formal and informal writing.

The academic writing genre, as previously stated, relies heavily on formal vocabulary. Table 2 provides common examples of non-academic vocabulary and some substitutes.

Table 2 Academic vocabulary

Non-academic vocabulary	Academic vocabulary	Non-academic vocabulary	Academic vocabulary
look at	observe	get rid of	eliminate
go up	increase	look into	Investigate, examine
build up	accumulate	bring up	raise
set up	establish	a lot, lots of	numerous, copious
cut down	*reduce*	*go up and down*	*fluctuate*

Non-academic vocabulary	Academic vocabulary	Non-academic vocabulary	Academic vocabulary
can't	*cannot*	*didn't*	*did not*
e.g.	*for example*	*says*	*states, presents*
gets	*receives, acquires*	*good*	*substantial, fortunate*
thinks	*believes, argues*	*but*	*however, conversely*
bad	*poor, malign*	*many*	*several, numerous*

Modality

Academic writing often qualifies a categoric statement or generalisation using **hedging** techniques, since the situations being written about are not black or white and an argument may fall somewhere along the continuum.

One technique of hedging is the use of complex words and phrases to express **modality**. Consider the difference in the following statements from the categoric initial statement (in bold):

> **All Australians like sport.**
>
> *You must agree that all Australian like sport (strong)*
>
> *You will agree that all Australians like sport (strong)*
>
> *You can say that all Australians like sport (moderate)*
>
> *You might say that all Australians like sport (weak/tentative)*
>
> *It may be possible that all Australians like sport (weak/tentative)*
>
> *I wish I could say that all Australians like sport (weak/tentative)*

This example shows that the degrees of certainty or commitment to a statement can vary from strong modality to weak modality. The degree of modality expresses the distance that the writer places themself from an argument.

An opinion in academic writing should be based on the evidence the writer has collected. The level of modality used to express an opinion should match the level of certainty provided by the evidence.

It might be appropriate to make a strong modality claim because evidence from multiple sources backs up an opinion. Many people use a combination of levels, as this is 'safe'.

Students tend to use weak modality when they start writing: if you explain to them how modality affects their writing, they can manage the impact of their word choice on their argument. Note that in some cases students may need to use tentative or weak modality to show weaknesses in an argument or to show a negative situation.

Three levels of modality

The three levels of modality (Table 3) are:

1. Strong modality: 75–100% certainty (***will, must, certainly, never, definitely***)

2. Moderate modality: 50–100% certainty (***can, usually, should, normally***)

3. Tentative or weak modality: 0–50% certainty (***may, possibly, conceivably***)

Table 3 Levels of modality

Level of certainty	Modal verbs/adverbs/ terms	Statement of claim
Strong	*is, will, cannot, must, undoubtedly, always, never, undeniable, definitely, clearly, unreservedly, seriously, obviously, unquestionably, all,*	*It is certain that …* *It is clear that …* *X is definitely …* *X is never …* *The results indicate that…* *To a great extent…* *To a large extent…*
Moderate	*should, most, a significant proportion, numerous, would, can, ought to, tends to, usually, likely, surely, probably, regularly, majority, generally, often, frequently, rarely, presumably, evidently, frankly, fortunately, unfortunately*	*It appears certain that …* *It is usually the case that…* *In the majority of situations…* *The results suggest that …* *To a certain extent …* *To a significant extent …*
Tentative	*may, might, could, possible, conceivable, sometimes, occasionally, seldom, perhaps, maybe, uncertainly, minority, somewhat, potentially, apparently*	*Conceivably...* *It is possible that …* *A small proportion of…* *The results are not conclusive …* *It is unlikely that …* *Occasionally…* *It may be the case that …* *It appears probable …*

Academic conventions

Following is a list of standard academic conventions. This is a great list to distribute to students in the first few weeks of semester.

Avoid phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are commonly used expressions in English that combine a verb with a preposition, a verb with an adverb, or a verb with both an adverb and a preposition. Examples of phrasal verbs are *goes up, go down, think up, look up* and *sorted out*.

Rather than using phrasal verbs, use a formal verb such as *increases, decreases,* and *creates*.

Avoid contractions

Contractions (for example, *can't, shouldn't* and *I'm*) are commonly used in informal writing but are not permitted in formal academic writing. You need to take out the apostrophe and write the full form of the words: *cannot, should not,* and *I am*.

Avoid rhetorical questions

Do we all know what rhetorical questions are? Rhetorical questions are self-answered questions. They are great in presentations, but to be avoided in academic writing such as an essay.

- Rhetorical question:
  How can we engage students in learning?
- Revised statement:

  There are several practical strategies to engage students in learning.

Also, do not use questions as headings: instead, pose the question as a statement.

Avoid run-on expressions

Using run-on phrases such as *and so on* makes your sentence look incomplete or week. Try to finish the sentence with a clear example rather than *etc.* or *so on*.

You do not need to list more than three objects in a list – unless you want to add emphasis.

- Weak ending with run–on:

  There are many causes of student exhaustion, such as poor diet, part-time work, and so on.
- Strong ending:

  There are many causes of student exhaustion, such as poor diet, part-time work, and stress.

Avoid using parenthesis around additional thoughts

In informal writing you might add a thought (often additional information) within parentheses. Avoid this as much as possible in academic writing: try to integrate this additional information in your argument or separate with dashes. Save the parentheses for your references.

Avoid clichés and idioms

Clichés and idioms are commonly used features of informal speech.

A cliché is an expression or idea that has been so overused that it has lost its original impact and/or meaning, for example *I am not made of money* or *what goes around comes around*.

An idiom is a word, expression or phrase that has a figurative meaning. We are often unaware of very common idioms such as *paints a picture*, *the silver lining*, or *stopped at all costs.*

You should try to avoid clichés and idioms as they make the tone of your paper less formal and can trivialise your argument. See the examples below:

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, the White Australia Policy, was introduced soon after parliament had begun. As colonies **under the wings** *of*

the British Empire, people were able to move freely into Australia's borders.

Smith (2009) paints a picture of a happy family unit. However, this picture is often too good to be true and many people feel guilty over the fact that they have trouble juggling family and work commitments.

Avoid generalisations, superlatives and emotive expressions

Try to avoid statements such as *every, all, none, nothing, the best,* and *the worst,* as these are hard to prove. Instead, try to use statements such as *a considerable amount, a significant proportion,* or *to a minimal extent*.

Similarly, avoid emotive expressions such as *terrible, horrible, devastating, ridiculous, pathetic* as these affect the tone and make your writing more sensationalist (like a newspaper).

Avoid using exclamation marks.

Avoid using simple reporting phrases

Inexperienced writers often use very simple 'reporting' expressions, such as *the authors say that* or *the writer said that*. Try to develop a more sophisticated use of reporting phrases.

There are numerous academic expressions for reporting verbs, such as a*rgues, states, explains, asserts, suggests, implies, identifies, purports, illustrates, concludes, outlines,* and *provides.*

Try to use nominalisation

Nominalisation means choosing noun phrases instead of verbs. Academic writing is usually highly nominalised.

- More verbs:

  The audience **believed** *that* **using** *cleaning products* **affected** *the environment* **negatively**.

- More nouns:

  The belief *of the audience was that* **the use** *of cleaning products had* **a negative effect** *on the environment.*

Try to use third person

Academic writing is usually in third person, avoids personalisation and uses a passive construct. Try not to use I, my, our, we, you, mine, or me.

- Personalised

  We *can see the changes in* **our** *society in …*

- Not personalised

  The changes in **society can be seen** *in …*

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism can be defined as 'using the work of other people as if it was your own':

- Buying, stealing or borrowing and submitting work as your work – even if it is your friend's work from last session and they have said you can borrow it.
- Downloading, copying, cutting and pasting text from an electronic source and submitting it as your work – you must use quotation marks to show a direct citation.
- Using significant ideas from someone else and using them as your own – concepts or theories need to be acknowledged.
- While not exactly plagiarism, work that relies too much on other people's materials means that your voice is lost. Avoid too many quotes (especially long quotes) or references: an average of two quotes is probably adequate for a first year level assignment.

Plagiarism

Referencing (see '11. Referencing' below) is an integral part of academic writing. Students need to know that they need to reference all of the information that they have taken from external sources for three reasons:

1. **To add credibility to their argument** – students' use of academic sources shows that they have undertaken research, rather than making information up.
2. **To acknowledge the work of others** – an author needs to be credited with their work or ideas.
3. **To show their 'voice'** – students need to reference the work of external sources so that their audience can distinguish the student's argument in relation to relevant literature and sources. Without referencing, students may not get credit for their original ideas.

There are two types of plagiarisers at university. The first group are the students that unintentionally plagiarise due to language problems or a lack of understanding of referencing conventions: they may often lack the skills of paraphrasing and quoting. Some students come from countries where they have never had to provide references before, so it is a new concept to be learnt. Other students over-rely on references and quotes thinking that they are doing the 'right thing'.

