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Academic writing guide for university students

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ACADEMIC WRITING GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

CONTENTS

TO THE READER

The purpose of academic writing is to communicate with readers of all kinds of literacy levels, e.g. illiterate people, beginners in the subject, students, educators, governments and the general public. A good assignment is the one that is easily understood by all these readers and contains no ambiguities in them. Contrary to what many people suggest (that you must use big forms of vocabulary and sophisticated terminology that is hard to understand), we must use the basic language, clear grammatical expressions and words that are familiar with all readers in order to ensure our message is well-received across our readerships. Juts bear in mind that our objective in academic writing is to convince, educate, inspire, enlighten and fulfil various academic needs and that does not come easily if we are too complicated, ambiguous and mysterious.

If you are tired of getting low marks in your assignments despite your diligent efforts, you have come to the right place. This guide simplifies the process and helps you understand the universal methods of communication, from the basic sentence construction skills to paragraphs and, eventually, overall assignments and how the small components fit in your academic landscape. Because, as individuals, we are different, we are expected to show our uniqueness in various ways but still maintain a measure of standardisation in order to ensure readers understand our unique talents/perspectives.

Academic writing is like constructing a tall building; it all begins with a basic brick/stone. If your bricks are shaped well, are combined with the right mix of other relevant building material and are all carefully placed in line/serve their intended purpose, there is no doubt that your final structure will be a marvel to watch and will accomplish your intended objectives. In this guide, you are certain to learn everything you need to include in your assignments, how to answer the right questions in the right way, include the right content, comply with all instructions and ensure your academic work is free from punctuation/ grammatical/language errors, is unambiguously understandable and focused. Happy Studying!!!

AUTHOR PROFILE

Mqondisi Bhebhe is an academic, a Management graduate and publishing author in various disciplines, but with more emphasis on Academic Writing skills and Business/Economics areas. He has been, and is still, teaching at tertiary level and enjoys sharing knowledge and experience with readers from all over the world. This is the second of the 5 coming editions of the 'simplified' series, with the first one already published being the Human Resource Management Solutions Textbook and a few other projects on the pipeline, all aiming to make studying easier for you. This guide is not intended to replace/supersede any existing academic writing guides as preferred by individual institutions but it will certainly give you all the basic understanding on what is required in many academic assignments. Please enjoy this work and look out for the other volumes to hit your shelves soon. Happy studying!!!

1 PART A: DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT TYPES

Objectives of this unit:

Writing academic assignments requires including enough components/building blocks in an orderly and systematic way that discusses all the important elements carefully from the beginning to the end. Most assignments fail to make the grade, not because they do not contain relevant information but simply because of the order and manner of their presentation. In order to avoid omitting important information or discussing everything in a random fashion that shows a lack of organisation, this section looks carefully into the required physical components for a concise, comprehensive and complete academic assignment and shares interesting checklists at the end of each assignment type. Let's get started:

1.1 PARTS OF AN ESSAY (GENERAL)

Purpose: To address/answer a question.

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This part of the essay helps the readers understand **what** you are writing about, **why** you are doing it and **how** you will achieve the objective. This requires including sentences dedicated towards the following elements:

1.1.1.1 Background information

Your work must begin with an introductory element/statement to help readers understand **what** you are writing about. This might be a definition of the topic, its main point, a catch phrase that raises interest in the readers, a quote from a famous text or any necessary background information that will help to clarify the intended direction to be taken by the essay.

1.1.1.2   Thesis statement/Central point

This is the main point/argument or the main answer to the question (or the main objective explaining **why** you wrote the essay). An example is when a topic says "What are your views on abortion?" where your thesis can say "Abortion is bad because of this and that…" or "This essay seeks to argue that abortion is bad for society because if this and that…" This shows readers what will be the main perspective so that they can follow it conveniently from the beginning to the end. Everything, from the body paragraphs to the conclusion, must be related to this point for your work to be consistent, cohesive and unified.

1.1.1.3   Essay objectives/outline

You have to help them understand **how** you intend to develop your essay by giving them a preview of the headings to be used and the major points to be discussed, including a suggestion of how the work will conclude. Include an outline like "The essay will use this and that approach…" so that the readers can understand how the work will be structured before they read.

1.1.2   BODY PARAGRAPHS

This is the main part of the essay that shares the actual content answering the question. An essay question asking about, say, **"What are the benefits of a market economy?"** will require around 15 points relating to the Economy's features *(e.g. freedom of enterprise/little government intervention/innovation/there is the price mechanism/freedom of choice/no barriers to entry/etc.)* but you do not simply 'list' them without explaining them in detail. You will need to mention the point first, expand it and show the readers why you believe it is a benefit by probably mentioning who benefits from it, how, why, etc.

This requires body paragraphs, each dedicated towards explaining the point; you will need at least 4 sentences to properly present your point in an academic way. Please note the following examples of what is required in this regard:

1.1.2.1   Main point sentence

This is the actual point that readers must carry in their minds as they read your essay. In the market economy example, let's pick the *'freedom of enterprise'* point. The main point in the first paragraph will read, *"The market economy is the only system that gives its citizens the freedom of enterprise".*

You have adequately shown your readers what the paragraph will be about in a clear, unambiguous way. Common mistakes here include attempting to combine the main point with many other unrelated points like, *"there are several benefits of the market economy that must be taken into consideration…"* (This implies that you will discuss more than one benefit in the paragraph and confuses readers). Ensure everything in the paragraph is related to the main point in one way or the other.

1.1.2.2   Explanation/Expansion

The topic sentence usually needs a follow-up statement to explain what it encompasses and help readers get a better understanding of your perspective. In the above example, we used the term *'freedom of enterprise'* that many readers may not be familiar with and may have to get a dictionary to understand it and that wastes their time. Besides, most dictionaries contain a literal, word-for-word definition of the terms *'freedom'* and *'enterprise'* and the ordinary English definitions might differ from the Economics use of the phrase. You may, therefore, have to say, *'Freedom of enterprise happens where governments relax investment and entrepreneurship laws and grant the permission to open any business to anyone regardless of nationality, income status, experience, gender, etc.'* Now the readers understand not only what dictionaries say about your point but **what you mean** by freedom of enterprise. Without a proper follow-up on the main point, readers will have to make their own assumptions on what you meant and they are likely to come up with different views and get confused.

1.1.2.3   Supporting facts with evidence

In order to be credible, academic writing avoids hearsay and unconfirmed opinions/ rumours. This includes personal views from individuals deemed not qualified enough to make comments in the field under evaluation. Therefore, you need to name your sources, explain their credibility (sometimes) and even show the links between them and the other reference works. You can pick sources like The World Bank/Wall Street Journal showing how "freedom of enterprise promotes job creation, facilitates the free movement of goods, boosts, exports, strengthens the Balance of Payments position…etc." giving statistics, percentages and actual GDP figures linking freedom of enterprise to economic growth. Proving that you used credible sources strengthens your argument since the greatest minds in the subject are all seen to be rallying behind your work.

The most common mistake here, though, is over-quoting/overly relying/depending on other authors; writing only/mostly other authors' words 'from source-to-source' without your own

interpretation in between. Remember, it is the student (not the authors) under assessment; this means, generally, about 10% or so of the sources can be used but most of the words must be the student's (Only involve other sources where it is absolutely necessary).

1.1.2.4   Concluding thought

This is a brief 'report' on everything mentioned in the paragraph and an attempt to show how the whole paragraph fits in the whole essay. Example, "The resulting growth in employment, increase in GDP and BOP position brought by freedom of enterprise benefits not only the informal business sector but the fiscal authorities, the citizens and even the regional trading partners." (Note the link between the paragraph's main point in the first sentence, its body explanation/ evidence sentences and how the concluding sentence summarises everything and reminds readers of the main topic/thesis, which is, enumerating the benefits of the market economy).

At this stage, the reader has 'heard it all' and is now ready for the next point in another paragraph. You can then pick the next point in line, which is, *little government intervention',* provide its main point sentence, its explanation, linking it with credible evidence and finally showing readers who it benefits, how, why, etc. Doing the same with all 15 points gives the readers a well-developed body with understandable, consistent and coherent sentences.

1.1.3 CONCLUSION

After exhausting all the points in the body, you will have to wrap up the essay by showing the readers its relevance and helping them grasp everything in one last paragraph. This is the final 'report' that shows readers how far you went in addressing the question and supporting your thesis/viewpoint. Its purpose is to summarise everything and condense the major highlights presented in order for the readers to understand if they really address the thesis/central point or not.

1.1.3.1   Reminder on the background information.

The conclusion begins with a short statement that reminds readers the information that introduced the essay at the beginning; in other words, you are reminding the readers on how the essay started, what the main purpose was and what you had set out to discuss.

1.1.3.2   Reminder on the main thesis

You remind them what your overall idea behind the essay was; remember, there is only one answer required to the question, "Do you believe abortion must be outlawed?" You need to remind your reader that all you have been trying to say is "Yes/No" (i.e., summarising your essay in one sentence).

1.1.3.3   Summarising the major points discussed (Concluding sentence 1+2+3….)

After reminding readers your main viewpoint, you need to repeat the reasons why you hold such a viewpoint by mentioning all the major points, possibly, from the concluding sentences in all paragraphs.

1.1.3.4   Offering a brief summary on what was accomplished

Closing arguments can direct readers to the progress that the essay has accomplished, interpreting the major points and helping readers respond in some way.

1.1.3.5   Offering recommendations (optional)

Depending on the requirements of the essay, you can be asked to provide solutions/ recommendations and you need to link them to the problems raised. Ensure you give actionable ideas that detail what must be done by whom, how and where, when, etc, showing the effects of taking such actions as well.

Checklist:

Before submitting your essay, ensure it has:

Section	Components	Yes/No
- **An introduction with**	- the background information sentence	
	- thesis statement	
	- essay outline/objectives	
- **Body paragraphs each with**	- a topic/main point sentence	
	- a sentence expanding/explaining the main point	
	- a sentence linking your explanation to relevant evidence	
	- a sentence summarising everything in the paragraph/linking it with the rest of the essay.	
- **Conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the essay started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- a summary of the reasons discussed that convince you of the relevance of the thesis/viewpoint	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	

Table 1: Checklist of all items required in an essay

☐ Essays structured in the above manner/containing all of the above elements usually carry more weight and score better marks than random, semi-structured presentations.

1.2   PARTS OF AN INFORMATIVE ESSAY

Purpose: To educate readers or raise awareness on something.

1.2.1   INTRODUCTION

The same principles as the essay are required, except for the fact that the thesis statement is a bit general/informative/educational in nature, e.g., "The essay will outline/investigate/ explore this and that…"

1.2.2   BODY

Follow the same format as the essay here with the main point, explanation, evidence and concluding sentence.

1.2.3 CONCLUSION

Follow the same format as the essay here by restating the main point, summarising the major highlights and giving your closing arguments.

