

# **Academic Writing and Publishing Matters for the scholar-researcher**

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## INTRODUCTION

### The genesis and purpose of this book

Over the recent decades I have had the task of preparing many different sets of resources for higher education students, particularly adult students, around study skills and techniques, and around the whole area of academic writing and publishing. Over that time technologies and access to electronic resources have changed considerably. What has not changed though is the need for the scholar-researcher to develop the skills required to communicate their ideas and their knowledge to readers, particularly in theses, journal articles and conference papers. The first study skills guide I wrote was specifically for adult students on an undergraduate modular programmes, some of whom may not have completed second level education. There was considerable classroom support at the initial stage. However, the study skills guide was used as a resource throughout the years as specific needs emerged. The second guide was aimed at postgraduate students who may not have been actively involved in academic writing since their initial degree years, or indeed, who may have come to their postgraduate studies through craft and work-based learning routes. The second guide focused on the thesis as an exercise in scholarly research and writing which could lead to publications later. What were evident over the years are two important principles. The first is that adult learners, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate levels, are highly motivated and effective learners when they get appropriate induction and support. The second is that adults extract precise information for immediate, relevant application in guides that are really useful. These two principles informed the design of the DIT Learn@Work e-learning materials<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent DIT Study Skills Survival Guide.<sup>2</sup>

A second reason for producing this book is to collect in one place the key guidelines and tips which I generally included over the past decade in writing and publishing workshop for DIT graduate students and for mature students. It is intended that this book will now make some of these materials available electronically on appropriate Library and student sites as well as in printed form in Libraries and School offices.

A further reason for producing the book at this time is to acknowledge the growing demand from DIT colleagues for support with publishing, regardless of the drivers of that demand. It is fair to say that the imminent launch of the 8th issue of the DIT on-line journal Level3 confirms that there is a constant and consistent interest in first-time publishing, particularly in publishing in peer-reviewed journals. While Level3 represents one avenue for first-time publishing, it is probably timely to supply more accessible supports for novice authors: thus the emphasis in this book on writing for peer-reviewed journals.

This book is organised into two discrete parts, though there is overlap between them. The parts are as follows:

**Part 1:** About academic writing and presentation of assignments and theses (37 pages)

**Part 2:** About publishing in peer-reviewed journals and conference papers (20 pages)

It is intended to revise and expand the contents regularly and to include a range of contributions from interested DIT colleagues in subsequent editions.

DIT colleagues are welcome to use any part of this document provided the source is acknowledged. The author reserves the right to alter or delete any of the text at any time.

Anne Murphy, June 2010

*Disclaimer: This document is for information and guidance only. It does not represent a formal DIT position on the content.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.learnatwork.info/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://studyskills.dit.ie/Survival%20Guide/Survival%20Guide/Home/Homepage.html>





# ABOUT ACADEMIC WRITING AND PRESENTATION OF ASSIGNMENTS AND THESES

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## PART 1: STUDYING AND WRITING AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL

As researchers and writers at postgraduate level it is likely that you have already developed considerable academic writing skills and analytical ability during previous study and perhaps through work-related experience.

When you register as a postgraduate student on a course, however, you also identify yourself as a learner. Being a learner gives you permission not-to-be-an-expert, to ask naive questions about the course material, to question your own assumptions and the assumptions of others, to explore the familiar from new perspectives.

As a postgraduate level learner you can expect to engage with complex and challenging issues and to become critically alert to contemporary debates and concurrent innovations in your chosen field of study.

At postgraduate level - postgraduate certificate and diploma - you will be offered structured opportunities to make critically informed connections between your own values and professional practices and the wider arena of practice, policy and research in your field. You will be expected to ask *What about? How? and Why?* questions at the forefront of your field of learning. You can expect to be stimulated, challenged and sometimes unsettled, as you venture into new territory, experience new ways of thinking, and try out new ways of engaging with your colleagues in collective learning.

By Masters and Doctorate level you should have achieved critical autonomy as a learner with a certain confidence that you have journeyed well and arrived at a sound vantage point from which to view your own professional philosophy and to recognise how that philosophy impacts on your practice.

*Note:* This academic writing guide is intended as a general reference for writing assignments at postgraduate level, particularly in the arts, humanities, education and social sciences. It is more skeletal than comprehensive, and is likely to be greatly augmented with additional material as you progress through your programme. It could usefully be read in conjunction with the following academic writing and research handbooks which are available in the DIT Library:

- Anderson, J. and Poole, M. (2001) *Assignment and Thesis Writing*, 4th Edition, Australia: Wiley
- Becker, H. S. (2007) *Writing for Social Scientists: how to start, and finish your thesis, book or article*, US: University of Chicago Press
- Becker, H. S. (1998) *Tricks of the trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it*, US: University of Chicago Press
- Crème, P. and Lea, M.R. (2003 edition) *Writing at University: a guide for students*, U.K.: Open University Press
- Cottrell, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills*, U.K.: Palgrave
- Dunleavy, P. (2003) *Authoring a PhD: how to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*, UK; Palgrave
- Murray, R. (2006) *How to Write a Thesis*, UK: OUP
- Murray, R. (2009) *Writing for Academic Journals*, UK: OUP
- Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (1999) *The Student's Guide to Writing, Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling*, U.K.: Palgrave
- Punch, K. (2000) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, UK: SAGE
- Rose, J. (2001) *The Mature Student's Guide to Writing*, U.K.: Palgrave
- Silvia, P. (2007) *How to Write a Lot: a practical guide to productive academic writing*, US: APA
- Soles, D. (2005) *The Essentials of Academic Writing*, NY: Houghton Mifflin
- Trafford, V. and Leshem, S. (2008) *Stepping Stones to Achieving your Doctorate: focusing on the Viva from the start*, UK; OUP and McGraw Hill

- Tubarian, K. (2007) *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, US; University of Chicago Style
- Wallace, M. and Wray, A. (2008) *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*, UK; Sage
- Wisker, G. (2001) *The Postgraduate Research Handbook: succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD*, UK: Palgrave
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process*, London: Sage

*A note of caution: The guidelines for writing in the broad education, arts, business, humanities and social sciences fields outlined in this guide may be significantly different to the guidelines for writing in other sciences and other fields. If your professional practice is broadly from technology, science or engineering you may need to augment the principles and guidelines here with additional reading. Your programme handbook generally contains information about the expected style for assignments.*

## 1.1 Reading before Writing

You are expected to read widely on any higher education programme, and especially at postgraduate level. For the most part you will read from secondary sources, but you will also be expected to read from primary sources where you are making a detailed and in-depth study of a topic or issue.

**Primary sources** are generally original works and first-hand accounts of research.

Such sources include reports of research investigations, government reports, annual reports, minutes of meetings, letters, diaries, autobiographies, theses, articles in journals, data collected through interviews and surveys, as well as key publications by the original authors.

**Secondary sources** of information include translations, commentaries on original works, summaries of primary material, and other written material gathered from primary sources. Encyclopaedias and guidebooks are generally regarded as secondary sources.

**Tertiary sources** are generally compiled from secondary sources, and include textbooks, brochures and leaflets.

As a reader, you should be alert to the accuracy and reliability of secondary and tertiary sources. It is best to read the primary source if you can at all, though sometimes reading a secondary commentary on a difficult primary source can be an accessible way of getting to an understanding quickly. At postgraduate level it is expected that you become familiar with primary sources.

## 1.2 How to Find Appropriate Literature

Usually the lecturer or tutor for each programme or module will recommend books or articles selected as an introduction to the subject you are going to write about. In your course/module handbook you are likely to find a list of essential and recommended readings.

**You will find the following sources to be useful aids in your own research:**

- a. Dictionaries, directories and encyclopaedias
- b. Histories of topics you need to research
- c. Annotated bibliographies
- d. 'Readers' on specific areas of professional practice
- e. On-line and bound collections of conference papers
- f. Periodicals and journals
- g. Reliable websites.

## LIBRARY CATALOGUES

DIT Library catalogues can be accessed at the following websites:

<http://library.dit.ie>

<http://www.dit.ie/library/databases/>

*Key reading tip:* You should normally start from general literature about your subject and end with special monographs or articles, which means starting with dictionaries/directories and then consulting periodicals and journals at a later stage. This will give you a better perspective on the complexity of the literature involved.

### 1.3 How to Make Notes or Record Excerpts

Taking notes effectively and efficiently as you read can save you a great deal of time and trouble when it comes to writing assignments. Here are some useful tips:

1. Do not make notes from the whole article you are reading in preparation for your essay/research paper/report/thesis. Try to find out what the author's main argument is and the main reasons he/she used to back it up. Try to paraphrase it or to copy out excerpts from the central assertions. This will deepen your own understanding of the topic.
2. Examine the views of authors who have a different opinion on the subject and find out why. Again make notes and write out relevant excerpts which you can use as quotations, citations or references in support of your own writing.
3. Critique each article by asking the questions:
  - a. Does the author use logically sound arguments?
  - b. Do I agree with them? If not, why not?
  - c. Does the author omit aspects of the argument which I regard as essential? Why do I think he/she did this?

Answering these questions will help you formulate your own positionality, or stance, on the issues under discussion.

### 1.4 Approaches to Reading Critically

Postgraduate study requires a lot of reading. A great deal of that reading will be for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and understanding of a range of new topics and issues. However, you will be expected to go beyond this type of reading and to become critical. This essentially means being able to make judgements about the material you are reading and to defend the judgements you make.

During your studies you will be expected to think about written material in a number of ways, including the following:

#### *Written material as information*

It is a good idea to question any writer's claim that the material is value-free or objective. No statement can be regarded as free from values, sub-text or selected agenda. The very choice of language itself is a judgement on the part of the writer!

#### *Written material as proposition or argument*

A writer may state the underpinning argument, or may not state it: just imply it. In any case you, as reader, should be alert to noticing how claims are being made and supported.

### *Written material as emotionally subversive*

The impact of emotive writing is that it can cause you to suspend your critical gaze. As a writer yourself you can experiment with this technique to develop a persuasive argument.

### *Written material as discourse*

The selection of a writing style and specific terminology may indicate a system-as-discourse at work. For example, the language and terminology in an EU policy document on occupational training may manifest a value-specific discourse about the connection between education and the world of work. Or, as another example, a feminist may detect a predominance of a male-oriented worldview or a male-oriented value-system in the choice of language and tone in a document. In such cases, it may be useful to ask yourself, as reader:

- a. Who has written this piece?
- b. For whom?
- c. What worldview is being presented?
- d. Could it have been written in a different way to reflect a different discourse?

As you begin to write your assignments at postgraduate level, you will begin to ask yourself if your written material betrays your value-system and beliefs about issues and topics in ways than may be more obvious to the reader than to yourself! One way of becoming aware of the discourses in your writing is to share your writing with colleagues on the course. In this way critical awareness is sharpened both in the reading and in the response.

## **1.5 Recognising your Voice: Ontology, Epistemology and Positionality**

At postgraduate level you are often asked for your view on issues, your take or interpretation, your value-based understanding or positionality. As you approach the stage of thesis writing you will be familiar with terms such as ontology and epistemological stance. Essentially, you are being required to identify your conscious understandings about the nature of knowledge and how you can defend a knowledge claim.

You will become familiar with terms such as objectivism, subjectivism, and constructivism, positivism, post-positivism, postmodernism, and so on. These can be slippery terms when it comes to exact definition, but you will need to arrive at a robust understanding by Masters level. At that stage you will have an awareness of your own voice as a writer in the text. A useful place to begin to come to grips with these ideas is by reading and re-reading the first chapter of Crotty, M. (2001) *The Foundations of Social Research*, U.K.: Sage. It is unlikely that you will stay secure in one mind-set throughout your postgraduate study years, but, uncertainty is a useful prerequisite to interesting enquiry and challenging scholarship!

## **1.6 Collaborative writing**

At Postgraduate Certificate level you may have opportunities for collaborative enquiry and collaborative writing. This will demand additional skills in selection and judgement. It will also give you a chance to hone your research skills and to debate the judgements underpinning the presentation of research findings in report format.

At Postgraduate Diploma level you are likely to take these skills further with collaborative projects and co-operative presentations, as well as considerable individual writing. There are higher expectations at this stage with regard to the breadth and depth of study and with regard to the standard of research and report writing.

