

WRITING AND REFERENCING GUIDE

In a university essay you are expected to:

- find, select, organise and reference information
- analyse, not just describe, information from competing explanations and sources
- read widely in order to critically review the field of literature on a topic; copying information from one book is not acceptable
- answer a question in a given time frame or word limit
- support what you write with evidence which is referenced.

1. Pre-planning the essay

1.1 Question

The first step in beginning an essay is to carefully study the question that needs to be addressed. Spend some time studying the components of the question or topic, breaking them down into their various parts, paying particular attention to what is being asked and what you are required to address. It is important that you clarify key terms and concepts in the essay question before advancing to later phases of completing the assignment. Such knowledge can be attained through such sources as the topic's textbook, lecture notes, set readings, specialist dictionaries or introductory books to the area.

While the clarity of your writing is an important component in the assessment of your work, in sociological essays you are NOT graded according to the mere presentation and recall of facts, or a simple discussion of an area. Instead, you WILL BE assessed on your ability to interpret a question and demonstrate your ability to collect and apply relevant information in a concise and logical argument.

1.2 Weighting

The topic outline will identify the length of the essay and the percentage proportion that the essay is worth to your overall grade. Together these provide a guide to the time and effort you should expend on the essay.

1.3 Literature Search

After having clarified the key concepts and theories identified in the essay question you can start your search for academic literature pertinent to the assignment. It is expected that students will use a range of academic sources in their essays, and that they will not merely *describe* what has been written or said, but also *analyse* it. The assessors are looking for evidence that the subject matter has been well comprehended and then addressed to the question carefully and knowledgeably, with the student displaying the capacity to reflect usefully on the issues raised.

Assessors will typically be looking for evidence in your essay that you have related both the literature and studies read or introduced in the topic, for example in your topic reader or textbook, in addition to having independently identified relevant material. There are a number of excellent sources to identify such information. General references such as sociology and social science dictionaries, handbooks, subject or discipline specific encyclopaedias and

textbooks are good starting points to become familiar with an area and key studies in it. Students will however need to go beyond such sources to identify specific and recent literature on a topic. This material is found in books and scholarly journal articles. The library catalogue should be used to identify relevant books, though the practice of browsing relevant shelves and sections in the library is frequently also fruitful. Pertinent scholarly journals will be those general to sociology, for example *Journal of Sociology* or *American Journal of Sociology*, as well as those particular to your topic. For example, the journal *Media, Culture and Society*, would be relevant to the department's first year topic Media, Culture and Society. The most useful library database to identify journal articles is *Sociological Abstracts*. The internet is also a useful source for information though this should not be overused and students should be aware that the validity of information on the World Wide Web is more difficult to identify than in refereed and published works. Further information and assistance can also be obtained from librarians at the university.

1.4 Essay Plan

It is important that prior to starting to write the essay you produce an essay plan. This will improve your writing's clarity and flow as well as making the production of the essay a more manageable task. You should reflect upon and structure the literature you have read and the information you have collected in relation to the structure of your essay. The core aspects of an academic essay are an introduction, an outline of literature and information, a discussion of this material, and conclusions. Below are some preliminary notes on each of these sections and what constitutes a strong essay.

Introduction

This perhaps the most important part of the essay (though it is one often neglected by students). Here you need to define your topic in relation to the set question and your particular argument in relation or response to it. A strong introduction will convince the reader (and examiner) that the social issue under investigation is important, perhaps setting up a research question or a puzzle of a theoretical nature. It is essential that students 'signpost' the essay by signalling the logical structure and argument of the essay

Essay Body

The precise structure of an essay will depend on the essay instructions and the argument you wish to make, though it will typically contain sections where you review the academic literature, a presentation of the data or information you have collected to test or reflect on what is already known about your topic, and a broad discussion of the subject matter typically making links, outlining implications and highlighting the conclusions drawn from connections between the two above sections. Considerable thought should be given to outlining your argument in the body of the essay, thinking of it as a series of steps that lead the reader through your literature, weighing up of arguments for and against a proposition, and presentation of evidence and conclusions. The essay should be divided into paragraphs. These should revolve around one main point; be logically structured with an introductory, supporting and concluding sentences that give a flow and coherence to your argument and provide a link between paragraphs and sections of the essay.

Conclusion

This should summarise the content of the paper, providing intelligent and critical reflection on the conclusions and limitations of the findings. You should NOT introduce any new data or significant connections between the literature and data in this section. The conclusion though should point to the broader implications of the findings and succinctly draw together the threads of your argument. It should not repeat but rather synthesise the main points of your essay.

