

GOOD WRITING: MANAGEMENT

Use this sheet to help you:

- plan for and develop good writing

5 minute self test

Before you read the Helpsheet, spend five minutes considering the following questions:

1. What is good writing?
2. How I do ensure quality in my writing?
3. What would be an ideal place to write?
4. What is a typical writing task for Management and Marketing?
5. How do I plan my writing?
6. How can I effectively read and research?
7. How do I make a good composition?
8. What writing format and layout should I consider?
9. How do I cite my references?

What is good writing?

Writing is a product. A product can be of good quality or of poor quality.

Like any product, writing can be good or it can be bad. A bad product is disappointing. It doesn't do what it is supposed to do, or it does it badly. It doesn't do what we expected it to do.

Good writing, on the other hand, is never disappointing. It does what it is supposed to do, and does it well. It meets our expectations. It looks elegant.

Just as products undergo a quality management system, so too your writing. This will determine if outputs:

- Are the outputs we intended to produce (the **vision** and the **reality** are the same),
- Are completed on schedule (on **time**),
- Are completed after the planned investment of effort (on **budget**), and
- Are what the customers want (meet **expectations**).

Good writing is like that.

It does what you want it to do.

It is completed when you want it to be ready.

It takes the amount of effort you planned to spend on it.

It meets the reader's expectations.

The last criterion is perhaps the most important. No piece of assessable work is written for yourself: it is written for an audience. You must always think about what your audience will expect. (Which is why it is important to pay very careful attention to the assessment criteria that accompany a written assignment!)

How do I ensure quality in writing?

Writing begins with raw materials.

The raw materials of writing are:

- You (the writer),
- Your place of work (the location where you will do your writing),
- The task (the assignment you have to complete), and
- Planning (estimating and scheduling the time and effort required to complete the piece of writing).

What would be an ideal place to write?

Where do you work most effectively? Find your place of work. It may be a university library, such as the Baillieu or the Giblin Eunson. It must be somewhere that you can be comfortable and productive. Some people work well at home, but most find that there are too many distractions at home for effective work. Choosing the best place of work for you is a quality management decision. It is your first step towards ensuring that your writing is of good quality.

What is a typical writing task for Management and Marketing?

Business is a discipline with its own writing conventions and requirements. You must accept them and try to understand them. In your studies with the Department of Management and Marketing you will learn about the management of people, the management of systems, and the management of products. You will discover what the global economy looks like. You will learn how to describe and analyse national differences and similarities in terms of economic, social, political and legal systems. You will examine the mechanisms that support cross-border commerce and consider the effects of these issues on firms seeking to develop and sustain competitive advantages in these environments.

You will gain also an overview of the primary concerns associated with human resource management, and acquire the basic theoretical framework of marketing, including segmentation, buyer behaviour, product management, marketing communications, channel management and pricing decisions. You will learn fundamental market research concepts, including the formulation of the research problem, research design, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, statistical data analysis tools, and the interpretation and use of research results.

You will learn about basic individual and group processes as they affect people in organisations. You will examine major theories and models in key areas of organisational behaviour, such as group dynamics, motivation, stress, communication, diversity, conflict, leadership, power, and change management. You will study how factories and services work, examining the link between strategy and operations for both manufacturing and service organisations.

You will analyse the strategic management of the business unit and the firm. You will be introduced to the different theoretical approaches to strategy to provide a framework for understanding and analysing the nature and sources of competitive advantage and firm survival in contested markets. You will examine the conceptual frameworks and practical illustrations of business analysis techniques, including decision trees, linear programming and related management science methods. You will apply these techniques to resource allocation decisions faced by organisations, including the areas of production, marketing and finance.

What does all this mean in terms of writing? Writing for Management and Marketing subjects will be based largely around the clear presentation of theoretical concepts and

the application of those concepts to a given set of facts, often through case study analysis. You will be required to write in a number of different styles, and to be familiar with proper academic referencing conventions.

The following is an example of a written assessment task for 325-101 Managing and leading organisations.

Just to put you into context, in the subject Managing and Leading Organisations you will be introduced to the fundamental issues involved in managing organisations. You will learn the various disciplines within management including operations management, international business, human resource management and organisational behaviour. You will learn about the variety of skills that managers must develop in order to bring about the realisation of organisational goals. You will also learn about the nature of different types of organisations, such as commercial, governmental and not-for-profit organisations. The subject also explores the impact of rapid environmental change on the role of managers and the nature of the organisation, exposing you to theory, research and case studies.

The writing task is a typical essay question. What do you need to do?

Example 1: Writing task

The Hawthorne studies are said to have been an important milestone in management thinking.