Checklist:

Before submitting your essay, ensure it has:

Section	Components	Yes/No
- **An introduction with**	- the background information sentence	
	- thesis statement	
	- essay outline/objectives	
- **Body paragraphs each with**	- a topic/main point sentence	
	- a sentence expanding/explaining the main point	
	- a sentence linking your explanation to relevant evidence	
	- a sentence summarising everything in the paragraph/linking it with the rest of the essay.	
- **Conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the essay started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- a summary of the reasons discussed that convince you of the relevance of the thesis/viewpoint	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	

Table 2: Checklist of all items required in an informative essay

1.3   PARTS OF A JOURNAL/DIARY ESSAY

These are focused on helping you apply your personal experiences, opinions and feelings into your academic theory in a way that helps you to share important lessons with your readers.

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This is where you introduce yourself, your experience and explain how you structure it. Common mistakes include discussing general issues that are not related to your personal experience, making readers, for a while, mistake the essay for an ordinary/conventional or even informative piece. Although the structure here is not always strict (since no one can tell you how to narrate your own story because you are the only one who knows it better), it can certainly eliminate a lot of ambiguities if you structure it as an ordinary essay by giving background information, a thesis/focal sentence and an outline of the major events to be discussed; this helps readers with everything that clarifies **who** you are, **what** aspect of your life you are talking about and the sub-areas falling under it.

1.3.2 BODY

The paragraph structure follows that of an essay as outlined earlier. You need to discuss one major point at a time and progressively. Begin with the first things first and discuss events before, during and after the experience in their chronological order. Avoid giving the background paragraphs after the concluding events and vice-versa (e.g. *I got a job and went for the interview; I then prepared for the interview and, after that, I applied for the job*). Although it is your story and readers are not always expected to question the accuracy of those events, however, including things that logically/obviously do not make sense can defeat the purpose of the essay and leave more questions than answers, e.g. presenting your mother's age as 18 and forgetting that you introduced yourself as a 32-year-old in the introduction are some of the irregularities you need to avoid.

1.3.3 CONCLUSION

This is where you give your final/concluding thoughts and ensure you make the lessons you want to bring across very clear to the readers. Good reflective essays portray an academic side of your life and, although you may be asked to mention your mistakes, avoid overly exposing such flaws and focus on helping readers understand how you developed, improved, changed and grew up from the incident(s). This suggests that you avoid sharing too much of an unbecoming behaviour, e.g. 'sneaking out of bed under your parents' watch to meet your boyfriend' would be a part of your life story you would like to omit since readers will likely fail to see you as a role model, but recovering from a 40% mark in the first semester to topping the class 6 months later is something worth imitating and will make your experiences worth reading/inspirational.

Checklist:

Before submitting your essay, ensure it has:

Section	Components	Yes/No
- **An introduction with**	- the background information sentence	
	- thesis statement	
	- essay outline/objectives	
- **Body paragraphs each with**	- a topic/main point sentence	
	- a sentence expanding/explaining the main point	
	- a sentence linking your explanation to relevant evidence	
	- a sentence summarising everything in the paragraph/linking it with the rest of the essay.	
- **Conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the essay started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- a summary of the reasons discussed that convince you of the relevance of the thesis/ viewpoint	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	

Table 3: Checklist of all items required in a diary/journal essay

1.4   PARTS OF A SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Purpose: To investigate and solve a problem/understand the nature of something.

1.4.1   MAIN TITLE

The main heading needs to properly describe what the study is about and it must be a relevant area that is able to be investigated in a scientific/conventional way. You can also include the author's name, dates, etc, and other important information.

1.4.2 ABSTRACT

Also called the synopsis, this is the summary of the whole report, detailing everything from the purpose/objective of the report, a summary of the methods, hypotheses, results, conclusions and/or recommendations made. It helps readers understand the contents of the report without necessarily reading everything in detail.

1.4.3 TABLE OF CONTENTS

This is the list of contents, their location, order and structure. It is strategically located in the beginning and is always useful for ease of reference and access to information. It also aids readers in understanding the depth of the report and consistency with most academic conventions.

1.4.4 INTRODUCTION

Often confused for the abstract or even used with duplicated information, this part is not the overall summary of the whole report. Almost like the essay, it also mentions/defines/ details what you are investigating, narrows down your objectives and gives the outline to be followed.

1.4.5 METHODOLOGY

This is very important since the outcome cannot be credible if poor/faulty methods are used. Demonstrate the ability to properly organise the relevant resources, prepare the environment, practise innovative but sound experimental methodologies, etc. You must not forget to describe the variables to be measured and explain how that would be done.

1.4.6 RESULTS

This is where you collect all the data, classify, categorise and group the outcomes according to their relevance to the study.

1.4.7 CONCLUSION

This is where one summarises the results, giving an explanation of the trends and relationships and explaining the reasons behind such interpretation. You explain the hidden meanings, show the implications and help them understand the whole assignment/report.

1.4.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

When readers have an understanding of what is involved in the study and what it means for them and other future spheres of investigation, it is time to show them what they ought to do with the information/how to use it. These can range from suggesting how to use the outcome of the investigation in future studies and recommending areas for improvement.

1.4.9   REFERENCE LIST

This is the list of all sources consulted before, during and after the preparation of the report. It helps readers assess the quality of the information used and is a proper way of acknowledging their contribution. Remember to use credible, peer-reviewed and academic sources.

1.4.10 APPENDIX

This is where you include information that would have, otherwise, been too long to include in the body of the report. This includes charts, graphs tables, etc and other material not directly related but relevant to the study and aiding readers who need a deeper/broader understanding of the concepts involved.

Checklist:

Before submitting your Scientific Report, ensure it has the following components:

Section	Yes/No
- Main Title	
- Abstract	
- Table of contents	
- Introduction	
- Methodology	
- Results	
- Conclusions (Sometimes replaced by the 'Discussion')	
- Recommendations (Sometimes replaced by the 'Discussion')	
- Reference List	
- Appendices.	

Table 4: Checklist of all items required in a Scientific/Lab report
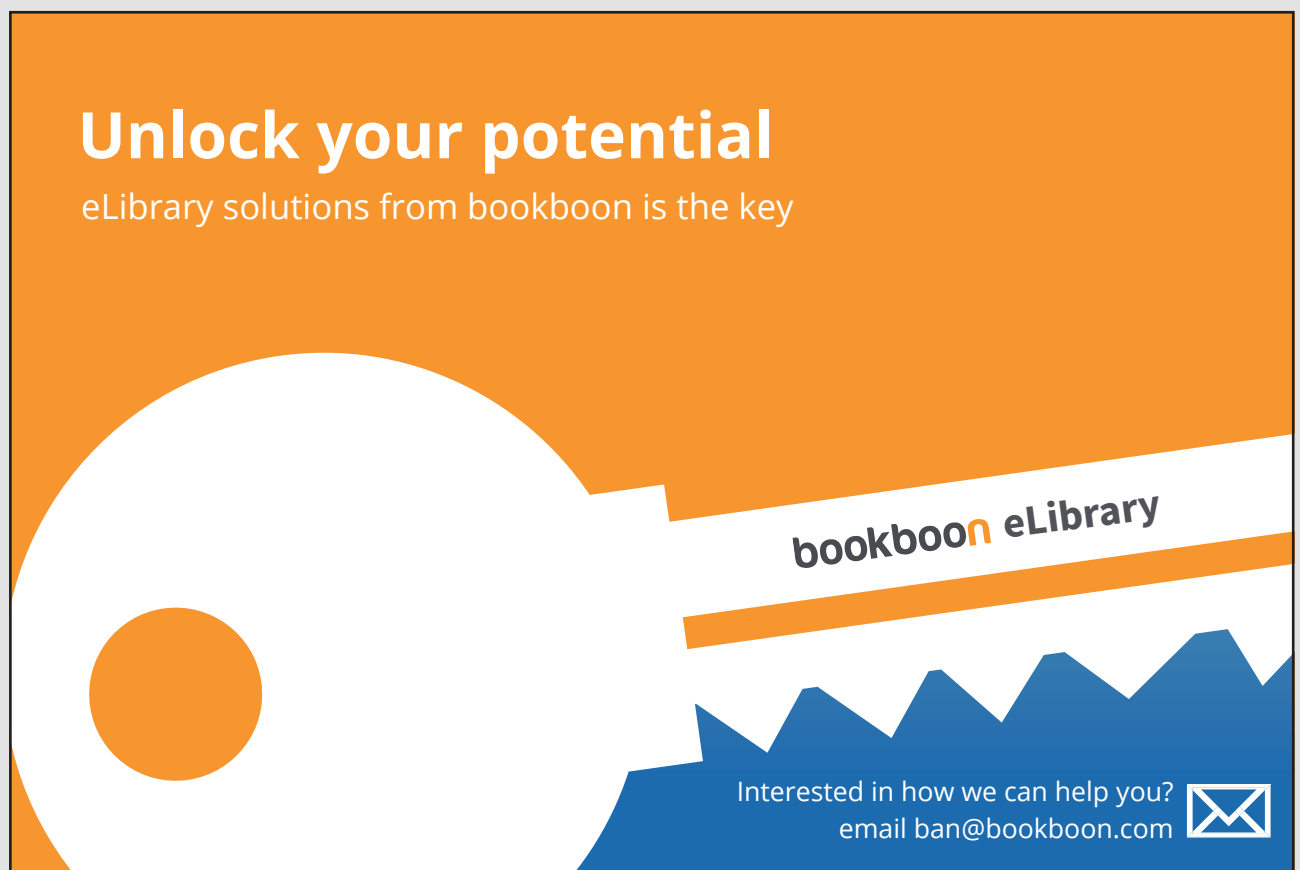
1.5 PARTS OF A BUSINESS REPORT

Purpose: To address a business issue/problem.

1.5.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Also called the management summary, this is a summary of the whole report in a way that enables readers to understand it without even reading the whole document. It contains the introduction, purpose, methodology, discussions, conclusions and recommendations contained in the report and helps everyone get the whole picture of what the document is about.

1.5.2 INTRODUCTION

Because these reports are mostly designed to address a certain **problem**, they are likely to include a brief background of the issue, **how** it started, **when** it did, how, etc., to acquaint the reader with what the document would be about. Like that of the Scientific report, this one also provides the purpose and indicates the general direction to be taken.

1.5.3 GATHERING INFORMATION

Your report's results are determined by the quality of the information you use; readers are likely to lose interest in a report if the information sources do not appear credible/useful enough. Thus, a report needs to be compiled following the gathering of reliable information that points to the existence of an issue that warrants the attention of management and the deployment of resources. Sources of information must be credible and thoroughly justified. Include a good balance of both the Primary and Secondary sources; avoid gossip, hearsay and informal sources.

1.5.4 ANALYSING INFORMATION/INTERPRETATION

You need to explain the validity of the results and show the readers the limitations and weaknesses of information obtained from each source. If you use faulty information, the whole process is compromised and that may require starting afresh. Because of that, this stage is important as it helps readers establish the credibility of the research and opens way for the next crucial stage.