At Masters and Doctorate level the quality of enquiry and presentation is generally significantly more advanced than at the previous levels with expectations of greater critical awareness of your epistemological stance and

understanding of the application of conceptual or theoretical frameworks. At this stage, you should be sufficiently experienced as a writer to attempt a systematic critique of the writings of others, making well supported analytical judgements.

In a nutshell, writing at postgraduate level is a complex skill-set which develops with experience and much practice. It is not necessarily a linear development. At times you can be overly self-critical. But essentially, it is unlikely that you will fail to learn!

## 1.7 Writing Tips and Traps

A short list of writing tips for successful study in higher education might start with these:

- a. Negotiate with significant family and friends about your cognitive absences during your studies. This might give you permission to be pre-occupied
- b. Allocate a space at home and at work for your writing and reading materials. Level-arch files and box files are neat and transportable
- c. Write often
- d. Write on paper first, not on your PC. This makes you very careful about the words you choose since it takes more time and energy to hand-write
- e. Keep a jotter handy for gems of thoughts
- f. Record book titles and other sources accurately and fully in a secure place so that you do not have the onerous task of chasing them up later
- g. Keep a dictionary handy
- h. Keep your own glossary of terms
- i. Think and write in full sentences
- j. When writing, try out different styles of expression
- k. Try to avoid stilted, turgid and overly-formal styles
- l. Avoid being 'chatty' or conversational in formal assignments
- m. Control your passion if you tend to write from a soap-box. Readers do not generally like sermons!
- n. Avoid making unsupported knowledge claims. Ask yourself: How do I know that for sure? Can I support the claim to know with evidence from my own research or the research of others? If you cannot support what you write, then it is best not to write it at all!
- o. Avoid language that may be interpreted as racist, sexist or otherwise offensive
- p. Always acknowledge sources of ideas: otherwise you could be accused of plagiarism
- q. Make paper copies and electronic backup copies of every assignment you write. This might save serious grief later!

## PART 2: TECHNICAL AIDS TO ASSIST IN WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

### 2.1 STUDY SKILLS SURVIVAL GUIDE (revised 2009)

In the DIT on-line, interactive Study Skills Survival Guide below, you will find a teach-yourself guide to using your PC which is more-or-less similar to the ECDL programme.

**STUDY & IT SKILLS SURVIVAL GUIDE**

Home Part 1 - Computer Skills Part 2 - Email Part 3 - Webcourses Part 4 - Academic Writing & Library Research Part 5 - Reflection

**Welcome to this online Study and IT Survival Guide**

The guide has been specially designed for DIT students and contains 5 parts:

- Part 1 - Computer Skills
- Part 2 - Email
- Part 3 - Webcourses
- Part 4 - Academic Writing & Library Research
- Part 5 - Reflection

You may move back and forth among the parts using the navigation links provided. There are internet links and activities to help you get the most from the guide.

[Click Here for a printable handbook version](#)

[Click Here for a Guide for Academic Writing](#)

You may borrow a CD-ROM version of the Survival Guide from any DIT library.

**To begin using this online Survival Guide please** [Click Here](#)

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<http://studyskills.dit.ie/Survival%20Guide/Survival%20Guide/Home/Homepage.html>

### 2.2 PC/laptop/notebook tools

Your PC/laptop is the most useful technical aid you are likely to use in assignment production.

On most WORD programmes you will find the following facilities which you are likely to use for production of written assignments:

- spell checker
- auto-formatting tools
- bibliography formats
- key word listing
- footnote
- margin settings
- syntax checker
- templates
- key word search
- search and change
- endnote
- auto-heading.

When saving and transferring material across computers it might be useful to check the date version of WORD programmes: 2003, 2007 etc... otherwise you might have formatting problems. Computer programmes can usually read back to earlier versions but not forward to more recent versions. This applies to programmes used for diagrams and images as well. It might be wise to seek advice from your campus IT Support Office when purchasing programmes and IT packages so that you do not delay your writing with IT distractions.

*TIP:* Try to save important writing in more than one place!!

### 2.3 Scanners, text storage and text transfer

To scan large amounts of text/images you could use a Scanner linked to your PC or laptop. The main disadvantage with this technology is the loss of formatting control. It might mean that you have to copy, cut and paste to a new document where you have control of formatting.

CPen scanners are a great invention for scanning small amounts of text and transferring text quickly to your computer. Great for Quotations! But remember to record the page number and book title!

Some digital cameras have text recording facilities or memory sticks which can be used to transfer text/images from the camera to the computer. It may not be worth buying one just for a thesis!

Flash discs/memory sticks/memory cards for USB points are magic! You can carry your entire thesis in your pocket from computer to computer. Just make sure you have access to a card reader and that you keep a back-up copy of your materials!

If you use APPLE Mac make sure use compatible bits for your PC/laptop.

Likewise VISTA can have trick elements.

### 2.4 Text Manipulation

Your PC can manipulate text in many ways for you. You will see tips and hints listed in the DIT Study Skills Survival Guide <http://studyskills.dit.ie/Survival%20Guide/Survival%20Guide/Home/Homepage.html>

### 2.5 Reference Management Tools

The DIT has a licence for ENDNOTE, a popular referencing management system.

Ask in your DIT library for a demonstration and for specifications about student access..

There are other similar software packages such as REFERENCE MANAGER which you might like to investigate.

You can download free trials from the internet. But, there is little value in compiling a bibliography on a free site when it might disappear in four weeks!

### 2.6 Data analysis tools (PC and others)

Data analysis packages such as SPSS, Envivo and NUDIST are available on some computers in the DIT. Ask the Library staff or course co-ordinator about this.

There might be merit in checking out the potential of EXCEL to do your data analysis before embarking on a more complicated package such as SPSS. Most quantitative data analysis can be done well on EXCEL.

### 2.7 Checking for Resources on Webcourses

Check often for new resources on your Webcourses site.

## PART 3: STYLES AND TYPES OF WRITING

### 3.1 Key Characteristics of Academic Writing for the Arts, Business, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences

Academic writing styles vary according to the rules and conventions of the different disciplines. The social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, business studies, technologies and engineering all have their own sub-sets of discourse conventions.

The study of education is generally regarded as a social science, with dimensions of the humanities (e.g. philosophy and history) and business (e.g. management and marketing).

As a social science, the study of education operates within known conventions and accepted presentation styles.

These convention and styles include:

- underpinning empirical research;
- concise, to-the-point writing style;
- clear organisation;
- succinct presentation;
- passive voice rather than the personalised active 'I';
- competent use of 'jargon' for the academic field familiar with it;
- use of graphs, charts and illustrations;
- a clear system of headings and sub-headings;
- clearly written abstracts;
- accurate use of a referencing system such as the APA or Harvard;
- skilful use of literature to contextualise information and issues;
- a high level of scholarship;
- support for all knowledge claims using evidence from your own research or the research of others.

### 3.2 Postgraduate standard of writing

At postgraduate level it is expected that all written assignments are:

- technically correct in adherence to academic conventions;
- coherent in organisation of ideas and presentation of argument;
- cohesive in structure;
- scholarly in content and style.

You should consult the assessment criteria used for your own programme, which are generally included in your programme handbook.

### 3.3 Types of Writing

Academic writing for assignments generally falls into the following three broad types and purposes:

TYPE	PURPOSE
1. Exposition/Informative	to give complete and accurate information on a specific topic/issue, which may <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• explain a process;</li><li>• explain cause/effect;</li><li>• compare/contrast;</li><li>• analyse;</li><li>• interpret;</li><li>• show problem/solution.</li></ul>
2. Persuasive	to convince the reader of the worth of your particular argument or point of view.
3. Narrative	to outline the linear development of a subject.

Most academic assignments are likely to involve a combination of informative, persuasive and narrative writing.

### 3.4 The Basics of Written Presentation

#### i. Punctuation

The essential punctuation marks (excluding usage in reference systems) are full stop, comma, semi-colon, and colon.

The **full stop** primarily marks the end of a sentence.

A full stop is used after an abbreviation where the final letter of the word is not the final word of the abbreviation e.g. in Enc. Enclosure, but not in Mr Mister

The **comma** is primarily used to separate parts of a sentence so that the meaning is clearer for the reader.

- (i) A comma separates words in a list e.g. He brought coal, kindling, matches and turf.  
Note that there is no comma before 'and' in the list.
- (ii) A comma separates sub-clauses within a complex sentence where two separate sentences are not required e.g. The judge, having delayed the contestants for some minutes, eventually announced the winner.

Commas are best used when the sentence sounds well when read aloud, using the comma to reflect the natural structure of the statement.

The **semi-colon** has two common uses.

Firstly, it is used to separate items in a list after a colon e.g. The painter sorted out all the materials needed for the job: brushes; oils; paints; canvas; rollers; cleaning cloths.

In this example, a comma could be used instead of a semi-colon: it would look better!

Secondly, it is used to indicate a certain relationship between two parts of a sentence, e.g.

*It was beginning to rain very heavily; the undertaker opened umbrellas for the mourners.*

The colon can be used before a list, as in the example for the semi-colon above. It can also be used before the lines of a quotation.

The **dash** is used in two contexts, as follows:

Firstly, and commonly, it is used to enclose a word group in a sentence where a list of items is separated by commas. e.g.

*He uses technology – PowerPoint, internet, WebCT, video-streams – in lecture preparation.*

Secondly, but less commonly, a dash can be used to divide element of a sentence where there is a shift in tone or emphasis, e.g.

*Punters can now use computer-based betting on the Tote – if they choose to waste their hard-earned money.*

An **omission** (where words are deliberately left out) is noted by the use of three full-stops followed by a space. If the omission is at the end of a sentence, another full stop is added.

An example of the use of omission stops is as follows:

*By the time you have finished your reading you should have a number of summary sentences which should be able to give you an overall picture of what your reading is about.... Once you have mastered this global strategy ... your note-taking will reflect this.*  
(Crème and Lea, 2003:59)

**Parentheses/Brackets** are used to enclose information of minor importance in a sentence. e.g.

*Malahide golf course (technically a golf links) is restricted to male club members most days of the week.*

Brackets are useful if a writer is restricted in the use of footnotes.

A **hyphen** is used within compound words such as on-going, co-ordinator, two-thirds, three-weeks holidays, inner-city streets, student-centred, problem-based, sub-standard.

**Italics** are used for titles of books, plays, films etc. and some names such as house names or names of ships etc.

**Capital letters** are used

- (i) for names and titles
- (ii) for the first word in a sentence
- (iii) for synonyms, e.g. NQAI

## ii. Numbers

- (i) Numbers less than one-hundred are generally spelled out
- (ii) A number as the first word of a sentence is spelled out regardless of its size
- (iii) Hyphens are used when numbers are spelled out e.g. twenty-nine
- (iv) Street numbers are given in figures e.g. 12 Upper Mount Street
- (v) A number is used in a date e.g. January 14
- (vi) Time is written in numbers e.g. 12.30p.m.
- (vii) Dates such as 1990s have an 's' added with no apostrophe.

## iii. The Apostrophe

The apostrophe is used for two main purposes, namely, to show ownership and to indicate that a letter or letters have been left out.

- a. A single owner is shown by an 's' e.g. the king's crown
- b. More than one owner is shown by s' e.g. the players' jerseys
- c. When a letter/letters are left out an apostrophe is used e.g. It's five o'clock.

*Note well!* **It's** means it is. **They're** means they are. **We're** means we are.

