

University of
Western Sydney

Bringing knowledge to life



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LEARNING THROUGH WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

A toolkit for Learning Guides

Acknowledgements

The Student Learning Unit (SLU) gratefully acknowledges the practical ideas featured in this toolkit for Learning Guides. These rich and diverse resources, drawn from various unit learning guides, workbooks, resource books, and teaching materials, have been developed by lecturers in the SLU and the Schools of Accounting, Biomedical and Health Sciences, Education, Engineering, Humanities and Languages, Marketing, Nursing, and Social Sciences to help clarify to students the learning and academic conventions and disciplinary writing requirements needed to be successful at university.

Grateful acknowledgement is extended to Monash University Library for permission to use an excerpt from one of the 'Lecturer's Advice' pages on their impressive *Language and Learning Online* website. This excerpt illustrates a student-friendly approach to explaining discipline learning expectations.

The examples that follow – many of which are the result of collaborative teaching partnerships between lecturers from the different disciplines and those from the SLU – can be adapted to particular unit or discipline contexts to facilitate student learning and the development of academic literacies.

FEEDBACK

This toolkit for Learning Guides is a working document and is expected to evolve as more examples of learning guide design emerge during 2009. We thus welcome feedback on any aspect of the toolkit that will help us to improve future editions.

Please email your comments or suggestions to slu@uws.edu.au

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Introduction

The University has introduced unit Learning Guides to enhance the student experience “by making clear to students what they are expected to learn and how they will be assessed.”¹ Assessment is widely acknowledged as a key driver of student learning in higher education (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Ross, Siegenthaler, & Tronson, 2006), with links to retention and progression factors like quality of student-teacher interaction and course satisfaction (Krause, 2001; Krause, 2005; Tinto, 1996). The quality of student engagement with assessment is also affected by the alignment of student and staff expectations for learning (see, for example, Allen & Readman, 2008). This toolkit demonstrates ways in which staff can use Learning Guides to align academic expectations and prepare students to engage appropriately with the learning and written assessment requirements of their units.

LEARNING GUIDES POLICY UNPACKED

Clause 28 in Section 5 of the Unit Outline and Learning Guides Policy presents guiding principles for the content, purpose and use of Learning Guides. These principles are examined below.

1. THE SCOPE, SCALE AND CONTENT OF LEARNING GUIDES MAY VARY WIDELY AND CREATIVELY FOR DIFFERENT UNITS.

The Policy is not intended to impose a rigid content template. While Learning Guides are required to cover certain topics (see Table 1 on page 4 for selected mandatory content listed under Clause 29), staff are not constrained in how they address these topics. This flexibility accounts for the different learning and assessment requirements of different disciplines, course units and student cohorts.

It is anticipated that the development of Learning Guides will be incremental and iterative with Guides evolving over time to reflect teaching needs. Most staff will already have resources that can be readily adapted to address many of the required topics. Creating a Learning Guide is thus an opportunity to consolidate these resources in an integrated format that explicitly aligns the unit learning outcomes, assessment criteria, standards and relevant learning support strategies.

¹ Unit Outline and Learning Guides Policy: Section 3 – Policy Statement, Clause 12

2. LEARNING GUIDES ARE ASSESSMENT-FOCUSSED AND AIM TO GIVE STUDENTS THE OPTIMUM OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES.

Learning Guides are tools for facilitating student-centred teaching and learning in units. To create educational environments that give students the optimum opportunity to achieve learning outcomes, it is necessary to understand and respond to the broad learning needs of student cohorts. These needs could relate to ability level, motivating interests, learning styles, cultural and linguistic background and prior educational experience. Embedding activities and support resources in Learning Guides to accommodate key cohort learning needs can thus enhance the overall quality of student engagement with assessment tasks.

For these reasons Learning Guides have an important role to play in supporting the student transition to higher education. As Haggis (2006) observes, it is unrealistic to expect that students enter university fully prepared for the complex learning demands of academic disciplines:

In a mass system, which is increasingly expected to provide career and professional development opportunities to a range of people learning throughout their lives, it is no longer possible to expect all students to enter university already knowing how to do things such as respond to a reading list and a set of essay questions, engage with new types of text genre, and adopt a critical stance in relation to ideas in published form. There are also questions about whether this can still be assumed for students coming straight from school (pp. 526-527).

Few transitioning students will automatically understand and embrace the scholarly processes, communication practices and orientations to knowledge valued by different fields of enquiry. Learning Guides, however, can be used to explicitly articulate these learning requirements and 'scaffold' students' capacity to meet them in unit assessment tasks.

To demonstrate how, this toolkit presents a series of practical strategies drawn from existing UWS Learning Guides and other teaching resources.

3. IT IS CRITICAL FOR STAFF TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH STUDENTS ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THEIR LEARNING GUIDE ON A REGULAR BASIS THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.

Learning Guides must play a central role in units if they are to optimise students' opportunity to achieve learning outcomes in the ways described above. Students are more likely to value and refer to Guides if tutors regularly use them in class to coach students towards meeting expectations for learning and assessment. Ongoing dialogue is particularly important for demystifying expectations about academic writing, which remains both a "key assessment tool" (Lillis, 2001, p. 20) and major area of student confusion (Lillis & Turner, 2001). Forms of dialogue that could be supported by material in Learning Guides include student-tutor discussion (Lillis, 2006), formative peer review of student writing (Russell, 2004), and provision of timely developmental feedback (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Lillis, & Swann, 2003; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Clause 29 in Section 5 of the Policy outlines the mandatory content areas for Learning Guides. It also specifies that these content areas can be arranged according to the needs of the particular unit. Table 1 (on next page) contains a selection of these mandatory content areas, and presents a range of resources that support them.

TABLE 1 Support resources for selected mandatory content areas of the Policy

LEARNING GUIDES' MANDATORY CONTENT AREAS	SOURCES & SUPPORT RESOURCES
ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
<p>c. Explanation about how learning activities (eg lectures, workshops, clinical visits, vUWS activities, group work, formative writing activities etc) will support the learning and teaching outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Part 1 of this toolkit for sample explanatory strategies and learning support resources compiled by SLU
<p>d. Annotated models of student essays or reports, or marking schedules to clarify expectations about what is required for assessment activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Part 2 and Part 3 of this toolkit for examples of annotated models and associated academic writing support tools compiled by SLU
LEARNING RESOURCES INFORMATION	
<p>d. Literacy and / or numeracy resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Part 4 of this toolkit for information and links to resources available on the SLU website

Source: Unit Outline and Learning Guides Policy, UWS

Clarifying learning expectations

In offering ideas for clarifying learning expectations, this section focuses on making expectations explicit regarding the organisation of learning in units and study skills needed at university. It also offers practical examples to help students develop their understanding of the writing expectations and specialised use of language in different disciplines.

UNIT LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Many commencing students are unprepared for the kind of learning involved at university (Wingate, 2007). For instance, students who have previously experienced teacher directed learning at school, TAFE or in their home countries may not immediately understand the importance of longer term planning or weekly preparation in meeting unit requirements.

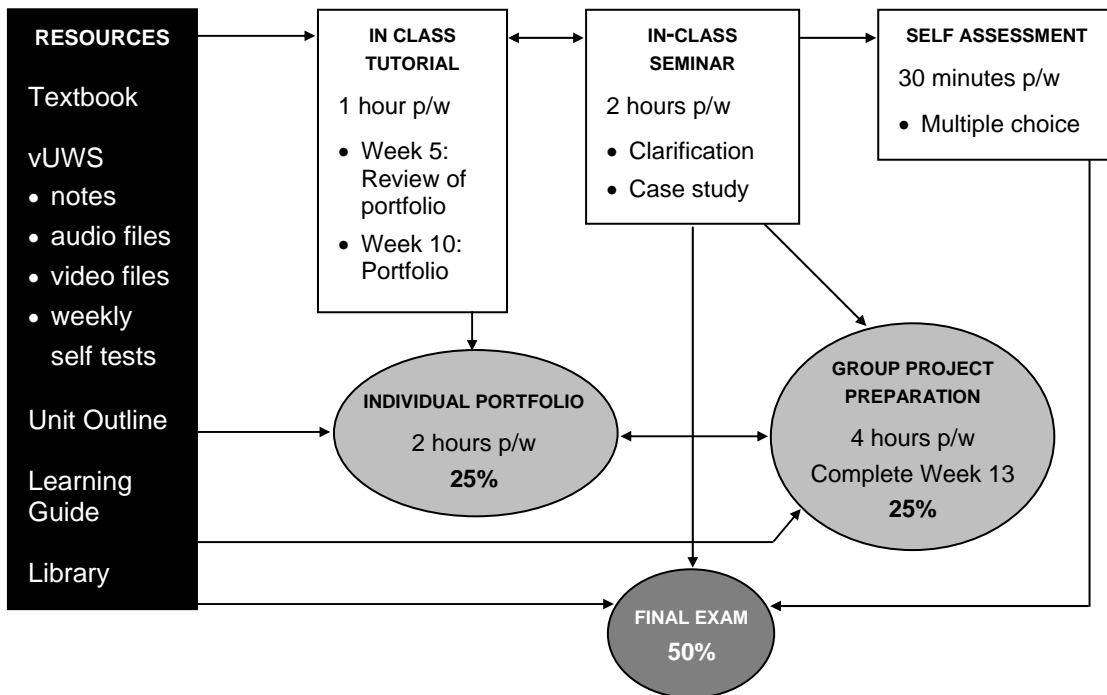
Learning Guides can provide transitioning students with explicit guidance in managing their program of learning. Example 1.1 (on page 7), from a Learning Guide for a first year unit – Marketing Principles, shows how a flowchart can be used to concisely map the relationships between unit learning resources, learning activities and assessment tasks.