1.5.5 REACHING CONCLUSIONS

You need to apply your business knowledge to understand the effects of one variable on the key components of the business. For example, there is a relationship between employee attitudes and productivity, costs, marketing, public image, sales, profits and, eventually, solvency and liquidity. You need to show your analytic and evaluative ability by judging the relevance/importance of certain actions and showing their relationships with the pillars that determine business success/solve the problem at hand. In short, you are listing the advantages and disadvantages of the issues involved and placing management in a better position to choose the most appropriate course to follow.

1.5.6 MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

When information about what happened, when, why, how and having done by whom is available, and having understood the dangers and advantages involved, it is time to suggest a better option to take. This is not an emotional or opinionated guess, but an objective decision that is taken after comparing advantages/disadvantages and choosing the alternative that has more positives than negative effects.

1.5.7 REALIGNING GOALS

Usually, the above analyses may reveal that there are certain goals that might be dangerous for the company, hard to achieve or becoming costly. The organisation must decide on which new directions they must take and that involves setting new SMART targets (sometimes, it can involve designing a new product, entering new markets, restructuring the organisation, etc, to ensure improvement is achieved).

1.5.8 GATHERING RESOURCES

The recommended targets are not effective if resources cannot be acquired to put them into action. The organisation will often need financial, physical and material resources, including human capital to implement the desired changes or even maintaining a status quo. The team must ensure all of them are available before proceeding.

1.5.9 BUDGETING

This stage is concerned with prioritising things, arranging the list of tasks and estimating the usage of resources according to their importance. It is time to mention how much will be spent on what, when and how, with what objective in mind. Care must be taken to consider hidden costs and including a contingency plan to keep the organisation ahead of things in terms of planning.

1.5.10 IMPLEMENTATION/ACTION PLAN

This is the timeline of how the suggested plan will be put into action. It involves task allocations, the sheduling, calendars and the document called an Action plan which, when too long, can be moved to the Appendix section.

1.5.11 CONTROL MECHANISMS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A good business report does not only address the current issue only but must benefit the organisation even beyond the implementation of the suggested solutions. This part deals with installing mechanisms that will make sure the business never experiences the same problem again but continues improving. It involves setting up a monitoring team, establishing consultative forums and defining the warning metrics that must be reported in time for further action to be taken.

Many business reports come with their own templates since no two businesses are ever the same; they might have the same objectives but will never have the same amounts of resources, identical staff and experience similar market conditions. One might have mature, willing, co-operative staff and might be located in an easy-to-penetrate market while the other might be experiencing the opposite. Therefore, despite both having the same resources, the disadvantaged business might even perform better than the privileged one, depending on how it responds/adapts to the conditions. This, in a nutshell, means you can either include some or all of the above steps in your Business Report and adapt them to the circumstances of the particular business in question.

Checklist:

Before submitting your business Report, please check for the following:

Section	Yes/No
- Executive Summary	
- Introduction	
- Gathering information	
- Analysing information/interpretation	
- Reaching conclusions	
- Making recommendations	
- Realigning goals	
- Gathering resources	
- Budgeting	
- Implementation/Action plan	
- Control mechanisms	

Table 5: Checklist of all items required in a Business Report.

1.6   PARTS OF A CASE-BASED ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: To apply theory on a real-life issue and demonstrate how problems can be solved.

1.6.1 INTRODUCTION

You introduce the case to the readers, outlining its circumstances. Acquaint the readers with the main character, the problems faced and the objective of the case study; you are helping the readers understand **what** problem needs to be solved, **why** and **how** before continuing. A case character may be a business experiencing problems, a person, institution, object or any issue judged to be worthy of our attention and where a solution from existing and future pieces of theory is sought.

1.6.2 BODY

This is where you outline the details of the case, developing them from the beginning and applying the theory/showing how they relate to popular academic conventions. It will be wise to break down and outline the problems experienced for the readers to understand what you are reviewing and follow your analysis closely. The paragraph structure follows that of the essay, with the Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence and Concluding sentence required with every point.

1.6.3 CONCLUSION

Just like the essay, you remind the readers of what you have been talking about, explain the implications involved and show the readers how the theory can help the case's character. Some case studies go to the extent of providing workable solutions to the problems discussed and suggesting ways of avoiding them in future.

Checklist:

Before submitting your case-study assignment, check for the following items:

Segment	Components	Yes/No
- An introduction with:	- a brief background to the topic	
	- the case's main character	
	- the circumstances that need solving, attention.	
- The case's body with:	- a detailed analysis/approach to the problem	
	- application of theory/establishment of relevant links	
	- body paragraphs can follow the PEEL format or	
	- they can follow a given table/template or question and answer sheet	
- Conclusion:	- reminder of how the case started/initial objective	
	- highlight major theory conventions affecting the case	
	- show how application of theory can help the case's main character	
	- possible recommendations for future improvements.	

Table 6: Checklist of all items required in a case-study assignment.

1.7 PARTS OF A PROGRESS ESSAY/JOURNAL

Purpose: To understand how someone, in most cases, a student, understands a topic; it measures the effectiveness of the teaching methodology and identifies areas for improvement. This is where the learner narrates their encounter with a real-life situation where they had to apply what they learned in class and the narration gives assessors the assurance that the individual has grown well enough to understand how such lessons can be used to help the community.

1.7.1 INTRODUCTION

Just like the reflection/diary, you introduce yourself, your background and show readers what they will be reading about.

1.7.2 BODY

Begin with a paragraph or two explaining the theory/class lesson/handout or sharing your general understanding on the topic.

Show how you learnt the material by narrating your events, beginning with what happened first down to the last detail. A proper chronology will help your readers understand the type of person you are and be able to learn something from your journey. Avoid starting with what normally happens last and mixing your events in a random order (e.g., it would be disorganised to begin with getting a job, waking up to take a bath, going for an interview and then brushing your teeth!).

Remember to include important/major milestones and avoid mentioning unnecessary details that are not related to your academic development and even informal circumstances.

1.7.3 CONCLUSION

You summarise your course material, the events that taught/changed you and repeat the lessons you learnt. This helps readers understand the lessons they must take from your work and be able to grow from your experience.

Before submitting your essay, ensure it has:

Section	Components	Yes/No
- **An introduction with**	- the background information sentence	
	- thesis statement	
	- essay outline/objectives	
- **Body paragraphs each with**	- a topic/main point sentence	
	- a sentence expanding/explaining the main point	
	- a sentence linking your explanation to relevant evidence	
	- a sentence summarising everything in the paragraph/linking it with the rest of the essay.	
- **Conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the essay started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- a summary of the reasons discussed that convince you of the relevance of the thesis/ viewpoint	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	

Table 7: Checklist of all items required in a progress-check essay.

1.8   PARTS OF A TEMPLATE-BASED ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: To narrow down the focus and 'force' students to apply their thinking in a standardised way or compare the level of understanding in various students. These are assignments that have specific questions that guide students on what to answer, how to answer, etc. They are also used in many aptitude tests and help students gain enough academic experience to tackle as many problems as possible in life.

Some of the assessments come in form of tables, short questions and other guiding documents to assist examiners in whatever skills they want to assess. They may tell you the number of words you need to answer, while some can tell you what to include/exclude from your responses; all you need to do is show that you can understand any type of instruction and comply, failure to which stipulated penalties may apply.

Checklist:

Before submitting your template-based assignment check for the following:

Component	Yes/No
- do you have a list of all key verbs in every question?	
- does your answers' wording match the questions?	
- do your answers overlap outside the allocated boundaries?	
- did you comply with all instructions?	

Table 8: Checklist of all items required in template-based assignment.

☐ For a full list of keywords used in assessments, please see the glossary at the end of this book.

1.9   PARTS OF A DATA-RESPONSE BASED ASSIGNMENT (SHORT QUESTIONS)

Purpose: Almost like the template, this is a list of multiple short questions to check the level of understanding on key academic words and assessment terminology.

How to answer:

The short questions are also guided by keywords and you need to identify the key activity/ keywords/verb/noun, e.g., If a question says "how will you treat a gunshot wound on a 22-year-old?" you need to include words like "I will", "the reason being/because" and "gunshot wounds" in your response. All that is required is to be consistent and proving to all readers that you understood the question and covered every aspect.

Checklist:

Before submitting your data response-based assignment, check for the following:

Component	Yes/No
- -do you have a list of all key verbs in every question?	
- -does your answers' wording match the questions?	
- -do your answers overlap outside the allocated boundaries?	
- -did you comply with all instructions?	

Table 9: Checklist of all items required in data-response assignment.

☐ For a full list of keywords used in assessments, please see the glossary at the end of this book.

1.10 PARTS OF A LITERATURE-REVIEW ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: To show the depth of the writer's knowledge on the topic and position one's study area in the overall research field; it involves a thorough study of existing literature in a particular area of study, analysing and evaluating it with the objective of identifying outstanding areas currently unaddressed and introducing one's own research. Readers get the chance to understand the extent to which your research will go in changing the landscape.

1.10.1 INTRODUCTION

Begin by sharing some background information on the topic and explaining your motivations for conducting the literature search. You detail your overall research area/objectives so that readers can understand the field to which it applies. You can also explain the sequence you will follow, the scope, exclusions and major highlights to be encountered.

1.10.2 BODY

This is the main area where you need to prove that you know the subject very well. You analyse your literature in detail, categorising the types of reference works according to similarities. You can show the relationships, explain trends, examine their methodologies and even analyse the authors' backgrounds/qualifications/credibility to help readers understand the depth those sources contain.

It is also wise to conduct a thorough evaluation, highlighting the strong points and exposing the limitations of each source/category of sources. This shows the readers the extent to which the current literature has gone in addressing the problems in the field under research and helps them understand the extent/amount of knowledge currently available on the subject.

1.10.3 CONCLUSION

Finally, you summarise what the whole document has been about. Remind the readers about the objectives of the literature review. Show them the points of convergence/divergence within the current literature and identify the outstanding issues that the current literature has failed to address.

You conclude the literature review by showing readers how your own research will differ from the rest, what unique areas it will focus on and how it will, to some extent, fill the gaps you identified. This shows the relevance of the research area and builds the anticipation for your overall research report as well.

Checklist:

Before submitting your literature review essay, ensure it has:

- **An introduction with**	- the background information sentence	**Yes/No**
	- thesis statement/your motivations	
	- literature review objectives	
	- sequence/inclusions/exclusions	
- **Body paragraphs each with**	- thorough explanation of the topic	
	- descriptions of sources	
	- background/credibility of authors	
	- methodology of the sources.	
	- strengths/limitations of current literature	
	- other relevant details	
- **Conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the essay started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- an overview of the topic and its related literature	

	- summarise the strengths, limitations, points of agreement/disagreements in the current literature	
	- -identify gaps/flaws/outstanding areas in the field	
	- introduce/position your own research	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	
	- any other relevant details	

Table 10: Checklist of all items required in a literature-review assignment.