2. Referencing written work

2.1 What is referencing?

Referencing' means acknowledging the sources of information used in your work. These are usually indicated briefly either in brackets in the text, or in a footnote, depending on the reference system you are using, and the complete book or article is then given in a list of references at the end of the piece of work. At first year level, it is likely that every major point made in an essay will need to be referenced. Note the following conventions:

- Use of the term **et al.** should only be used when there are **three or more** authors. Make sure the full list of authors' names is provided in the Reference List.
- You should reference direct quotes and summarised information (even if it is in your own words), such as statistics and research findings, concepts and theories.

2.2 Harvard Referencing System

The Department's preferred referencing system is the Harvard or author/date system where the reference appears in the text of the essay: **(Author, year: page)**. Footnotes are not used. All the bibliographical information (title, edition, place of publication, publisher) appears in a list of references at the end of the essay. The following examples demonstrate how to use the system.

West (1996:56) states that...

Here the author's name is part of the sentence. Note the space between the author and the bracket. You may see some variations such as: (1988, p5) or (1988, 5) - choose one and be consistent.

It can be argued that... (Roach Anleu 1992:16).

If the author is not mentioned in the sentence, then the full reference comes at the end, all in brackets, with the full stop after the bracket.

Zadoroznyj (1988: 5-10, 15-20) maintains...

Here the reference shows that the information has come from disconnected pages.

Various studies have demonstrated that unemployment levels have... (Martin 2002; Hassan 1986).

When you wish to cite more than one author these should be in alphabetical order and separated by a semi-colon. If you wish to refer to their work generally it is not necessary to reference exact page numbers.

Direct quotes should be kept to a minimum (no more than 10% of the essay word limit). Please note that direct quotes of 30 words or more should be separated from the text and be indented on both sides. When this is done there is no need for quotation marks. The following example is a long quote; because it is indented it does not need quotation marks, but it does need to be correctly cited:

Sociology demonstrates the need to take a much broader view of why we are as we are, and why we act as we do. It teaches us that what we regard as natural, inevitable, good or true may not be such, and that the 'givens' of our life are strongly influenced by historical and social forces (Giddens 2001, p.2).

2.3 Reference list

At the end of your essay, you must include a list of all the sources of information you referenced in your essay. The list is organised in alphabetical order by the surname of the author/s used. It is here that you provide the full details of the books and journal articles used. *Do not include any other material that was not referenced in the essay.* Below are examples of the Department's preferred referencing style for journal articles, books and books chapters:

Bellah, R. (1967) "Civil religion in America" *Daedalus* 96:1-21.

Durkheim, E. (1915) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, translated by J.W. Swain. London: Allen & Unwin.

Dayan, D. and Katz, E. (1988) "Articulating Consensus: The Ritual and Rhetoric of Media Events" in J.C. Alexander (ed) *Durkheimian Sociology: cultural studies* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 161-186.

2.4 Internet referencing

As stated previously should be careful in using the internet as a source of information and sceptical of the validity of material on it. At the same time though the increasing amounts of academic material is being published on the World Wide Web (WWW) and students may find this material useful. As with print, internet sources need to be referenced. Failure to cite or even use this material referencing it is known as plagiarism. While the most blatant form of plagiarism is presenting another writer's sentences as if they were your own, it can also involve paraphrasing an argument as if it were your own, or presenting a particular sequence of ideas as if it were your own. Plagiarism is taken very seriously and incurs significant penalties. The University policy on plagiarism is detailed below.

As a general rule you reference internet sources in your essay as you would any other source of information. Additional information though is required relating to the specific characteristics of the WWW. There is no definite guide for internet referencing but the basic elements should include: the author; title of the article/document; title of the volume/book; volume, issue, and page number; URL address; date of publication and date accessed. The date you accessed the information is essential to include as documents on the WWW change frequently. Below are two examples of citing online resources:

Quinion, M. (1996) *Citing Online Sources* [on-line]. Available from: <http://www.quinion.com/words/articles/citation.htm> [Accessed 17 July 2001].

Seton, K. (1999) Fourth World Nations in the era of globalisation. *Fourth World Journal* [on-line]. 4(1). Available from: <http://www.cwis.org/fwj/41/fworld.html> [Accessed 18 June 2000; 19 July 2000].

