Introduction

1. Independent Learning Skills
   Getting the Most out of Lectures, Tutorials, and Assignments...
   Managing your Time and Tasks
   Getting the Most out of your Reading
   Making Notes
   Monitor your Learning

2. Teamwork

3. Writing in Humanities and Social Sciences
   Humanities and Social Sciences Writing Style
   Common Grammar and Expression Errors

4. Referencing and Paraphrasing
   Why and How we Use Sources
   Referencing
   Plagiarism

5. Guidelines for Assessment Tasks
   Audience
   Exercises
   Essays
   Annotated Bibliography
   Reviews
   Literature Reviews
   Oral Presentations
   Exams
Welcome to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. If this is your first time studying at university, you will notice that there are a lot of new things to get used to.

The HuSS First Year Survival Guide has been written to introduce you to university study and to help you to develop the academic skills you will need, not only to survive your first year, but to excel!

You’ll want to develop three kinds of skills:
- habits of managing your time and tasks
- conventional styles of expression and use of sources
- habits of thinking about the questions people ask in the disciplines you’ve chosen to study.

An unfamiliar culture

A very helpful way to find your feet at uni is to think of it as a new culture, in the same way that we talk about the culture of a workplace, a sport, or a school. Each of these has a culture in the sense that it has its own particular purposes, beliefs, values, ethics, methods and conventional practices – even its own language, to some degree. These can be difficult for an outsider to discern at first, but once you’re aware of them and how they all relate together, it’s much easier to find your way.

In the case of university, you are surrounded by a culture of enquiry, and ours derives from British and North American (“Anglo-western”) academic traditions. Students from overseas may notice differences from their home traditions; but local students will also encounter differences from school or TAFE. Moreover, within the university, each Faculty has its own particular version of academic culture.

These are some hallmarks of Humanities and Social Sciences:
- **Purpose:** to make knowledge and teach students how knowledge is made. The provisional, unstable, and infinitely expandable nature of knowledge is always in our minds. We aim at objectivity and try to move towards truth, or at least towards insight. But we are people studying other people, so we try to be critically aware of our own assumptions and concerns, and those of others, as we search out information and try to decide what it means.
- **Belief:** that knowledge is not simply discovered, but constructed through a process of research and discussion within each discipline community.
- **Value:** that nobody is entitled to their own opinion, but must earn it by careful research and consideration of any other well-researched opinions on the topic.
- **Ethic:** that it matters how this process is carried out,
so it is open to scrutiny by the community, following shared standards of integrity, care, and courtesy.

- **Methods**: these vary from discipline to discipline, but must be designed to maximise accuracy, reliability, and insight.

- **Conventional practices**: the ways that texts are organised, the formats for referencing where ideas have come from, the tone we use in writing, and many other things we do in set, prescribed ways, are convenient ways of carrying out the purposes of enquiry.

They are “right” in that cultural sense of being appropriate, rather than being the only right way to do these things. In other settings, such as the schools you came from or the workplaces you are going to, there are other, sometimes conflicting, conventional practices.

You may not be able to “transfer” all the ways of doing things that you’ll learn here, but you can transfer the awareness that each culture has its ways and you’re expected to learn them. This is one of the “graduate capabilities” you take away from uni.

---

![Image](image.png)

**“Graduate Capabilities” for HUSS**

It will probably feel harder to work out what is expected of you at uni than it was at school. Each assignment is different, and you get less guidance about what content should be included. However, all your subjects expect you to demonstrate a common set of skills, and there’s plenty of guidance on those if you know where to look. La Trobe’s “graduate capabilities” – the skills you will develop over the years of your degree – are writing, speaking, creative problem-solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and inquiry/research. You come with skills in all these areas already, but your course will develop them further, in terms of both how well and how independently you carry out the work. This development is formally assessed at each year level based on your assignments. For each capability at each year level, you’ll get feedback that you have either “not met”, “met”, or “exceeded” the required standard. So what does each capability mean, and what are the standards? You’ll find them at the end of this guide in the appendix.

---

By looking at the little differences between one standard and the next, and between one year level and the next, you’ll get some answers to two questions that students often wonder about:

**What’s the difference between a D and a C, or between a C and a B?**

How do the expectations change between first year and second or third year?

---

### Practise, practise, practise...

Reading about skills is one thing (and a good thing!); practising them is another. One reason that writing for uni is challenging is that you seldom get to see anybody’s writing other than your own, and feedback on that is infrequent and usually brief. Because of this, we’ve developed interactive materials you can use to practise and test your understanding of the skills discussed in this guide. You’ll find links to these online materials as you go through the guide, along with links to further useful resources elsewhere on the web. We’d like to encourage you to go to these resources, so you can

- See other people’s academic writing for humanities and social sciences
- Clarify your understanding of the conventions of academic work
- Get instant feedback as you practise your skills.

### Key terms

***GCs: Problem-solving; Critical thinking**

This quick tour of the culture of enquiry brings us to its implications for our use of language. One of the most confusing things for students, in the early months, is the difference between the way we use certain key terms at uni and the meanings those same terms have in the world outside. The terms you will hear most often include “opinion”, “argument”, and “critical”. All of these mean something to you already, so you need to be aware of how their academic meaning is likely to be different.

**Your academic opinion is not what you already think, or what you like; it’s what you find you have to conclude after looking at the evidence.**

When an assignment asks for your “opinion”, what your tutor wants to see is this considered evaluation of the evidence in your sources. Sometimes people decide what they think and then “look for a quotation to back
it up”. However, if you go into any question prepared to see where the evidence leads, often you will change your mind. For this reason, too, other people's opinions are not considered evidence. If an expert holds a view they probably have a good reason for it; but it’s that good reason that is evidence for your purposes, not the view itself.

**Problem-solving in HUSS**

Your academic opinion is a “solution” to an academic “problem” – another word that needs some explanation here. It may seem particularly strange to talk about solving problems in Humanities, especially if the whole thing happened a long time ago and there's nothing anybody can do about it now! (the French Revolution? Romeo and Juliet?) If you’re used to solving problems by carrying out mechanical procedures, or mathematical operations, or routines of supervision, it may be hard to imagine what a “problem” means in Humanities. But we do use that term, and once you know how we use it, you can see what it has in common with more obvious problems elsewhere.

First of all, problems come in two kinds: problems to fix, and problems to understand. Of course, to fix a problem you need to understand it first, so these kinds overlap. But Humanities encompass a lot of problems that don’t need to be, or couldn’t be fixed (like the French Revolution!). They are not problems with deciding what should happen, but problems with understanding why or how something happens in the way that it does (or did). They are problems of interpretation, and they come in the form of questions about how/why/how important…..?

You could think of a problem, then, as a question. And the “solution” is an interpretation that offers a reasonable answer to the question, based on

- the information available
- and what you think it means, in relation to your question.

So, the “solution” to a problem in Humanities and Social Sciences often takes the form of an essay or some other kind of assignment, that presents an “argument”.

**An argument is not a quarrel, and may or may not be about anything controversial: it just means your answer to a question, and the way you set that out with evidence.**

Outside of uni, we tend to think of arguments as views about what should be done to solve some problem. But at uni, our “problems” are largely problems of understanding, and our arguments are about the best ways to understand how or why something is the way it is. Often academics have conflicting views on this, and then you will be evaluating which makes most sense and why. Often, however, your argument will simply be your explanation of why you think what you think about how something works.

**Being critical does not mean finding fault with people's ideas, but always reading, thinking and writing with that awareness of the instability and variety of ways of knowing.**

It means questioning what you hear and read (whether expert or not). It involves appreciating what is done carefully, logically, and thoroughly, while being aware of the difficulties and problems of making knowledge and the possibilities of confusion or error (but maybe also insight from different perspectives). So, whether or not an assignment explicitly asks you to criticise or evaluate an idea, you are expected to develop that habit of mind and use it all the time!

Whenever you read or hear anything in your subjects, you’ll be asking yourself:

- What is this about?
- What are the main ideas?
- What does it help me understand?
- And are there any problems with it?

**In the following pages, you’ll be introduced to independent learning skills, a Humanities writing style and basic grammar, referencing and paraphrasing, and guidelines for the common assessment tasks assigned in this Faculty’s subjects.**

All of these flow from the cultural ideas foreshadowed in this introduction.

For practice, go to the ACTIVITY: “Critical Thinking”; “What’s the problem here?”
Learning to learn at university

Learning at university is different from learning at high school. If you are prepared for these differences, you can really enjoy the challenging and stimulating learning environment of university.

The table at right summarises some of the main differences between secondary and tertiary study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECONDARY SCHOOL</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• guided homework tasks to assist learning</td>
<td>• self-directed study throughout semester – need to set your own homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• time often structured by teachers/curriculum/homework</td>
<td>• need to manage your own study time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• study tasks fairly evenly spread throughout the year</td>
<td>• may have many assessments due at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• concepts often simpler</td>
<td>• concepts often more challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• information often presented as black and white ‘facts’</td>
<td>• need to understand that some ‘facts’ are more certain than others and there may be different opinions about what is true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• writing tasks may not require in-text references and reference lists.</td>
<td>• in-text references and reference lists required for most writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• smaller amounts of directed reading</td>
<td>• very specific rules for referencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• less emphasis on online materials</td>
<td>• extensive reading of text books and journal articles required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less teaching staff and smaller environment makes it easier to ask for help</td>
<td>• need to critically evaluate what you read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• LMS used to communicate important information e.g. lecture notes, assessment information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• help is available, but need to know who to ask or where to look online as universities are large institutions with many staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning about learning

Learning is not the same thing as simply remembering. At university you will need to develop higher order thinking skills (see Bloom’s Taxonomy below). Many assessment tasks will require you to go beyond simply remembering and repeating information. You may be asked to apply what you have learnt to new situations or to analyse and evaluate information.

This could mean pulling apart a writer’s arguments and evidence (analysing) and making judgements about them (evaluating). The highest level thinking skill is creating. This refers to the creation of new knowledge that has never been known before. This is a skill that is normally developed at postgraduate level.

Although you will be focussing mainly on other people’s research, it’s important to understand that your course is like an apprenticeship in creating knowledge. The idea that knowledge is made doesn’t mean that it’s made up! – but simply that what we know depends on what we ask, where we look for answers, and how we interpret what we find. In your course, you will be learning:

• what kinds of questions people ask in your disciplines (fields of study)
• what sources they go to for answers
• what methods they use to gather information
• what ideas influence their interpretation of what they find
• how they evaluate its significance
• how they present what they’ve learned to their discipline community

As an apprentice member of that community, you will be participating in all these activities, through your lectures, tutorials, and assignments.

Bloom’s Taxonomy
(cognitive domain) Anderson and Krathwohl (2001)
Source: http://edoriqami.wikispaces.com/Bloom’s+Digital+Taxonomy

Getting the most out of lectures, tutorials, and assignments

Lectures introduce you to ways of thinking about the subject matter, and to current questions in the discipline.

Often, they provide some historical context of how these ways of thinking have developed over time, which helps you to appreciate their uses and their limitations. Lectures give essential background to help you understand your readings, and they link the ideas discussed from one week to the next.

They also give you a chance to see how people in your discipline explore a question: when your lecturer speaks, s/he is modeling the way that people construct interpretations (“arguments”), so try to notice how s/he goes about it.

What different points of view does s/he present? How does s/he evaluate each one?

What kinds of evidence does s/he discuss?

You’re not just getting information; you’re seeing a method in action!

To help deliver lecture materials more flexibly and accessibly, many lecturers now make PowerPoint slides and Lectopia recordings available to students online. It can be very helpful to print PowerPoint slides and preview them before a lecture. Then, use them to structure your own more detailed notes. Lectopia recordings, which are synchronised with the PowerPoint slides on LMS, are very useful for revision.

But hang on, if it’s all online “Why attend lectures...?”

“I’ll just print out the slides – these will provide all the information I need in an already summarised form”.

But hang on, if it’s all online “Why attend lectures...?”

“I’ll just print out the slides – these will provide all the information I need in an already summarised form.”
• PowerPoint slides or other forms of lecture summary are not comprehensive enough on their own to cover the lecture material. In order to fully understand a summary, you first need to hear it explained in full detail.

• Summaries do not always show the links between different points and how they relate to the ‘big picture’ ideas. Lecturers will often add these links verbally and with gestures during the lecture.

• Lecturers often give tips for assignments and exams that you won’t find on the slides.

• Writing your own notes and summaries means you engage with the material in an active way.

“Why go all the way to the campus to attend a lecture when I can just stay home and listen to it later on Lectopia?”

• Being on campus and attending lectures is a good way to mix with other students.

• Many lectures now include interactive activities to assist you with learning in class. You can’t participate in these online.

• You have an opportunity to ask questions in a lecture.

• Even with the best intentions, you may find it very difficult to get around to listening to lectures later on.

• You are paying for it! Skipping a lecture is sort of like going to the cinema and paying for a movie ticket and then walking out without seeing the film!

Here’s what some current students have to say about going to lectures...

“I really benefited from going to every lecture, the visual stimulation is often better than anything you can do at home, and the interaction with fellow students is essential to the university experience.”

“Attending the lecture will allow you to see and share in the passion that the lecturer has for the subject and gives you the opportunity to ask questions of people who know the subject material really well.”

“If you are paying fees or HECS, an individual lecture is actually worth a fair bit of money and you should go there and get your money’s worth. There’s no point paying thousands if the only time you see the university is in the exam.”

“Attending lectures provides students with a connection to others enrolled in the same units, allowing new friendships to form and expanding the support networks available to them. Such friendship and support is as much a part of the university experience as the academic work is.”

*Thanks to John McDonald (In2Science Peer Mentoring Program Manager) for obtaining these quotes.

SO:

Arrive on time – often an overview is given in the first few minutes.

Try to comprehend the overall structure of the lectures. What were the main concepts? How did the lecturer set out the argument or main idea? Pay particular attention to establishing how all the individual pieces of information fit together to produce a coherent whole.

Combine material you have learned from your reading with your lecture notes. Underline / highlight / write comments in order to emphasise main ideas and relationships.

Note any questions/problems. If you don’t understand something, try to formulate a question about what you don’t understand. Make the question as specific as possible, and raise it in your next tutorial.

Form a study group with people sitting near you.

Studying regularly (perhaps weekly) with a partner or small group is a great way to learn. You can sort out difficulties with content, check that you’re on the right track and help each other to find sources. You can brainstorm essay topics together, and later you can swap drafts and give each other feedback (“Is there any way you could boil this answer down to a sentence for the introduction, so I can know where you’re going from the start? …Can you explain this idea a bit more? …Can you give me an example of this concept? Here you said x, but on the next page you said y…I just love this bit!”)

It is easier to stay motivated and on track when you study in a group. (Alternatively, you can form a group from your tutorial.)
What are tutorials for?

Tutorials are your time to discuss the ideas in the lectures and readings with your tutor and a group of up to 25 of your fellow students. These sessions give you practice in interpreting the primary sources of the discipline, that is, the raw materials that people go to with their questions: e.g., bones and stones for Archaeology, films for Cinema Studies, novels for English, diaries for History, paintings for Art History, etc. This is partly so you can learn to interpret them, and partly so you can experience how hard and messy and complicated they are to interpret! This helps you to read the secondary sources, that is, books and articles by academics, “critically”, and critical reading and discussion of these secondary sources is also done in tutorials.

Go prepared. Tutorials are interesting and enjoyable if everybody has done the reading and can remember any of it – so make some notes so that you’ll have something to contribute. Before you do the reading, look at the week’s tutorial questions in your subject guide, and think about those as you read; summarise each reading, noting how it bears on those tutorial questions; write your own definitions of key terms; note any questions or confusions you have and ask the tutor (you won’t be the only one, but you may be the only one brave enough to ask!).

Listen and respond. Tutes are for collaborating, not competing, to take your understanding further than you can do on your own. (“This is what I think, but tell me if it makes sense”; “I see what you mean, but I don’t see how it fits in with Bloggs’ argument that …”; “Can anyone help me with this point on page 31…?”)

If you have to miss one let the tutor know that you are ill/ in court/ your childcare fell through; apologise and try to get the notes from someone who was there.

What are assignments for?

In lectures, you learn about the current questions and arguments in your discipline. In tutorials, you practise working with the evidence that will enable you to join in asking those questions and making those arguments. Your readings likewise present arguments and also introduce you to the primary sources that people in your discipline interpret.

Assignments then give you the chance to present arguments of your own, interpreting the evidence from primary sources in the light of the ideas of academics that you’ve read. You’ve heard it done; you’ve seen it in print; now it’s your turn!

In the next section, we’ll look at how you can fit all this into your week.

Managing your time and tasks

Making a study plan

To be successful at university, you need to study consistently throughout the semester, right from the first week. The biggest adjustment for many students is structuring your time to accommodate all your commitments. In Humanities and Social Sciences especially, so little of your time is structured for you, and yet there is so much to do! You may have as little as 3 “contact hours” a week in each subject – lectures and tutorials – but the bulk of the work is the reading and writing assigned in your subject guides. There can be up to 9 more hours of reading/writing/thinking per subject, and it all adds up to a full-time job or more.

Nobody will tell you when and how to get it done, so it’s important to figure that out soon. And this challenge means that you will train yourself to manage your time and tasks independently – just one of the skills you develop in your degree that are important for the rest of your life (remember to talk it up when you have job interviews!)

It’s actually not so hard to manage if you remember that the week’s work is made up of many small tasks – for example (depending on your subjects and what week it is)

- read an article;
- go to the library to borrow a book;
- watch a section of a film that you need to observe closely and make notes on;
- make an entry in your subject’s online blog, or your reflective journal;
- review lecture notes, highlighting things to remember and things to follow up;
- download next week’s lecture notes and notice what ideas are coming up;
- have coffee with a tutorial mate to clarify your understanding of that week’s work;
- brainstorm what you know about your essay topic and what else you need to know.

And most of these can be done in an hour or less! So that time between one lecture and the next, or between your tutorial and your lunch, is the perfect time to get that one thing done and not have it hanging over you.
If you don't study until you have a big free block of time, you may find it harder to concentrate for all that time, and hard to remember what you studied last time.

Try to use those little times as well, and that doesn't have to mean that you have less social time on campus. Do some of those tasks with a study partner from your tutorial group:

“Do you want to go and watch that film clip now?”

“Could you help me brainstorm what on earth this essay question means?”

Organising your time

A semester planner is a good way to start. It’s a good idea to make a big one to put up on your wall. Here’s a small section of one to give you an idea.