1.11 OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

Multiple-choice questions:

Purpose: To test a student understands on the smallest of details (an attempt to move away from broader answers to the more specific)

This is a high-risk environment where you need to show your definite subject knowledge by being able to pick the right answer among a few closely competing/similar ones. It also tests your ability to make the right decisions in a short period of time and other aptitude abilities. There is no substitute here other than knowing your subject well and answering only by providing the required letter, symbol, Roman numeral or a simple "Yes/No" or "True/false".

2 PART B: ACADEMIC GRAMMAR

Objectives:

Unlike social language, academic writing must be useable across various disciplines since it is the kind of information we use to solve life's most critical problems. This means what we write must be clear, unambiguous and beneficial to all kinds of readers. With that in mind, the following pages will help you present your work in very neat, tidy and professional styles through eliminating common grammatical mistakes and utilising universal standards in the process.

Common academic grammatical mistakes:

2.1 COMPLETE/PROPER SENTENCES

In order to present complete/proper sense, everything starts with a sentence in academic writing. A complete sentence needs at least one of these two elements:

a) Subject-predicate combination:
You can present complete ideas by simply ensuring every sentence has its own subject (who/what you are talking about) and predicate (what is happening to the subject).

e.g. *"The dog (subject) died (predicate)."*

b) Subject-verb-complement combination:
Some sentences can still sound incomplete even when there is a predicate and the trick is in expanding the predicate and making sure it properly describes either the verb or the subject:

e.g. *Aaron (Subject) is (Verb) a good carpenter (Complement).*

With the above elements, all your sentences will be complete and focused; this leads to properly constructed paragraphs which will, eventually, contribute key information containing sound academic sense to your readers (failure to comply with this rule will result in one presenting dependent clauses*, which look like, but will never be independent clauses** required to provide a complete sentence. Your assignment, like a picture puzzle, needs perfectly crafted blocks of information, all serving a grand purpose and the relevant the pieces are, the more beautiful the final complete picture will be. Therefore, start with complete/proper sentences and your work will be on the right track.

Common mistakes here include beginning sentences with dependent clauses, often presenting 'half ideas', e.g. *'Also, the Agricultural students as well.'* or *'Then, the main part of the program.'* Both these sentences seem to imply that they are continuing from a previous thought but that must be avoided. Each sentence requires its own subject-predicate/subject-verb-complement combination e.g. "This is expected from all, including the Agricultural students" or "Gradually, the main part of the program commenced…"

* 'depends' on another clause; needs adjustments to make complete sense.

** stands on its own and is complete without any additions/alterations.

2.2   SENTENCE COMBINATIONS

Many students, despite having complete and properly constructed sentences, fail to combine them with other key pieces of relevant information and still end up with ambiguous

sentences/paragraphs. That is the reason why we must follow academic conventions when it comes to forming sentences using more than one clause. While it is advisable to write short sentences and discuss one idea at a time, there are times when different thoughts need to be combined in order to make proper sense to the readers. Examples here include 'run-on' sentences, 'cliff-hangers', complex sentences and many facts that are simply written parallel to one another without a clear focus.

E.g., Sentence 1: "This is a dog."

Sentence 2: "I want to buy the dog."

Common mistakes:

"This is a dog I want to buy it." (No comma/punctuation at all).

"This is a dog, I want to buy it." (Only a comma between independent clauses).

Proper use:

"This is a dog, and I want to buy it." (Using the comma and conjunction).

"This is the dog that I want to buy." (Using a conjunction).

"This is a dog; I want to buy it." (Using a semicolon).

"This is a dog. I want to buy it." (Using the period and capital letter).

Using proper punctuation/combination techniques improves the sense, the cohesion and the conciseness of the academic work, eliminating all sorts of ambiguities that may arise on the way.

2.3   COMMAS

These are short breaks in sentences that enable readers to pause for a short while, to absorb a point, introduce important elements or separate various aspects of a sentence among others. They are very important in helping readers understand the main points, avoid combining unrelated elements and in maintaining a steady, regulated and convenient reading pace that facilitates a better retention of the reading material.

Common mistakes:

I woke up, went to the store, bought the bread, and went back home (Leave only 'and' at the end; the comma is not necessary after exhausting all possible points).

This is Peter, and Anna… (Avoid using the comma between the compound noun; we hardly say 'Peter, and Anna' but always leave it as 'Peter and Anna').

As I was walking this car came to me… (Forgetting the comma after the introductory element).

James, is running with the ball now. (The comma is separating the noun from its verb here).

Proper usage examples:

As I was walking home, a car came to me… (Use a comma after the introductory text).

I was saying, for example, this is not the way we must go… (Use commas before and after introductory text in the middle of a sentence).

I woke up, went to the store, bought the bread and went back home… (Use commas to separate your points in a sentence).

He went complaining all the way, making us wonder why he had come in the first place… (Use the comma to help readers pause and apply more concentration on the important point at the end of the sentence).

☐ One can see the ambiguity that arises should the comas be removed in any of the areas shown above. Thus, the proper usage of the comma will help readers understand everything without unnecessary delays as seen.

2.4 DETERMINERS

These are short and enhancing words like articles, possessives, quantifiers and others that are added before a noun to provide more details on it. Without determiners, readers my remain with many unanswered questions on the *what, why, how, where* aspect of a matter and fail to make sense of the whole context, especially, if the words used could be open to many interpretations.

e.g. **Wrong**: *"I am driving car right now…"*

Many readers may start to wonder, "What type of car? Whose car? How important? How many know about the car? and so forth." Look at how the determiner changes everything and clarifies the noun beyond reasonable doubt:

"The car." (This shows that it is an obvious case; the reader is familiar with the vehicle/ is reasonably expected to know it since the determiner implies a major/specific emphasis).

"A car." (This could be any ordinary, unknown vehicle and that requires no further investigation since the object is of lesser importance).

"My/Your/His/Their car." (Indicates who owns it; a possessive relationship can also imply value and show the reader how the writer views the object).

"That car." (This points to a specific location or invokes certain memories in the reader to remember).

"One car." (The number also clarifies the number of people involved and gives them a mind picture of the extent of the matter, etc.

*Readers always assume that any of the above words may have been omitted in the, *"I am driving car right now…"* sentence and it will be wise to provide the accurate determiner together with the noun in the first place.

2.5   SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

This is the ability to match the subjects (what you are talking about) and their verbs/actions in a way that is readily understandable, non-ambiguous and straight-forward. In order to eliminate ambiguity in our sentences, we must use the proper verbs for the correct subjects and avoid using singular verbs for plural subjects and vice-versa (Beginning with a plural subject and later using a singular verb is likely to cause readers to go back to see if they omitted the 'singular' subject on the way and cause even further delays while they examine the plural subject to check if it is not the 'singular' term they are looking for and vice-versa). However, this changes in the present tense where you are expected to use singular nouns with plural verbs and vice-versa. Let's take a look at some examples:

Proper use:

e.g. (1) General: "The boys (plural subject) are (plural verb) welcome here."

Or "The boy (single subject) is (plural verb) welcome here."

(2) Present tense: "The dog (single subject) walks (plural verb)".

Or "The dogs (plural subject) walk (single verb).

Common mistakes:

Wrong: Peter, Anne and John is walking (The subject is a compound noun which is considered as a plural and, meaning the verb is expected to be plural as well).

Correct: Peter, Anne and John are walking.

Wrong: Peter, Anne and John walks here everyday. (The subject is a compound noun/plural but, in the present tense, the verb must be singular).

Correct: Peter, Anne and John walk here everyday.

Wrong: The effect allow them to do this and that.

Correct: The **effect allows** them to do this and that.

Wrong: The effects allows them to do this and that.

Correct: The **effects allow** them to do this and that.

2.6   PREPOSITIONS

These are words used in linking other words like, especially, nouns, pronouns and others, showing/clarifying the relationships between them. They indicate direction, intensity, manner, extent, methodologies and describe many other activities clearly and omitting them results in a lot of ambiguities.

Common mistakes:

I am going to get my results for school (wrong preposition).*

I am going to get my results school (omission).*

Proper use:

'I am going to get my results from school.'

Certain verbs go with certain prepositions and are hard to interchange. E.g. "According to the source/Depending on the outcome." One cannot say, *"According on the source/Depending to the outcome."* It is, therefore, important to use the dictionary and get the meaning/usage examples of the preposition before including it in a sentence because they don't just go with any word, while omitting them would be even more disastrous.

*The improper use of the preposition confuses the readers on the link/relationship between the two nouns (i.e., 'results' and 'school') as shown.

2.7   COMPOUND WORDS

These are expressions constructed through combining two or more words to form an adjective that describes another word/activity in the sentence. They are formed using a hyphen in between the two or more words e.g. "*first-year student"/"five-year-old girl".*

In this case, the term "first-year" is describing the type of "student" under discussion while "five-year-old" shares additional details on the type of 'girl' in the sentence. Without a hyphen, e.g. "first year student"/"five year old girl" a lot of ambiguities may arise and prompt readers to ask themselves if you mean a "year student" who simply happens to be the "first" or 'five girls' who are a 'year-old each' and the intended meaning is easily lost that way. Always make sure you include these forms of punctuation even when they seem insignificant.

2.8   SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION (ADJECTIVES)

Adjectives are describing words used to clarify the nature of the word/s adjacent to them. Students sometimes make the mistake of writing adjectives without any noun next to them and leave readers 'hanging', looking for additional clues to help them understand the general direction of the story. Sometimes, it is rather the attempt to describe nouns using other nouns that brings the ambiguity.

Common mistakes:

*This is a good… (only an adjective and no noun).**

*This is an emotion (noun) situation (noun).**

Proper use:

This is a good (adjective) car (noun).

This is an emotional (adjective) situation (noun).

☐ Note the confusion caused by omitting the adjective entirely (first example) and that of forgetting to adapt the noun into an adjective (second example). All these are essential elements of a sentence and, without them, your work cannot present complete/proper sense.

