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MA Level Writing Guide

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INTRODUCTION

These guidelines emerge out of our personal experience of what students need to know when writing essays. They include some instructions for what you must do, and some advice for what you can do, especially if you have been out of academic education for some time. There are simple guidelines to follow which can make the essay-writing process far easier. The following ideas are designed to help you, but they are open to improvement, so we are very happy to receive any feedback.

A huge number of errors in essays result from not reading these guidelines! Our advice is print them, sit down with a yellow highlighter pen (or colour of your choice) and coffee (or tea, or water....), and read them carefully.

Below we have used **bold**, **capitals** and **underlining** to draw attention to areas which we have found to be widely ignored! And please read right through to the end.

One important point which we always stress: learning should be a pleasure and the results fulfilling. Acquiring and improving academic writing requires that certain precise rules are followed, but this is exactly as it is when learning any other skill, such as a language or an artistic skill. It is our intention, as your academic staff, that the MA should be a pleasure.

Lastly, these guidelines were written for students on the MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology, which explains the many references to astrology and astrologers. However, the advice applies to all essay writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

This handbook is designed to be as clear and helpful as possible!

You will also find useful resources at:

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

<https://waylink-english.co.uk/academic-writing>

Support from the University

If you need essay writing support from the University then go here for information:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/student-services/learning-support/>

WRITING

We can all write. We write e-mails and shopping lists, and some of us write for our jobs. However, there are different styles of writing. There is poetry and there is prose; then there is fiction and non-fiction. Non-fiction may include technical reports or historical biography. In the Humanities we use a particular style, which we will be teaching you. Look at this as the same as learning a style of art: you may be a potter or a painter and, if you are a painter, you may work with oils or watercolours, or you may be abstract or figurative. If you are a dancer, you may do the samba or the tango. In every case there are particular skills to learn and a different mode of expression. And so it is with writing: our aim is to enable you to use the precise skills of academic writing to convey a message which anyone else across the academic world, in any discipline and in any country, can appreciate.

PLAGIARISM OVERVIEW

Please read the University's guide on plagiarism at <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/collaborative-partnerships-office/06.-Tunitin-and-Plagiarism.pdf>

Also scroll through to the end of this document.

Plagiarism is the use of other people's words without attribution and expressly forbidden. Specifically, plagiarism is:

- passing off another's work, words or research, as your own
- passing off the work of another student as your own
- resubmission of part or all of your own work from a previous essay

It is easily avoided by direct quotation, and ensuring that when you paraphrase in your own words you use sufficient referencing. It is essential that any information you have used is referenced correctly and failure to reference means your work could be considered to be plagiarised. This is the equivalent of cheating and is a very serious offence which is not acceptable in the University. Plagiarism is an example of Unfair Practice and may result in penalties being applied to one or more pieces of your coursework. For more information, see the section on PLAGIARISM.

For more information about Unfair Practice and the University Procedures, please see Section 7.7 and 7.8 in the Academic Quality Handbook. You will find this on the University web site: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/academic-quality-handbook/>.

WORD LENGTH

Stick to the prescribed word length. You should not write less than the required amount. However, you can write 5% over. If you exceed that length, we may not read it! Writing to a prescribed length is normal in almost all writing, whether academic or journalistic, and all published commissions are set to an exact length, so this is part of the normal discipline.

Bibliographies, footnotes and captions for images, figures and pictures **are not included in the word length** (you MUST, though, submit your bibliography in the same file as your essay).

To take an example, the total word count in a 1500-word essay is therefore 1500-1575 words. Bearing in mind the total of direct quotation should be no more than 10% of the total word count, the amount of direct quotation in an essay of 1500-1575 words is therefore 150-157 words.

You can count the number of words using MS Word by highlighting the relevant text (except your bibliography) and going to Review-Word Count and following the instructions. You should choose not to count footnotes. The word count of image captions will be so small as to make no difference. If you get stuck, please ask.

FONT, LINE SPACING AND PARAGRAPHS

Different people like to work with different fonts. The important point is that your work is easy for others to read. Calibri is a good choice for a simple font without serifs, Cambria or Times New Roman for a font with serifs. We recommend 11 or 12 point for font size. Text should be single spaced, **not** double spaced. Begin new paragraphs by indenting a line.

SPELLING, GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

The aim of good writing is to be clearly understood, and English grammar is in a continual state of evolution. There are variations in the rules, for example, on when to use a comma. There are also differences between **English and American** spelling. We would rather you use English spelling where there is a clear difference (for example, centre rather than center), but in other instances (for example, sanitise or sanitize) both forms occur in English. **The important point is that your writing is clear and your scholarly work of a good level.**

REFERENCING

References are absolutely essential. Referencing provides the evidence that you have undertaken your own research to find the information necessary for in-depth learning. It allows you to gain a broad perspective on different issues and to consider different aspects and points of view in the subjects you study.

For more information and resources, please see **the section on REFERENCING.**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

You must include a bibliography of works used. Do not include works you haven't used. If you find any course documentation that says you do not need a bibliography, ignore it: it is left over from former times! The required format is set out in the University's MHRA Referencing Guide: https://uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/library-and-learning-resources/infoskills/MHRA-eng_v.1.2.pdf.

ILLUSTRATIONS

There are certain modules in which illustrations may be required. In general, there is no need to include illustrations of any kind. Unless required by the essay guidelines, leave them out. See the section GUIDELINES FOR USING IMAGES IN YOUR ESSAYS.

PLANNING YOUR TIME

If you anticipate submission dates and plan your work, you will be able to submit essays on time. If, for example, English is your second language, you should work out a schedule which takes this into account. We realise that everyone works at different speeds, for we are all individuals, which is precisely why careful planning is vital!

LATE SUBMISSION

Good time management is considered an important part of being a student. The ability to both conduct and complete research is essential to scholarship. For example, if you are submitting an article or book for publication, you are expected to work to deadlines. If you are a journalist and your work is late, you lose your job.

University deadlines are strict, but the university is also extremely sympathetic to students who get into difficulties or experience unexpected problems.

If you have a genuine reason for submitting late, such as illness or exception professional pressure, you may apply for Extenuating Circumstances and will be given a later deadline. This requires a formal application to the University. You should do this via MyTSD.

Penalty for late submission

If you submit an essay after the submission deadline, your essay fails. When you eventually submit we then mark the essay as usual and tell you the mark that you would have received, but your official mark is recorded as the pass mark of 50%. You will be notified of a resubmission – or new submission – date by the University. Because of the way the administration works, you will be notified of the new date weeks after the module has ended, and the new deadline may be several months afterwards. However, this will be confirmed by the university.

If you fail an essay

If you fail an essay, you will only be required to rewrite it if you fail the whole module.

You pass or fail a module on the basis of your aggregate mark for both essays. Usually one essay is worth 20%-40% of the module marks, and the other 60%-80%. Therefore, you can fail one essay and still pass the module. If you fail your first essay, then you will not know whether you have passed until your second essay has been marked.

If you have failed the module then the University will email you after the final marks are uploaded and approved, a few weeks later, at a University Exam Board with a resubmission date for whichever essay or essays you need to resubmit. This date may be as much as four months after the Exam Board. However, if you wish to resubmit a failed essay sooner then you are welcome to do so.

In addition, your first marker's comments should include clear guidance as to the steps needed for you to pass a failed essay. You will also be offered a tutorial by Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

THE MA LEVEL ESSAY: CONTENT

Analysis and discussion

MA level work depends on analysis and discussion, not description. While, of course, description is necessary in order to present evidence, the analysis of evidence in order to answer a question posed within a wider theoretical context is crucial. **You should never imagine that you are writing an overview or survey. Do not devote part of your essay to writing a 'brief overview', or even just an 'overview'.**

You need to describe, because description provides the evidence, but keep the critique in the front of your mind and remember that the function of description is to provide material for the critique. **The description must never provide the substance of the essay.**

You must not provide just an uncritical list of information, no matter how well supported from the scholarly literature.

The provision of essential information takes place at an early stage in writing your essay, in which you sort out the information in your mind. This, though, cannot be the final essay. The essay itself then analyses and critiques the information.