A GRID can be useful to organise when to study. (– filled in here from 9 to 5, but don’t forget the evenings…)

A ‘TO DO’ LIST can be useful to organise what to study.

Sort the things you need to do (like those in the bullet list on the previous page) under subjects (History, Sociology, etc.) and keep it in front of you day and night.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>1-7 Mar</td>
<td>8-14 Mar</td>
<td>15-21 Mar</td>
<td>21-28 Mar</td>
<td>29 Mar-4 Apr</td>
<td>5-11 Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Mum’s 50th b’day Sun)</td>
<td>Document exercise (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Research Skills Exercise Tue (15%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Article Review Thu (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**A GRID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>shopping</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>tute</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>tute</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>Meet grp</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>tute</td>
<td>tute</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>tute</td>
<td>lecture</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>rehearsal</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>yoga</td>
<td>study</td>
<td>enough!</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A ‘TO DO’ LIST**

It’s very satisfying crossing each one off as you go!
It is important to be realistic. Don’t set impossible goals for yourself. You’ll be more likely to stick to your timetable if you take into account the following points:

Allow for the limitations of your attention span. Avoid scheduling large slabs of time for one subject. Alternating subjects for study will help you to sustain your concentration and interest.

Work in terms of tasks not time. Rather than having a vague aim to ‘study sociology for two hours’, set a particular section of work for each study period. A sense of achievement comes from successfully completing small tasks, and breaking the work up into smaller sections makes the whole process of study seem less daunting.

Budget for demanding weeks. These will include the weeks when assignments are due, and often a subject will also ask each student to lead a particular week’s tutorial by talking about the reading or a topic they’ve researched. Do yourself a favour – in the first week, look at all the assignments and, if there’s a choice of topics, see which ones match which week or cluster of weeks. Then you can choose one that you want to work on; borrow the “further reading” early, before other people are competing for it; and budget time to work on it.

Allow time to redraft assignments. When you enter an assignment’s due date on your semester plan, move back a couple of days and enter “draft” of that assignment. It’s very rare to write a good assignment once, and wiser to write two or more drafts.

Review your approach. If your study plan is not working effectively, review your strategies and consider making changes. For example, you may have tried to fit too much into your timetable, or your timetable may not be flexible enough to accommodate unexpected events. Resist the temptation to throw away your plan and allow yourself to fall in a heap. Some minor adjustments may be all you need to stay on track.

Make sure you include some recreation time. If you allocate time for recreational activity you will be less tempted to throw it all in and waste time avoiding study because of unrealistic demands you have made upon yourself.

Getting the most out of your reading

*GCs: Inquiry/Research; Critical Thinking

In most of your subjects at university, you are expected to do a large amount of reading. You will need to do reading related to your lectures and tutorials to help you to understand the main concepts. You will have to read more sources for essays, presentations, and other assignments.

“Essential readings” and “Further readings” are listed in your subject guides and LMS sites for your subjects. It’s important that you start with these, even if you are going to search for wider reading in addition. This is because, as you remember, the study of humanities and social sciences focuses on how knowledge is made. Scholars ask questions and suggest answers; others respond in various ways. They may agree with and extend the first scholar’s ideas, or raise problems or limitations they perceive in that scholar’s work and propose answers of their own. Often it’s both – a scholar will see merit in someone else’s ideas but also problems, and will respond with a critical appreciation and some kind of contribution that takes the discussion further.

This all goes on in an international “conversation” between publications in the discipline, including books and articles in scholarly journals. These are evaluated (“refereed” or “peer reviewed”) by experts in the discipline before publication, so you can be confident that they are based on sound research. However, there are many ways of looking at almost any question, so a great deal of academic work consists of thinking about the usefulness (or not) of current publications in making sense of the subject matter they interpret. Your lecturers want to involve you in this thinking, so they assign particular publications relating to particular ideas that they want you to consider. It won’t be good enough to read something else instead, which may not have much to do with the particular interpretation you’re expected to discuss.

Evaluating sources

Often, of course, you will be expected to read more widely, and then you will need to evaluate how useful and how reliable are the sources that you find for yourself. This involves asking yourself:

- Does the source need to be recent? In some fields, new ideas replace older ones all the time; in other fields, older ideas may continue to be important and relevant.
- Is it verifiable? That is, does it say how its information was gathered, and give us references to check that it is accurate? Academic publications do this, but publications for a popular audience, including magazines and websites, may choose a simpler or more personal presentation, a narrative about the people involved, with little or no reference to sources.
What is the purpose of the source? Does it stand to profit from providing information, either by selling something or by persuading people to join in a cause? All publications are selective – that is, they include some, but not all, relevant material – so it’s important to be aware of authors’ reasons for selecting what they present to you.

The information you use in your assignments should come from high quality, reliable, academic sources. Information about finding and evaluating information sources can also be found on the Library website @ www.latrobe.libguides.com/libskills

Reading for answers
Always take your questions with you! Before you read, look at the week’s tutorial questions, and also look ahead at the assignment questions you will tackle later. That way, you can read with an awareness of what you’re trying to get out of the reading, and make notes accordingly. Your reading and your notes will be much more effective if you know a bit about the ways that academic texts are typically structured.

This varies according to their purpose.

- **A general textbook** is written to teach students the main ideas in a field, which most scholars agree upon, rather than arguing an individual point of view. If the textbook is divided into sections of several chapters each, there may be a section introduction at the beginning of each section. It may summarise each chapter briefly and say how they relate to each other – don’t skip these summaries! When reading any chapter, read the headings first, and any “teaching devices” like summaries or questions following the chapters; then go back and read it through.

- **A specialised book or journal article** is likely to be organized to carry out that purpose of making knowledge through dialogue with other published work, which was explained above. (Journals are collections of articles published one or more times each year. In print, a journal looks like a little book, but you are most likely to access journal articles online through the library’s databases.) Articles can also be collected as chapters in books compiled by an editor, where each chapter, by a different author(s), discusses some aspect of a common theme. Tip: If there is an “abstract”, that is, a separate paragraph before the article begins, that’s a summary of the article – don’t skip it!

Of all the reading you do, specialised articles are likely to be the most difficult, because they pull you into an existing conversation that you know little about as yet. It can be difficult to sort the author’s position out from all the others s/he may be referring to. These articles often argue a particular idea about their subject matter, which may or may not agree with others. But these arguments don’t always begin with the author’s main idea. They may begin with the context of what others have said, that this author is either going to take further or going to raise doubts about. Usually his/her own idea comes next. You can check whether you’ve found it by looking at the conclusion, because it’s usually restated there. Then read the rest.

Below is an example of a text that starts with an idea the authors want to use as a springboard for their own argument (which is that other scholars have neglected something important, which they will now demonstrate). The following paragraphs occur early in the text, which is about “Alienation and the assimilation of immigrants”.

Although the precise pattern and rate may vary from society to society, it is customary for the immigrant to be expected to adjust his former ways until they conform to an acceptable degree to those of the receiving society. This process is usually considered in terms of the concept of “assimilation”. Although various frameworks have been developed for considering assimilation (Taft, 1966), it is typically described as a complex of cultural, social and psychological processes through which members of the receiving society and immigrants become more like each other, with the onus for change mainly placed on the immigrant. Consequently, studies of the parameters regulating the speed and extent of changes in immigrants undergoing the successive phases of this process (termed accommodation, acculturation and integration), have concerned themselves primarily with the process of attachment of the immigrant to the receiving society (for example, Eisenstadt 1954; Gordon 1964; Martin 1965; Shuval 1963). They have thus taken little notice of the simultaneous process of detachment or estrangement of the immigrant from his traditional ethnic followings.

In fact, most studies of the processes through which immigrants are assimilated pay scant attention to the fact that as they are absorbed into the new society, they inevitably experience gradual deviation from former mores [values]. This process of detachment and estrangement is referred to in the present paper as alienation. The purpose of the paper is to argue that assimilation of immigrants cannot be studied adequately without considering alienation, and that this reversal of vantage point has major implications for fostering the well-being of immigrants.

Reference: Kovacs, M & Croyler, A 1975, ‘Alienation and the assimilation of immigrants’, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 221-230. (Here, the original footnotes have been replaced with in-text bracketed references for ease of reading.)
A research article, in a scientific discipline, has a standard structure:

*Abstract* (a brief summary of the whole article)

*Introduction* (stating the aim or problem the study is concerned with);

*Methods* (what was done, with what materials, equipment, etc);

*Results* (what the study found out);

*Discussion* (what the results mean, whether they agree or disagree with previous studies, and any problems with them);

*Conclusions*, and perhaps recommendations based on the results.

If you read the introduction and then the discussion, you can go to the other sections knowing the purpose and outcome of the study. You may meet readings of this kind in disciplines like Linguistics, Archaeology, Psychology, and Sociology.

A report begins with a Summary, so that you can get an overview before plunging into the Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations.

Primary sources may be fiction, letters, diaries, public or private records of many kinds — all sorts of things. They weren’t written to present any main idea to an academic readership, so you’re not looking for a “thesis” (that is, main idea), argument, or conclusions. You’ll read with questions that you bring from the subject you’re doing, and make notes of anything that helps you to answer those — often, does this source confirm or contradict (or both) a theory that you’re studying this week?

### Skimming

Because of the way that academic texts are typically put together, you can often skim a reading quickly before you read it in depth. Read the first paragraph (or the first few, if it takes that long to present the context and introduce its main idea), and then skip to the conclusion, as above. Then read the first sentence of each paragraph. This may be enough to give you a preview of the whole argument. If not, try reading the first and last sentence of each paragraph. Writers in the British academic tradition, including Australians, usually put the point of each paragraph in the first sentence (the “topic” sentence); Americans often put it in the last sentence.

Skimming like this only takes a few minutes, and can save you time and confusion. It can also save you making unnecessary notes as you read, because sometimes you find that the article has summaries, from time to time, of what it has said up to that point, and it’s enough just to make notes of these!


### Making notes

There are several strategies for making effective notes from your reading.

The more active you are when producing the notes, the better you will learn.

Copying whole sentences from your text book or lecture notes is not very effective, because you’re not forcing yourself to think about what it means.

Simply highlighting large chunks of information is also not a very effective strategy, because you have to work out, when reviewing, why you highlighted all of that!

Here are some suggestions for note making strategies:

1. **Summaries** of the argument or method discussed in a reading. *Keep summaries brief.*

### Bibliographic details:

(Author, date, title, publisher [of book] city of publication); or

Author, date, article title, journal title, volume, pages of article)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helps me understand:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems/limitations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections with other readings?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Connections with other readings?  
By making a summary each time you finish a reading, you can do a lot of the thinking toward your assignment, as you criticize the reading and relate it to others on the topic. You can also tell when you have read enough, and could start writing your first draft.
2. When taking notes from a textbook, where no particular argument needs to be traced, you may like to use a format that records what you think is important and, next to that, why you think so, or any connections with other ideas that occur to you (see example 1).

3. Sometimes, you can set up your notes to fit your essay topic. For example, if you were asked to compare the gender roles of men and women in a traditional village society, your notes might look something like this (see example 2).

**What about copying?**

Try to make notes in your own words, as this forces you to understand the material, and shows your tutor that you understand it. However, there will be passages you want to quote directly in your writing, because you want your reader to see the original wording.

This may be because

- the way an idea is expressed is striking, influential, or significant in itself, and you are going to discuss that;
- some flavour, character, or belief is embodied in the wording which would be lost if you rewrote it;
- or the phrasing is evidence of a point you want to make about the use of language (for this reason, direct quotation is much more common in some disciplines, such as English literature, Linguistics, or History, than in others such as Art History or Archaeology when the primary sources are objects rather than words).

For example, in an influential Politics text, “What is a nation?”, Renan (1990, p. 19) argues that it is not a common language, religion, or ethnicity that defines a nation, but the continuing willingness of its citizens to belong to it, which he calls a “daily plebiscite”. Notice how, in that sentence, I have put most of Renan’s idea in my own words, but I’ve...
quoted the memorable phrase in which he suggests that the commitment of citizens to their nation is like a vote of confidence each day. (Notice, too, how I have just commented on the meaning of that phrase, which you should also do when you use quotations in your writing.) (Reference: Renan, E 1990, “What is a nation?” trans. M. Thom, in H Bhabha (ed) Nation and Narration, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 8-22.)

Mind Maps or other diagrams such as flow charts and grids. It is often easier to recall information which has been represented diagrammatically, and to see the relationships between different parts. Colours are particularly helpful to stimulate the memory.

There are websites, some free and others commercial, where you can get mind map software, e.g. Freemind, Inspiration, Thinkgraph, and Visual Mind.

The diagram below puts the writer’s question at the top and then branches out with information of various kinds, taken to different levels of detail. Again, the bibliographical details of your source(s) need to be listed with your diagram.

What were the bases of Stalin’s power?

- Personal cult
- Control of media
- Control of education
- Elimination of opposition
- Role in party machinery
- Key posts for those loyal to Stalin
- Economic transformation
- Appeal to legitimacy
- Creation of fear
- Self promotion as people’s protector
- Purges
- Reorganisation of party
- Secret police
- Collectivisation
- Key posts for those loyal to Stalin
- Terror
- Elimination of peasant farmers

For practice, go to ACTIVITY: ‘Making a writing frame’ http://www.latrobe.edu.au/learning/
Monitor your learning

It takes time to develop the learning strategies you need to be successful at university. Notice what works for you and what doesn’t, and think about why. You may need to develop new habits of questioning, and new strategies for processing ideas and storing information. These can be adapted to make the most of your particular learning style.

Learning styles

Are you an active or reflective learner? A sensing or intuitive learner? A visual or verbal learner? A sequential or global learner? Everybody has a different mix of learning styles. It is helpful to know which ways of learning you favour so that you can adapt your study techniques accordingly. Would you revise more effectively in a group or on your own? Would drawing diagrams be more helpful to you than linear notes or summaries? Would skimming a chapter of a text book aid your understanding?

To find out about your learning styles, take the Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire, devised by Soloman and Felder at NC State University in the USA: [http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html](http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html)

When you have completed the online quiz, read about the study strategies that suit your learning style.

Below are some example items from the questionnaire:

4. I tend to
   (a) understand details of a subject but may be fuzzy about its overall structure.
   (b) understand the overall structure but may be fuzzy about details.

7. I prefer to get new information in
   (a) pictures, diagrams, graphs, or maps.
   (b) written directions or verbal information.

19. I remember best
   (a) what I see.
   (b) what I hear.

32. When writing a paper, I am more likely to
   (a) work on (think about or write) the beginning of the paper and progress forward.
   (b) work on (think about or write) different parts of the paper and then order them.
While independent learning is essential to uni study, social learning too plays an important part.

Teamwork is a skill that universities are committed to developing in their students, but we might as well acknowledge that students are not always eager to do it. At uni, each person is working for themselves. They want to pursue the learning that interests them, and they want to earn marks that reflect their individual abilities and efforts, both for their own satisfaction and to certify their worth to future employers. Success at uni is fundamentally an individual, not a collective success.

Paradoxically, however, those future employers put considerable pressure on universities to train students in teamwork. This is because success in a workplace is collective, rather than individual. Your employer values your contribution not for what it shows about you, but for what it does for the organisation. If you get credit for a job well done, it will be based on your contribution to a team effort. And at work, it seems natural to operate as a team: your goal is shared; the work you produce is not about you; it’s easier to do it if you pool your skills and share the load; and you’re all in the same place at the same time so you can just get on with it.

At uni, teamwork may feel artificial, if you feel you are doing it just for the sake of doing it, rather than because it will make for a better result. Moreover, it may be annoying if the team doesn’t work well together, and inconvenient if it’s difficult to get people together for meetings. You need to be working on something that will be both easier and better than if you did it alone; and you need to adopt procedures that ensure that everybody knows what they need to do, how, and when. These outcomes can’t be left to chance or goodwill! But you’ll probably find that it’s worth the effort – students find that teamwork is good for their learning as well as their social life, and some, who stick with a study partner or group for a longer time, say it makes all the difference to their enjoyment of uni as well as to their academic success.

There are things that teams usually do to organise themselves so that problems are less likely to arise, or can be dealt with if they do. As you can see from the standards for assessing teamwork in this Faculty, the process is as highly valued as the outcome: (From the “Standards” for assessing Graduate Capabilities in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the end of this guide (Appendix).

- Teamwork in humanities and social science disciplines is used to produce more or better work than individuals could achieve by working on their own. By dividing the work into sub-tasks and distributing these among the members according to their interests and expertise, a group can achieve work for which no single member has the necessary time or skills. Contributions may be prepared individually, but the group collaborates to decide how these are to be combined and presented, so that the end product is jointly constructed. To ensure an effective process, teams engaged on a project that develops over time decide on ways to document when, how, and by whom each part will be done; ways to communicate and to monitor their progress; and ways to deal with any logistical or interpersonal difficulties that may arise. To consolidate their learning, members usually include in their submission a reflection on their process, including the strengths and limitations of the way they worked together.

The standard that must be met at first year is as follows:

- “When students were given a task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members, with some success, followed instruction to
  - Plan the task together
  - Distribute sub-tasks
  - Monitor and document progress
  - (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising
  - Jointly construct and deliver satisfactory work for assessment
  And that they usefully reflected on the process of working as a group.”

(The standard is “not met” if those criteria are not in evidence, and “exceeded” if, instead of attending to those criteria “with some success”, the group did it all “successfully”)

There are lots of comfortable spaces on campus – cafes, empty rooms, even seating in hallways, often with a power point for laptops. But you can also book group study rooms with computers in the library; you’ll find instructions at http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/help/catalogue/bookstudycarrel.php.

Virtual meetings online can work well too; students form Facebook groups, Google groups, etc., or use the discussion facility on their subject LMS site.

So, how can you make this work? Let’s look at each criterion in turn:
“Plan the task together”
This involves identifying roles, identifying subtasks, and agreeing on procedures.

Identifying roles.
The roles you need to adopt depend on the kind of task and how large, complex, and time-consuming it is going to be. For example, if you are put in a group to prepare for discussion of an article in next week’s tutorial,
• one of you might undertake to summarise the article;
• another might question/critique it;
• a third member might elaborate on a particular point;
• and the last one might relate the ideas in that article to others previously discussed in the subject.
Then you would each read the article with your particular role in mind, and meet in person or electronically to put your presentation together ahead of the tutorial, and ensure that it all makes sense.
Alternatively, if you are put in a group to do research and present it several weeks from now, you’re going to need roles to manage that process (and these could stay the same throughout, or rotate at each meeting so that everyone gets practice in the role).
You may need
• a chairperson to take the group through each meeting’s work;
• a record-keeper to take notes (or “minutes”) each time and circulate them afterwards;
• a time-keeper to ensure that each part of the work, and each member of the group, gets enough time (but not too much);
• and perhaps a project manager to keep track of each member’s progress on the sub-task s/he is responsible for.