2.9   TENSES

These are the modifications made on the verbs used in order to accurately reflect the timeframes, settings and sequences of events. Proper use of tenses will help you ensure your events add up and your facts are credible. On the other hand, any work that uses random tenses, 'e.g. *I wake up yesterday and went to work tomorrow and came back next week, play soccer last year and will give them their money the previous month*' is likely to leave readers guessing what happened when; they are not likely to understand what has actually happened, what will happen and what will not happen out of everything you said. Here are the various types of tenses to expect in academic writing:

a) The Present Tenses:
These describe what is currently happening and can be narrowed down to three categories as follows:

i) Present Simple Tense:
This is activity already in the process of occurring or occurs more often, e.g., *I eat*.

ii) Present Perfect Tenses:
This may have occurred in the past (not specific) but the most important thing is that it continued until *today* .e.g., *I have eaten in this restaurant till now.*

iii)Present Continuous Tenses:
The activity is happening now and will continue into the future. e.g*., I am eating.*

b) The Past Tenses

These activities happened in the past but care must be exercised if they kept continuing, stopped completely or were succeeded by other events and so on. Choose the right tense for your words from the following categories:

i) Past Simple Tenses:

This happened and ended in the past e.g., *I ate*

ii) Past Perfect Tenses:

It happened and ended in the past (particularly introducing something that happened after it) e.g., *I had eaten.*

iii) Past Continuous Tenses:

The activity began in the past and lasted/continued for some time but ended in the past, e.g., *I was eating.*

Past Perfect Continuous Tenses:

The activity began in the past and lasted/continued for some time but ended in the past before something else began, e.g. *I had been eating.*

    c) Future Tenses

       This hasn't happened and is expected to take place at a date/time to be determined later.

         i) Simple Future Tenses:

           This hasn't happened at all and is still an intention, e.g. *I will eat.*

         ii) Future Perfect Tenses:

           The action will be completed at a certain time or will happen before another action succeeds it, e.g., *I will have eaten.*

         iii)Future Continuous Tenses:

           It will happen and continue for a while (or happen before something, e.g., *I will be eating.*

Future Perfect Continuous

The action begins now or in the past but will continue into the foreseeable future, e.g., *I will have been eating.*

    ☐ It is, therefore, wise to determine the type of tense that one wants to use in advance. An example is when I want to use the word 'eat' in a sentence. To decide on its proper tense, I have to ask myself:

         i) *'When did/will I eat?'*
         ii) *'Is the activity continuing/currently happening/has been happening/will happen?'*
         iii)*'When did/will it end?'*

The answer to the above questions will help me understand the category of the tense I am looking for, whether it is the present/past/future and its sub-category and/or if it is the perfect simple/continuous, etc. I can then go to the dictionary and check for the word 'eat' in its present/future/past/continuous/perfect tense for the exact word I will use in the sentence. Without the proper tenses, your work won't add up and many contexts will lose the logic required.

2.10 CONFUSING VERBS FOR NOUNS ETC

Many students struggle with seeing the difference between verbs (doing words) and nouns (naming words) and sometimes confuse one for the other.

e.g. mistaking the word 'practice' (noun) for 'practise' (verb).

or 'affect' (verb) for 'effect' (noun).

Wrong: 'I will practice (noun) the Maths solutions this afternoon.'

Proper usage: 'I will practise (verb) the Maths solutions this afternoon.'

Wrong:' This is a practise (verb) exercise and not the real test.'

Proper usage: 'This is a practice (noun) exercise and not the real test.'

Wrong: 'The affect (verb) of inflation on the poor is devastating.'

Proper usage: 'The effect (noun) of inflation on the poor is devastating.'

It is recommended/advisable to double-check one's spellings since they may rhyme but still carry huge differences in meaning. One can notice how confusing it is to use the verb instead of the noun and vice-versa from the above examples. It will be wise to ask oneself, "am I seeking to name something" (noun required) or "provide an action" (verb required) in this sentence?" The answer is likely to lead you to the dictionary spelling of the word when used as either a verb or noun and ensure your work makes proper sense to the readers.

2.11 PUNCTUATION MARKS (APOSTROPHE)

The apostrophe is the short-cut for establishing ownership relationships in sentences. Instead of writing "the car belonging to Aaron" or "The car that was bought by Aaron", you can simply say "Aaron's car" as a short cut.

Note that the apostrophe moves to the end of the word if it is a plural. E.g., 'the egg's shell' (singular) changes to, 'the eggs' shells' (plural).

 Some students use the apostrophe in modifying words into plurals, e.g*., in the 1970's* (instead of in the 1970s), which is also wrong. The apostrophe implies there is an ownership

relationship and any other uses are likely to cause more confusion than bring solutions. It would be wise to revisit all places where the apostrophe has been used in the work to ensure these errors are eliminated before submission.

2.12 PUNCTUATION (ORDINARY WORDS)

One other issue that could confuse readers is the way students write ordinary words using capital letters, making them resemble proper nouns and other terms.

e.g., *"This is My Car that I Bought yesterday."*

We usually write proper nouns, names of places, people, etc., in capitals and readers usually pause for a moment while trying to recollect and check if there are characters that they might have missed in the story. The trick is in avoiding capitalising any ordinary words in the sentence except if they appear at the beginning of sentences.

2.13 PUNCTUATION (PROPER NOUNS)

There is one more area that needs proper attention to avoid deliberately misleading your readers, i.e., the proper identification of the main subjects/characters of the story. Some writers make the mistake of presenting proper nouns using small letters, making them resemble ordinary text in the process.

e.g. "I wanted to see *mark* yesterday but couldn't find him"

Please note the ambiguity that results, especially, since "mark" could be an object and the pronoun "him" confuses readers on the actual type of subject "mark" is in this case.

Proper use:

e.g. "I wanted to see Mark yesterday but couldn't find him."

Everything now points to a proper noun and the ambiguity is eliminated, all thanks to the Capital 'M' in the sentence.

2.14 PUNCTUATION (FOREIGN NOUNS)

It is a fact languages often evolve and so does English. There are many other words in English that originated from many languages and still do not have close synonyms in the everyday language until now and have to be used as they are for the time being. Because many ordinary English readers are not familiar with such terms, it is better to show them using proper punctuation marks that they must not be taken in their ordinary/literal context.

There are so many Latin words like *"spina bifida occulta", "mens rea"* and *"actus reus"* that can confuse readers if they don't immediately identify them as foreign and not literal English. Please use italics, inverted commas and other forms of punctuation to differentiate them from ordinary text.

2.15 PUNCTUATION (PERIOD)

Standard English sentences begin with a capital letter and end with the period/full-stop. This helps readers understand where a thought begins and ends and shows the major separation between important ideas. Mistakes do arise when mentioning in-text citations where the period either gets misplaced/omitted in the process:

Common mistakes:

e.g., This is going to help the community at large. (Jones, 2010)

Proper use:

e.g., 'This is going to help the community at large (Jones, 2010).'

Please do not forget that the period must come right after the citation and be the very last item in the sentence (because it is part of the sentence).

2.16 DIALOGUE/DIRECT QUOTES FORMATTING

When we use the exact words that were spoken by the character in the story, we need to use proper punctuation using commas, inverted quotes and ensure we mention the speaker either in the end or at the beginning. Many inconsistencies can arise if it is unclear as to who is talking, about what, etc.

e.g.

Common mistakes:

I want to go home now said Mary OR

John said of course you have been working hard today (No punctuation).

"John said of course you have been working hard today." (Inverted commas enclosed both the direct quote and the introductory statement).

Proper usage:

"I want to go home now", said Mary.

John said, "Of course, you have been working hard today."

Without proper punctuation, it is hard to bring the message properly to your readers. There are certain subjects that require different punctuation to distinguish between the speaker and the quotes, e.g., in literature/plays where the speaker in a dialogue is written in capital letters and a colon, while their actions are italicised and kept in parentheses. All these must be taken into consideration when writing different types of assignments.

2.17 PUNCTUATION (SEMICOLON)

The problem here is using this punctuation mark in many places where the comma, the period or the colon are required. One major use of the semi-colon is to separate major thoughts in a sentence or split it into several independent but related thoughts.

e.g.

Common mistakes:

"I will go home; eat dinner; cook and; go outside and play." (Commas must be used to separate thoughts/points in a sentence).

"The qualities of a good car include; a good engine, nice wheels, leather interior etc." (The semicolon is not required here).

Proper use:

"He showed me the evidence that could exonerate him from the case; a lot of papers were fraudulently obtained and signatures had been forged." (These sentences are complete and

can stand each on its own but they are related and cannot be written 'far' from each other; to preserve the continuity of the thought, they are written almost like one sentence, hence, the involvement of the semicolon),

Avoid using it to introduce other points in a sentence or even in separating points in one sentence as that is the job of the comma.

2.18 USE OF ADVERBS

While adjectives (explained earlier) are mostly used in describing nouns, this is a word or phrase that clarifies the nature of another word, usually a verb, adjective or another adverb in a sentence. It often provides additional details in terms of the timing, setting, manner or intensity and can be formed through modifying adjectives. (e.g. "*general*", an adjective changes to "*generally*", "*happy* to *happily*", "*angry* to *angrily*", "*serious* to *seriously*," etc). You can use them to describe a group of words or even entire sentences; e.g.

Common mistakes:

> *"The system was not complete (adjective) overthrown (verb)..."*

Proper use:

> *"The system was not completely (adverb) overthrown (verb)..."*

☐ The first example shows how difficult it is to attempt to describe the verb using a simple adjective and that is where the adverb will often come in. Students must ask themselves, 'Do I intend to describe a noun (adjective required) or a verb/adjective/adverb (adverb required)?' By considering the requirements of each context and adapting accordingly, the work eventually 'gathers steam' and presents a strong outlook.

Spellings (General):

One other area that needs attention is the use of rhyming words with minor variations in spellings but leading to bigger impacts in the meaning behind such sentences.

There are many problems when students fail to recognise the difference between *"weather they want..."* and "whether they want", *"there consumers"* and "the/their consumers" among other areas. It is advisable to use a spell-checker or manually check the meanings of all spellings used in the dictionary to ensure the work is not ambiguous before submitting.

2.19 DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

These are pronouns that introduce to specific objects in a sentence and they usually suggest the quantities and nature of the items in the sentence. An example is *this*, *that*, *these* and *those*, etc.

Common mistakes:

"These is a car."

"This are cars."

Proper use:

"This is a car." (Singular demonstrative with a singular noun).

"Those are cars." (Plural demonstrative with a plural noun).

   ☐ One must be careful to use a singular demonstrative for a single noun and a plural demonstrative for a plural noun, failure to which complications could arise.

2.20 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICANISED ENGLISH

These two types of languages are almost similar but carrying huge differences in their points of divergence. Americanised spellings mostly use a "z" where the British language normally uses an "s". Other spelling differences include "favor/labor/center" where the British variants use the format "favour/labour/centre". Further differences are seen in the double negatives like "this ain't nothing/my clothes don't fit no more" etc. The writer needs to understand which type of English they are inclined to and ensure they are consistent with it; avoid confusing/mixing both variants in the same document as that shows lack of order/focus.

3 PART C: ACADEMIC VOCABULARY ENHANCEMENTS

Objectives of this section:

Writing properly understandable sentences is not only limited to using the correct use of grammar and spellings alone but there are also many other features required. Just as we know that a cake does not only need flour and sugar alone but there are many 'smaller' ingredients that, when absent, still result in the loss of 'flavour' and the overall enjoyment/ satisfaction is still lost/reduced. Likewise with academic writing, there are many additional words that provide the final touches, iron out the 'gaps' and show proper/sound subject knowledge or cohesion between your thoughts. The following pages broaden the reader's understanding of certain words necessary to spice up their work.

