

Guidelines for submitting written assignments to Graham Harvey

Modules:

Introduction to the natural environment

Exploring personal journeys

Issues in conservation

Impacts of outdoor recreation

Discovering outdoor lifestyles

International outdoor pursuits

Dissertation studies

Format*

*If you have a recognised need to use an alternative format because of conditions such as dyslexia or visual impairment, you must notify your lecturer **before** handing your work in.

The format of your work is very important. If the submitted work is untidy, difficult to read and hard to open then it is almost inevitable that this will have a negative impact on the overall score. Poorly presented work gives the impression that it is rushed and that the student has put little effort into it. If you are proud of the work that you are doing, having spent several days researching and writing, then just an hour or so of formatting will be well worthwhile!

Formatting Guidelines

Font style - Arial, Helvetica or Times New Roman: these fonts are easiest to read

Font size -12 for text and 14 for headings

2cm page margins

Ink colour – black only

Line spacing – 1.5 line spacing

Leave a line space between paragraphs

All paragraphs must be left aligned

Pagination (your essay should have page numbers)

Electronic submissions must be in **a single Word document**- NOT pdf, text or other format

Avoid including large picture or video files, only use images if they are absolutely essential

Your file must be clearly labelled with your name and module number

Marking matrix

You must include the appropriate, blank marking matrix **at the end of your document**. The marker can then complete the form as part of a single document making the marking process and returning the work much quicker and easier.

You must also include a completed marking matrix **at the very beginning** of your document. You should read through your work and mark it using the marking matrix. The idea is that you are critical of your own work; this is good reflective practice.

Structure and Content

Introduction- sign posting- the beginning

Tell the reader what you are going to say

Set the scene- the context for your paper

Outline the structure

Could someone read my introduction and have a rough idea of the body?

Avoid starting discussions of theory

Keep it short

The main body- the journey- the middle

Throughout the main body you need to build your argument/discussion/ review/ thesis through a series of linked paragraphs that lead the reader to your conclusion. The topic of one paragraph should follow **logically** from the topic of the last paragraph and should lead on to the topic of the next paragraph.

Each paragraph is a group of connected sentences relating to **one main topic or idea**.

There are usually three parts to a paragraph:

The topic sentence: this contains the main idea of the paragraph.

Supporting sentences develop or give additional details about the topic sentence.

Supporting sentences may offer explanations or examples relating to the main point.

A concluding sentence which summarises the paragraph or may provide a link to the next paragraph.

Conclusion- destination- the end

What you have said in the essay in condensed form

What you have shown by your arguments

Avoid introducing new material

Summary of key points

Reiterate personal perspective but avoid Oscar speeches

Could someone read my conclusion and know what they would have learnt had they read the body?

Keep it short!

Substantiated claims

Any claims that you make must be substantiated. Usually this means that your claim will be supported with reference to research that you have done. In the case of reflective journals it may also be your observations but you should be able to strengthen these observations with reference to research.

It is not enough to simply include quotes; you need to demonstrate your understanding of the material you are quoting and how it relates to the specific point that you are trying to make.

Be careful when using quotes that you are not forcing them into your work just because you like what they say. Often people will take a quote that they think is profound but it really has very little to do with their subject.

You must also be certain that you are not quoting out of context. Once you remove a passage from its original source it becomes detached from the rest of that body of work in such a way that the original intended meaning could easily become distorted.

E.g., Mortlock (1984) strongly advocates that all children should have the chance to experience adventure. But **in the context** of global poverty he argues that in the western world a lot of money is wasted on contrived adventures when people are starving in less developed societies.

On-line sources of information

Just about anyone can put information on the Web. You must be prepared to look critically at websites and assess the credibility and usefulness of the information you find. Two key aspects to consider are who wrote it and when.

Try to find out who is the author of the site and what is their motive for publishing; what are their potential biases?

Government, university, or professional organisations may be more objective than a business wanting to sell products.

The URL (web address) can help you decide how reliable the source might be. More reliable sites might include those that have:

(.ac) an academic

(.edu) an education

(.gov) a government agency

(.org) a recognised not for profit (charity) organisation,

or is it a commercial one (.com or .co)?

How current is the site? Many sites will give you a last updated date, but you can get clues as to whether a page is being well maintained by whether the links are up to date and by its general appearance.