Identifying sub-tasks. These may include:
• gathering various kinds of information (reading? statistics? images? interviews? observations?)
• designing “tools” such as questionnaires, categories for analysing information, or formats for presenting your results
• different roles or contributions to the end product for assessment (writing? editing? proofreading? illustrating? speaking?)

Deciding on procedures
• How often to meet
• Where to meet (in person? electronically? some combination?)
• How to manage plans (an agenda for each meeting?), records (minutes or dot points?), and responsibilities. Good examples of an agenda and a set of minutes can be found at the Higher Education Academy website, http://learnhigher.ac.uk/Students/Group-work.html
An another simple format, that handles everything, could be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attending</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Whose Responsibility</th>
<th>Done</th>
<th>To do</th>
<th>By when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you fill this out at every meeting and keep them all, you have a record of who was there (to support any assessment of individuals’ contributions, and the effectiveness of the group); and be sure to circulate it to all members afterwards, whether they attended or not, so that all are aware of tasks distributed, and deadlines for completion.

“Distribute sub-tasks”.
When team work goes well, it’s because everyone knows what needs to be done, and what they are responsible for. You may want to consider:
• What skills/knowledge each member brings to the task.
• What skills/knowledge each would like to develop.
• What constraints each member has (time; distance from uni; cultural constraints on certain activities; language; disability). Nobody should do less because of a particular constraint; but you should find ways of enabling each member to do the best they can.
• What could be usefully done in pairs (someone with expertise in some aspect of the task partnered with somebody inexperienced, so skills are shared).
• Fairness. Some sub-tasks need to be done earlier in the process, some later. Some are bigger than others.

“Monitor and document progress”.
If you have undertaken the necessary roles, and set up procedures as above, this should go smoothly. It’s important, because:
• You all need to know that you’re on track
• Your tutor may want to see this evidence of how you’re managing the process
“Overcome any difficulties arising”. These may be of various kinds:

- **Problems with communications** (make a contact list for all members to use, and make sure it’s clear who has to communicate what, with whom, by when)
- **Problems with keeping to the timetable** you’ve planned (if somebody is in difficulty, find out why, and how the rest of you can help; but make sure the person who falls behind contributes fairly in return)
- **Problems with technology** (see what the group can do by pooling members’ knowledge before asking the tutor’s advice)
- **Problems with personalities**. This is the most common difficulty that groups encounter, and the hardest to deal with. However, it’s also the reason that employers value skills in teamwork: you may be able to avoid people who annoy you a lot of the time while you’re at uni, but in the workplace, you have to work with anyone else who is there, perhaps closely, perhaps for years!

You don’t have to like each other (though that’s ideal), but you have to find ways to get along. If you feel that a member of your group is too dominant, or too passive, or too lazy, or plain incompetent, you need to find a way to deal with that. At the same time, bear in mind that everyone is different – if somebody is naturally shy or quiet, they may be great at research or writing, and may not need to do much speaking.

Also, it’s important to be aware of cultural differences, as people’s willingness to be critical, outspoken, outgoing, etc, can depend on cultural values and preferences which should be respected.

Finally, be aware that if English is not somebody’s first language, they may need a little while to form what they want to say, and discussion should allow for that. It’s often too simple to attribute different ways of interacting to personality, when so many things shape who we are and how we work together.

- **Too dominant?** This is why you have a chair – it’s easier to ask somebody to give equal time or turns to others if it’s your role to do so.
- **Too deferential?** Rotate the roles to build confidence through participation.
- **Too quiet?** Arrange turns and time for everyone, and encourage each other by respecting everybody’s contributions.
- **Too lazy?** The project manager can check whether there are other reasons why someone is not contributing, and if not, can record the problem so that it is at least documented, if not solved.
- **Too unskilled?** Find someone who can show them how to do the task, or something else that person can do instead.

“Jointly construct and deliver work for assessment”

There are many ways to do this, depending on the tasks, how you have shared them out, and what skills your members bring to the work. You will need to decide whether to

- sit down together and draft a joint presentation, or
- jointly work on a web-based document (e.g. Google Docs), or
- compile individuals’ contributions into one file or document, or
- entrust the final write-up, PPT, or whatever to one member of the group, who is therefore asked to do less of the earlier work

However you decide to put the work together, it’s essential that each of you check it out before it is submitted. You don’t want something submitted under your name with misspellings that you could have corrected, or other faults in presentation. You are going to share the mark, so you’ll want to share the responsibility for it.

“Usefully reflect on the process of group work”

This is likely to be a component of your submission for assessment. If so, the purpose is to get you to think about what you have learned (for better or for worse!) about working in a group. What went well, and why? What didn’t go well, and why not? What could you have done differently, for a better result? What would you be sure to do whenever you are called upon to work in a group, based on this experience? Your reflections will also help your tutor to monitor the success of each group’s learning, and can alert him or her to any problems that may need to be taken into account in assessing the work submitted by the group.

Whether or not your tutor requires a reflection as part of your assessment, it is well worth writing one up for yourself. It’s very common to be asked, in job interviews, how you have handled a problem arising in your prior experience of teamwork. If you have already reflected on this when it happened, you can talk about it promptly and confidently (and if no problems arose, you can explain how you anticipated problems and organised your teamwork so as to avoid them!).

Presentations

While you will usually submit a written version of your work, you may also be expected to present it to your class orally or online. This can be a great opportunity to learn presentation technologies such as posters, PowerPoint or “prezi”. You can make visual aids to support your spoken delivery, ranging from basic points to more complex multimedia creations incorporating film clips, pictures, graphics and animations. Most of these technologies offer free templates, or starter versions, along with online tutorials in how to use them. The websites below are only a few of those you can find via a web search (the ones we found most helpful at a basic level).
Posters:
These can be made on PowerPoint or Microsoft Word. They’re not difficult to design, but before you decide to make one, check how you will get it printed, as that can be expensive if you have to pay a printer.

- Universities at Medway: Creating Posters – Tutorial Presentation (Drill Hall Training) at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpIllszQ4AE&feature=related
- Making an academic research poster using Power Point by Jerry Overmyer, University of North Colorado at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqgiqwlXadA&feature=related
- Posters4Research: Free Templates at http://posters4research.com/templates.php
- StudentPosters.co.uk at http://www.studentposters.co.uk/templates.html

There is a very useful page on “Oral Communication” at Brunel University’s site Learn Higher: Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/designing-visual-aids.shtml

From here, follow the links to

- “Getting Started with PowerPoint”, by Kate Ippolito & Ravinder Chohan from the LearnHigher CETL at Brunel University: http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/getting%20started%20with%20powerpoint.pdf
- And “Example of a power point presentation”: http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/UsingPowerPoint.ppt
Prezis:
A “prezi” is a screen on which you can put text, photos, film clips, diagrams, etc, together in whatever arrangement you like and create a “path” between them, so that the screen moves to whatever part you want to focus on as you speak, and expands it while you focus on it, before moving on to the next thing. (It’s almost like walking around on a map and having the scenery spring up and then fade back again.) It’s less standardised and formal than PowerPoint – each has its uses.

• Prezi: Choose a license to start using Prezi at http://prezi.com/profile/signup


Useful links:
• Higher Education Academy: http://learnhigher.ac.uk/Students/Group-work.html
  This has a range of resources, of which the most engaging is probably the “Making group work work video resource”.
  This is a series of short videos of a very dysfunctional group that meets each week to try to produce a joint presentation on “barriers to learning”. They get through it in the end, but each episode brings up relevant issues in working as a team.

• Harvard University: “Working in groups” at http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/wigintro.html
• Carleton College: “Student roles” at http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/cooperative/roles.html
• University of Canberra Academic Skills Centre: “Working in groups” at http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/learning/groups
Writing for humanities and social science subjects is ideally clear and straightforward. You may find yourself reading some sources that don't live up to that ideal, but you'll appreciate the ones that do, and your tutors feel the same about your writing! The ideas you're dealing with are complicated enough, without your expression making them more so. A lot of students feel that their style is not sophisticated or “academic” enough, and try to complicate their sentence structure or vary their vocabulary by reaching for a thesaurus.

This is risky, however. To use new words accurately, you need to see them in context several times first, to see how they work with other words and what their connotations are. Sometimes words mean the same thing, but don’t fit the same grammar.

For example, you can say “She considered him reliable” but you can’t say “She regarded him reliable”; you’d need “as reliable”. “Relate” is not the same as “tell” (“The defendant related the court…?” No.)

A more serious problem is that the words grouped together in the thesaurus often aren’t really synonyms. For example, “insinuate” is not the same as “imply” or “suggest” (“insinuate” is not just indirect, but sneaky). Short words are not bad.

But, if you use a thesaurus, use a dictionary too. Meanwhile, if you use the words you already know, your writing will be clear and accurate, which is the main thing your tutors are looking for. Over time, your vocabulary will grow, as a result of reading in your subjects.

At the same time, your writing should be formal rather than conversational. That is, we avoid slang and contractions (conversational forms like isn’t, it’s, or would’ve instead of the “written” forms is not, it is, or would have). We write sentences that are grammatically complete and use punctuation in conventional ways as visual aids to meaning (don’t worry, that’s all explained further on). Again, however, be careful not to let your sentences get long and convoluted. You want your sentence structure to help your reader to get your point, not to obscure it!

The following are general features of good academic writing:

* GCs: Critical Thinking

1. **Appropriate and relevant content**
   In an essay, everything you write must relate to the essay question. You need to be careful not to “go off on a tangent” and start to present or discuss ideas that, while interesting, are not related to the exact topic or question.

2. **Substantiated (supported) claims**
   In order to build a strong argument, claims made in academic writing need to be supported, usually with information from a reliable, academic source.

3. **Use of high quality academic sources of information with adequate and accurate acknowledgement**
   It is VERY important to use reliable sources of information for your written assignments. For most (but not all) subjects, websites are NOT acceptable academic sources. Commercial (.com) websites are the most likely to be unreliable.

The author of a commercial website is often not known and the pages may contain biased or inaccurate information. University websites have the ending “.edu”; government websites end in “.gov”; and non-profit or charitable organisations end in “.org”. Ask your lecturer or tutor whether website information is allowed for a particular assignment.

(Tip: Wikipedia can be very useful in providing background knowledge to help you understand your academic reading, but it is not considered a reliable source for assignments because anybody can contribute to it, and some of what they do contribute may not be accurate. Don’t use it as a reference in your essays.)

When you use information from sources such as books and journal articles, you are using ideas that you did not create yourself. As these ideas belong to someone else, it is important to acknowledge the person or people who created the ideas. In academic writing, this is done by providing references to show where the ideas came from. Referencing at university is quite complicated and takes some time to learn.

**ACTIVITY:**
For practice, go to [http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills](http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills) and do the module ‘Evaluating Information Sources’

For more information on finding credible sources and evaluating websites go to: [http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills](http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills)

To view the library’s short YouTube clip ‘Why can’t I just Google’ go to: [http://latrobe.libguides.com/google](http://latrobe.libguides.com/google)
4. Adequate and accurate paraphrasing of information

In addition to providing references, you also need to paraphrase information from other sources. This means you must put the ideas in your own words. This may seem strange and difficult at first, especially if the information is complex and hard to understand, but there are good reasons for paraphrasing. Paraphrasing shows the person who is marking your work that you understand what you are writing about. It also helps you to keep a consistent writing style. Every writer has their own style and your writing will flow more smoothly if all of the sentences are written in your own natural style. Even if you provide a reference, you still need to paraphrase information before you include it in your written assignment. If you don't, you may be accused of plagiarism.

There is a detailed guide to paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism in section 3.

5. Appropriate academic style and language use (precise, concise, formal, clear)

A. Precise

Use specific terminology where appropriate

✗ A machine was used to see how big the site was.
✓ A theodolite was used to measure the size of the site.

(Thanks to Susan Lawrence of Archaeology for this example)

Be careful with words like 'it' and 'they'. Sometimes it is better to be specific about what 'it' is or 'they' are.

✗ After a while it went up.
✓ Over the next ten years, the rate of divorce in the 16-30 age group increased by 30%.

B. Concise – aim for maximum content, minimum words

If you are under the word count, you need to add more content rather than 'pad out' your writing with extra words. Adding 'filler' words will not get you any extra marks. It's the number of ideas that are marked, not the number of words.

✗ In my opinion, up until the present time, it seems relatively unclear as to which will, in the long run, emerge as the best method of sampling to use in order to obtain the desired results in the shortest possible time.
✓ It is not known which sampling technique is the most efficient.

C. Formal – avoid personal, emotional and colloquial (everyday) language

Avoiding personal language

It is advisable to avoid using personal language, particularly pronouns which refer to the reader e.g. you, your, us, our, because it sounds as if they're in the room with you. Academic writing is addressed to any reader, not just the ones you know.

✗ If you want to improve this survey, you should increase the sample size. [informal]
✓ To improve this survey, the sample size should be increased. [more formal]

It is sometimes acceptable to use I and we in academic writing, but this varies throughout the different disciplines.

The purpose of avoiding "I" is to keep you focussed on the thing you are writing about, rather than on yourself, and to remind you to be objective about it, rather than allowing your personal, subjective opinion to dominate your exploration of a topic.

However, it makes sense to say "I" if you are asked to write about your own response to, or reflection on, something. You could also say "I" when you are sign-posting what your essay is going to do: "First I will explain Mills' concept of the sociological imagination, and then I will show how it helps us to understand the experience of a particular Australian family in the 1950s."

However, if your tutor frowns on "I", you have an alternative: "First, this essay will explain...."

Avoid colloquial language

Colloquial language is everyday language which may be suitable when speaking, but should not be used in formal, academic writing.

✗ Every day, more and more electronic stuff is chucked out and ends up in the tip. [informal]
✓ Electronic waste is an increasing problem with 75% of computers bought annually in Australia ending up in landfill (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). [more formal]

Avoid emotional or aggressive language

The use of emotional language may weaken an academic argument.

✗ It will be a tragedy if these incredible sites are lost to the world forever. [emotional & informal]
✓ It is vital that conservation measures are immediately put in place to save these historic sites from destruction. [more formal]

Be assertive, but not aggressive (you'll never need "blatant" again!).

✗ As this essay will prove, Bloggs is biased and blatantly wrong. [combative]
✓ This essay will suggest that Bloggs has given undue emphasis to... [more modest, and courteous – still makes the point]

D. Clear structure and flow

Ideas about how texts should be structured are cultural, like so much else. They vary from one educational culture to another, and again, from one discipline to another! This is important to take note of, if you come from overseas or even from another Faculty of the university.

The structure that's expected in Humanities and Social Sciences will be discussed in more detail in
Chapter 4, when we look at types of assignments. The following points apply more generally to any writing you may do.

**Order points logically**
This is important at the planning stage of your writing. It is very difficult to make a piece of writing flow well if the ideas are not presented in a logical order.

Make sure you have one main unifying idea per paragraph and that the ideas within the paragraph lead logically from one to the next.

Also take note of the order of paragraphs so that there is a logical progression from one main idea to the next.

**Link ideas within and between paragraphs**
Good flow in a piece of writing can be achieved by making clear links between your ideas and also making it clear how each main idea is related to the topic. Where possible, linking words and expressions should indicate the relationship between ideas. For example if you want to show that something in the second sentence is a result of something in the first sentence, you could start the second sentence with ‘as a result’.

**Warning:** using a linking word just for the sake of it, if it’s the wrong word to express the relationship between ideas, is worse than no link at all, as it looks as if you yourself don’t know how the ideas are related. Choose carefully!


The following table gives a brief list of linking words and expressions.

Note that this is not intended to be a complete listing of all the linking words and phrases available for use in assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Linking word examples</th>
<th>Examples in sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducing</td>
<td>It is argued/ I argue that It is suggested/ I suggest It is arguable that It seems that It may be that</td>
<td>In the first part of this essay I argue that the impact of globalisation is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|            | This essay will ask/argue/explore/analyse/examine/look at ... the arguments/evidence/development of... | It is arguable that the predominance of American film and television has affected Australian English usage. (note the difference: “arguable” means that something could be argued, not necessarily that you are arguing it. It’s useful if you want to suggest an argument that you are going to show some problem with!)
|            |                                                                                       | This essay will examine the claim that written language and spoken language hold equal prestige in modern society. |
| Similarity | Similarly, Likewise, In a similar way, A similar response...                           | Similarly, Australian artists also began to produce smaller landscape pieces using...    |
|            |                                                                                       | A similar study also found an historical connection between...                         |
| Contrast   | In contrast, Conversely, On the other hand, (less formal) While..., ... Although..., ..., ...; however, ..., However, ..., Nevertheless/nonetheless, Despite/in spite of/Notwithstanding Whereas/ | In contrast, none of Shakespeare’s early comedies are set in England...                |
|            |                                                                                       | While many of the ideas were original, Johnston’s overall theory failed to gain widespread acceptance...  |
|            |                                                                                       | Although the policy seems well funded, insufficient planning has gone into the implementation process. |
|            |                                                                                       | The number of female writers increased; however, they were still forced to publish their work using male pseudonyms... |
|            |                                                                                       | Nevertheless, the majority of research still points to a sizable shift in...             |
|            |                                                                                       | Notwithstanding the ongoing difficulties faced by some migrants, the process of assimilation has been largely successful |
| Cause & effect | With this in mind In view of this As a result/therefore Consequently | With this in mind it should also be noted that... In view of this, most scholars now reject the conventional belief that... The reigning monarch died without an heir. Consequently, a fierce civil war broke out amongst... |
**Common grammar and expression errors**

In order to understand simple grammar errors, you need to know a little bit about basic sentence structure.

**What is a sentence?**

In order for a sentence to be complete it must usually contain a **subject** and a **verb**. A sentence must also convey a complete thought. For example, 'A student is.' contains a subject and a verb but doesn’t express a complete thought. It doesn’t convey any information and is thus not a complete sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Linking word examples</th>
<th>Examples in sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Point</td>
<td>Moreover, Furthermore, In addition</td>
<td><strong>Moreover</strong>, there are no specific advantages of using this type of linguistic model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>In addition</strong>, cinematic adaptations have the distinct advantage of using ‘close up’ shots.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These linking words should be used infrequently. It is not necessary to have a linking word between every sentence. It is also much better to use more specific linking phrases e.g. “**A further consequence was…**” OR “**In addition to the use of…**”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronology (time order)</th>
<th>First, Firstly, After that, Then, Next,</th>
<th>The idea of an Australian Republic was <strong>first</strong> adopted as a policy by the Australian Labor Party in 1991. <strong>After that</strong>, a Republican Advisory Committee was appointed to lay the foundations for constitutional change… The proposal was <strong>then</strong> the subject of an unsuccessful referendum…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Building up an idea (explaining, giving examples, adding, bringing in another aspect) | For example, To illustrate, …such as... In other words, In addition Another It is relevant to add It should be noted In this connection Similarly/likewise Thus, Moreover/furthermore | For example, this effect is achieved in the Tarantino film 'Pulp Fiction' through the use of multiple plotlines. Repeated phrases **such as** "Nevermore" convey a sense of dread and finality…

Despite its ‘Cult’ status, **it should be noted** that the film was poorly received when first released in cinemas. The financial consequences of the First World War were immense; **furthermore** the arrival of the Great Depression led to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary (not necessarily at the end of the essay; perhaps also between stages of the argument)</th>
<th>In conclusion, To sum up, In summary, In short, In brief,</th>
<th><strong>In conclusion</strong>, the introduction of a curfew had little effect on the crime rate in local communities. <strong>In summary</strong>, neither political party was able to implement successful social reform.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating</th>
<th>On balance/overall</th>
<th><strong>On balance</strong>, neither theory provides a satisfactory explanation… Despite government claims, the <strong>overall</strong> effect of these policies was a reduction in opportunities for women.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**The subject** says who or what does the action e.g. ‘who decides?’

**The verb** is the ‘doing word’ and describes an action or state. For example,

- **The voters** **decide**.

A simple sentence can also have other elements:

**An object** answers the question ‘what’ after the verb e.g. ‘decide what?’

For example,

- **The voters** **decide** **the result**.

**A complement** says what something is/was etc. For example,

- **The students** **were** **confused**.
Some of the most common grammar errors

1. Comma splice error
(a “splice” is a joining of 2 separate things, like ropes or sections of film)

A comma splice error occurs when two complete sentences are joined together by a comma. For example:

- **Thugs intimidated voters, the election failed.**

Comma splice errors are quite common, particularly for native speakers of English. They often result from the desire to avoid writing short sentences. Often, too, people write these sentences because they know that a sentence must contain a complete thought, and if their idea isn’t finished, they keep going until it is! However, it can take several sentences – indeed, a whole essay – to discuss an idea fully. A “complete thought” is not everything you have to say, but enough to make sense.

A comma splice error can be fixed in different ways, depending on the length of the sentences and the way their contents are related.

- If the two sentences are short, you can join them with a conjunction (“joining word”) such as “and”, “so”, or “but”, that expresses the relationship between the two ideas:

- **Thugs intimidated voters, so the election failed.**

- An alternative is the semicolon, which is useful when there is no word that expresses the relationship between ideas:

- **Thugs intimidated voters; this occurred at many polling stations.**

- If the relationship is general: specific – that is, the first part says something general, and the second part says something more specific about that — you can use a colon:

- **Thugs intimidated voters: they beat them up or threatened their families with violence.**

- The “something more specific” could be an explanation; more details; or an example. This is why writers often use a colon to add a quotation that explains or exemplifies a point they have made:

- **Thugs intimidated voters: “We will know if you have tried to vote and we will make you sorry”, villagers were told in one constituency (Muller, 2003, p. 46).**

- If the two sentences are already rather long, it is better to put a full stop between and have two separate sentences.

- **Backed by the party in power, thugs intimidated voters. Therefore, the election failed despite the efforts of observers to ensure a free and fair polling process.**

2. Run on sentence

Run on sentences are the same as the comma splice errors described above, except that there is no comma placed between the two sentences. These are less frequent than comma splice errors and can be fixed in the same way.

- **Thugs intimidated voters they beat them up or threatened their families with violence.**

- **Thugs intimidated voters: they beat them up or threatened their families with violence.**

3. Sentence fragment

A fragment is an incomplete sentence. Fragments may be missing a verb or a subject or they may not convey a complete thought.

**Example of a fragment that has a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought.**

- **Because the ruling party refused to hand over power.**

The above fragment contains a subject and a verb, but it does not contain a complete thought. We have the reason for something, but we don’t have the “something.” This is the most common form of fragment error. The word “Because” at the beginning has turned a complete sentence (“The ruling party refused to hand over power.”) into a fragment, which requires another part to be a complete sentence.

To correct this sentence it needs another part. For example:

- **Because the ruling party refused to hand over power, the election failed.**

There are many words similar to “because” that, when used in this way, require another part to make a full sentence. Some examples are given in the table below. Don’t be confused. This doesn’t mean that you can’t start a sentence with ‘Because’ (a common urban grammar myth!). You can start a sentence with ‘Because’ as long as you make sure to include the other part of the sentence.

An adverbial tells us how, when, where, or why.

For example,

- The voters filled out their ballots carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(subject)</th>
<th>(verb)</th>
<th>(object)</th>
<th>(adverbial - how)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In most places the voters filled out their ballots carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(adverbial - where)</th>
<th>(subject)</th>
<th>(verb)</th>
<th>(object)</th>
<th>(adverbial - how)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Notice that we use a comma when the adverbial element comes before the subject.
Fragment example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Because/ Since</th>
<th>Because the ruling party clung to power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although/ Whereas/ While</td>
<td>Although a majority wanted change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unless</td>
<td>Unless free elections can be guaranteed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the fragments in the above table could be corrected by adding another sentence part with a subject and a verb.

**Example of a fragment with no verb or subject**

✗ Being an uncompromising faction.

This fragment does not contain a full verb or a subject. The word “being” at the beginning of the sentence looks like a verb, but it is really only part of one.

To be a full verb, an –ing word needs to be combined with a “helping verb” such as am, is, are, was or were (e.g. The ruling faction is being uncompromising). To fix the fragment in the above example, another part needs to be added to make it a complete sentence.

✓ Being an uncompromising faction, the ruling party refused to hand over power.

Here's another example of a fragment.

✗ In most polling stations with adequate security.

The example above is a fragment because it only tells us the “where” part of the sentence. It does not contain a subject or a verb. We don’t know who is doing what. The fragment needs another part to make it a complete sentence.

✓ In most polling stations with adequate security, the voters filled out their ballots confidently.

### 4. Subject verb agreement

In English grammar, subjects must “agree with” verbs. We use different forms of verbs with singular or plural subjects. The table above gives some examples.

Making subjects agree with verbs is fairly easy when the sentence is short and the subject is right next to its verb. However, when sentences are long and complex, subject verb agreement can be more difficult, as in the following example.

✗ Punctuating long sentences, such as the ones in the following examples, cause difficulties for many writers.

✓ Punctuating long sentences, such as the ones in the following examples, causes difficulties for many writers.

In order to check whether the subject agrees with the verb, you first need to identify the main verb in the sentence (“cause” in the sentences above) and then ask who or what causes difficulties? The answer is “punctuating” (not “examples”). Punctuating = “it”, so we need to use the verb form with the “s”, i.e. punctuating… causes difficulties…

### 5. Problems with commas

Many people are unsure how to use commas correctly. A lot of the time, this doesn't matter as many sentences “requiring” a comma can be easily understood even without the comma. However, a comma acts as a visual aid to the reader by:

a) preventing ambiguity (that is, more than one possible meaning):

✗ A passport wallet and camera were stolen. (How many things were stolen?)

✓ A passport, wallet and camera were stolen. (Three!)

b) making the subject and verb more visible, because they are the most important part of the sentence:

i) Separate any introductory phrases off with a comma, so readers can easily find the subject and verb that come next:

✗ Where threats were made the turnout was low.

✓ Where threats were made, the turnout was low.

( **introduction bit**  **main part of sentence** )

ii) Don’t separate the subject from the verb with a comma, because it suggests that they don’t belong together:

✗ The turnout was low.

✓ The turnout was low.
If you put any information in between the subject and verb that is additional but not crucial to the meaning of the sentence, separate it off with a comma at each end. This alerts the reader to hold the subject in mind until they find the verb at the other end.

*The turnout, independent observers reported, was low.*

Here, the information could come out without damaging the meaning. But the commas couldn’t – if they were not there, it would mean that only the turnout that was reported by independent observers was low, whereas it may also have been low in places where there were no independent observers.

In the next example, the inserted information is crucial; that is, it couldn’t be removed without damaging the meaning of the sentence. This is because the turnout was not low in places where threats were not made.

*The turnout where threats were made was low.*

Don’t, in any case, put in just one of those commas and not the other – it confuses the signals you want to send about what belongs with what!

*The turnout, independent observers reported was low.*

*The turnout independent observers reported, was low.*

It may seem strange that punctuation can direct a reader’s attention in these ways, but these are conventions that we learn from reading which help us navigate through long and complex sentences without losing the plot. Mostly, commas in writing are matched by pauses in speech, because they mark the “chunks” and shifts of meaning in a sentence. However, it doesn’t work to throw in commas wherever you would pause if you were reading aloud, because we pause in speech more often, and for more different reasons (for emphasis, or just to breathe!). Your safest guide is the grammatical reasoning above.

### 6. Parallel structure

Problems with maintaining parallel structure often occur when constructing lists, either as dot points or within a sentence. Items in a list should be the same type of word in terms of grammar, for example, a list of nouns or a list of verbs. The following examples should illustrate.

- **The objectives of this analysis are:**
  - Identifying the main categories of cultural difference
  - To give an account of the dangers of stereotyping
  - The different ways to conceptualise difference

  Each of the dot points has a different grammatical form. To give the items in the list parallel structure, they should have the same grammatical form as in the list of verbs (actions) below.

- **The objectives of this analysis are to:**
  - identify the main categories of cultural difference
  - give an account of the dangers of stereotyping
  - describe the different ways to conceptualise difference.

### 7. Modifiers (descriptions) must be next to the thing they describe

- **Abandoned at birth, he never knew his parents.**

  **NOT**

  **Abandoned at birth, his parents never knew him.**

  (This would mean that his parents were abandoned at birth!)

### 8. Apostrophes

Apostrophes are notoriously difficult to use correctly. There is even a website showing examples of apostrophe abuse on signs from around the world: [www.apostropheabuse.com/](http://www.apostropheabuse.com/)

However, once you know the rules, it’s really not that hard.

Apostrophes are used for two main reasons:

1. **To denote one or more missing letter(s)**

   When we put two words together, we use an apostrophe to show that a letter is missing. It is not common to use these shortened forms in academic writing. Here are some examples.

   - do not → don’t
   - is not → isn’t
   - you are → you’re
   - it is → it’s
   - we are → we’re
   - he would → he’d
   - would have → would’ve

   (Note that would’ve and could’ve are contractions of *would have* and *could have*, not *would of* or *could of*.)

   We do not use an apostrophe to make a plural, even with abbreviations, acronyms, or years, where you may think it looks funny just to add an “s”. We do just add an “s”!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>✖</th>
<th>✔</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD’s</td>
<td>CDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USB’s</td>
<td>USBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM’s</td>
<td>ATMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960’s</td>
<td>1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90’s</td>
<td>90s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(also!) sofa’s only $199</td>
<td>sofas only $199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. To denote possession

Apostrophes are used to show possession or ownership of something, as in the following examples. Note that the apostrophe is placed after the ‘s’ if the noun is plural. We can also use pronouns in place of the noun. The table below contains some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>singular nouns</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
<th>plural nouns</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student’s writing</td>
<td>his/her</td>
<td>The students’ writing</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paper’s references</td>
<td>its</td>
<td>The papers’ references</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bee’s knees</td>
<td>its</td>
<td>The bees’ knees</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The computer’s functions</td>
<td>its</td>
<td>The computers’ functions</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn’s office</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A point of confusion**

The words that cause the most confusion when using apostrophes are *it’s* and *its*.

*It’s* – the apostrophe denotes a missing letter (i.e. short form of it is’)

*Its* – is used to show possession but has no apostrophe (e.g. Its ears are big).


**Commonly confused words**

The English language can be very confusing, so it’s hard to avoid mistakes. Some commonly confused words are listed at right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word confusion</th>
<th>explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>effect/affect</td>
<td>These words are similar, but not the same. The verb “to affect” means to influence something: The storm affected his travel plans. The verb “to effect” means to make something happen: The storm effected a change in the water level. (In the first example, you can see that a storm is not likely to make someone’s travel plans happen – to effect them – but it could influence them not to happen – affect them.) The noun effect means result: One effect of the storm was a rise in the water level. The noun affect means emotion, and is rarely used outside of Psychology: The accused showed little affect as his crime was described in shocking detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imply/infer</td>
<td>Both are about suggested meanings, but the difference is in who is responsible for the meaning: A speaker or writer implies a suggested meaning; A listener or reader infers a suggested meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few/less</td>
<td>Use few or fewer with “countable” nouns. e.g. There were few errors. Use less with “uncountable” nouns. e.g. There was less freedom of speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprise/consist</td>
<td>Use comprise without “of”. e.g. The sample comprised 42 males and 47 females. Use consist with “of”. e.g. Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen atoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice/practise</td>
<td>Practice is a noun. e.g. I need more practice with this technique. Practise is a verb. e.g. I need to practise this technique. (To help you remember, the difference between advice (a noun) and advise (a verb) is similar.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then/than</td>
<td>Then means “at that time” (Then he left the meeting.) Than means “compared with” (Castro’s speeches were longer than those of most heads of state.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A word about Microsoft Word grammar checker and spell checker

Automatic spelling and grammar checkers are not as accurate as a human editor, and given the current state of technology, the Microsoft Word spell checker and grammar checker make mistakes, particularly the grammar checker.

For example, the grammar checker often misses subject verb agreement errors or identifies a sentence as containing an error when it doesn’t, in fact, have one.

Grammar checkers are useful for writers who have a knowledge of correct grammar. They can alert the writer to inadvertent mistakes and typos, but ultimately, it is the writer that makes the final decision whether to accept or reject the suggestion.

The Microsoft Word spellchecker is generally more accurate; however, it may not recognise alternative spellings as illustrated in the poem below. (And common misspellings in essays, based on similarities of sound, include sort [type] for sought [searched]; compliment (say something flattering) for complement (fit well with each other); tenant [lodger] for tenet [belief]; and boarder [lodger] for border [edge]!)

Candidate for a Pullet Surprise by Mark Eckman and Jerrold H. Zar

Published in the Journal of Irreproducible Results, January/February 1994, page 13.

I have a spelling checker,
It came with my PC.
It plane lee marks four my revue
Miss steaks aye can knot sea.

Eye ran this poem threw it,
Your sure reel glad two no.
Its vary polished in it’s weigh.
My checker tolled me sew.

A checker is a bless sing,
It freeze yew lodes of thyme.
It helps me right awl stiles two reed,
And aides me when eye rime.

Each frays come posed up on my screen
Eye trussedd too bee a joule.
The checker pours o’er every word
To cheque sum spelling rule.

Bee fore a veiling checker’s
Hour spelling mite decline,
And if we’re lacks oar have a laps,
We wood bee maid too wine.

Butt now bee cause my spelling
Is checked with such grate flare,
Their are know fault’s with in my cite,
Of nun eye am a wear.

Now spelling does knot phase me,
It does knot bring a tier.
My pay purrs awl due glad den
With wrapped word’s fare as hear.

To rite with care is quite a feet
Of witch won should bee proud,
And wee mussed dew the best wee can,
Sew flaw’s are knot aloud.

Sow ewe can sea why aye dew prays
Such soft war four pea seas,
And why eye brake in two averse
Buy righting want too pleas.
Why and how we use sources

Using references in your writing enables readers to check your ideas or follow up your sources for themselves and also gives due credit to the person(s) who produced the original information. Ideas are a kind of “intellectual property”, owned by their creators.

Therefore, when you use someone else's idea in your writing, it is important to clearly show the difference between your own ideas and theirs.

If you do not make this difference clear, you may be accused of plagiarism. This is a serious academic offence and may result in failing an assignment or even a whole unit.

A further reason for using references in your writing is to give your assignment weight and authority as you back up your arguments with evidence from sources.

How can my work be original if it's about other people's work?

Students often worry that if they discuss ideas from the assigned readings in their essays, it will look like they had no ideas of their own. For this reason, sometimes students ignore the reading and struggle to come up with something different, but the result is usually a failing essay. Many – even most – essay topics are designed to get you to engage with particular scholars' arguments, and you are expected to discuss what they have said. What is original in your essay is the way you explain and evaluate those ideas, your choice of evidence, and your conclusions.

When students are criticised for relying too heavily on the sources they read, it's not because they used those sources – they were supposed to use them. But it might be for either (or both) of two reasons.

One is that they have used direct quotation so extensively that the tutor could not tell whether they had understood the material. The other is that they have just reported what the various authors said, and didn't use that material to construct their own answer to the question. It's your essay and you need to show how all these ideas relate to each other and to the question you are asking. You could think of it like weaving – you bring together a lot of different threads, but the pattern you weave with them is your own, and this is what we mean by originality in university essays.

It can be hard to imagine what this might look like, so here is a paragraph from a student's essay that shows how her using sources very effectively. Note, also, how the paragraph is constructed: it's a very good example of how a paragraph should:

• focus on one idea,
• begin with a topic sentence that presents that idea,
• and then develop it with evidence.

The question was: “Early sociologists such as Durkheim and Tonnies predicted the modern city would be a secular space, lacking genuine sense of community. Have their fears been realised?”

The student decided that modern cities are indeed secular spaces, but that the early sociologists had been mistaken in assuming that community must be based on religion. She argued that modern cities have other kinds of community, and in one part of her essay, she focussed on the maintenance of community via the internet.

You can see how she brought ideas from her reading together: she didn't quote directly, but she discussed ideas found in three different sources that were relevant to the point she wanted to make, and referenced these.
Karen Barnett and Barbara Adkins' article “Computers: Community for Aging Women in Australia,” suggests that the internet allows older women who would otherwise be quite isolated from society, due to poor health or lack of mobility, the ability to forge friendships with other women in similar circumstances. Through this, they attain a sense of community, a sense of belonging and security. If something were to go wrong, the virtual community that they interact with on a day to day basis would be the first support system to respond (Barnett and Adkins 2001, p. 23). More often than not, participants of internet chat rooms, instant messaging and other forms of on-line contact see each other in person regularly or have met before (Wellman, Salat, Dimitrova, Garton et al 1996, p. 213). Therefore, this means of communication is an extension of face-to-face interaction, a feature commonly associated with pre-modern society (Bessant and Watts 2002, p.10). As access to technology such as the internet increases and people become more technically competent, virtual communities will prevail and the new generation of aged citizens can rely on such devices.