Example 1.2 (on page 8) consists of short excerpts from the Week 1 notes of a School of Accounting unit Learning Guide – Accounting Information for Managers. It demonstrates a highly detailed approach to explaining what students should do to prepare for lectures, tutorials and assessment tasks. The example concludes with a checklist students can use to assess their progress towards completing the tasks for that week.

examples

EXAMPLE 1.1 Mapping out unit components

OVERVIEW OF UNIT EXPECTATIONS



Source: Marketing Principles Learning Guide, School of Marketing, UWS

EXAMPLE 1.2 Specifying weekly study components and learning outcomes

WEEK 1

As this is your first week of study it is vital that you get a good start in this unit and attend the first lecture and tutorial. Throughout the semester your tutorials will deal with the content covered in the previous week. So your tutorial in Week 2 will deal with the material that you cover in your Week 1 lecture. However, it is still essential that you attend your first tutorial this week.

TUTORIAL FOCUS

In this first tutorial, the focus will be on getting to know each other, discussing how the tutorial program will contribute to your learning in this unit and also outlining what is expected of you in terms of attendance and participation in tutorial classes.

You should make it a priority for Week 1 to:

- Thoroughly review the Unit Outline and make sure you clearly understand what is required of you in order to pass this unit (particularly in terms of assessment tasks).
- Familiarise yourself with the structure and features of the textbook and undertake the required reading – Chapter 1 and, if possible, Chapter 2. Make sure you do not fall behind in your reading of the textbook throughout the semester – if you fail to work through the readings for a few weeks you will quickly fall behind and find it very difficult to catch up. Also note that topics covered later in this unit often depend on a thorough understanding of earlier topics, so you can not simply return to cover topics you have missed at the end of semester prior to the exam. Each topic builds on previous material, so you will need to progress through the textbook chapters in the prescribed order.
- Log on to the unit website on vUWS and familiarise yourself with the content and tools available on this site. If you have any technical difficulties using the unit website make sure you sort these out immediately (contact the IT desk if you need support).

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TEXTBOOK READING

The key reading for Week 1 is Chapter 1 of the textbook. This chapter provides a broad overview of the nature and role of accounting in the business environment. After completing your reading of Chapter 1, you should be able to:

- interpret and apply data and reports
- explain key elements of ethical behaviour for a professional person
- state who the users of accounting information are and why they find accounting information useful
- define the objectives of financial reporting for business enterprises.

Your first challenge is to develop an awareness of the ‘jargon’ used in accounting. There is a specific language of accounting which needs to be used with some precision. For example, on page 4 of the textbook the term ‘entity’ is used by accountants, rather than ‘organisation’. When you come across such terms as this, use the glossary at the end of the textbook to find out what the term means and consider why this term is used by accountants rather than alternatives. Much new terminology is introduced in this chapter, with which you may not be familiar. A list of key terms used in Chapter 1 is provided on pages 26 – 27 of the textbook. You should refer to this as you work through each part of the chapter and consult the glossary regularly. Once you have completed the chapter, write out your own definitions for these terms and compare them to the glossary. This is a good way to test your learning as you work through each chapter and consolidate your new knowledge.

...

At the end of the Chapter (and indeed each Chapter of the textbook) there is a variety of self study material to help you actively learn the material covered in the Chapter. Selected activities are prescribed as preparation for the tutorial in Week 2 (see the preparation guide for Week 2 tutorial), and you should complete these prior to attending the Week 2 tutorial. However, you will also benefit from completing other exercises. In particular, you should complete the multiple-choice questions on pages 28–30 and then check your answers against the solutions provided in Appendix 3 of the textbook. If you make any errors, revise the relevant section of the textbook Chapter to ensure you fill in any gaps in your knowledge.

If you have time after completing Chapter 1, you should immediately start reading Chapter 2, which will be the focus of the lecture in Week 2 and the tutorial in Week 3. You should endeavour to stay ahead of the reading schedule if possible, just in case unexpected circumstances (eg, illness, unanticipated work or personal commitments) arise during the semester.

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WEEK 1 CHECKLIST

At the end of Week 1 you should complete the following table to indicate what you have achieved. If there are particular tasks that you have not completed or learning outcomes you have not achieved, you might make a note of how and when you will address these.

TASK/LEARNING OUTCOME	ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED
Read Unit Outline		
Log on to and explore Unit website on vUWS		
Complete reading Chapter 1 of the textbook		
Complete preparation for Week 1 lecture		
Attend Week 1 lecture		
Attend Week 1 tutorial		
Obtain a copy of the UWS 'UniStep Academic Skills Guide'		
Develop a study plan for the semester		
Can interpret and apply data and reports		
Can explain key elements of ethical behaviour for a professional person		
Can state who the users of accounting information are and why they find accounting information useful		
Can define the objectives of financial reporting for business enterprises		
My notes:		

DISCIPLINE LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

A core learning expectation in higher education is that students adopt a critical orientation to knowledge. While questioning and constructing knowledge is central to all academic endeavour, different traditions of inquiry operate within the so-called 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines (Becher, 2001; Hyland, 1999; Neuman, 2001; North, 2005). The epistemological frameworks that underpin this activity tend to be poorly understood by students and are seldom explicitly taught in undergraduate coursework (Haggis, 2006; Kember, 2001; Wingate, 2007). Students commonly begin university viewing "knowledge as a body of absolute truth held by experts, teachers or some other authority, and 'received' largely uncontested" (Hockings & Cooke, 2007, p. 729). Without explicit guidance, students may not appreciate the utility of replacing such beliefs with the critical perspectives valued in their disciplines.

In addition to containing suitable learning activities, Learning Guides could address this need for explicit instruction by explaining discipline specific expectations for learning and written assessment in student-friendly language. Example 1.3 (on next page), from Monash University Library's website – *Language and Learning Online*, demonstrates how such expectations could be presented in the form of Frequently Asked Questions answered by the lecturer.

example

EXAMPLE 1.3 Meeting lecturer expectations for essay writing in Sociology**LECTURER'S ADVICE**

In this section, one of your lecturers - Cathi Lewis - answers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about researching and writing of essays in first-year Sociology.

1. What exactly is a "sociological perspective"?
2. What are the main writing difficulties students have?
3. What constitutes "evidence" in Sociology and how should I use it in my essays?
4. What makes a good essay?
5. How much should I read for an essay?
6. What if the text I am reading is too difficult?
7. What writing style should I adopt?
8. What final piece of advice do you have?

1. WHAT EXACTLY IS A "SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE"?**SUMMARY**

A sociological perspective involves:

- using sociological theories to understand your social world
- questioning assumptions and viewing your social world as the object of scientific study
- using sociological concepts and terminology.

Taking a sociological perspective means, therefore, being able to stand outside your social world and looking at it as though you have never seen it before, examining it as an object of scientific study. In doing so, you will use **sociological theory** to understand

social phenomena; you will **question** your own preconceived ideas and **assumptions**; and apply **sociological concepts** to familiar phenomena.

USING SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

To have a sociological perspective is to look at your social world in terms of the major sociological theories. Generally speaking, there are three main strands in Sociological theory: Functionalism, Marxism and Critical Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism (there are also subgroups and combinations of these). Sociologists generally examine social interactions and institutions in terms of social power and the political (in the sense of who has power over others, who controls what, who doesn't have it) and how these social factors shape or determine to some extent this group or this individual's behaviours. A sociological perspective looks at the impact of social factors such as age, gender, ethnic group, socioeconomic group, cultural group, national group, geographical location, occupational group, education, and so on.

QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS

The other part of acquiring a sociological perspective is to break the set of assumptions we have about our social world. You need to be able to stand outside your own ideological frameworks and see the everyday and the ordinary as unfamiliar and the object of scientific study. Students often have difficulty with this because they are dealing with familiar material, and may think it is simpler than it is. In many ways, it is much easier for an anthropologist to make objective observations about a culture because it is a culture that is foreign to them; they sit outside it. This is probably the key problem for our students; that is, to be able to reflect on what is familiar.

USING SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

There are a series of concepts that are specific to Sociology that students have to come to grips with. For example, most students would not previously have come across the concept of "anomie", a sociological term that means an absence of rules of behaviour (or norms). Now, there are no layperson's terms for these concepts, so students have to acquire an understanding of them in the sociological context before they can explore a particular question.

In addition to the terms that are exclusive to the discipline of Sociology, sociologists have also appropriated certain common everyday words and given them different meanings. They are specific jargon to the discipline so students have to unlearn and reuse words in new ways.

...

3. WHAT CONSTITUTES "EVIDENCE" IN SOCIOLOGY?

SUMMARY

In sociology, evidence constitutes:

- theory, empirical studies, and example
- a number of theorists and studies for different perspectives on the same topic.

I would expect students to substantiate specific points by drawing on the **theorists**, and also on **empirical evidence from studies**. I would also expect them to use **examples** to illustrate their points.

Engaging with the theorists often involves critiquing one theorist and then bringing in another theorist to develop an area that wasn't sufficiently scrutinised or not dealt with at all by the first theorist. So you use theorists like a box of tools for carpentry. In carpentry, you use a hammer for the nails and a screw driver for the screws. In sociology, you use whichever theorist to examine a particular problem, and another theorist for a different problem. (Also, take note that being "critical" doesn't necessarily mean being negative; it means to analyse something in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.)

You should also reflect on the issues yourselves, imagining situations and using your own experiences (but not relying on them). So the anecdote or the example that you have encountered can be used to illustrate the point you are making along with the theory and empirical studies. These examples or anecdotes won't substantiate your argument, but they will add to it. Note that these anecdotal examples should be used sparingly. You can use your reflective processes to UNDERSTAND the concepts, but not use them as evidence for your essay.

So, **theorists**, **empirical studies**, and **examples** are the tools which you would use (not to argue one line of argument but) to critically EXAMINE an area in order to scrutinise a social institution from a range of perspectives.

(Monash University Library, 2008)

Source: Language and Learning Online, Monash University

LANGUAGE OF A DISCIPLINE

The specialised use of language in academic disciplines can be an initial barrier to learning for commencing students (Northedge, 2003, p. 171), and an ongoing challenge for those enrolled in degree programs that incorporate units from a variety of disciplines (Baynham, 2000). Students are traditionally expected to acquire a working knowledge of expert discourse through exposure to it in lectures, tutorials and readings. However, this process of passive osmosis can be slow and unreliable, particularly in a second language.