Word choices per subject:

Academic writing, although the same across all disciplines, must be tailored specifically towards each particular subject/field for it to appeal to the right people in the right way. This means using special wording for special contexts. For example, 'showing one's teeth' can mean a smile if the character is a human being but it shows extreme aggression when it is a dog doing it. Likewise, 'Crossing the line' (annoying/provoking someone/invading privacy) is usually considered a bad thing that needs to be avoided in general/social circles but it is the most sought after activity in rugby and in soccer! One might need to carefully consider their vocabulary when writing, consider the subject, think about the readers and how they will likely react and choose the appropriate wording before proceeding (because, as mentioned earlier, the use of the phrase '*so-and-so crossed the line with the ball/the ball crossed the [goal] line*' is likely to be greeted with enthusiasm in sport, while, in a novel, rage is stirred up when one says, 'this time, he had obviously crossed the line and there was no going back').

There are many verbs/phrases/nouns/etc. applying to Science, Business, Economics, Mathematics, Finance, etc that can be used to spice up your work now and then in order to easily appeal to your readers and convince them of your perfect subject knowledge; simply avoid veering from the basics, keeping your grammar/tone calm, cautious and clear. This requires widening your research and using more than one generic dictionary since there are many Scientific, Business, Economics, Biology, History, Engineering, Religious encyclopaedias and many others out there to help you impress the examiners with your accurately crafted vocabulary.

Transitional devices:

This is a very important non-grammatical issue that is gaining significance every day. Although assignments contain many points, readers are only able to understand them if there is a common theme that flows from the beginning to the end. Many students make the mistake of constructing 'stand-alone' sentences/points that 'selfishly'/'independently' further their own points without fostering the unity between them and the other points in the sentence/paragraph. However, through the use of transitional terms (the words and phrases used to connect one's points), one can improve the connection between their major points and present a sound, coherent, consistent and unified idea. Here is an example:

(Before) No transitions:

This is a car. I bought the car. I did not like the car. It has a faulty airbag. It also looks old-fashioned. It is very fast and fuel efficient. It is hard for me to make a decision. I do not have money to maintain it. I will return the car to the dealership tomorrow.

(After) With transitions:

This is the car **that** I bought. It has a faulty airbag **and** it also looks old-fashioned. **However**, it is very fast and fuel efficient. **Honestly**, it is hard for me to make a decision **at the moment**. **Nevertheless/Despite all the good things**, I do not have money to maintain it and, **because of that**, I will return it to the dealership tomorrow.

☐ All sentences above are grammatically correct in conventional English and there is no single mistake in them but they do not look or even sound appealing in the first example. One can tell that, without these words in bold, many questions arise as to how those terms are related and it only makes proper sense when transitional elements are included between the thoughts. One can use words like "on the other hand, over and above all, fortunately, in addition, accordingly, at the same time, additionally, similarly, after all, on the contrary, again, all in all, however, nevertheless, eventually, with all things considered, essentially, as a result...etc." to show the connections between their thoughts and present unified ideas.

Colloquialisms:

Many sentences, although grammatically correct, lack an academic appeal through the use of slang terms like "dude/guys/mom/dad/kid/etc" since they are, sometimes, considered too informal for academic purposes. For the readers to take you and your discussions, findings, recommendations and suggestions seriously, you will need to avoid using terms that also show a casual approach/lack of seriousness and use words you would normally use in a formal situation like an employment interview or when conversing with a very important individual.

Passive voice/Indirect/Impersonal approach:

Academic writing in general is about considering many opposing sides and making a balanced judgement and that requires us to be neutral. We need to refrain from 'personalising' the

lessons by using words like "my/our essay/article" and "I/we will do this/that…" The use of passive statements like, "it has to be done…", "the article" and other conventions can make the assignment even more credible since it doesn't keep giving undue glory to the reader.

Use of the third person perspective:

Academic writing is all about the theories, methodologies, approaches and conventions and is never about the individuals behind them. This means we need to adopt a neutral, third person/observer position in order to be judged as unbiased and focused. There comes a certain point where we must avoid using words like "you/your" in the essay, seemingly communicating with/about the reader. We do not use that approach except when the assignment is in form of a letter addressed to an individual, when designing a user's manual, preparing a recipe or when expressly allowed to do so by the examiner. Students are expected to use words like, "one/they/etc." to remain objective and credible in the readers' eyes (unless, of course, when instructed otherwise).

Reflective language:

Some essays, contrary to the above, are reflection-based, designed to help you share your own journey and understand how you have developed due to a recent exposure. Some students make the mistake of using generalised approaches and talking less about themselves, which is against the requirements. When the question says, "narrate your journey", one must avoid presenting information that has been researched and adapted from several scholars because there is absolutely no chance all of you could have experienced the same thing. Therefore, students must avoid theoretical assumptions and the use of passive sentences like "It should be acknowledged that..." which are the direct opposite of the phrases like, "I must acknowledge this and that..." required for a reflection. Try making everything about you and share, mostly, relevant/important details that will help readers learn one or two valuable lessons from you.

Over-exaggerations and inappropriate language:

These are words used in order to have a greater emotional impact on their audience. Sometimes, writers can 'overplay their hand' in a desperate attempt to influence readers to respond in some way or support a certain perspective and resort to exaggerations and dramatic expressions (which, sort of, misrepresent the facts in the context). Words like "as if that was not enough/if it were you, wouldn't you have done the same..? etc., may invoke biased feelings from the reader and defeat the objective of the assignment, that of conveying the facts/accurate picture. Although using one of those words once or twice might not be that bad, their repeated use in almost every major area may be showing a recurring habit and will require further introspection. We must always endeavour to use facts/clarifications to reach the minds/hearts of our readers.

Courteous/Polite language:

Certain assignments could be in form of a business letter or any document where a certain measure of courtesy/respect must be extended to individual/s. The way we address people in high offices also reflects on the kind of person we are and we need to vary our wording there. There are many words that must be avoided at this stage, words that make it sound like one is assuming they already know everything about them, e.g. "As you have seen in my resume...." (what if they haven't seen anything?) Other words may sound more like one is "nagging" them or "bragging" and this is unethical (e.g., I have a lot of qualifications and I AM A GOOD CANDIDATE" or jumping to conclusions by saying "I hope you will give me the job" – (what if there are still some more interviews as per company protocol?)

The best approach is to stay humble and say, "I will avail myself to any further assessments should the need arise" and leave the rest of the processes to the relevant authorities.

Effective use of Analytic/Evaluative language:

There are many assignments that will require an in-depth, neutral, objective and professional discussion of various aspects of a subject matter and needs to comply well with these definitions:

1) Analytical language: terms that are used in showing/proving relationships, implications and connections between words in sentences. Such terms help in establishing important facts so that the readers can reach important assumptions/conclusions on their own (e.g. this implies/leads to/results in/is caused by/etc.).

2) Evaluative language: shows the relevance of an issue. This is a balanced discussion that exposes both the good and the bad side of something and helps readers understand the quality/worthiness and related aspects of the context (e.g. this is weak/strong here and there/ir/relevant in this and that/serves this and that purpose/etc.).

Before drafting one's work/assignment, they may need to consult a variety of sources for all "forms of analytic/evaluative vocabulary" and include those types of words/phrases before submitting.

4 PART D: LARGER RESEARCH PROJECTS/THESES/ DISSERTATIONS

Objectives of this section:

By now, students must be familiar with Essays, Reports and various types of assignments, all which give them an opportunity to prove their readiness to conduct larger projects like the above mentioned documents which often form the final requirements in the fulfillment of academic degrees/courses. You will realise how important it is to understand the dynamics of answering essay questions, structuring reports, constructing proper sentences/paragraphs, organising facts into logical categories, formulating thesis statements/hypotheses, summarising, presenting introductions, conclusions and recommendations and many other relevant issues since they will all be called into action here.

Although each institution has its own requirements and expectations in terms of structure, content, length, approach, there are, however, many areas of convergence that must be adhered upon and this guide will focus on those general aspects, giving simplified explanations of the key areas so as to help the readers understand the requirements even better. Most dissertations contain the following:

Title:

Since the dissertation can be the property of the academic institution (unless agreed otherwise), it is very important to structure it according to the requirements of that particular institution. The outside cover contains the name of the University/Organisation sponsoring the research, the name of the research project, its research area, the author's name, student identity and other details as required.

Copyright instructions:

The information on how the work is to be used, distributed and the limitations applicable will be included here. A large section of this page is usually left blank if the author grants unlimited rights to reproduce the work and when there is hardly anything to acknowledge from any other authors who might have indirectly/directly contributed to the thesis' existence.

Abstract:

Also called the synopsis, this is the summary of the whole report, detailing everything from the purpose/objective of the report, a summary of the methods, hypotheses, results, conclusions and/or recommendations made.

Dedication/Acknowledgements:

The author may seek to properly acknowledge/recognise the help they received and extend individual expressions of appreciation towards anyone who may have participated in one way or the other. It can include thanking them for all types of help including emotional, physical, academic, financial, spiritual, etc. deemed to have been crucial in the production of the document.

Table of Contents:

This is the list of topics, detailed information contained in the report, their location, order and structure. It is strategically located in the beginning and is always useful for ease of reference and access to information. It also aids readers in understanding the depth of the report and consistency with most academic conventions.

List of Tables/Figures/Illustrations:

This can be an extension of the table of contents to provide specific locations of key information and specific objects that aid the understanding of certain details. These forms of objects contain information of very notable significance and, therefore, a lot of emphasis needs to be placed on their accessibility.

List of Abbreviations:

There are many terms that can be used in the work and unnecessarily lengthen the contexts to the readers' inconvenience. An example is when the research is concerned with "Contemporary African Human Resources Management" and one has to repeat that name over 200 times in the project. Instead of writing the whole name each time, an acronym can be used, e.g. CAHRM but its explanation needs to be provided in this list to guide readers on its intepretaiton before they start reading.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

This is the description of the research area; it presents the pertinent issue that needs to be solved, addressed or improved with the research. In other words, this is a description of the purpose of the whole research. You detail exactly what the problem is, who it applies to, when it occurred and address the "why" aspects thereof.

4.1.2 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

As the name suggests, you need to share the importance of the research and justify its existence. Mention the area that the research seeks to address whether it seeks to fulfill a religious, social need or something else. The reasons given must be understandable and easy to accept, otherwise, readers may feel the research was unnecessary/not that important.

4.1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION/S

This is the narrowing down of the research areas and translating it into actionable statements. The question formulated around the research area is answerable in a way that is easy to expand, elaborate on and provide workable solutions. To cover specific details in the research, the question is broken down into several units so that a concise/comprehensive result encompassing many aspects can be obtained.

4.1.4 HYPOTHESES

In order to get the research started, the researcher needs to widen out their approach and consider a few possible solutions to their problem. The hypothesis is the speculated answer to the research question that the researcher has in mind when conducting the study. The research later tests the hypotheses and proves them either right or wrong and eliminates the confusion that may have been experienced in the beginning.

4.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose: To show the depth of the writer's knowledge on the topic and position one's study area in the overall research field; it involves a thorough study of existing literature in a particular area of study, analysing and evaluating it with the objective of identifying outstanding areas currently unaddressed and introducing one's own research. Readers get the chance to understand the extent to which your research will go in changing the landscape.