If you are studying history, pay careful attention to chronology. However, if you write an essay as a chronological list of information your essay will be descriptive rather than analytical. It is therefore very important to think about organising your essay thematically.

Do not write essays based uncritically on a single school of thought. There are no right or wrong answers, only an inquiry into the evidence.

Structure

You should have a clear essay structure which allows your reader to follow investigation clearly. See the section on ESSAY STRUCTURE

MARKING YOUR ESSAY

The following are amongst the criteria on which your work is judged. All these are explained below.

- Clear structure
- Clear writing
- Clear introduction
- A critical attitude: debating the evidence
- Use of primary source material: original evidence
- Use of secondary material: scholarly literature
- A clear and balanced conclusion
- Clear and adequate referencing

Detailed guidance is given in the Essay Guidance in each module. Your markers should address all these factors in their comments and grading (except where specifically not relevant).

A Note on Marks

A feature of the UK marking system is that the 'Distinction' is set at 70%. Distinction work is generally considered of the highest quality and the effect of setting the barrier at 70% is to keep marks lower than is often the case in other systems. Therefore, few students obtain marks above 70%.

This means that a mark in the 60s, which constitutes a 'Merit', is very respectable. If you are marked in the 50s, there is improvement to be made, and in the low 50s there is considerable scope for improvement. 50% is the lowest pass mark.

Our job as Tutors is to get you to improve. Each student, though, is different. Some students receive marks in the upper 60s for every piece of work, always doing good work but never improving, while others move from borderline pass to distinction.

Being Critical

Being critical does not mean being negative. It means being analytical, analysing texts and theories for their strengths and weaknesses. The word 'critique' has a more neutral sense, which is why we talk about critiquing a text.

Keeping an Open Mind

Remember, your essay is an open-minded examination of a question. It is inevitable that you will start with preconceptions, but try to put these aside and allow yourself to change your mind during the writing of the essay. When you reach your conclusion, it should be based on the evidence and discussion you have presented.

Communication and Clarity

Your task is to communicate your ideas to your reader. For that reason, clarity of expression is vital. Keep your language simple and direct. Demonstrate clear writing and your ability to communicate with both specialist and non-specialist audiences – in other words, do not assume that your reader, **not even your tutor**, possesses exactly the same knowledge as you.

Academic essay writing is designed to reveal the structure of your thought. The use of metaphor, allegory, imagery, jargon, or rhetorical and journalistic style can obscure your discussion of the question rather than assist it. You need to say what you mean, and the use of colourful imagery will obscure your meaning.

The essence of academic writing is to be concise and clear – which means cutting out unnecessary adjectives, figures of speech and unsupported assertions. The point is to make your meaning absolutely clear – or as clear as possible.

The reason why it is important to compose a well-written, logically organised essay, is that you want to get your message across. You need to show that you have done the reading and understood the facts – and are discussing the issues raised in the question on the basis of the evidence. You should be familiar with this, otherwise you would not have been accepted on to the course, but the point is always worth repeating.

ESSAY PLANNING

A clear structure is essential.

Plan your essay

It is very useful to write out paragraph headings (for your own convenience) and summarise the information you intend to put in each one.

Please remember: you need to be literary, so do not write essays as lists. Do not write paragraphs consisting of one or two sentences. If you do this, the flow of your essay breaks up and you are no longer communicating effectively. Once again, go back and look at some of the papers you have been reading and see how they use paragraphs.

Make sure that your paragraphs are arranged in a logical sequence, avoiding scattering the same sort of information throughout the essay. A good method to follow is to include in each paragraph a discussion together with some relevant facts and a quotation or two from another author. In this sense a paragraph is like a mini essay in itself, with an introduction, content, and conclusion.

If your sentences are too short your essay will read like a list. If they're too long the reader will be lost by the time they reach the end.

Think about the question. This might seem obvious, but there might be hidden dimensions to an apparently simple question which you only identify after reflection.

Mind-mapping

Mind-mapping relies on the useful flow charts to organise and plan material. It is not necessary, but you may find it useful. 'Inspiration' software is used by many universities as an electronic aid: <https://www.inspiration-at.com/inspiration-maps/>

Headings and Sub-Headings

These are most useful to help you with the structure of your paper, as you can begin your work by writing a series of headings.

ESSAY STRUCTURE

With acknowledgement to The Open University, <https://help.open.ac.uk/essays>

The simplest instructions for academic essay writing are these:

- **Title:** Write the question (title) at the top of your assignment. It will contain keywords (known as content and process words).
- **Introduction:** A paragraph or two to define key terms and issues and indicate how you intend to address the question.
- **Main body:** A series of paragraphs written in full sentences that include specific arguments relating to your answer. It's vital to include evidence and references to support your arguments. Each paragraph has an introduction and a conclusion and follows the preceding paragraph in a logical manner.
- **Conclusion:** A section which summarises the main points and findings. Focus on the question and refer back to your introduction and key literature but avoid repeating what you wrote in the introduction.
- **Bibliography/References:** A list of sources, mainly articles and books, that are mentioned in the essay.

In your essays you should analyse given texts and primary and secondary sources that deal with the issue and/or time period in question. You will be expected to include and develop a clearly stated conclusion or argument about the issue. The precise criteria are given in the **Student Assessment Handbook**, posted on the MA CAA Home Page on Moodle.

Read your essay through when you've finished. Then read it again. If necessary, leave it overnight and read it a third time. This is the best way to spot passages which do not make sense. Read it out loud if it helps: it usually does.

Introduction

An introduction provides your reader with an overview of what your essay will cover and what you want to say. Essays introductions should:

- Set out the aims of the assignment and signpost how your answer to the question will unfold. You do not need to be too precise, but you can write, for example, 'the essay will consider the nature of the soul in classical thought and its implications for the understanding of nature in modern ecological thought'.
- Introduce the issue and give any essential background information, including a brief description of the major debates that lie behind the question.
- Define the key words and terms (these definitions may also be expanded in the body of your essay).
- Be between 5% and 10% of the total word count.

The first and most important thing to do is pay close attention to what the essay guidance says you have to do. It gives you the essay question and extra things that might help, such as notes on the writing style and the format you should adopt.

When you **introduce the question – do not assume the reader knows what it is**. For example, if your essay title is 'Did the Greeks invent astrology?' you might simply write, 'This essay explores the question whether the Greeks invented astrology'. Alternatively, you might try working the question into a sentence such as 'The belief that the Greeks invented astrology is supported by many historians, such as Jim Tester', or 'The argument that the Greeks invented astrology has recently come under serious scrutiny. For example, Nicholas Campion has recently questioned it'. You can then examine the basis for the question.

Make sure that you provide an academic context or theoretical framework at the beginning of the essay, using previous academic and scholarly work in the field. The reason is that your works should build on previous scholarship.

For example:

Patrick Curry argued that astrology should be seen as divination.¹ Nicholas Campion disagreed² and Robert Hand took a different approach, suggesting that, in some cases astrology appears to have some of the characteristics of divination.³ This essay will consider the evidence, relying on testimony from astrologers.

While you need to begin your essay by drafting an introduction, many scholars would complete an introduction having written the rest of the essay. It is only having finished an essay that you can see its complete shape.

Argument or Investigation

Often in academic work we talk about students or scholars making an argument. The weakness of this approach is that we start off with a presumed conclusion, which we have to argue, and then shape the evidence to fit the conclusion.

Therefore, instead of making an argument, you should examine, investigate and answer a question. Such an approach is much better suited to the ways in which historians analyse primary source texts and artefacts, or that anthropologists interpret data derived from studies of human belief and behaviour. Even in the Abstract to a Dissertation you should write 'this Dissertation examines', or 'this Dissertation investigates'.

Never write: 'This essay will argue that....' or equally 'this essay will show that', or this essay has shown that'.