#### iv. Foreign words and phrases with popular abbreviations

Foreign words (particularly Latin and French words) are frequently used in writing in other languages. The convention is to use italics for full foreign words. Commonly used foreign word/phrases and abbreviations in academic writing include the list below:

<i>ibid.</i>	ibidem: in the same piece of work (used in referencing where more than one citation or reference is from the same page in a text. If the second or subsequent reference is from a different page in the text, the page number is used with <i>ibid</i> )
<i>idem</i>	the same, (used when a footnote refers to the same work and the same page as the previous)
<i>loc. cit</i>	loco citato: in the place cited (used when a reference is made to the same place, that is the same page, as a preceding but not immediately preceding reference; used with the last name of the author only)
<i>inter alia</i>	among others
<i>ab initio</i>	from the start
<i>sub rosa</i>	literally, 'under the rose', but means that the conversation is confidential
<i>in absentia</i>	in absence
<i>n.b. nota bene,</i>	note well,
<i>id est, i.e.</i>	that is
<i>e.g., exempli gratia</i>	for example
<i>aug.</i>	augmented
<i>c. or ca., circa</i>	approximately
<i>ed.</i>	edition or editor, depending on context
<i>ed(s)</i>	editors
<i>et al, et alii</i>	and others
<i>et alibi</i>	and elsewhere
<i>Fig(s)</i>	figure(s)
<i>Inter alia</i>	among others
<i>No(s)</i>	number(s)
<i>Non seq.</i>	non sequitur, it does not follow
<i>op .cit.</i>	opera citato: in the work cited (used when the reference is made to the same work as a preceding but not immediately preceding reference: it follows the author's name but precedes the page reference)
<i>p. pp.</i>	page, pages, e.g. p. 43, pp 43-47
<i>par, pars.</i>	paragraph, paragraphs
<i>P.S.</i>	Post scriptum
<i>q.v.</i>	quod vivide: which see
<i>rev. ed.</i>	revised edition
<i>sec(s)</i>	section(s)
[sic]	thus (used to call attention to the fact that an error in spelling, grammar, or fact

is in the original. It is enclosed by square brackets and placed immediately after the word or phrase in question.)

<i>supra</i>	above (used to refer to text already cited)
<i>trans.</i>	translation, translator
<i>vid or vide</i>	see
<i>vide infra</i>	see below
<i>vide supra</i>	see above
v., vv.	verse, verses
vol(s)	volume(s)
vs	versus

Most examples are from Anderson & Poole, 2001, pp. 168-170

It is not recommended that you use these abbreviations in your own work, but you need at least to know their meanings.

#### v. Footnotes and endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes are used for two main purposes:

- a. to greatly elaborate a point made in the main text or to acknowledge a source in great detail
- b. to give additional information which would not be appropriate in the main text but which may be essential for particular readers to gain a full understanding of a context.

Some fields of academic study require extensive footnoting/endnoting. The convention in education studies is to write sufficiently clearly in the main text to keep footnoting to a minimum.

### 3.5 Essential Writing Skills

Academic writing requires that you are skilled in identifying and presenting complex ideas and arguments. Among the writer's skills-set, summarising and paraphrasing are two of the most important.

Note: When summarising and paraphrasing you are obliged to acknowledge the sources of the ideas, using accepted conventions.

#### i. Summarising

Summarising is presenting the ideas of another writer in a reduced manner, capturing the essential ideas and presenting them in the same voice and style as the original writer.

A summary is generally about a quarter the length of the original. To summarise successfully you need to understand the original writing very well. You need to stay objective about the content and keep your own opinion/judgement of the issues out of the summary

#### ii. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is representing your understanding of a piece of text in your own words.

You should read the original piece several times and write your first version of the paraphrase without consulting the

original. This will allow you to impose your own style of writing on the paraphrase and to incorporate it seamlessly into your own writing. Then re-read the original to check that you have not misunderstood it, or misrepresented it.

Your paraphrase may be longer than the original as you may need to contextualise it for the reader and cross reference it to other parts of your article/paper/thesis.

The skill of paraphrasing is an essential one in postgraduate writing as it is pivotal in developing and supporting a scholarly argument. It is a key skill in writing an effective literature review.

### iii. Structuring

The structure of a piece of writing is the order of the parts and the relationship between them.

Most pieces of writing, regardless of their length, have:

- a beginning /introduction;
- a middle /main body;
- an ending /conclusion.

There may be several paragraphs/chapters in the main body, each of which has a different purpose.

A paragraph is essentially a group of sentences which deal with a theme or an aspect of a topic. Each paragraph should have an obvious topic word/theme/phrase/sentence. This is where the skills of summarising and paraphrasing are applied.

The paragraphs in the body of your writing must have unity: all paragraphs must develop, explain, add detail to, or otherwise relate to the topic sentence. The group of sentences in the paragraph should develop the main idea and progress it to the next stage.

The introduction generally has a specific function:

- (i) it gives an indication of the purpose of the piece of writing;
- (ii) defines terms used in the title;
- (iii) indicates how the piece is structured;
- (iv) indicates the writer's position in relation to the topic.

The main body of the written assignment presents the argument and supports points with research.

The conclusion brings together the main points made and justifies the arguments. It should give a sense of closure to the piece. The tone should confirm that the purpose of the piece has been attained and that the writer has done what he/she set out to do.

### iii. Cohesion and coherence

In general, cohesion means that elements relate to each other, and fit together in a plausible way for the reader.

Coherence refers to the acceptability of the argument being presented in so far as it makes sense to the reader, and can be clearly understood.

### iv. Connecting ideas, sentences and paragraphs

Ideas in your writing will be cohesive and coherent when there are obvious connections drawn by you, the writer. You should read your writing out loud and apply the following questions:

- a. Is each sentence complete?
- b. Does the punctuation help or hinder understanding?
- c. Are there too-many ideas in each sentence, or should short sentences be rolled into longer sentences for smoother reading?
- d. Does each sentence connect with the sentence before it?
- e. Does each sentence connect with the sentence after it?
- f. How are new themes introduced?
- g. How are connections made between ideas throughout the piece?

Useful devices for ensuring connection between sentences are the following words/phrases:

Then,  
 However,  
 Consequently,  
 Subsequently,  
 Accordingly,  
 Yet,  
 Although  
 Regarding,  
 With regard to,  
 As a result,  
 Firstly, .... Secondly....Finally....  
 In the first instance....  
 In addition...  
 As previously mentioned...  
 As mentioned above...  
 As indicated below....

### 3.6 Developing an Argument

In academic writing you may be required to make an argument about which there is considerable disagreement, or at least divided opinion. In such cases it should be obvious from your writing that you are aware of the range of the current opinions. You should be able to provide clear evidence to support your point of view. That evidence may come from either your own research or the research of others. If you make unsupported claims to knowledge in support of your argument you will be challenged! You will be asked: How do you know that? This is where the postgraduate student needs to be absolutely clear of his/her epistemological stance, and be able to defend his/her basis for a claim to knowledge.

You will be expected to be skilled enough both to defend your own claims and to persuade the reader that your claims are considered, reasonable, credible and valid. You will need facts, statistics, scholarly and authoritative sources of literature, examples and cases to develop and defend your argument.

### 3.7 Drafting, Editing and Proof-reading

A rough draft at postgraduate level is not an untidy, unstructured document. It should have an obvious structure with a high level of scholarship. The roughness is only in presentation quality!

The first draft should show clearly:

- a. that there is a clear purpose in the writing;

- b. that there is a plan in how the work is structured;
- c. that the context has been adequately explored;
- d. that the writing will be worthwhile!

A draft submitted to a tutor for feedback should satisfy the questions above, and, be free from presentation errors. The tutor is interested in the potential of the writing and in your development as a scholar, not in editing and correcting errors!

Before submitting a draft, check the following:

- a. Is the introduction clear?
- b. Are all paragraphs structured around a topic sentence?
- c. Are paragraphs connected?
- d. Is there an explicit conclusion?
- e. Have the available sources been fully incorporated?
- f. Is the bibliography complete and correct?

Check the appropriateness of the academic voice in your writing style: is your style too-chatty or too-casual?

Cross-check all references.

Use your spell-checker!

Good writing is not purely about being technically correct and following conventions. It is also about robust form, completeness and coherence, excitement and originality, scholarship and insight.

### Re-reading for Submission

When you have finished your research paper/report put it aside for a couple of days and then re-read it aloud. It should make aural sense for you and for the reader!

Do change it if you think it needs changing, but do not go on changing it forever.

### 3.8 Understanding Assessment Comments

Tutors generally make critical comments on assessed written assignments that indicate specific areas of strength and weakness. You should use such comments to revise and redraft.

Depending on the specific assessment criteria for your module/course, critical comments may be as follows:

- a. It is not clear from your introduction that you have clarified the purpose of your research.
- b. You should use sub-headings to structure your writing.
- c. There is no flow to the writing style. You should use more connecting phrases.
- d. There is no obvious argument.
- e. You make too-many unsupported claims.
- f. The writing style is turgid and inaccessible.
- g. The style is too-informal.
- h. You have not explored the obvious sources sufficiently.
- i. Your referencing style does not comply with any convention.
- j. You are confusing summarising with paraphrasing.
- k. Your style is too-informal for an academic paper.
- l. You use jargon.
- m. It is difficult to recognise the voice of the writer.

- n. Your positionality is inconsistent.
- o. The theoretical framework is inappropriate for the topic.

You may get directive comments, such as the following:

- a. Elaborate this point
- b. Clarify this point
- c. Support this point with more literature/references
- d. Re-structure this complex sentence into short sentences
- e. Re-word this more simply
- f. Use sub-headings to organise the structure
- g. Connect your argument to the aims and objectives
- h. Check that your conclusions are supported with evidence from the earlier parts of your paper.

You may be able to improve your writing by reading any of the writing guides mentioned in the opening part of this handbook. If you cannot follow assessment comments, you should ask your tutor for more directive advice.

### 3.9 Technical Documents

You are likely to be used to reading third level education technical documents such as class plans, curriculum descriptions, course syllabi, assessment forms, evaluation reports etc.

All technical documents are characterised by accuracy, clarity and objective writing style.

On most post-graduate programmes you will also have opportunities to produce technical documents such as reports and theses.

A general outline of report style is contained in Part 8 of this guidebook.

At Masters level you could consider the MA thesis a technical documents in that it follows specific technical guidelines. Generic guidelines for a thesis in the social sciences, arts, business, education and humanities are outlined in Part 5? of this guidebook.

### 3.10 Personal writing

Writing from a personal perspective may be required at postgraduate level. As a writer, you should be absolutely clear about the differences between personal writing and academic writing.

*Crème and Lea (2003:101) distinguish between the two types as follows:*

Personal Writing	Academic Writing
Recounts, tells a personal story	Comments, evaluates, analyses
Non-technical vocabulary	Subject-specific vocabulary
'I' at the centre	'I' as the observer and commentator
Information comes from the writer's experiences, personal feelings and views	Information comes form a range of sources, and refers to what others say
	Evidence and argument
	Conventions of referencing and citation to acknowledge the work of others.

It is, of course, possible to have both personal and academic writing styles in the same piece of postgraduate writing. However, the skill is in knowing how to use your voice as a writer to be absolutely clear that you are consciously aware of when you are in a personal mode or in an academic/analytical mode.

Researchers who are researching their own practice will commonly use the 'I' convention. This is academically acceptable as it would be nonsense to imply that the researcher is outside his/her own practice! But, the use of 'I' in academic writing generally is not acceptable. You should request specific instructions on this from your course co-ordinator/tutor.

### 3. 11 Common Knowledge, Plagiarism, Copyright and Ethics

We can assume that all our ideas are informed from many sources. However, in academic writing we distinguish between common knowledge that is available from sources such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, yearbooks etc. and specific knowledge that came from an identifiable source such as a report. In some cases a writer needs to make a judgement about whether to reference a source of common knowledge or not. The rule generally is: if you are in doubt, reference the source!

But you **MUST** acknowledge distinctive ideas, sources of specific information, verbatim phrases, sources of original terms and sources of statistics you use in your writing.

Using the ideas and information generated by another person in your own work without acknowledging that usage is generally regarded as plagiarism. Sometimes plagiarism is unintentional: simply a result of lack of skill in paraphrasing, summarising and quotation. However, at postgraduate level it is expected that you could not unintentionally plagiarise, and that therefore, you are responsible for your actions. In academia, plagiarism is a serious issue. It is so serious that a specific declaration of awareness is required in a thesis document.

To protect yourself from a possible accusation of plagiarism the following conventions should be followed:

- a. If you are summarising ideas you gleaned from a book/s, you must acknowledge where you got them, by using the authors' name/s and the date/s of publication. You must then list the books, with the full references, in your bibliography.
- b. If the point you are summarising is particularly controversial or important, you should give the page number in the book where the original point is made.
- c. All direct quotations in your text should be acknowledged with the page number of the source as well as the writer and date.

#### *In summary:*

Plagiarism means presenting the words of another writer as if they were your own. This is a serious matter, and if it is detected in any of your writing submitted for assessment it may result in sanctions.

The way to avoid plagiarism is very simple: always put quotation marks around someone else's words and credit the words to their proper source. If you also borrow ideas from another writer, say so and name the source. In this way you can also impress an examiner by showing that you have done some research!