The second group are the intentional plagiarisers. This includes a range of behaviours, from submitting the same assignment in different units of study, submitting a friend's assignment, cutting and pasting large sections of text from internet sources and employing the services of ghost writers.

Turnitin

Turnitin is not a cure-all for plagiarism. In fact, it is better used as a tool to help students see how they can improve their paraphrasing. Please follow your Faculty guidelines on how to address plagiarism.

3. Assignments and assignment questions

> Written assignments are the primary focus of the student's development in academic literacy.

Students will come across a range of assessments at university, with **essays**, **reports** and **case studies** being the most common written assessments. Some features of these assignment types are identified below (Table 4). Note that this is a generic outline and different faculties may have different expectations.

First-year students may or may not have written these types of assignment before. School assignments tend to be more descriptive than university essays. Mature-age students and international students may not be aware of the format and/or expectations of a particular assignment type.

It is often useful to show students models of a 'good' assignment type – seminars and tutorials are a good place to do this – so that they have an idea of what to aim for. However, it is best *not* to provide students with take-home copies or to make models accessible online, as there is a tendency to copy these models word for word.

Table 4 Assignment type

Essay	Report	Case study
Aim is to persuade or convince the audience Introduction Body Conclusion No headings Does not normally include visuals	Aim is to inform or report on an event, object or situation Clear headings Sections dependent on subject and report type Use of tables and figures	Aim is to respond to a case using theories and analysis Cases can be real or fictional May or may not require headings - depends on length and context. This style of assessment is varied.

For more information on:

- essays, see UNSW Learning Centre's essay writing guide
- reports, see WRiSE online writing support
- case studies, see Colorado State University Writing guide: case studies

Writing the assessment question

As researchers, we get to pick what we want to write about from topic lists provided in journals and conferences, so we often forget how hard it is to respond to a specific question.

Students often struggle with engaging in an assessment because the question or task is too complicated or is poorly written. A poorly written assignment question has no task words, no content words and no limiting words (see below for some examples of these components).

Essential task components

When writing a task, try to ensure sure that it has these three components:

1. Task words – words that tell a student specifically what to do. Task words are usually verbs, such as *compare, contrast, define, explain, discuss, identify, analyse*…

For example, the verb *discuss* is often used as the task word, but *discuss* is open to much interpretation: for example, some lecturers expect a one-sided argument, others a 'compare and contrast', and others an overview of a topic. Please ensure if the task word *discuss* is used in an assessment that you clarify to students exactly what you expect them to produce.

2. Content words – words that tell a student what the topic is.

3. Limiting words – words that limit the topic so that it is workable. Limiting words help students to set and define the scope of their essay.

If you do not use a clear task word in the assignment question, students do not know if they need to describe, explain or compare. If you don't supply any limiting words, students will have to guess how broad or narrow the focus of the set topic should be.

Some questions are simple and some are complex; however, if you break down the question, students should have clear understanding of the expectations of the marker.

> **Example 1 – A simple essay question**
>
> **Discuss** *[task words]*
> **to what extent** *[task words]*
> *the* **Australian education system** *[content words]*
> *is based on* **division and exclusion rather than inclusion and cohesion**
> *[limiting words]*

Example 2 – A complex essay question

Discuss *[task words]*
to what extent *[task words]*
the **Australian education system** *[content words]*
is based on **division and exclusion rather than inclusion and cohesion**.
[limiting words]

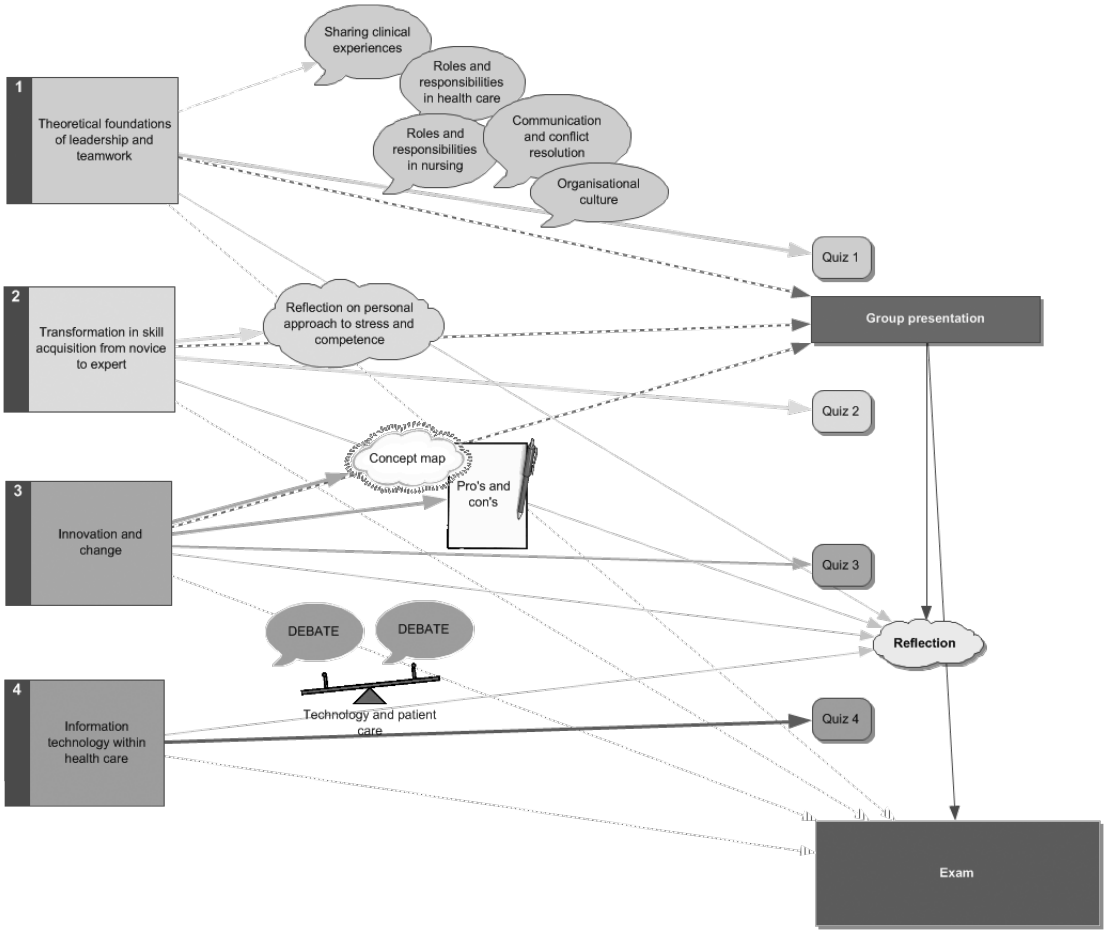
Evaluate *[task words]*
current **education policies** *[content words]*
in Australia. *[limiting words]*

Make recommendations *[task words]*
to **improve** *[limiting words]*
these **policies**. *[content words]*

Multiple subtasks

The other problem is that assessments are sometimes too complex: that is, there are numerous stages and micro-tasks that need to be completed. A graphic organiser (Figure 1) or visual representation (such as a flow chart) can sometimes help you to describe the assessment to students. Students also like to know word counts, that is, how many words are expected for each section of the assessment task.

Figure 1: Graphic organiser - Learning activities by module



4. The report

A report is a form of professional documentation.

A report may be one page long or 100 pages long. In some disciplines, such as science, information technology, or business, reports form the basis of academic and professional writing.

A report is designed so that information can be accessed easily – that is why a typical report has clearly delineated sections, headings, tables of contents and visuals.

Different people may read a report for different reasons – and students need to practise writing for the multiple possible audiences of a report.

A good report

- A good report is concise – the language is clear and the paragraphs are well structured.
- A good report has clear headings and subheadings.
- A good report is thorough, with sufficient data, evidence and clear conclusions.
- A good report has relevant information.
- A good report is visually appealing – font, spacing, editing, visuals, headings and referencing are all appropriate.

The structure of a report

This is a *brief* guideline to what may be included in a report. A report is not an information brochure – students need to address a problem, research the problem and provide plausible solutions to the problem and recommendations.

Below is a list of sections that may need to be included in a report.

1. Title page (separate page)

The title page should include unit name and number, assignment name and number, student name and number and tutor's name.

2. Abstract (separate page)

The abstract is a summary of the report, not an introduction. It is usually written last, and is about 100 to 200 words long.

3. Glossary (separate page)

The glossary contains any words or terms used that the audience may not know, along with their definitions.

4. Table of contents (separate page)

The table of contents page contains lists of section headings, tables and figures (if any). These tables of contents can be automatically created using the styles in Microsoft Word.

- Make sure that headings are numbered.
- Make sure that there are no single word headings.
- Headings should not be questions.

5. Introduction (separate page)

The introduction is the start of the main text of the report. Students should start this section on a separate page, with the title of their assessment at the top followed by the heading 'Introduction'.

The introduction should state the topic and the reason for the report, and answer these two questions:

a. Problem, hypothesis, or question – what does the student/author want to research?

b. Importance of research – why is this an important area to study?

