Academic Research & Writing

Mastering Academic Integrity and Effective Essay Planning

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Undergraduate Diploma in Digital Marketing

TEXT Books for this module....

Core textbooks

- McMillan, K. and Weyers, J. (2013). How to Write for University: Academic Writing for Success. Pearson.
- Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2019). Cite Them Right. The Essential Referencing Guide. Macmillan Education

Supplementary textbooks

- Bailey, S. (2019). The Essentials of Academic Writing for International Students. 3rd ed. Routledge.
- Cottrell, S. (2019). The Study Skills Handbook. 5th ed. Red Globe Press.
- Locker, K. O., & Kaczmarek, S. K. (2014). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Swetnam, D. and Swetnam, R. (2020). Writing Your Dissertation. 3rd ed. Plymouth: How to Books.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words, ideas, or work without proper acknowledgment, and presenting it as your own. This includes:

- Copying text directly from a source without quotation marks or citation
- Paraphrasing someone else's ideas too closely without credit
- Submitting someone else's work as your own (e.g., buying an essay or copying a friend's assignment)
- Using media (images, videos, charts) without permission or reference

Types of Plagiarism:

- Direct plagiarism – Copying content word-for-word without citing the source.
- Self-plagiarism – Reusing your own previous work without permission or citation.
- Mosaic plagiarism – Borrowing phrases from a source without quotation marks, even if cited.
- Accidental plagiarism – Unintentionally failing to cite sources correctly.

Why is Plagiarism a Serious Issue in Academia?

- Academic Integrity: Plagiarism violates the core values of honesty and fairness in academic work.
- Consequences: Institutions may penalize plagiarism with failing grades, academic probation, suspension, or even expulsion.
- Skill Development: Relying on others' work without engaging with the material hinders learning and critical thinking.
- Reputation Damage: Plagiarism can have long-term consequences, damaging your academic or professional credibility.

The biggest challenge for pupils is the expectation that they will need:

a) to demonstrate that they have read the leading authors on the subject - by **citing** examples

b) to use their own words to express these concepts and arrive at their own creative conclusion

➢ Use plagiarism detection tools as a final check

Acknowledging Sources

If you borrow an idea of another person provide the correct acknowledgement.

We can do this in two ways:

i. Summary and citation

Smith (2009) claims that the modern state wields power in new ways.

ii. Quotation and citation

According to Smith: 'The point is not that the state is in retreat but that it is developing new forms of power . . .' (Smith, 2009: 103).

In-text citations needs to be linked to a **reference** at the end of your work:

Author	Date	Title	Place of Publication	Publisher
Smith, M.	(2009)	*Power and the State*	Basingstoke	Palgrave Macmillan

The citation makes it clear to the reader that you have read Smith and borrowed this idea from him.

This reference gives the reader the necessary information to find the source if the examiner/reader needs more detail.

Anything that is not a common knowledge

Anything that is not your own ideas and was researched (published or not)

It must be cited and referenced...

Avoiding Plagiarism By Summarising & Paraphrasing

Summarising means reducing the length of a text, but retaining the main points.

Paraphrasing involves re-writing a text so that the language is significantly different while the content stays the same.

Summarising Example-

“University students often experience stress due to workload, social pressure, and time management challenges.”

University students face stress from multiple sources, including academics and social expectations (Brown, 2021).

Paraphrasing Example-

“Effective time management allows students to balance academic and personal responsibilities.”

Students can handle both school and personal tasks more successfully if they manage their time well (Lee, 2022).

Avoiding plagiarism by developing good study habits

- Break tasks into smaller steps to avoid last-minute pressure
- Use the SMART goal framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Summarise information in your own words
- Don’t copy blindly — process and internalise ideas
- Keep notes, drafts, and sources clearly labelled
- Proofreading
- Use the correct referencing style (Harvard)
- Include in-text citations and a full reference list

Vocabulary Revision

Source: Any text that students use to obtain ideas or information

Quotation: Using the exact words of the original text in your work

Citation: Short in-text note giving the author's name and publication date

Summarise: To reduce the length of a text but keeping the main points

Reference: Full publication details of a text to allow a reader to access the original

How to develop effective keyword search strategies

Identify your main topic – Think about the key idea of your research. **Choose important keywords** – Pick the main words related to the topic.

Find synonyms – Use different words that have the same or similar meaning.

Use search operators – Combine keywords with: **AND** – to include both words (e.g., *social media AND students*)

OR – to include either word (e.g., *teenagers OR adolescents*)

NOT – to exclude a word (e.g., *jaguar NOT car*)

Use quotation marks – Search for an exact phrase (e.g., **"academic performance"**).

Refine your search – If you get too many or too few results, change or add keywords until you find the most relevant information.

How to develop effective keyword search strategies

For Example:

Research topic - *The impact of social media on students' academic performance.*

Main keywords - social media, students, academic performance

Synonyms - social networking, learners, educational achievement

Search string - ("social media" OR "social networking") AND (students OR learners) AND ("academic performance" OR "educational achievement")

How to evaluate the credibility and the reliability of sources

Check the author – Is the author qualified or an expert on the topic?