Plagiarism could be regarded as a breach of copyright.

Copyright, in the context of academic programmes and academic publishing, generally refers to ownership of products, ideas or knowledge. In educational research and writing there might be copyright issues about the right to claim credit for research findings and for written material. There are questions about 'ownership' wherever there is scholarship. Here we move into the realm of ethics. In educational research there are well developed ethical guidelines for both the conduct of research and the presentation of research findings.

The DIT, like all higher education institutions, has a designated research ethics committee and set of agreed guidelines available on the intranet. However, on taught courses you are not normally required to get research clearance from the DIT Ethics Committee, as it is assumed that academic staff responsible for your courses will supervise your research appropriately.

*Note:*

Computer-based technology, such as turnitin, is now available to detect plagiarised text.

In research leading to a postgraduate thesis you are required to produce an ethics statement which outlines your awareness of, and provision for, any ethical issues relevant to your research.

Two books you might find useful in generating your ethics statements for research and writing are:

McNamee, M. and Bridges, D. (Eds) (2002) *The Ethics of Educational Research*, London: Blackwell

Sikes, P. Nixon, J. and Carr, W. (Eds) (2003) *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research: Knowledge, Inquiry and Values*, UK: Open University Press

## PART 4: REFERENCING

The referencing systems generally accepted for all written assignment for the humanities and social sciences are:

either

### The Harvard Referencing System

or

### The Referencing System of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Whatever system you are using you should write according to that system consistently and methodically.

You are advised NOT to take direction for referencing from websites. It is likely that your programme Handbook will indicate the referencing system to be used in assignment.

#### 4.2 Bibliographies: Referencing systems using Harvard and APA systems are illustrated below.

(This table was compiled by Diana Mitchell, DIT Library Services)

Source	Harvard System	APA System
Book title, single author	Tennant, M (1988) <i>Psychology and Adult Learning</i> , Routledge, London.	Tennant, M. (1988). <i>Psychology and adult learning</i> , London: Routledge.
Book title, several authors	Cohen, L, Manion, L and Morrison, K (2000) <i>Research Methods in Education</i> , 5th ed, RoutledgeFalmer, London.	Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). <i>Research methods in education</i> , (5th ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
Book title, edition	Tennant, M (1997) <i>Psychology and Adult Learning</i> , 2nd ed, Routledge, London.	Tennant, M. (1997). <i>Psychology and adult learning</i> , (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
Chapter in a book	Gumport, P J (1997) Feminist Scholarship as a Vocation, In A.H. Halsey et al (eds) <i>Education, Culture, Economy, Society</i> , Oxford University Press, Oxford.	Gumport, P.J. (1997). Feminist scholarship as a vocation. In A.H. Halsey et al, (Eds). <i>Education, culture, economy, society</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Article in a journal	Trigwell, K and Shale, S (2004) Student Learning and the Scholarship of University Teaching, <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> , 29(4), 523-536.	Trigwell, K., & Shale, S. (2004). Student learning and the scholarship of university teaching. <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> , 29(4), 523-536.
Official report	Department of Education and Science (2003) <i>Supporting Equity in Higher Education</i> , The Stationery Office, Dublin.	Department of Education and Science. (2003). <i>Supporting equity in higher education</i> . Dublin: The Stationery Office.
Thesis or dissertation	Murray, T (2003) Can there be objective numeric measurement of creative practice in visual arts? Unpublished MA thesis, Dublin Institute of Technology.	Murray, T. (2003). Can there be objective numeric measurement of creative practice in visual arts? Unpublished MA thesis. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.
Unpublished work	Learning and Teaching Centre (2000) <i>Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching</i> , Unpublished document, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin.	Learning and Teaching Centre. (2000). <i>Postgraduate Certificate in third level learning and teaching</i> . Unpublished document. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.
E-journal	Stierer, B and Antoniou, M (2004) Are there distinctive Methodologies for Pedagogic Research in Higher Education? <i>Teaching in Higher Education</i> , 9(3), 275-286. Full-text [online] Available: Swetswise, [Accessed September 1 2004]	Stierer, B. and Antoniou, M. (2004). Are there distinctive methodologies for pedagogic research in higher education? <i>Teaching in Higher Education</i> , 9(3), 275-286. Retrieved September 1, 2004, from Swetswise Fulltext.

Source	Harvard System	APA System
Document from the internet	Higher Education Authority (2004) <i>Creating Ireland's Knowledge Society: Proposals for Higher Education Reform</i> , Higher Education Authority, Dublin. <a href="http://www.heai.ie/uploads/word/2004KnowledgeIrelandV1.doc">http://www.heai.ie/uploads/word/2004KnowledgeIrelandV1.doc</a> [Accessed 1 September 2004]	Higher Education Authority. (2004). <i>Creating Ireland's knowledge society: proposals for higher education reform</i> . Dublin: Higher Education Authority. Retrieved September 1, 2004, from <a href="http://www.heai.ie/uploads/word/2004KnowledgeIrelandV1.doc">http://www.heai.ie/uploads/word/2004KnowledgeIrelandV1.doc</a>
Newspaper item	Reid, L (2004) July 8, <i>World-class Skills, Education and Training</i> , The Irish Times, p 7.	Reid, L. (2004, July 8). <i>World-class skills, education and training</i> . The Irish Times, p. 7.
Lecture notes	Donnelly, R (2003) What should guide your teaching? Lecture notes distributed in the course – PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching, at Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin on March 10, 2004.	Donnelly, R. (2003). What should guide your teaching? Lecture notes distributed in the course – PG Cert in Learning and Teaching, at Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin on March 10, 2004.
Web-site	Dublin Institute of Technology (2004) <a href="http://www.dit.ie/DIT/Homepage/index.html">http://www.dit.ie/DIT/Homepage/index.html</a> [Accessed 7 September 2004]	Dublin Institute of Technology.(2004). Retrieved September 7, 2004, from <a href="http://www.dit.ie/DIT/Homepage/index.html">http://www.dit.ie/DIT/Homepage/index.html</a>
Image	Map of Dublin.jpg [Picture of Dublin map] [online] <a href="http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary">http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary</a> [Accessed 2 September 2004]	Map of Dublin.jpg [Picture of Dublin map] [online] Retrieved September 2, 2004, from <a href="http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary">http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary</a>
Anonymous Publications	Alphabetise under title <i>Primary Colors: A Novel of Politics</i> , (1996) Vintage, London.	Alphabetise under title Primary colors: a novel of politics. (1996). London: Vintage.
No Author	As anonymous publications above.	As anonymous publications above.
Referencing Cited works	Make it clear that you are referencing from a secondary source. In your reference list, cite the secondary source only.  Psychologists have identified three basic processes of social influence (Kelman 1961, cited by Atkinson 1987, p 597).	Make it clear that you are referencing from a secondary source. In your reference list, cite the secondary source only.  In Kelman's study, he shows the three basic processes of social influence that psychologists have identified (as cited in Atkinson 1987)
Pseudonym publication	Listed under the pseudonym with the real author's name following in brackets.  Bell, C [Bronte, C] (1992) <i>Jane Eyre: An Autobiography</i> , Nutshell Publishers, Rugeley.	Listed under the pseudonym with the real author's name following in brackets.  Bell, C. [Bronte, C.]. (1992). <i>Jane Eyre: an autobiography</i> . Rugeley: Nutshell Publishers.
Association or Institute as author	The association/institute appears in the author position.  Staff and Educational Development Association (1996) <i>Facets of Mentoring in Higher Education</i> , SEDA, Birmingham.	The association/institute appears in the author position.  Staff and Educational Development Association. (1996). <i>Facets of mentoring in higher education</i> . Birmingham: SEDA
Conference Proceedings	McCauley, F (2001) <i>Celebrating Difference: Gender Equality and Lifelong Learning</i> , Proceedings of the AONTAS Millenium Conference held at the Limerick Inn Hotel, Limerick, 20th October 2000, AONTAS, Limerick.	McCauley, F. (2001). <i>Celebrating difference: gender equality and lifelong learning</i> . Proceedings of the AONTAS Millenium conference, Limerick Inn Hotel, Limerick, 20th October 2000. Dublin: AONTAS.

## 4.2 Acknowledging sources, and incorporating citations/quotations into your own writing

General guidelines:

- a. In a paraphrased passage only the author and date are required as acknowledgement of the source, e.g.  
During the last decade of the twentieth century, curriculum design became increasingly student-centred (Toohey, 1999).  
Toohey (1999) argues that curriculum design became increasingly student-centred in the last decade of the twentieth century.
- b. If the same point was made in several works you just list the writers and years of publication in date order, e.g.  
Lecturers are increasingly using a student-centred approach to teaching in higher education (Gredler, 2004; Lukes, 2003; Mannion, 2003).
- c. If your material comes from more than one source by the same author you should list the years as follows:  
Boud stresses the urgent need to consider the theoretical underpinnings of experiential learning when planning work-based learning (Boud, 2001, 2003a, 2003b).
- d. When a publication has more than one author, you should mention all the authors the first time you refer to the publication  
e.g. (Brown, Duguid and Collins, 2001), but use (Brown et al, 2001) thereafter.
- e. When an author cites another author you need to acknowledge this, e.g.  
Giddens (cited in Elton, 2004:22) argues that the school no longer reflects society in urban England.
- f. If your source is not published, but is significant, you can acknowledge it as follows:  
This particular concept was introduced by Prof. Pat Lyons at a conference in July, 2003 in the University of Stirling.
- g. When quoting directly in the text use quotation marks as well as acknowledging the author's name, year of publication and page number of the quote in brackets. Short quotations of less than two lines are embedded in the text using single quotation marks and plain print, e.g.  
Boud, (2004:34) maintains that 'work-based learning can now be regarded as the dominant learning paradigm of the new century'.  
OR  
Boud (2004) maintains that 'work-based learning can now be regarded as the dominant learning paradigm of the new century' (p. 34).

Direct quotations of more than two lines should be in italics, indented on both sides, no quotation marks, as follows:

*At the end of your essay it is usual to give both a bibliography and a reference list, although in some pieces of work you may just be asked for a reference list alone. This contains only the authors and works you have referenced in the essay, while the bibliography is a list of all the material you have consulted as background for the topic.*  
(Greetham, 2001:246).

## PART 5: SAMPLE HOUSE STYLE FOR ASSIGNMENT PRESENTATION

A sample house style for presentation of text documents might include the following:

- 1. Font style** Times New Roman
- 2. Font Size**  
Text 11 or 12 plain  
Footnotes or End notes 10/11 plain
- 3. Levels of Headings** (as in Chapter 9, Anderson & Poole (2001 edition) ) as follows:  
Up to 5 levels of headings may be used in major documents such as a thesis.

**Level 1** CENTRED HEADING UPPER CASE BOLD

**Level 2** Centre Heading Title Case Bold

**Level 3** Side Heading Title Case Bold

**Level 4** *Side Heading Title Case in Italics*

**Level 5** *Paragraph heading sentence, lower case, in italics, ending with a full stop.*

In all documents you should be clear and consistent about the levels of heading you are using. Levels of headings force you to think carefully about the function of each sentence and paragraph in your writing. This is very useful if you tend to be less than orderly in your writing habits.

- 4. Page numbering** Centred at foot
- 5. Line spacing**  
1.5 for main text  
single for quotations, appendices, figures, tables, footnotes/  
endnotes  
  
single for reference list/bibliography, leaving one space  
between entries
- 6. Margins**  
left -4 cm  
right -2 cm  
top -3 cm  
bottom -4 cm (includes the page number)
- 6. Text justified**
- 7. Quotations**  
a. Plain print with single inverted commas for all short  
quotations embedded in the text  
b. All quotation of more than two full lines should be single  
spaced, in italics and indented, without inverted commas.  
A single space should be left above and below the quotation.
- 8. Emphasis** Bold or italics. Do not underline.