Structure of the introduction

The introduction of a report is broken down into three paragraphs.

A. Overview or orientation to the topic

This section contains a general statement that introduces the topic and particular focus to the audience. Definitions of the topic or focus area should be included and students may clarify their position or view of this area. References may be needed.

B. Background

The background to topic and main issues or problems that need to be addressed should be explained. Students need to provide an outline of the main problem, its causes and the importance of this area. Students may provide historical information, recent developments and core issues. References may be needed.

C. Purpose

The purpose of the report and an outline of the key areas that will be covered need to be included here. The audience will use this as a guide to the report.

6. Literature review (follow on from 'Introduction')

The literature review is where the students include current and/or relevant research. Here they include current information, past trends and relevant data regarding their topic. The aim of the review is the synthesis of information and not a list or summary of texts.

7. Methodology (follow on)

In this section students write how they did their research: did they look over materials, did they do an experiment, did they conduct an interview, and did they compare data sources? – in summary, how they collected and analysed their data?

8. Results (follow on)

This is where students write about the information that they found. This section is factual and may be brief.

Did the student researcher have problems gathering data? Was the methodology inappropriate? Are the results clear?

9. Discussion (follow on)

This is where students can employ writing on cause and effect, or comparative or persuasive writing as they discuss their results. Was one model better than another? Was the data inconclusive? Will there be problems in the future? What are the limitations of the technology, how can it be improved, is it too expensive, will it be feasible, and so on.

10. Conclusion (follow on)

This is where students summarise the report. This may be very brief.

The final section of their report is the conclusion. This may be separated into two sections – conclusion and recommendations. The conclusion contains no new information, no references, no quotes and no statistics. It is a summary of the main points of their report accompanied by recommendations for future study or a course of action.

Structure of the conclusion

The conclusion has three stages.

1. Review of general statement

Students should re-write the first sentence of their report with the addition of a transition such as in summary; in brief; in conclusion.

2. Summary of key findings

Students need to summarise their main points or findings in the order they appeared within the report. They need to let the audience know the main points or issues that they found.

3. Recommendations

In a couple of sentences students need to make a recommendation for future action, such as more research, a possible course of action, changes that need to be made and the limitations of their research.

11. Recommendations (follow on)

The recommendations can appear under the 'Conclusion' section or under a separate heading. Here the students outline what the report indicates should happen in the future: what is the preferred model and course of action? They need to be persuasive to convince their audience.

12. References (follow on)

This is a list of references with complete bibliographic details according to faculty guidelines. Students should not just copy and paste weblinks.

13. Appendix (separate page)

This is where students include data and materials relevant to the report, such as questionnaires, data and results. Students need to mention the items in the appendix when relevant in the body of the report. Each additional resource is a new appendix, so students may end up with two or three appendices. Students should start each new appendix on a new page.

5. The essay

> The ability to communicate ideas effectively is a fundamental skill of academic writing. A solid structure enables a student to communicate their ideas and argument to their audience clearly.

There are three sections in a university essay: introduction, body and conclusion.

1. Introduction

- The introduction provides the reader with an outline of the essay.
- Students should mention their main points and give an indication of their conclusions.
- Students should directly engage with the question.
- Students should provide a clear statement of the thesis or argument and clearly establish the lines of discussion.

2. Body

- Within the body, the students answer the essay question by developing an argument sequentially.
- The students support assertions with evidence.
- Each paragraph should deal with one main idea.
- Paragraphs should progress logically towards a conclusion.

3. Conclusion

- The conclusion should bring together the main points of the essay and reiterate the answer to the question.
- It should not introduce any new material.
- It should add strength to the essay by clearly summing up the arguments and making a final comment.

The introduction of an essay

The introduction provides the reader with an outline or 'road map' of the essay. It should mention the main points and give an indication of the viewpoint. The introduction should directly engage the question. There should be a clear thesis statement and outline of the main points that will be addressed. No references, quotes or examples should appear in an introduction.

There is a typical sequence to an essay introduction (Table 5) which students may benefit from exploring.

Table 5 Essay introduction – example

(The introduction in this example would be one continuous paragraph.)

general statement	*The theory of engagement is a fundamental learning theory that suggests that students need to be engaged to learn.*
orientation to topic	*Engagement is the process of applying attention to a task. Student engagement occurs when students make a psychological investment in learning.*
thesis	*The purpose of this essay is to define the theory of engagement and to then analyse and discuss several methods of engaging students in the high school classroom.*
outline 1	*Firstly, the theory of engagement will be discussed in relation to theories of motivation and student behaviour.*
outline 2	*Secondly, this essay will outline several engagement strategies used in the documentary 'The classroom experiment'.*
outline 3	*Finally, an analysis of a case study will be presented.*

The general statement

First comes a general statement which tells the audience what the essay is going to cover. The general statement should respond to the question (content and limiting words may be used).

Orientation, scope or definition

Next, the topic is defined and the orientation made clear to the audience by a sentence or two of background information. No references are needed.

More detailed definitions belong in the body of the essay.

Thesis statement

At this point the introduction should provide a thesis statement, which lets the reader know what the essay will argue. A thesis statement may be overt or subtle. (More explanation of the thesis statement is provided below in '7. Thesis statements and meta-argument'.)

The outline

In the outline the main points that will be addressed in the body must be mapped out. Transition words (see '9. Cohesion – linking, building and proving points'), such as *firstly, in addition, further to this* and *however,* can establish the argument so that the audience can have an overview of how the points are related.

The body of an essay

The academic essay demands a change in a student from being a receiver of knowledge to being an active seeker of understanding and a maker of sense and meaning.

The body of the essay is where a student will detail and support their argument. The argument may be detailed in several places, dispersed across the paragraphs. The basic body paragraph should be the assertion elaboration paragraph discussed in '8. The paragraph'.

The argument should express a point of view and be developed in a systematic and balanced way that leads to a clear conclusion. An argument must be supported by evidence. This evidence comes from a student's understanding of the readings.

Students are not telling a story but dealing with a question. Often first year students may write narratives, use first person, and adopt an overly emotive tone when they first start writing. Try to encourage students to strive for academic characteristics in their writing.

Many students also struggle with the concept that they cannot have unsupported ideas and that they need to use references to support their ideas. Help them understand this by explaining how many references you expect them to use. A good rule of thumb is to encourage students to have around two references per body paragraph, and not to over-rely on one particular source. In a 1000 word essay, a first-year undergraduate should easily be able to find 6 to 8 sources.

The conclusion of an essay

The conclusion of an essay serves the general purpose of telling the reader what the essay has been about. No new information or references are used in a conclusion – as with the introduction, the conclusion is pitched at a general level. The main purpose of the conclusion is to reiterate the argument, prove it was true and summarise the main points.

For an essay type that aims to persuade, the conclusion may contain the following elements (Table 6):

Transition statement

The student should use a transition phrase such as:

In summary …

In conclusion …

to signal that they are finishing the essay.

2. Restatement of the general statement

The student should paraphrase the first sentence of the essay in restating their focus.

3. Summary of the main points

Each of the main point/s or key arguments from each section of the essay should be summarised.

4. Restatement of the thesis

The student should restate the thesis of the essay and show how it has been proved. An overly emotive statement is often a risk here – tell students how to avoid this.

5. Any qualification of the thesis

Encourage students to qualify the focus of their thesis or future directions or goals for this idea.

Table 6 Essay conclusion – example

(The conclusion in this example would be one continuous paragraph.

transition statement	*In summary, a focus on encouraging student engagement and commitment to learning is a crucial factor of successful classroom environments.*
restating the general statement	*The theory of engagement outlines how students learn when they are engaged.*
summary of main points	*In the documentary 'The classroom experiment', it was shown that by using three strategies, paddle pop sticks, mini whiteboards, and coloured cups, students were not only more engaged in the classroom, but were more motivated to learn and felt more involved in classroom activities.*
proof of thesis	*It was evident in the case study analysis that Miss Green's use of engagement strategies resulted not only in a better learning environment, but better learning outcomes than her colleague, Miss Blue. Hence, it was demonstrated in this essay that maintaining student engagement is a critical strategy in a successful high school classroom.*

Some essay don'ts

- Students do not need to use subheadings in an essay.
- Students should not use bullet point lists in an essay.
- Students should not use too many quotes. In a 1000 word essay, one long quote (quote over 3 lines long), as well as several shorter quotes, is more than enough.
- Students do not need to include references in either the introduction or the conclusion.
- Students should avoid writing in a first person narrative or overly descriptive style of writing.
- Students should avoid using personal pronouns, such as I, we, my or our, unless otherwise directed.
- Students should avoid clumsy use of reporting phrases, such as the writer said that, or in their book the author writes that.

6. Reflective thinking and reflective writing

> Reflective writing is becoming more popular as an assignment type because it allows students to respond in their own voices to experiences and information encountered during a unit.

Reflective writing is popular in education and health sciences as both of these professions are centred on reflective practices.

Reflective thinking

The concept of reflective thinking is credited to Dewey. Dewey's (1933) definition of reflective thinking is 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends'.