Wikipedia... and other unregulated web sources

Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia composed of contributions from millions of people from around the world; anyone can create or edit a Wikipedia page. It is undoubtedly a great resource for getting an overview on a subject, be it a single word, a phrase, a person or a complex theory. However, it is important to be very careful when using Wikipedia for your research. Wikipedia allows anyone to contribute to its pages and many of its authors are anonymous, which makes it difficult to tell whether you can trust their work. Most contributors are very enthusiastic and this can lead to bias; they may simply be hoaxers deliberately trying to mislead or they might just not know much about the subject.

You should always verify facts you've retrieved from Wikipedia and other unregulated websites.

DO NOT quote from Wikipedia!

Things to avoid

Exaggerations, deductions and leaps in logic: it does not matter how much evidence you collect, you should avoid saying things like 'proves' and 'shows'. Instead employ qualifying statements such as 'suggests' or 'indicates'.

Be cautious in your use of **imperative, definitive** and **globalist** phrases

Imperatives are phrases like: 'must', 'essential' and 'has to be'.

Similarly **definitive** statements infer that there is only one way of regarding something, e.g., outdoor education is 'the' most effective form of education. A more appropriate phrase might be, 'Outdoor education is a particularly effective form of education'.

Globalisms are phrases such as: 'all', 'absolutely' and 'everyone'. Globalisms (generalisations) are used to group everything together as a homogenous mass and do not take account of any variation: e.g., all children like ice-cream.

Waffle!

What is waffle? Waffle is:

Repetition	Meaningless generalisations	Unsubstantiated opinions and rants
Long sentences which could be shorter		Lists that are not explained

Checking for Errors

Too many students lose valuable marks simply because they fail to check even the most basic aspects of their work. Purposeful, reflective editing can transform an average paper into a much higher quality piece of work.

The incubation period

The secret to good editing is to pause between each of the three levels of editing. After you've finished your draft, leave it alone for a couple of days before attempting to edit. This way, you become detached from your original writing and you are better able to edit objectively. You will have to schedule editing time into your time management plan.

The **macro edit** looks at the overall issues of structure and flow and ignores smaller issues such as spelling and punctuation, in order to concentrate on the larger, essay construction issues. Macro editing involves:

- Getting others to read the body of the essay (not the introduction or conclusion) and ask them what your main points are – see if you agree.
- Checking the paragraphs flow logically?
- Were any of my arguments unsubstantiated or biased?
- Are you consistent in writing from the first or third person?
- Have you answered the question?

Mid-level edits are most concerned with paragraph construction and the use of language. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence and does that sentence somehow relate to the hypothesis?

- Does the content of each paragraph address the topic sentence?
- Have you used each paragraph to express just *one* main idea?
- Check that you have only used appropriate words and that you have avoided colloquialisms.
- Does the reference list match the in-text citations?

The **micro edit** is the final word-by-word edit that checks for correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and presentation. This final stage of editing is relatively straightforward with the use of spell and grammar checking available in Word.

Double-check everything that has a green or red line under it on your screen and make sure that you have set the language as 'English (UK).'

'We have a language that is full of ambiguities; we have a way of expressing ourselves that is often complex and allusive, poetic and modulated; all our thoughts can be rendered with absolute clarity if we bother to put the right dots and squiggles between the words in the right places. Proper punctuation is both the sign and the cause of clear thinking.'

(Truss, 2003)

There is further information on grammar, punctuation and spelling at:

http://www.coventry.ac.uk/ec/~lisa/rept_wrt/grammar.htm

Assignment Checklist

- ☐ Submission is a single word file, clearly labelled with your name and module code
- ☐ The correct marking matrix is included within your document
- ☐ Font style - Arial, Helvetica or Times New Roman, size -12 for text and 14 for headings
- ☐ Ink colour – black only
- ☐ 2cm- 2.5cm page margins
- ☐ Line spacing – 1.5 line spacing
- ☐ Leave a line space between paragraphs
- ☐ All paragraphs must be left aligned
- ☐ Pagination (your essay should have page numbers)
- ☐ Essay is within 10% of the word limit (excluding references and any appendices)
- ☐ Correct use of punctuation
- ☐ Correct referencing style in the text
- ☐ All references in the text are included in the reference list
- ☐ Correct reference list using SHOE Reference Guide
- ☐ Direct quotations - state page numbers in the text citation
- ☐ Paragraph structure logical and clear
- ☐ Grammar and syntax correct- double check anything that has a green line under it
- ☐ Correct spelling using **UK English**
- ☐ I have read my essay out loud to myself and it makes sense and is easy to read
- ☐ Somebody else has read my work and it makes sense to him or her!
- ☐ **I have attempted to mark my essay against the criteria in the marking matrix**
- ☐ **I have checked through my work using the editing guidelines**