Points to avoid in your Introduction:

- Do not embark on a series of rhetorical flourishes concerned with the state of the planet, the function of astrology, the nature of the cosmos, or the future of humanity, or a nice story, a beautiful myth, or a piece of grand scene setting about the historical era in which your essay is set. The proper place for nice stories or beautiful myths, if they are relevant, is as evidence in the body of the essay. Academic writing needs to be understood clearly, so figures of speech and metaphors will obscure your point.
- Avoid this very common pitfall: do NOT state your conclusion in the introduction. So, **do not** write: 'this essay will argue that the Moon is made of cheese', or 'this essay will show that aliens come from Mars', or 'this essay will demonstrate that ...', or 'this essay will conclude that...'. The Moon may well be made of cheese, and aliens might come from Mars, but you cannot say that until you have investigated all the evidence and allowed it to lead you to your conclusion.

¹ Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science And Culture: Pulling Down The Moon* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp.1–3.

² Nicholas Campion, *What Do Astrologers Believe?* (Oxford: Granta, 2006), p. 22.

³ Robert Hand, 'Introduction To The Liber Hermetis', in Hermes, *Liber Hermetis*, Part I, trans. Robert Zoller, Project Hindsight Latin Track Vol. II (Berkeley Springs, WV: Golden Hind Press, 1993), pp. iii–iv.

- Please do not insert an unexplained quotation below your title and above your text, no matter how poetic or imaginative. This may work well in a book, but you are writing an academic essay and you need to explain everything you write.

The difference between an Introduction and an Abstract

Most published academic articles include an Abstract. This is a separate paragraph which appears at the beginning of the article that summarises the entire article, including the conclusion. In an Abstract it is also common to set out a point of view followed by the writer, such as 'this paper will argue that Einstein's theory of relativity has had a significant impact on modern culture' or 'this paper will argue that sacred space is a human construct' or 'this essay will show' or 'the essay will conclude that'.

However, you do not need an Abstract in a MA essay, only in your Dissertation, which we will deal with separately.

Therefore, in your introduction to an essay there is no need to state your conclusion. In fact, you should not do so!

The body of your essay

The main body of your essay should examine the question. Each main point should have its own paragraph. You should use evidence to support the arguments you make in this section, referencing your sources appropriately.

You can deal with the issues in a way that seems appropriate to you. You can choose to

- deal with all of the supporting evidence and all of the challenging evidence separately
- take each issue in turn, describing and evaluating it before moving on to the next issue
- describe all the issues first before moving on to your evaluation of them

How to order your examination of the question

Although you will need to clearly describe the issues related to the essay title (for example, concepts and theoretical positions), you are expected to go further than mere description. An essay question expects you to examine competing positions, presenting an unbiased discussion. You might do this by comparing and contrasting things (such as arguments put forward by individual scholars), and exploring all the elements involved in a particular concept or theory in an even-handed way.

In all cases, you will be expected to

- present a balanced discussion of the evidence
- base any conclusions you draw on evidence
- present evidence using references to primary and secondary sources

As you write, you must consider your essay question in relation to the evidence. Keep these points in mind:

- **Use of primary sources** (see below for more information). Use these at every stage of your essay (EXCEPT when you are told otherwise)
- **Contrary evidence:** always consider contrary evidence. Remember, you are not prosecuting a case. You are investigating a problem. Keep an open mind: you might reach the opposite conclusion to the one you expected.

- **Relevance:** make sure that everything in your essay is relevant to the answering of your question. Do not include interesting information just because it is interesting.

We recommend the sections on 'Writing a paragraph', 'Developing paragraphs' and 'Linking paragraphs' at <https://waylink-english.co.uk/academic-writing>

Conclusion

You must have a good conclusion, drawing the evidence together and stating your final point of view, based on this evidence. The conclusion is your answer to the title question: either a full or partial agreement, or a full or partial disagreement on the basis of the evidence presented and discussed.

Your conclusion should sum up how your essay has answered the title. It should refer back to your introduction and include a reference to the wording of the title.

If your essay has presented evidence or data, ensure that the conclusions you draw are valid in the light of that evidence and data. Draw your conclusions cautiously: use phrases such as 'the evidence suggests that ...', or 'one interpretation is that ...' rather than 'this proves that ...'.

Sometimes it seems good to end an essay with a quote from a scholarly source. This is not necessarily bad practice in academic writing, but it is usually better to end with your own conclusion in your own words, as a quote by someone else always requires your interpretation, even if you include a phrase from a secondary source within your last sentence.

Please refer back to any key literature that you have used earlier in your essay. Your conclusion is potentially the part of any academic work which potentially makes a contribution to scholarship. It is therefore necessary to consider all previous scholarship and whether your discussion supports such scholarship or not, and whether and how such scholarship has helped you frame your investigation.

Remember, your conclusion should conclude the essay, not open up new questions or speculate on matters which are not part of the essay. It must answer the question posed at the beginning. One of the most common failings of essay writing is to use the conclusion to make predictions about the future, policy statements or comments on the world in general. **Do not do this!** A conclusion should conclude on the basis of the evidence and arguments you have presented: it should answer the question posed in your title, and refer back to your introduction.

In longer essays and essays based on research projects (i.e. usually not shorter essays based on the critical review of secondary sources) It is important to refer back to key secondary and primary sources. Do your conclusions reflect on those in the secondary sources? Do the primary sources support your conclusion?

Your conclusion should

- summarise the key elements of your discussion clearly and concisely
- refer back to key literature, whether primary or secondary sources.
- demonstrate how you've answered the question
- reach a final answer: after you have considered all the evidence, what is your answer to the question?

It should not

- include any new arguments ideas or examples
- be too long – for an assignment of fewer than 1,500 words a conclusion of 50-100 words is probably enough
- repeat examples, phrases, or sentences from the main body of your essay

As an exercise, it can help to take five academic papers and read their conclusions; this will show you the value of a well-constructed conclusion.

BEFORE YOU UPLOAD YOUR ESSAYS, CHECK THE FOLLOWING:

- Have I written the title **exactly** as specified in the assessment criteria, or agreed with my tutor?
- Have I included a proper introduction?
- Have I read through to check that there are no passages which do not make sense?
- Do my references and bibliography conform to the required method?
- Have I included page numbers in the references, and place of publication in the bibliography?
- Have I referenced the author's name (Where I am quoting him or her, or where I am citing a claim by them) in the text where it helps make more sense?
- Are all quotations introduced?
- Have I deleted all reference to 'we', 'our', and 'us'?
- Have I included a proper conclusion, based on the material I have presented in the essay, and avoided making recommendations for the future?
- Have I inserted page numbers in the header or footer?

THE EVIDENCE: SOURCES

All academic arguments must be based on evidence, and the evidence is usually provided by references – bibliographical citations. Evidence can come in different forms but the major form we will be dealing with is textual, or literary.

Use appropriate texts for authoritative statements.

In other words, use history books for statements about history. Use anthropology books for statements about anthropology, astronomy books for astronomy, archaeology books for archaeology, ecology books for ecology and astrology books for astrology.

On the other hand, if you are discussing people's opinions, you may want to consider what anthropologists say about astrology, or astrologers say about history, or what astronomers say about astrology.

Use of multiple sources

The reason for using multiple sources is not to impress the person marking your essay. It is so that you become aware of different points of view and to demonstrate this to your marker.

1. Primary sources

Primary sources are the original source material produced by the people or things we are studying.

Our guidelines are taken from the University of Cambridge guide for history students:

<https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/getting-started-reading-primary-sources>

In a literary subject like history the primary sources are mainly the written accounts of ideas, beliefs and events by the people who created ideas or lived through the events you are discussing.

In the history of astrology, primary sources are mainly the texts written by astrologers, including everything from Babylonian clay tablets to medieval texts and modern books, magazines and websites. Artefacts and works of art are also primary sources in history. For example, a historian of timekeeping will examine sundials or clocks, and a historian of art may investigate paintings and sculptures. A historian of music will explore musical scores or instruments, as well as sound. In archaeology the primary sources are usually material artefacts from the past, or evidence in the landscape. In the study of ecology and spirituality primary sources include books and articles putting forward points of view about the relationship between the two, or advocating political positions.

For botanists, the primary sources are plants, for geologists they are rocks. Thus, in cultural astronomy, the sky is also a primary source.

