



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

STYLE GUIDE

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1. REFERENCING STYLE:

'Referencing style' refers to a formal, recognised system for producing and presenting the sources of information you use within the body of your text (essay, paper, report), listed in your reference list (bibliography). Referencing is a standard practice at University.

In brief, this means that whenever you write assignments that require research (i.e. finding and using information from other sources), you must reference these sources (resources) in your writings. These sources can include books, newspapers, magazines and journal articles, items from the Internet, visual material (e.g. pictures, films, documentaries), statistical information and diagrams (not a complete list - see details in the 'Harvard Referencing Style Guide' section 1.a.).

UWS places great emphasis on clear and correct referencing as evidence of academic rigour and honesty. The Harvard Reference System is the reference style nominated by the School of Social Sciences, but variations are allowed at the digression of individual unit co-ordinators.

a) Harvard Referencing Style Guide – University of Western Sydney Library.

The following Guide has been reproduced with permission from the UWS Library and can be found at:

http://library.uws.edu.au/FILES/cite_Harvard.pdf

b) Avoid plagiarism: the need to reference.

It is essential to reference all your sources correctly, in order to avoid any implication of **plagiarism and/or collusion**. The term 'plagiarism' derives from the Latin term *plagiare*, which means 'kidnap'. It refers to the use of another person's writings, ideas and works. This use applies to both published and unpublished material and includes the use of the work by another student, as well as work you have previously submitted in another unit. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offence, and the University of Western Sydney enforces harsh penalties for those found guilty. The penalty if found guilty of plagiarism range from a Fail mark in the unit to suspension from the University for a set period. These penalties are determined according to the severity of the act and the previous record of the student involved. These penalties are determined by members of staff, the School and in accordance with **the Student Academic Misconduct Policy**. It is highly recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University's Student Academic Misconduct Policy on plagiarism, collusion and cheating, found at:

<http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00051>

It is not uncommon that students plagiarise inadvertently (e.g. claim ‘I forgot to use quotation marks’ or ‘I did not realise that I was copying a quote’), but you must keep in mind that even unintentional misuse of sources (see examples below) can result in allegation of plagiarism under the University policy. At the same time, it is not uncommon that first year university students lack adequate knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Hence, read carefully through the following points on the reasons for the need to reference your sources.

i) To avoid plagiarism

It is essential to acknowledge the work of others. Any time you rely on ideas, research, theories or descriptions that other people have produced, you must say who you got it from and supply details so that anyone reading your work can check the original. If you do not do so, in academic, commercial and professional circles it is seen as taking credit for that work yourself. This is a type of stealing or cheating.

ii) To substantiate points

In academic writing anything you say must be supported by research, theories or knowledge sourced from readings. It is not acceptable to make statements or assertions without evidence, examples or arguments to back them up. Sadly, in academic writing, no one is interested in your unsubstantiated opinion.

iii) To enable your readers to find your sources

If someone reading your work wants to check that you are citing sources fairly, or they are just interested in finding out more about what the authors have to say, an accurate reference allows them to locate the item and read it for themselves.

iv) To demonstrate use of set readings

One of the marking criteria for assignments in all unit is the use of set readings (see section 2. b. By basing your points on these and carefully providing references you make clear to the marker your level of understanding and ability to appropriately use the prescribed readings.

v) To demonstrate your grasp of the topic to your audience

It is essential that you consider carefully the audience you are writing for and that the reader must be able to detect your own voice in your writings. You can only achieve this by indicating very clearly all material which is not yours (full reference), and that you can draw critical and reflective points and solid observations from these sources in your own words.

vi) Consider the importance of your signature

All assessment items (essays) require a cover sheet, which will include a section with a declaration regarding the nature of your source, calling for your signature. Below is an example of such a declaration, which should indicate clearly areas of concern.

DECLARATION

I hold a copy of this assignment that I can produce if the original is lost or damaged.

*I hereby certify that **no part** of this assignment/product **has been copied** from any other student's work or from any other source **except where due acknowledgement is made in the assignment**. No part of this assignment/product has been written/produced for me by another person except where such collaboration has been authorised by the subject lecturer/tutor concerned.*

Signature:

Note: An examiner or lecturer/tutor has the right not to mark this assignment if the above declaration has not been signed)

c) Avoid plagiarism: Using 'Turnitin'

The School of Social Sciences uses the text-matching software **Turnitin** to assist students to identify incorrect paraphrasing and referencing within their written work. In the box below you will find a brief explanation of Turnitin, as a tool to improve your academic writing. Your Learning Guide for each unit will specify the requirements for the use of Turnitin for each assignment and provide detailed information of how to access the system (usually via vUWS¹). The full guidelines can be found at:

<http://library.uws.edu.au/turnitin.php>

When you read the text below, keep in mind the two key roles which Turnitin can play in your written work:

- 1) The **Originality Report** will indicate the extent of matches your work has to other text, it will pinpoint the sources and indicate need for in-text referencing.
- 2) The **Originality Report** will indicate sections (sentences/paragraphs) where your own text (paraphrasing) is too close to the original source(s). Hence, you will need to re-work these sections, ensure that you demonstrate your own grasp on the topic and provide full in-text referencing.

¹ See information on vUWS in Section 3.a. "E-learning (vUWS).

Turnitin: A Tool to Improve Academic Writing

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin from iParadigms is an online web-based text-matching software that identifies and reports on similarities between documents and is widely utilised as a **tool to improve academic writing skills**.

Turnitin compares electronically submitted papers against electronic text from a range of sources including:

- Text on publicly accessible internet sites (over 4.5 billion www pages)
- Proprietary databases (e.g. Gale e-publications; ProQuest databases, Emerald, selected electronic books)
- Previously submitted student papers (10 mill +)
- Assignments obtained from 'paper mills' (internet sites offering assignments / papers for sale e.g. cheathouse.com, researchpaper.com)

How does Turnitin work?

Academics and / or students may submit documents through the institutional electronic content management system i.e. vUWS. In many institutions Turnitin is used as a **pre-assessment filtering tool** with students directly lodging assessments for review prior to final submission.