Reflective thinking is an ongoing (iterative) process in which an individual consciously thinks about his or her own knowledge and the gaps in his or her knowledge, assumptions, and past experiences. At university, this usually links readings, course notes and lectures and practical experience with theories in the field.

In the process of reflective thinking a student will (Figure 2):

- Identify gaps in current knowledge – determine what information is needed for understanding the issue at hand.
- Conduct a literature review – access and gather the available information and opinions of reliable sources in relevant fields.
- Make notes and summarise literature – synthesise the information and opinions.
- Identifies relationships and evaluates synthesis – considers the synthesis from all perspectives and frames of reference and considers this in relation to current beliefs, attitudes and knowledge.
- Develop a 'working' understanding – creates plausible (temporary) meaning that may be reconsidered and modified as he or she learns more relevant information and opinions. As states earlier, reflection is iterative in that there will be cycles of reflection and redesign of ideas as new information is accessed or experienced and processed.

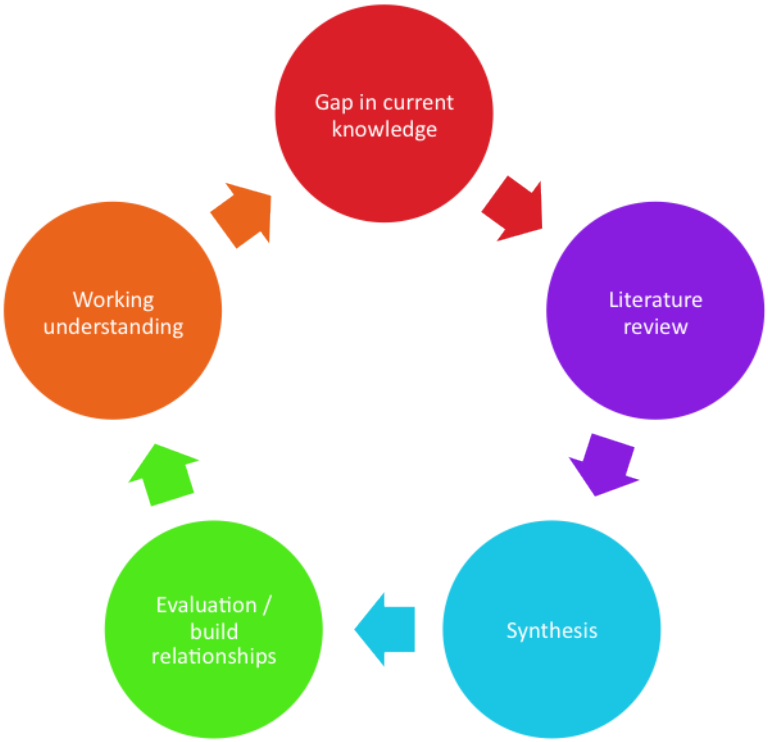


Figure 2:Cycle of reflective thinking

Reflective writing

Generally, a *reflective writing* assignment requires a student to consider the connection between three different aspects of the topic or subject that they are studying:

1. the topic
2. how it connects to other aspects or concepts in this unit
3. how it makes sense (or does not make sense) to the student

Reflective writing is:

- a response to the student's own experiences, opinions or events – not those of other authors
- where thinking about their learning takes place – building self-knowledge
- a student's response to thoughts, feelings, other forms of awareness and new information
- a way to achieve clarity and better understanding about unit materials.

Reflective writing is not:

- information, instruction or argument
- pure description, though there may be descriptive elements
- a straightforward decision or judgement, for example whether something is right or wrong, good or bad

- simple problem-solving
- a 'normal' university essay.

What can be discussed in reflective writing?

- a student's perceptions of the unit and about what they are learning
- experiences, comparisons, connections, ideas and observations they have had, and how they relate to the unit
- questions that students have and conclusions that they draw
- what they have found confusing, inspiring, difficult, or interesting, and why
- problem-solving – how a student reached a conclusion, found an answer or reached a point of understanding
- alternative interpretations or different perspectives on what students have read or done in their unit
- how new ideas challenge what a student already knows.

7. Thesis statements and meta-argument

> The thesis statement is the argument or the main premise when writing.

Students need to have a clear thesis statement when writing a report or essay so that the audience knows their position. If students don't have a thesis it is very easy for them to get off track and to lose direction when writing. The problem is that we are often not taught, at school or at university, how to write a thesis statement, and it can be a bit confronting for students to have to be so overt and explicit in their purpose for writing.

If you tell students what a thesis statement is and how it is the meta-argument or their purpose for writing, it may help them to organise and plan their assessments. Below is a brief outline of how to write a thesis statement. We also consider thesis statements when we look at the structure of an essay and the structure of a report.

Both essay and reports need to have a thesis statement or a statement of purpose in the introduction of the text.

Thesis statement in an essay

When students are writing an essay they need to have a clear thesis statement in their introduction.

A thesis statement must be quite explicit: that is, when the audience reads the thesis statement they immediately identify it as such – 'ah, that is the thesis statement'. Below are some examples of thesis statements:

> *This essay will argue that the use of Green IT strategies in multinational organisations will prevent further environmental degradation.*

> *This essay will provide an outline of education policies in Australia and will demonstrate the limited extent of inclusion and cohesion in Australian schools resulting from these policies.*

> *Overall, the use of pay for performance measures in an organisation needs to be analysed carefully before being implemented in order to avoid negative impacts on staff*

Other ways to start a thesis statement include:

This essay will demonstrate…

This essay will argue…

This essay will evaluate…

This essay will illustrate…

This essay will analyse…

This essay will explain…

The purpose of this essay is to …

Thesis statement in a report

In a report, the thesis statement is the statement of purpose. So if a report introduction has three paragraphs, one paragraph (usually the third) will be a purpose and outline paragraph. Students need to have a clear purpose statement:

> *The purpose of this report is to analyse the growth of mobile technologies and to ascertain their effect on society.*

> *This report will clarify the issues faced by the Australian legal system and will present several recommendations for the overhaul of relevant policies and legislation.*

Meta-argument

The meta-argument (thesis) is the main argument in an essay. This means that students need to plan their argument *before* they start writing. Each paragraph or section needs to have clear links back to the thesis (Table 7): that is, students should repeat key terms from their thesis in each paragraph or section. This repetition is often done in the topic and concluding sentences.

Table 7 Thesis links across a paragraph or section

Introduction	Body	Conclusion
The purpose of this report is to analyse the growth of mobile technologies and to ascertain their effect on society →	[Point 1] [Point 2] [Point 3] [Point 4]	→ *Consequently the growth of mobile technologies has had both positive and negative impacts on society…*

Organising ideas

Planning writing is a core component of the writing process, but many students overlook this stage altogether and then wonder why their writing lacks cohesion and logical order.

In this section, several strategies are provided for presenting the outline of a written assessment visually in order to help with the planning process.

Visual representations

Visually mapping a text can make it easier to understand the relationships, the flow of ideas and the gaps in the text or knowledge. The following visual representations are familiar to most students; however, many people don't know their value when planning a paper.

The value of visuals

Mind mapping is a great way to get ideas on paper.

Flow charts are useful to see relationships and cause and effect.

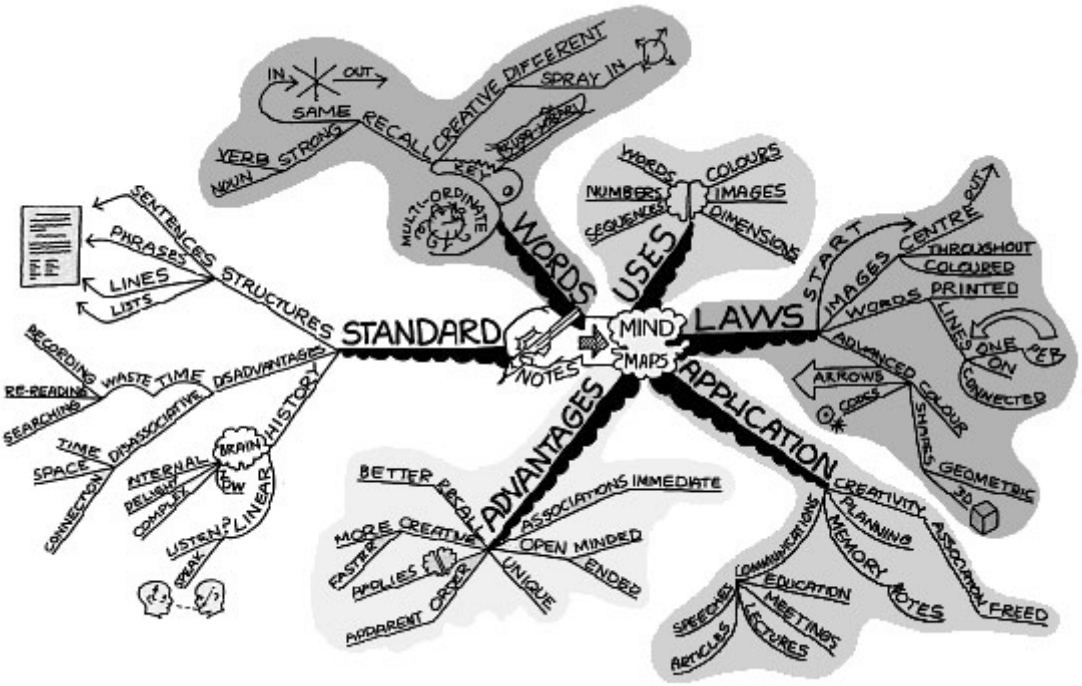
Tables are great for comparing and contrasting ideas and articles and seeing relationships.