The nature of the primary source changes depending on the context and topic of investigation. For example, if you are writing about the history of Babylonian astrology you will have no use for modern astrological websites, which may be positively misleading. However, if your investigation actually concerns the use of astrology on the web, or what modern astrological websites say about Babylonian astrology, then such sites become your primary material.

When web sites are utilised as sources some statement should be given as to what they are and why they are considered reputable (also see below).

As primary sources are the main source of evidence, it is essential to consult as many as you can, given the time constraints you will be under, and quote from them.

If one of your secondary sources says, for example, that a particular person or development was Platonic, Aristotelian or Stoic, you **MUST** then consult the original Platonic, Aristotelian or Stoic text – they are all available electronically. Extend this same principle across your work.

Follow this rule: you must always use primary sources where you can, especially when they are easily available – such as Plato or Aristotle. If you quote a secondary source, for example, assuming that what Brown says Plato said, Plato really did say, you are quoting somebody else's possibly misleading conclusion. You need to go to the primary source and form your own opinion.

One of the most familiar student mistakes is to write an essay discussing, for example, Plato, with no use of Plato's works at all.

If you write an essay based entirely on an excellent analysis of secondary sources but no primary sources, you would be unlikely to achieve a mark above 60%.

As an example, if you are writing an essay about classical astrology, you must use texts in classical astrology as raw data, or your mark may be no higher than 60%.

You will enjoy your work much more if you go to primary sources because you will be gathering your own data. You may also produce work which is original.

Primary sources should **NEVER** be used as an authoritative statement of fact at any level. For example, modern astrological works provide evidence of what modern astrologers believe, but

nothing else. Books which argue for the spiritual power of nature provide evidence for the authors' opinions, but not necessarily the way that the world really is.

When you learn anthropological and archaeological research techniques (for example in the Researching Contemporary Cosmologies module), you will begin to create your own primary source material, based on data you acquire through interviews, questionnaires, site surveys, or other kinds of fieldwork.

2. Secondary sources

These are usually the **scholarly and academic texts** which analyse and comment on the primary source material.

In history, the secondary sources are the history books written by academic historians. In anthropology, they are the anthropology books written by academic anthropologists. As a student, you place the information and evidence gleaned from the primary source material in the context of ideas and theoretical frameworks gleaned from the secondary material.

The secondary sources act as organising frameworks for you to assess the meaning and relevance of the primary sources, but the primary sources in turn help you judge whether the arguments presented by the secondary sources are reasonable: can you support them or should they be criticised? In other words, Curry, as a secondary source, uses Weber's theory of enchantment to explain the appeal and nature of astrology. As a student, you would use the primary data (books and statements by, and behaviour of, astrologers), to investigate whether Curry's theory can be supported or criticised.

Be critical of secondary sources. Remember, secondary sources may be written by scholars who have spent years studying the evidence. But this does not mean they are right. In all academic disciplines, theories are constantly changing or being challenged, so there is never a set of facts, only a consensus which is constantly changing. In the final analysis, any scholar is setting out their opinions.

(see below 'Citing the author in the text: citing a fact versus an opinion')

Therefore, do not use such sources just to build a case without considering whether they might be wrong or contain partial truths. Even if perfectly fair, you might still disagree. If you quote Brown, who is hostile to astrology, as saying that there is no scientific evidence for astrology, stop and consider whether this statement is true. Does the author cite any evidence? Does he or she have a bias or ideological position? Is the statement worth any more than as a record of Brown's opinion? Similarly, if Green claims that astrology is divination, do not just reproduce this: ask whether it is true or not. Is Green's evidence convincing, or is the argument flawed?

You can only assess the secondary sources by going back yourself to examine the primary sources.

No matter who writes them or where they are published, it is necessary to be sceptical of secondary sources. In the humanities, academics and scholars do not 'prove', 'demonstrate', 'explain', or do anything else which implies they have discovered the final truth. Rather they 'claim', 'argue', or 'conclude'. When describing what secondary sources say, you can write 'As Brown claims...', 'As Brown argued...', 'Brown concludes that...' or 'In Brown's opinion...'

As cautionary tales, here are three examples exposing flaws in secondary sources:

First, a blog exposing problems with a paper attempting to use astronomy to achieve precise dating in Homer:

<http://kiwihellenist.blogspot.com/2018/09/the-citation-problem.html>

Second, a paper on fake journals and low quality journals:

<https://freethoughtblogs.com/pharyngula/2012/02/17/the-fake-journal-trend/>

Third, a paper revealing flawed methodology in a scientific journal:

<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2017arXiv171105132N/abstract>

Academia.edu and Research Gate

The websites Academia.edu and Research Gate are becoming an increasingly valuable resource and many academics are using it to make available published work which is otherwise unavailable. However, even though many academics are using it there is no quality control and anyone can post anything they have written.

Therefore, when using it you MUST take two steps

1. check whether the author has an academic position, teaching or researching at a University. If the author has such a position you may use their work as a secondary (i.e., scholarly, academic) source. If the author does NOT have such a position you MUST NOT use their work as a secondary (i.e., scholarly, academic) source.
2. Check whether the paper was published in an academic journal or book. If it was not it may be the author's unedited notes. If this is the case then the paper should NOT be used as a secondary (i.e. scholarly, academic) source.

Citing secondary sources

When citing secondary sources, there is a right way and a wrong way.

Secondary sources are records of other people's, usually scholars', opinions. Do not forget this! There is therefore a right and a wrong way to cite such sources in your text. For example, suppose you read a statement about Jung by Roderick Main and decide to cite it.

This is the wrong way: 'Jung said synchronicity is meaningful coincidence'.⁴

The reason it is the wrong way is because you cite Main's opinion as if it was fact.

This is the right way:

'According to Main, Jung said that synchronicity is meaningful coincidence'.⁵

Main may be important to your argument, but he may have misread Jung, so you do not want to tie yourself to his conclusion. Actually, Main is a very good source, but the principle holds.

⁴ Roderick Main, *Jung On Synchronicity And The Paranormal* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 242.

⁵ Roderick Main, *Jung On Synchronicity And The Paranormal* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 242.

In the wrong version you are assuming that Main is right, when he may be wrong. In the right version you are reporting Main's view, which you may then go on to discuss, without tying yourself to his opinion.

In other words, do not state other people's opinions as facts, even when they are scholars.

The difference between primary and secondary sources

One way to summarise the difference is that primary sources are produced by the people we are studying, while secondary sources are the commentary on the people we are studying.

When a secondary source is a primary source

What actually constitutes a primary source may vary in certain academic contexts. However, as far as student essays is concerned, this causes unnecessary confusion.

In all normal circumstances in all your essays, an academic source, whether a book or a journal article, is ALWAYS a secondary source, not a primary source.

3. Tertiary sources

Tertiary sources are those which quote sources that cite the original evidence. A tertiary reference usually relies on secondary references, and a secondary reference is one which works from the primary sources.

Many history books do this when the author was unable or unprepared to check the original primary source. **Dictionaries and encyclopaedias are tertiary sources.** If you want to cite a work in a reference which you have found cited in a tertiary source, then you must include the full information – the work being cited and the work in which it is cited.

In general, do not use tertiary sources to make authoritative statements. You should use secondary sources instead. Tertiary sources such as dictionaries are useful because they give generally accepted definitions and information.

In some circumstances it can help to use Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions, if it helps to know what definitions they are using, but **do not rely on them for academic investigations**. It is better to look for definitions given in the academic texts and then discuss and use them to further your investigation. Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions of terms such as 'divination' are interesting because they are part of the common currency of culture, and it is fine to mention them in order to describe what common Roderick public sources are saying. However, on most occasions in an essay, give an Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definition only **after** giving one from a primary or secondary source.

Some dictionaries and encyclopaedias are more reliable than others. For example, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* is a reliable source for philosophers, while Wikipedia is not and should never be cited.

Lectures, PowerPoint slides and notes provided in the course material are tertiary sources and should NEVER be cited in your student essays. This includes lecture notes posted by academics on other university websites.

4. Recent versus old sources

One word of caution concerning old material. Such material is part of the ongoing discourse and is essential to understand developments within our disciplines. However, when you are using authors from the early part of the twentieth century, be aware that their ideas may have been critiqued and superseded. This is no reason not to use them, but it is reasonable to be cautious, place them in context, and show that you are aware of more recent material. Official guidelines state that students should be aware of recent scholarship.