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Begin by sharing some background information on the topic and explaining your motivations for conducting the literature search. You detail your overall research area/objectives so that readers can understand the field to which it applies. You can also explain the sequence you will follow, the scope, exclusions and major highlights to be encountered.

4.2.2 BODY

This is the main area where you need to prove that you know the subject very well. You analyse your literature in detail, categorising the types of reference works according to similarities. You can show the relationships, explain trends, examine their methodologies and even analyse the authors' backgrounds/qualifications/credibility to help readers understand the depth those sources contain.

It is also wise to conduct a thorough evaluation, highlighting the strong points and exposing the limitations of each source/category of sources. This shows the readers the extent to which the current literature has gone in addressing the problems in the field under research and helps them understand the extent/amount of knowledge currently available on the subject.

4.2.3 CONCLUSION

Finally, you summarise what the whole document has been about. Remind the readers about the objectives of the literature review. Show them the points of convergence/divergence within the current literature and identify the outstanding issues that the current literature has failed to address.

You conclude the literature review by showing readers how your own research will differ from the rest, what unique areas it will focus on and how it will, to some extent, fill the gaps you identified. This shows the relevance of the research area and builds the anticipation for your overall research report as well.

4.3   METHODOLOGY

This is the main section where the research is actually carried out; it begins with thorough preparations, observations of key protocols and the gathering of resources to ensure a smooth flow of processes throughout. It, therefore, includes the following:

4.3.1 A DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION/PARTICIPANTS

Researches are achieved using humans, animals, machines, objects and any relevant items that can be effectively compared, measured and analysed. This section is dedicated towards the detailed descriptions of the sample population, the features, characteristics, dimensions and other aspects. Including participants who once cheated, of an unworthy ethical standing and many with a conflict of interest is likely to interfere with the results and defeat the objective of the research. Therefore, care must be exercised when selecting the population, sample size and the composition of the sample; always ensure there is variety and equal representation of all possible/relevant sectors for a neutral, unbiased and focused report.

4.3.2 MATERIALS/RESOURCES

A credible research is easy to determine from the materials used in the process. A whole list of material resources used, the tools, consumables, setting, etc. is likely to show good progress if they are relevant to the area. For example, an investigation into the fuel consumption levels of petrol cars can only make sense and bring credible, usable results if mostly petrol cars are used in the study; it will confuse readers and leave more doubts if buses, diesel vehicles, bicycles or even pedestrians are only mentioned throughout. Mention the materials and their relevant contribution to the study.

4.3.3 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS/METRICS

How the outcome will be measured is very important in establishing a universal research. You will need to define the millimeters/liters, miles, degrees or other relevant metrics that will be used in the study. However, because researches have to be new/innovative, you may have to come up with your own measures and make sure you properly define them. An example is when you are investigating a certain behaviour in dogs and you want to use the manner in which they wag their tails as a sign of happiness/anger/sadness. You are allowed to use that as a metric/unit of measurement as long as you properly explain it to the readers.

4.3.4 PROCEDURES

The credibility of a research and its outcomes are valid as long as proper methods have been used in their extraction/processing. Data collection methods must be proper and relevant to the study for them to produce credible results. You need to ensure you describe the primary, secondary and other methods of data collection used and show how relevant they are to your research.

4.3.5 PROCESSES

This is the actual research activity. You describe what you are going to do with the materials, participants, methodologies and how you will go about conducting the actual research. Mentioning which participant you will call first, what tools will be applied, how the observations/recordings will occur and the measurement of the outcomes will be very crucial in giving the readers a mind map of what your research is all about.

3.6 Other research reports include the research design methodologies and other key components as required/according to the instructions.

4.4   RESULTS

When all the resources have been collected and used in the research process, outcomes are received but they have to be processed into meaningful details for proper decision-making.

4.4.1 KEY STATISTICS/RECORDED OUTCOMES

The outcomes can be converted into percentages, ratios, official statistics and other valuable numbers that help readers understand the proportions of the research that require significant attention.

4.4.2 TABLES/CHARTS/GRAPHS

Information received can be processed into finer decision-making models by making graphs, charts, tables using the numbers/figures and statistics obtained. These simplify the bulk of the information and make it easy to use in many projects even in the future.

4.5   DISCUSSION

Results are raw forms of data which still need more refining for the benefit of readers of various literacy levels.

4.5.1   SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The whole amount of information obtained in the results is summarised in a few paragraphs to enable readers that did not read the whole report to understand the main findings. Only the major highlights related to the main objectives/purpose are included to enable readers to focus on them and be able to understand them even better.

4.5.2   COMPARISONS WITH HYPOTHESES

The actual results can either match or differ by a wide margin with the initial hypotheses. This helps readers understand the significance/relevance of the research even more since hypotheses usually represent the readers' view in the absence of the research and that helps them understand what has been accomplished by the project.

4.5.3   DRAWING INTERPRETATIONS, TRENDS, RELATIONSHIPS

The mere 'reporting' on the findings/results will be immaterial/insignificant to many readers since it does not address the 'so what?' aspect of the process. A lot of analytical explanations are expected here to help readers understand what happened first, caused by what, leading to what and resulting in what, etc. This helps readers grasp the hidden interpretations, messages and explain the relationships between one variable and the other.

4.5.4   STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The researcher gets the chance to draw the attention of the readers towards the main positive aspects to be learnt from the project. What has been achieved is highlighted and re-emphasised, with the focus placed more on the specific areas that the researcher has found outstanding and believes readers can use in their own projects in future.

4.5.5   LIMITATIONS

The research is only balanced if it doesn't only mention the good things achieved but when it includes what it failed to address. This makes it easy for the readers to categorise/classify it and be able to use it in their life in specific areas.

4.5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The strengths and limitations of the research help reveal the areas that need further address and that could be done either by the current researcher or any other authors in future.

References

This is the list of all sources consulted in the study. It helps readers assess the quality of the information used and is a proper way of acknowledging its contribution. Remember to use credible, peer-reviewed and academic sources.

Appendix

This is where you include information that would have, otherwise, been too long to include in the body of the report. This includes charts, graphs tables, etc., and other material not directly related but relevant to the study and aiding readers who need a deeper/broader understanding of the concepts involved.

Checklist:

Before submitting your dissertation for correction/advice from the supervisor, ensure you have some or all of the following:

Section	Components	Yes/No
Title:	☐ as defined	
Copyright instructions:	☐ as defined	
Abstract:	☐ as defined	
Dedication	☐ as defined	
Table of Contents:	☐ as defined	
Tables/Illustrations/key pictures:	☐ as defined -	
List of acronyms	☐ as defined	
Introduction:	- research problem statement	
	- research significance.	
	- research questions	
	- hypotheses	
Literature Review:	-	
- **an introduction with**	- the background information sentence	
	- thesis statement/your motivations	
	- literature review objectives	
	- sequence/inclusions/exclusions	
- **body paragraphs each with**	- thorough explanation of the topic	
	- descriptions of sources	
	- background/credibility of authors	
	- methodology of the works	
	- strengths/limitations of current literature	
	- other relevant details	

- **conclusion**	- a brief summary of how the review started and what the main objective has been throughout	
	- an overview of the topic and its related literature	
	- summarise the strengths, limitations, points of agreement/disagreements in the current literature	
	- identify gaps/flaws/outstanding areas in the field	
	- introduce/position your own research	
	- concluding thoughts and recommendations.	
	- any other relevant details	
Methodology:	- participants	
	- materials	
	- measuring instruments/metrics	
	- procedures	
Results:	- key statistics/recorded outcomes	
	- tables/charts/graphs	
Discussion:	- summary of the results	
	- comparisons with hypotheses	
	- interpretations, trends, relationships	
	- strengths of the study	
	- limitations (what it failed to address)	
	- recommendations for future study	
References	☐ as defined	
Appendix	☐ as defined	

Table 11: Checklist of all items required in a standard dissertation/research report.

5   SECTION E: REFERENCING

Objectives of this section:

As mentioned briefly in the paragraph structures under 'essays', academic writing uses credible and verifiable facts to make its arguments while, at the same time, avoiding rumors, hearsay and unqualified, opinionated guesses. This calls for the use of properly collected, analysed, processed and presented information and properly mentioning/acknowledging its source in our writing (using in-text citations and reference lists/end-noting tools). Sources of academic facts/information include some or all of the following:

- databases
- print and e-books
- library catalogues
- journals
- websites
- online books, journals, magazines
- lecture notes

- conference speeches
- media outlets like newspapers, TV, radio etc.
- live performances
- museums
- national events
- university/school course materials
- visits to historical sites and archeological information, etc.

Whenever we use any such kinds of information in our work, we need to properly acknowledge where we got it by providing these details:

- the author(s) of such information
- the dates of such publication
- titles and subtitles
- chapters and pages where the material has been taken
- type of source (whether it is a book, website, journal, image/figure/object, online source etc.).
- location of the source (Place of publication, whether it is a city, town, village or online source).
- the individual/organisation holding the publishing rights.

All these details are required in order to properly show if we used credible sources and acquired them ethically. However, as we can see that there are so many details required, it is obvious that they cannot be simply provided randomly and all of them at once. As a result, many academic associations have designed several referencing styles to use in different types of assignments/disciplines and they always require different types of information at different locations. Here are some of them:

-Harvard

Probably the most popular citation style in the world, this guide is widely used in Humanities, Business/Economics and other fields. In-text citations include the mentioning of the author, the year of publication (also known as the date) and the page numbers of the source material (where available). The rest of the details (e.g., Authors' initials, titles, chapters, page numbers, locations, publishing houses, website names/urls, etc.) are provided alphabetically in a reference list at the end.

-American Psychological Association (APA):

Almost identical to the above, it also utilises the Author, Date approach in the in-text citations and a reference list entitled "References" at the end. Minor differences exist in the presentation of the information as the APA requires special indentation rules as compared to the former. Besides the reference list headings, other variations also exist in the page numbering, where the APA uses the year and page numbers separated by a colon while the former uses a comma instead. The format for electronic sources have notable differences in the presentations of the dates (one uses the words "Date accessed" and square brackets at the end) while the other uses words "Retrieved from" just before the "url" and mentions the date in full.

-The Vancouver system

This guide is used in medical and scientific faculties and slightly differs from the above. It has its own in-text system that utilises a number and footnote combination and has an end-text reference list that provides additional details on the citations used. It is wise to download the Vancouver referencing guide and have it in hand before preparing one's referencing section.

-Chicago

This one is popular in History subjects, Economics and related areas. Almost like the above, it uses a number inside the text to identify the author of the article but provides more details at the bottom of the same page rather than at the end of the text. There is, however, a provision to include endnotes for detailed descriptions of the sources used, depending on the type and length of the assignment.

-MLA

Many students in the English, Literature and Media Studies are familiar with this one. It slightly differs from the Harvard and the APA because of its main points of emphasis; it mentions only the author and the page number(s) of the cited article in the in-text citations (leaving out the year of publication) and the rest is provided in the list of references at the end of the text.