Further Reading

'The Marking Process' PDF sample From Greasley's book: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/39890_9781849202039.pdf

'Using English for Academic Purposes A Guide for Students in Higher Education Writing' website by Andy Gillett: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

References

Gillett, A. J., Hammond, A. & Martala, M. (2009). *Successful academic writing*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Greasley, P. (2011) *Doing Essays and Assignments: Essential Tips for Students*. London: Sage Publishing:

Trask R.L. (1997) *The Penguin Guide To Punctuation*. London: Penguin Books

Truss, L. (2003) *Eats, Shoots And Leaves* London: Profile Books

A Sample of Marker's Comments:

- The overall structure of your paper is good and you have drawn on some very well chosen, relevant articles.
- Unfortunately your writing tends to be quite sloppy throughout your paper and this undermines the clarity of your thesis. **You need to write more accurately. Take time to reread what you have written** and be certain that it makes absolute sense- even better find someone else to read through it and give you feedback.
- You address all of the assessment criteria and have clearly understood the assessment task.
- You fail to clearly demonstrate your appreciation of the evidence that you have collected.
- The assignment was set as a review of literature and you have obviously accessed some good resources, which you have explored in some depth. This could have been enhanced if you had more carefully and creatively linked the various resources to build your thesis.
- **You tend to take a single article as 'proof'**. You often state that 'this shows'; when you should say something like 'this may indicate' or 'this suggests'.
- You failed to **define certain key themes**, notably 'sustainability' and 'carbon footprint'.
- Your writing is coherent but it would be easier to follow if your **sentences were a little shorter and to the point**. You do tend to repeat yourself. Make a point clearly once and move on.
- **I have docked 7 marks for spelling and grammar errors** that you have made. Please take more time to check through your work before submitting it.
- **Your essay was completely lacking in supporting reference material**. It is absolutely necessary for writing at this level that you make reference to evidence that will support the individual points that you try to make as you build a thesis/discussion.
- **Your reference list is too narrow**; there is no balance to it. This suggests a lack of research on your behalf. What exactly did you read in preparation for this

assignment? An assignment is not just about writing it is also about the reading that you do in coming to an informed position from which to write.

- **Try to make a single point in each sentence.**
- Your sentences are too long. You have a tendency to over use comas as a way of extending sentences and whilst it is not necessarily wrong to do so, the longer sentences are more difficult to read, it disrupts the flow of your writing and can confuse both you as the author and me, or anyone else who is trying to read it. (See what I mean? Compare 1st sentence in this passage with the last.)
- I have replaced 7 words with one! Your writing needs to be more precise and to the point.
- You are writing in the UK for a UK university- **you MUST use UK English** not US English spellings.
- If this is a quote, it needs to have a proper citation/reference.
- The overall structure is sound with a clearly defined introduction, main body of text and a conclusion.

Turnitin Comments

The list below is adapted from the marking comments available from Turnitin. Turnitin is used by academic institutions throughout the world to handle the submission and assessment of student s' written work. The fact that these comments are included within their software indicates that these are probably the most common mistakes. Use them for reference when you are checking through your work.

Would a marker be able to put one of these negative comments against your writing?

V = Vague: passage lacks clarity. You need to ensure that your writing is purposeful and detailed otherwise the overall impression is that you may lack subject knowledge or understanding.

P = poor punctuation or punctuation error.

I = Improper citation: Please follow the guidance in the student handbook (available on Blackboard).

S = Simple: Whilst it is important to state basic facts you should go beyond simple, bland statements and explore the facts in more depth and where possible link them with other points.

Sp = Spelling: Spelling error

A = Awkward: The passage is difficult to read; it is poorly constructed. Consider how you might rewrite this part

R = Repetitive: Avoiding repeating the same point. Once you have made a point, move on to the next one!

Sup = Support: Your work needs to be supported with reference to either primary or secondary resources. Without support you are simply putting forward your unsubstantiated opinion.

Coll = Colloquialism: Remember that this is an academic piece of writing. You should avoid slang and idiomatic expressions as this can undermine the gravitas of your writing. Instead stick to a more formal tone.

W = Wordy: This passage is 'waffly': you are using more words than necessary to make your point. You could make this point more succinctly. Try to be concise and to the point. A thesaurus might offer a single word that could be used instead of a longer phrase but be certain that you do not use words that you do not understand.