But once you know what it means to use sources in your writing, you’re still faced with some technical problems:

- If I quote, should I use long or short quotations, and what do they look like?
- Do I have to use the quotation exactly as it is in the original? What if it doesn’t fit my sentence, or I don’t want all of it?

**Conventions for quoting**

If quoting three lines or more, don’t use quotation marks but block-indent the whole quotation in from the margin:

Miller (1992, p. 86) emphasises the ongoing importance of the Revolution:

The Revolution of 1688-89 was…of great importance for the history of liberty, in England and elsewhere. Later generations saw it as the cornerstone of their liberties – an MP referred to the Bill of Rights as “our original contract” as early as 1690 (Grey 1769, pp. 75-76) – and used it to validate their claims for greater liberty.

(Original footnoting has been changed to Harvard style in this example.)

If quoting less than three lines, just incorporate the quotation into your own sentence, but use quotation marks around it to show that you are quoting. You can leave something out of the middle of the quoted passage, if you do not need it; leave three dots there to show that something has been omitted.

If the part you leave out extended beyond the end of a sentence in the original, leave four dots (the fourth is for the full stop from that sentence).

If you want to change or add to the quotation, to make it fit the grammar or the content of your own sentence in which it is included, use SQUARE brackets around your addition. The dots allow us to shorten a quotation, while the square brackets allow us to make something sensible out of what’s left.

For example, suppose you want to quote just a bit of that passage above:

Miller (1992, p. 86) tells us that “the Revolution of 1688-89 was [very important to] … later generations … as the cornerstone of their liberties”.

Note that the quotation, if treated in this way, must remain faithful to the meaning of the original, and must also make sense in your own sentence.

For example, you couldn’t write:

Miller (1992, p. 86) tells us that “the Revolution …liberties”.

This section aims to provide guidance in paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism, and directs you to instructions on how to reference correctly.
Talking about other people’s ideas

You’ll need to pay particular attention to the language you use to introduce ideas or information from a source, and to relate ideas to each other.

Sometimes students try to vary their vocabulary so their writing won’t look repetitive, and we’ve looked at the risks of this strategy at the beginning of Chapter 2. It’s particularly risky if the words you are varying, just for the sake of variation, are words that bring ideas from other sources into your writing – Bloggs says/ reports/ points out/ claims/ asserts/ assumes/ argues/ notes/ mentions/ writes/etc.

The reason you should be careful is that these words are not variants of “says” – each one means something slightly different, or even very different. For example, if you say that Bloggs “asserts” or “claims” that World War Two ended in 1945, you’re going to look foolish, because a claim can be made only about something that is not established fact.

In another example, if you say that Bloggs “mentions” something that is in fact Bloggs’ main idea, it will look like you didn’t recognise it as her main idea – to mention something means to give it only brief attention.

The reason these kinds of words are so important is that one of the most fundamental academic values is that we construct knowledge by sharing, discussing and contesting ideas, so it matters who says what, and how they say it, and how it relates to the things that other scholars have said. Your tutors want you to be aware of how different scholars’ ideas are related, and to reflect that awareness in your writing.

Referencing

There are two places where references need to be included in a piece of writing:

1. In-text references (citations) - in the text of your writing
2. Reference list – at the end of your assignment

Why do I need to reference?

- To help the reader find the sources referred to
- To protect yourself against charges of plagiarism
- To show that you have read widely and researched the topic
- To distinguish your own ideas from those of others

How do I know when to cite or reference?

- When you use direct quotations
- When you refer to the ideas of another person in your assignments.

Every source (e.g. primary text, novel, scholarly journal, electronic source) that you either quote or paraphrase in your assignment must be included in the reference list and every reference included in your reference list must be cited in your assignment.

There are dozens of different referencing styles. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences students can use either an in-text referencing style (such as the Harvard style) or a footnoting system (such as the Oxford style). Please be aware that even individual styles, such as Harvard, have several versions. In order to avoid confusion, the best approach is to familiarise yourself properly with ONE version and stick to it throughout your assignment.

A guide to the referencing styles commonly used in Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University can be found at www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/referencingtool

Before attempting your first assignment...

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences offers a large and diverse range of study programs. As such, individual programs and subjects (e.g. Sociology, History, Politics, Media Studies) may have a preferred referencing style. This information may be addressed in lectures or tutorials, or included in subject Guides. However, if you are unsure, it is important that you consult your subject tutor or lecturer in regard to referencing requirements for each of your subjects, before attempting your first assignment.

Once you know the referencing style(s) you’re going to use for your assignments, it’s recommended that you learn the general principles (as well as the finer points) of each style before attempting your first written assignment. To help you with this the LaTrobe University Library offers a series of on-line training modules that explain and allow you to practice referencing styles.

You can access these at: http://latrobe.libguides.com/referencingmodules

In-text referencing

If using an in-text referencing style, such as Harvard, every idea that is not your own (e.g. information from a book or journal article, or a website) needs to include an in-text reference (also called a citation) to show where the idea came from. Even if you have put the information in your own words (paraphrased) you must still provide an in-text reference.

Be sure to enclose the source for the in-text citation in round brackets. Where you place the citation in your sentence depends on whether you are focussing on the author, the text, or the idea. If you have already named the author in your sentence, don’t repeat the name in your bracketed citation.

Examples:

(A) Idea focus:

“The worst sectarian violence in our history occurred in Melbourne in 1846 when Catholic and Protestant mobs fired on each other on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne” (Hirst 2009, p. 14).

(B) Author focus:

Hirst (2009, p. 14) claimed that “the worst sectarian violence in our history occurred in Melbourne in 1846 when Catholic and Protestant mobs fired on
each other on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne”.

(C) Text focus:
A recent study (Charalambou & Harrison 2009, pp. 48-49) has shown that due to a lack of suitable employment, people are moving from rural communities to the city.

Why is my tutor telling me that my referencing is ‘vague’ and ‘unclear’?

There are three main reasons why this may be happening:
1) You have not referenced a quotation/paraphrase of material from a source.
2) You have provided an in-text citation, but you have failed to include all of the required information. You should always include the following:
   • The author’s or editor’s family name (or names if more than one author). Usually, if you are citing an edited book, you are referring to a particular chapter of it. If so, cite the author(s) of that chapter, not the editor(s) of the book. Likewise, in your reference list, you list each different chapter that you used separately.
   • The year of publication.
   • Page number(s) where the material can be found on specific pages of the source. If you summarise an idea discussed throughout the source, no page number is needed. If you cite a website that lacks page numbers (but check!), no page number is needed. If you cite a website that lacks page numbers (but check!), no page number is needed.
3) You have provided citations and you have included the required information; however, you have not located the citation in its proper place.

While it is important to master your chosen referencing style, it’s equally important that you make use of citations in their proper place, so that there is no confusion over what, or how much, material is being referenced.

As a General Rule: An in-text reference should happen immediately – normally, at the end of your sentence. Remember, your paragraphs will contain numerous statements and may include several direct quotations, pieces of statistical data or other evidence that need to be referenced.

If you wait until the end of a paragraph or page to provide the citation, the person reading your essay will find it extremely difficult to know what it is that you are specifically referencing.

Apart from creating confusion, this could potentially lead to accusations of plagiarism (i.e. that you have failed to reference another person’s ideas or words).

Same idea from more than one source

Sometimes you may find the same idea in two (or more) sources. After you paraphrase the idea, you may be unsure about which source to cite. The simple answer is to cite them both. When doing so, order the citations alphabetically, based on the first author’s family name. Do not change the order of authors within a piece of work. Separate the citations with semicolons.

Example:
Topkapi Sarayi, the Sultan’s imperial palace, was the setting for an opulent display of wealth and status, expressed through entertaining (Freely, 2008; Nicolle, 2008).

Citing something cited in a source you’ve read

Sometimes, you may want to use a piece of information that an author has cited from another source. If it is not possible to find and read the original source, you may have to rely on the one you first read. This kind of citation contains the original author and the year, plus the author of the source where you read the information, plus the year.

Example: Remember the example of a long quotation given on p. 43:
Miller (1992, p. 86) emphasises the ongoing importance of the Revolution:
The Revolution of 1688-89 was … of great importance for the history of liberty, in England and elsewhere. Later generations saw it as the cornerstone of their liberties – an MP referred to the Bill of Rights as “our original contract” as early as 1690 (Grey 1769, pp. 75-76) – and used it to validate their claims for greater liberty.

Suppose you just wanted to use that quotation from the MP in 1690? – notice how the reference includes both the original source and the source the student found it in:
The idea that the Bill of Rights was the “original contract” guaranteeing liberty can be traced back to debate in the House of Commons in 1690 (Grey 1769, cited in Miller 1992, p. 86).

Footnote referencing

Some disciplines prefer to use a different style of referencing. Instead of putting a citation in brackets at the end of a sentence, you insert a footnote number which appears as a small number above the line of print.

Each footnote number is then matched by a note with the same number, at the bottom of the page, which gives all the publication details of the source, plus the page or pages that your discussion refers to.

A footnote can also contain a detail or comment that you don’t think is important enough to go into the essay itself, but you would like to make it available to your reader.

You can see an example of a paragraph from an essay that used footnoting on the next page.

When you use the footnote system, the reference details in your footnote are almost identical to the entry in your reference list at the end of your essay.
There are two differences:

- In a footnote, the author’s initial comes before their family name. In the reference list, the family name comes first, followed by a comma and then the initial.
- In a footnote, the page number in the source you are referring to comes after the other details. In the reference list, you don’t include any page numbers except for articles, where you give the page range, that is, the pages that the article occupies in the journal or book where it is published (e.g., pp. 2-21).

**Example from an essay using footnotes**

Flowers and gardens epitomized the true sense of pleasure for the Ottoman hierarchy. This was evident in the number of gardens around the Bosphorus channel and the Sea of Marmara. Many of the gardens were decorated with a combination of trees, flowers and fountains, which made for perfect leisure spaces and entertainment areas. The rose was widely embraced not only for its great beauty and scent, but as a flower that was drunk, bathed with and eaten. While “liqueurs prepared from the essence of roses might be drunk … the supreme achievement was the rose-petal jam”. (Note, in that last sentence, how the writer has left 3 dots to indicate that she has omitted something that was in the original sentence, which was more than she needed here.)

3 ibid, p.190.  
4 ibid.

### Reference Lists

As well as including citations in the text of your essay, you must also include a reference list at the end. This contains all the sources you used, arranged in alphabetical order of the authors’ family names.

(If there is no author, substitute the editor or organisation responsible for the source; consult your referencing guidelines for more details on this.)

The following selection from a Harvard Style reference list shows a range of sources:


All referencing systems require the same information in your reference list: author, title, city of publication, publisher, date, etc. They differ, however, in the formats they require. Differences include:

- The order of the information  
- Punctuation within and between items of information  
- Abbreviations used.

When you consult the guidelines for the system your subject requires, be sure to carefully note the order of details, when to use italics or quotation marks, where to put brackets, commas, colons, or full stops, and which words to capitalise.

### Frequently Asked Questions about Referencing

**Can I reference lecture notes?**

It is not good practice to cite your lecture notes. It is better to find the same information in a source. (You can ask the lecturer where to look for it.)

**If I write something in my own words, do I need to provide an in-text reference?**

Yes, we reference ideas, not just the words used to express them, so you need to show where the original idea came from. Most sentences without a reference are considered to contain your own ideas, so you must make it clear whether your sentences contain ideas that are your own or someone else’s.

**Does that mean I need to provide a reference for nearly every sentence?**

Yes, in first year it is likely that you will not have a great deal of your own knowledge of the subject matter, so most of the information you use in your writing will come from other sources and thus will need a reference. Sometimes, if it is clear that two or three sentences come from the same source, it is only necessary to reference one of the sentences.

**Example:**

Neilson (2006) explored the rise of the equal rights movement in Spain during the 1970s and its impact on the number of women undertaking full time paid employment. She found that the equal rights movement had directly affected the working status of women in major cities, yet there was negligible impact in provincial Spanish towns and villages.

In the above example, the second sentence is clearly from the same source as the first. Thus, it is not necessary to provide an in-text reference for the second sentence.
When can I ‘own’ an idea and so do not have to provide a reference for it?

This is a very tricky question. There is not always a clear dividing line between what constitutes your own knowledge and what is knowledge from others and hence needs to be referenced. It can sometimes be difficult to decide whether you need to put a reference or not.

But common sense can guide you: if you found the idea somewhere in your reading/viewing, say where that was!

How to paraphrase

Many students find paraphrasing difficult. In order to paraphrase well, you must first understand what you are reading. Poor paraphrasing is often the result of poor understanding of the text.

Some students try to paraphrase at the sentence level rather than the ideas level. Just changing a few words and shifting parts of the sentence around may not result in a good paraphrase.

A better way to paraphrase is to read a section of the text, write down a few key words that summarise the main idea(s) and then build up a sentence in your own words without looking back at the original sentence(s).

Example

Original text

“Many Parliamentary supporters during the English Civil War were strict Puritans, opposed to European fashions such as the wearing of long hair. As a result they were commonly known as ‘Roundheads’, so called because of their preference for hair cut short around the head” (Ulmer 2007, p. 103).

Paraphrase

Because they often wore their hair cropped close to the head, to show their Puritan disdain for fashion, supporters of the Parliament were often referred to as ‘Roundheads’ during the English Civil War (Ulmer 2004, p. 103).

Plagiarism

If you do not reference or paraphrase correctly, you may be accused of plagiarism. This is a serious academic offence. The La Trobe University Academic Misconduct Policy (2008) explains that “There are many forms of plagiarism, including the following:

(a) direct copying of sentences, paragraphs or other extracts from someone else’s published work (including on the Internet and in software) without acknowledging the source;
(b) paraphrasing someone else’s words without acknowledging the source;
(c) using facts and information derived from a source without acknowledging it;
(d) using ideas directly derived from an identifiable author without acknowledging the source;
(e) producing assignments which should be the student’s own, independent work in collaboration with and/or using the work of other people (e.g. a student or tutor).”


For practice, do the “DETECTION ACTIVITY” at http://latrobe.libguides.com/content.php?pid=171105&sid=1440839

Before you submit your first piece of written work, you must read the information about plagiarism on the following web page.

Read this!


For practice, do the module “REFERENCING YOUR SOURCES” at http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills
Audience – how much should you explain?

This is a good time to raise the question of audience. It’s common sense to consider, when you write anything, who is going to read it, how much they already know, and how much, therefore, you will need to explain to them.

However, in writing for uni, this doesn’t work exactly as you would expect. You are writing for your tutors, who are experts in the subject, so it might seem like you shouldn’t bore them by explaining things they surely know already.

However, they are reading your work as if they knew slightly less than you! This seems strange, but they are training you to write in ways that will make sense to people who do know slightly less than you. When you go into the workplace, nobody will ask you to research and report on things they know already, so you will need the skills of explaining ideas, giving examples, and commenting on what they mean.

You cannot rely on the idea that you and your audience have read the same sources; your writing alone must be adequate to make sense of your ideas.

This is why tutors write in your margins “Who was this?” “Date?” “Explain” or “for example?” – even when they know.

There is one exception: in writing about English literature or cinema, you can assume that your reader has read the work of literature you are discussing (the poem, story, novel, play or film).

But what you say about it must still make sense without your reader going back and looking for the passage in the text, or watching the film again, so avoid fragmentary quotation, and explain your points in full.

Exercises

“Exercise” is a general term for the short pieces you may be asked to write, the purpose of which is usually to practise a method of the discipline. For example, in Politics or Sociology you might be given some statistics and asked to comment on what they show in relation to some question.

In History, you might be asked to examine a document from the place and period you are studying – a speech, a letter, or a set of rules for living in a convict barracks – and again, the purpose is to see how they illustrate some broader idea that the subject is discussing.

In English, you might be asked to comment on how some aspect of meaning is created in a poem or a short story. In Linguistics, you might be analysing a pattern of grammar in a series of utterances on a worksheet. None of these kinds of exercises is a full-blown essay, but each is a kind of building-block for essay writing.

If you think of studying as an apprenticeship, exercises are your chance to learn how to work with the raw materials of your discipline, the kinds of information that you will later use as “evidence” in your essays.

They are brief and specific – don’t get too ambitious, and don’t be vague – focus closely on the source you are asked to deal with, and comment on it specifically and in detail.
1. Analyse the question

This is not just a matter of noticing the instruction words (compare, evaluate, etc.), though of course you must do that. More importantly, it’s a matter of figuring out what the question has to do with the larger concepts, methods, theories, and perhaps debates that are discussed in that subject.

What overall questions or ideas give rise to the particular question you are writing on? How will you show, in your essay, that you understand the context relating to your question?

Most assignments in Humanities and Social Sciences want you to consider how some idea (or more than one) applies to particular examples of whatever phenomenon you are studying. You need to explain what that idea is and how it relates to the example(s) you or your tutor have chosen for analysis.

It may be that the idea you start with applies very well to your example, and you just need to walk your reader through that. It may be that the usefulness of the idea is limited, in the case(s) you’re looking at, and you would need to show how it does and doesn’t help us to understand that situation.

It may be that the example actually casts doubt on the idea, once you’ve thought about it, and again, you’d need to explain why.

Making knowledge is a constant process of testing general explanations (i.e. “theories”) against actual cases, and modifying the theory when necessary; and your assignments are designed to involve you in this process.

Often, this is evident from the wording of the assignment:

How far do you agree/ is it accurate/ is it fair to say ……………………………..?

A question that isn’t a question?

One common kind of assignment presents you with an idea, often in the form of a quotation, and the instruction word is “discuss”:

“Blah, blah, blah blah blah.” Discuss.

This sounds like you could just say anything about the topic, but no! “Discuss” means, “Explain this idea and say how true you think it is, in light of the reading that you’ve done about it.”

Assignments don’t always take the form of a question, but it’s important for you to turn those into a question or cluster of questions, so that you have something to answer. Just to write “about” some topic is too vague and will not produce an argument.

So, if you’re not sure whether you’ve understood what question is implied in an assignment, rephrase it as a question and ask your tutor if you’ve got that right.

