

Essay Writing and Referencing Guide

School of Management

Essay and Project Writing

Management is a varied subject. It is a social science, which is both academic and practical, and you will need to acquire knowledge and skills that are numerical, technical and literary. Of all the tasks students have to tackle, however, they find the techniques of essay and project writing the most perplexing and elusive. In fact, you have only to appreciate some basic principles; gain enough practice; and know your subject through adequate reading and research. The following notes are intended to provide some general guidance for all first year Management students on the art of good essay writing. Any hints apply equally to the answering of examination questions.

All students, regardless of academic background and ability, should be anxious to ensure that their hard work is properly directed and appreciated. Lecturers want their students to understand what is required of them and so attain the highest standards. The purpose of these notes is not to force students into writing dull, mechanical essays, but rather to help each student develop his or her own style of thought and essay writing while aware of the qualities sought by lecturers. The art of writing a good essay can only be cultivated through care and by dint of hard work. These notes are only a guide to good essay writing. If you feel you need further guidance, do ask your lecturers for assistance.

I Preparation

No student can write a first class essay without careful preparation of his or her answer. So, allow yourself plenty of time before you start writing, and consider the following:

The Question;

Read the Question

Read **the** Question

Read the **Question**

Sometimes, you will be asked to write on a particular essay theme. Read the question or the statement thoroughly, and deduce the essential point being made. On many occasions, the question will be alluding to an important theme within your course. Students often write good essays but, in misunderstanding the question at the outset, they finally fail in their task. Be careful, to answer all dimensions of the set problem. Finally, use your evidence to answer the question specifically and avoid simply writing on the right theme in a loosely conceived way. An understanding of the implications and significance of the question's precise wording will be crucial to the relevance and quality of your answer. Since some of the implications of the question will not become apparent until you have done quite a lot of reading, look back at the exact wording of the question and check that your work continues to be properly directed. Use some of the vital words or quoted phrases of a question in your essay, so that their full significance can be demonstrated to the reader.

On other occasions, you will decide upon a project title in conjunction with your tutor. Once you have selected a topic, your tutor will normally wish to indicate the main issues you may wish to cover; he or she will also wish to relate these issues to the bibliography for the topic. Do take note of your tutor's advice as this may well save you a lot of unnecessary work.

Books and Articles

Each topic you study is likely to involve working with four main types of source: texts which place the subject in a broad context; specialist books which focus upon a particular aspect of the subject; articles in academic journals; and articles in magazines and the financial and business press. Since several other students may be searching for the same books (especially if you have chosen a popular question), you should select your essential reading well in advance of the date you intend to start your note-taking. Use the Library reservation system to ensure that the books are available when you want them. The most popular books are often available in the restricted loan collection that allows them to be used intensively.

Students should recognise that key books are always in great demand. It is highly desirable that you co-operate with your colleagues and circulate books as freely as possible. You should inform your tutor whenever a book is hard to find so that may be placed on restricted loan.

Taking Notes

You may want to take some general notes about the sort of ideas, arguments and interpretations you find in your prescribed texts, thereafter your reading and note-taking for an essay should always be selective. You have a particular purpose in mind, so you should read and take notes only where the material is relevant. To ensure that you do not become immersed in a sea of copious notes around and about your subject, it is probably best to read a chapter or article through before you take any notes upon it. This will help you to see the central arguments and evidence in the chapter, assess their relevance to your work, and take selective notes accordingly. Do not note blindly every peripheral and marginal point of the discussion. Use headings and abbreviations in your note taking so that you can 'sort' the notes when you come to plan your essay, and save yourself the toil of re-reading long and elaborate sentences. When you take your notes try also to distinguish between firmly established facts and hypothesis or speculation. Once you have identified the essential 'facts' of the matter, you will be able to see how different management and other social science specialists are using them.

Everyone develops their own method of note taking, but a few practical tips may help:

Uncluttered notes help to speed the writing process. Start a separate sheet of paper for each book or article. Only write on one side of the paper, and leave generous margins for afterthoughts.

When you start on a new book or article, jot down the particulars at the top of the page - author's name, title, etc. As you make notes, write the page number(s) in

the margin. When you write your essay, you will need all this information to acknowledge your sources (the Referencing Guide gives fuller information). And of course it will save a lot of time if you need to go back to a book or article later. It's also helpful to note where you found the source: which library? shelf number? Again, this can save time if you ever want to consult the work again.