-Oxford

This is very much relevant in the Classics, Philosophy and History subjects. It also uses in-text numbering and footnoting combinations, including a reference list that provides additional details at the end. Minor differences can be seen concerning how it organises electronic sources and the specific details it requires therein.

- Australian Guide to Legal Citation (ALGC)

As the name suggests, this guide is available in Australia and New Zealand for use in legal arguments/assignments. It uses superscripts, footnotes and end-text bibliographies in order to provide a uniform citation technique for case law, judgments, legal archives and matters of legal precedence.

Common referencing mistakes include failing to cite information that shows evidence of an extensive level of research (e.g., where an assignment quotes/uses national statistics and other details that are logically way out of the access of the student). It is logical for readers to conclude that the student omitted the sources due to the nature and amount of resources required to uncover certain details.

Other errors, as mentioned earlier, include 'letting the sources write the assignment' by citing everything and presenting too many in-text citations and a very long reference list. Yes, we are expected to cite wherever we have paraphrased/directly quoted a source but must avoid overdoing it and remember that the assignment is still ours and the rest of the work must be in our own words.

Some institutions have their own referencing manuals different from the above and expect their students to use their own in-grown methods of academic discipline. It is wise for students to check the requirements of their own institution before deciding on the referencing system to use in order to ensure compliance with all relevant rules.

GLOSSARY OF SOME OF THE TERMS USED IN ASSESSMENTS

Assess something

Assessing is determining the worthiness/value of something. It involves a comprehensive discussion that describes all possible angles, mentioning the good and the bad and usually ends with an opinion about whether the subject of the discussion is good/bad or fit for a certain purpose.

Comment on something

This one gives the student more freedom to express themselves on a subject matter/topic. Care must be exercised when giving personal opinions and students must not overdo it but link everything to the relevant theory and references.

Compare things

The features, characteristics and identities of certain elements are required; the student must systematically present the nature, lengths, widths, lengths, colours, behaviours, etc., and show how they differ and what they have in common. These assignments can also require giving an overall perspective/comment/summary on the main features.

Contrast/ Differentiate

This is similar to the above, but focusing more on the points of divergence and the major differences. It may begin with a comprehensive description of element A and then follow up with the main part of the assignment, that of showing how element B differs with/from A.

Critique

This is also a balanced discussion that exposes the strengths, weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of something. It uses expert comments, opinions and also concludes with reiterating the main

perspective observed during the discussion. Sometimes, recommendations, or at least an indication of what is favourable, can be provided.
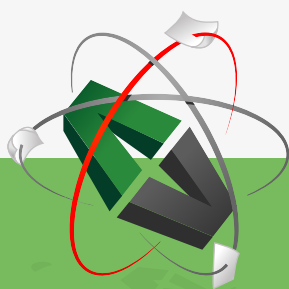
Define

A definition is a clear explanation on the nature of something. Usually, more than simply defining is required; things like origins, background information, internal/external environments and many ways in which the subject interacts with the environment are highly encouraged.

Describe

A description is a detailed account that uncovers the identity, nature, features, compositions, appearances and other visible/invisible aspects of a subject. This assignment seeks to explain how/ what a subject **is** *and hardly makes any comments/perspectives on a matter.*

Discuss

This is the most comprehensive assignment that includes giving definitions, descriptions, analyses, evaluations and there is no limit to what can be done here. The students can explain, break down the concepts into parts, share its good/bad sides, etc., and even attempt to influence readers to respond in some way to the recommendations raised.

Examine

This is almost like the analysis; it breaks down the concept into smaller parts, explains the trends, relationships and hidden meanings involved but does not include feelings, opinions, etc. Unlike the analysis (which focuses on the main points), this one focuses on a more comprehensive look at the whole topic.

Explain this and that

This is an attempt to clarify something to the readers (or increase/enhance their understanding/viewpoint); it helps uncover a lot of aspects ranging from direct/implied/indirect meanings, reasons/motives and other important details.

Generate something

This assignment is broad; it can include (literally) bringing new ideas, coming up with new concepts or compiling lists on a variety of issues.

Hypothesise

This is a general/common viewpoint on something; it is usually untested and unconfirmed but it can be useful during the brainstorming part of a research as it provides researchers with adequate motives to conduct a research so as to test/prove its accuracy. Students must just avoid making wild guesses but must try to be as objective and reasonable as possible.

Illustrate

The student needs to be careful here since it can either mean presenting a drawing that explains a big concept or providing an explanation that uses pictures, diagrams, examples and hypothetical situations to clarify an issue.

Interpret

This involves providing reasons behind reasons and explanations that help readers understand other explanations, concepts and hidden issues. It is an attempt to enhance the readers' understanding or show them what they might have missed in the subject under investigation.

Investigate

A combination of the analysis and description is involved here; the student defines the topic, gives background information and provides a comprehensive breakdown of the topic and uncovers important perspectives on it, whether hidden or otherwise. Formal and credible methods/approaches can also be expected during the 'search and analysis' of the clues.

Justify

Justification is the provision of reasons, rationales and perspectives behind something. Students must explain why something is the way it is or must be viewed that way and maintain that stance/position throughout. These assignments are judged to be a success when they manage to convince readers to understand why something must be viewed the way it is and are even moved to support it.

List

It is used in short answer assignments; the student must only provide a numbered/ordered list of points (and even bullets) and avoid discussing or performing any of the other activities.
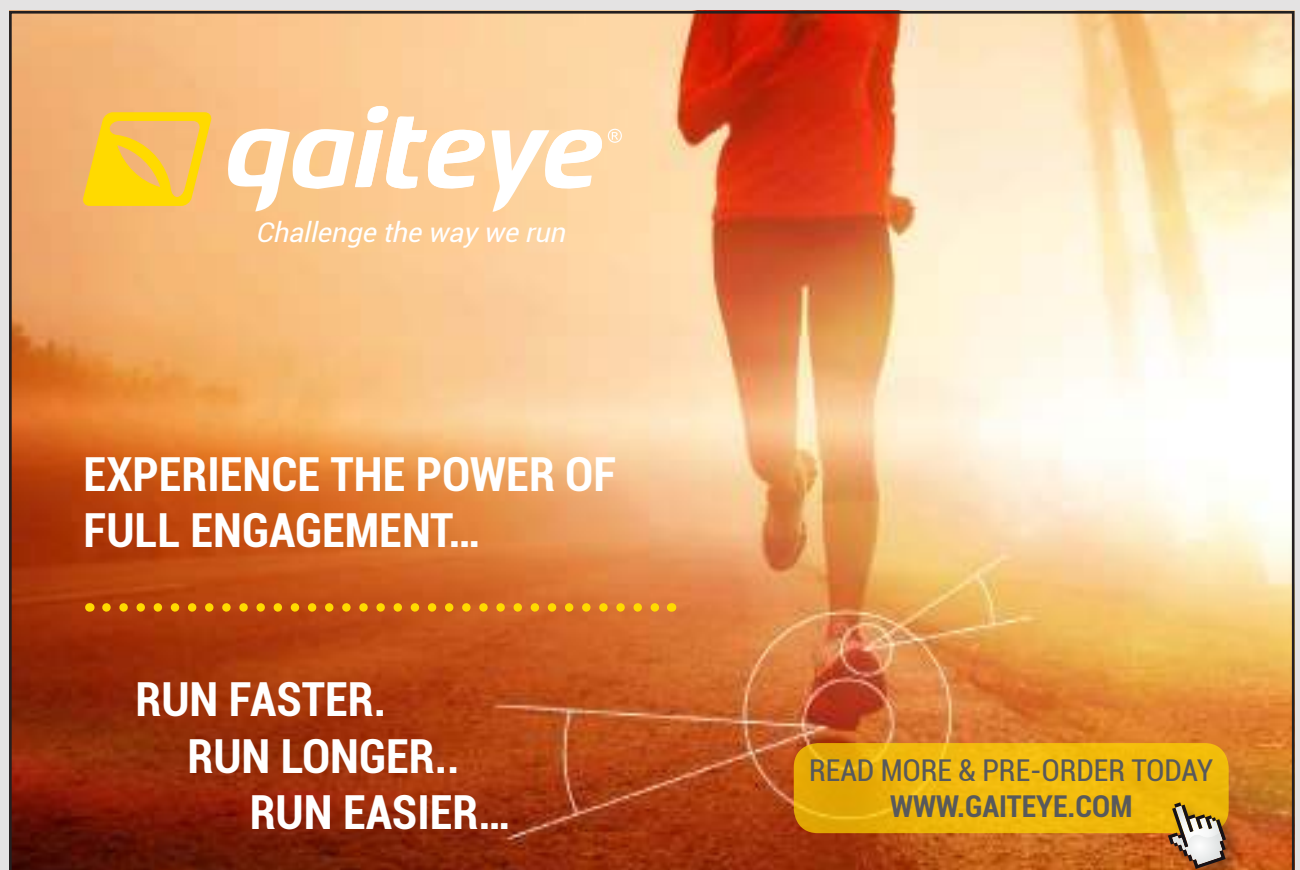
Make an argument

This requires adopting a viewpoint/perspective on something and explaining in detail as to why the individual believes so. A perspective is a clear/unchanging stance position on a matter, while the argument is a detailed perspective involving the use of evidence and a logical structure.

Outline

This is a description but one that focuses mostly on the major issues. The student provides a list of the main aspects and neither provides and opinions or any personal view; it mostly assesses the depth of a student's knowledge on an existing area and helps educators understand if the students are aware of the existence of such issues.

Perform/Conduct an accounting for something:

The student must not confuse this for an account-which is a historical version of an issue or a narration of something. This part requires one to provide reasons, fill in some missing details, 'connect the dots' or make something that sounds hidden/incomplete more understandable. Usually, a comprehensive explanation is required.

Prove

Almost like the 'justify' assignment, this one focuses on the points that help readers understand the existence/validity of an issue. The student may be required to provide several points that link with credible evidence supporting the adopted perspective.

Provide an analysis/Evaluation

This involves breaking down a concept, component, idea, etc., into smaller, manageable and understandable parts. Analyses focus on the main points/most valuable areas and establish relationships between the components, helping readers understand the bigger/overall concept. It is useful when performing a deep investigation into an issue and in problem-solving.

Relate

This can either be a simple narration/retelling of a story or an effort to establish relationships between one subject area and another. The former is used in reflective and journal/diary assignments while the latter is more common in scientific areas where 'dots' may need to be connected and a 'bigger picture' requires uncovering.

State

This is usually the simplest form; it can be used in short answer situations where the student simply needs to provide a short phrase/sentence. In longer essays, however, the student mentions the main point and, sometimes, provides an accurate description and definition of the main topic. To earn higher marks, in other situations, a comprehensive discussion can also suffice (depending on the lecturer).

Summarise

This requires shortening a longer version and presenting it in a condensed but more understandable manner; main points need to stand out and the original version must not be altered, obliterated or end up sounding ambiguous

THE END!!!

HAPPY STUDYING!!!