Results are returned in the form of colour-coded customised **Originality Reports** in which any text matches identified are highlighted and linked to their source. The Reports allow students and teaching staff to interpret similarity matches and determine whether plagiarism may have occurred.

Turnitin aims to develop student academic and writing skills by promoting awareness of plagiarism and strategies for avoiding inappropriate use of other's work. Students find the Originality Report useful for editing papers that include excessive direct quotes and paraphrases. Academics find the Originality reports useful as a tool to guide students in correct citation practices and highlight potential need for greater originality in student work.

<http://library.uws.edu.au/turnitin.php> - text underline and italics added)

d) Some common forms of plagiarism.

Keep in mind that most of the information and ideas you wish to use in your writings have sources outside of yourself and these need to be recognised. The following are some of the most common forms of misuse of sources, i.e. plagiarism:

i) **Failing to use quotation marks.** This applies to any direct quotation of material, *verbatim* (word for word), without the use of quotation marks. All direct quotes must have quotation marks and must include page number(s). According to the Harvard Referencing Style Guide (see above, under 'In-text citation: Referencing sources within the text'), you use quotation marks for quotes with fewer than 30

words. When the quote exceeds 30 words, you display it in a double-spaced, indented block.

ii) **Close paraphrasing/failing to acknowledge other peoples' ideas.** This refers to any use of parts of your sources which are presented with wording very similar to the original text(s). You must provide full reference to the(se) source(s) as you are drawing on the ideas and claims of another person(s).

iii) **Citing sources which have not been consulted.** This refers to the use of information and/or ideas retrieved through 'secondary sources' (see 'Referencing secondary sources' in section a) above).

iv) **Failing to recognise key sentences/concepts.** When you take key sentences/concepts from a source, even if you make some alterations, you must provide full reference. This is a very common form of plagiarism, which indicates the fact that it is not always easy to put another writer's ideas into your own words (you will find guidelines to overcome this common problem in the 'Essay Writing' section below).

The following examples on plagiarism and paraphrasing are taken from:

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/plagiarism/>

There are three common examples provide below. Keep in mind that there are countless examples to be found, both online (provided by UWS and other Universities) and in some of the sources provided in the reference list. The examples below draw on a reputable source and provide you with guidance about how to use your sources and when you need to reference.

Text example 1

Original source (text)

Alvin Kernan, *The Playwright as Magician*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. pp. 102–103.

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Verbatim plagiarism, or unacknowledged direct quotation (lifted passages are underlined)

Almost all of Shakespeare's Hamlet can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, there is Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" that he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. When Hamlet enters his mother's room, he holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Comment for example I

Aside from an opening sentence loosely adapted from the original and reworded more simply, this entire passage is taken almost word-for-word from the source. The few small alterations of the source do not relieve the writer of the responsibility to attribute these words to their original author, Alvin Kernan. A passage from a source may be worth quoting at length if it makes a point precisely or elegantly. In such cases, copy the passage exactly, place it in quotation marks, and cite the author.

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/plagiarism/>

Text example 2

Original source (text)

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in *Hamlet* becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Lifting selected passages and phrases without proper acknowledgment (lifted passages are underlined)

Almost all of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, in Act 1, Hamlet adopts a pretense of madness that he uses to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from discovering his mission to revenge his father's murder. He also presents truth by means of a show when he compares the portraits of Gertrude's two husbands in order to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made. And when he leaps in Ophelia's open grave ranting in high heroic terms, Hamlet is acting out the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Comment for example 2

This passage, in content and structure, is taken wholesale from the source. Although the writer has rewritten much of the paragraph, and fewer phrases are lifted verbatim from the source, this is a clear example of plagiarism. Inserting even short phrases from the source into a new sentence still requires placing quotations around the borrowed words and citing the author. If even one phrase is good enough to borrow, it must be properly set off by quotation marks. In the case above, if the writer had rewritten the entire paragraph and used only Alvin Kernan's phrase "high heroic terms" without properly quoting and acknowledging its source, the writer would have plagiarized.

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/plagiarism/>

Text example 3

Original source (text)

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in Hamlet becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Paraphrasing the text while maintaining the basic paragraph and sentence structure

Almost all of Shakespeare's Hamlet can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, in Act 1, Hamlet pretends to be insane in order to make sure his enemies do not discover his mission to revenge his father's murder. The theme is even more obvious when Hamlet compares the pictures of his mother's two husbands to show her what a bad choice she has made, using their images to reveal the truth. Also, when he jumps into Ophelia's grave, hurling his challenge to Laertes, Hamlet demonstrates the foolishness of exaggerated expressions of emotion.

Comment for example 3

Almost nothing of Kernan's original language remains in this rewritten paragraph. However, the key idea, the choice and order of the examples, and even the basic structure of the original sentences are all taken from the source. This is another clear example of plagiarism. When paraphrasing, it's absolutely necessary (1) to use your own words and structure, and (2) to place a citation at the end of the paraphrase to acknowledge that the content is not original.

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/plagiarism/>

2.ESSAY WRITING:

a) Some common rules and tools for good narrative (prose)

One of the essences of good academic work is clear and concise text. It is essential to develop this skill in your first year of study. You need to consider the following 'facts':

i) **Expression:** Your written work (e.g. essays, reports, presentations) must communicate clearly to the reader the arguments and points you wish to raise on the topic. You need to take special care to express your ideas as clearly and concisely as possible. Write complete sentences and keep them as short and succinct as possible. Avoid vague, obscure and misleading expression. Keep in mind that the marker of our work is not expected to provide 'charitable' interpretation of sloppy and ungrammatical work.

ii) **Proofing:** The way to achieve clarity in your text is to, firstly, proof-read all your work thoroughly, secondly, in order to find out whether your essay is well-written, you ask friends and/or family to read through your work, finally, read your work out loud. All of these practices, will help you in recognising the syntactically awkward bits, and it may help you to detect the misspellings and other errors which commonly occur (see sub-section d.).

iii) **Tools and Aids:** Use the tools provided in word processing programs, especially the spell-checker - ensure your spell-checker is set on Australian English - and Grammar checker. If English is not your native language, you might find the Thesaurus (usually under 'Language') useful in order to work on increasing your vocabulary (see Section 3 on workshops for writing academic English). However, you must keep firmly in mind, that the Thesaurus is only valuable to you as a tool, when you ensure that you understand the meaning of terms and concepts clearly. Hence, a Thesaurus is a tool which requires both time and dedicated approach to improve your skills in the English language.