Branch diagrams are good to break large topics down into subtopics.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a simple strategy to elicit ideas and information around a central theme or idea. The point is not to organise ideas, but to see where the relationships are and the gaps.

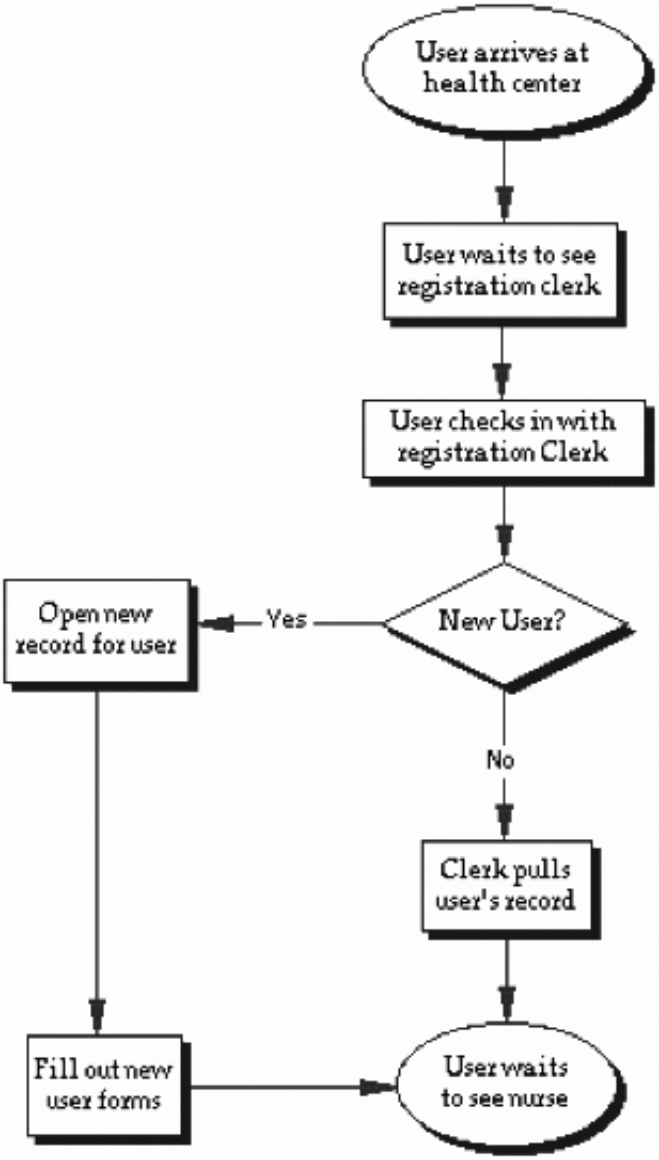
Mind mapping is also often used by teachers to see what prior knowledge students have about a topic. It is a useful strategy for group work.



Source: Adapted from Buzan, T. (2010). *Mind map gallery*. Retrieved from www.thinkbuzan.com

Flow charts

Flow charts are a useful way to map out a process. For example, if a student reads a text on patient admissions, they can develop a flow chart of the process.



Source: Adapted from *The Manager's Electronic Resource Centre*, Management Sciences for Health, Retrieved from http://erc.msh.org/quality/graphics/flowchart2.gif

Tables

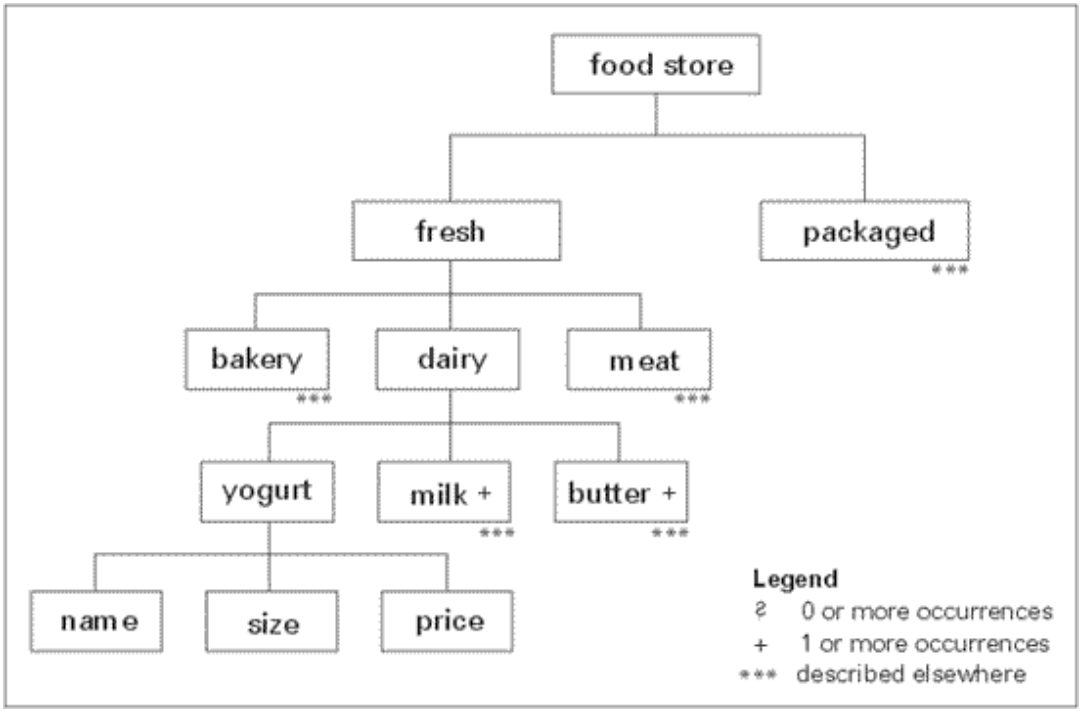
Tables are useful for students to organise literature and to see the relationships between the data in the columns and rows. Here the strengths of several visual planners are compared:

Visual tool	is good for ...
mind map	brainstorming
flow chart	cause and effect relating concepts
table	contrasts summaries
diagram	hierarchy taxonomy

Branch diagrams

Branch diagrams are a useful graphic organiser to help students see hierarchies and categories of information, what the main points are and what the subcategories are. It is best if they go down to at least three levels in order to get a high degree of specificity.

Source: Adapted from Bartz, J. (2002). Great Idea, but how do I do it? A practical example of



learning object creation using SGML/XML. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 28(3). Retrieved from http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/102/95

Writing the plan

Planning is an essential part of academic writing – planning helps students to organise their ideas, remove superfluous information and weak arguments and develop coherency.

There are numerous types of plans, but a plan should include:

- the position – what is the thesis?
- four or five points that are the most relevant to the central argument (thesis)
- ideas organised on paper
- research to support points. Students may change their points and even their thesis after doing some research, which is all part of the process.

Below (Table 8) is an example of an essay plan for a first year Education student. Some students have very detailed essay plans complete with references and others have bullet points of ideas. Students should be encouraged to develop their own style. The more information that they have in their plan, the easier it is for them to start and stop writing without losing their flow of thought.

Table 8 Essay plan – example

Introduction		
Overview	• Engagement is a critical factor in successful student learning. If a student is not engaged then they are not focused on the lesson.	
Thesis	• The purpose of this essay is to examine the theory on student engagement and to describe and analyse several strategies to engage students in a high school classroom.	Need to find at least 3 theories and 4 strategies
Body		
Point 1	• Theory of engagement (200 words) • Student engagement • Student motivation • What happens when students are not engaged	Need to find at least 3 references
Point 2	• The Classroom Experiment • Use of paddle pop stick instead of hands up • Use of mini whiteboards • Use of coloured cups	Professor William Watch BBC movies

Point 3	• Case study (400 words) • Analyse difference between Miss Green and Miss Blue in the classroom. • Miss Green uses activities and uses group work • Miss Blue is very hands up and focuses on one student	Need to link to references
Conclusion		
	• Not too sure yet	

8. The paragraph

> The basic academic paragraph is the assertion/elaboration paragraph.

This is an easy model for students to follow, and will ensure that they are writing complete paragraphs.

In this type of paragraph, the assertion is made in the topic sentence and is elaborated on in the body through the use of supporting statements. This is a very linear method of paragraph writing. The example below (Table 9) shows some of the key features of an assertion/elaboration paragraph.