The context behind the question

Stepping back from the question like this, to set it in its larger context, can be illustrated by looking at a question from a subject on the history of Britain and Australia in the 18th and 19th Centuries:

“Did the owner and manager of the Castle Forbes Estate fulfil their obligations as paternalist masters?”

Superficially, that could be answered: yes, they did; no, they didn’t; or yes and no. But if we step back and ask, why was this a question worth asking, in terms of this particular History subject? – then we are led to say a bit about the context.

The subject looked at the history of Britain as a background to the early history of Australia. It focussed, first, on the world view that all levels of English society shared in the eighteenth century, in which each person knew their place. They obeyed the social ranks above them, and dominated those beneath them, but the ideology underpinning these relationships was not one of power alone. The relationship of masters to workers was modelled on that of a father to his children, with
In 1833, six convict labourers on the Castle Forbes Estate in New South Wales rose up against their overseer and tried to escape. This unsuccessful rebellion showed cracks in the paternalist model of relations between masters and workers that colonists brought with them from preindustrial England. According to this model, masters had a duty to control, guide and care for the people under them, who owed them service and loyalty in return. The evidence given to an enquiry set up to investigate the Castle Forbes rebellion suggests that the owner and overseer provided only for the men’s material needs, and for these only what was cheap and easy to obtain. This is probably because masters and men lacked any common interest that would have made investment in their labour seem worthwhile, and because neither felt a duty to the other. As we look at the kinds of things they were expected to provide – clothing, shelter, medical care, holidays, food, and a fair hearing – we will see that they fell short of expectations in the last two areas particularly. Their own evidence to the enquiry will show why.

These features of the opening paragraph are very important because they go a long way to meet the academic reader’s expectations of what an essay should do, how, and in what order, so this writer would have been well on the way to a good mark already!

The structure of academic texts
We need to look at these expectations because they are very much a part of the Anglo-western culture of enquiry. We take them for granted, but it’s better to be explicit about them so that students who are new to uni, including students from different academic cultures overseas, can be aware of them from the start.

Australian academic readers expect the things they read to be structured so that points are made first, and are then developed further. In an essay, this means that the first, “introductory”, paragraph should make the overall point the essay will develop. Then, in each “body” paragraph, the first (“topic”) sentence, should make the point of the paragraph, and then supporting sentences explain that point and illustrate it with evidence. The whole essay is closely focussed on the question and its context, and only material that is relevant to that is welcomed. And, as the essay unfolds, there are connecting words and phrases that show the reader how ideas relate to each other and to the main, organising idea of the essay.
This “deductive” structure is considered appropriate in Anglo-western academic culture, where it reflects the idea that each individual plays a role in the construction of knowledge and must be explicit and assertive in doing so. Meaning is the writer’s responsibility, not the reader’s.

In some other academic cultures, where readers take more responsibility for deciding what the text conveys, people are made uncomfortable by a way of writing that insists upon its conclusions from the start. It seems to them more respectful to approach that conclusion indirectly, giving lots of background and allowing readers to do more of the thinking for themselves (as we do, for example, in detective stories).

If you are used to that “inductive” structure, and the cultural values underpinning it, you need to know that Australian tutors will not think it disrespectful if you tell them what you want them to think right from the start. They will find it helpful, and feel confident that you know where you are going and will take them there!


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Research the topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start with the sources recommended in your subject, and move out from there if required (check! The recommended reading may be all you are expected to use, for some assignments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can follow up relevant references in your essential and further readings, to read what those authors read if the library has it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can also search the library catalogue using key words to find books, and targeted search strategies to find articles in the library databases. To learn how to do this, go to the online tutorials at <a href="http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills">http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills</a> .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Plan the essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This involves three main steps. Firstly, brainstorm. Jot down everything you can think of from your research related to the topic. The next step of grouping is critical. This is where you attempt to find common ideas within the brainstorm. Give your grouped ideas a heading. These groups then become the themes for your essay. Finally, outline the essay in detail with each theme becoming a main point supported by factual evidence. Write down all necessary referencing details as you plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of a piece of academic writing</th>
<th>To answer these questions in a reader’s mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>What’s this about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>What larger discussion does it relate to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question/problem</td>
<td>What is this writer asking/trying to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>What does s/he think is the answer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signposting</td>
<td>How is s/he going to show it to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point I (explanation)</td>
<td>Why does s/he think this? (what does this mean?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence/example</td>
<td>Based on what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference(s)</td>
<td>Where did s/he learn this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point II (and so on)</td>
<td>(same questions again)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>So what? How does all this relate to what s/he asked at the beginning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A “point-first” argument like this is called “deductive”, and can be contrasted with the opposite, “inductive” process preferred in some other educational cultures.

Maybe a little Latin would help you to remember …..

Latin: De (from) + duct (lead) Deductive = leading from

In (to) + duct (lead) Inductive = leading to
The diagram below shows an initial brainstorming for the Castle Forbes topic, based on the evidence given to the Inquiry following the rebellion. It was a mixture of things the masters had provided to, or done to, or thought about the convicts, as well as the convicts’ complaints.

The student then grouped the material into:
- Kinds of things that masters were expected to provide
- How the masters actually treated their convict workers

Importantly, she also asked herself Why? Part of finding your way into the culture of enquiry in a discipline is getting to know the questions it always asks.

Sometimes these fundamental questions are unspoken, but they are always there, and they account for the different meanings of “analysis” in different disciplines.

Analysis always means pulling something apart and showing how the parts are related, but the purpose of analysis is not always the same.

In History, for example, it is aimed at showing why things have happened. In Sociology, it is aimed at showing what kinds of things happen in what kinds of social situations.

In disciplines that study creative arts, like Art History, Cinema, and English literature, it is aimed at showing what effect a work of art has on its audience, how that effect is created, and why it is done the way it is.

There are overlaps, of course, but this awareness takes some of the mystery out of why such different processes are called analysis in different subjects you may study, and at the same time, what they have in common.

Analysis is often contrasted with description, as in the comment markers often write on essays, “Too much description; not enough analysis.” Don’t take this to mean that you shouldn’t describe things in your essays! Analysis is description used to make a point, and the important thing is to keep that point visible so that your reader can see your description as evidence.

4. Draft the essay

Construct these ideas into the key elements of an essay: an introduction, a discussion (or body) divided into a number of paragraphs, and a conclusion.

The writing style is formal but the essay can, at this stage, be quite disorganised. This draft is only for you, to get all your ideas and information down in one place where you can see what they are.
You will have techniques up your sleeve for making it better, as soon as you've read the next section! Whatever you do, don't get bogged down trying to make the introduction perfect or trying to get the structure right just yet.

You have seen an introduction, and the next section will look closely at some "body" paragraphs. Conclusions can be difficult to write, because if you have done a good job of introducing your essay, it is hard to see how different the conclusion could be! However, the example below shows how a conclusion restates the main idea from the introduction, but in different words; and is "more informed", because the specific evidence has been discussed by then.

Thus, it seems that the masters of Castle Forbes were far from negligent in several areas, and their workers were not starving or left to suffer when they were ill. But the sense of mutual obligation that could have enabled grievances over the quality of food, in particular, to be resolved without violence was lacking. The convicts had no stake in the estate, and the masters thought of them as thieves and layabouts, pimps and perverts. They controlled them, if they could, by force, and regarded them with contempt.

5. Rewrite

*GCs: Writing; Problem-solving;

It's almost impossible to produce a good piece of writing in a single draft, and no professional writer would try to do so. The first draft was for you; but in the next draft, you need to consider your reader and make sure that each paragraph works well and that all are logically ordered and linked. Then you can redraft your introduction to match what you have done in the essay.

Each paragraph should develop one point, which should be stated in its first ("topic") sentence. This sentence also makes any link or transition that is needed to show its relationship to the paragraph before it. (Many writers make those links at ends of paragraphs, but if you do this your marker may think you are raising a new point there. It's a better strategy to do it when you start a new paragraph, where readers generally expect to find these links.) Following the topic sentence, supporting sentences develop the new point with explanation and evidence.

Check your structure

A good way to assess your first draft is to print it out and write, in the margin next to each paragraph, a word or phrase that labels the theme of that paragraph or the point it is making. At this stage you will discover if any paragraph doesn't have a point! If it's not doing any work in the essay, discard it. However, it may be useful but the point of it is not yet expressed, and you can do that now. If it's got a point, but buried in the middle, you can move it to the beginning. Then, just by running an eye down your margins, you will see:

- Whether any paragraph deals with more than one point. If so, separate the material so that each point gets its own paragraph.
- Any paragraphs that need to be combined because they deal with the same point. If they deal with different aspects of it, they can each get a separate paragraph with that new aspect in a topic sentence, but if not, bring them together. If a paragraph is three sentences or shorter, you should be suspicious! Either it needs more development, or it really belongs to some nearby paragraph. In newspapers, the paragraphs are very short, often a single sentence; but essays develop each idea more fully, in one place.
- You may find that you have similar material scattered throughout the essay, perhaps leading to some repetition. Bring it together and remove repetition.

Check whether links or transitions are needed anywhere to improve the flow. ("Despite that objection, ..."; "In light of this suggestion, ..."; "An example of this is ..."; "Nonetheless, ..."; ...) To see whether you have achieved a coherently structured argument, you can save a copy of your draft under a different name; delete everything except the first and last paragraphs and the topic sentence of each body paragraph; and see whether what's left makes sense.

Proofread

Now, proofread very rigorously, so that your presentation does justice to your ideas. (If it doesn't, your tutor may have trouble even seeing your ideas!) Remember that errors slip past everybody, and you should not assume that what you wrote is what you meant to write, and think you've written. Focus closely on every sentence, and read aloud, so that your ear can catch the things your eye fails to notice!

Example of rewriting

This process of redrafting can be seen in some paragraphs from two drafts of the same essay written for a subject on Turkish history. The question asked: What was the meaning of the 'good life', for the elite class in Turkey at the time of the Ottoman empire?

The first draft collected excellent evidence, showing good research which included primary sources such as paintings and poetry from the period, as well as secondary sources by historians (notice the frequent referencing of these). However, when the paragraphs were labelled, the writer found that the material was scattered about, so the essay did not "flow". Once she had reorganised her material, she found that it suggested ideas she could feed back into her introduction, to guide her reader through her train of thought.

Let's look at the first few paragraphs of the first draft, below.
In the second draft, the writer elaborated her thesis (her main point) to be more specific about the "extravagance" and "comforts" in her original thesis statement (additions are highlighted in yellow).

She also signposted how she was going to explore the evidence of the Turkish elite's appreciation of sensual pleasures. In labelling her draft, she had found that her material dealt with five topics: buildings, fountains, gardens, feasts, and physical love. She reorganised the draft to bring scattered material on each of these topics together, so that now all the paragraphs about buildings are together, and the paragraph about food has been moved to much later in the essay, where feasts are dealt with.

She wrote links to show how her new arrangement fit together. Then, she signposted the topics she would discuss, in the order in which she would discuss them, at the end of her introduction. All of this work set her reader up to expect what was coming, and to understand how it all related to her main idea.

**Introduction**

This paper will describe a number of aspects of the good life, as perceived by the Ottoman elite. For the purpose of this paper the good life will be defined by a life filled with extravagance and life's comforts.

**Buildings (palaces)**

Topkapi Sarayi, an imperial palace, was built for Sultan Mehmet II and his entourage (Nicolle 2008, pp. 133-135). Sections of the palace area housed a large number of animals. On 'feast days' the sultan enjoyed 'displaying his wealth in the first court by showing off his giraffes and elephants' (Freely 1999, p. 35).

**Buildings (palaces)**

Construction and purchasing of palaces and grand buildings for the elites' own use, or as a gift, was not uncommon among the Ottoman hierarchy. Sultans and the elite would commission palaces to be built and then gift them to loved ones or friends on occasions such as weddings (Freely 1999, pp. 247-265). An example of this was when the grand-vizier of Ahmed III gifted a palace to his wife early in the 18th century (Hamadeh 2008, pp. 24-25).

**Food**

The utmost importance was placed on the consumption and preparation of food. The elite ate well and had access to a variety of meats and vegetables. The elite were able to make decisions in regard to food they consumed and to food they left because it was of poor standard. Commoners did not have the pleasure of making these choices. Mansel highlights choices available in his claim in relation to the cooking of animals: "in wealthy households, cooks used only left legs (right legs were considered tough, since animals stand on them more)" (1995, p. 169). The main staple diet for commoners was vegetables and bread (Quataert 2000, p. 155). Coffee and pipe smoking followed meals. People's place in society and where they were on the social structure could be identified by "the length, beauty and intricacy of a pipe and its mouthpiece..." (Mansel 1995, p. 170).
This paper will describe a number of aspects of the good life, as perceived by the Ottoman elite. For the purpose of this paper the good life will be defined by a life filled with extravagance and life’s comforts. These were the expression of an aesthetic of appreciation of sensual pleasure enjoyed in social settings. We can see the indulgence of sight, hearing, taste, and scent, in the design and decoration of buildings, fountains, and gardens. These were the setting for feasts and other kinds of entertainment, much of it openly focussing on physical love.

### Buildings (palaces) – general material is now first

Construction and purchasing of palaces and grand buildings for the elites’ own use, or as a gift, was not uncommon among the Ottoman hierarchy. Sultans and the elite would commission palaces to be built and then gift them to loved ones or friends on occasions such as weddings (Freely 1999, pp. 247-265). An example of this was when the grand-vizier of Ahmed III gifted a palace to his wife early in the 18th century (Hamadeh 2008, pp. 24-25). A particularly opulent example, Topkapi Sarayi, an imperial palace, was built for Sultan Mehmet II and his entourage (Nicolle 2008, pp. 133-135). Sections of the palace area housed a large number of animals. On “feast days” the sultan enjoyed “displaying his wealth in the first court by showing off his giraffes and elephants” (Freely 1999, p. 35).

### Formerly separate paragraph on particular palace now combined (note the connecting phrase)

Another kind of building, the “yalis”, were pavilions on the water generally along the Bosphorus (McCarthy 1997, p. 252). These buildings were the symbols of wealth and extravagance. Occupancy of these buildings varied from use as a summer house to occupation all year long (McCarthy 1997, p. 246). The location and opulence of these buildings gave the elite an opportunity to reap the very pleasures that wealth and sovereignty offered, which included the choices of where to live. For example, living right on the banks of the sea appears to have been preferable to living in other locations within the region (McCarthy 1997, pp. 246-247).

### Buildings (yalis) – Paragraph from later in essay now brought together with other material on buildings. (Note the linking phrase in topic sentence)

A smaller type of pleasure building was the kiosk. Louis de l’Espinasse’s image of The Reception of an Ambassador (http://clayton-payne.com/pages/single/8.html) clearly depicts the lavishness and opulence of the kiosks. The openness of the area, as highlighted by the full length windows on at least two sides, indicates the far reaching view available to the elite. The minimal use of furniture and the use of low sofas along the sides of the walls are highlighted. The sea glistens in the background radiating a scene of tranquillity and bliss. Ultimately the experience of the Bosphorus can be summed up in Hamadeh’s remark that “by the nineteenth century, the Bosphorus shores became an icon of pleasure-loving life, and came to serve as one of the most common images on the walls of buildings that cultivated sensuous pleasures” (2008, p. 210). The Tulip Period saw a change in the design of kiosks. The kiosk’s design changed from a single room to a more extensive building. The interior “was embellished with carved and gilded ceilings, rococo motifs and designs, and look totally French” (Kuran 1977, pp. 324-325).

### CHECKLIST FOR ESSAYS

Every essay is different, but there are common criteria. To be considered adequate for uni, your essay should meet the criteria below (many departments don’t require a synopsis; but all require everything else). So, when you’re ready with a final draft, check it for these; they’re the kind of thing that can make the difference between one letter grade and the next!

1. **SYNOPSIS/ABSTRACT** (if required)

   Sometimes you may be asked to include a synopsis (or “abstract”). If so, it’s a paragraph on a separate sheet, before the essay, that summarises its content. It’s more comprehensive than your introduction; the introduction says what the essay is going to do, but the abstract boils down the whole thing. It should include (not in point form, as here, but in a paragraph):
   - The problem or question that you’ve addressed
   - Your answer (your “thesis”)
   - (if important, your scope; focus; method; sources)
   - Your main reasons for your answer / main findings of your research
   - Your conclusion (with implications, if any)

2. **INTRODUCTION**

   Does your first paragraph explain the question and (briefly) give your answer and/or indicate how you are going to approach it?

3. **IDEAS & EVIDENCE**

   Does each paragraph make a clearly identifiable point?
5 GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT TASKS

Is there a sentence, preferably the first sentence, that expresses this point?

Does the rest of the paragraph develop that point with explanation and/or evidence from the reading?

4. ARGUMENT & RELEVANCE

Does each section of your essay clearly contribute to your answer?

5. PARAGRAPHING

Does each paragraph develop one idea (not a mixture), and develop it fully?

6. COHERENCE & LINKING

Is there a connection between each point and the one that follows it?

7. USE OF SOURCES

Have you put quotation marks around, and a reference after, everything that you have copied directly from your reading?

Have you put a reference after everything that you learned from reading but have put in your own words?

8. REFERENCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Are the references throughout your essay in the format specified in the study guide for this subject?

Have you included a Bibliography of all the sources you used for this essay (even if you only used one)? Again, for all sources, have you given the details in the order, and with the punctuation, that your guide for this subject prescribes?

9. PROOFREADING

Have you carefully checked spelling, etc., by spell-checker, if any, and again by eye? Remember that the spellchecker will accept any word that it has in its vocabulary, and it doesn't know what word you meant, so it won't pick up errors like of/off, there/their/they’re, it’s/its, here/where, etc.

Reading your work aloud can help you to notice anything amiss (and savour what sounds really good!)

Other types of assignments:

Annotated bibliography

*GCs: Inquiry/research

What is it? You could think of this as the thing you wish a friend who'd done the subject last year had handed you just before you started your research. It's a list of sources on some topic, each one accompanied by a paragraph saying what that source is good for.

Usually an annotated bibliography assignment is an early step on the way to writing a research essay. The idea is that you go to the library, and perhaps to the internet (check with your tutor), and find out what has been written already about your topic.

You decide which sources are most relevant to what you're doing, and figure out how they're relevant.

What is it for? While you go through this process every time you write something based on research, submitting an annotated bibliography gives you a chance to show your tutor what you think the best sources are, and what you think so far about the topic you're researching.