Finally, chapter 9, 'Features of academic writing' and chapter 10, 'Grammar in academic writing' in *UniStep* (2006) provide a detailed guide to expression, grammar and vocabulary. Both chapters are excellent sources of information on academic writing for both native and non-native English speakers.

b) General Guidelines to essay writing.

In the Social Sciences you are expected to read widely and critically. You will soon discover that much of the scholarly debates in the Social Sciences consist of arguments about how social facts and social phenomena are to be interpreted and understood. Our understanding often advances through a variety of contrary viewpoints and emphases. The Bachelor of Social Science degree is broadly based (Courses in: Child and Community Studies; Criminology and Criminal Justice; Geography and Urban Studies; Heritage and Tourism; Peace and Development Studies; Sociology), which will expose you to a variety of

approaches and contemporary debates, but within related disciplines. Hence, your written assessments will need to demonstrate not just factual knowledge in your area(s) of study, but also some ability to present and assess arguments and counter-arguments about particular problems (the focus of your assessment) within the chosen unit of study. The following outline will provide you with broad guidelines towards essay writing within all the courses in the Bachelor of Social Sciences.

i) Step-Through Guide towards the Writing Process.

Individual Learning Guides will provide step-by-step guide towards each assessment in the unit. The following guide is a generic guide toward most essay topics set in units in the Social Sciences:

- 1) Chose a **topic**. You are advised to chose a topic in an area which is close to your own interests. It is also recommended that you consider carefully the sources you need to draw on, consider carefully the sources which are provided in your Learning Guide for the topic and sources available via the Library and online databases.
- 2) Start your **research**. See also section iv) Research: Reading and evaluating sources below.
- 3) The list of suggested sources (as provided in the Learning Guide) should only provide you with a part of your sources. You are expected to undertake **independent research**. The following are some of the sources you may wish to use:
 - a) Academic: Library books and journals. Library databases (available via Library e-resources. Library weblinks (provided via the Library and the vUWS site)².
 - b) Institutional: Websites associated with various organisations, e.g. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), The World Bank (WB), the United Nations (UN). Keep in mind that personal blog sites are not consider objective academic sources, **neither is Wikipedia**.
 - c) News related: Various media, news magazines, newspapers, popular culture (movies/music), can be used as empirical examples. Keep in mind that you need to exercise critical and reflective thinking when you choose and use these sources.
- 4) Lay out your approach to the topic. Keep in mind that there is no one way in structuring an essay, but make sure that you identify the key

² See information on vUWS in Section 3.a. "E-learning (vUWS).

focus point(s) and keep referring back to them during the writing process. You may use sub-chapter headings if you wish (consult your Learning Guide).

- 5) Keep in mind that a good essay contains both a description of the topic/focus and a critical discussion on that topic (the critical discussion should include empirical examples).
- 6) Proof-reading. One of the keys to producing good work is to proof-read carefully - see section a. ii. 'Proofing', above.
- 6) Take a good look at any marking sheets (which should include Criteria) which might be provided in your Learning Guide and/or on vUWS. Ensure you focus on any 'Assessment Criteria', as it will indicate what constitute the grade category for essays in the unit (see examples in the table below).

Example table: Assessment criteria for an essay.

Fail	Pass	Credit	Distinction	High Distinction
0-49	50-64	65-74	75-84	85up
Shows little or no evidence of reading recommended or standard texts; relies primarily on non-reviewed internet source; no reference to literature Content is limited or unclear with irrelevant information Limited restatement of the sources with little or no evidence of independent thinking or critical evaluation Unsatisfactory performance	Relies primarily on recommended or standard texts with minimal or no reference to other sources Content is limited and often unclear Literature is not well integrated with the general discussion Simple restatement of the sources with little or no evidence of independent thinking or critical evaluation Work showing satisfactory achievement	As well as meeting the standard for pass, the body of the essay refers to some relevant literature and uses recommended and/or standard texts Relevant up-to-date content that is well considered and logical Good restatement of the sources with accurate synthesis and critical evaluation of key points from the literature Work of good quality showing more than satisfactory achievement	As well as meeting the standard for credit, the essay integrates ideas from wide reading of relevant literature and recent research Excellent content with a logical sequence of ideas Accurate and independent synthesis and critical evaluation of key points from the literature. Work of superior quality demonstrating a sound grasp of content, together with efficient organisation and selectivity	As well as meeting the standard for distinction, offers new understanding on ideas from literature. Distinguishes between the quality of sources and uses novel but relevant sources Excellent content with a logical sequence of ideas Accurate and independent synthesis and critical evaluation of key points from the literature Work of outstanding quality, broadly speaking, which may be demonstrated by means of criticism, logical argument, interpretation of materials or use of methodology. This grade may also be given to recognise particular originality or creativity

ii) Relevance: Theory and Empirical material. The content of your essay should be relevant to the question or problem you have selected. Do not include material not directly related to it. When it comes to determining the relevance of your sources, there are two main areas you need to focus on: Social theory and empirical material. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines **Theory** as: “The analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another”. The term ‘theory’ (and here we are referring to Social Theory) can be quite elusive, and it usually takes some time for first year students to fully grasp the nature and role of ‘theory’ in the Social Sciences. At this stage, you might wish to think of ‘theory’ as an analytical and explanatory tool, which assists you (and those engaged in Social analysis) to explain and understand Social Phenomena. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines **Empirical** as: “Originating in or based on observation or experience (empirical data)”. Empirical material in the Social Sciences refers to examples and data which have been collected by researches in diverse fields on

everyday life of people in a wide variety of social and cultural contexts. Make sure you gain a good grasp of the meaning of both terms; ‘Theory’ and ‘Empirical material’.