2.5 Plagiarism

Academic Integrity is of the highest importance to Flinders University. You may read about the university's approach to Academic Integrity at these websites: Academic Integrity Management Strategy: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/aims/> Academic Dishonesty: http://www.flinders.edu.au/studentinfo/acad_dishon.htm

Plagiarism is the use of another's ideas or words as if they were one's own. Plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty, and is taken very seriously by both the School of Humanities and the university. The penalties for plagiarism may include zero marks for the relevant piece of work, a fail grade for the whole topic, or referral to the Vice-Chancellor.

Flinders University's Policy on Academic Integrity states:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas as if they were one's own. It may occur as a result of lack of understanding and/or inexperience about the correct way to acknowledge and reference sources. It may result from poor academic practice, which may include poor note taking, careless downloading of material or failure to take sufficient care in meeting the required standards. It may also occur as a deliberate misuse of the work of others with the intent to deceive. It may include, but is not restricted to:

- presenting extracts, without quotation marks and/or without appropriate referencing, from books, articles, theses, other published or unpublished works, films, music, choreography, working papers, seminar or conference papers, internal reports, computer software codes, lecture notes or tapes, numerical calculations, data or work from another student. In such cases, it is not adequate merely to acknowledge the source. This applies to material accessed in hard copy, electronically or in any other medium;
- close paraphrasing of sentences or whole paragraphs with or without acknowledgement by referencing of the original work;
- adopting ideas or structures from a source without acknowledgment;
- using source codes and data from other's work without acknowledgement;
- arranging for someone else to undertake all or part of a piece of work and presenting that work as one's own;
- submitting another student's work whether or not it has been previously submitted by that student.

You may read the full policy here:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/SecC_b.htm

When you borrow an idea, do one of two things. Either express it in language that is thoroughly your own and acknowledge the borrowing with a note, or indicate the exact extent of your debt to the actual words of your source – whether a single word, a phrase, or a passage – by enclosing it in quotation marks and acknowledging your debt with a note.

You may use your first footnote/endnote to refer to a general indebtedness as well as a particular one, by writing something like the following: “In this paper I draw extensively upon [insert full reference here]. Individual citations cannot indicate fully my reliance on [name of author]’s commentary.” Even if you have made this general acknowledgement, however, specific quotations and borrowed or paraphrased ideas must still be separately cited.

The cover sheet for essays and assignments in most disciplines includes a formal declaration acknowledging that you are aware of the university’s policies on this matter, and that what you are submitting is your own work.

Ignorance is no excuse when it comes to plagiarism. If in doubt, acknowledge the source. If doubt remains, ask your tutor about satisfactory procedure. Each discipline is willing to discuss essay writing and plagiarism. If you are not clear about the nature of work expected from you, see your tutor.

3. General Consideration

3.1 Presentation

In writing university essays students should produce a number of drafts, continually examining the structure of the essay and clarify of your argument. Students should also be on the look out that points raised and data introduced in the essay is sufficiently and accurately referenced. In the production of a final draft particular care should be taken with spelling and grammar. It will be necessary to proofread your work for errors before submission. The use of a computer grammar checker is often useful but should not be totally relied upon. It is often useful to have someone else read your drafts. It is preferable that your essays are typed or word-processed. Margins should be a minimum of 25mm. Lines should be **double-spaced** with a standard 12 point font used.

3.2 Non-discriminatory language

Avoid the use of 'he' or 'man' when referring to both men and women - either use the plural (they, people, individuals) or use 's/he'.

Aboriginal is spelled with a capital A, just like *English* or *French*. *Aborigine* is the noun and *Aboriginal* is the adjective.

There is no such word as 'ethnics' - either refer to specific nationalities or use ethnic groups.

3.3 Submitting and collecting work

All written work have a completed Assignment Cover Sheet attached and be submitted to Room 254 Social Sciences South Building (SSS) prior to the due date. It is normal policy that **an extension will only be granted if applied for before the due date and if accompanied by a medical certificate or other compelling and documented grounds.** To estimate the period of time it will take for your assignment to be assessed you should refer to your Assessment of Methods form given to you at the beginning of the semester. Assignments are normally deposited in Room 254 SSS for students to pick-up at their convenience. However they might also be returned during a tutorial or lecture.

3.4 Assistance

Academic staff will be pleased to assist students with any matter relevant to the topic, such as the explanation of theories and concepts relevant to the essay. However, students should research thoroughly before going to their tutor or lecturer for further references. A substantial part of learning consists of becoming self-directed and enterprising. Students are also encouraged to discuss essay plans with academic staff but, again, should have done preliminary planning and reading.