Discuss this idea with reference to the thoughts on management both before and after the Hawthorne studies took place.

First, you will need to find information about the Hawthorne studies. Refer to your lecture notes. If your lecturer hasn't discussed the Hawthorne studies yet, consult your textbook. (You don't need to wait to be told to begin the assignment!) Academic textbooks invariably contain a section at the back called an Index. Some have more than one index (e.g., 'Subject Index', 'Name Index'). Some academic textbooks have a further section called a 'Glossary'. These sections are arranged alphabetically. Look under 'H' for 'Hawthorne'. Once you have located it, read and made notes of the discussion of the Hawthorne studies in your textbook, make a list of the numeric superscripts (e.g. '7', '25') that appear in the text. These numbers correspond to entries in the section at the end of the chapter entitled 'Notes'. The relevant entries in the chapter notes will identify further material, usually books and journal articles, you should consult to prepare your essay on the Hawthorne studies. These books and articles, in turn, will contain bibliographies that will point you to further sources of information.

Once you have completed your reading and research, start writing!

This is not as silly as it sounds. The act of writing helps to clarify your thinking. **Start anywhere:** do not make the common (and usually disastrous) mistake of trying to begin at the beginning and write steadily through to the end. Take the aspect of the Hawthorne studies that interests you most and write about it. As you write, other ideas will occur to you and connections will start to appear. In this way, the body of your essay will evolve.

As the body of your essay approaches completion, the direction of your **arguments** and **point of view** should emerge. Pause to note down on a separate sheet of paper what your main arguments appear to be (you can use the technique of reducing each of your paragraphs to a single sentence to achieve this). Do they make sense? Are they consistent? If not, go back over your work and modify it until you are presenting a logical and consistent case.

Once your main body is completed to your satisfaction, your conclusions should more or less write themselves. Conclusions should never be surprising: they should consolidate and reinforce the themes that have been explored in the main body.

Finally, write the introduction. An introduction sets the scene for a discussion and tells the audience what you propose to do and how you propose to do it. It is written last because you can't tell your audience these things until you know them yourself!

Above all, make it interesting. Your introduction should entice your audience to read through to the conclusion.

Planning your writing

Any assessable writing you do will require some prior reading and research. This reading and research should not be undertaken without a plan. You need to ask yourself:

- What aspect(s) of my subject knowledge is/are tested by the task?
- How does the task relate to the lectures and tutorials?
- How deeply do I need to go into the material? (This question connects with how much the assignment is worth and the amount of time you have to complete it.)

Consider these questions carefully.

Consider them in relation to work you need to complete for other subjects. Prioritise your writing. Determine how much reading and research you will need to do to complete the task successfully. Convert this reading and research into hours. Allocate these hours in your timetable between now and the due date.

Always aim to complete your written work in two-thirds of the time you allocate to it. A good quality management system allows for the unexpected.

Finally, it is not enough simply to allocate your available time proportionally: you must determine what you will do within each block of time. How many of the available hours will you spend in the library? How many books and articles will you need to consult for the assignment? If it is a group assignment, how often will the group meet, where, and for how long? (Don't forget to include travel time!) When should your first draft be ready? Do you need assistance?

Reading and research

Reading and research mean using your textbook and assigned materials, using the library and its resources, and using the Internet. Do not start by supplying an Internet search engine with a few keywords from your assessment task and using what comes up as the basis of your assignment. Such an approach is sloppy, inefficient and, because you will not be able to verify the accuracy or the integrity of much of the material, dangerous. It is dangerous in a more pragmatic sense, too: your tutor and your lecturer will not be impressed by such a superficial approach, and will not award marks!

The Giblin Eunson Library will be your major sources of reading and research materials for your assessment tasks. If you are confused, unsure how to use the catalogue, ask a member of the library staff. They are very friendly and helpful people. The Information Desk on the ground floor of the Giblin Eunson Library is an immensely valuable resource. Skim read the books and journal articles you have selected to ensure that they are on point and of value. You don't want to waste valuable research time on material that is not directly relevant to your assignment. If there are summaries or abstracts of the material, so much the better: read them.

Once you have what you need, read the material in detail and make notes as you go. Try to reduce each paragraph to a single sentence. If you discover what you think is a really telling observation by an author, copy it down carefully, ensuring that you have all the citation details you will need (see 'Citation' below).

Check the speed at which you are acquiring information. You should have a sense of the size of your topic: be sure you're not wasting research time on some peripheral detail.

Composition

Composition is about putting things together. It is about organising the results of your reading and research into logical categories. There are many ways to compose a piece of writing but there is no 'right' way. To a considerable extent, composition is a matter of taste and personality. However, you may find the following useful when composing your assignment.