An effective way to accelerate students' understanding of key 'technical' terms of a discipline or alert students to the academic meaning certain 'everyday' words assume in discipline contexts is to define them in a glossary. Example 1.4 (on next page) is part of a glossary from an academic literacy workbook developed for a core first year unit in the School of Nursing – Becoming a Nurse.

EXAMPLE 1.4 Listing a glossary of terms – Becoming a Nurse**GLOSSARY**

Accountability	Process that mandates that individuals are answerable for their actions and have an obligation (or duty) to act.
Active listening	Listening that focuses on the feelings of the individual who is speaking.
Anxiety	A vague, uneasy feeling of discomfort or dread accompanied by an autonomic response.
Assumption	Something that is taken for granted without any proof.
Attitude	Mental stance that is composed of several beliefs. Often involves a negative or positive judgement towards a person, object or idea.
Autonomy	The state of being independent, self-governing, with no outside control, the ability to make one's own decisions.
Behaviour	Observable response of an individual to external stimuli.
Beliefs	Interpretations or conclusions that are accepted as accurate.
Beneficence	Ethical principle regarding the duty to promote good and prevent harm.
Caring	The intentional action that suggests physical and emotional support and security. A genuine connectedness with another person or a group of people.
Client / patient advocate	Person who speaks up or acts on behalf of the client / patient.
...	
Health	Process through which a person seeks to maintain an equilibrium that promotes stability and comfort; includes physiological, psychological, sociocultural, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.
Health promotion	Process undertaken to increase levels of wellness in individuals, families and communities.

Holism	The belief that individuals function as complete units that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts.
Holistic nursing	Nursing practice that has as its aim the healing of the whole person.
Illness	Inability of an individual's adaptive responses to maintain physical and emotional balance that subsequently results in an impairment in functional abilities.
Informed consent	The patient understands the reason for the proposed intervention, its benefits and risks, and agrees to the treatment by signing a consent form.
Justice	Ethical principle based on the concept of fairness that is extended to each individual.
Nursing	An art and a science that assists individuals to learn to care for themselves whenever possible; it also involves caring for others when they are unable to meet their own needs.
Therapeutic communication	Use of communication for the purpose of creating a beneficial outcome for the patient.
Therapeutic range	Achievement of constant therapeutic blood level of a medication within a safe range.
Therapeutic touch	Holistic technique that consists of assessing alterations in a person's energy fields and using the hands to direct energy to achieve a balanced state.
Transcultural nursing	Formal area of study and practice focussed on comparative analysis of different cultures and sub-cultures with respect to cultural care, health and illness beliefs, and values and practices with the goal of providing health care within the context of the patient's culture.
Values	Principles that influence the development of beliefs and attitudes.

Source: Becoming a Nurse Workbook, School of Nursing, UWS.

Scaffolding written assessment

Building on the previous ideas about how discipline learning and writing expectations can be made clear to students, this section looks at different ways to scaffold written assessment. It offers approaches to teaching writing processes, outlining the structures of particular text types, and clarifying key academic text conventions, including those from different disciplines.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Weaknesses in students' writing for assessment tasks can often be traced to problems with the process they adopt to complete a particular task (Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Taylor & Drury, 2005; Ellis et al., 2006; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001; Prosser & Webb, 1994; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). Students who adopt a 'surface' approach to learning often view writing as simply a process of reproducing information or arranging facts. This tends to result in texts that are descriptive or lacking global coherence. However, those who adopt a 'deep' approach to learning are more likely to treat writing as a process for transforming knowledge. That is, 'deep' learners prefer to use writing to engage with content by progressively constructing logically organised analytical texts that develop argument and discussion on content issues. This process approach to writing is therefore more complex and time-consuming, and involves recurring stages of conceptualisation, drafting and revision.

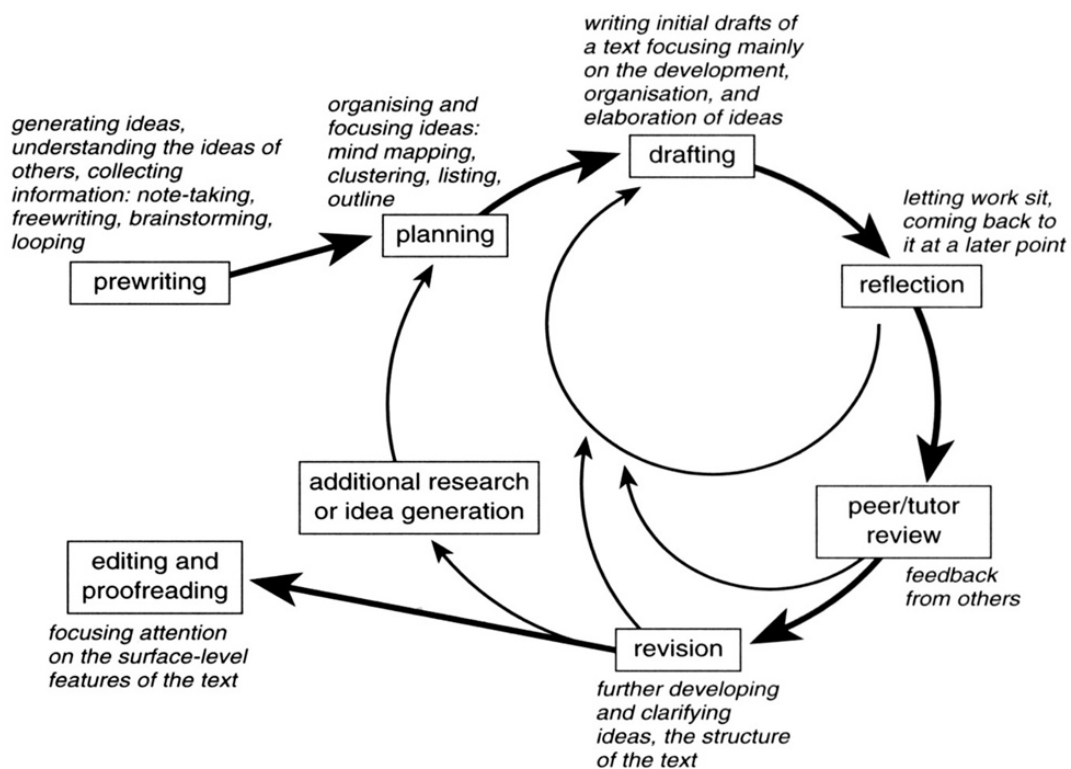
Many students who rely on surface learning strategies may be capable of taking a deep approach, but do not fully understand yet what this entails, particularly for the writing process. Learning Guides can be used to clarify students' understanding about writing by explicitly teaching the stages students need to work through to complete a particular task. The following three examples offer some process approaches to writing.

Example 2.1 (on page 21), taken from session materials of an English for Academic Purposes unit, illustrates typical stages of the writing process. In describing these stages, students can be advised that not all writers move through the stages included in this process – some stages may be useful, while others superfluous to any given task – and that since writing is an iterative process, the stages can happen in various orders, and at different points (Coffin et al. 2003, p. 34).

The next two examples illustrate how Multiliteracies, a level one unit from the School of Education, tackles explicit teaching of the writing process. Both appear in the unit's Learning Guide, and are extracts from a particular assignment set within the course.

Example 2.2 (on page 22) illustrates the process approach to a writing task. It outlines a series of steps students need to work through in order to complete the task.

Example 2.3 (on page 23) is a selection of what follows this outline: elaborations of each step in the writing process. In the Guide, these elaborations include specific information and explanations about the process, along with explicit analysis of text conventions. This focus on process in conjunction with text features is intended to help students prepare for and complete their assignment. Moreover, by introducing the notion of stages of the writing process, this enhances the development of their confidence in the act of writing itself.

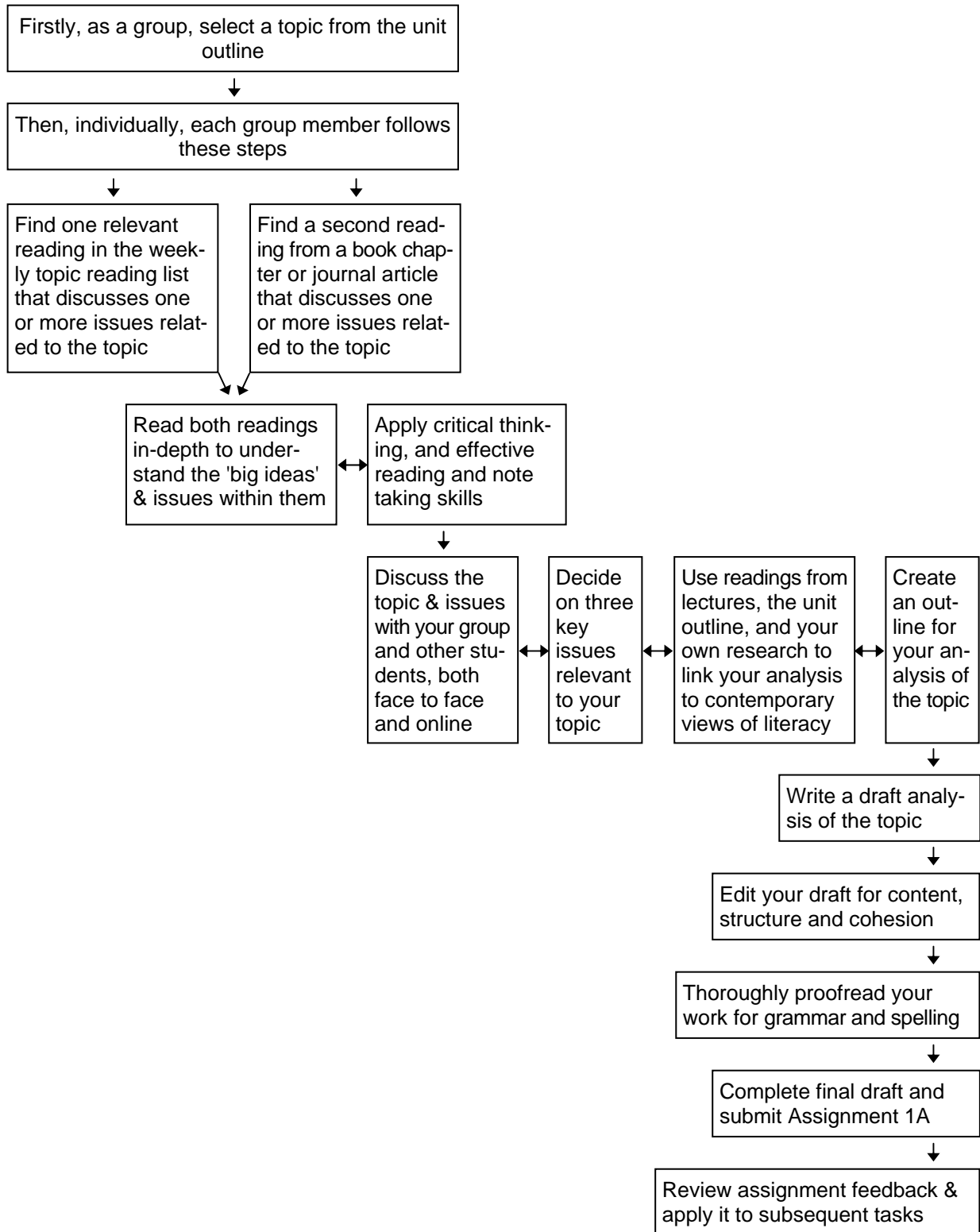
EXAMPLE 2.1 The different stages of the writing process**THE WRITING PROCESS**