If, at this point, you've missed any crucial sources, or you're about to waste a week in the blooming of your youth reading something that won't take you anywhere, your tutor can tell you about it. If your bibliography suggests that you don't understand your topic well enough, you can sort that out now as well.

Suggesting a question. There may be an extra advantage to doing an annotated bibliography, if you're supposed to be doing it in order to formulate a research question. That is, you start with something that's just an area of interest, but you don't yet have a question about it -- say, "utopian communities".

You go and see what's been written about these and you notice some common themes in the sources, which generate a question in your mind: "Why do some utopian communities believe in total sexual freedom, while others ban sex completely?"

Now you have a research question to check out with your tutor, make sure that it is feasible, and get her/his advice on what else you might read in order to explore this question.

You don't need to read every word or every book, at this stage. Read the introductory chapter, or the chapter that introduces the section dealing with your topic. If it's an article, read the first couple of pages and the last, and look at the headings.

If it's a research article, scan the introduction and the discussion section (what did they ask? What did they learn?). If it's a report, read the summary at the beginning. Use your judgement about how much more you need to read in order to know what this source says and does. You'll come back to it when you're ready to write the research essay.

Follow any particular instructions your tutor gives you about the format of this assignment. You may or may not be asked for an introductory paragraph setting out the topic, question, and the common themes you found.

Then, the body is a series of separate entries, with the reference as a heading each time (author, title, etc – set it out according to the referencing guidelines in your LMS).

After this heading, write a paragraph saying what the source deals with, its particular focus, its main argument, and how it contributes to an exploration of your topic. Mention any important limitations, too; each source is not going to give you everything you need.
What could an annotation look like?
Suppose you're working on the question: “How do courtroom conventions work to ensure compliance with the legal system?”
One of your annotations might be something like:


This deals with the way that courtroom spaces separate the administrators of the law from the public, elevate the judges, and isolate the witnesses. It draws attention to the use of space to define roles that participants then accept as given. The discussion is limited to the design of the highest courts in the judicial system, which may be different from courts in which mediation is the aim.

Reviews
*GCs: Critical Thinking; Writing

It’s quite common to be asked to review a book or article as part of your assessment in a subject. An academic review is a bit different from the kind you find in newspapers or magazines, or the kind you may have written at school. Those usually focus on how interesting the book was, and how well written (or not). When you review a book or article for a university subject, the quality of the writing is not the main focus.

Your purpose is to tell another reader what the central idea of the book is; how it is argued (i.e. what points, supported with what kinds of evidence, arranged in what kind of structure); and how useful it is in helping you to think about its central questions, &/or whatever questions you took to it.

Follow any special instructions your tutor gives you; but these are the aspects you should probably cover:

**Review of a reading:**
Topic
Context (what discussion does it contribute to?)
Purpose
Method
Structure
Content (themes &/or argument)
Assess:
  How is it useful?
  To discussion in the discipline
  To you as a reader
  How useful is it?
  Strengths – problems – limitations

**Literature reviews**
*GCs: Inquiry/research; Critical Thinking; Writing

In the context of this assignment, “literature” does not mean fiction. When we put “the” in front of it, “the literature” on some topic means the publications that academics have written about it. In a literature review, you’re looking at a lot of different sources to see how they have dealt with some particular topic.

**It’s normally an early stage of some larger project** – a preliminary to your own research. The aim is to find what other people have published about the topic that interests you, to see
  • what themes and issues have interested them;
  • how their work helps you to think about your topic;
  • what they agree about, and what they don’t; and
  • what still remains to be asked about your topic, in the light of what they’ve said.

**Find what you can, read it and decide how it’s relevant to your own project.** Some sources may offer a framework within which you will explore your topic, or a method you will use in your research.

Alternatively, some may have approached the topic in a way that you see problems with, and your research will try to correct their mistake or fill a gap they’ve left.

Either way, they are a springboard for your own investigation, and your literature review will need to explain how.

**How is it different from an annotated bibliography?**
An annotated bibliography is a list of sources, each one accompanied by a short paragraph saying what it deals with and how it contributes to your project.

The literature review is similar in purpose, but it takes a different form. You start with a paragraph introducing your project and giving an overview of the literature you’ve found. (“There is some debate about the effect on court proceedings of judges wearing wigs and gowns. The literature has focused mainly on the benefits of anonymity for judges and of respect for judicial authority, on the one hand; and on the disadvantages of creating an intimidating distance between citizens and the law, on the other.”)

Then, in paragraphs with or without headings (check with your tutor on this) you go into detail, not source by source but theme by theme, looking at how various sources, or clusters of sources, deal with each theme.
You’re likely to have sentences like “While Bloggs and Pugg (1992) see wigs as old-fashioned and ridiculous, Smith (2001) has found that jurors are in awe of them, and Loonish (1989) notes that spectators’ behaviour is more subdued in courts where judges sit in wigs and gowns”.

For another way of dealing with multiple references, try “Several writers have noted the intimidating effect of wigs and gowns in court (Loonish 1989; Rumpole 1985 & 1987; Smith 2001).”

When you’ve covered the ground, conclude with a brief paragraph, drawing out what seems to be the most interesting idea(s) emerging out of your review of the literature; and if you’ve been asked to do this assignment in order to formulate a research question of your own, this is the place to say what that is, and how it relates to the sources you’ve discussed.

**How is it different from an essay?** You’re not using the sources, at this stage, to construct your own argument in answer to some essay question. So you don’t go into detail or harvest quotations; you summarise their contributions to your exploration of the topic. (You could think of it like pushing other people’s work down a funnel to emerge with an idea you want to test or a question you want to answer.)

**Giving an Oral Presentation**

*GCs: Speaking*

These are general guidelines only. Therefore, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you check specific requirements in each of your subjects. This information will be in your subject guides or on LMS. If you are not sure, check with your tutor or lecturer.

**Preparation for the oral presentation**

Preparation is the key to a successful oral presentation. Your speech will only be as good as the amount of work you put into it. It is also the best way to decrease nervousness.

1. **Define the purpose:** Are you informing/instructing or reporting?
2. **Analyse the audience:** For example, how many people will be there? Make sure you have enough handouts. Consider such factors as level of knowledge.
3. **Consider context:** Formal or informal? Will you need to bring anything?
4. **Identify main ideas of topic:** Brainstorm the main ideas needed to get the message across and then order them into a logical sequence.
5. **Research supporting material:** Ensure you gather strong factual evidence to support the main points. Is it current, relevant, accurate and documented? Unlike an essay, personal experience can also be relevant to illustrate your evidence.
6. **Group presentations:** Ensure that both preparation and presentation time is equally shared amongst all group members. Each team member should briefly introduce the next presenter and what they will talk about.

**Writing the oral presentation**

1. **Planning the material:** Focus on the purpose of the speech at all times. Logically order each main point and its supporting evidence. Prepare an outline plan in conjunction with the marking criteria.
2. **Writing the presentation:** An oral presentation is structured and each section has a specific purpose and organisation.

**Introduction:** aims to catch the audience’s attention and introduce the topic.

- Open in a way that **stimulates interest**.

Tell a short story (anecdote), present an interesting fact, statistic or image related to your topic.

- Provide some **background or context** for the topic. In other words, indicate to the audience why your topic is important and/or describe the problem you are working on. Don’t assume that the audience is already familiar with your topic or project.

- Give a clear statement of the **main premise/point** of your presentation.

- Provide a **plan** of your presentation by outlining the main points to follow.

**Discussion/ Findings (body of the presentation):** aims to inform your audience.

- Present only **3-5 main points.** It is better to discuss each point in depth.
• **Support each point** with strong factual evidence.
• **Use a variety** of examples and visuals.
• **Use relevant personal experience** (yours or others’) where appropriate.
• Use connectives to **link your ideas**, such as Firstly, Secondly, In addition, Finally, However. This provides cohesion and logic for the audience.

**Conclusion:** is often overlooked!
It is important to end on a strong note.
• Give a **clear signal** that you are concluding: In conclusion, In closing,
• **Restate the original premise** or point of view.
• **Summarise the main points** used to support that premise.
• **End effectively** with a relevant anecdote, recommendation or challenge.
• **Invite questions** if appropriate.
• Complete your talk with a suitable “Thank you” rather than “Well that’s it”!!

The internet has many sites where you can download templates and instructions for visual aids. Some good ones are:

**PowerPoint:**
There is a very useful page on “Oral Communication” at Brunel University’s site Learn Higher: Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/designing-visual-aids.shtml
From here, follow the links to
• “Getting Started with PowerPoint”, by Kate Ippolito & Ravinder Chohan from the LearnHigher CETL at Brunel University:
http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/getting%20started%20with%20powerpoint.pdf
• “Example of a power point presentation”:
http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/UsingPowerPoint.ppt
• and “Rehearsing your presentation”:
http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/rehearsing-your-presentation.shtml
Also, The Learning Centre at the University of New South Wales has a page on “Academic Skills Resources: Using PowerPoint in oral presentations”,
http://www.llc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/ppoint.html

**Prezis:** A “prezi” is a screen on which you can put text, photos, film clips, diagrams, etc, together in whatever arrangement you like and create a “path” between them. Have a look at:
• **Prezi Academy Lesson 1:**
• **Prezi:** Choose a license to start using Prezi at http://prezi.com/profile/signup

Finally, Monash University’s site, Language and Learning Online, has a very comprehensive resource, which is full of suggestions about language you might want to use:

**Using PowerPoint Effectively**

**Keep it Simple.** If using a template, choose a simple one with easy to read fonts. Avoid special effects and animations unless they are related to a point you are making. Do not overuse colour.

**Avoid overcrowding slides.** Use bullet points if appropriate (but do not assume all text should be bulleted). Never use full sentences (except for – rare – quotations); use key words only. It is better to use more slides with fewer points on each than to overcrowd slides.

**Make it readable.** If the audience cannot read what is on your slides, there is no point in including it. Font size should be at least 20. Avoid using only capital letters. Diagrams can be a very effective way to convey information, but make sure they are easily readable. Make sure you guide the audience through your diagram by pointing to the relevant parts as you speak.

Choice of colour is a very important factor influencing readability. The Colour Visibility Chart shows different coloured fonts on different background colours.

**Colour Visibility Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>black on yellow</td>
<td>yellow on black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black on white</td>
<td>white on black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack on orange</td>
<td>orange on black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue on white</td>
<td>white on blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green on white</td>
<td>white on green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on white</td>
<td>white on red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on yellow</td>
<td>yellow on red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black on red</td>
<td>red on black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on orange</td>
<td>orange on red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on blue</td>
<td>blue on red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on green</td>
<td>green on red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Delivering the oral presentation

Avoid reading the presentation as there is an automatic drop in both audience attention and marks. However, it is unwise to attempt to memorise the whole speech. [For some very nervous people, a script may be useful to fall back on, but if you use one, make sure that you write in conversational "spoken" language, not formal "written" language. For example, use contractions (didn't instead of did not); build in some repetition so listeners don't have to hold too much in memory.]

Some useful hints:

1. **Use power point slides as cues:** Summarise each main supporting point. Use headings and sub-headings, a numbering/lettering system and key words. Try using the 'presenter view'function on PowerPoint. This enables you to see which slides are coming up next, while the audience only sees the slide you are presenting.

2. **Practise, practise, practise!** Practise the complete presentation aloud and many times. Practise in front of an audience such as family, friends, videotape or a mirror! Time the speech and stick to given limits.

3. **Have a backup plan** in case the technology fails! **Use visual aids** to add interest, to help simplify the message and to increase audience understanding. Visual aids need to be large, clear, simple and relevant. Make any handouts available before the presentation begins. Refer directly to the visual aid in the speech. Know how to use the technology and ensure that equipment works before the presentation begins.

Know what's coming up next. Be sure to know which slide is coming up next so that you can introduce it and link it to the previous slide before you hit the page down button.

Voice signals are vital. Speak more slowly, pronounce words more clearly than normal, raise your voice and project towards the back wall, and avoid “conversational” language such as “um, er, gonna and youse”.

Body signals are also important. Always face the audience (never board or screen unless you need to point to something on a diagram) and stand straight with chin up to direct your voice to the listeners. Keep hands open and avoid nervous gestures. Eye contact is essential. Be sure to scan across the audience rather than focusing on one or two individuals.

For practice, go to **ACTIVITY:** “Spoken vs written language”


Remember nervousness is normal.
Thorough preparation and practice decrease anxiety. Organise equipment and visual aids early and ensure power point slides are simple and clear. It may help to bring detailed notes to get you started and as a ‘safety net’ throughout the presentation. Breathe deeply. Develop positive mental thoughts.

If fear is extreme see a counsellor!

Exams

Know what to expect. The library has copies of past years’ exams in many subjects on file. Read over the last few years to see the format and types of questions, and the topics and themes that come up repeatedly. In your tutorial, ask whether this year’s exam will be along similar lines to previous years’.

Reflect. Think back over the whole subject, and ask yourself what its main concerns were, what big ideas it was building up, what methods it was teaching you to apply. Note down your thoughts on that, then look back over your notes of lectures and readings to see how they fit in, and whether you ought to add anything to your list.

Look at all the questions for tutes and assignments — the ones you wrote on and the ones you didn’t. What would you have to say on each of those questions now? Make some notes. Look again at your list of overall concerns, and ask yourself how each of the assigned readings fits in with those concerns. Make notes on that. This way you’ll remind yourself of what you know, and also articulate for yourself some more things that you probably know but hadn’t thought much about.

You may also be able to write about texts that you haven’t tackled in depth, if you find that you have to when you get into the exam! This kind of overview from hindsight is at least as important as memorising things you’re pretty sure you’ll have to know; after all, it’s what your tutor is hoping you will gain from taking the subject, and it’s what enables you to connect the bits together.

Practise. To deal with anxiety about writing essay answers in exam conditions, choose some questions from past exams, from your tutes, or from the lists you’ve made. Find out how much time you’ll have in the exam for writing on each question, and set that time aside each day leading up to the exams. Take one question and write on it for that amount of time. You’ll find out how much you can realistically get down, as well as “warming up” for the real thing. Try taking a few minutes to plan each answer at the start, and write your plan; bear in mind that if you run out of time in the exam, you’re likely to get some marks for ideas in point form, showing what else you would have said if you’d had time. Remember, too, that expression is not as important as in essays you write during the semester; the markers know you don’t have time to polish, just try to be clear!
Reduce anxiety and stay motivated
Although a small amount of stress before exams may aid your performance, too much anxiety will negatively affect your exam performance. Around exam time, the La Trobe counseling service on the Melbourne campus runs group seminars on exam success. The Melbourne campus counselling webpage http://www.latrobe.edu.au/counselling/ also has information about study timetables, goal setting, planning and priorities. If you feel overwhelmed by exam stress or study motivation problems and unable to cope, you may like to make an individual appointment with one of the counsellors on your campus. You can find their contact details on the La Trobe Current Students homepage under ‘campus specific resources’.

There are several strategies you can try to reduce your anxiety before and during exams.

- **Start early and stay on track with your exam preparation** to reduce your stress levels.
- **Look after your health.** Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy food and try to find time to exercise. Many people find that yoga and breathing exercises can help keep them in tune both physically and mentally.
- **Keep things in perspective.** Although it may seem at the time that the next exam will be the most important event in your entire life, this is probably not really the case and thinking like this only puts more pressure on yourself.
- **Take a break.** Notice when you are tired or losing concentration. If you feel like this late at night, you could make more effective use of your time by going to bed and getting up earlier the next morning to study when your mind is feeling fresher. A good way to refresh a tired mind is to go on a brisk 15 minute walk. A 15 minute TV break is not usually refreshing and can easily turn into a one hour break.

- **Set rewards for yourself.** Rewards for good progress can assist with motivation. Try setting yourself a goal and rewarding yourself when you achieve it.

Some tips for specific types of exam questions

**Multiple choice questions**
Many students believe that to answer a multiple choice question they need only be able to recognise material and so need only do minimal revision. A well-written multiple choice examination, however, will require you not only to have a thorough knowledge of the subject, but also to be able to integrate and apply information and to discriminate between similar answers.

- Carefully note the connecting words as well as the key words in both the question stem and possible answers.
- Try considering each alternative of a multiple choice question as a true/false statement and then choose the odd one out.
- If you see an answer that you think is correct, check to make sure that the others are incorrect. You may find that you’ve been a bit hasty.
- Does the question contain any clues to the answer? Do the alternative answers give clues? Through careful analysis and a process of elimination it may be possible to arrive at the correct answer even if at first sight you did not have any idea.
- If you are not quite sure of an answer, guess (unless of course there is a penalty for incorrect answers).

**Short answer and essay questions**

Your main aim is to provide a clear, logical explanation that can be followed easily by your examiner.

- **Don’t rush into a question.** Give yourself time to think about and plan your answer. Before writing, make notes or a brief outline to aid your memory if you have a mental block later.
- **Short answer** - summarise the main points in the first sentence. This means that you will have to carefully plan your answer first. Also, if you run out of time your examiner will be able to see where you were heading with your answer.
- **Essay** - your introduction should outline the main points of your argument. The body of the essay should consist of a logical sequence of these ideas. Have one main idea per paragraph and express the main point of the paragraph in the first sentence. The conclusion should provide a summary of your argument.
- If you run out of time or misjudge things and still have a question to go, then write notes/points. Set out a plan of how you would have answered the question if you’d had time. A well structured outline is often sufficient to achieve a pass for that question.
- In a short answer question, content must be strictly relevant. Make sure that your answer is clear and concise. Padding wastes time and may lose you marks.
- **Budget time so you can attempt every question that is required.** The examiner can’t give you credit for a question you didn’t answer, even if you did very well on another.
“This Guide has been produced for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences by Kate Chanock and Craig Horton of the Academic Language and Learning Unit.

It is based on the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering’s First Year Survival Guide, sponsored by a Design for Learning project grant from La Trobe University’s Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre.

We gratefully acknowledge FSTE’s material which is reproduced and/or adapted here.

Thanks also to the Visual Arts and Design Program, Bendigo, and to Geoff Hocking who redesigned the pages and drew all of the cartoons.”
What are Graduate Capabilities?
During your time in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, in addition to receiving feedback in your subjects about disciplinary knowledge, you will also receive feedback on how you are progressing on six university graduate capabilities. The university graduate capabilities are: Writing, Speaking, Teamwork, Inquiry/Research, Critical thinking, and Creative Problem-Solving. The faculty also aims to inculcate in its students two further capabilities, Lifelong learning and Ethical and cultural awareness, which may be developed in your subjects. The university has chosen its six graduate capabilities because it intends that all students will finish their studies as successful and capable graduates in each of these areas.