- 9. Use of colour** Text in black or dark blue print on white paper. Colour may be used for images, graphs, charts, diagrams etc.
- 10. Binding** Short documents submitted for assessment normally require no binding, but should be stapled on the top, left-hand corner.
- 11. Cover** The cover page for documents submitted for assessment (other than the thesis) should give essential information in the following order: course, module, title, name, submitted to, date.
- 12. Printing** Text on right-hand page only
- 13. Paper** Good quality white paper, 80g. for short assignments, 100g. for theses
- 14. Binding** Short individual assignments need not be bound, but must be stapled on the top left-hand corner;  
Group reports may be bound;  
Standard hardback binding for theses.
- 15. Cover** Dark blue with gold lettering

*Spine:*

Name (as registered) . . . . . top  
 year of submission . . . . . centre  
 M.A. . . . . bottom

*Front Cover:*

Title - . . . . . top  
 Registered Name - . . . . . middle  
 M.A. - . . . . . bottom left  
 Year of submission - . . . . . bottom right

*Back:* blank

Three (3) copies of assignments are normally required for assessment purposes.

## PART 6: THESIS PRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE THESIS (SAMPLE)

Below is generic advice about the structure of a thesis at Masters level in the fields of education, humanities, and social sciences. Each Masters programme is likely to have its own specifications which student should follow.

### 6.1 Organisation of the MA Thesis

A thesis, or dissertation, is an exercise in organisation - research organisation and writing organisation - regardless of the research topic.

There are established expectations regarding theses in higher education, and the format is generally internationally recognisable.

A thesis is generally highly stylised with distinctive and clearly evident component parts.

While the logic of the research design and your treatment of the content of the research are of paramount importance, the organisation and style of your completed document are critical to acceptance of your thesis by readers. It is essential, therefore, that your writing style and language are appropriately formal, even when the first person, 'I', is used.

### 6.2 PRELIMINARY PAGES

The general order of preliminary pages in a thesis is as follows:

- Title
- Declaration
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- (Glossary of Terms)
- (List of Abbreviations)
- (List of Acronyms)
- List of Appendices

### 6.3 CHAPTERS/MAIN BODY

The main body of a postgraduate thesis generally has sections (Chapters) presented in the following order:

- a. Introduction
- b. Context of the research, rationale for the study, research hypothesis or question, aims and objectives, ethical considerations.
- c. Theoretical Perspective/Conceptual Framework or Paradigm informing the research
- d. Review of the literature
- e. Research design, methodology and method
- f. Presentation of Findings
- g. Discussion/Analysis of Findings
- h. Conclusions and Recommendations.

Each of these sections (Chapters) may, of course, have sub-sections devoted to discrete parts of the research work, indicated by sub-headings.

The main body of the thesis is generally followed by:

- a. References and citations (used in the text). All references must be fully acknowledged.
- b. Bibliography (of all works consulted). This is optional.
- c. Appendices

## 6. 4 APPENDICES

Appendices will vary but generally the following items are included:

- Tables not suitable for the main text
- Figures not used in the text but useful for the reader
- Illustrations not appropriate for the main text
- (Glossary)
- (Abbreviations)
- Letters
- Samples of research documents used
- Transcribed text from interviews or focus groups. This is usually presented in smaller font and with economy of space usage.

Appendices are usually listed alphabetically using capital letters: A, B, C, D.

## TITLE

It might be worth considering that many people read the title of a dissertation/thesis, while only a few read the entire report. Therefore all words in your final title should be chosen with great care, paying attention to syntax.

The title should have the fewest words possible which adequately describe the contents of your thesis.

It is sometimes helpful to have a question or 'catchy' title, followed by a description of the study in the minimum of words.

## ABSTRACT

The abstract should:

1. state the principal aims, objectives and scope of the investigation
2. describe the research design
3. summarise the results
4. state the principal conclusions and recommendations

There are generally no references or statistics in the abstract.

Emphasis should be on the conclusion and recommendations.

## 6.5 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Introduction is to supply sufficient background information for the reader to understand the context and purpose of the research, the main aims and objectives, the research design used, the main findings and recommendations.

The Introduction is generally written as one of the final tasks and is generally less than five pages in length.

The content of each chapter is generally summarised.

The first chapter usually ends with an indication to the reader of the approach to expect in the rest of the document.

## 6.6 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH, RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, DELIMITATIONS, RESEARCH ETHICS

This chapter will be based largely on the relevant sections of the Research Proposal.

Remember to change the tense of the verbs to the past tense where necessary!

The context of the research should be outlined in sufficient background detail for any reader to understand with ease.

The rationale for the research should clearly prove that the research is justified and is worth the effort.

The aims and objectives should be very clear and outlined in detail. This is essential as the entire research design depends on the clarity of the research aim and achievement of its objectives.

The delimitations section outlines and justifies what aspects of the research topic are included in the research and what aspects are deliberately left out.

The section on ethics outlines the standard academic position on the research and outlines the specific ethical aspects of your own research.

As with all sections of the thesis this chapter should be written in formal style, well supported with relevant data and literature.

It should be clear to the reader that the research is justified and that it will contribute something worthwhile to the particular field.

## 6.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OR PARADIGM INFORMING THE RESEARCH

This section will have been introduced in the Research Proposal document. Again, it should be supported with adequate references and written in formal style.

Some theses will have more emphasis on the theoretical or conceptual framework than others, especially where data are being interrogated from a theoretical perspective or conceptual framework as the main analytical approach. Your thesis supervisor will advise in this regard.

## 6.8 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The main purpose of the literature review is to outline current theories and arguments related to your research topic and to outline the main debates, research and key authors who have contributed to the field.

There are various ways of approaching the presentation of the relevant literature and theory in this section, and indeed to including literature at different junctures throughout the thesis. It is advisable to have consistency between the Proposal and Thesis in this regard. Your supervisor will advise you appropriately in the context of your own research.

## **6. 9 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

This is a crucial chapter in any thesis since the validity of the study will to a large extent depend on the care taken in the planning and implementation of the research. This section should be carefully written, as, ideally, your research design should stand up to the test of 'replication' by other competent researchers.

Your discussion and conclusions chapters depend largely on the validity and accuracy of your research data, so great care should be taken both to describe the research design and to outline the approach to data analysis.

You need to refer to literature in support of your selected methodology and methods, especially where unusual or complex design is involved.

If your method is relatively new it may require detailed information to defend its validity.

If you are using mixed methods it is necessary to justify the decision.

Do NOT attempt to offer any findings of your research in this chapter as its purpose is to outline the research design only.

It is likely that most of the issues in this section will have been considered in some detail in the Thesis Proposal. Your supervisor will advise of any issues emerging from assessment of the Proposal.

## **6. 10 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

This is a vital part of your thesis: the conversion of data into information for the reader.

There are many variations as to how findings may be presented, and you should use an approach appropriate to your own research context.

You could take the approach of a clear, crisp, direct presentation in an orderly and logical fashion or, you may wish to present the findings in a more discursive way, interweaving literature with the findings.

Your research may require presentation of extracts from logs, field notes, interviews etc..

You could, if you choose, start with a very brief description of the research methods used and a presentation of the findings without discussion or analysis.

It is not necessary to present each and every finding with equal weighting. You may use your judgement to emphasise important or significant findings, including variables, in relation to verification or rejection of your research hypothesis/question. It is important to present any negative findings which impact on your research hypothesis/question.

There is some merit in indicating what you did not find, or what surprised you.

The presentation of data from quantitative research (including tables, graphs, statistics, etc.) may differ significantly from data from qualitative research. However, in both cases the data should be presented relative to the research method used.

In reviewing the overall presentation of findings, it is important to keep in mind how the earlier chapters led towards

the findings chapter, and, how you intend to handle the Discussion of Findings chapter. The reader needs to be led smoothly through the chapters in a systematic and logical fashion.

## 6. 11 DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

You may wish to divide this section into clear sub-sections so that complex topics can be given adequate treatment. Such sub-sections should arise from the way you have ordered the earlier chapters. This gives a unity and coherence to the material both for your self as writer and for the reader.

If you have outlined a specific theoretical or conceptual perspective for the study in the earlier chapters, you should use that perspective as a framework for analysis of the data here.

The following are suggested as general guidelines for an approach to the discussion of findings chapter, but variations are possible:

1. Try to present the principles, relationships and generalisations shown by the Findings. Remember that you are discussing the findings, not re-presenting the findings or summarising them
2. Indicate where the findings lacked correlation, were surprising, or where they unsettled assumptions made in the original research design
3. Show how your findings agree with, or contradict, previously published results of similar studies
4. Be brave in discussing the theoretical implications of your findings, if relevant
5. Indicate any practical implications of the findings as they relate to the aims and objectives of the study.

## 6. 12 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions chapter will be closely connected with Discussion of Findings chapter and earlier chapters. This chapter generally answers the questions: '**So what?**'

This section should clearly connect the aims and objectives with the discussion of findings, and outline for the reader the significance of the findings, or otherwise, in the research context.

Any conclusions drawn should be clearly supported by the data presented, without exaggeration or deliberate misinterpretation.

Your conclusions should indicate your judgement on the relative importance of your study.

Some theses will have a stronger emphasis on the recommendations section than others, especially with regard to policy and practical the nature of your own research will dictate how much emphasis should be given to these sections.

In any case, recommendations should:

- be constructive and realistic
- arise obviously from the research findings
- be carefully worded
- indicate practical solutions/strategies/policies etc.
- be few in number.

To round off the Thesis you should very briefly refer to the purpose of the research, the main findings and conclusions, and whether or not, you have succeeded in achieving the main aims.

# ***Towards an Epistemology of Artificial Intelligence***

A thesis submitted to the Midlands University in part fulfilment of the requirements for award of  
Masters (M.A.) in Work-based Learning

by

**Kurt Replies**

June 2008

**Supervisor: A. Another**

**Department of Informatics, Faculty of Humanities, Midlands University**

## 6.14 Sample thesis declaration

### ***Declaration***

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards award of the Masters (M.A.) in Work-based Learning is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

Signature of candidate:.....

Date: .....

## PART 7: STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The DIT has specific guidelines regarding the presentation of a doctoral thesis in its Postgraduate Research Regulations Handbook. Those guidelines, current for 2010, are outlined below.

### 3.4.1 Characteristics expected of a thesis for the award of PgDip (Res)

A PgDip (Res) thesis is a comprehensive and coherent account of the work done, including the context and background of the work and a critical appreciation of the results of the work and their relevance to the field. It is normally a substantial written report and may include other elements such as models, designs, artistic compositions, audiovisual or multimedia materials etc., depending on the discipline and nature of the project.

It should demonstrate a range of the following characteristics

- an understanding of the theory and methodology in the discipline;
- knowledge of specialisation in the field;
- specialist skills and their application in research and/or advanced practice in the field;
- planning ability
- implementation of complex processes relating to the field;
- problem-solving skills.

### 3.4.2 Characteristics expected of a thesis for the award of MPhil

An MPhil thesis is normally a substantial written report but may encompass models, designs, artistic compositions, audiovisual and multimedia materials etc., depending on the discipline and nature of the project. It should demonstrate a range of the following characteristics:

- thorough and critical understanding of the issues and developments in the discipline;
- a scholarly approach and a wide knowledge in the discipline;
- specialist skills and their application in research and/or advanced practice in the field;
- planning ability
- a high degree of independence of thought and work
- ability to self-assess and engage in personal professional/academic development
- ability to reflect on the social context and significance of the work
- a novel application of existing knowledge

### 3.4.3 Characteristics of a thesis for the PhD

A PhD thesis is normally a substantial written report but may also encompass models, designs, artistic compositions, audiovisual and multimedia materials etc., depending on the discipline and nature of the project. It should demonstrate a range of the following characteristics:

- systematic understanding of knowledge at the forefront of the discipline;
- original, independent and creative development of new knowledge,
- work that is suitable for publication in peer-reviewed publications;
- a wide range of skills, tools and methods in research and/or advanced practice in the field;
- ability to propose new advanced skills, tools, methods or materials;
- ability to analyse and solve problems and extend existing knowledge;
- ability to communicate results of research, scholarship and development to peers
- ability to critically review developments in the field, including their social significance and critical
- ability and capacity to undertake further independent research.

### 3.5 Recommended format, length and presentation

The body of the thesis should be printed single-sided on good quality white A4 size paper. Letter quality, at least 12 point, black type should be used with double line spacing. On each page there should be a left-hand margin of at least 40 mm and a right-hand margin of at least 20 mm. All pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the text and appendices, starting at the table of contents, with the page numbers central at the bottom of each page, at least 10 mm above the edge of the page. If there is more than one volume, each volume should carry its own pagination. A PhD thesis should not exceed 600 pages or 100,000 words, an MPhil thesis should not exceed 300 pages or 50,000 words and a PgDip thesis should not exceed 150 pages or 25,000 words.