Table 9 Assertion/elaboration paragraph – example

Game-based learning

Structure	Text	Explanation
Topic sentence	*Virtual worlds [topic] can provide students with access to an experience that is not possible in the classroom [controlling idea]. Virtual worlds, due to their immersive design, can enable students to participate in an experience, such as engaging with contagious diseases, conducting a rescue or conducting surgery (Barab et al., 2009). An example of this is evident in scientific inquiry learning, which teachers find difficult to teach without support (Urhahne, Schanze, Bell, Mansfield, & Holmes, 2010). Using a virtual world such as River City to conduct a virtual inquiry can result in improved student attitudes towards learning science (Ketelhut, Dede, Clarke, & Nelson, 2006). River City is a virtual world that enables learners to investigate airborne, waterborne and insect-vector diseases. Research findings demonstrate the learners have a deeper understanding of both inquiry skills and infectious disease after participating in the study than participants in paper-based resources trials (Ketelhut et al., 2010). Thus, through using virtual worlds, learners are able to participate in an experience, such as a scientific inquiry, that may not be possible in a classroom.*	A topic sentence has a topic and a controlling idea.
Topic sentence		Detail about the controlling idea is provided.
Elaboration		
Supporting evidence		Point-focused referencing (information prominent; no argument is being presented).
Explanation		
Explanation		Transition
Concluding sentence		Link back to topic sentence.

Topic sentences

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of each paragraph in the essay body.

A topic sentence is a brief sentence that identifies the main point that will be addressed in the paragraph. It provides the reader with an overview and it is linked to the meta-argument.

Reading the topic sentences only should give the reader a good understanding of the content of the essay.

Topic sentences are neither too general nor too specific. There are no references, statistics or quotes.

The topic and the controlling idea

A topic sentence contains a **topic** and a **controlling idea**. The topic is linked to the thesis, and the controlling idea is the main point that will be discussed in that paragraph. As you can see in Table 10, the controlling idea provides the perspective or limits of a paragraph. If students do not have a clear controlling idea it is difficult to narrow the scope of their paragraphs.

Table 10 Topic sentence components

Topic	Education
Controlling idea	Information technology Financial support Developing countries, women
Examples	**Education** *[topic]* **has been greatly affected by the integration of information technology** into the classroom *[controlling idea]*. Financial support *[controlling idea]* is essential in the development of an effective education *[topic]* program. Education *[topic]* for women in developing countries is necessary to boost literacy rates *[controlling idea]*.

Further examples of topic sentences:

> *a. There have been several major economic trends [controlling idea] in China that have boosted growth and development topic.*

This suggests that the topic of the essay is growth and development in China and that this paragraph will focus on economic trends.

> *b. The court of Henry VIII topic was plagued by deceit and treachery [controlling idea].*

This suggests that the topic of the essay is Henry VIII and the focus of the paragraph is deceit and treachery within the court.

c. One influential language teaching methodology topic is grammar translation [controlling idea].

The essay is discussing language teaching methodologies and this paragraph will explore grammar translation.

Elaboration

One problem that students have when writing is that they assume that the reader can follow their train of thought. One way to overcome this jump from topic sentence to example is to use elaboration. Elaboration occurs when you explain or define the topic sentence and the main point of a paragraph. Elaboration is an important part of academic writing as it helps to:

- develop the argument
- make sure that the audience understands a point of view
- show the logic supporting the choice of examples and evidence.

Examples of elaboration

Text 1 – Language teaching methodologies

This paragraph does not explain the main point.	**This text does not contain elaboration:** *One influential language teaching methodology is grammar translation [topic sentence]. For example, in China and Japan, grammar translation is popular due to the large class sizes [supporting example].*
This paragraph explains what grammar translation is.	**This text contains elaboration:** *One influential language teaching methodology is grammar translation [topic sentence]. Grammar translation is a methodology that is derived on the basis that individuals learn a language by repeating and rote learning complete grammatical structures. One benefit of grammar translation is that one teacher can instruct numerous students [elaboration]. For example, in China and Japan, grammar translation is the preferred methodology due to the large class sizes and the limited availability of teaching resources [supporting example].*

Text 2 – The qualities of a hero

This text is confusing – there are two controlling ideas: which one is being dealt with first?	**This text does not contain elaboration:** *In order to be considered a hero a person must display extraordinary physical or intellectual powers [topic sentence]. Take the example of Cathy Freeman's gold medal 400metre run in the 2000 Sydney Olympics; even though she was placed as the favourite, she overcame racial, social and physical obstacles to secure her place on the podium [supporting example].*
This text explains what a physical hero is, which is a logical transition between the topic sentence and the example.	**This text contains elaboration:** *In order to be considered a hero a person must display extraordinary physical or intellectual powers [topic sentence]. The physical hero is one who exhibits great strength to overcome opposition to become a victor, such examples are often found in sporting lore and folktales [elaboration]. Take the example of Cathy Freeman's gold medal 400-metre run in the 2000 Sydney Olympics; even though she was placed as the favourite, she overcame racial, social and physical obstacles to secure her place on the podium [supporting example].*

Paraphrasing, quoting and summarising

Quoting, paraphrasing and summarising are all essential skills that students must be able to utilise in order to write academic reports and essays. These are skills that relate to how students use information found in external sources that support their argument. In each instance, the original source must be referenced.

Students should be encouraged to use paraphrasing and summarising, and to reserve the use of direct quotations for referring to key thinkers in the field or for when the source author's expression is so beautifully presented that to paraphrase would lose the subtleties and nuances of the original. Students should not over-rely on direct quotations, because this is the most superficial integration of someone else's ideas into their own work.

Quoting

A quotation, or 'direct quote', is exactly the same as the original text. When the student wants to directly copy, word for word, the author's writing, they must precisely indicate the copied words by placing inverted commas (quotation marks) around the text if it is less than three lines long, or indent the text as a block if it is over three lines long.

Students should use quotations only when necessary and include an in-text reference, including page numbers (as well as referencing the source text in the end-of-text References list). They should also try to explain the relevance of a quotation.

Example of a quotation[1]

Australian society is based on exclusion: as Kalantzis and Cope (1993, p. 120) state, '1901 was a moment of nationalism, and with that came racism, isolationism and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples'.

Here the quotation is presented as supporting evidence for the student writer's assertion.

Poor use of a quotation

Federation was 'a moment of nationalism' and this meant that Australian society displayed 'racism, isolationism and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples' (Kalantzis and Cope 1993, p. 120).

In this instance the student voice is lost: it is the quotation which is making the point, not the student writer.

Better use of a quotation

Kalantzis and Cope (1993, p. 120) state '1901 was a moment of nationalism, and with that came racism, isolationism and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples': this suggests that Australian society was not founded on the principles of inclusion and cohesion, but rather that the Act of Federation excluded sections of the community.

In this last example the quotation has been linked to the argument, and so it supports the point.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the use of another person's work in a piece of writing where the meaning is not changed, but the words are, and so it is not a direct quotation. Just as when quoting, the source text being paraphrased must be referenced, including the page number.

Paraphrasing a short section of text (a sentence, a couple of sentences or a paragraph) allows the student to demonstrate their understanding of the material they are reading by pulling its ideas and meanings into their own analysis and argument.

Unlike a summary, a paraphrase is usually about as long as the original text (Table 11).

1 The reference for these examples is: Kalantzis, M. and Cope, B. 1993, 'Republicanism and Cultural Diversity' in *The Republicanism Debate*, (eds) W. Hudson and D. Carter, New South Wales University Press, Sydney.

Table 11 Example paraphrase

Original text	Paraphrase in a student's essay
1901 was a moment of nationalism, and with that came racism, isolationism and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples.	*Australian society has an ongoing history of exclusion of indigenous Australians. Kalantzis and Cope (1993, 120) indicate that the exclusion and racism towards the Aboriginal peoples was evident at Federation.*

Summarising

Summarising is similar to paraphrasing, but a summary is shorter than the original text (Table 12), and is typically used to outline the meaning of long sections of texts or chapters. The student's summary must not change the meaning of the text and must include an in-text reference.

Table 12 Example summary

Original text	Summary in a student's essay
1901 was a moment of nationalism, and with that came racism, isolationism and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples. 2001 could be a year when the peoples of this continent, indigenous and immigrant, celebrate their common purpose without hegemony their global outlook without prejudice to local vision, their multiculturalism which dynamically and creatively open us the dominant culture, their republic without nationalism.	*The year 2001 provides an opportunity to celebrate an inclusive national identity (Katalantzis & Cope 1993).*

Introducing evidence

Evidence, or providing support for a point, is a basic part of academic writing. Students may need guidance on incorporating evidence, as they may jump from point to evidence without a smooth transition. This transition is often structured as follows:

- State the point.
- Explain the point.
- Provide evidence - remembering to relate it to the point.
- Comment on the evidence to show how it supports the claim – this may mean analysing data, explaining a quote or showing a weakness in an argument.

A second piece of support is always useful to strengthen an argument.