Check the publication – Is it from a trusted journal, university, government agency, or reputable organisation?

Check the date – Is the information current and up to date?

Check the evidence – Does the source provide facts, data, and references to support its claims?

Check for bias – Is the information objective, or is it trying to persuade or sell something?

Compare with other sources – See if other reliable sources provide similar information.

If you are researching about **climate change**:

✅ A peer-reviewed journal article published in 2025 by climate scientists is likely to be credible.

❌ A personal blog with no author, no references, and outdated information is less reliable.

Effective planning is the foundation of successful research and writing. It helps organise your thoughts, manage your time, and produce clear, coherent work.

For coursework, preparatory reading is required.

The process of planning includes:

1. Analyse the title wording
2. Decide how long each section should be
3. Prepare an outline using your favourite method

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Summarising to Planning

1. Create a plan to help you gather your initial ideas and response to the question

Think about:

1.1 - What you already know

1.2- What sources of information you already have (lectures notes, reading etc.) and what you still might need to gather

1.3- What aspects of the topic you might want to cover

1.4- What different perspectives might there be on this topic

1.5- Learn more about finding high-quality information for your assignments

Identify Themes, Trends, and Research Gaps within existing studies

- **Themes** – The main ideas or topics that appear in many studies.
- **Trends** – Patterns or changes that can be seen across different studies over time.
- **Research gaps** – Things that have not been studied enough or questions that still need answers.

For Example:

If the topic is **social media and students**:

Theme: Social media affects academic performance and mental health.

Trend: More recent studies focus on TikTok and Instagram instead of Facebook.

Research gap: There are few studies on how social media affects primary school students or students in rural areas.

Analysing the Essay Titles

- Titles contain key words that tell the student what to do
- Titles often have two (or more) parts

Understanding the essay title is one of the most important steps in writing a successful essay. It ensures that you answer the question fully and stay focused on the topic.

Directive Words in Essay Titles

- Analyse: Break down into the various parts and their relationships
- Assess/Evaluate: Decide the value or worth of a subject
- Describe: Give a detailed account of something
- Discuss: Look at various aspects of a topic, compare benefits and drawbacks
- Examine/Explore: Divide into sections and discuss each critically/consider widely
- Illustrate: Give examples
- Outline/Trace: Explain a topic briefly and clearly
- Suggest: Make a proposal and support it
- Summarise: Deal with a complex topic by reducing it to the main elements

Let's Practice:

"Discuss the impact of social media on teenage mental health."

Directive word: Discuss → present different ideas and viewpoints

Key content words: social media, teenage mental health

Scope: Focus on teenagers, impact of social media (not adults or other age groups)

Let's Practice:

Identify the key words in the following titles and consider what they are asking you to do

- Explain how data analytics can improve digital marketing outcomes.
- Describe the role of mobile marketing in the current digital marketing landscape.
- Assess the ethical challenges faced by digital marketers in using consumer data.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of email marketing campaigns compared to search engine marketing.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a creative thinking process used to generate a wide range of ideas or solutions to a problem, question, or topic

—quickly and without judgment.

Brainstorming Techniques

- Mind Mapping - Exploring connections between ideas
- Freewriting - Getting unstuck or discovering hidden ideas
- Listing - Quickly generating multiple points or angles
- Pros and Cons - Opinion or argumentative essays
- SWOT Analysis - Essays on systems, strategies, or developments

Task: Work with a partner

- Brainstorm ideas for the title…
- What are the benefits of learning a second language at primary school (age 6–10)?
- Are there any drawbacks to early language learning?

Assignment Guidelines

Follow the assignment guidelines from the **course resource centre**.

- Font: Times New Roman
- Font Size: Text: 12 pt. Titles: 14 pt.
- Line Spacing: 1.5
- Alignment: Justified
- Page Numbering: Preferably at the bottom of the page

Always check the word count

Steps to Create a Detailed Essay Outline

1. Understand the Prompt or Topic

- Identify key terms or questions.
- Clarify the type of essay: argumentative, analytical, narrative, etc

2. Conduct Preliminary Research or Brainstorming

- Gather relevant information or ideas.

3. Define Your Thesis Statement

- This is the central argument or claim of your essay.
- It should be specific, debatable, and supported by the body paragraphs.

4. Organise Main Points (Body Paragraphs)

- Typically, each body paragraph supports one main idea related to the thesis.
- Arrange them logically (chronologically, thematically, or by importance).

5. Break Down Each Paragraph

- Topic Sentence: States the paragraph's main idea.
- Supporting Details: Include examples, evidence, analysis.
- Concluding Sentence: Connects the point to the thesis or next idea.

6. Plan the Introduction and Conclusion

- Introduction: Hook, background info, and thesis.
- Conclusion: Restate thesis, summarise key points, closing thought.

Let's Practice:

Nowadays the way many people interact with each other has changed because of technology. In what ways has technology affected the types of relationships that people make? Has this been a positive or negative development?

THANK YOU