(Coffin et al., 2003, p. 34)

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS

EXAMPLE 2.2 Process approach to a Multiliteracies writing task

STEPS INVOLVED IN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENT 1A



EXAMPLE 2.3 Elaborations on selected steps of a Multiliteracies writing task**MULTILITERACIES ASSIGNMENT 1A PROCESSES**

...

APPLY CRITICAL THINKING AND EFFECTIVE READING AND NOTE TAKING SKILLS**What is critical thinking?**

Critical thinking is a term that you will hear a lot at university. Developing a critical approach to thinking allows you to assess information and to develop an informed opinion which can be supported by reliable evidence. It also enables you to interpret others' opinions and have the ability to discuss issues in an informed and open manner.

Critical thinking means thinking carefully, questioning and testing what you hear and read, and being prepared to examine and, if necessary, change your beliefs and ideas. Also, critical thinking often refers to the skills and attitudes needed for evaluating texts and arguments.

Critical thinking involves:

- **interpreting** – understanding the significance of information / ideas / issues, and clarifying their meaning
- **evaluating** – judging the worth, credibility or strength of both your source material and your thought processes.
- **analysing** – breaking information down into different aspects by probing and examining this information
- **synthesising** – recombining information and ideas in different ways
- **reasoning** – creating an argument through logical steps.

You will be applying critical thinking throughout the whole process involved in undertaking Assignment 1. For instance, you will be **interpreting** the task, and then **evaluating** the readings you choose to use. You will be **analysing** these readings to look for key issues and relationships to contemporary views of literacy. When you write your analysis of your topic, you will be synthesising your ideas by bringing together your own thoughts and the key points raised in your readings. When you read for your topic, you will be synthesising your readings by looking for similarities and differences evident in the readings, and recombining the information and ideas, and then putting these ideas into your words. When you undertake this synthesis, you must acknowledge all the sources that have contributed to your thinking.

Following is an example of a writer's critical analysis of what literature says on a particular topic. The analysis is an extract from an assignment.

An example of a writer's critical analysis

The teaching of critical literacy can be a constant feature of an educator's approach to teaching. It is the responsibility of educators to incorporate children's social literacy practices and technology into the school curriculum, in order to encourage the development of critical thinking and questioning of texts they encounter (Reid, 2003). Where the teacher incorporates critical media literacies into a range of learning opportunities, students are encouraged to develop critical positions that will possibly differ from those anticipated (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). However, it is crucial that educators are cautious in teaching for critical literacy that there is no manipulation of student opinion, but rather there is involvement in analytical and critical discussions of multiple perspectives (Knobel & Healey, 1998). Students should be encouraged to form their opinions based on their consideration of different evidence, thinking critically.

The writer has analysed a contemporary view on literacy about positioning students to form critical thinking

Different readings (Reid; Alverman & Hagood; Knobel & Healey) are analysed in order to synthesise ideas on the importance of developing students' critical thinking. Notice that ideas from the different sources are acknowledged.

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WRITE A DRAFT ANALYSIS OF THE TOPIC

It is essential that you complete several drafts of your paper prior to submission of the final piece of work. When completing your drafts and your final paper, you need to look back to the assessment criteria and the standards and make sure that all areas are covered.

You also need to think about the structure of your paper. A well structured paper has an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

As writers, when we begin writing, we often focus on sorting out ideas and thinking about ways to express these ideas. However, it is very important to develop this first draft further. Therefore, you need to allow time firstly to edit your draft in terms of content, structure and cohesion, then to proofread it for grammar and spelling, and finally to complete it ready for submission by checking the references and formatting. This may require multiple drafts, because you might realise that your paper is not well structured, your analysis has flaws, you have not included enough evidence to support your arguments, or you have not presented your arguments in your own words.

...

THOROUGHLY PROOFREAD YOUR WORK FOR GRAMMAR AND SPELLING

In the final stages of writing your paper, you need to ensure that your analysis of the topic is written clearly. Therefore, you need to carefully proofread your work for grammar and spelling before submitting it – mistakes at this stage can create ambiguity in your writing. To guide you on what elements to focus your proofreading, use the assessment standards. These standards are also useful to indicate what is required for a pass, credit and distinction.

Example of why it is important to proofread

The excerpt below, taken from a student assignment (2006), is an example of an insufficiently proofread text. It shows how mistakes can affect not only the readability but also the meaning of the text. Here, the mistakes are underlined.

The writer claims that various literacies are a part of children, but does not explain what this means.

The pictures are also accompanied by persuasive words like half price, look cool this summer, hot, which children will they see the items as must have items. As educators we should not turn out back on these types of literacies but acknowledge that it is apart of the children and it will construct children's play and social identity.

- *half price, look cool this summer, hot, must have*, need quotation marks around them
- *they, the items* are surplus to the sentence
- *out* should be *our*
- *apart* should be *a part*

These mistakes make the text confusing and difficult to read. Mistakes can also result in communicating an entirely different meaning.

Some useful proofreading strategies include:

- reading your work out loud
- getting somebody else to read it critically; ask them also to let you know where it doesn't

...

WRITING ACADEMIC TEXTS

In higher education, writing remains the primary medium through which knowledge and learning is assessed. As Coffin et al. (2003) go on to explain, "students can begin to understand the significance of writing by becoming aware that writing takes particular conventional forms in different contexts" (p. 19).

In supporting students to write appropriately for this context, it is important to make explicit the features of the many types of academic writing, including different text types (such as essays, laboratory reports, and critical reviews); their purposes (for example, a laboratory report reports on experiments, while a critical review informs and evaluates); and structure (for example, the basic outline for an essay is introduction, body and conclusion).

Such features may seem obvious to experienced academic writers or professionals. However, novice academic writers, especially those just entering university, often have difficulty producing unfamiliar text types. This difficulty extends also to understanding how certain features of familiar text types can vary across different assessment situations.

To make explicit the features of different text types, Example 2.4 (on next page) highlights the differences purposes of several text types and the stages through which they generally move to achieve these purposes. This framework introduces the text types that students enrolled in the Master of Public Health typically encounter during their postgraduate studies.

EXAMPLE 2.4 Different purposes and stages of five academic text types**FIVE TEXT TYPES OF ACADEMIC WRITING**

TEXT TYPE	PURPOSE	STAGES
Discussion essay	Discusses an issue in the light of some kind of 'frame' or position. Provides more than one point of view on an issue.	Introduction [Thesis] → Critical discussion of evidence [claims and counter claim/s giving reasons and evidence to support these] → Conclusion [resolution of arguments]
Critical review	Summarises and comments on important aspects of a text (eg book, journal article).	Context [bibliographic details] → Summary [text's overall purpose, major themes and conclusions] → Evaluation [eg text's contribution to field, usefulness for particular audiences, strengths and weaknesses, use of language]
Report	Describes and discusses the goals, methodology and outcomes of research.	Abstract [overview of report's sections] → Introduction [outline of research's aims and findings of literature search] → Methods [data collection, statistical analysis] → Results → Discussion [discusses results' significance, ie whether they support, extend or conflict with previous research] → Conclusion
Proposal	Presents a project's aims, significance, outcomes and cost to a prospective funding provider.	Overview [of issue or need] → Literature review [of literature dealing with issue] → Identification [of particular issue, target groups] → Description [of objectives, methodology] → Conclusion [about need for/value of project], → Recommendation [that proposal be approved and funded]

TEXT TYPE	PURPOSE	STAGES
Media release	Informs the media about a specific issue or event that affects an organisation.	Headline → Lead [briefly details what, where, why, how, when] → Key events → Quotes → Call to action [requests action from reader] → Ending [strong, powerful]

Source: Master of Public Health, School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, UWS

OUTLINING ACADEMIC TEXT TYPES

Given that text types vary in response to the function that a text performs, Coffin et al. (2003) goes on to explain that:

Words such as 'essay', 'laboratory report' and 'case study' are problematic in that they denote a wide variety of types of texts. . . The essay, for example, may contain different elements depending on whether it is framed as a critical review, a discussion, a personal response or an exposition (p. 21).

It cannot be assumed, therefore, that students will necessarily grasp the range of rhetorical variations afforded by each text type. As a first step to make these variations more explicit for written assessment, broad outlines of particular text types can be included in Learning Guides.

Example 2.5 (on following pages) presents two such outlines from a level one unit in the School of Marketing – Business Academic Skills. The first outline shows the organisational structure of a critical review; the second shows that of an academic essay. Both introduce in a general way the formatting expectations for two writing tasks set within the course.

EXAMPLE 2.5 Broad outlines for two academic text types**THE REVIEW FORMAT**

A review consists of four main parts:

1. Referencing information
2. Introduction
3. Summary
4. Evaluation

REFERENCING INFORMATION

The review begins with a full reference of the work under review, and it should include such necessary details as:

- name of author/s (surname/s + initials)
- year of publication
- title of the work (eg chapter, book, video)
- location and name of publisher
- page number/s (if applicable)

...

INTRODUCTION

Following the referencing details of the work is the introduction. The introduction prepares the reader by introducing:

- the author/s and the title of the work under review
- the work's main argument and purpose
- your evaluation of the work as a whole.

...

BODY

Immediately following the introduction is the body of the review. This is made up of paragraphs that are clearly organised into summary and evaluation sections of roughly equal portions. Remember, there are two options when formulating an organisational structure for your review:

1. Combined summary and evaluation
2. Separate summary and evaluation

SUMMARY SECTION

The summary paragraphs are the centre of your review, where you identify and then elaborate on the key points in the work. Each of these points is developed briefly in a separate paragraph, and remember to:

- use the ideas that are most important to the author of the work and not the ideas that you find most interesting or unusual
- write a topic sentence that expresses each main idea completely
- link your ideas, sentences and paragraphs coherently by repeating key nouns, using connecting words/phrases, and ensuring the supporting ideas in a paragraph relate to the main idea in the topic sentence
- distinguish between the author's opinions and your own as you discuss the author's major points
- summarise the main ideas accurately, adequately, objectively and concisely. Take care not to distort or misinterpret the author's ideas, and avoid interpretation or judgment of the information.

■ ■ ■

EVALUATION SECTION

In writing your review, you should comment on the points you have raised in your summary. You should also provide an evaluation of the value, credibility and usefulness of the work.

As such, it may help you to have a set of general questions in mind not only to guide your thinking as you watch the video, but also to provide the foundation for your evaluation.

Here are a few questions for you to consider:

■ ■ ■

FINAL COMMENT

At the end of your review, you should include a final comment that states your overall evaluation of the work. To help you do this, here are some questions you may want to consider:

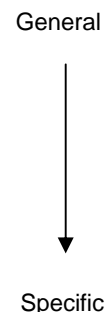
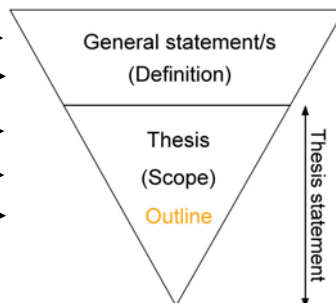
- Which parts of the work are the most effective and which parts are the least? Why?
- How well is the stated or implied purpose of the work achieved?
- What contribution does the work make to a specific field?
- What has seeing this work done for you or demonstrated to you?

Source: Business Academic Skills, School of Marketing, UWS.

THE STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS OF AN ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

- Orients reader to the topic →
- Clarifies meaning of key terms →
- Clarifies position of the writer →
- Sets limits of the essay →
- Previews stages of the essay →

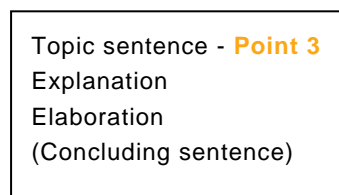
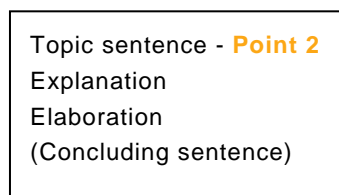
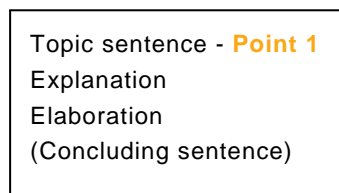


BODY PARAGRAPHS

The body consists of a logically sequenced series of paragraphs that develops the essay topic.

Each paragraph contains:

- One idea, which is introduced in the topic sentence.
- Supporting sentences that explain and elaborate the point by referral to research, giving examples from the field and using an appropriate mix of summary, paraphrase and quotation from reliable sources.
- A concluding sentence that finishes the point (optional).
- Connecting words & phrases that link ideas/sentences within a paragraph, and connect one paragraph to the next.

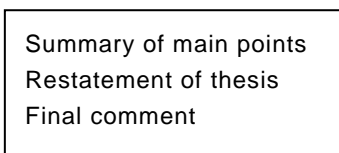


OUTLINE
Point 1
Point 2
Point 3

The outline indicates the sequence that the body paragraphs will follow.

CONCLUSION

- Paraphrases the thesis statement →
- Can make an evaluation or recommendation, or may indicate the implications that follow the conclusion →



The conclusion:

- often refers back to the question.
- never introduces new ideas.

CLARIFYING ACADEMIC TEXT CONVENTIONS

In conjunction with broad outlines, such as those presented in the previous section, conventions of particular text types may also be demonstrated by using texts annotated with lecturer comments. Whole texts or sections of texts can be culled from the work of previous students or developed by the lecturer to model key features of particular text types or to illustrate expectations for certain assessment criteria.

Example 2.6 (on next page), from an Engineering and Industrial Design resource book, highlights the text conventions of an annotated bibliography. Set as an assessment task, it requires students to produce a series of short reviews, or 'annotations', of research articles. To help students recognise the text type's key features, the left column presents the model annotation, while the right aligns the lecturer comments with its conventions.

example

EXAMPLE 2.6 An entry for an annotated bibliography with lecturer comments

MODEL ANNOTATION	LECTURER COMMENTS
<p>Holmgren, D 2004, 'The essence of permaculture', in <i>Permaculture: Principles and pathways beyond sustainability</i>, Holmgren Design Services, Victoria.</p>	<p>The annotation begins with the citation, which includes the full bibliographic details, using the Harvard system of referencing.</p>
<p>In the chapter, 'The essence of permaculture' from his book, <i>Permaculture: Principles and pathways beyond sustainability</i>, Holmgren, a co-originator of the concept of permaculture, highlights its importance as an organising framework for enabling a sustainable future. He claims that a 'cultural revolution' is needed to be able to live within the ecological limits of the planet, and that permaculture provides a means for enabling this.</p>	<p>The summary section follows. Notice how the introductory sentences briefly set the context for the reader by providing the author's name, chapter and book titles, along with the author's purpose and thesis/main argument.</p>
<p>Holmgren acknowledges the value of practical experience and skills, and claims that in tandem with this, permaculture can be a part of the process of moving to sustainable situations. Permaculture accounts for the complexity of factors that arise in finding ways to introduce more sustainable ways of living. Holmgren claims that, by necessity, strategies and techniques will be adopted as 'natural and obvious ways to live within ecological limits' (p.4).</p>	<p>The body is made up of paragraphs that are logically organised into summary and evaluation sections; each paragraph is clearly structured with topic and supporting sentences (ie each topic sentence includes the main idea of the paragraph).</p> <p>The summary paragraphs outline the supporting evidence for the author's main argument.</p>

MODEL ANNOTATION	COMMENTS
<p>Holmgren describes permaculture as moving historically from a focus on land and nature to other interconnected aspects such as physical resources, energy sources and human organisation. He considers that these factors, combined with the ethical and design principles of permaculture, have application from the personal to the global.</p>	<p>Notice how at the beginnings of sentences the author is often mentioned; this tells the reader that the main ideas are still being summarised and that the writer of the annotation clearly presents the information as Holmgren's, and not as her own.</p>
<p>Holmgren places permaculture conceptually within ecological science and systems theory and suggests its relevance across a range of contexts and cultures. He discusses the factors that have impeded the spread of permaculture, particularly its innate challenge to the paradigm of economic growth. However, rather than focussing on these, he recognises the need to focus on opportunities.</p>	<p>The summary also reflects the writer's interpretation of Holmgren's attitude towards his material. This is achieved by choices made in reporting verbs. Such verbs vary in strength: NEUTRAL: <i>describes</i>, SPECULATIVE: <i>suggests</i>, STRONG: <i>claims</i>.</p>
<p>Holmgren discusses the ethical and design principles of permaculture, which are derived from his observation of nature and research into pre-industrial societies. The ethical principles relate to 'care for the earth, care for people and fair share' (p. 2). He points out that his design principles, which are situated in a systems theory framework, vary from other permaculture practitioners. He describes the principles as 'simply thinking tools to assist us in identifying, designing and evolving design solutions' (p. 3).</p>	<p>The writer summarises the main points using mostly her own words; direct quotes are short, and cited with single quotation marks and page numbers.</p> <p>Notice how the author's ideas are objectively reported with no subjective opinion present.</p>
<p>Due to Holmgren's credentials and scholarly approach this would seem to be a credible text. Holmgren is a recognised expert in the field of permaculture, which he has been immersed in since the 1970s. He has written a number of texts on the subject and has taken a more conceptual approach to his work than Bill Mollison, with whom he originated permaculture. The text is referenced and he acknowledges the influence of other experts in related fields. Although the text is strongly critical of economic growth and consumerism, and Holmgren makes some sweeping critical comments about the causes of the current ecological crisis, most of the text is focussed on explaining the tenets of permaculture.</p>	<p>The evaluation section begins here. Broadly speaking, it is for you to say what you think about the work/author, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how convinced you are by the arguments/author • what the work's strengths and weaknesses are <p>Notice how in these paragraphs the writer's comments focus on Holmgren rather than his ideas, and how the language used indicates the strength of the writer's opinions about the work/author.</p>

MODEL ANNOTATION	LECTURER COMMENTS
<p>This text is relevant to the team project of designing a garden based on permaculture techniques because it provides an understanding of the basis of permaculture and the principles behind it. It explains that permaculture is about much more than just designing and planting a garden and that its effectiveness is due to taking both culture and nature into account.</p>	<p>The final comment discusses the relevance of the text to the project and how exactly this will feed in to the team report; eg by helping with the ethical approach to the topic, and explaining why.</p>

Source: Engineering and Industrial Design Resource Book, School of Engineering, UWS

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES

The increasingly inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of degree programs means that more students have to manage writing expectations in several different discipline areas (Bayham, 2001; Coffin et al., 2003; Lea & Street, 1998). To help students recognise and produce the kinds of writing that are valued in particular disciplinary contexts, annotated whole texts or sections of texts that exemplify good practice, or illustrate particular assessment criteria, can be developed from the work of previous students.