On a separate sheet of paper, break down the topic into its components. Then, write sub-topic headings that can be related to these. Slot the results of your reading and research under each sub-topic heading as appropriate. Start writing about any one of these sub-topics and see how you go. If you don't go well, try another sub-topic. As you write, your perspective on the assignment may change (this is a good sign: it means you are **thinking!**). Your sub-topics may no longer seem appropriate. That's okay: scrap them and develop new sub-topics. The process you are following allows your writing to take shape, to develop form and substance.

As you write, you will need to think. All written work for the Department of Management and Marketing should involve **critical analysis**. Critical analysis refers to the objective evaluation of ideas and concepts, regardless of authorship. In other words, you subject others' ideas and your own to the process.

Critical analysis usually involves the following questions.

- What needs to be true to support an idea or concept?
- What theoretical base or bases exist to support these ideas or concepts?
- What empirical evidence exists to support an argument that furthers my critical analysis of an idea or concept?
- What additional evidence might I use to reinforce my argument or to augment primary evidence?
- Are there sufficient evidence and an adequate theoretical foundation to support my argument?

See **Study and Research Helpsheets: Critical Thinking 1, 2 and 3** for more details.

You must demonstrate clearly **why** and **how** ideas and concepts are relevant to your discussion.

You must also avoid a number of common undergraduate traps in your writing. Do not pose rhetorical questions (e.g., 'Why is McDonald's successful? Because . . .'). Do not be careless with referencing and citation. Use the **Study and Research Helpsheet: Basic Referencing using the APA system**. Do not allow your language to become informal (e.g., you should write 'it is' in preference to 'it's' and keep well away from tabloid excesses such as, 'Move over, Bill Gates, you've got serious company').

Students whose first language is Mandarin or Cantonese should pay particular attention to the employment of articles ('a', 'an', 'the'), of plurals ('data', 'equipment') and of prepositions ('in', 'on', 'by', 'through', 'from', etc.). Such students need also to pay particular attention to consistency of tense: do not abandon one tense in favour of another during a paragraph or, even worse, a single sentence!

Students who are unsure on points of written English should consult the **Study and Research Helpsheets, Grammar Essentials, Verb Tenses, Articles, Punctuation**. You will also find the following helpsheets helpful: **Paraphrasing** and **Paragraphs**.

Format and layout

Presenting your work properly is more than a matter of conforming to requirements: it is a question of manners. You are writing for an audience. Sloppy presentation, small fonts, single-spacing, unintelligible diagrams all tell your audience that you couldn't be bothered making an effort to please them. This is not a good message to convey to your audience!

Your written work for the Department of Management and Marketing should be:

- Double-spaced;
- Written in regular 12-pt Times New Roman; and
- Fully justified.

and should have:

- A header, containing the name of the department, your subject code and title, and the title of the assignment; and
- A footer, containing your name, student identification number, the title and name of your subject co-ordinator, and the page number.

It is more elegant to reduce the size and style of your font for the header and the footer. Regular 8 pt Arial looks professional. So, for example, the header might look like this.

Dept. of Mgmt. & Mktg.		325-101 Managing and leading organisations	Management Report	Question 2: Ethical Responsibility
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The footer might look like this.

John Smith Student ID: 888888	Co-ordinator: Michael Webb	Page 2 of 6
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Citation

The Department of Management and Marketing favours two similar referencing conventions: the American Psychological Association (APA) style and the Harvard style.

Learn to cite accurately and consistently. It is technique, once mastered, that lends authority and professionalism to your writing – as well as ensuring better marks!

What is important to remember is that referencing conventions exist to serve two important purposes. We cite so that:

1. The person or people who first expressed the ideas under discussion are properly acknowledged (this is a matter of basic honesty), and
2. An interested reader can locate the source material quickly and easily.

Both the APA and Harvard styles use in-text citation, which means **no footnotes or endnotes**. References are embedded in your writing between round brackets. An example would be (De Cieri et al., 2003). If you are quoting directly from the text, or referring to a specific passage, you would give the page reference (De Cieri et al., 2003, p. 75).

For more examples of in-text citations and creating a reference list, including using sources from the Internet, grab a copy of the **Study and Helpsheet: Basic referencing using APA**.

References

The University of Melbourne (2014). Handbook: 325-101 (MGMT10002) Managing and leading organisations. Retrieved 30 June 2014 from <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/view/2014/MGMT10002>

Beecham, R. (2005). *Good writing: Management*. Melbourne, Australia: Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, The University of Melbourne.