#### 3.5.1 Thesis Cover

Copies of the thesis are initially submitted with a soft cover. Final copies of the thesis are submitted with a hard cover, with inscriptions on the cover and spine as specified below.

The hard cover is required to be dark blue in colour and the front cover must be gold-embossed with the following inscription:

- the full title of the thesis (in 20 point type) together with any subtitles
- the name of the candidate
- the award for which the thesis is submitted (PgDip (Res), MPhil, PhD)
- the name of the Institute
- the year of submission
- the volume number and the total number of volumes, if more than one

The spine of the hard-bound cover thesis is also required to be gold-embossed, in a smaller type if necessary, with the following

- the name of the candidate
- the award (in abbreviated form) for which the thesis is submitted (PgDip (Res), MPhil, PhD)
- the year of submission
- the volume number, if more than one

#### 3.5.2 Structure of the thesis

The elements of the thesis should be set out in the following order.

##### 3.5.2.1 Title page

The title page should display the :

- full title of the thesis, with any subtitles, in 20 point type in black text
- name and qualifications of the candidate
- award for which the thesis is submitted (PgDip (Res), MPhil, or PhD)
- name of the Institute
- name(s) of the supervisor(s)
- school to which the candidate is principally affiliated
- month and year of submission
- volume number and the total number of volumes, if more than one.

### 3.5.2.2 Abstract

The thesis should include a single-page abstract of the work.

### 3.5.2.3 Declaration page

A page containing the following declaration, appropriately completed is required:

**I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of \_\_\_\_\_, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any Institute.**

**The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.**

*(The following sentence is added to the declaration unless academic access to the thesis is restricted according to paragraph 5.5)*

**The Institute has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate

### 3.5.2.4 Acknowledgements (if any)

Personal acknowledgements may be expressed.

### 3.5.2.5 Abbreviations list (if any)

A list of abbreviations and symbols used in the thesis should be provided, together with their meanings, definitions and/or the terms they represent.

### 3.5.2.6 Table of contents

There should be a table of contents which includes the number and title of each chapter of the thesis, numerically referenced chapter subsection headings, references and appendices with corresponding page numbers.

### 3.5.2.7 Table of illustrations, figures, etc.

All illustrations, photographs, figures, tables, graphs and/or diagrams should be provided with reference numbers and legends.

### 3.5.2.8 Chapters in sequence

The main headings for the chapters should be given in capital letters. Subsidiary headings should use initial capital letters only.

Footnotes in each chapter should be numbered consecutively.

### **3.5.2.9 References/bibliography**

References should be thorough and comprehensive and a single form of referencing should be used throughout the thesis. The form used should accord with the norms and accepted standards for the discipline and should be agreed with the supervisor(s).

A list of the references, in alphabetical order, should be included in a separate section located at the end of the main body of the text chapters and before any appendices or at the end of each chapter. A glossary of terms and / or an index may also be included.

### **3.5.2.10 Appendices (if any)**

Appendices may consist of supporting material, lists, documents, commentaries, tables or other evidence, which, if included in the main text, would have interrupted the flow of the narrative.

### **3.5.2.11 List of publications (if any)**

A list of the student's publications relating to or arising from the research work should be included.

### **3.5.3 Indicative length of thesis**

A PhD thesis should not exceed 600 pages or 100,000 words. The content of the thesis should be sufficient to demonstrate that the candidate has fulfilled the criteria for the relevant award. The dissertation should be written concisely, without repetition or unnecessary text.

### **3.5.4 Unbound material**

If material that constitutes part of the thesis cannot be conveniently submitted in bound form, the unbound material and its packaging shall both be marked with the author's name, initials and award for which the work is submitted, in such a way that it can readily be linked to the thesis. Reference to any such unbound material shall be made in the thesis.

## PART 8: REPORT STYLE

In higher education students are frequently required to submit reports, either individually, or as part of a class group exercise.

In either case, you are likely to be working to a research and reporting brief designed by course teaching staff. Usually such exercises are real-life in style, but notional in reality. The object of the exercise is generally to enable you to acquire the skills of collaborative research and report writing: skills that are essential in real life!

Reports have a number of features which are different to the standard academic essay, for example:

- a. they are written with a particular readership in mind
- b. they have clarity of communication as the key determinant of writing style
- c. they generally explain: why the research was done (terms of reference), how it was done: (procedure/methodology) and the outcomes (findings, conclusion and recommendations)
- d. they generally have a set of recommendations, or action points, as the final section
- e. long reports generally have an executive summary, glossary of terms and appendices
- f. information is frequently presented in figures, tables, diagrams and visual images
- g. the style of writing is impersonal, logical, direct and succinct with an emphasis on facts and details rather than on argument and discussion
- h. bullet points are frequently used instead of continuous text
- i. there is significant use of sub-headings, numbering and standardised layout.

### 8. 1 Sample title page for a report

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report on</b> <b>XXXXXXXXXXXXXX</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prepared by</b> <b>XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For</b> <b>XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Date</b> <b>XX XX XXXX</b></p>
--

## 8. 2 Sample Contents Page format for a report

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<i>Page</i>
<b>1. Terms of Reference</b>	
<b>2. Research Procedure</b>	
2.1	
2.2	
2.3.	
<b>3. Findings</b>	
3.1	
3.2	
3.3.	
3.4	
3.5.	
<b>4. Conclusions</b>	
4.1	
4.2	
<b>5. Recommendations</b>	
5.1	
5.2	
5.3	
<b>Appendices</b>	
A.	
B.	

### 8.3 Sample Cover Page for a module assignment

**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATICS**

**POSTGRADUATE (Certificate, or Diploma or Masters) in Work-based Learning**

**MODULE (or assignment)**  
.....

**STUDENT NAME:** .....

**STUDENT NUMBER:** .....

**SUBMITTED TO:** .....

**DATE SUBMITTED:** .....





# ABOUT PUBLISHING IN CONFERENCE PAPERS AND JOURNALS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This part of the book is intended for the first-time publisher. It is a gentle introduction to thinking about yourself as an author. It is not intended as a comprehensive guide to everything-you-need-to-know about getting published. Rather it is intended to prompt you into planning your first piece of formal, scholarly writing and starting the process of getting it published either as a conference paper or as a journal article. Before considering the publishing process it might be worth defining what is meant by 'research', 'scholarly activity' and 'publishing' here.

### What is 'research'?

For the purpose of discussion here, the term 'research' refers to deliberate and systematic activity which has the aim of finding out something new to you, or new to your field of practice. That activity can be desk-based, as in a literature review, where there are no new data generated, but which may present or analyse existing data from new perspectives. It can be practice-based, as in testing out an idea, theory or process associated with your own work. It might be field research and data gathering through surveys, interviews or focus group sessions to find answers to research questions. Or it could be laboratory-type trials or case studies to test hypotheses, propositions or models. The essential thing is that research involves exploration, data gathering, data analysis and data presentation.

As an author of research papers, you will be expected to be keenly aware of the types of research you are involved in, such as applied research, basic research etc.. You will also be expected to be aware of accepted norms for scientific research, historical research, action research etc. so that you can look for suitable publishing opportunities to attract particular readerships.

### What is 'scholarly activity'?

The term 'scholarly activity' has many meanings and is often context-specific. In higher education it can refer to activities such as keeping up-to-date on policy, practice and pedagogical matters. It can mean attending seminars and conferences as a participant, and attending continuing professional training events. It can be about investigating aspects of your own work practice, writing about it and disseminating your writing among peers in your field.

The added dimension of 'being scholarly' infers that there is systematic and informed reflection and analysis involved in the activity, and that the 'scholar' is well informed about current 'scholarship'. The purpose of scholarly activity may be personal and individual such as in a thesis, or it may have a more public intent towards wide dissemination through a journal, a conference paper or book chapter.

In scholarly writing there is generally external verification of the evidence you present. At a conference this verification may be from the audience at your presentation in a non-formal mode.

In a peer-reviewed journal, however, you are volunteering to have your work verified by peers and editors.

### What is 'publishing'?

'Publishing' generally refers to making your work available to a wide readership through print in journals, books, or websites. Academic publishing may involve peer-review of your work, or at least editorial oversight, before it goes to print. In this book, publishing refers to text modes such as conference papers, chapters in books and journal articles. Guidance for publishing full books is not offered in this edition but is likely to be included in subsequent editions.

## 2. BEFORE CONSIDERING PUBLISHING

Before you decide to publish you need the following:

- a. something to say
- b. a way of saying it publicly
- c. someone to read it – a target audience.

It is reasonable to assume that if you are reading this book you have more than a casual interest in publishing in some form. What might be worthwhile thinking about is the type of publishing which best suits you just now. As it is you are probably engaged in writing activities related to your day-to-day activities.

You are likely to write informally for a number of communication and recording purposes, and to write more formally in memos, minutes, programme documents, newsletters and reports. So you have considerable writing skills already.

If you are a novice ‘scholarly’ writer it is useful to distinguish among the different forms and styles of writing early in your research career. There are many ways to present the range of different forms, but perhaps the table below is a useful place to start your own categories and to help you decide where to begin your writing and publishing career.

Informal Writing	Reports - types	Conference Papers- Why?	Journals- Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- working out what you are thinking about a topic or issue</li> <li>- trying out new styles of writing</li> <li>- testing ideas with colleagues and friends</li> <li>- venting a point of view</li> <li>- imitating the styles of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal and informal progress reports</li> <li>- funding reports/proposals</li> <li>- analytical reports</li> <li>- literature reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to disseminate your research findings</li> <li>- to get feedback from an expert and interested audience</li> <li>- to hear yourself speak your research</li> <li>- to practice presentations</li> <li>- to practice communicating your research</li> <li>- to practice responding to questions</li> <li>- to further your profile</li> <li>- to rehearse a journal article or book chapter</li> <li>- because you are obliged to do so as a condition of the research funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to disseminate your research globally</li> <li>- to be considered an expert</li> <li>- to be searchable on-line</li> <li>- to be cited and quoted</li> <li>- to enhance your profile</li> <li>- to be associated with co-authors</li> <li>- to stop others taking credit for your work</li> <li>- because it is a challenge</li> <li>- because it is pleasing</li> <li>- to show that you can write to high standards</li> <li>- to build your professional reputation</li> <li>- because your Department requires you to do so</li> <li>- to enhance your CV for promotion</li> </ul>

### 3. ABOUT YOURSELF AS AN AUTHOR-IN-CONTEXT

As a reader of this book you may be an academic lecturer, a manager, administrator, or member of library staff. You may be a part-time Masters of Doctorate student, a full-time self-funded student, or a research student working on a funded project upon which you are basing your doctoral thesis. You may be registered on a taught professional doctorate programme which requires a series of academic papers.

Whatever your particular context you need to think carefully about how you go about publishing.

Below are twenty questions you could ask yourself in order to plan a coherent and efficient first-draft strategy for your publishing career.

#### Twenty questions to ask yourself before publishing

1. Does your current student status or job description require you to publish? If so, are you aware of how many items you are expected to publish, where and how?
2. Does your research project, Department or office have preferred journals? If so, do you know them and their specifications for submissions?
3. If you are required to write for particular journals, what is their style of writing and can you write in that style yourself?
4. Have you looked carefully at the pages in the journal which explains the type of articles accepted, their style guide etc?
5. Do you have to submit a full paper or just an abstract/proposal?
6. Can you wait six months or more for a response about acceptance or rejection and perhaps up to two years for eventual publication?
7. Would you be prepared to adapt your article to suit the styles of 3, 4 or more journals?  
Is it worth the effort?
8. Are you prepared to make substantial changes as advised by the copy-editor?
9. Will publication of your findings impact on your thesis if you publish too-much of it in advance?
10. If your first choice journal recruits only particular types of research would you take a chance anyway and submit, or focus only on the aspects that would suit the journal?
11. What if your top journal dislikes your research design, could you focus on other aspects of the research?
12. Could you submit to a research design/methodology journal, a literature journal, a theoretical journal, a professional practice journal from the same piece of research?
13. Will your supervisor assist you?
14. Can you afford to go to conferences?
15. Are you prepared to write with colleagues?
16. Are you bound by confidentiality protocols?
17. Could you afford to publish a book yourself?
18. Does your lifestyle have time and space for writing?
19. Have you sufficient IT skills to write articles with tables, graphs and figures?
20. Have you a reference management system on your computer?

## 4. ABOUT SUBMITTING ABSTRACTS AND ARTICLES TO PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

Internet sites such as Google Scholar and JSTOR are useful sources for journal articles and other types of scholarly writing. The Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) also produces books of journal article abstracts on an annual basis. By using these types of resources you can quickly become familiar with how journals are categorised and how types of journal articles are arranged into themed sections. This will help you when you are deciding about the aspect of your research you intend to publish.

The internet now has a bewildering variety of support sites for the would-be author. It might be wise to initially rely on established and widely respected sites such as EMERALD or the sites of recommended professional journals. Your own professional or programme network may have information about the most appropriate journals and conferences for your particular field.

Generally a journal website, or call for conference paper proposals, will specify the types of articles or papers being sought. Generally the types are as in the table below.

### Types of articles and papers

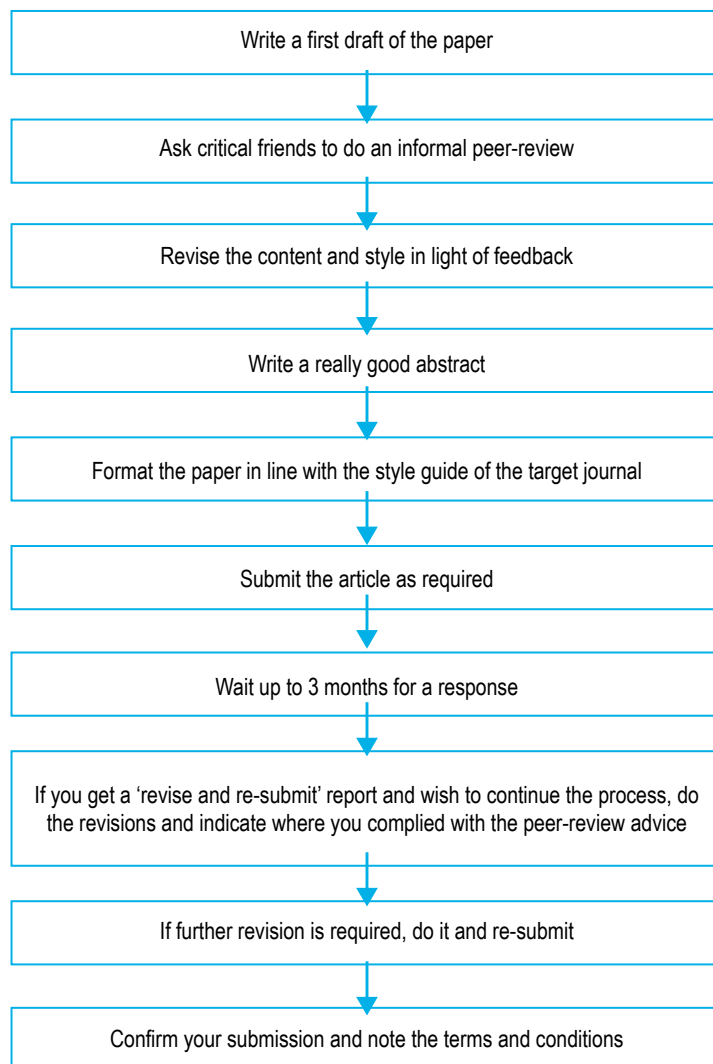
Research report	A research paper reports on research already undertaken, or on research in progress. It generally has a standard structure which outlines the aim of the research, the research design, the background literature, the research process, findings, analysis of findings, and discussion of implications of the findings.
Viewpoint /Critique paper	A viewpoint paper generally offers the author's opinions and interpretations on the subject matter. If it is a critique paper it should have a well defended framework for the critique. This type of paper could be organised around a key question which is answered in relation to both the literature and the author's positionality.
Technical paper	A technical paper generally includes specific facts and information which is intended for a readership with relevant background knowledge already.
Conceptual/Theoretical paper	A conceptual or theoretical paper may not necessarily be based on research but will develop a hypotheses. It is likely to be discursive and argumentative with philosophical discussion and comparisons with the work of other authors.
Literature review	It is expected that scholarly articles and conference papers will contain appropriate references and citations from literature. A paper or article which is entirely a literature review will have a critical review intent and not be merely a presentation of current thinking.
General review	A general review usually is less critical than a literature review and can review policy and practice as well as published works.
Historical paper	A historical paper is precisely that: it usually tracks a development or phenomenon with supporting facts and evidence.
Case study	Case studies generally describe actual interventions or experiences, though hypothetical cases may be posed. They may be exploratory and discursive as well as research-based. Case studies may be unique to their time and context with low potential for replication. Comparing case studies is a popular format for articles and papers.
Book review	Book reviews are generally invited. The reviewer normally has a degree of expertise in the subject matter of the book and writes the review to editorial specifications.
Dialogue	Occasionally a dialogue or interview is offered as a scholarly piece of writing. In such cases the participants in the dialogue or the interviewee are well-known experts with innovative, provocative or controversial ideas.
Think piece	Well known experts are frequently invited to write think pieces which are more than reflections. Think pieces are usually about macro issues and have an analytical tone and style. It is not unusual for editors to invite think pieces from a number of experts on a common topic and to publish them as a themed special issue.

## The journal submission process

Some journals require an abstract to be submitted and approved before a full article is considered.

They will invite full articles only if the content of the abstract meets their particular requirements. Authors should pay particular attention to the type and format of abstracts considered for the issue. Authors who are invited to submit full articles should understand that the initial submission is considered a 'manuscript' and not the final article – except in rare cases.

The steps from draft paper to final publication are broadly as follows:



## What the journal will look for in your submission

The initial screening of submitted articles will generally include the following questions:

### Content questions:

- Does the paper have original content worth publishing?
- Is the research design appropriate and capable of being replicated?
- Is the literature review appropriate and comprehensive?
- Is the paper accurate in its analysis?
- Is the written expression clear and easy to understand?
- Is the structure logical?
- Is there practice-relevance or field-relevance in the research?

- Are there appropriate figures, diagrams and tables?

### Style questions

- Does the article conform to the style guidelines?
- Are the paragraphs grammatically correct and punctuated correctly?
- Are all figures and tables numbered correctly?
- Are all references accurate and complete?

### Peer-review criteria

Journals and conference organisers will generally use 'blind' peer review processes where the author is unlikely to be known to the reviewers. Some do not.

Some journals distinguish clearly between peer reviewers and editors. Some do not.

Some used triple blind review and occasionally four reviewers. In any case the author generally sees the reviewers' reports and revision advice. Authors are occasionally asked to use a track changes mechanism to let the editor know that the required changes have been made.

Authors should be prepared for contradictory review reports and advice for re-submission. It may be necessary to select the revisions that are acceptable and defend the decision to the editor. At this stage the paper may be accepted, or further revisions may be required.

The peer-review criteria for Level3 and reviewers decisions are as follows:

### Peer Review Process for Level3

Articles submitted to Level3 are reviewed by two 'blind' reviewers. Authors are advised by the Editors of peer review decisions under the following categories:

- accept for submission
- revise and resubmit
- reject

Articles which are rejected as peer reviewed publications may be published in Level3 as non-peer reviewed articles, subject to the agreement of authors.

*Peer review of submissions to academic journals is an act of judgement by expert colleagues given in a spirit of collegial respect for the work of others in the academic community. It cannot be regarded as an exact, numeric science. Peer review criteria for Level3 were designed with these principles in mind. Criteria are outlined in the table below.*

**Please offer responses as appropriate.**

**Article title:** .....

	Accept as submitted	Revise and Resubmit	Reject	Peer Reviewer Advice and/or Comments
1. The subject matter is appropriate for Level3				
2. The paper adds something new to knowledge in the field				
3. The literature review is current and relevant				
4. The methodology and methods are clear and appropriate				
5. Analysis is clear and appropriate				
6. Data are presented clearly in text, tables and figures				
7. Terminology is consistent and accurate				
8. Conclusions are drawn appropriately				
9. References are accurate and complete				
10. The paper is generally coherent and accessible				

**Reviewer:** ..... **Date:** .....

### Success rate from submission to publication

The number of submissions for publication in journals and inclusion in conferences varies greatly. Well established, highly-rated journals with wide readership may have several times more submissions than are required for an issue. The process can be very competitive. In these cases additional issues may be organised or articles held-over for subsequent issues.

Likewise prestigious conferences will rate proposals for papers and indicate to authors how they scored relative to the expected standard. This is useful feedback for the novice author as it affirms the value of their paper internationally.

It is useful for novice authors to know that journals generally estimate the likely success rate from initial submission to finished article when planning issues, and know from experience how many they are likely to publish in any issue. It is likely that one-third of initial submissions will survive to publication. One quarter may be rejected initially, or withdrawn when revisions are required. Others withdraw later, or are unwilling to do second revisions. Withdrawals may result from frustration with the time involved in the process or because the article was published elsewhere. Occasionally authors withdraw because they do not like the reviewers' comments.

### How to maximise your chances of publication by writing a good abstract

An abstract can only be written accurately after the research is fully complete. Calls for conference papers often use the term 'abstract' when they really mean a 'proposal' for a paper which is not yet written! Novice authors should be clear about this difference and write accordingly.

The most important requirement in an abstract is that it clearly meets the expectations of the journal and the focus of the particular issue. If it does not, it is likely that the paper will not get past the first stage of the selection process. So, authors should carefully read the instructions for submission and follow them.

Abstracts are generally written in a clear and succinct style without references and details. Usually there is a word limit for abstracts. Sentences should be crisp and clearly expressed without ambiguity or complexity. It should give an accurate indication of what is in the article and how it is structured.

It is a good idea to get a critical friend to listen to you read the abstract out loud. If it sounds well, complete and clear to you as you read, it probably is so: if not, revise it.

### Selecting key words

Most journal articles, conference papers and book reviews now require authors to list five or six key words. You should choose these carefully as they are often used in on-line searches and in identifying research reports that are on similar topics and themes. They are also ways of attracting the reader who might not otherwise be inclined to read a full article in the expectation that it will deal with their particular 'key word' interests.

## Structuring the journal article

A journal article generally has the following structure and related content:

<b>Introduction/Purpose</b>	Explain why the topic is worth reading. Explain why this paper is different to other papers on broadly the same research topic. State the research question/s or aims clearly.
<b>Literature review</b>	The literature should be justified, current and comprehensive with 20 - 30 relevant references.
<b>Research design/Methodology</b>	The research design should be succinctly described and explained. If there is an analytical framework it should be explained and justified.
<b>Delimitations and Limitations</b>	Here you should state the scope and scale of the research actually conducted.
<b>Results/Findings</b>	The findings should be presented succinctly using figures and tables where appropriate but with no more than six overall.
<b>Implications/Discussion of results</b>	The significance of the findings should be outlined and discussed in relation to the analytical framework outlined earlier. This part should 'draw conclusions' as well as 'conclude' the paper.

## What you might do wrong in your first article

### Content mistakes

1. claim too-much from the evidence
2. miss out key literature
3. critique the research of others too-stridently
4. link your work to the work of very significant researchers where it is not warranted.

### Style mistakes

1. ignore the style guide provided
2. pick only the style aspects they like
3. go over the word limit
4. use the wrong reference style
5. reference list incomplete
6. pick less-than-useful key words
7. promise in the abstract but do not deliver in the paper.

## Who might give you good feedback before you submit your article?

As a novice writer there is merit in getting informal feedback before you submit your journal article.

Senior academics frequently share drafts with colleagues! So, in your own context you could identify who might be an appropriate person to ask. Use the table below to narrow down options.

Possible critical friends to give feedback on draft writing	Yes! I would consider asking	If not, why not?
Supervisor/Mentor		
Other research students		
Senior staff in the Department		
Colleagues who publish successfully and frequently		
Professional copy-editors		
Family		
Library Staff		

## Responding to reviewers' feedback

About reviewers:

- they are human – usually!
- They have opinions, prejudices, preferences etc
- They may be kind or unkind
- They often give contradictory advice!

However,

- most responsible journals select reviewers carefully and list them in their publications
  - reviewers are generally told if the articles are from novice writers and are encouraged to give developmental feedback
  - reviewers sometimes stray from their remit and want to be copy-editors as well!
  - copy-editors sometimes want to be reviewers!
  - Some reviewers request changes that force the paper to concur with the points of view they support.
1. As an author you generally have a right of reply to reviewers' comments and a right to defend why you are not prepared to make the recommended changes.
  2. As a novice writer it might be wise to take the reviewers' advice as the reward is 'publication'.
  3. If the changes requested are too-bothersome, or objectionable, you may withdraw the paper. In this case be sure to politely explain why.
  4. Be prepared for rejections. If you are told why you were rejected it is easier to accept and you can learn from it.
  5. Be careful when submitting an article that you may be signing away copyright to your own material and not getting paid for it! Check the terms and conditions!
  6. When you are sending back revisions write a polite letter explaining where the changes are.
  7. You may be sent a few free copies of the journal together with 20 or so bound off-prints of your own paper. This is useful when you are going for interview or formal assessment.

### About reacting to feedback and peer reviews

As authors we are all sensitive to comments on our writing. As a novice writer there are reasons to be anxious about the peer-review process for the following reasons:

1. You might get feedback that rocks your confidence in your writing – either as written feedback or after a conference/seminar presentation.
2. Very significant scholars may read your very novice work and patronise you.
3. You may lose face if the work is not great.
4. You may have your research dismissed because of flaws you did not notice.
5. You might offend experts by being too-critical of their work without realising you are doing it.
6. You might find out that you are not a great writer!

The important thing is to learn from first experiences and to regard them as opportunities to go on to greater things.

### What Journal editors dislike from authors

1. Rudeness
2. Slow response to requests
3. Withdrawals without explaining why.

### What Journal editors like

1. Courtesy
2. Efficiency
3. Deadlines being met.

## 5. ABOUT CONFERENCE PAPERS

The novice writer will invariably benefit from attending relevant conferences and seminars. It is a good idea to identify local events where you can see and hear experienced authors give keynote addresses and/or present research papers. From attending you absorb the mores and styles of communication acceptable in your particular community of practice. You automatically react favourably to some presentation styles and less favourably to others. This is important in identifying for yourself the styles you would like to replicate and the standard you would like to achieve. You will quickly realise if you could carry off a dramatic and entertaining presentation, or if you would prefer to use a carefully prepared and precisely scripted approach.

Some experts use no script or visual aids. Audiences vary in their reactions to this style depending on their expectations of what a 'good' presentation style looks like. There are several 'golden rules' for presentations which you may ignore if you choose! But there are risks in doing so, and the wise novice presenter might consider erring on the side of caution!

So, what are the advantages of conference presentations and conference papers for the novice writer?

Academics usually consider submitting papers to conferences related to their professional practice, such as engineering conferences, music conferences etc. and then narrowing down their options to specific interest conferences. As a scholar-researcher, or as a practitioner, you are likely to see advertisements, posters and network email inviting proposals for particular conference papers, both nationally and internationally. Those invitations will list the particular themes for the conference as well as deadlines for submission of proposals, and deadlines for full papers. Most conference organisers will accept proposals only from those you register to attend the conference. Few want to waste time on authors who are merely seeking feedback on proposals for papers.

### When deciding to send in a proposal for a conference paper consider the following:

- a. Do you actually have the data to produce the proposed paper?
- b. Are the data related to the conference strand or theme you selected?
- c. Will you have time to produce the paper in time for the deadline?
- d. Have you checked the guidelines for authors? If you are submitting electronically you may be restricted to a template of a defined word limit.

### Peer review of conference papers

Some prestigious conferences attract so many proposals that they are shortlisted through a peer review scoring system by at least two reviewers. Getting past this selection process is a good start.

Following selection, your proposal may be referred to two or more other conference paper writers who will read your full paper carefully and pose critical questions about it after your conference presentation. You may be asked to do likewise with the paper of another author. This represents a second layer of peer review – a public review! It can be a daunting experience, especially if the conference reviewer is a well-known expert. The learning from it, though, can be considerable for you as a scholar-researcher and as a presenter. You will also learn how to give feedback and ask critical questions yourself in a sensitive and measured way. If you are a doctoral student it is not uncommon to invite your supervisor to your conference presentation where a prestigious audience is likely to attend. Doing well at an international conference can greatly enhance your scholarly career and open up opportunities for further writing and collaborative research. Think of these events a professional development opportunities in your writing career.

Some conferences require a paper to be submitted after the conference presentation rather than before it. They might expect all papers to be submitted and made available electronically. Or, they may select only the papers they consider enhance research and scholarship in the particular field and are worthy of publication. If your paper is selected as 'worthy' take a bow!

Prestigious international conferences often organise publishing workshops for attendees, with particular events scheduled for students. These are worth going to as there may be opportunities to join interest groups or writing groups. You may even be 'noticed' and invited to collaborate on publishing projects for books or special journal issues.

It is reasonable to argue that there is considerable merit in presenting at conferences as you will learn quickly over a short timeframe and get immediate developmental feedback.

## 6. DEALING WITH COPY-EDITORS

The role of the copy-editor is to ensure that articles and papers conform to the required style and are technically accurate. The copy-editor should not be an additional reviewer, though some do take on that role. Copy-editors are not likely to be experts in the content of an article or paper and ideally should not offer opinions on the content.

As an author you are likely to have more correspondence with the copy-editor than the general editor or the peer reviewers. So it is important to manage your relationship well. It is not wise to be indignant when common errors are noted by the copy-editor and when there may be several rounds of communication for clarification. The copy-editor may be more anxious than the author about 'perfection', as their reputations are involved.

Some conference organisers place the onus for copy-editing and accuracy on the author and do not provide a copy-editing service. Some allocate a bunch of papers to members of their scientific committee to copy-edit as a voluntary exercise. This latter arrangement can be more challenging than a regular copy-editing process as the committee member is likely to know you personally!

## 7. FROM COPY-EDITING TO GRAPHIC DESIGN

As an author you lose some control of your work when it goes to the graphic design or type-setting stage. When the piece appears in print you may not recognise your figures and diagrams! Changes may have been made to suit a design style. There may be errors and omissions. If there are serious errors you may ask for corrections. However, it is usually too-late at that stage and you have to live with it and learn from it.

## 8. COPYRIGHT

Before submitting a piece of writing it might be wise to check where copyright resides after publication. You may find that there are restrictions on what you can do with the writing once you concede copyright.

## 9. OFF-CUTS

Printed journals usually send authors one copy of the publication which includes their work. Some send up to ten off-cuts with the author's article in bound copies. This is a nice practice and encourages the author to write for that particular journal again.

## 10. PAYMENT

It is not usual to pay authors for journal articles or conference papers. Even special issues of online journals with specifically invited papers offer no gift to authors even where there is a charge for all downloads.

Keynote presenters at conferences rarely get payment but will generally have travel and accommodation costs covered.

For authors the rewards are what they themselves perceive as rewards.

## 11. NOW BACK TO YOU AS THE AUTHOR

So if you are currently considering a journal article or paper, below are additional things to help you clarify the process and content in your own mind.

### About the title of your article or paper

1. What kinds of titles does your target journal like?:
  - accurate
  - tentative
  - friendly
2. Will your title explain the contents, findings, methodology, analysis....?
3. Will you have a main title which is summative or catchy, with a sub-title explaining what the article is really about?
4. Will you use a colon, dash, brackets,....
5. Do you have a trademark such as song titles.?
6. Will you use humour, irony, question marks, or play on existing titles.

### The 'spin' of your article

1. Some journals deliberately select articles that generate a particular 'spin' on a topic. How would you know if this is going on in your field?
2. Some journals look for particular conference papers, or research outputs, to create special issues with a particular spin, or indeed with several conflicting spins! There are advantages in this for the journal, some of which are:
  - They know the paper already
  - It is probably copy-edited
  - They can request minor changes to suit their issue
  - They can collect an issue quite quickly from scholars all over the world and make a 'global' issue without much cost of effort.
3. If your conference paper is selected in this way take a bow!  
However, make sure you are not signing away copyright to your work!  
Remember that the journal charges up to €30 for each download of your work and you get nothing!

### Are you a presenter or a communicator?

Are you a writer who is happiest with silently handling data and manipulating information on paper? *Type A*

Are you the type of writer who talks endlessly about your research with anyone who will listen? *Type B*

Types A and B are likely to have quite different approaches to writing and to how they prefer to present material.

Both can be 'scholars'. However, some writers like to 'hear' their writing and know they are 'talking' to the reader in a 'communicative' way. Some writers are happy to present information to an 'unknown' reader.

Does this matter? No, if A does a good job.

However, presentation does not require the writer to 'imagine' reader reaction, or to hold a conversation. 'Communication', on the other hand, requires the writer to write as if 'hearing' and answering questions!

So, when you are writing, think about the reader as a listening person!

If the reader finds it hard to follow your writing it is probably because it is hard to follow!

'Hard to follow' is probably because:

- your sentence structure is too-complex and does not follow the natural forms of expression
- the words you choose are inaccurate or inappropriate
- punctuation marks are careless
- there is no connection between the sense of sentences in a paragraph
- there is no topic word of topic sentence in a paragraph
- there are no headings or signposts
- information does not flow in a sensible sequence.

Ask yourself:

- a. How could I explain my topic simply to a reader unfamiliar with the specifics but sufficiently informed to follow it?
- b. Are the sentences structured in a way that they sound well when read out loud? If you cannot read a sentence without taking a breath it is too-long!
- c. Are the paragraphs actually doing what the topic sentence indicates?
- d. Do I know how to write meaningful headings and signposts?
- e. Do I know when to make lists instead of creating extreme sentences?
- f. Can I create tables or flowcharts to communicate information? (some journals will not permit tables or figures).

### Your writing plan: *TIPS*

1. Never waste writing: start small, if it is worth developing do so. If not, store it.
2. Start with a think piece or conference paper. Then look for a more advanced conference.
3. After feedback, grow the paper into a journal article.
4. Grow the article into a book chapter.
5. Collect your writing into a book!!!... alone or with others.

## 12. WRITING WITH OTHERS

Writing conference papers and journal articles with other authors has a number of advantages and disadvantages, some of which are listed below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. makes a complex paper easier	1. how your piece features in the article may be out of your control
2. shares the workload	2. the whole article may be style-edited in a way that you do not like very much
3. can have more strengths than a solo paper	3. the sharing of the work may not be fair but the credit is shared
4. makes checking and copy-editing easier	4. you may lose ownership over the contents you contributed.
5. if you are a novice writer you learn a great deal from an experienced co-author	5. Who gets the task of revision and resubmission may not be reflected in the order of authors
6. there are huge gains from writing with well-respected colleagues	
7. if your name is first you are more prominent in references and citations, and your name may pop up quite quickly in a key work search	

### 13. SOME USEFUL READING

Anderson, J. and Poole, M. (2001) *Assignment and Thesis Writing, 4th Edition*, Australia: Wiley

Becker, H. S. (2007) *Writing for Social Scientists: how to start, and finish your thesis, book or article*, US: University of Chicago Press

Becker, H. S. (1998) *Tricks of the trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it*, US: University of Chicago Press

Crème, P. and Lea, M.R. (2003 edition) *Writing at University: a guide for students*, U.K.: Open University Press

Cottrell, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills*, U.K.: Palgrave

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process*, London: Sage

Dunleavy, P. (2003) *Authoring a PhD: how to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*, UK; Palgrave

Murray, R. (2006) *How to Write a Thesis*, UK: OUP

Murray, R. (2009) *Writing for Academic Journals*, UK: OUP

Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (1999) *The Student's Guide to Writing, Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling*, U.K.: Palgrave

Punch, K. (2000) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, UK: SAGE

Rose, J. (2001) *The Mature Student's Guide to Writing*, U.K.: Palgrave

Silvia, P. (2007) *How to Write a Lot: a practical guide to productive academic writing*, US: APA

Soles, D. (2005) *The Essentials of Academic Writing*, NY: Houghton Mifflin

Trafford, V. and Leshem, S. (2008) *Stepping Stones to Achieving your Doctorate: focusing on the Viva from the start*, UK; OUP and McGraw Hill

Tubarian, K. (2007) *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, US; University of Chicago Style

Wallace, M. and Wray, A. (2008) *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*, UK; Sage

Wisker, G. (2001) *The Postgraduate Research Handbook: succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD*, UK: Palgrave