Reporting verbs

Reporting verbs (Table 13) form an important part of academic writing, as they show the relationship between the authors being referenced and their work, and can strengthen a student's argument.

Table 13 Reporting verbs

Function of verb	Examples
Neutral	*Smith (2006) describes* *Lee (1999) states* *Brown et al. (1997, p. 123) defines* *Carter and Hachijima (2011) explain that* *Dalgarno and Gill (2008) outline*
Draw attention to the author's viewpoint	*MacLean (2001) argues* *Marcello (1997) disputed* *Watanabe (2001) conceded*
Give information about the author's work	*Patty (2000) investigated* *It was evaluated by Grocer (1993, p. 54)* *Burns and Fong (2006) compare*
Highlight the author's viewpoint	*Brown (2001) believes* *McAllister (1996) recognised* *Smith (2004) predicted …*
Other useful reporting verbs	*Analyses, assesses, comments, concludes, criticises, demonstrates, discusses, examines, identifies, illustrates, indicates, notes, observes, points out, purports, reports, shows, suggests, validates, verifies*

Concluding sentences

The final sentence of a paragraph can have three main functions:

1. To re-state the topic sentence

2. To summarise the main point or issue raised in the body

3. To make links to the following paragraph

Let students know that they should try not to finish a paragraph with a quote or a

reference, but rather finish with their own words.

Functions of concluding sentences:

1. To re-state the topic sentence

    Thus, there have been numerous changes in Australian society in regards to gender and equality.

    Therefore, there have been numerous changes to bicycle design recently.

2. To summarise the main point or issue that is raised in the body

    In brief, it is evident that Australian society is cohesive to a limited extent in regards to the religious and cultural values of migrants.

    Consequently, it is evident that the changes in bicycle technology over the past ten years are a result of using similar technology to that used in aircraft construction.

3. To make links to the following paragraph

    Thus, there have been numerous changes Australian society in regards to gender and equality and these changes are also reflected in education policies.

    Thus, there have been numerous changes to bicycle design recently and the impact of these changes is evident in competitive bike riding.

Putting it all together

Below is an example of an assertion elaboration paragraph that ties together the elements outlined in this section.

Example paragraph with elements: To Be a Hero

Paragraph element	Paragraph text
Topic sentence assertion	*In order to be considered a hero a person must display extraordinary physical or intellectual powers.*
Elaboration	*The physical hero is one who exhibits great strength to overcome opposition to become a victor: such examples are often found in sporting lore and folktales.*
Supporting example	For example, Cathy Freeman's gold medal 400 metre run in the 2000 Sydney Olympics; even though she was placed as the favourite, she overcame racial, social and physical obstacles to secure her place on the podium (ACERA, 2009).

Paragraph element	Paragraph text
Tie to topic sentence	*Securing the gold medal made Cathy a physical hero and is one the great moments in Australian Sporting History.*
Elaboration	*A second heroic type is the intellectual; this person is admired for his or her contributions to society. Marie Curie discovered the mysterious element radium.*
Supporting example	*It opened the door to deep changes in the way scientists think about matter and energy (Jones, 2011).*
Tie to topic sentence	*Furthermore, she also led the way in a new era of medical knowledge and the treatment of diseases, thus becoming an intellectual hero (Morgana, 2010).*
Concluding sentence	*Therefore, being a hero is based on physical or intellectual strength and dedication, which demonstrates the cultural values in Australian society.*

9. Cohesion – linking, building and proving points

This section will look at how cohesive words can be used to add links and build relationships in academic writing.

Linking words (Table 14) are also known as *conjunctions* or *coordinating words*. They are useful in making essays and reports cohesive (making them 'stick together'), and linking together and showing logical relationships between ideas, sentences and paragraphs. Linking words can be used within a sentence, between sentences, and between paragraphs.

Within a sentence:

Both of the brothers enjoyed playing sport. Samuel was a good cricketer; **however**, *Raymond was a star tennis player and never stepped on a pitch.*

Smith et al. (2007) explained that the use of laser in optic surgery has a 98% success rate; **however**, *their research is countered by the work of Singh and Patel (2008), who claim that the success rate is a significantly lower 79%.*

Between two sentences:

New technologies cause basic changes in skill requirements for potential employees. **Moreover**, *these technologies often result in the combining of jobs.*

At present, much of the research has been centred in multinational corporations. **Consequently**, *thorough research of the incidents of embezzlement in small companies needs to be undertaken in order to obtain a broad view of the issue.*

Between two paragraphs:

… Many examples of new technology are seen in call centres [concluding sentence].

Furthermore, *call centres can be outsourced to international corporations reducing a company's need for fulltime employees [topic sentence]. …*

… **Hence**, *the art of Modigliani represents the very best of Italian Art Deco painting [concluding sentence].*

There are, **however**, *a large number of art critics who dispute the value of Modigliani's work [topic sentence]. …*

Table 14 Cohesive words and phrases

Relationship	Words
Time	*soon, then, finally, previously, next, last, afterwards, on another occasion, at this point, until then, before that, lastly, meanwhile, subsequently, following on from, in the end, now, presently, formerly, concomitantly, parallel, alongside*
Addition	*again, and, besides, therefore, additionally, indeed, moreover, as well, furthermore, in addition, likewise*
Result	*hence, therefore, consequently, so, because, then, finally, in summary, on the whole, thus, accordingly, as a result, such as, these include, evidently*
Contrast	*however, nevertheless, yet, and yet, but, still, on the other hand, otherwise, conversely, in spite of, though, although, even so, contrastingly, contrarily, on the contrary, balanced against, despite*
Comparison	*similarly, likewise, correspondingly, equally, equally important, in the same way, even so, by comparison, consistently, congruently, respectively*
Analogy or **example**	*for example, an example of this is, this can be seen, this can be illustrated by, an illustration of this is, this can be exemplified by, for instance, to demonstrate, take the case of*
Summary	*in brief, finally, in conclusion, to conclude, lastly, in summary, on the whole, as shown, thus, to recapitulate, in other words, summing up, hence*
Sequence	*Firstly, secondly, subsequently, simultaneously, concurrently, previously, at this time, next, last, finally, then, followed by, before, after, meanwhile*

Examples of cohesion

These two texts use cohesive words to organise the argument.

Text 1 – Online Learning

There have been numerous studies undertaken in the area of visualisation at secondary and tertiary levels. Visualisation is effective as a learning strategy because it enables learners to access complex information in a way that can develop meaning and understanding (Waller & Greenauer, 2007). Several authors purport that there are numerous benefits for the learner (Muller et al. 2008; Green 2006; Natarajan 2007). The literature indicates that using multimedia technology allows for flexible, self-paced, learner focused and measurable learning (Muller, Kester & Sharma, 2008). Muller et al. (2008) suggest that online learning can enhance classroom learning through rich activities. **Moreover**, *Lipton and Bray (2003) suggest that enhanced visualisation can make navigation easier, and Lowe (2004) concurs in stating that visually explicit information can aid learners in avoiding wasteful processing of information.* **Consequently**, *the advantages of visualisation seem to lie in the ability to create a visually appealing learning experience*

that allows learners to engage with materials that utilise a variety of delivery methods. This suggests that materials can be developed to appeal to differing learning styles and strategies.

Text 2 – Fast food

Recently in Australia, fast food has received copious attention in the media, which is predominately negative; **however**, *there are several benefits to eating fast food. Fast food can be defined as food that is bought ready to consume from a shop, store or food court (Granger et al. 2005). Fast food has a negative image since it often contains too much fat, sodium and calories and may contribute to obesity. One benefit of fast food is that it brings much needed convenience to our hectic lives as the food will be readily available when we are hungry thus avoiding preparation or cooking time.* **Secondly**, *to avoid too much fat or salt in a diet, an individual can select healthier options such as salads, sandwiches or sushi (Healthwise 2005).* **In fact**, *McDonald's has now introduced a range of 'Lighter Choices' with seventeen menu options each with ten grams of fat or less, so the argument that fast food is unhealthy is not valid as there is an abundant array of healthy options that are just as accessible as their salt, fat and calorie ladened counterparts (McDonald's 2006).* **Finally**, *fast food is also inexpensive; most menu items offer a full meal for less than ten dollars, for example, two sushi rolls at Sushi Fast cost $4.40, thus providing a nutritious and inexpensive lunch, which took no time to prepare (Sushi Fast, 2006).* **Consequently**, *fast food can provide nutritious and inexpensive meal options for individuals, but consumers need to be aware of the healthy options.*

Punctuation and cohesion

Students often make simple mistakes with punctuation when making use of cohesive words (also called *linking* words, *connectives* or *transitions*).

- One important consideration to remember when using linking words is not to overuse any particular word, such as *Thus*, throughout the essay. Encourage students to check for this when they are editing their work.
- Secondly, students shouldn't start sentences with *And*, *Because* or *But*. These words are conjunctions and their function is to join clauses within a sentence.
- If the linking word can be moved around within the sentence – if it can be placed at the beginning, in the middle or at the end and still make sense – then it can be isolated from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas, or a single comma if it is the first or last element. The following sentences show the slight semantic difference in the placement of the word *however*.