II Composition

The composition of a good essay entails much more than the mere re-shuffling of your notes under particular headings. Here are the hallmarks of a well-composed essay:

Relevance

As stated above, the relevance of your essay will be dictated in the first place by your ability to interpret the set question or statement properly. No essay is an invitation to write generally around and about your subject. So, if asked to 'Compare and contrast human resource management practices in British and Japanese companies', an account of the development and current position of the British Trades Union movement would be severely penalised for not answering the question directly and explicitly. Your answer would also be inadequate if it was not truly comparative and did not give equal weight to management systems in both countries. Therefore, be disciplined and do not indulge in a broad discourse on a general theme. So, stick rigorously to the question; answer it clearly and incisively. Never forget that anyone unable to answer the question in an examination may be failed.

Organisation

This is a vital element in any essay. Never be misled by anyone who tells you that, so long as you have collected the facts, you can dash them on to the page in any order. An essay is the result of empirical evidence being structured to prove a specific point through the means of a progressive and explicit logic. The way in which you answer the question - the demonstration of coherent and clearly expressed thought - is more important than the facts used to fill the page.

A good essay technique is to begin with an introduction that answers the question directly. This acts as a signal and proof to your marker that you have understood and will answer the question. The rest of your introductory paragraph should explain the structure of your essay, that is in outlining why you have included particular pieces of evidence and why they will substantiate the case you have just expounded. This will force you to think about the relevance of your evidence, its organisation and the order in which it is displayed.

The structuring of your essay so that each stage of your argument and discussion leads naturally and logically on to another stage is not easily achieved, but it does distinguish a fine essay from the weak and the average. Furthermore, be definite and conclusive in what you are saying. No lecturer will penalise a student for reaching a conclusion with which he or she personally disagrees, provided that the argument preceding it is generally sound. The only 'wrong' conclusion (to be justly penalised) is one that is plainly at odds with the evidence presented in the essay, or if evidence which the writer ought to have included is omitted.

Information

To be convincing, any academic argument must be an informed argument. This does not mean that you have to cram every fact and figure that you have acquired from your reading into the body of your essay. It does mean, however, that you need to support your major claims and arguments by showing the reader the evidence, or the sort of evidence, upon which they are based. Much of this evidence may be open to several interpretations, so you should try to demonstrate why the particular argument you are making is preferable to other interpretations. Clearly, you need to exercise your judgement about how much evidence you need to support a particular point. Usually, one or two good examples will suffice to demonstrate a generally accepted point of view, but a more contentious argument will require more detailed explanation and substantiation.

Scepticism

Be prepared to be critical of your authors, or at least to adopt a sceptical attitude of mind towards them. Be aware that academics cannot be completely objective, and the treatment of a subject will reflect something of the problems, concerns and attitudes of the time and place in which they write. Do not be afraid to challenge received wisdom with arguments of your own.

Clarity

Sound grammar and correct sentence construction are essential components of clarity, so you need to take great care of them. Ungrammatical essays cannot expect to attain a good mark, whatever their other qualities. Gross illiteracy invites failure. Jargon, slang, journalese, and clichés are normally penalised. This is not to say that your style of writing must be colourless, for fluent and forceful prose may well make your arguments more persuasive.

Economy

The length of an essay is no indication of its quality. An excessively lengthy essay may, however, indicate that the author has failed to master acquired material. Consequently, the student is unable to select material that is relevant and important to the question set. Conversely, a very short essay may indicate that the author has failed to tackle one or two critical aspects. Always remember that you can write a first-class essay without exceeding the given word-limit. So, do not over-illustrate any single point, or over-develop any one contention.

Plagiarism: What it is and how to avoid it

Introduction

Academic communities, like the School of Management at Royal Holloway, exist to produce ideas and knowledge and to pass them on to students. In joining this academic community, we therefore expect you to respect the thoughts and ideas of academic colleagues, both here and elsewhere in the world. Yet, according to research in the US and UK (see reference 2, listed at the end) and from our own experience over the last few years, an increasing number of students are cheating in their academic work. They are doing so by copying other people's work and presenting it as their own, a form of academic misconduct known as *plagiarism*.

What is plagiarism?

At its most simple; plagiarism refers to attempts by the student to misrepresent his/her own ability by drawing on other people's work and presenting it as his/her own. It includes collusion with or copying from fellow students. However, it is more evident in the copying of sentences and ideas from academic textbooks and articles in the library. Possibly the fastest growing type of plagiarism is the cutting and pasting of materials from electronic sources such as Internet sites.