Examples 2.7 and 2.8 (on following pages) present four such annotated texts from student writing. Example 2.7 compares two introductions – one from a Multiliteracies (Early Childhood) essay; the other, from an English for Academic Purposes (English Language) essay.

Example 2.8 compares the conclusions from these essays. Each text draws out the significant features that meet writing expectations for the texts' respective disciplines. One notable difference between these expectations relates to the inclusion of references in introductions and conclusions – with Multiliteracies it is appropriate to include references; with English for Academic Purposes, it is not.

examples

EXAMPLE 2.7 Two introductions from different disciplines**1 STUDENT INTRODUCTION – MULTILITERACIES**

The concept of literacy is changing and it is recognised that, currently, the literacy experiences of many children are connected to their interactions with popular media culture. One of the key issues related to this topic is the argument that many children develop literacy understanding as they interact with popular media culture (Beecher & Arthur, 2001). A second issue is that when early childhood settings and schools integrate texts from daily life, children are able to see the ways in which literacy is part of everyday social practices (Rowan, Knoble, Bigum, & Lankshear, 2002). Consequently, the third issue is situated in the discussion that early childhood settings and schools need to find ways of creating greater congruence between the everyday literacies of children's families and communities and school literacies. Alloway et al. (2002) suggest that the use of popular media culture provides opportunities for children to display expertise in the classroom in ways that traditional materials generally do not.

The introductory paragraph introduces the topic explicitly and identifies three key issues.

Each point is supported by reference to readings.

The introduction prepares the reader for what to expect in the body of the topic's analysis.

Source: Multiliteracies Learning Guide, School of Education, UWS

2 STUDENT INTRODUCTION – ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Introductory paragraph adequately prepares reader for what is to follow

Note: Quotes should not be included in an introduction unless defining key terms in the question. This quote, therefore, is superfluous, and would be better used as supporting evidence in a body paragraph

Effective communication is an essential element of the teaching profession. The essence of a teacher's occupation is to successfully impart and convey information to students of varying socio-cultural backgrounds, many with pre-existing expectations of communication styles. The importance of the success rate of communicating cross-culturally is extremely high for contemporary teachers, and the amount of educational effect a teacher has on their pupils depends on how aware the teacher is of the students' academic and socio-cultural background, and of the many ways to communicate to students. In fact, cross-cultural competence is considered a 'social skill required almost everywhere and in all situations other than in monocultural settings' (LeRoux, 2002, p.41), and these communicative skills are learned in part in the socio-academic environment of primary schools. This essay will support the importance of effective cross-cultural communication in the Australian field of primary education, by analysing cultures based on generational and ethnic traits, as well as outlining the benefits of multimodal communicative methods, such as nonverbal communication.

General statements – orients reader to topic

Thesis – presents writer's position on topic

Scope – sets boundaries of essay

Outline – predicts how essay will unfold

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS.

EXAMPLE 2.8 Two conclusions from different disciplines

1 STUDENT CONCLUSION – MULTILITERACIES

The analysis of the topic has shown that critical literacy changes constantly in children's social contexts. Therefore, this raises several issues and implications which require ongoing attention from early childhood educators for effective outcomes. Alvermann and Hagood (2000) claim that linking fandom with critical media literacy in classrooms has a possibility of encouraging interest in school literacy practices. This can be practised while expanding and providing opportunities for teachers and children to utilise the classroom context as becoming a place where meaning can be drawn from a vast range of popular culture texts. Mitchell (2006) argues that exposing children to alternative perspectives portrayed in the alternative press rather than the mainstream press enables them to question their worlds. This exposure encourages children to make their "everyday worlds problematic", and to rewrite their worlds when they are curious to learn more about society and themselves (Mitchell, 2006). Such early interactions could prove to be beneficial in the later stages of life which require strong critiquing abilities (Reid, 2003). It is important that cultural and social backgrounds must be incorporated with critical literacy practices in every classroom (Knobel & Healey, 1998). It must be remembered by educators and practitioners that needs and critiquing abilities of every individual child vary in the context of social literacy practices. Thus, it is essential for early childhood educators and practitioners to collaborate with parents and families to incorporate literacy practices into a school curriculum that teaches for critical literacy.

Key findings of the essay regarding alternative perspectives of media, the critiquing abilities of children, and the influence of cultural & social backgrounds are synthesised.

References for key points are acknowledged.

Specific points raised regarding critical literacy are linked to the broader context for all early childhood educators.

The writer provides a message from the synthesis.

Source: Multiliteracies Learning Guide, School of Education, UWS

2 STUDENT CONCLUSION – ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Conclusion effectively and logically draws together ideas developed in the body paragraphs, and makes a judgment in response to the topic

Connectors show clear and logical links between ideas and sentences; each connector indicates how a sentence relates to the one before

In sum, generational and ethnocentric cultural differences are two important examples of cross-cultural divisions that teachers must successfully overcome in order to maximise student education. **Whilst** there are specific benefits for nonverbal communication in the classroom, it is essential that student ethnicity and associated norms be observed when teachers communicate. The importance of successful cross-cultural communication, **therefore**, is extremely high in the profession of teaching. **In order to** capitalise on the educational potential, it is imperative that teachers aim to achieve as little miscommunication through cultural difference as possible. **Since** communication must cross many cultural bounds, and in such a profession based on successful communication, for a teacher to be unaware of and ineffective at multimodal communication methods, this would negate the point of their position as an educator. **Thus**, a high level of importance is placed on cross-cultural communication and its effective implementation.

Restatement of main points

Restatement of thesis

Final comment sums up the essay with an overall evaluation, and leaves the reader by reinforcing the thesis

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS.

Teaching academic conventions

The learning, thinking and writing practices addressed in previous sections of this toolkit are supported by academic conventions for integrating evidence and acknowledging borrowed content. These conventions can seem arbitrary or mysterious to those with a limited understanding of how professional scholars use academic discourse to analyse and test the propositions or “knowledge claims” made in published research (Penrose & Geisler, 1994, p. 509).

INTEGRATING EVIDENCE

Citing evidence in academic writing is not only a matter of documenting sources and giving due credit. By choosing among different citation options, writers also construct their stance in relation to the claims they incorporate from these sources (Neville & Buckingham, 1997; Hyland, 1999; Hendricks & Quinn, 2000; Thompson & Tribble, 2001; Thompson, 2003). The following examples can be used to show how integrating evidence in academic writing involves positioning and interpreting source material to develop a coherent argument throughout the text.

Example 3.1 (on page 43), an excerpt taken from a Masters of Public Health academic skills session, presents alternatives to introduce another author's work into a text, and language choices to convey the writer's interpretation of the cited author's attitude towards their material.

Examples 3.2 and 3.3 (on pages 45 and 46 respectively), extracts from English for Academic Purposes lecture materials, illustrate in different ways the use of voice to develop a claim. Example 3.2 contains an annotated paragraph which explains how the writer's voice leads the argument, while Example 3.3 compares two paragraphs – one with a series of unanalysed quotations, the other with sources that support a claim.

EXAMPLE 3.1 Introducing evidence into a text**IN-TEXT CITATIONS**

Whenever you use the ideas of others, you need to give proper credit to the author of those ideas. Therefore, always cite your sources in text by providing the author-year information. (This information also provides a link to the full bibliographic details in the reference list at the end of your work.)

There are a number of ways to refer to another's ideas in your text, and each time you do, you need make choices about what you want the initial focus of a sentence to be – the information or the writer.

TASK 1

Compare the three sentences below. Discuss why the writer may have chosen to organise the same information in these three different ways.

1. I think that Bloggs' (2007) explanation of the writing process provides a useful basis for understanding how to plan an assignment.

- Here, the writer 'I' is the subject, the writer's actual opinion follows. Therefore, in this sentence, the writer takes the focus.

2. Bloggs' (2007) explanation of the writing process provides a useful basis for understanding how to plan an assignment.

- Here, Bloggs and Bloggs' theory take the focus. The writer of the text has disappeared. Therefore, when you want to make the author an explicit part of your argument or explanation, incorporate the name as part of your sentence. The year (and page number, if a direct quote) is placed in brackets directly after.

3. Understanding how to plan an assignment emerges from research on the writing process (Bloggs, 2007).

- Now the issue or information takes the focus; the author of the theory is given less prominence with the author's name placed in brackets along with the year (and page number if a direct quote) at the end of the sentence. Again, the writer of the text has disappeared.

(Morley-Warner, 2001, p. 44)

REPORTING VERBS

Another important factor to consider when citing your sources is to choose an appropriate reporting verb. For example:

Bloggs (2007) suggests that . . .

Bloggs (2007) argues that . . .

These verbs communicate your interpretation of the quoted author's attitude towards their material. Accordingly, such verbs can vary in strength. For instance, 'to suggest' is much weaker and more tentative than 'to argue'. It is important, therefore, to interpret the writer's ideas accurately and choose a reporting verb that reflects this understanding.

The table below contains examples of reporting verbs, which are classified in terms of their function and strength.

FUNCTION AND STRENGTH	EXAMPLES OF REPORTING VERBS
NEUTRAL	
These verbs are used to say what the writer describes factually, refers to, demonstrates, discusses, and explains in terms of their methodology.	describe, show, reveal, study, demonstrate, note, point out, indicate, report, observe, assume, take into consideration, examine, go on to say that, state, believe (unless this is a strong belief) mention, find
TENTATIVE	
These verbs are used to say what the writer suggests or speculates on (without being absolutely certain).	suggest, speculate, intimate, hypothesise, moot, imply, propose, recommend, posit, question the view, postulate
STRONG	
These verbs are used to say what the writer makes strong arguments and claims for.	argue, claim, emphasise, contend, maintain, assert, theorise, support the view that, deny, negate, refute, reject, challenge, strongly believe, counter the view/argument

(Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2008)

Source: Masters of Public Health, School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, UWS

EXAMPLE 3.2 Annotating a paragraph that uses evidence to support a claim**INTEGRATING EVIDENCE WITH YOUR OWN COMMENTS**

Evidence should not be used by itself to make a point. Each paragraph should be a balance between your own points and comments and the supporting evidence.