  The old man, **however**, *liked to walk alone of an evening.*

However, the old man liked to walk alone of an evening.

The old man liked, however, to walk alone of an evening.

The old man liked to walk alone, however, of an evening.

In your marking, watch out for students using a linking word to join complete clauses to make a compound sentence: in this case, the linking word is preceded with a semicolon and followed with a comma.

There was much celebration at the end of the night; moreover, the winning team shared the spoils with the vanquished.

10. Editing

> Students, especially those with poor time management, leave editing to the last minute. Encourage students to build editing into their writing process and to set time aside for editing.

No matter how good a student's ideas or argument are – poor editing will result in poor marks.

Editing strategies

Writers make changes to their papers at different levels. Knowing about these levels can help a student divide up the job of getting a paper ready to hand in.

- Read the paper aloud, or have someone read it aloud. We often 'hear' more of our errors than we see.
- Leave as much time between finishing writing a paper and editing and proofreading it. This lets a student 're-see' the paper with rested eyes and a more distanced perspective.
- Read the paper backward - from the end to the beginning - one sentence (for editing) or one word (for proofreading) at a time. This concentrates attention on sentences and words rather than on the paper's meaning as a whole.
  or

  Use two pieces of blank white paper to cover all but one sentence at a time. This helps reduce visual noise and prevents distraction from other (nearby) sentences.
- Deliberately set aside time for proofreading. Don't write a paper on the last day. Editing takes days!
- Build editing and proofreading into the writing process. Many writers like to edit a section a day after they have finished writing so that they can concentrate on their ideas first. Time management!
- Good writers don't necessarily know all the grammar and punctuation 'rules', but they do know where to look them up. Find and use resources.
- Know and keep a list of your common errors so that you know what to look for in your papers.
- Read a paper a few times concentrating on different levels. For example, read for big picture meaning and clarity, read for referencing, read for punctuation, read for topic sentences and read for vocabulary.

11. Referencing

> Referencing is a difficult skill to master. Not only do students need to become familiar with the conventions of referencing, they also need to know how to use referencing to support their argument.

There are two components to referencing which students need to master: end-of-text (that is, the reference list) and in-text (or, citations).

Keep in mind when you are teaching any cross-faculty units that students are likely to only be familiar with the format preferred by their particular faculty. You will need to provide guidance for the format you expect in the written work in your unit. Four systems – APA, Harvard, Chicago and MLA – are outlined on the 'Academic referencing' webpage on the ACU student site.

The Academic Skills Unit provides referencing support for students.

End-of-text reference list

Students are expected to complete a reference list, written as *References*. A reference list is a list of all of the sources used in the body of the assignment: this should come under the heading **References**. This is different from a **bibliography** which is information that has been read but not referred to in the body of a text.

Points to remember:

- The reference list comes after the conclusion (that is, before the appendix).
- Last name goes first, then the author's initials.
- Don't use bullet points. Either separate with a blank line or use a hanging indent.
- Be consistent with punctuation, placement of the year and use of italics.
- If there are several authors, list their names in the order that they are presented on the paper. (The person whose name is first usually did the most work.)
- Even if there are ten authors for a paper, all of the authors' names need to be included in the list.

In-text referencing: introducing evidence and referencing

In-text referencing, also known as **citation**, is when you place an author's name and the year that they published their work next to their idea in brackets. Ensure students know that punctuation like periods or commas go after the reference.

Students can either make their point author-focused or point-focused.

Author-prominent or author-focused in-text referencing

Author-focused citation places emphasis on the author's name.

This is a useful technique when using a seminal text or to show that someone else

supports the student author's view. Using the author's name at the beginning of the quote gives more authority.

Author-focused summary

Smith (2006) focused on the influence of American culture on Australia.

Author-focused paraphrase

Smith (2006, p. 34) argues that Australian children are greatly influenced by American popular culture and that this has led to an increase in violence.

Author-focused referenced quote

Australian society is experiencing an increase in childhood crime as Smith (2006, p. 34) states 'American popular culture is having a dramatic impact on Australian teenagers by creating an image of the cool gangster'.

Example:

Sandman (2005) states that …

Plover (2003) indicates that …

According to Bloom (2003, p.23), …

Bloom (2002) suggests/argues/ illustrates this point/purports/emphasises/ identifies …

Information-prominent or point-focused in-text referencing

Point-focused citation is useful when you are summarising complex ideas, concepts, or strategies or when you want to focus on the information.

Putting the reference at the end of a sentence takes emphasis from the author's name and can suggest that you are summarising.

Point-focused summary

The influence of American culture on Australia is evident (Smith 2006).

Point-focused paraphrase

Australian children are greatly influenced by American popular culture and that this has led to an increase in violence (Smith 2006, p. 34)

Point-focused referenced quote

Australian society is experiencing an increase in childhood crime. 'American popular culture is having a dramatic impact on Australian teenagers by creating an image of the cool gangster' (Smith 2006, p. 34).

The main causes of depression in cats are obesity, long claws and fur balls (Purr 2006).

Using multiple and linked in-text references

One of the skills that students will need to master is combing or presenting multiple sources. This is usually done to add emphasis to their point.

Multiple sources

Multiple source references are where two or more sources are combined to show agreement between ideas. The order of the references is arbitrary in that it is not based on alphabetical order or year of publication.

Example 1: multiple sources, author prominent

Barab et al. (2005) and Squire (2004) both outline the benefits of game-based learning in education: these include higher levels of engagement, increased motivation, and enhanced visualisation.

Example 2: multiple sources, information prominent

There are several benefits to game-based learning: increased motivation, high levels of student engagement, and belter understanding of complex visual data (Barab et al. 2005; Squire 2004; Dickey 2009).

Linked sources

Linked source references are where students use cohesive words to compare, contrast or add to the previous point.

Example 1: linked sources, author prominent

Rates of female game play are equivalent to males in the use of educational games in high school. Barab et al. (2005) have shown that girls make up 51% of players of Quest Atlantes. Moreover, Squire (2004) also found high rates of female game play.

Example 2: linked sources, information prominent

Rates of female game play are equivalent to males in the use of educational games in high school. Research studies on Quest Atlantis have found that 51% of all players are female (Barab et al. 2005). Moreover, a significant percentage of players of Civilisation III are female (Squire 2004).

Things to remember when in-text referencing

- Note that the full stop is after the bracket at the end of a sentence.
- Watch subject/verb agreement and the reporting phrase:

  Molly (1995) claims that …

  Molly and Smith (1995) claim that …
- If using a relative clause, include 'that', for example:

  Bally (2005) claims that …
- If using the reference as an adjunct, separate with a comma, for example:

  According to Jones (2006), people need to sleep …
- Quotes must have inverted commas on either side of the quote, for example:

  Blair and Geiger (1997, p. 325) argue that 'radiation is harmful to our health'.
- When writing a quote or paraphrase, include the page number, for example:

  Brian et al. (2004, p. 32) claim that …
- When there are three or more authors, use et al. 2 , meaning 'others', for example:

  Clark et al. (2003) state that …
- When you are writing a summary the last name and year is sufficient, for example:

  Brian et al. (2004) claim that …
- Avoid using simple reporting phrases such as said, says or writes.
- Refer to authors in the present tense unless they are deceased, you are reporting on research findings, or the idea or concept has been superseded, for example:

  Freud believed that, while today psychoanalysts believe that…
- Avoid too many quotes – especially long quotes!
- If you include a quote you must explain the relevance or the meaning of the quote. Do not use the quote to speak for you.
- If your quote is over three lines long then you must start the quote on the next line and indent the whole quote.
- The use of 'cited in' shows where a source was found within a later text. For example:

  Smith (2005, p. 34, cited in Jones 2011, p. 112) or (Singh, 2005, p. 54 cited in Lorenzo, 2011, p. 23).
- Both texts need to be added to the end-of-text reference list.

2 'Et al.' is a short form of the masculine 'et alii' or the feminine 'et aliae' .

Synthesis

Synthesis is bringing together sources and showing how ideas are related and making conclusions from this. This is a very difficult skill for students to achieve. It may help first year students to show them examples of literature reviews from journal so that they get an idea of how they can use other people's ideas in their own writing. Look at the difference in the two texts below.

Text 1.

Singh (2011) states that children should be encouraged to take risks through playing sport to develop self-confidence. However, Jones and Patel (2003) describe the different changes of a person over a lifespan and how confidence changes at different ages. Furthermore, Ramirez (2003) argues that young children need to be exposed to a range of sporting activities to build their confidence.

Text 2.

Many authors have undertaken research on how people change over the course of a lifespan and the development of self-confidence (Jones & Patel 2003; Singh 2011; Ramirez 2003). It has been shown that by playing a wide range of sports that children can develop better self-confidence through taking risks while playing sports (Singh 2011; Ramirez 2003).

Text 1 is very superficial, the points are not linked and there is no connection between the sentences. Text 2 links the ideas and shows a connection between the three sources.

Resources considered in developing this manual

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