Hricko (see 4) argues that plagiarism involves a combination of three elements:
Cheating involves "...borrowing, purchasing or otherwise obtaining work composed by someone else and submitting it under one's own name..."
Non-attribution involves using someone else's words or ideas without acknowledging him/her as the source
Patchwriting involves taking passages from a variety of sources, often with the judicious changing of words or phrases, with an intention of disguising the sources

It does not matter from whom you copy, what you copy from, whether you copy word for word or idea for idea or how much you copy when it is not attributed. All these practices constitute plagiarism because they do not present *your* thoughts about the topic in question, but attempt to present other people's ideas *as if they were your own*.

What's wrong with plagiarism?

In a college community where ideas are at the heart of its existence, using other people's ideas for personal gain is considered to be not just poor work, but academic *misconduct* – it is not just intellectually weak or formally wrong, it is also morally indefensible. As academics, our life work is the production and writing of ideas and arguments, and plagiarism constitutes a theft of intellectual property.

On a more practical level, it is our job as lecturers to assess *your* intellectual abilities, and we are not able to do so accurately if you present the arguments of someone else as your work. In the longer run and at a more abstract level, the practice of plagiarism undermines the credibility of the educational work carried out in universities, since confidence in the quality of the degrees awarded will be diminished. In summary, plagiarism is a major threat to academic integrity, a key value underlying university life.

Plagiarism and your life as a student

If you understand the nature and significance of plagiarism and intentionally copy ideas without due attribution to their authors, this is a serious offence under college regulations and is tantamount to cheating (not necessarily...see Regs on Exam and Assessment Offences. There is not necessarily, in all cases, an intention to cheat). Resorting to plagiarism may be particularly tempting, when there is pressure to meet assignment deadlines. On the other hand, students can quite unthinkingly and innocently fall into academic practices that result in plagiarism. However, your tutors will not always be able to judge whether your copying is innocent misjudgement or intentional cheating, so you must think carefully about plagiarism when you are preparing assignments. In what follows, we explain some simple techniques to prevent you falling into bad academic practice.

Avoiding plagiarism

Wide reading

The more dependent you are on one source or just a small number sources, the more likely you are to replicate the ideas those authors offer. It is good academic practice to consult as widely as possible, and to focus your reading on the issues raised in the assignment topic rather than retrieving everything you read. The further you progress through your degree programme, the more widely *and* *deeply* you will have to read in order to address issues raised in assignments.

Careful note-taking and paraphrasing ideas

Much preparation for assignments involves taking notes from books or materials that you are reading. In taking notes, you should be careful not to copy sentences or paragraphs directly, unless you place them in inverted commas. If you omit the inverted commas, you might forget when you get around to writing that you copied directly and therefore plagiarise without realising.

It is good academic practice to learn to paraphrase arguments. To do so, you should read, say, a chapter of a textbook and use your own words and your own sequence of ideas to record the arguments as they relate to the issues raised by the assignment.

Clear in-essay citing and referencing

As mentioned in 2, it is important to record in your notes when a passage is a direct quotation – don't forget to note also the page on which the quotation is located. Direct quotes are very useful mechanisms for conveying key ideas concisely, but in management assignments they should be used sparingly e.g. to clarify definitions of concepts. You should avoid citing huge chunks and paragraphs from sources. When you do quote directly, you must use inverted commas and make a clear reference to the source at the point of quotation (e.g. Jones 1999: p.10) and provide its full reference details in a bibliography (reference list) at the end of the assignment¹.

Citation of all consulted sources

In order to optimise transparency in academic work, it is necessary to provide a full list of all the sources consulted in writing an assignment. All articles, books and other materials including Internet sources should be referenced in conformity with the Harvard system.

Wary use of Internet sources

Although it is convenient and quick to gain access to materials on the Internet, you should note that there is virtually no quality control over what appears on the Web. There are obvious exceptions – such as web sites established by authoritative institutions (e.g. the Economist; World Bank) – but in general you should think hard before relying on information from the Internet. Where you do make use of such sources, you must give full reference details, including the date you accessed the site.

Writing individual assignments on your own

Most assignments are designed to examine your individual skills and understanding, and it is important that you write such assignments on your own. This does not prevent you from discussing assignments with colleagues – indeed, this is often a very good practice – but the way you present information and construct an argument should reflect *your* knowledge and ability.