It is essential to avoid the common trap of getting bogged down on either end of the extreme of pure theory (i.e. floating off on the basis of speculations and unfounded claims) or empirical material (masses of factual details). Neither of the two extremes, by themselves, offers much analytical potential. The essential points of determining the relevance of your sources and writing a good academic essay is to grapple successfully with the relation between theory and empirical material; i.e. how to best understand and explain the empirical material. A descriptive account of what individuals and groups within various social and cultural contexts do, qualifies as particular information (empirical examples), but it does not produce an explanation of the social phenomena you wish to address. Conversely, a statement of opinions, theories or abstraction, unsupported by reasoning (critical thinking) and particular, empirical evidence, similarly fails.

The best advice for you to carefully address these matters, is to consult the Learning Guides for each particular unit and pay close attention to the Assessment Criteria and Expectations. For a detailed outline of this component, consult *UniStep: Academic skills guide (2006)*, chapter 3 (Understanding the task) and chapter 4 (Thinking critically).

iii) Your own thinking and your own words: Familiarity with the literature is essential, but not sufficient to meet the criteria of demonstrating both conceptual grasp on the topic and capacity for critical thinking (see section 3. e. on Critical Thinking). To some extent, your essay must be based on your own thinking and understanding of the topic area. Only a minor part (no more than 10% for a first year unit) should be direct quotations or material that is merely a modified or condensed version of another author's work (this refers to close paraphrasing and summarising – see 2 c.). Extensive quotation or paraphrasing does not meet criteria, as it does not evidence your thinking about your reading and conceptual grasp on the topic matter.

You are not expected to come up with original insights at this stage of your studies. But you are expected to invest serious efforts in evaluating how the readings bear on the topic area. One way to proceed to do so, is by comparing and contrasting the work of different authors/scholars. Consider the implications of the arguments and data used by one author for other works you are also referring to in your essay (see 2 a. below).

Think for yourself and write what you think, but ensure that your thoughts are fully supported by your sources (theory and/or empirical material). Keep in mind that you are not being encouraged to make rash, unconsidered statements, which draw on your personal opinions. Rather, the emphasis is on a search for inspiration and information from the readings, which encourage you to think through the issues raised in your sources. You might need to consult your lecturer/tutor on the extent of individual input to specific assessments.

iv) Research: Reading and evaluating sources. Your essay should be well-informed. Read as widely as possible. You need to consult your Learning Guide regarding specific requirement on the nature and extent of your research (i.e. number of sources and any specific nature of the information you should explore). For detailed outline on Reading and Research, consult *UniStep: Academic skills guide (2006)*, chapter 5 (Reading and note making), which outlines a number of different styles of reading, two (**‘effective reader’** and **‘evaluating sources’**) outlined below:

An **‘effective reader’** is one who:

- can locate information relevant to the task
- is not distracted by interesting and irrelevant information
- can distinguish between main points and minor points
- can take clear, concise notes

In other words, at university you have to be:

- a selective reader
- an active reader
- a critical reader

(UniStep: Academic skills guide 2006, p. 97)

‘Evaluating sources’: Some texts are more valid or credible than others. Any sources that possess most or all of the following features are likely to be suitable for your research:

- **Authority.** Is the writer an expert in the field? Is the writer often quoted by others in the field? Is the source published in a reputable book or journal (academic or professional) affiliated with a reputable institution?
- **Originality.** Does the material provide original information or only a summary or paraphrase of previously existing information?
- **Objectivity.** Is the writer being objective or is there a slant or bias in their approach?
- **Accuracy.** Has reliable, credible data been used that shows knowledge of the field?
- **Currency.** Is the information current? Or, is it outdated and obsolete?
- **Coverage.** Does the source cover the issue in depth or give only a cursory treatment?

(UniStep: Academic skills guide 2006: 108)

v) **Organisation; Paragraphs, Sentences and Essay Layout:** Your essay should be constructed in a way that shows the logical steps in your argument, with data from various sources being brought in as appropriate. Your Learning Guide will provide you with a step-by-step instruction on how to approach a particular assessment in a particular unit, so, the following points are generic to good academic essay writing

Paragraphs are the ‘building blocks’ of an essay, they are the organisational components of your argument/discussion on the topic and each paragraph must have a main idea or a theme. Keep in mind that good organisation can be achieved only through very careful planning and revisions of your text (proof-reading). Writers who do not take the trouble to revise and review their work, are seldom successful. See examples in the box below.

Example 1

There are many ways in which an individual or group belong to a nation. These include issues such as; race, colour, religion, culture, tradition and language. The idea of a nation leads to the creation of a national identity. Although national identities are evident in many countries, not everyone living in certain countries feel like they are apart [sic] of that national identity. This directs many of these people to conflict. Many ethnic groups and minorities come into conflict with one another when they have differences on issues such as; race, culture, religion, beliefs and identity. An example of how nations and ethnic [sic] groups have come into conflict with one another is the issue of the Cronulla riots

This paragraph is very vague, it is very generalising and it is confusing. The use of some of the key terms – i.e. ‘ethnic group’ and ‘nation’ - are used synonymously. The overall claim of this paragraph is inherently controversial. One might assume that the factors which provide for feelings of belonging, inevitably result in conflict. It also includes one of the most common mistakes in essay writings, the use of the term ‘this’ without clear reference. Finally, [sic] indicates misspelling of terms, which result in confusing or incorrect statements.

Example 2

What creates ethnic identity for all migrants who enter Australia is their country of origin (Cox 2007). Many migrants will come together and be able to relate simply because of their country of origin and the similar experiences that they shared in this country of origin HISTORY [sic]. But what makes a nation is acknowledging the different places and experience that migrant came from and all working towards the same goal for Australia, or working towards the same destiny. This working together for the same cause for one country is what truly creates a nation.

When you use terms like ‘what’ and ‘why’ at the beginning of a sentence, the reader assumes you are posing a question. Furthermore, this paragraph begins with a passive sentence. You should endeavour to write in active and affirmative manner. This paragraph also shares some of the vagueness of the previous examples. Generalising statements about the need to ‘acknowledge’ and ‘work towards the same goal’, give no indication of agency and social/political forces involved. You must ensure that your statements are clear and to the point, use specific examples and identify the individuals/groups and powers involved. Finally, this paragraph is tautological in nature. It states that: by working together we create a nation, we create a nation by working

If paragraphs are the ‘building blocks’ of your essay, **sentences** are the ‘cement’ that bind the blocks. Each sentence must provide a clear point toward the main idea or theme of the paragraph. The following examples are taken from *the little red writing book* (2006), evidencing ‘**failed sentences**’. Read them out loud and attempt to establish the point(s).