5. The Web

Material published on the web often looks authoritative precisely because any material which is well laid out and published imitates authoritative work. However, much material on the web which poses as academic is, in fact, of an extremely poor quality: it is increasingly common for students, including undergraduates, to post their student essays on their web sites. This material may be inaccurate, poorly thought out, and contain errors: you may cite material which has failed.

Therefore, the first consideration when using any material from the web is to consider the nature of the site:

- Is it an official site? Such as '.gov'?
- Is it an academic site? Such as '.edu' or '.ac.uk'?
- Is it an academic journal?
- Does the material have adequate sources?

If not, be suspicious. Sites that are none of the above should only be counted as evidence of themselves. For example, a poor undergraduate essay on the web is an example only of the opinions of the author – and of the posting of undergraduate essays on the web.

Secondary sources on the web

For secondary (academic) sources it is very important to only use reliable web sources. There are different kinds of academic sources on the web:

1. Digitised archives, such as JSTOR. These are actually counted as print sources, so there is no need to think of them as on the web, even if that is how we access them.
2. Online academic journals, such as the *Journal of Cosmology*, *The Ecological Citizen* or *Culture and Cosmos*. These are good secondary sources.
3. Academics' websites. Some academics post their own published articles on their websites. These are acceptable if they have been published elsewhere in academic journals.
4. University websites. These often include lecturer's teaching notes which are not legitimate secondary sources as they have not been through a publishing and editorial process. You can use these as short cuts to other sources or ideas, but you should not cite.
5. Academia.edu and Research Gate. Many academics upload their papers to these sites, but so do other people. Anyone can get an Academia.edu account and upload their work, including failed undergraduate essays. Only use material by academics you can trust.
6. Ordinary websites are never secondary sources. They are primary sources and can be used as such.

Wikipedia

Can be a useful source for links, but should **NEVER** be cited (unless as an example of the kind of information one finds on Wikipedia). Anyone can edit Wikipedia articles and the information you cite may have been uploaded by someone with no knowledge of the material, be edited by people with

an overly hostile or sympathetic attitude to the material, or they may be copying inaccurate material from elsewhere.

As an example, in 2005 an Austrian student added the name “Friedrich” to Johannes Kepler’s Wikipedia page, calling him “Friedrich Johannes Kepler”⁶. The error stayed until 2011, by which time it had entered German literature.

Non-English Sources

If you are fluent in a language apart from English then you may use sources in that language. Provide a translation in your text and the original in a footnote.

In your text, after the translation, insert ‘(author’s translation)’.

REFERENCING

Referencing Style

In Sophia Centre modules you must use the University’s MRHA guide, downloadable as a PDF from

https://uwtسد.ac.uk/media/uwtسد-website/content-assets/documents/library-and-learning-resources/infoskills/MHRA-eng_v.1.2.pdf

(A short version of the MHRA guide is available at: <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style/quick.html>. The full version is available at <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>. However, always use the University guide as your first option.)

There are, though, two exceptions where the University MRHA guide **should not be used**.

The first is the advice that every word in a book title should begin with a capital letter. This is not usual practice. Book titles should be given as in the original.

The second is **secondary citation**, when one work is quote in another (see below).

In MS Word you insert a reference by positioning your cursor in the text where you want to place your reference. Then go to ‘References’ in the top menu and then ‘Insert Footnote’. This inserts a superscript number in your text and a corresponding number at the foot of your page, where you insert the bibliographical information.

References: an introduction

The backbone of academic writing is the correct use of references. Without learning how to reference your arguments, your papers will struggle to gain good marks. But references are not just academically essential; they are very useful. They allow your reader to pursue their own ideas, starting with your work.

If you include references, you encourage your reader to pick up your research and take it further. They can go to the books you cite in order to pursue their own research. This is good academic practice and is part of belonging to a community of scholars who share information. Also, if you do not quote your sources, at worst you may be plagiarising and, at best, you are only giving your own opinion without evidence.

⁶ History of Astronomy Discussion Group [mailto:HASTRO-L@listserv.wvu.edu] On Behalf Of dfischer@ASTRO.UNI-BONN.DE. Sent: 23 June 2011 23:31.

Referencing also provides the evidence that you have undertaken your own research to find the information necessary for in-depth learning. It allows you to gain a broad perspective on different issues and to consider different aspects and points of view in the subjects you study. This cannot be achieved by simply using class notes and hand-out information to complete your assignments.

Some students think that referencing everything obscures their original voice. The opposite is true. Most students who write essays without citations and references are saying nothing original, merely repeating their own or others' assumptions. Learning to write academically is like learning to play a musical instrument; playing notes aimlessly is not 'creative' – creativity comes when one has learnt technique. So, with academic writing, you learn the skills of using evidence to build up your own argument in order to reach an original conclusion. The art is to avoid writing a list of other people's opinions; instead, use the evidence you find in the literature to reach your own reasoned position.

Keep Records as you write

Recording the name of an article and the page number you are using, as you write, is essential. Without this you will waste many hours trying to find a lost reference. The whole process of referencing involves maintaining a detailed account of every piece of information you use. It is very frustrating to find a useful article or document and then be unable to locate it again if needed because you have not kept an accurate record of its source. Should this be inaccessible, you will have no record of the information and will no longer be able to use it in your essay.

Different Styles of References

Reference styles vary between the sciences, social sciences and humanities. The social sciences (such as sociology and sometimes anthropology) use the Harvard or MLA system, sometimes called the 'author-date system' or 'in-text references'. In this system you will see references in the text in brackets such as this: (Pingree 1994, p. 22).

There are many different systems for footnoting, for example, the MHRA and the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS). The MHRA is the Modern Humanities Research Association. Its style guide is based on the CMOS style of referencing, which uses footnotes. Within these options there are other variations. The MRHA and CMOS are constantly revising their guidelines and individual publishers then create their own systems from within the options on offer. There is therefore no accepted single system for referencing.

(A short version of the MHRA guide is available at: <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style/quick.html>. The full version is available at <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>. However, always use the University guide as your first option.)

What is included in a footnote

As far as possible, references should be confined to bibliographical information. Please do not include additional information in footnotes unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If information is relevant it should be in the text. If it is not, then leave it out altogether. The main exception is, if you translate a passage from a non-English work in the text of your essay, you should put the original non-English text in a footnote.

See Below: USING NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOURCES

Key points and questions on referencing

Always cite the person's name in the sentence in which you are giving the exact quote.

Example: Fred Smith argues that ‘A blue sky can make some people sad’, which is a point that can be argued.¹ [Your citation to Fred Smith’s published work and the page number of the quote]. The passage will be unclear if you omit Smith’s name and just write: ‘A blue sky can make some people sad’, which is a point with which many would disagree.¹

There is always a judgment to be made when including a reference for factual information. When you include an item of factual information that is general knowledge. For example, ‘The Second World War ended in 1945’. This does not need a reference. However, when it is not a universally known fact, such as ‘Sales of astrological almanacs in 1945 reached 350,000’, then a reference is required.

What if I have more than one quote in a sentence?

An example might be: The Scientific Revolution was both a ‘fiction’ and a ‘reality’.

Here the words ‘fiction’ and ‘reality’ are from Professors Green and Brown, respectively. Each author should be referenced within the sentence, and a footnote given for each: According to Green,⁷ the Scientific Revolution could be considered a ‘fiction’, although Brown⁸ insists it was, in his word, a ‘reality’.

If I have footnotes do I need a bibliography?

Yes, you do need a separate bibliography at the end of your paper. The University’s MHRA guide shows you how to format bibliography sources.

Should I use book titles in the body of my paper?

It is clumsy to write the entire title of a book in the text of your essay, unless you are introducing the work when writing a Critical Review. For example, rather than writing ‘Green, in his book *The Scientific Revolution*, stated that...’, say ‘Green stated that...’ with the details of the book in the footnote.

Book and journal titles should always be given in italics. You might write, ‘In the *Tetrabiblos*....’ but the correct way to do this is to write, ‘In the *Tetrabiblos*....’, using italics for the title of the book. For an article, use single inverted commas.