It would not be appropriate, for example, if quotes and paraphrases from other sources made up most of your essay. Your own comments may come in the form of explanations for the evidence, reasons, links, critical commentary or examples.

Your voice needs to lead your argument. As the writer you make the claim (your voice), which is then supported by the evidence. The text below provides an example of the evidence (highlighted text) supporting the points that the writer is making.

EXPRESSING YOUR OWN VOICE IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Supporting evidence is provided to validate writer's claim/opinion. →

The evidence here is used to support and elaborate on the claim. Paraphrased material is integrated into the paragraph as supporting evidence for the writer's claim. →

This comment indicates the writer's wider reading and an understanding of the contradictory argument. →

The inequity in the distribution of wealth in Australia is yet another indicator of Australia's lack of egalitarianism. In 1995, 20% of the Australian population owned 72.2% of Australia's wealth with the top 50% owning 92.1% (Raskall, 1998, p. 287). Such a significant skew in the distribution of wealth indicates that at least in terms of economics, there is an established class system in Australia. McGregor (1988) argues that Australian society can be categorised into three levels, the upper, middle and working classes. In addition, it has been shown that most Australians continue to remain in the class into which they were born (McGreggor, 1988), despite arguments about the ease of social mobility in Australian society (Fitzpatrick, 1994). The issue of class and its inherent inequity, however, is further compounded by factors such as race and gender within and across these class divisions.

The relative disadvantage of women with regard to their earnings and levels of asset ownership indicates that within classes there is further economic inequity based on gender.

← The topic sentence includes the writer's intended claim for this paragraph

← The writer's voice makes the significance of this evidence clear by linking it to the issue of *class*.

← Again, the writer's voice is clear. It creates links between this paragraph and the next on the issue of gender, the next aspect of the argument.

← New topic sentence introduces the writer's next claim using impersonal academic voice.

(UniLearning, 2000)

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS

EXAMPLE 3.3 Comparing two paragraphs that incorporate sources**USING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT AND DEVELOP CLAIMS**

...

Look at the two paragraphs below. Text A appears to be a collection of unanalysed quotations, whereas Text B uses sources to support a claim about an important aspect of reflection. Creating a context for these pieces of evidence, by contrasting and explaining instead of merely listing, results in a far more effective use of these sources.

TEXT A

Here, the focus is on what the authors say

According to Mezirow (1990, p. 5), reflection "is generally used as a synonym for higher-order mental processes". Reflection is the process of "turning thought back on action" (Schon, 1983, p. 50). Through reflection teachers "can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experience of a specialized practice" (Schon, 1983, p. 61).

TEXT B

Here, the focus is on ideas developing the argument

Reflection is a distinguishing feature of critical thinking about teaching. Although reflection is sometimes associated with "higher order mental processes" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 5), it might be more useful to emphasise its relationship to action. For Schon (1983), reflection is the process of "turning thought back on action" (p. 50). Without reflection, teaching practice can stagnate. Reflective teachers, however, can "surface and criticise the tacit understandings" (Schon, 1983, p. 61) that tend to make teaching routine and repetitive. These tacit understandings might include beliefs about what students are capable of learning and assumptions about how students learn. Thus, reflection looks forward as well as backward. It is oriented to practicality and change, not to undirected mental activity.

← claim

↔ quotations contrasted

↔ quotations explained

(UniStep: Academic skills guide, 2007)

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Many students plagiarise inadvertently. Few begin university with an adequate understanding of what constitutes plagiarism in the Western academic tradition, and how to avoid it in their work (Carroll, 2002; Emmerson, MacKay & Rees, 2005; Roig, 1997). Nor can it be assumed that students will develop competence in integrating and referencing sources appropriately without opportunities for explicit instruction and practise (Barret & Malcolm, 2006; Carroll & Appleton, 2001; Levin, 2003). However, students can be helped to gain control over these referencing conventions in a number of ways.

The two examples that follow – extracts from learning activities created for a Business Academic Skills unit – illustrate different approaches to developing students' confidence with academic writing conventions.

One approach, Example 3.4 (on next page), is to spend time in a session looking at acceptable and unacceptable paraphrasing, and to discuss with students reasons and strategies for avoiding inadvertent plagiarism in their written assessment tasks. In this activity, students are asked to imagine that they are writing a report on the major causes of water shortage in the world today, and that they have found a paragraph in a journal article containing information they want to use in their report. Then, in groups, students:

1. Read the original paragraph, and then each of the six paraphrased versions.
2. Decide which they think are acceptable and which are not, giving reasons for their choices.
3. Note how the 'voices' of both author and report writer have been used in each paragraph.

Another approach, Example 3.5 (on page 52), is to offer guided practise in making appropriate decisions about presenting a reference list. In this activity, students are invited to recognise certain features of a reference list, and to evaluate the appropriacy of sources for a particular assessment task from this list.

EXAMPLE 3.4 Identifying examples of plagiarism**ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE WAYS OF USING EVIDENCE****ORIGINAL PARAGRAPH**

Hughes, S. (2004). The coming water crisis. *Water Conservation*, 16 (2), 21-25.

Freshwater resources are being squandered due to pollution and the way in which we use water. Some two million tons of waste per day are pumped into rivers and lakes. This includes industrial and agricultural wastes, chemicals, and human waste. Human waste is a special problem, with only about 35 per cent of wastewater being treated in Asia, and about 14 per cent in Latin America. In Africa, the figure is even lower, where only a negligible percentage of treatment has been reported. Even in industrialised countries, sewage is not universally treated.

PARAPHRASED VERSION	YOUR COMMENT
<p>1 Freshwater resources are being squandered due to pollution and the way in which we use water. Some two million tons of waste per day are pumped into rivers and lakes. This includes industrial and agricultural wastes, chemicals, and human waste. Human waste is a special problem, with only about 35 per cent of wastewater being treated in Asia, and about 14 per cent in Latin America. In Africa, the figure is even lower, where only a negligible percentage of treatment has been reported. Even in industrialised countries, sewage is not universally treated.</p>	<p>This version is an exact copy of the original without any acknowledgement; so it <i>appears</i> to be the voice of the report writer.</p> <p>In other words it has been plagiarised, and therefore is unacceptable.</p>

PARAPHRASED VERSION	YOUR COMMENT
<p>2 Hughes (2004) points out that freshwater resources are being squandered due to pollution and the way in which we use water. Some two million tons of waste per day are pumped into rivers and lakes. This includes industrial and agricultural wastes, chemicals, and human waste. Human waste is a special problem, with only about 35 per cent of wastewater being treated in Asia, and about 14 per cent in Latin America. In Africa, the figure is even lower, with only a negligible percentage of treatment has been reported. Even in industrialised countries, sewage is not universally treated.</p>	<p>Although Hughes' voice has been acknowledged once, after two or three sentences, the reader cannot tell whether the voice is that of Hughes or the report writer.</p> <p>Also the wording is too close to the original.</p>
<p>3 According to Hughes (2004), freshwater resources are being squandered due to pollution and the way in which we use water. He states that some two million tons of industrial and agricultural wastes, chemicals, and human waste are pumped onto rivers and lakes everyday. He identifies human waste as a special problem, with only about 35 per cent of wastewater being treated in Asia, and about 14 per cent in Latin America. In Africa, the figure is even lower, where only a negligible percentage of treatment has been reported. Even in industrialised countries, sewage is not universally treated.</p>	<p>Hughes' voice is clearly identified but the report writer's voice is not 'heard'.</p> <p>Also the wording is too close to Hughes'.</p> <p>This could be viewed as plagiarism, and therefore is not acceptable.</p>
<p>4 According to Hughes (2004), freshwater resources are being squandered due to pollution. For example, two million tons of waste is pumped into waterways every day. He points out that only about 35 per cent of waste-water is treated in Asia, about 14 per cent in Latin America and only a negligible proportion in Africa. Even in industrialised countries, sewage is not universally treated.</p>	<p>Here, information has been omitted, but the words are still Hughes'. It is not a real summary as it is too close to the original. Again, the report writer's voice is not present.</p> <p>So, this is not acceptable.</p>
<p>5 Pollution of freshwater sources by industrial and agricultural wastes is a major cause of the water crisis. Even more important is the problem of human waste (Hughes, 2004). In the developing world, the amount of wastewater that is treated ranges from 35 per cent in Asia to almost none in Africa. A number of industrialised countries also do not treat their wastewater.</p>	<p>Here, the claim is presented in the writer's voice and supported by specific information from Hughes. This information is adequately rephrased in the writer's own words.</p> <p>This version is acceptable.</p>

PARAPHRASED VERSION	YOUR COMMENT
6 While industrialised and agricultural wastes are major sources of freshwater pollution, human waste is of even greater concern. Hughes (2004) states that in the developing world, the amount of wastewater that is treated ranges from 35 per cent in Asia to almost none in Africa. He also points out that not all industrialised countries treat their wastewater.	Again, the report writer's voice introduces the claim, which is supported by Hughes's voice. The information is appropriately summarised. This version is acceptable.

(Brick, 2006, pp. 123-124)

Source: Business Academic Skills, School of Marketing, UWS.

EXAMPLE 3.5 Identifying citing conventions of a reference list

THE REFERENCE LIST

Imagine that you have written a report on the following topic:

WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION? IN WHAT WAYS DO DIFFERING CONCEPTS OF MANAGEMENT IMPACT ON THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS INTERNATIONALLY?

All the references included in this report are cited in the reference list below.

REFERENCES

Gudykunst, W & Kim, YY (eds) 1992, *Readings on communicating with strangers*, McGraw Hill, New York.

Hodgetts, R, Luthans, F & Doh, J 2005, *International management culture, strategy and behaviour*, 6th edn, McGraw Hill, Boston.

Barna, LA 1997, 'Stumbling blocks in intercultural communication', in L Samovar & R Porter (eds) *Intercultural communication: A reader*, 8th edn, Wadsworth Publishing, California.

