

## **Developing Your Academic Style of Writing**

### **Introduction**

You will be assessed on the intellectual content of your dissertation and on its presentation. Your written style is incredibly important. The success with which you convey your ideas will depend significantly upon the fluidity of your writing. To write a dissertation involves following a formula. To be successful the dissertation must adhere to those accepted rules of academic writing. A wide range of resources and guidance are available to help improve academic style. As noted elsewhere, keeping good records of references as you go along will help ensure these will all be in place (it's hard to go back and find sources of quotes!).

### **Doc 4 What is academic discourse? Practical advice on writing**

#### **Top Tips**

- Observe basic grammatical conventions.
- Remember the audience you are writing for - academic work requires a certain formality and the need to develop a carefully worked argument.
- You need to persuade the reader that you understand the process of research and that you can present this in a clear intelligible manner.
- Be clear about what a paragraph is.
- Avoid grammatical errors.

#### **Key Questions**

- Based on feedback from previous assessments what are your strengths in writing?
- In what areas could you improve?
- Are you clear about the rules of academic style you need to follow?
- If you are unsure about your style, have you sought advice from your supervisor and/or other support within your university (student services, the library, etc)?

## Further Reading

**CRÈME, P. and LEA, M. R. (2000).** *Writing at University*. Buckingham, Open University Press

**REDMAN, P. (2006).** *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide*. London, Sage

**SWALES, J. M. and FEAK, C. B. (2004).** *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. Michigan, The University of Michigan Press

## Web Resources

General resources on writing:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

A resource written for PhD students – but the section on words to avoid is still useful for dissertations:

<http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>

# Plagiarism

## Introduction

This section is about plagiarism and cheating. It will help you to avoid plagiarism in its different forms. It will explain why plagiarism is counter-productive when constructing your dissertation and be a reminder that academic staff are usually very good at spotting what is and what isn't your work. **Plagiarism is an academic crime and can carry severe penalties for you and your degree.**

## Summary

- Broadly speaking, cheating is the deliberate attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage or to deceive his or her assessors.
- Plagiarism means that you fail to acknowledge the use of someone else's work or words in your own dissertation.
- Plagiarism can be accidental - that is why it is so dangerous.

- To avoid accusations of plagiarism, ALWAYS credit your sources. Keep a full bibliography and references.
- Use indentations and single line spacing for lengthy excerpts.
- Use quotation marks for phrases or ideas that are credited to others.
- Referencing lends your work authority, by showing off how much reading and research you have conducted.
- IF IN ANY DOUBT ABOUT REFERENCING, CONSULT WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR!!!!

### Key Questions

- Have you footnoted all of your quotations?
- Have you given credit to the originators of the theories you have mentioned?
- Where do the things that you 'just know' actually come from?
- Is it clear when you are citing the work of others and when you are presenting your own views/conclusions?
- Are you over-using one author?

### Further Reading

**ASHWORTH, P.; BANNISTER, P. and THORNE, P. (1997).** *Guilty in Whose Eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work and assessment.* Studies in Higher Education, 22(2), 187-203

**COTTERELL, S. (2003).** *The Study Skills Handbook.* Basingstoke, Palgrave, chapter 6

**PEARS, R. and SHIELDS, G. (2005).** *Cite Them Right: The Essential Guide to Referencing and Plagiarism.* 5th ed., Newcastle-Upon Tyne, Pear Tree Books

**REDMAN, P. (2006).** *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide.* London, Sage, chapter 9

### Web Resources

Avoiding Plagiarism: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>