How do I handle a repeated reference?

The first time you use a reference it should be full enough to be readily identifiable. The University guide allows you to use the abbreviation *Ibid* in footnotes where a reference to the same work appears in the next footnote, **unless it causes confusion**. We recommend the University’s alternative, which is to use a clear abbreviation. This abbreviation needs to include the surname of the author and book or journal article title.

Example:

G. W. Coopland, *Nicole Oresme And The Astrologers: A Study Of His Livre De Divinacions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1952), pp. 61–65.

For every subsequent citation use the abbreviation
Coopland, *Oresme*, pp. 61–65.

⁷ Gordon Green, *The Scientific Revolution* (New York: New Publishing Company, 1999), p. 10.

⁸ Benjamin Brown, *The Scientific Revolution Reconsidered* (Boston, MA: Big Publishers, 2009), p. 104.

The rule is that the abbreviation should be clear enough to make sense.

How many references should I use?

When in doubt use a reference. Too many is not a problem. Too few is a problem.

Referencing Secondary Citations

*******This is very important and is the only point on which you should disregard the University's reference guide.**

Secondary Citations are books cited in another book, articles cited in another article, or an article cited in another book.

If the original work is available then use it. If it is unavailable, it is **ESSENTIAL** that you acknowledge this, as it is misleading to give the impression that you consulted the original. Use the guidelines above and give the details of the item cited, then 'cited in' and then the details of the work in which the first work is cited.

Example:

Andrew Wiese, "'The House I Live In': Race, Class, And African American Suburban Dreams In The Postwar United States', in *The New Suburban History*, ed. by Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 101–102, cited in Yves Bonnefoy, *New And Selected Poems*, ed. by John Naughton and Anthony Rudolf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 22.

The same rule applies to the citation of primary sources.

For example, a book you are reading may cite Plato or Shakespeare and give a citation. You should repeat this. For example,

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997), IV.2, lines 110–12, cited in Fred Halliday, *Shakespeare in his Age*, London: Duckworth 1956, p. 25.

Classical texts

Classical (and medieval) texts are often divided into numbered books, chapters, paragraphs and line numbers. You should use these. In such cases the page number is optional.

Many online editions do not include the paragraph and line numbers. If you are making heavy use of a classical text you should go to the print version (where possible) and give the paragraph and line numbers.

Note that the university has online access to the Loeb Classical Library. Although this is an online resource, because this library shows exact copies of the printed work, you can cite the page numbers as though you were citing from the printed copy, without needing to cite the URL. Please also cite the relevant book/chapter/section number in addition to the page number of the edition.

Example:

Plato, *Republic*, trans. by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), Book I, 364E.

Plato, *Laws* V.737 E– 738 A, VI 771 A–C; *Epinomis* 978E– 979A.

Referencing JSTOR

JSTOR provides the format for citing articles which include a DOI (digital identification) code. This contradicts the referencing guide. However, we do not mind which format you follow:

Example

Barth, James R., and James T. Bennett. "Astrology and Modern Science Revisited." *Leonardo*, vol. 7, no. 3, The MIT Press, 1974, pp. 235–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1572896>.

WORKING WITH QUOTES

Direct quotations: quoting from sources

It is necessary to use direct quotes from sources so that your reader can read extracts from original documents. It also means that you must read the documents!

Direct quotations can be included in the overall word length but should comprise no more than 10% of the total word count.

Format of quotations

Quotations of under 30 words should be in the main body of the text, enclosed between single quotation marks.

Always use single quotation marks for short quotations. Use double quotation marks for quotations within quotations.

For example: 'In Champion's view, New Age and Pagan movements demonstrate "the fragmentation of religious affiliation and privatization of spirituality" and are therefore part of the same phenomenon'.

Quotations of over 30 words

These should be separated from the main body of the text by a one-line space above and below, without quotation marks and indented. (Always indent the left-hand margin. Indent the right-hand margin if you consider it necessary for clarity).

You shouldn't really use quotes of over 100 words unless absolutely essential. Over 100 words you should paraphrase – repeat the information in your own words.

Quotes should not be italicised.

If a quote is relatively long in relation to the overall length of the essay, paraphrase it in your own words.

Always introduce quotations

Do not just break your text and insert a quotation. Begin with 'As Smith and Jones claimed...', 'In Smith and Jones' opinion', 'As Smith and Jones argued in their 1953 analysis of the topic...'. This is not just a matter of style and readability. If you do not introduce a quotation, then it may not be clear who is speaking.

Do not introduce a quote with a colon. For example, 'Thorndike argued: astronomy played a vital part in history'.

If you insert a direct quote in the essay with no introduction you will be criticised on the grounds that you have inserted information with no attempt to explain why it helps answer the question.

Citing the author in the text

It is also necessary to be clear when you are repeating other authors' opinions and arguments, rather than facts. Hence quotes, or references to other people's arguments need introducing as, for example, 'Curry believed that... but Campion disagreed'.

Consider the following example:

'Some scholars argue that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival'.⁹

Which of the following is correct?

1. Campion is an example of a scholar who argues that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival or
2. Campion is reporting that various scholars argue that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival.

Furthermore, if (2) is correct, what is Campion's attitude? Does he think those scholars were mistaken?

In other words, always help the reader understand your evidence as much as you can. It therefore helps to cite an author's name in the actual text, rather than just in the reference.

Citing the author in the text: citing a fact versus an opinion

It is vital that you make it clear in your text whether you are citing a fact or an opinion. You can avoid this mistake by citing the author in the text.

For example

'Astrology's transfer to the Hellenistic world saw a shift away from a universe populated by multiple personalities towards a cosmos conceived of as a single living body'.¹⁰

The referencing is incorrect because it presents the information given as a fact, which is sourced from Campion. However, this is Campion's opinion.

The correct phrasing would be

Campion argues that 'Astrology's transfer to the Hellenistic world saw a shift away from a universe populated by multiple personalities towards a cosmos conceived of as a single living body'.¹¹

Then it is clear that you are referring to Campion's opinion, one with which other scholars may disagree.

As another example, consider this paragraph:

⁹ Nicholas Campion, *What Do Astrologers Believe?* (Oxford: Granta, 2006), p.46.

¹⁰ Nicholas Campion, *A History Of Western Astrology*, Vol. 1. (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 185.

¹¹ Nicholas Campion, *A History Of Western Astrology*, Vol. 1. (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 185.

Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* was published in 1543.¹² The Copernican Revolution was the cause of an existential crisis in the European psyche: humanity was expelled from its central place in the cosmos and the resulting sense of insecurity is responsible for an ongoing psychic malaise in the western world.¹³

The first sentence is a fact: Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* was published in 1543.

The second sentence is an opinion:

The Copernican Revolution was the cause of an existential crisis in the European psyche: humanity was expelled from its central place in the cosmos and the resulting sense of insecurity is responsible for an ongoing psychic malaise in the western world.

As this is an opinion, not a fact, to state it as if it is a fact is therefore misleading.

The correct way to write this is to include the author in the text:

Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* was published in 1543.¹⁴ Thomas Kuhn considered that what he called the 'Copernican Revolution' was the cause of an existential crisis in the European psyche: humanity was expelled from its central place in the cosmos and the resulting sense of insecurity is responsible for an ongoing psychic malaise in the western world.¹⁵

Instead of 'Thomas Kuhn considered that...', you could write:

'Thomas Kuhn wrote that...'

'Thomas Kuhn argued that...'

'Kuhn stated that...'

'Kuhn claimed that...'

'In Thomas Kuhn's opinion...'

'In Thomas Kuhn's view...'

In this way, you will have distinguished (a) something that happened from (b) an idea, theory or opinion about something that happened.

Always put the reference in the same sentence as the relevant quote or information. If the relevant information extends over several sentences, or a whole paragraph, insert the reference at the beginning of the section, after the first sentence.

When you want to say that an author wrote something, there are certain ways that are ungrammatical or old fashioned:

For example:

'Pingree advances that' is ungrammatical: there should be some words between 'advances' and 'that', such as 'Pingree advances the claim that...'

