

Research Skills & Structuring an Assignment

Assignments

- Look to a model/structure/template
- Outline a skeleton
- Expand on each element of the skeleton

Towards a Structure

Define the question as **you** see it.

Brainstorm

- Fill the page with points you may want to make.
- Under points, identify the references or evidence

Chaos rules – use coloured pens, arrows, circles, highlighters to find connections.

Use your sketch to see if a line of reasoning is emerging.

Test Questions to an Outline

- Main points relevant to the topic?
- Does outline seem logical - tell a story?
- Does the argument progress or stall?
- Sufficient supporting evidence for each point?
- Is there room in outline for other viewpoints?
- Outline reflect a thorough, thoughtful argument?
- Is the ground fully covered?

Topics, Paragraphs and Headings



- Just as every assignment requires reference to the title to assert and control the thrust of the main topics, so every paragraph requires a sentence topic to assert and control its main idea.
- Use headings throughout. They should emerge from your outline. It is easy to get distracted. If your outline and skeleton are robust they should tell the story. This is very important at the editorial stage

Topics, Paragraphs and Headings



Allocation of word count

Introduction	15%
Literature Review	40%
Main Body	35%
Conclusions	10%

Introduction 1 & 2



Introduction 1 Work plan

Plan the work – Work the plan

Scene setting

Broad outline of the story

How you will go about it

Introduce the main theories/authors

How you will link or challenge theory to application

Introduction 2 Re-write introduction at the end

Literature Review



What is a literature review?

The central purpose of a literature review is to provide the researcher (and the reader) with an understanding and overview of the relevant and significant literature on a research area.

It describes, compares, contrasts, and evaluates the major theories of what has been said before on a topic.

Critically Evaluating the Literature



- Critical evaluation expects analysis and not just a summary
- A summary answers only “what did the author say?”
- A critique analyses, interprets and evaluates a piece or pieces of work and answers questions such as: How? Why? Where? Who?
- A critical evaluation can be positive, negative or a combination

Critical Evaluation



Three Step Approach

- Analyse each piece
- Evaluate the piece
- Plan and write-up

Evaluate

Questions to help evaluation

- Is the argument logical?
- Is the piece well-organised, clear and easy to read?
- Are the facts accurate?
- Have important terms been clearly defined?
- Is there sufficient evidence for the arguments?
- Do the arguments support the main point?
- Does the piece present and refute opposing viewpoints?
- Does the piece add to your understanding of the subject?

Plan and Write-Up



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The literature review structure:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

Reading



It is often useful to start reading with the most recent publications. This allows:

1. Focusing more quickly on current knowledge,
2. Recent research often includes references to relevant earlier research

First read the abstract or summary to determine relevance and whether to review the article.

As you read, keep in mind that the central purpose is to identify and describe the relevance of the study to your research

Good Writing



Good writing is difficult to define but it is very easy to recognise:

- It is clear what the topic is about
- It has an easy to follow structure/framework
- It isn't pretentious, repetitive or rambling
- The argument/s are supported by good examples
- There is a minimum of spelling and grammatical mistakes & paragraphs are not too long
- The argument comes to a focal point
- There is a competent list of references

(Dr Dan Remenyi, 2012 p.18)

Main Body

- Testing theory through particular application.
- Review outcomes
- Compare and contrast
- Benchmark against national and international best practice.
- Evaluate and comment on similarities and differences
- Refer back to the question asked from time to time.
- Develop your own argument
- Arrangement and Coherence

Conclusion



- Return to the on-going conversation with emphasis on your contribution.
- Reconsider the background information and how you have shed new light on it
- Return to the key terms, show added dimension
- Use an anecdote or quotation to reflect your main idea.
- Leave your ideas resounding in the reader's mind.

Referencing



Referencing previous literature occurs throughout the assignment but is used most in the literature review.

We reference other literature to:

- Provide supporting (or contrary) evidence for the views we write about
- Assign credit for an idea, concept or result
- Add information and details on matters discussed

Referencing



- Giving credit for thoughts, ideas, efforts and contributions of others is an important *ethical issue*.
- Plagiarism is the failure to give credit for an idea or research result to its originator.
- Presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own is not only wrong but can hurt your professional standing
- By properly referencing and giving credit for other's work, you show that are aware of the state of knowledge in your subject and are familiar with the work of leaders in the field.

Why reference your work?



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- To give credit and acknowledge another persons work

Why reference your work?

- To give the reader information on who and what the sources of your information are, so that they may locate the details
- It gives the assessors of your work an indication of the volume and depth of research and reading you have done

Why reference your work?



- It lends credibility to statements you make, or arguments you are developing
- To avoid plagiarism

Plagiarism



- To take and use the thoughts and writings of another person and use them as your own
- Plagiarism is against University Regulations and is regarded as a **serious offence.**

How to avoid plagiarism



- Write all your notes in your own words
- Note down exactly where you read the information you put in your notes
- In your assignment, reference your work
- Make clear when you are using a direct quotation
- Write a full list of reference material

Referencing



- Harvard UL referencing style
- All statements, opinions, conclusions etc. taken from another writer's work (print, online or multimedia) should be cited, whether the work is directly quoted, paraphrased or summarised. Paraphrasing is rewriting an argument using your own words, phrasing and interpretation.

Referencing is a two part process:

1. Citing within the text
2. References at the end of the work

Rules for in-text citing

- **Author(s)** name:
- Use surname only. Use both authors' surnames linked by 'and' for 2 authors.
- Use first author's surname and et al. for 3 or more authors.
- If citing multiple sources at same time, list in chronological order and alphabetically thereafter for sources sharing the same year.
- **Year:** Give full four digits for year.
- **Pages/Point:** Abbreviate to p. for single page and pp. for page range. Give full numbers for page range.

Rules for In-text citing

- You will see all of the following variations when page numbers are cited. All are valid. ❓
- Quote from a single page: (Critser 2003, p.31) ❓
- Quote from multiple pages: (Critser 2003, pp.31-32) ❓
- Quote generally: (Critser 2003) ❓
- Structure your sentence to include the in-text citation: Critser said in 2003 (p.31)

Cite it Right Manual: on library homepage

Zotero Reference Manager

Zotero is a free bibliographic reference manager that is usable with the Zotero application







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