- The focus of the study is on the identification of the benefits for the Nation of combining the four disparate railway infrastructures.
- Snacking, in addition to breakfast, morning and afternoon tea, lunch and dinner, is bound to put on excess weight.
- Relax by the pool with a retractable roof.
- The Environment Protection Authority is seeking to maximise its outputs and minimise flow-on effects to industry from its implementation of the new waste minimisation program.

(Tredinnick 2006, pp. 19-20)

General layout of an essay:

- **Introduction (Thesis).** Begin with an introduction that states the aim of your essay and foreshadows your argument. State what you assume to be the problem, state basic view points and arguments (theory/ies) and provide an idea of your conclusions. Keep in mind that the common practice is to write the introduction last.
- **Main body of the essay.** Develop your argument/discussion coherently and progressively. It is essential to ensure that sentences and paragraphs follow logically from one another. Good planning is essential - it might be useful to think in terms of subsections – and your focus needs to be on a clear and gradual build up of your argument.
- **Conclusion.** Your conclusion must draw together the key points of your argument and produce a final answer(s) to, or assessment of, the problem. The conclusion needs to flow logically from the main body of the text, summarise your analysis and answer the set question(s). The conclusion should produce no new material and needs to correspond to your statement(s) in the introduction.
- **Clarity on key terms.** If there appear to be disagreements in your sources about the meaning of key terms, mention this and state how you intend to use the(se) term(s). You must choose an appropriate place to define terms(s), usually when you first mention the term(s). Keep in mind that dictionary definitions are not always adequate when it comes to concepts specific to a discipline, hence, use a definition from the literature by preference.
- **Reference list.** The last part of your essay is a list of **all**, and **only**, the references you used in your essay. You should use the term ‘references’, not ‘bibliography’ (see details in section 1. a)).
- See detail outline on ‘**The academic essay**’ in *Unistep* (2009), chapter 6.

c) Using your sources.

UNISTEP (2009) provides some very good advice on how to refer to and use your sources in-text:

In academic writing, you will be expected to refer to the work of others in a variety of ways. Sometimes, a direct quote will be the most efficient and effective way to make your point. More often, it will be appropriate to either leave out certain words and ideas or to put them into your own words. As a general rule, paraphrasing is the preferred method of referring to sources; it is a very good way to show that you have understood and can explain others’ ideas and claims. Conversely, relying too heavily on direct quotations can be a signal that you have not been able to incorporate that information into your own knowledge base. Remember that no more than ten percent of your text should take the form of direct quotations (p.129).

Following are some brief definitions of each of these methods of incorporating information:

i) Paraphrasing is to express someone else's idea(s) in your own words

A **paraphrase** is a way of presenting a text, retaining the meaning, but using entirely different wording to “translate” this meaning for use in the context of your writing task. Paraphrasing is generally used with short sections of text, such as phrases and sentences.

(Unistep 2009 (Chapter 5) provides extensive guide to, and examples of, **paraphrasing**).

ii) Summarising is to express someone else's idea(s) in condensed form, in your own words.

A **summary** is an overview of a text. The main idea is given, but most details, examples, and formalities are left out. Used with longer texts, the main aim of summarising is to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. However you choose to incorporate outside information, the process will begin as you make notes from your reading. It is a good idea to practice all three types of references in your notes as you gather information; when it comes time to begin writing from notes, you will then have a variety of resources to draw on. As we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 8: *Evidence and academic argument*, difficulties with using quotations, paraphrases, and summaries can sometimes lead to plagiarism. Properly referencing all information from outside sources during your note making can help you to avoid this problem when you begin writing your assignment. Be certain to reference **all** uses of outside sources, no matter what method of incorporating them you decide to use

(UNISTEP 2009 p. 129).

iii) Copying is to reproduce a diagram, graph or table from someone else's work. You need to ensure that such copies are clearly relevant to the topic, and that you outline clearly the reasons behind your choices of such material and provide interpretation where needed. Ensure you provide full references for all diagrams, graphs and tables you wish to use in your work, unless the material is designed by yourself (you might still need to provide sources, unless you have collected the empirical material yourself).

iv) 'Reporting verbs': Another important factor to consider when citing your sources is to choose an appropriate “reporting verb”. The Centre for Applied Linguistics, UWS (2008) provides the following examples on 'reporting verbs':

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

Neutral	Neutral verbs
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	Tentative verbs
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	Strong verbs
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

(Cited in Preparing Student for Learning through written assessment: a toolkit for Learning Guides 2009 p. 44).

d) Common mistakes found in student essays

The examples below are **not actual samples** of students work, they are made up to illustrate the points but do represent the kinds of mistakes markers often come across. The examples given are for an assignment question that asks students to: "Discuss the causes, symptoms and treatments for chronic pain".

The 8 common mistakes identified here are:

1. Drifting off the topic
2. Unnecessary 'padding'
3. Poor organization of material
4. Poor expression
5. Making incorrect statements
6. Making unsubstantiated statements
7. Not making enough use of the readings
8. Failing to Analyse

Mistake No. 1- Drifting off the topic.

Markers say things like

- *Irrelevant!*
- *How does this relate to the question?*
- *Relevance?*
- *Stay focused*

Example:

Chronic pain can sometimes result from an injury. (*relevant*) Other things that can be caused by injuries can include high medical bills and loss of employment (*irrelevant-we are not talking about what may be caused by injuries*)

How to avoid this mistake

The only information that should be in your essay is information that answers the essay question. For every sentence you write, ask yourself, 'is this directly on the topic?' and 'does it contribute to answering the question?'

Mistake No. 2 - Unnecessary 'padding'.

Markers say things like

- *Waffle!*
- *What is your point here?*
- *This doesn't say anything*
- *This should be briefer*
- *You are wasting words*
- *Be more succinct*
- *Write concisely*

Example

Chronic pain is very unpleasant. Lots of people have lots of pain in many different ways and in a varied manner they can suffer many effects. Effects that are severe and numerous can be costly to the sufferer and have a big impact on them. A person can suffer chronic pain alone or with others, in big or small ways and the effects can be devastating. (*The main point seems to be that chronic pain has a serious impact on people's lives. This could be said in one sentence the writer should move on to examples and research relevant to this point.*)

How to avoid this mistake

For every section you write ask yourself, 'what is my main point here?' Does it come through clearly? Do I only say it once? Can I say it more briefly? If there are any extra bits-repetition or sentences that don't add anything extra - get rid of them.

Mistake No. 3 Poor organisation of material.

Markers say things like:

- *This section belongs on the previous page*
- *This needed to be discussed earlier*
- *Badly organized*
- *Poor structure*

Example

An essay structure such as:

Section 1 One possible cause of pain.

Section 2 Some symptoms

Section 3 One sort of treatment

Section 4 A different symptom

Section 5 Some more examples of causes and some more symptoms

Section 6 Another cause and one more treatment

This structure has lots of the right “bits” but puts them together as a jumble. It jumps all over the place and lumps too many separate issues together in some sections

How to avoid this mistake

Identify the key sections needed to answer the question then put them in a logical order so that they flow on from one another and clearly build up the answer. Within each section organise all the ideas that will be included in that section in the same logical way.

An example would be:

- Introduction-including things like the relevance of this topic, meaning of terms and outline of what the essay will cover
- The causes of chronic pain
- The symptoms of chronic pain
- Treatments for chronic pain
- A conclusion drawing together what has been said

Mistake No. 4 Poor expression

Markers say things like:

Doesn't make sense

Confused

Check grammar

Unclear

Example

Treatments for chronic pain include biological psychological and social with social being more than just applying to the one person but applying to others. Relationships are important to these people who are treated socially and biological can also help. But with the X theory there is also the psychological. So all three are the treatment of choice. *(If you cannot identify what makes this poor expression, you may need to attend a University learning support seminar on writing-here is the url for the Student Learning unit part of the UWS website: <http://www.uws.edu.au/students/ods/lisu>*

How to avoid this mistake

- Use correct grammar and double check this before submitting (check for missing words, use correct punctuation, make sure sentences are complete).
- Keep sentences short with one main idea in each
- Finish explaining one idea before moving on to the next.

Mistake No. 5 Making incorrect statements.

Markers say things like

- *Wrong!*
- *X*
- *This is not accurate*

Example:

Chronic pain results from injury *Incorrect- Chronic pain **may be** experienced after an injury but it may also be experienced as part of an illness or in the absence of either any known injury or illness. It is simply not true to assert merely that it results from injury.*

How to avoid this

For everything you write, ask yourself-does this **accurately** reflect the research, theories and/or evidence?

Mistake No.6 Making unsubstantiated statements.

Markers say things like

- *Reference?*
- *Evidence?*
- *Says who?*
- *Unsubstantiated!*

Example

“Massage is a really good way to relieve chronic pain and aromatherapy can also help.” *This may be true, but in academic writing you must support this statement with some evidence and again make sure what you say is accurate-It may be more accurate to say: “In my experience as a massage therapist I have found massage is a really good way to relieve chronic pain for many people” This is substantiated by your experience and doesn’t claim to be true for all people everywhere. If the writer found these ideas in one of the readings then it must be referenced to avoid plagiarism but also to show that it isn’t just something the writer made up.*

How to avoid this mistake

- For every point you make, ask yourself-
- How do I know this?
- Where did I get this idea?
- What is the evidence for this?
- Then make sure you have provided the supporting references, evidence etc and that you have expressed your point in a way that does not go beyond the evidence.

Mistake No. 7 Not making enough use of the readings.

Markers say things like

- *Readings?*
- *You need to discuss X Theory here*
- *This is not relevant*
- *Waffle*
- *This may be relevant but you need to show how it relates to the readings*
- *Where is the theory?*
- *You need more examples from.....*

Example

A whole paragraph without any reference, not because you have failed to reference correctly but because you have not used anything from the readings. *The assignments are to reflect your understanding and use of the set resources. A paragraph without using them is generally an indication you are off track or padding. If you use personal examples (where permitted and acceptable) they should be linked to relevant parts of the set resources and should generally illustrate something from those resources.*

How to avoid this mistake

- Base your points on the set resources
- Relate all your examples to the set resources
- Use ALL the **required** resources
- Cover as much of the relevant material from the readings as you can

Mistake No.8 Failing to Analyse

Markers say things like

- *Don't just list things*
- *Explain*
- *Need more detail*
- *More depth required*
- *Discuss don't just describe*
- *Add some analysis*
- *No integration of ideas*
- *Add your own voice*
- *Show you understand*
- *Plagiarism! (by this they mean that you have used the ideas of others without acknowledgement and without integrating them to form your own opinion)*

Example (for the sake of brevity this is an extreme example, but the same mistake can be made even with more detailed descriptions) _ Treatments for chronic pain include medication, hypnosis, treatment X, treatment Y, treatment Z, (Feldman 2005) treatment X, treatment Y, treatment Z (Morrison and Bennett 2005). *There is no evidence of understanding here. The list takes ideas directly from the readings without any "processing" What are the links? When the same ideas are covered in 2 readings they should be discussed together (e.g. here treatments X, Y and Z -this person doesn't show an awareness that they are the same) What is the significance of all this? Anyone can list. As academic writers you are expected to analyse evaluate synthesize and organize the material in a meaningful way*

How to avoid this mistake

- Find and explain links between concepts
- When preparing, compare readings-find similarities and differences
- When writing, highlight similarities and differences where it makes sense to do so
- Show clearly how everything relates to the question
- Explain why your points are important to talk about-show how they help to answer the question
- Demonstrate that you understand what you are talking about

e) Essay presentation.

The presentation of your essay is an important part of the writing exercise. Every aspect of spelling, punctuation, grammar and formatting should be checked for correctness and the essay as a physical production would be as neat as possible.