¹² John North, *The Fontana History Of Astronomy and Cosmology* (London: Fontana, 1994), p.262.

¹³ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy In The Development Of Western Thought*, (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 263.

¹⁴ John North, *The Fontana History of Astronomy and Cosmology* (London: Fontana, 1994), p.262.

¹⁵ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought*, (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 263.

'Pingree highlights that' ungrammatical: there should be some words between 'highlights' and 'that', such as 'Pingree highlights the claim that...'

'Pingree posits that...' is archaic: nobody actually says 'somebody posits that' in contemporary English.

'Pingree opined that...' is archaic and not common usage. Modern English would be 'Pingree's opinion was that..'

Citing astrological claims and information

One weakness of past students with a background in astrology has been to take astrological claims for granted, as if they are common knowledge. They are not. Astrology evolves and astrologers disagree. However, if you write statements about astrology such as 'Venus is a feminine planet' or 'Uranus is a revolutionary planet', you are citing an opinion, not a fact. Thus, you need to name an astrologer that says that 'Venus is feminine'. By doing this you provide some evidence to support your assertion. Remember that astrological lore is not fact. That the Earth is round is a fact, but Venus relating to women is not; it is an opinion and thus needs a citation.

The same consideration applies to other areas.

STYLE: THE AUTHORIAL VOICE

Every piece of writing has a 'voice'. In fiction, the narrator may be the central character ('I') or an invisible narrator. Until we have taught you the appropriate use of 'I' in academic literature, do not use the word.

In most circumstances, avoid personal comments altogether. To write basic academic essays you need to be able to 'objectify' the information, which means standing back and putting yourself outside the frame. As examples:

Do not write 'It is my opinion that...' or 'I believe that...'

Do write 'The evidence suggests that...', and then cite the evidence.

Quite simply, **NEVER** make statements that begin 'I...', **UNLESS** you are writing personal and reflexive work in which your own role in the research is important, and which will be explained when the situation arises.

The use of the personal 'I' in Anthropology and Ethnography

There is a blurring of the boundaries between the injunctions against using 'I' and permission to use it. When you are dealing with the present in an anthropological or phenomenological manner (which we will teach you) you can get personal, but when you are being a historian, stick to the conventions and remain distant and objective.

In fieldwork research you will be able to say 'I observed...', 'I concluded' and 'My research...'

This is much clearer than alternatives such as 'The research was...', 'The researcher studied...'

Do not refer to yourself as 'The author' as in 'The author concluded that...'. as it is not clear whether you are referring to yourself or another writer.

However, never you use 'we'. This always begs the question who is 'we' and, even if 'we' knew who 'we' were, how could you speak on behalf of 'we'?

Avoid the use of 'us' as well as 'we'. The effect is to make it seem that you are making statements on behalf of the reader. In journalism it is a common writing device to use 'us' and 'we' to draw the reader in to the writer's argument, but it's not good practice in academic writing, in which clarity is required. By writing 'we think this' or 'we separate human and world psyche in our astrological thinking', the reader is entitled to ask, who is 'we' and 'whose' astrological thinking? 'Certainly not mine', they might answer, and your argument immediately fails.

Do not use 'you' either. Think: who is 'you'?

You may be tempted to make personal comments, perhaps about astrology or saving the planet. **Do not do this.**

You will give your conclusions in the conclusion to your essay. They will, though, be based on your assessment of the evidence you have presented in your essay. Thus, the appropriate wording is 'the evidence suggests that' – or similar, in your own words.

Tenses

In general, write in the past tense, unless you are dealing with modern, ongoing phenomena.

The Historic Present Tense

The Historic Present Tense is used to describe past events as ongoing in the present. Always avoid it in academic work as it causes confusion.

In the **past tense** we would write: 'In 1789 a French mob stormed the Bastille'.

In the **historic present**, this would be '1789: a French mob storms the Bastille'.

The 'historic present' is commonly used in popular narratives, such as TV documentaries, because it conveys dramatic effect. For this very reason it should not be used in academic writing.

It should never be used in historical work, in which chronology is essential. By placing everything in an eternal present, the historic present tense undermines a sense that one event happened after another.

There was a public, friendly argument between two leading British journalists, John Humphrys and Melvyn Bragg, in 2014, which aired the issue:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/28/historic-present-tense-past-john-humphrys>

The use of the word 'the' in English

This is very important if English is not your first language. The English word 'the' is known as 'the definite article'. Most non-English speakers have difficulty with the ways in which the words 'the', 'an' and 'a' are used in English. Many use 'the' when it is not required and omit it when it is required. The rules are given on-line at the Waylink English site:

<https://waylink-english.co.uk/grammar/definite-and-indefinite-articles>

As an example, note the profound differences between these two sentences:

1. 'astrology and alchemy were once the cornerstones of the West's world view'
2. 'astrology and alchemy were once cornerstones of the West's world view'

WRITING STYLE AND HINTS

Avoiding unsupported assertions and sweeping statements

The purpose of MA level work is to investigate questions and reach conclusions on the basis of the evidence.

Figures of speech

Never use slang or figures of speech. For example, to talk of a movement hitting 'critical mass' or 'coming of age' may make sense in an impressionistic sense but does not help your case if you are striving for clarity. If you say that something is 'the other side of the coin' what exactly do you mean? What is a 'smoking gun'?

Never make unsupported assertions or sweeping statements which cannot be justified by evidence, **not even** general assertions about what astrology is or does. Do not say 'astrology is such-and-such' or 'astrologers do this and that', unless you can back such claims with some evidence. It is not enough to make such generalised statements from your own personal opinion. You might think you are right, but who is to say that anyone else agrees with you?

Sweeping statements which make huge comments about the nature of history, society, or the cosmos may look fine when you write them, and may seem to be useful ways of linking one part of an essay to another. AVOID THEM. They will open far more questions than they solve. Here's an example:

'As the Renaissance dawns, a shift in thinking occurs, from a prevailing mystical and symbolic world view to a concern for the wonders of Nature, and reverence for humanity's role within that.'

This might, at first glance, look like a wonderfully convincing piece of prose. But I would ask:

- When did the Renaissance dawn?
- What country are we talking about?
- How do you know there was a shift in thinking?
- Who was involved in this shift? Men? Women? Slaves? Priests? The Irish?
- What is a mystical and symbolic world view?
- Did it really prevail before the Renaissance dawned? And amongst whom?
- Did nobody marvel at nature before the Renaissance?

Other examples include:

'In the last few hundred years, collectively, contemporary Westerners have become increasingly culturally biased towards the empirical sciences.'

How do we know this? Contemporary westerners live now, so what were they doing a few hundred years ago? Who are contemporary Westerners anyway? And what is the evidence?

These are examples from past student work:

- Jehovah's Witnesses are viewed as a dangerous cult
- The discovery of Neolithic cultures which revered the feminine is synchronous with the rise of modern women

- Sceptics and critics of astrology have rarely studied it
- We live in a time of unparalleled global threat
- Some commentators have described Plato as a mystic
- Astrology is a valuable tool for psychological growth
- Today's leaders need greater skills and resilience than ever before
- in today's increasingly violent society...
- It cannot be denied...
- Ptolemy is guilty of turning astrology into a science
- Psychological astrology is essentially secular...
- Astrologers think that...
- Everyone knows a superstition...
- Many cultures, even today, retain folk memories of the past
- Durkheim's ideas do not bear scrutiny
- Eliade makes a fundamental mistake as he fails to distinguish between...

And do not write:

- 'The ancients...' (who were they?)
- 'Over the centuries...' (when exactly?)
- 'Over the ages...' (when was this?)
- 'In time immemorial' (when was this?)

Instead you could write :

- 'In the ancient near east', or 'In classical Greece'
- 'From the fifth to second centuries BCE'
- 'From the fifteen to seventeenth centuries'

Avoid repeating the same word too often – try to find synonyms. For example, 'important' could become 'significant', 'principal', or 'paramount', depending on the context. English is such a diverse language, containing both Germanic and Latin/Romance roots, as well as many loan words from other languages, that it is usually not difficult to find alternatives.

