

# ASSIGNMENT & SAQs WRITING GUIDELINES

## **GENERAL PRESENTATION**

### **File format**

Assignments should be written using MS Word. They can be submitted in one of the following file formats: .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx or .rtf.

### **Fonts**

Use Calibri font throughout.

Use black text on a white background. Avoid coloured backgrounds or text in a colour other than black unless you have special permission to use them (for example, if you're dyslexic).

Use 11 or 12 point for the body of your assignment.

### **Spacing**

Use 1.5 or double spacing

Leave a blank line between paragraphs.

### **Headings**

Use bold for headings. Not underlining or italics.

### **Title page**

Assignments require a title page, which should include the following:

- the title and number of the assignment
- the qualification
- your full name and student registration number
- the assignment submission date.

This information should be centred, starting approximately one third of the way down the page.

### **Numbering**

Number all pages except the title page.

Tables, figures or illustrations must be numbered and clearly labelled.

### **Headers and footers**

Insert a header or footer on each page (except the title page). It should contain:

- your full name
- the title and number of the assignment
- the page numbers.

### **Word count**

Include a final word count (the number of words in your assignment) at the end of the

assignment, before the reference page. Your assignment should not be more than 10% under or over the prescribed word count. Remember that the title/title page and reference list/bibliography are not included in the word count.

## **WRITING TIPS**

### **Do your research**

You will be recommended some web links and resources to help you complete your assignments. However, it is important that you complete your own research and reference your sources. Do not copy directly from your research sources, unless you are citing quotes directly from the writer. Your assignment will be checked for Plagiarism before marking and will be returned to you if Plagiarism is identified.

### **Plan your time**

Some people prefer to complete their assignment over a few weekends, scheduling mini deadlines to keep their momentum going. Others prefer to complete the assignment over a weekend or consecutive days to maintain continuity and flow. The key thing is to plan your time and give yourself deadlines.

### **Plan your assignment structure**

Before you start, it is advisable to create a basic assignment structure. This should contain your introductory points, your key points and arguments and your planned conclusion.

## **WHEN YOU START YOUR ASSIGNMENT...**

### **Introduction**

Your first paragraph should set the scene, in terms of the key issues you are covering and any essential background information. Some people find it easier to write their introduction after they have finished the rest of their assignment. Set out the aims of the assignment and signpost how it will unfold.

### **Structure your argument**

As you write the body of your assignment, make sure that each point you make has some supporting evidence. Use statistics or quotes you have gathered during your reading to support your information or argument, or even as something to argue against. A good academic writer should analyse facts, present arguments and prove the point using professional language. Present your facts clearly in a way that the reader can understand without spending hours reading it. This is where structure plays a vital role. The ability to present facts in an organised manner are a skill that needs to be learnt.

### **Start thinking critically**

Present facts objectively and provide factual and/or descriptive information e.g., what,

who, when and where? Include examples and support these with quotes or summarise/paraphrase source material in your own words. Identify processes and methods and include examples to illustrate how something is/was done.

**Consider the following:**

- What are the consequences of accepting a point of view or idea?
- What is the impact of a theory or concept or an event or an action?
- What is the relative importance of a piece of evidence (e.g., a point of view, an interpretation etc.)?
- Why do viewpoints or researchers disagree/agree/change opinions over time?
- What is the weight of evidence – how and why is the evidence convincing? Are there enough examples to illustrate this point?
- Look for connections between points

The difference between good academic writing and poor academic writing is the ability to think critically and present an objective opinion. Display originality in your writing. Even if you are referencing to others work, you need to have the skill to interpret it and critically evaluate it using your own words.

**Cite your sources**

References or creating a bibliography are skills that you have to master when writing your assignments. The Harvard referencing system is primarily used by university students, to cite information sources.

If you are using a lot of different sources, add them to your reference list as you go along.

**Different types of citations**

Citations located in the body the text are used when directly quoting or paraphrasing a source. They quote a section of the full citation.

**Example:**

“After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe...” (Fitzgerald, 2004).

Where the author’s name is cited in your assignment and is part of the sentence, put the author’s name, followed by the year of publication, in brackets.

**Example:**

Cormack (1994) states that ‘when writing for a professional readership, writers invariably make reference to already published works’

When citing a web page, follow these guidelines.

By Author and date (where possible)

By title and date if there is no identifiable author

**Note:** You should only insert the URL in-text, if neither author nor title can be identified. If there is no author, corporate author or title of a webpage, and all you have is the

URL, ask yourself if you should be citing it in your assignment and consider its academic integrity.

**Example:**

The latest survey by health professionals (<http://www.onlinehealthsurvey.org>, 2012) reveals that...

If you are quoting short passages, integrate them into the main body of your text. Enclose the quote inside 'quotation marks' and provide the relevant page numbers in your citation:

**Example:**

J. R. Irons (1948, p.1) says of bread that 'there really is no other food to take its place'. If you are quoting larger passages of 40-50 words (approximately four lines), the text should begin on a separate line and be inset from the rest of your text.

**Example:**

We must realise that bread is made to eat, and that the palate and not the eye must always be the deciding factor in how much is consumed. Bread will always have a place in the diet, but... there are signs that the bread of today is lacking – often dry, mostly under-fermented – and such is not likely to maintain sales. (Irons, 1948, p.4)  
Indenting larger passages of text already separates it from your own work, so quotations marks are not required.

**Conclusion**

Your conclusion should summarise your points/argument and leave a lasting impression with your reader. Make sure you recap any key points or arguments you may have made in your assignment.

**Reference Lists**

These are located at the end of your work and list full citations for sources used in your assignment. They should follow the Harvard Reference List format.

**Examples:**

Records are those required by organisations such as Ofsted,

Last name, First Initial. (Year published). Title. City: Publisher, Pages(s).

Examples of a full citation for a book:

Fitzgerald, F. (2004). The great Gatsby. New York: Scribner

Barton FE., Jr The SMAS and the nasolabial fold. PlastReconstr Surg. 1992; 89:1054.

Zimble, M., M. Kokoska, and J. Thomas, 'Anatomy and pathophysiology of facial aging'. Facial plastic surgery clinics of North America, 2001. 9(2): p. 179-87, vii. Lon

**Note:**

For additional information on citing references, click on the following link:

[http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/documents/Harvard\\_citation\\_hlp.pdf](http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/documents/Harvard_citation_hlp.pdf)

### **Writers Block**

Try different methods to get you inspired: a change of scenery, playing background music, or start on one section of the assignment that interests you. If you find yourself unable to write, use your time to research, make notes and plan ahead or re-read what you have already written.

### **Ask for help**

If there is any doubt in your mind about the question or the requirements of the assignment ask us for help or clarification.

### **Reflection**

When you have completed your assignment, put your first draft aside for a day or two before re-reading it. This will give you time to read your assignment more objectively and make it easier to spot mistakes or issues.

Once you have completed your assignment use the following checklist to see if you have met the all the criteria, prior to your submission: