

# Guide to Academic Writing

The following is a guide to the minimum standards expected of ALL Higher Education written work submitted to ACOM for assessment. Students should be aware that markers will fail assignments that do not meet these requirements.

In order to gain a PASS grade or above, written assignments submitted to ACOM for assessment must AT LEAST:

## Be presented as formal assignments

Rough notes, draft copies and unfinished work are always unacceptable and will result in automatic failure. A cover page is mandatory.

## Be presented using the following guidelines

### File type

All assignments must be submitted electronically in either Word “.doc or .docx” format or if using a Mac “.pages” format.

### Line Spacing

Assignments must be either 1.5 or double-spaced.

### Margins

Assignments must have at least a 2.5 cm margin on all edges.

### Font

Assignments must be written in Times New Roman with 12-point font.

## Be written in formal English

Essays MUST use grammatically and syntactically correct sentences, and all conventions of the English language (e.g. correct spelling, correct and consistent use of capitals, full stops, commas, inverted commas, question marks, quotation marks, etc.) must be followed consistently. Isolated errors will not usually result in failure. Consistent errors will result in failure.

## Be within required word limits

Aim carefully to write the required number of words. We encourage you to write no more than 10% more or 10% less than the required number of words. As using concise language is important, it is generally considered worse to write an excessively long essay than one too short. Please also note that footnotes and Bibliographies are not to be included in word counts.

## Be arranged in coherent paragraphs

Essays must not, for example, be arranged in one block or in single sentences. Bullet points are unacceptable in any assignment, including field assignments. However, proper (i.e., consistent and careful) use of numbering or lettering within, or between paragraphs, is acceptable.

## Begin with an introduction and finish with a conclusion

Introductions should describe how the student plans to answer the question. Conclusions should ONLY include issues dealt with in the main body of the essay.

## Be free from slang, colloquialisms and conversational language

- Isolated examples of slang, colloquialisms or conversational language will not usually result in failure. Consistent use of slang and colloquialisms will result in failure.
- A very short list of some slang words (and some suggested formal alternatives in brackets) include:
  - “Cool” (“popular”), “crappy” (“poor quality”), “I reckon” (“It is my opinion that...”), “hang around” (“wait”), “boss” (“employer”), etc.
  - “Well, the best way to....”  
Using “well” to begin a sentence is colloquial (and redundant). Simply start the sentence with “The...”. Instead of using “best” use, for example, “most appropriate”, or “most widely accepted”.
  - “The methodology used to reach this conclusion is really bad.”  
Neither “really” nor “bad” are properly defined. Instead of “really bad” use, for example, “highly inappropriate”, or “obviously unjustified”.
  - ‘You will agree that...’  
Never address the reader directly in an essay, and never speculate about the reader’s beliefs or opinion(s). Instead say, for example, “There is strong evidence that...” or “This conclusion seems inevitable”.
  - Avoid use of the first person (e.g., ‘I’, ‘we’)
- Academic essays should generally be written in the third-person. Use of the first-person MAY be justified in some circumstance e.g., where the question/topic asks for personal responses to, or reflections on, certain issues or material. If in doubt, the third-person should always be used.

## Use gender inclusive language

Students are required to use gender inclusive language in all academic papers and verbal presentations. This is recognised practice across tertiary education. It also reflects the inclusive nature of the gospel (Galatians 3:28) and is good practice and preparation for ministry and worship leading.

## Address the question or topic

Assignments not addressing the questions/topic WILL be failed regardless of the overall quality of the essay.



## Address the question or topic in the manner specified

Where the assignment question/topic clearly specifies a particular manner of addressing the topic, assignments not addressing the topic in that manner may be failed EVEN IF the overall question/topic is addressed in other ways.

## Be characterised by tertiary level thought and/or depth of analysis

Assignments should evidence a level of clarity, logic, and persuasiveness consistent with tertiary (Higher Education) studies. Assignments that could have been written by a reasonably intelligent and reasonably well informed high-school student have not reached the minimum criterion for this standard.

## Support key statements with evidence

'Evidence' includes citations of written academic work (e.g., books, journals, reputable and verifiable internet resources) and direct evidence gathered by students (e.g., through an interview or survey), but DOES NOT include anecdotal evidence or 'motherhood' statements such as "everybody knows that..."

## Interact with a range of sources

Generally, students are expected to cite a range of resources (books, journal articles etc.) appropriate to the task given. It is important to note that is not sufficient to simply quote/reference such authors. Students are expected to critique the arguments of various authors, and to assess whether the contributions of other authors are valuable, insightful, applicable, etc. A balanced essay will include views/sources with which the student disagrees.

Important Note: Depending on the nature of the specific question, field assignments do not necessarily require formal citations of the work of other writers. However, as with any assignment, if you do use the ideas or words of another person in a field assignment, you MUST quote and reference these ideas or words appropriately or be guilty of plagiarism (see below).

## Be free from plagiarism

Examples of plagiarism will result in automatic failure. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use or paraphrasing of another person's work, and the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. See Student Handbook 9.7.2 for further information.

## Use Turabian or other acceptable referencing system correctly

See the Referencing Fact Sheet.



**As long as these are used clearly, consistently, appropriately and accurately it is ACCEPTABLE but not mandatory to:**

- Use headings and subheadings.
- Use numbering and lettering.
- Use footnotes.
- Include a table of contents or other tables, figures, diagrams, and/or appendices.

### **ACOM Assessment Cover Sheet**

All formal assessment are to include the ACOM Assessment Cover sheet that can be found on your Moodle Home Page.

### **Assignment file naming requirement**

All assessments must be saved in the following format: name first, then unit code for the assessment that you are submitting, then assessment type e.g., “Joe Bloggs S7101 Field.doc” or even “Joe Bloggs S7101 Intro to Theology Field ass.doc” (if you prefer)