Your Learning Guide might provide you with the specific details required for your assessment, but the following are standard requirements for an academic essay:

- 1) Ensure that your essay has the correct cover sheet, fill in all relevant information and provide signature where required. Attach the cover sheet with a single staple in the top left-hand corner (unless otherwise stated).
- 2) Use a standard A4 paper, single sided (no double-sided pages) - word-processed text in a size 12 font. Margins: All margins should be at least an inch (2.5cm) wide. The left margin is often wider, to allow space for binding and/or marker's comments. Line spacing: double-spaced lines, for clarity and to provide space for marker's comments. Page numbers: should be on all pages but the first, where the number is optional (see specifications in individual Learning Guides).

3) Title: Give your essay an appropriate title. The title can be a simplification of the topic being addressed or perhaps a catchy phrase that refers to a key aspect of your argument. Your name can appear below the title if you like. Your title should be in bold type and/or underlined, and title and author's name should be centred on the first page.

4) Quotes longer than thirty words should be double-spaced and indented, without quotation marks. Do not use single sentenced paragraphs. Ensure correct use of the Harvard Referencing System.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES AND UNIVERSITY SOURCES

First semester at University can be daunting for most of us and it is essential to acquire some 'survival skills' as soon as possible. One of the main skills you need to develop is to be able to identify resources and seek assistance to facilitate your entry into university life and studies. There are two aspects which need to be stressed here:

1) In order to ensure that you develop the skills and techniques need for effective learning at a University level, you need to access online resources provided by the University (see information and web links below).

2) It can never be stressed too much, ensure you read carefully through Unit Outlines and Learning Guides for all the subjects you are enrolled in.

The following are some of the resources you need to explore and acquaint yourself with.

a) **University Homepage:** <http://www.uws.edu.au>

Practical Information: First Year Central (FYC)

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/your_first_year/first_year_central

The following is one of the key links to several online systems, which you will need to access and use during your studies at UWS:

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/using_uws_online_systems

It includes the following links:

MyUWSAccount

A MyUWSAccount gives you access to UWS online services and systems such

as student email, MySR (your online student record) and the MyUWS Student Portal - a central information hub for students.

Your MyUWSAccount is secure with a username and password. To activate your MyUWSAccount, go to <http://myuwsaccount.uws.edu.au>.

MyUWS Student Portal

MyUWS is the central online information hub for students. You will need to log in to MyUWS to access your student email account, MyStudentRecords (MySR), PlatformWeb and vUWS (online learning), Career Hub and the Library website. Important notices and announcements are also displayed in MyUWS, so make sure you check it regularly.

Student Email

As a UWS student, you are provided with an official UWS student email account. This is the main and only email, communication between you and the University. You will receive emails with important information about things like your enrolment, exams, results and graduations. You **must** check it at least twice a week.

If you don't check your student email regularly, you will miss important messages which can have serious consequences, such as cancellation of enrolment.

You **must also always use your UWS student email account** when contacting the University (including lecturers and tutors) by email.

Access your UWS student email via the [MyUWS](#) Student Portal.

MyStudentRecords (MySR)

MySR is the online student records system at UWS, where you will manage your enrolment - enrolling, adding, changing or dropping units (until the census date), keep your personal and contact details up to date, check your fees and your results. Access MySR via the [MyUWS](#) Student Portal.

If you need help using MySR, please see the [MySR Help webpage](#).

PlatformWeb

PlatformWeb is the online system used for registering for tutorials, creating your personal timetable and exam timetable and checking your results.

Access PlatformWeb via the [MyUWS](#) Student Portal

E-Learning (vUWS)

E-Learning@UWS is the online learning environment known as 'vUWS' (pronounced 'views'). Your course and some of your units may have a vUWS site, which may include your unit or course outline, information about your assessment tasks, study resources and announcements related to your unit or course.

Access vUWS via [MyUWS](#) Student Portal.

iPay

iPay is the secure online payment system students use to pay their fees and charges. iPay is also used to pay for academic transcripts and Graduations:

<https://ipay.uws.edu.au/intro.asp>

SMS

UWS may contact you by SMS in an emergency. Emergencies include being at risk of having your enrolment cancelled or the emergency closure of a campus. You will need to make sure that your mobile telephone number is up-to-date in MySR so these emergency messages reach you.

If you do not wish to receive any SMS notifications from UWS, you must email no-sms@uws.edu.au, from your student email account.

UWS Handbook (course and unit search)

The UWS Handbook is the official reference for courses and units on offer.

Once you have accepted your offer to UWS, you will need to check what units are available in your course so you can enrol.

You can access the Handbook online.

<http://handbook.uws.edu.au/hbook/>

Computer Labs

General purpose Computer Labs are available on all UWS campuses for students to use:

http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/using_uws_online_systems/general_purpose_computer_labs

AirUWS

AirUWS is the wireless internet access for students. You can access AirUWS from your laptop or mobile:

http://www.uws.edu.au/campuses_structure/cas/services_facilities/it/airuws_wireless_lan

Print Services for students

Student's 'one stop shop' offering value and convenience for your printing needs. Services include printing, copying, scanning and binding:

http://www.uws.edu.au/print_services/print_services

The IT HelpDesk

Students can contact the IT HelpDesk by email or phone to get help for a range of things including, computer and account problems, audio visual equipment loans and discount computers. For a full list of services, please see **the UWS IT Services**

Catalogue: http://www.uws.edu.au/campuses_structure/cas/services_facilities/it/helpdesk

Policies

While you are a student at UWS, you are responsible for making sure you are aware of the policies that affect you such as the Enrolment Policy and the Examinations Policy. All University-wide policies, procedures and guidelines are available at the **policies** webpage:

<http://policies.uws.edu.au/>

b) Library: <http://library.uws.edu.au/>

The Library should be one of your first ports of call when you commence your University studies. You can visit the Library both online and in person. It is highly recommended that you locate the Library on your campus (see locations at <http://library.uws.edu.au/infoLocations.php>) in the first week of your studying, pay a visit in person and take one of the Library tours offered in the first weeks of semester.