Bjorkman, I & Schaap, A 1994, 'Outsiders in the Middle Kingdom: Expatriate manager in Chinese-Western joint ventures', *European Journal of Management*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 147-153.

Faure, G 2000, 'Negotiations to set up joint ventures in China', *International Negotiation*, vol. 5, no 1.

Harris, H & Kumra, S 2000, 'International manager development: Cross-cultural training in highly diverse environments', *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 19, no. 7.

Chen, GM & Chung J 1994, 'The five Asian dragons: Management behaviours and organisational communication', *Communication Quarterly*, Spring, pp. 93-105.

Study the reference list on the previous page, and then, in your groups, answer the following questions:

1. Which of the publications on this list are books? How can you tell?

- The first three titles are books.
- Italicised font is used to indicate book/journal/website titles. Also, only the first word in book/chapter/journal article titles is capitalised.

2. Which are edited collections? Why acknowledge editors?

- Gudykunst, W & Kim YY (eds.) 1992 . . .
- L Samovar & R Proter (eds.) . . .
- When the role of an editor is significant this needs to be acknowledged.
Note: Edited publications are referred to in-text thus: (eds. Gudykunst & Kim 1992) or Gudykunst and Kim (ed. 1992) indicate that . . .

3. Which are journal articles? How can you tell?

- The last four entries are journal articles
Note: Single quotes are used for article titles (and chapter titles in books). Also, for journal titles (unlike book titles), maximal capitalisation is used.

4. Arrange the titles in the order in which you would present them in the final draft of your report. Be ready to explain why.

The reference list is arranged:

- in alphabetical order according to the author's surname for quick location. If there is no author, then it is listed alphabetically according to either organisation (eg World Health Organisation) or publication title.
- into one list regardless of whether the source's origin is printed or electronic.

Note: Numbers, letters or bullet points do not begin each entry.

5. Are there any publications on the list which you probably shouldn't have included in the report? Why or why not?

- You probably shouldn't have included Faure's article, as it deals with negotiations rather than with management.

(Brick, 2006, pp. 93-94)

Supporting independent learning

As adult learners, students need to take control of their learning, and ensure their own success. This means that in addition to learning a body of knowledge about a subject, students also need to develop independence in organising and monitoring their program of study, and mastering specific academic skills.

Students can be helped to develop their independent learning in a number of ways. One is to supplement the content of Learning Guides with information about the range of on-line resources and face to face workshops on academic literacy and mathematics / numeracy offered by the Student Learning Unit (SLU).

Another is to include material that explains which of these support resources or services is most relevant to addressing common student learning needs in a unit or course. The following three examples demonstrate different approaches to using Learning Guides to support independent learning.

Example 4.1 (on page 57), taken from the School of Accounting's Learning Guide, gives an overview of the online academic literacy and mathematics resources available through the Student Learning Unit website.

Example 4.2 (on page 59), based on a resource developed for the School of Social Science unit – Introduction to the Psychology of Health, contains a list of common mistakes in assignment writing. Each of these 'common mistakes' is aligned with appropriate face to face workshops offered by the SLU to help students to choose topics most relevant to their needs.

Example 4.3 (on page 60) is part of a diagnostic assessment task for the unit English for Academic Purposes. It is designed to give students early feedback on their writing so that they can focus their learning in the unit. Support for this involves aligning feedback to relevant online resources or tutorial / lecture topics to develop specific academic skills.

EXAMPLE 4.1 Online study skills support**STUDY SKILLS SUPPORT (LITERACY AND NUMERACY)**

As noted in the 'Introduction' to this learning guide, a key focus of your first semester at University should be developing the skills and techniques of an effective learner at University level. The UWS Student Learning Unit (SLU) offers a range of services that you can use to assist in your smooth transition to the University learning environment. This includes a range of online resources which are easy and free to access and use to support your study program. You should visit SLU's 'Online Study Resources' page at the following address:

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/online_study_resources

From there, you can access resources for support with 'Language and Learning Links' and 'Improve Your Maths'. More details on each of these are provided below.

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING LINKS

From the 'Online Study Resources' page, follow the links to the 'Language and Learning Links' website, where you will be able to download the comprehensive *UniStep: Academic Skills Guide*, which is an excellent resource. Sections of the guide will be referred to in the study tips throughout this Learning Guide. It is strongly recommended that you obtain a copy of SLU's *Academic Skills Guide* and use it as you identify areas where you need additional support and assistance in coping with University study.

From this website, you can also access additional links to online guides and interactive tutorials from other universities on the following topics:

- assignment preparation
- academic reading
- academic writing
- annotated bibliographies
- case studies
- critical reviews
- essay writing
- journal writing
- literature reviews
- report writing
- postgraduate writing
- grammar
- exams
- oral presentations
- study skills

IMPROVE YOUR MATHS

Obviously, accounting is an area that requires skills working with numbers, and the UWS Student Learning Unit also offers assistance with numeracy. So, from the 'Online Study Resources' page, follow the links to 'Improve Your Maths', where you will be able to access a range of resources to help you with basic maths, calculus and statistics. This website also includes quizzes, booklets and many useful links for specific areas of mathematics.

Accounting requires a sound grasp of basic mathematics as well as algebra, problem solving and percentages. Since many students in this unit struggle with these areas, and if you think you need to brush up on your maths skills, then make an effort to access the resources and assistance that you require early in the semester.

Source: Accounting Information for Managers Learning Guide, School of Accounting, UWS

EXAMPLE 4.2 Support workshops for common mistakes in assignment writing**COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID IN ASSIGNMENT WRITING**

After reflecting on your assignment feedback from last semester, you might consider attending workshops relevant to areas identified as needing improvement.

These workshops, offered by the Student Learning Unit (SLU), are generally run in the first few weeks of semester. However, since not all workshops are available every semester or on every campus, you will need to check SLU's website at the following link for further information.

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/study_skills_workshops

COMMON MISTAKES AND SUPPORT WORKSHOPS

Below is a list of common mistakes typically found in assignment writing and the relevant workshops that could help to address them.

COMMON MISTAKE	RELEVANT WORKSHOPS
Drifting off the topic	ASSIGNMENT PREPARATION 2 hours
	ESSAY WRITING 6 hours (Sat)
Poor organisation of material	ESSAY STRUCTURE 2 hours
	ESSAY WRITING 6 hours (Sat)
Poor expression	DEVELOPING YOUR WRITING 2 hours/week (Individual attention is often over 4 weeks possible due to low attendance)
Making unsubstantiated statements	REFERENCING 2 hours
	ESSAY WRITING 6 hours (Sat)
Not making enough use of readings	ASSIGNMENT PREPARATION 2 hours
	ESSAY WRITING 6 hours (Sat)
Failing to analyse	CRITICAL THINKING 2 hours
	ESSAY WRITING 6 hours (Sat)

Source: Introduction to the Psychology of Health, School of Social Sciences, UWS

EXAMPLE 4.3 Feedback aligned with academic skills support resources**UNGRADED SHORT ESSAY FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT**

CRITERIA	FEEDBACK	SUPPORT
Use of source material		
<p>Relevant information selected</p> <p>Appropriate integration of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate in-text referencing (APA) • Appropriate use of paraphrasing or quotation • Appropriate use of reporting conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of evidence from <i>Eunson (2005)</i> to support and develop claims 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See Week 3 tutorial materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citing sources 2. Read Week 3 online lecture notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing overview
Structure & development of essay		
<p>Appropriate generic structure:</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation to topic • thesis statement • preview <p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logical paragraph sequence • appropriate paragraph structure with topic and supporting sentences • logical development of argument within paragraphs <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restatement of thesis • summary of main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfocused & disconnected – jumps from <i>society in general to refugees</i> • Appropriate structure, but argument development repetitious or circular in places (see feedback on text) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See tutorial materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing analytically • Essay writing • Critical thinking • Developing an argument 2. Review Week 10 online lecture notes on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic argument and evidence 3. See attached 'Academic writing support resources' sheet
Academic writing style		
<p>Clarity of expression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coherent linking of ideas, sentences and paragraphs • appropriate (impersonal, abstract, formal) and precise language • sound grammatical knowledge at clause and sentence level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing in places – repetition and uncertain reference words (eg 'this') • Avoid 'you' – use third person and more formal language (eg 'much' rather than 'a lot of') • Need to work on sentence structure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Weeks 4 & 5 lecture notes on grammar 2. See attached 'Academic writing support resources' sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic writing style • Sentences

ACADEMIC WRITING SUPPORT RESOURCES

Language and Learning Links is the Student Learning Unit's (SLU) gateway to academic writing and study skills resources. It includes links to SLU's own extensive resource – *UniStep: Academic skills guide* – and a selection of the best online guides and interactive tutorials from other university learning centres around Australia.

Follow the link below to SLU's 'Online Study Resources' page and from there sign in to vUWS through 'Language and Learning Links'.

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/online_study_resources

RECOMMENDED LINKS

From the 'Language and Learning Links' website, you can access the following links to other universities' resources to help you improve your academic writing.

Note: Items with a star are highly recommended.

ASSIGNMENT PREPARATION	*	understanding assignment questions
	*	researching to develop a point of view
ACADEMIC WRITING	*	academic writing style
	*	writing effectively
	*	paragraphs
	*	referring to sources
		paraphrasing
ESSAY WRITING	*	essay writing
GRAMMAR	*	sentences
		punctuation

Source: English for Academic Purposes, School of Humanities and Languages, UWS

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Directory

To enquire about support from the Student Learning Unit to develop or adapt Learning Guide resources, contact:

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To explore a range of practical ideas that can be adapted for and incorporated into a particular discipline's unit Learning Guide, visit the SLU's Online Study Resources page at:

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/online_study_resources

This web page contains links to the following websites:

- LANGUAGE AND LEARNING LINKS
- IMPROVE YOUR MATHS
- ACADEMIC WRITING FOR POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK
- CRITICAL THINKING
- WRITING IN HEALTH SCIENCES AND NURSING

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Student Learning Unit
January 2009