How will you receive feedback on your achievements related to Graduate Capabilities?
At three points during your course degree (cornerstone, midpoint and capstone), you will be notified about the standard you have achieved for each of the university six graduate capabilities. These standards will be drawn from the completion of your assessment tasks. For each of the six university graduate capabilities, your feedback will be: (i) exceeded, (ii) met, or (iii) not met. The standards are described below and are intended to help you identify where you most need support so that you can be successful in your academic studies.

Opportunities to practise:
The opportunity to develop your knowledge of, and skills related to the graduate capabilities will happen mainly in your ‘core’ subjects. These subjects are likely to be the compulsory components of your disciplinary major. Many of the learning activities and assessment tasks in those core subjects will enable you to advance your knowledge and skills related to the graduate capabilities. It is likely that the standard you will achieve and the feedback you will receive related to graduate capabilities will be in the context of one of your core subjects.
Writing in humanities and social science disciplines requires you to engage with other people's ideas in order to develop, test and communicate your own. In doing so, you will learn about the writing conventions that structure the different ways disciplines organise and communicate knowledge. You will learn how to use and reference different kinds of texts and sources of knowledge. You will learn how to read, assess and work with ideas and evidence in order to apply those skills to your own writing. To write well in the humanities and social sciences, you will need to ensure that your piece of work: (i) responds to the question in a clear and coherent way; (ii) is coherently structured; (iii) is free of grammar and spelling errors; and (iv) uses sources and evidence appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cornerstone      | • The ideas are expressed clearly.  
• The writing is **structured coherently**.  
• The work is **mostly free** of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.  
• The sources and evidence are **integrated** with the writing. |
|                  | • Most ideas are expressed **clearly**.  
• The writing is **mostly coherently structured**.  
• The work contains **a few errors** in grammar, punctuation, and/ or spelling, but these do not obscure the meaning.  
• The sources and evidence are **mostly integrated** with the writing. |
|                  | • The ideas are expressed **unclearly**.  
• The structure is **incoherent**.  
• The work contains **many errors** in grammar, punctuation, and/ or spelling. |
| Midpoint         | • The ideas are expressed clearly.  
• The writing is **structured coherently**.  
• The work is **mostly free** of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.  
• Sources and evidence are **integrated** with the writing. |
|                  | • The ideas are expressed clearly.  
• The writing is **structured coherently**.  
• The work contains **minor errors** in grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling.  
• The sources and evidence are **mostly integrated** with the writing. |
|                  | • The ideas are **mostly unclear**.  
• The structure incoherent.  
• The work contains **many errors** in grammar, punctuation, and/ or spelling.  
• Sources and evidence are **not integrated** with the writing. |
| Capstone         | • The ideas are expressed clearly and **fluently in the language of the discipline**.  
• The writing is **structured coherently**.  
• The work is **free** of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.  
• Sources and evidence are **smoothly integrated**, producing an **authoritative authorial “voice”**. |
|                  | • The ideas are expressed lucidly.  
• The writing is structured **coherently**.  
• The work is **mostly free** of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.  
• Sources and evidence are **integrated** with the writing. |
|                  | • The ideas are **mostly unclear**.  
• The structure is often incoherent.  
• The work contains **many errors** in grammar, punctuation, and/ or spelling.  
• Sources and evidence are **often not integrated** with the writing. |
**Speaking in humanities and social science disciplines** is about using disciplinary ideas/concepts to craft a message, communicate that message persuasively and with confidence, and engage your audience to help them learn. You will engage in a range of tasks that encourage you to speak on your own and as part of a group with other students. In some cases, you will practise speaking in your classes and tutorials and in later years, you may be asked to speak to audiences outside the university, for example, to a group of professionals in a workplace environment as a formal part of your assessment. Communicating your ideas effectively through speaking, and learning how oratory can be part of the art of persuasion are important steps in becoming a professional. To be successful in speaking in the faculty, you will be expected to: (i) create interest in your topic; (ii) communicate your message clearly, explicitly and clearly; (iii) select and organise relevant discipline materials to support your message; (iv) engage your audience; and (v) use a repertoire of aids effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cornerstone      | • In developing the topic, the speaker **considered the audience’s needs.**  
• The central message of the presentation was **explicit and clear.**  
• The materials were drawn from an **appropriate range of sources and relevant** to the topic.  
• An **appropriate range** of aids was used to effectively support the central message. | • The speaker developed the topic in an **interesting way.**  
• The central message of the presentation was **mostly clear.**  
• The materials, **drawn from limited sources, were relevant** to the topic.  
• **Limited aids** were used effectively to support the central message of the presentation. | • The topic was not made interesting for the audience.  
• The central message of the presentation was **unclear.**  
• The materials **were not relevant to the topic and/or the audience.**  
• **No aids** were used and/or the choice of aids was ineffective. |
| Midpoint         | • The speaker tackled the topic in a **compelling way for the audience.**  
• The central message of the presentation was **explicit, clear and memorable.**  
• The speaker **applied relevant ideas/concepts from the discipline to frame the topic.**  
• The selection of materials was **innovative,** appropriate, drawn from a range of sources and helped the audience to learn.  
• A **range of aids** was **creatively** used to support the central message. | • In developing the topic, the speaker **considered the audience’s needs.**  
• The central message of the presentation was **explicit and clear.**  
• The materials were drawn from an **appropriate range of sources and relevant** to the topic.  
• An **appropriate range of aids** was used to effectively support the central message. | • There was a **limited attempt** to make the topic interesting for the audience.  
• The central message of the presentation was **somewhat unclear.**  
• The selected materials were **limited in their relevance** to the topic and/or the audience.  
• **No aids** were used and/or the choice of aids was ineffective. |
| Capstone         | • The central message of the presentation was **articulate,** clear, compelling and **memorable.**  
• The speaker **integrated the ideas/concepts from the discipline with the topic.**  
• The selection of materials was innovative, appropriate, drawn from a range of sources and helped the audience to learn.  
• A **range of aids** was used creatively to support the central message. | • The speaker tackled the topic in a **compelling way** for the audience.  
• The speaker **applied relevant ideas/concepts from the discipline** to frame the topic.  
• The central message of the presentation was **explicit and clear.**  
• The selection of materials was innovative, appropriate, drawn from a range of sources and helped the audience to learn.  
• A **range of aids** was creatively used to support the central message. | • The speaker made some effort to make the topic interesting to the audience.  
• The central message of the presentation was **unclear and drew on limited ideas /concepts from the discipline.**  
• The selected materials were **limited in their relevance** to the topic and/or the audience.  
• **Limited aids** were used and/or the choice of aids was ineffective. |
Creative Problem-Solving in humanities and social science disciplines focuses on developing your skills to suggest a clear way of responding to, and resolving, an intellectual challenge or problem. In most cases, the disciplines you encounter will require you to arrive at some decision about a problem you are confronted with. You will be expected to draw on the theories/concepts and ideas in those disciplines to develop and justify a response. In later years, you will be encouraged to exercise your imagination, wit and creativity by bringing together ideas and theories in a novel way, to solve a problem. You will come to realise that a skilled creative problem solver is someone who realises the limits of their own knowledge and learns how to harness resources that will push the boundaries of current thinking. Creative problem solving tasks vary, but may include framing and/or performing a written line of argument, a narrative, or a visual or audio presentation. To do well in creative problem-solving within humanities and social sciences, you will need to be able to: (i) identify what needs to be understood about the problem; (ii) apply relevant disciplinary concepts and methods to the problem; (iii) produce and assess solutions that are plausible, innovative and creative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cornerstone      | • Given a problem, the piece of work shows a *clear grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies difficulties with understanding the problem.  
• It applies relevant concepts/methods from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *clearly explains* a plausible solution to the problem.  
| • Given a problem, the piece of work shows some *grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies some *of the difficulties* with understanding the problem.  
• It applies some *relevant concepts/methods* from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *suggests* a plausible solution to the problem.  
| • The piece of work shows no *grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It *does not apply* relevant concepts/methods from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *does not suggest* a plausible solution to the problem.  
| Midpoint         | • Given a problem, the piece of work shows a *full grasp* what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies difficulties with understanding the problem.  
• It *selects relevant concepts/methods* from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion and applies them to produce a *well-supported solution* to the problem.  
| • Given a problem, the piece of work shows a *grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies some *difficulties* with understanding the problem.  
• It applies relevant *concepts/methods* from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *produces a plausible* solution to the problem.  
| • The piece of work shows limited *grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It applies few *relevant concepts/methods* from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *does not adequately present* a plausible solution to the problem.  
| Capstone         | • With reference to a discussion in the discipline or other relevant context, the piece of work identifies what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies any difficulties with understanding the problem.  
• It draws on a *wider repertoire* of relevant concepts and applies them to produce a *compelling solution*.  
• It demonstrates innovative thinking about the implications of this solution for the discussion around this problem.  
| • With reference to a discussion in the discipline or other relevant context, the piece of work identifies what needs to be understood.  
• It identifies any difficulties with understanding the problem.  
• It selects relevant concepts/methods from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion and applies them to produce a *well-supported solution* to the problem.  
| • The piece of work shows some *grasp* of what needs to be understood.  
• It *does not apply* relevant concepts/methods from the discipline or other relevant context of discussion.  
• It *does not demonstrate independent thinking* in presenting a plausible solution to the problem.  

Teamwork in humanities and social science disciplines is used to produce more or better work than individuals could achieve by working on their own. By dividing the work into sub-tasks and distributing these among the members according to their interests and expertise, a group can achieve work for which no single member has the necessary time or skills. Contributions may be prepared individually, but the group collaborates to decide how these are to be combined and presented, so that the end product is jointly constructed. To ensure an effective process, teams engaged on a project that develops over time decide on ways to document when, how, and by whom each part will be done; ways to communicate and to monitor their progress; and ways to deal with any logistical or interpersonal difficulties that may arise. To consolidate their learning, members usually include in their submission a reflection on their process, including the strengths and limitations of the way they worked together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cornerstone      | When students were given a task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **successfully** followed instruction to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver satisfactory work for assessment  
And that they usefully reflected on the process of working as a group  | When students were given a task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members, **with some success**, followed instruction to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver satisfactory work for assessment  
And that they usefully reflected on the process of working as a group  | When students were given a task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **did not succeed** in following instruction to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver the work for assessment  
And that they did not usefully reflect on the process of working as a group |
| Midpoint         | When students were given a task of some complexity, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **showed initiative in organising themselves** to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver good work for assessment  
And that they usefully reflected on the process of working as a group  | When students were given a task of some complexity, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **showed initiative in organising themselves** to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver satisfactory work for assessment  
And that they **usefully reflected** on the process of working as a group  | When students were given a task of some complexity, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **did not succeed** in organising themselves to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver the work for assessment  
And that they **did not usefully reflect** on the process of working as a group |
| Capstone | When students were given a complex task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members took full responsibility for organising themselves to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver high quality work that **went beyond the intention of the assignment**  
And that they reflected **insightfully** on the process of working as a group | When students were given a **complex task**, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members **took full responsibility** for organising themselves to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver **good work** for assessment  
And that they usefully reflected on the process of working as a group | When students were given a complex task, a reflective component of the work indicates that group members did not succeed in taking responsibility for organising themselves to  
- Plan the task together  
- Distribute sub-tasks  
- Monitor and document progress  
- (Where applicable) overcome any difficulties arising  
- Jointly construct and deliver the work for assessment  
And that they did not usefully reflect on the process of working as a group |
**Critical thinking in humanities and social science disciplines** is a habit of mind: an awareness that knowledge is constructed through a process of asking questions, considering relevant information, and articulating a reasoned explanation. You will learn to consider the ideas you encounter with an open mind; to continually question how they are applied; to appreciate explanations that have been arrived at carefully and thoroughly, and to identify any problems or limitations they may have. You will learn to apply the same care and critical evaluation to your own work. This will be shown in: (i) your selection and presentation of evidence; (ii) your awareness of your own assumptions and those of others; (iii) your recognition of how context shapes people’s different perspectives; and (iv) your evaluation of the strengths and limitations of competing explanations, including your own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornerstone</td>
<td>• All points are relevant.</td>
<td>• Most points are <em>relevant</em>.</td>
<td>• Most points are <em>not relevant</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All evidence is appropriate.</td>
<td>• Most evidence is <em>appropriate</em>.</td>
<td>• Most evidence is inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The reasoning is <em>coherent</em>.</td>
<td>• The reasoning is <em>coherent</em>.</td>
<td>• The reasoning <em>lacks coherence</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
<td>• And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
<td>• And is insufficient to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Where applicable) the work <em>questions assumptions of others</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Where applicable) The work <em>recognises how context shapes perspectives</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midpoint</td>
<td>In a task requiring somewhat complex reasoning,</td>
<td>In a task requiring somewhat complex reasoning,</td>
<td>In a task requiring somewhat complex reasoning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All points are relevant.</td>
<td>• All points are relevant.</td>
<td>• Most points are <em>not relevant</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All evidence is appropriate.</td>
<td>• All evidence is <em>appropriate</em>.</td>
<td>• Most evidence is <em>inappropriate</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The reasoning is <em>coherent</em>.</td>
<td>• The reasoning is <em>coherent</em>.</td>
<td>• The reasoning <em>lacks coherence</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
<td>• And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
<td>• And is <em>insufficient</em> to arrive at the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Where applicable) the work <em>questions assumptions of others</em>.</td>
<td>• (Where applicable) the work <em>questions assumptions of others</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Where applicable) the work <em>questions own assumptions</em>.</td>
<td>• (Where applicable) the work <em>questions own assumptions</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Where applicable) The work recognises how context shapes perspectives.</td>
<td>• (Where applicable) The work recognises how context shapes perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Capstone | In a task requiring complex reasoning,  
|          | • All points are relevant.  
|          | • All evidence is appropriate.  
|          | • The reasoning is coherent.  
|          | • And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work questions others’ assumptions.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work questions own assumptions.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work recognises how context shapes perspectives.  
|          | • The work **acknowledges the limits of its own position.**  
|          | • The work **considers alternatives beyond** those suggested by the assignment. | In a task requiring complex reasoning,  
|          | • All points are relevant.  
|          | • All evidence is appropriate.  
|          | • The reasoning is coherent.  
|          | • And sufficient to arrive at the conclusion.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work questions others’ assumptions.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work questions own assumptions.  
|          | • (Where applicable) the work recognises how context shapes perspectives. | In a task requiring complex reasoning,  
|          | • Most points are not relevant.  
|          | • Most evidence is inappropriate.  
|          | • The reasoning **lacks coherence.**  
|          | • And is insufficient to arrive at the conclusion. |
**HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES GRADUATE CAPABILITIES**

**Inquiry/ Research in the humanities and social sciences** are focused on helping you develop the knowledge and skills that will enable you locate, evaluate and use ideas and information effectively, both in your subjects and beyond. You will learn how to search effectively for information using the Library’s resources and to assess the quality of what you find. At the same time, you will learn how to present your own work in ways that serve the purposes of scholarly inquiry and observe the values of academic integrity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD &amp; LEVEL</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cornerstone      | • The work shows a **thorough understanding** of what the question/topic is asking.  
• Some sources beyond the minimum required reading inform the work.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been **covered**.  
• Information used is **credible and relevant**.  
• A relevant argument has been advanced.  
• The piece includes all **elements** of the task.  
• Sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced. | • The work shows a **thorough understanding** of what the question/topic is asking.  
• The **minimum required reading** has informed the response to this task.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been **considered**.  
• Information used is mostly credible and relevant.  
• An attempt has been made to formulate a relevant argument/position.  
• The piece includes most **elements** of the task.  
• Most sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced. | • The work shows a **general misunderstanding** of what the question/topic is asking.  
• There is no evidence that the minimum required reading has informed the response to this task.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been **neglected**.  
• Information is used that is **irrelevant or not credible**.  
• The piece presents no clear argument/position.  
• The work does not address most elements of the task.  
• Most sources are inaccurately attributed and inappropriately referenced. |
| Midpoint         | • The work shows a thorough understanding of what the question/topic is asking.  
• Some high quality sources beyond the minimum required reading inform the work.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been covered.  
• Only credible and relevant information is used.  
• A relevant argument has been advanced, **drawing on the conversations of the discipline**.  
• The piece includes all elements of the task  
• Sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced. | • The work shows a **thorough understanding** of what the question/topic is asking.  
• Some **high quality sources** beyond the minimum required reading inform the work.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been covered.  
• Information used is credible and relevant.  
• A relevant argument has been advanced.  
• The piece includes all **elements** of the task.  
• Sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced. | • A limited attempt to grasp the topic/question is evident.  
• **Insufficient effort** to include the minimum required reading in the response to this task is evident.  
• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been neglected.  
• Information is used that is irrelevant or not credible.  
• The piece presents an incomplete argument/position.  
• A number of elements of the task are not addressed.  
• Most sources are inaccurately attributed and inappropriately referenced. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The work shows a <strong>thorough and critical grasp</strong> of what the question/topic is asking.</td>
<td>• The work shows a <strong>thorough understanding</strong> of what the question/topic is asking.</td>
<td>• <strong>Some attempt</strong> has been made to grasp the topic/question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A good number of high quality sources beyond the minimum required reading inform the work.</td>
<td>• A good number high quality sources beyond the minimum required reading inform the work.</td>
<td>• <strong>Limited effort</strong> to include the minimum required reading in the response to this task is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideas/ information <strong>exceeding</strong> what is necessary to the task have been covered.</td>
<td>• Ideas/ information necessary to the task have been covered.</td>
<td>• Ideas/information necessary to the task have been neglected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Only credible and relevant information is used.</td>
<td>• Only <strong>credible</strong> and relevant information is used.</td>
<td>• Information is used that is irrelevant or not incredible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The argument/position advanced in this piece <strong>engages with the conversations of the discipline</strong> to offer a compelling view of the topic/question.</td>
<td>• The argument/position advanced in this piece <strong>draws on the conversations of the discipline</strong> to offer a <strong>compelling</strong> view of the topic/question.</td>
<td>• The piece presents an incomplete argument/position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The piece includes all elements of the task.</td>
<td>• The piece includes all elements of the task.</td>
<td>• A number of elements of the task are not addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced.</td>
<td>• Sources are accurately attributed and appropriately referenced.</td>
<td>• Most sources are inaccurately attributed and inaccurately referenced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>