Detecting plagiarism

A small minority of students, for a variety of motives are tempted to take shortcuts that plagiarism seems to offer. Where staff suspect a case of plagiarism, it is now possible to undertake very sophisticated analysis of coursework assignments to find the original source of materials. (However, plagiarism is an academic judgement (see Regs) and we don't necessarily need to find the source to prove it has taken place)

Higher education institutions in the UK, including Royal Holloway, have access to powerful detection tools, which allow linguistic analysis, comparative analysis of different texts and, most significantly, Internet searches to scour the Internet for similar or identical materials (see, for example, references 1, 5 and 6).

Dealing with plagiarism

Where the School of Management has sufficient evidence of collusion between students or of the plagiarising of published or Internet materials, the students involved will be sent a letter outlining the allegation and asked to attend a meeting to present their view of the case . If it is established that plagiarism has taken place, then a range of penalties may be applied (see Regulations on Examination and Assessment Offences). In the most serious cases, there is the possibility that the student will be required to withdraw from the programme and the College.

Referencing Guide

This guide sets out the Harvard system of referencing to be used in essays submitted to the School of Management, Royal Holloway, University of London. It is important to reference published material that you wish to use in your essay. While referencing is a standard that is used to avoid plagiarism it also supports a strong scientific method. To build arguments and provide evidence you must reference any published resources you use. The spirit of referencing is embodied in Newton's famous 1676 quote, '**If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants**'. It means that Newton's great discoveries were made by building on the previous work of scientists. This reference guide sets out how to reference other authors' work properly.

For each type of material you are referencing (e.g. books, journal articles, newspapers, internet sites), this guide presents two parts, how to write the reference **in the text** of your essay, and how to write the full reference **at the end** of your essay. The section at the end of the essay should be called a reference section and only include those references cited in the essay. For the purposes of this guide these two sections will be called *in-text* referencing and the *reference list* format.

A note on **paraphrasing and quoting**: Quotes are direct transcriptions of text from other sources while paraphrasing uses your own words to express others' ideas. You should attempt to paraphrase where possible and only use quotes sparingly and strategically. Both paraphrasing and quoting require referencing, and quotes must refer to the page number from which they were taken (see Books).

The following pages give clear examples of how and where you should reference in your essays and reports

Generic Format

The Harvard system has a generic format for in-text referencing and the reference list. While this guide provides a range of examples for books, articles, internet sources etc, the generic format below should be used where adaptation is necessary.

In-text

(Author, year) or Author (year)

e.g. Sillince (1996) or (Sillince, 1999)

Reference List

Books

Author, (Year) Title. Place Published: Publisher.

e.g. Sillince, J.A.A. (1996) *Business Expert Systems*. Hitchin: Technical Publications.

Articles

Author, (Year) 'Article title'. Journal Title, volume (number): pages.

e.g. Sillince, J.A.A. (1999) 'The role of political language forms and language coherence in the organizational change process'. *Organization Studies*, 20 (3): 485-518.

Books

The following exemplifies several in-text references for books with one, two, more than two authors, and authors cited by another author. When citing more than two authors, list all authors' surnames the first time, then use *et al.* (see example). Note the different formats for the *in-text* referencing of *paraphrasing* and *quotes* (with page number) and the *complete* references in the reference list.

In-Text

One Author

The development of bureaucratisation in the UK was fundamentally different from that of the US. The Taylorist efficiency movement occurred in the US during an expansionary period while the same movement occurred in the UK during one of the worst ever recessions (Littler, 1982). Littler (1982) concludes that for these reasons the labour movements in the UK are fundamentally different from those in the US. These differences in capitalist development had important consequences, 'This affected the pattern of resistance, and British capitalism still carries the scars of this historical conjuncture' (Littler, 1982: 195).

Two Authors

Managerial skills are a key focus for Whetton & Cameron's (1991) introductory text.

Three or More Authors

Smith, Child & Rowlinson's (1990) case study of Cadbury's Ltd revealed that the corporate culture's resistance to change was diminished by the use of new concepts and symbols. The new vision embodied in the transformation was also facilitated by key change agents located strategically throughout the organisational structure (Smith, et al., 1990).

Author cited by other Author: Secondary sources

Haslam, Neale, & Johal (2000) outline Porter's (1980) industry structure analysis. It features five important forces; barriers to entry, buyers, suppliers, substitutes, and intensity of rivalry (Porter, 1980, in Haslam, et al., 2000). Haslam, et al. (2000) cite Pharmaceutical giant Glaxo-Wellcome as particularly at risk of low-cost substitutes as drug patents expire.

Reference List

Alphabetically ordered list of references.

Haslam, C., Neale, A., & Johal, S. (2000) *Economics in a Business Context 3rd ed.* London: Thompson Learning.