Do not ask direct questions, such as 'Why?' in your text. Who do you expect to answer?

Do not ask rhetorical questions, such as: 'Can anyone disagree that astrology is divination?' Yes, of course they can!

Avoid colloquialisms: for example, 'Brown's work was a waste of space', or 'astrology is the other side of the coin'.

Do not instruct the reader to do things, such as 'Compare Plato's argument with Aristotle's', or 'Consider the nature of science'. It is your job to compare or consider, not the reader's.

Do not write, 'in this all too brief study... space forbids', 'unfortunately, in this brief essay...', or 'it is outside the scope of this essay' in order to excuse the exclusion of material. Do not blame your content on the word length: everyone else is writing to the same length as you.

Please do not provide a list followed by 'to name but a few'. Who are the others and why aren't you mentioning them?

Do not write, 'it is interesting to note that'. Of course it is: otherwise it wouldn't be in your essay.

For the same reason, do not use phrases such as 'it is worthy of note that'. What are you implying? That the rest of the essay is not worthy of note?

Do not write 'scholars say that...'. Which scholars? Name them.

Another weak phrase is, 'it could be argued that', or 'it can be argued that', to which we can reply, well, anything can be argued. The same goes for 'it can be suggested that...'. Anything can be suggested.

Never use 'contractions': you should write 'for example' and not 'e.g.'. Do not use 'i.e.' and never use 'etc.'. In the case of etc, or etcetera, if this word refers to anything which is important then mention those things, and if it doesn't then delete it.

Explain technical terms. For example, if you write 'divinatory techniques', 'divinatory astrology', 'psychological astrology', 'ecocentricity', 'individuation', 'animus', or 'anima' with no further explanation, the reader will not know what you are talking about.

The use of 'This' and 'It'

When you use 'this' or 'it' in a sentence, referring to information in a previous sentence, make sure you know that your reader knows what 'this' and 'it' refer to, even when it is clear to you, and even at the risk of appearing to be too repetitive in your language.

For example:

'Plato's insistence on reincarnation was rejected by Zeno, who believed that nature is all there is, and has had a huge impact on modern technology. This was adopted by Plotinus.'

This is a common mistake, but there is no clear indication as to what 'this' refers. Does 'this' refer to 'Plato's insistence', 'reincarnation', 'nature' or 'modern technology'? Similar problems arise with the use of 'it'.

Describing well-known people

The first time you mention a major historical character, give their dates and introduce them. For example, 'the Greek philosopher Plato (c.428-348 BCE)'. This is important if you are discussing their ideas.

HOWEVER, avoid doing this with everyone you cite, as the result is to skew the impression of their work. For example, if you write 'Astrologer Rob Hand', 'Science historian Alan Chapman' or 'science writer James Lovelock', you may give the reader a different impression than if you write 'Historian of ideas Rob Hand' and 'Church of England member, Alan Chapman' or 'influential environmentalist James Lovelock'. Therefore, with most sources that you cite, give the name of the author, but do not describe them further unless it is absolutely essential to your argument.

Often it helps to describe the individuals you are talking about, sometimes it doesn't. For example, if you write 'astrologer Rob Hand', what are you saying? That Rob Hand can speak as an astrologer but not as a historian? That what Rob Hand says is constrained by his being an astrologer? If you want to put Rob Hand into context, then write, 'Rob Hand, author of a number of key astrological textbooks. Similarly, rather than 'Environmentalist James Lovelock', just write 'James Lovelock' or, if you want to put him into context, 'James Lovelock, famous as the originator of the Gaia Hypothesis'.

Also, when you add adjectives to your labels, think about what you are saying. For example, if you write, 'Franz Cumont, the distinguished historian', what are you saying by the use of the word 'distinguished'?

Often it is not necessary to describe an individual when you are quoting from their work, as the context is given by the title and publication details of their work.

To summarise:

- Historical figures: put their dates in at first mention.
- Modern scholars: a matter of judgment, but in general put their dates in if they are both important and dead.
- Always put in the first name when you first mention someone.

IF ENGLISH IS YOUR SECOND LANGUAGE

If English is your second language, tutors will be aware that certain words might be used which are picked up from dictionaries, but which may not be the best usage.

We understand this and may suggest better alternatives.

USING NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOURCES

If you have access to non-English language sources, we encourage you to use them. If you quote from a non-English source you should:

1. Translate the original into English
2. Write '(my translation)' after the translation
3. Put the original text in a footnote

READING - TIPS

We can all read, otherwise we wouldn't be involved in a university. However, it is easy to become seriously bogged down in academic reading and spend so long staring at the printed page that there is no time left to do anything else. This is a university degree, so a substantial time commitment is required. However, we have attempted to simplify your task by giving specific readings and page references in many cases.

If you have a sound grounding in a particular topic area, scan the additional material. Some people are able to turn over pages at speed looking for words or phrases of special interest. Alternatively, you can tackle specific chapters first, leaving others until later. There are no hard and fast rules and we all have to find the way to work which suits us.

DOING RESEARCH - TIPS

Many people highlight important passages in books when reading. This is useful but makes it difficult to organise essays because you're constantly looking back through various books to find the relevant texts. The result is that information throughout the essay can be disorganised.

It is essential for most people to keep their own notes (in addition to highlighting texts, if that's what you do). Some people keep them on record cards. A good way to do this is to make a note of important themes while you're reading. You can then keep separate notes on 'the origins of Greek astrology', or 'Christian opposition to astrology', or any other idea which strikes you as important.

The notes do not have to be long – you can restrict yourself to headlines with page references if that's all you need. But do make a note of factual evidence, major themes and the main arguments put forward by the authors you are reading. As you make notes make sure that you include page references back to the original source.

A useful exercise:

Choose an academic paper that you have found clear and informative and thus useful for your work. Look at that paper as a good example of what you are aiming for and thus deconstruct it. Look at its introduction, what issues it developed, and pay attention to its conclusion to see how it relates to these issues. The issues you identify must arise out of your reading of the paper. Also consider the length of the paragraphs and how the author has used their paragraphs to help carry their examination of the topic through their paper.

PLAGIARISM

This material is quoted from the Oxford University Web site on Plagiarism
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1#>,
 accessed 6 Feb 2021.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement.

All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed, or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.

The necessity to acknowledge others' work or ideas applies not only to text, but also to other media, such as computer code, illustrations, graphs and so on. It applies equally to published text and data drawn from books and journals, and to unpublished text and data, whether from lectures, theses, or other students' essays. You must also attribute text, data, and other resources downloaded from websites.

The best way of avoiding plagiarism is to learn and employ the principles of good academic practice from the beginning of your university career. Avoiding plagiarism is not simply a matter of making sure your references are all correct, or changing enough words so the examiner will not notice your paraphrase; it is about deploying your academic skills to make your work as good as it can be.

Some Forms of plagiarism

Verbatim (word for word) quotation without clear acknowledgement

Quotations must always be identified as such by the use of either quotation marks or indentation, and with full referencing of the sources cited. It must always be apparent to the reader which parts are your own independent work and where you have drawn on someone else's ideas and language.

Copying and pasting from the Internet without clear acknowledgement

Information derived from the Internet must be adequately referenced and included in the bibliography. It is important to evaluate carefully all material found on the Internet, as it is less likely to have been through the same process of scholarly peer review as published sources.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing the work of others by altering a few words and changing their order, or by closely

following the structure of their argument, is plagiarism if you do not give due acknowledgement to the author whose work you are using.

A passing reference to the original author in your own text may not be enough; you must ensure that you do not create the misleading impression that the paraphrased wording or the sequence of ideas are entirely your own. It is better to write a brief summary of the author's overall argument in your own words, indicating that you are doing so, than to paraphrase particular sections of his or her writing. This will ensure you have a genuine grasp of the argument and will avoid the difficulty of paraphrasing without plagiarising. You must also properly attribute all material you derive from lectures.

Self-plagiarism

You must not submit work for assessment that you have already submitted (partially or in full) to fulfil the requirements of another degree course or examination, unless this is specifically provided for in the special regulations for your course. Where earlier work by you is citable, namely that it has already been published, you must reference it clearly.