You should acquaint yourself with the Services (see <http://library.uws.edu.au/servicesAssistance.php>) provided by the Library. Ensure that you visit all the links provided at <http://library.uws.edu.au/resources.php> and if you have any specific questions do not hesitate to ask the librarians, in person or via the Online Librarian (at <http://library.uws.edu.au/infoContacts.php>).

c) Student Learning Unit (SLU):

http://www.uws.edu.au/campuses_structure/cas/services_facilities/slu

This site is particularly useful for information on academic writing and study skills resources. It provides students with information on:

- 1) **Uni-Bridging Programs:** e.g. pre semester courses in academic literacy and study skills.
- 2) **SLU Workshops:** pre semester and semester workshops in academic literacy.
- 3) **Online Learning:** resources on essays, reports, referencing and many more

Furthermore, SLU provides you with a link to *UNISTEP: Academic Styles Guide (UWS) 2007*, 352 pages of extensive and detailed information on all aspects of academic work and selection of the best online guides and interactive tutorials from other university centres around Australia. The link is:

www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/online_study_resources and you go to 'Language and Learning Links'.

It is highly recommended that you read through **Chapter 1: Beginning university studies, NOW!**

d) Academic skills (writing academic English):

The university offers a number of Academic Skills Workshops:

- Introduction to Academic Writing Style
- Introduction to Assignment Preparation
- Introduction to Critical Analysis
- Developing Your Writing
- Introduction to Essay Structure
- Introduction to Essay Writing
- Introduction to Referencing

For detailed information on each workshop go to:

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

e) Critical Thinking

The use of the term ‘critical’ in ‘Critical Thinking’, does not necessarily mean that you are negative towards the material you are evaluating. It means that you analyse your sources on the basis of their strengths and weaknesses.

Unistep (2007) provides a very detailed guideline to, and exercises in, Critical Thinking (see Chapter 4). It is highly recommended that you read through Chapter 4 in *Unistep* and that you attempt some of the exercise provided there. Below is a brief explanation of what constitutes ‘Critical Thinking’.

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.

(Preparing Students for Learning and through Written Assignments 2009 p. 23).

4. NETIQUETTE: general communication via email and online discussion forums

The computer-based discussion is similar to a normal face-to-face discussion in that it is a personal exchange of information. Therefore, it is important to observe the everyday courtesies you would use in normal conversation.

You should be:

- Polite and avoid the use of bad language
- Respectful of others' points of view
- Aware of cultural differences
- Careful with humour and sarcasm.

Ideas and impressions are transmitted by text so you will not have the advantage of body language to help you interpret meaning.

Be careful to clearly convey your message and be aware that your classmates' views may be different to yours. Try not to be judgmental, and try to give people the benefit of the doubt.

- Only use capitals for specific purposes (e.g. headings) otherwise it can seem like you are SHOUTING (and CAPITALS are harder to read).
- Re-read your message before you send it. If you inadvertently send the wrong message, you will need to contact the system administrator to have it erased.
- As a general rule, try to keep your messages reasonably short.

Read more at:

http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/downloads/basic_standards_LR.pdf

http://www.netalert.gov.au/advice/behaviour/netiquette_emoticons/What_is_netiquette.html

a) How to Write Emails to your Lecturer or Tutor – Tips & Examples.

An email to your lecturer or tutor should start with an appropriate salutation (*Hi Ben*) and finish with an appropriate sign-off (*Thanks, Kate*).

It is ok for the email to be fairly casual, but it is not a text message or email to a friend, so it should not use ‘text-speak’ or be too familiar.

The email should also contain enough information for the lecturer and tutor to understand what the issue is. Remember that many units are taught on three campuses, so stating who you are and what campus you are on, the time and date of your tutorial would be helpful.

Here are some examples of real emails sent in vUWS. The first two are **inappropriate**, the second two are **fine**.

thsnk you ben ... sorry bout the 2 emails didnt know which 1 would work ... and promise this is the only and last time .. just wondering if i drop it to you in ur room on monday ??

This is an inappropriate email to a lecturer. It should use proper English, and it should provide a context – i.e. enough information for the lecturer or the tutor to understand what the issue is and what campus the student is on (this unit runs on three campuses).

Hey

i just want to let you know that i got sick two days ago and was unable to finish off my happiness essay. i showed Benita my doctor's certificate and asked her if i could hand it in tomorrow instead because i would be able to finish it by then as i've already done more than half of the essay she said yes but that i have to ask you first if that's alright with you?

This is another inappropriate email to a lecturer. Not only is the salutation too informal, it has little (and incorrect) punctuation and has spelling errors (including the tutor's name). This email does provide enough information about the issue

Hi Ben,

I just completed the feedback survey which after completing was supposed to give us access to an end of session review quiz, I did gain access to a self-review referencing test, but I was under the impression that there would be a review test on what we've covered over the semester am I mistaken? If so sorry to bother you if not could you please tell me how I can access the review test.

Thanks

Nicole

This email is fine. It has an appropriate salutation (note that we do not require a formal, although correct, "Dear Dr Spock", but "Dear Mr Spock" is incorrect). It provides context and finishes with an appropriate sign-off.

Hello Ben

I am in Michelle's tutorial at Bankstown and I did not pick up my assignment today. Would you please let me know when and where I can pick it up?

Thanks

Paul

This email is also fine. As above, it has an appropriate salutation and while it is brief, it clearly identifies the issue.

b) Netiquette online: using online discussion boards (vUWS)

You must consider all the points raised above on Netiquette. Furthermore, you must keep in mind that much online discussion is open to all those enrolled in the unit (this can be hundreds of students and staff), hence it is essential to adhere to the four points on courtesy and respect raised above.

Furthermore, online discussion is frequently undertaken through discussion threads, specific to topics, assessments, themes, etc. Ensure that you place your online posting on the correct thread and use 'Subject' headings to facilitate and clarify the discussion.

For detailed guide to Netiquettes read: *Basic Standards for E-learning sites* (2009) at

http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/downloads/basic_standards_LR.pdf

5. References:

Merriam-Webster online: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Empirical>

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UNISTEP: Academic Styles Guide (UWS) 2007. Found under 'Language and Learning Links (352 pages) at: http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/online_study_resources

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