Smith, C., Child, J., & Rowlinson, M. (1990) *Reshaping Work: The Cadbury experience.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whetton, D.A., & Cameron, K.S. (1991) *Developing Management Skills 2nd ed.* New York: HarperCollins.

Journal Articles

In-text referencing of journal articles uses the same format as books (see above). Notice that the reference list includes the name of the journal article *and* the name of the journal. Be wary of electronic journals or articles retrieved from the internet, as some formats may not include the original page numbers you might need for direct quotations.

In-Text

Broadbent, Jacobs, & Laughlin's (1999) comparison of the organisational accountability of UK and New Zealand Schools reveals important distinctions. Broadbent, et al. (1999) discuss how management accounting in UK schools results in an individualistic focus in contrast to the socialising focus of an integrated financial accounting in New Zealand Schools. An individualising focus may result in undermining 'the capacity for communal action and alienate the organisational members from the activities that they are required to undertake' (Broadbent, et al., 1999: 358).

Reference

Broadbent, J, Jacobs, K. & Laughlin, R. (1999) 'Comparing schools in the U.K. and New Zealand: Individualising and socialising accountabilities and some implications for management control'. *Management Accounting Research*, 10: 339-361.

List

Internet Sites

The variability of internet site quality is problematic for referencing in academic essays. However, access to annual company reports, press releases, and daily news services provide ample reasons to utilise the internet in essays. Journal articles obtained over the internet should use the standard journal format unless the journal is solely in electronic format (see below).

In-Text

Wiegran & Koth's (1999) article on successful online commerce focuses on customer loyalty, increasing purchases, and higher margin products. They propose five website features to achieve successful online commerce; Value added information, personalisation, intelligent communication, user-generated content, and loyalty incentives (Wiegran & Koth, 1999).

Since 1991, the price of oil has reached its highest in February 2000 and this rise is due to OPEC restrictions on oil production (BBC, 2000).

Reference List

BBC (2000, February 19) 'Oil reaches \$30 a barrel'. (*BBC News*), Available:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/business/newsid_644000/644028.stm (Accessed: 2000, February 20).

Wiegran, G., & Koth, H. (1999) 'Customer retention in on-line retail'. (*Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*),

Available: [http://www.arraydev.com/commerce/JIBC_4\(1\)](http://www.arraydev.com/commerce/JIBC_4(1)), (Accessed: 2000, February 20).

Other Formats

Again, use the generic system when you encounter material to be referenced that does not fit clearly into the previous or following examples.

Newspapers

In-Text

Use same as Books (i.e. Author, year). If no author is found then use full name and date as follows.

The oil crisis has caused parents to 'consider home education' (*The Times*. 9th July 1973: 3).

Reference List

The Times (1973) 'Oil Crisis Impacts on Learning'. 9th July: 3.

Chapter in edited collection

In-Text

Note that the author's cited chapter is taken from pages 138 to 157 from Pollert's Book, '*Farewell to Flexibility*'. Smith's (1991) examination of flexible specialisation focuses on production and consumption.

Reference List

Smith, C. (1991) 'From 1960s' Automation to Flexible Specialisation: A déjà vu of technological panaceas'. In A. Pollert (ed.) *Farewell to Flexibility*: 138-157. Oxford: Blackwell.

Company publication

In-Text

Flexible work technologies are a key focus for British Telecom. BT has set up a consultancy unit that specializes in employing flexible working practices with respect to technology (British Telecom, 1999).

Reference List

British Telecom (1999) *Annual Review and Summary Financial Statement*. London: British Telecom.

Author with more than one publication in a year

In-Text

Haslam, Williams, & Williams (1990a) is distinguished from Haslam, Williams, & Williams (1990b).

Reference List

Haslam, C., Williams, J., & Williams, K. (1990a) 'The hollowing out of British manufacturing'. *Economy and Society*, 19(4): 456-490.

Haslam, C., Williams, J., & Williams, K. (1990b) 'Bad work practices and good management practices'. *Business History Review*, 64(4): 657-688.

Interviews and personal communication

Students are advised not to reference personal communication (e.g. lectures or meetings) unless a part of a submitted field research project with a relevant section on methods. Lecture material should be traced back to original sources.

In-Text

One respondent believed that post-modern research methods were indicated by the use of computers and quantitative algorithms with traditionally qualitative textual analysis (Innes, 2000).

Reference List

Innes, P. (2000) Interview, no.01a00, 22 March.