SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

GUIDE FOR ASSIGNMENT PRESENTATION

JACKIE ROBINSON
for the School of Economics
Teaching and Learning Committee
The University of Queensland

This Guide has been compiled from the Graduate School of Management and Department of Management Assignment Writing Handbook (Carnegie, 1998) and from work previously undertaken by Bruce Littleboy and Jon Stanford from the Department of Economics

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GUIDE FOR ASSIGNMENT PRESENTATION

An assignment should be regarded as a piece of academic writing. The following comments and suggestions about the construction and presentation of assignments are intended to provide a guide. They are not intended to be considered as rigid rules. However, there are a number of academic conventions which should be met in academic work. Of most importance in academic writing is an overriding need for internal consistency in presentation. Internal consistency is achieved by thoroughness and attention to detail in the presentation of work.

The purpose of an academic piece of writing is to report the results of an investigation to other members of the discipline for their information, evaluation and criticism. Communication of the results of academic activity is important as it allows the dissemination of information and is fundamental to the establishment of groups of people who are interested in similar problems and who are interested in applying similar analytical techniques to identify solutions to these problems. Writing an assignment is an exercise in effective communication and requires more than just learning of techniques of analysis and facts about the economic process.

There are a number of books available that assist with writing assignments. See for example, Betts and Seitz (1986) *Writing Essays in the Social Sciences* and Anderson and Poole (1994) *Thesis and Assignment Writing*. It is recommended that students consult these for information about how to research and write an assignment.

1. **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

Each course offered through the School of Economics will have stipulated the criteria for assessment of assignments in the Course Outline. A number of assessment criteria that may be relevant for all courses are listed below.

- Relevance of your answer to the question or task set.
- Clarity of expression.
- Supporting documentation for arguments.
- Proper acknowledgement of documentation and the use of a bibliographic convention.
- Logical planning and sequence.
- Overall presentation, including correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Comprehensive coverage reflecting mastery of set readings and text.

2. **PLANNING AND SEQUENCE OF AN ASSIGNMENT**

The assignment should contain at least three well defined and distinct sections:

(a) An introduction (or ‘a beginning’)
(b) The body of the assignment (or ‘a middle’)
(c) A conclusion (or ‘an end’)

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• The introduction, which occurs at the beginning of the assignment, should include a statement of the aims or objectives of the assignment. The introduction provides a clear statement of the problem or question to be considered; the limitations or assumptions you plan to use when examining the problem, and the analytical techniques used. Although the question set will frequently determine the question posed for the assignment, there is still scope for the introduction to define more precisely the question or to set the bounds of the assignment. Do not simply state the title of the assignment or repeat the question posed by the lecturer.

• The body of the assignment contains the argument that you present in support of the question you have posed in the introduction. The argument should be logical and embody the standard techniques of analysis as well as display familiarity with standard economic concepts and doctrines.

• The conclusion should complete the assignment by following up discussion points raised in the previous sections. It should relate clearly to your statement of aims and purpose provided in the introduction. As a general rule, no new material should be introduced in the conclusion. The conclusion normally should draw conclusions and point to further directions one could take from matters which have been argued fully and stated in the body of the assignment. Do not simply repeat, or summarise, what you have already said in the body of the assignment. Repetition is regarded as padding.

3. COMMON SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS USED IN ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Define Set down the precise meaning of a word or phrase and show why the distinctions implied in the definition are necessary by expanding on particular elements that may be sources of confusion or misunderstanding.

Discuss Investigate an issue by examining the positive and negative arguments and by exploring interesting alternatives.

Illustrate Use a model to clarify a particular point or use examples taken from everyday reality.

Explain Clarify by the use of explanation, model and example.

Compare Describe the similarities and differences and evaluate likely outcomes.

Contrast Present an overview of two points of view and set them in opposition to bring out the differences.

Describe Give a detailed explanation and clarification.

Evaluate Make an appraisal on the basis of pre-established criteria, explore other points of view and, perhaps, include your personal opinion.
Interpret  Expand the meaning of a particular issue or event.

Justify  Show the basis for a decision or conclusion by the use of an appropriate model or relevant evidence.

Outline  Describe the major features of an issue or theory omitting minor details and emphasising structure and key conclusions.

Relate  Show how things are connected to each other and how they influence each other.

State  Present in brief, clear form.

Summarise  Give a brief overview of the key points of a matter, omitting details and examples.

Trace  Follow the development of a topic from some point of origin.

4.  PRESENTATION

The style and presentation of assignments are important. Your assignment should be easy to read and be presented in a way that shows you have organised your material to present your argument clearly. In addition, your assignment should be referenced where appropriate and literature cited in the text should be accurately documented.

4.1  THE BASICS

Although there are variations in writing style required by different academic disciplines, different journals, different universities, and even different schools within the one university, the guidelines provided in this section should be followed unless you have been given specific instructions to the contrary.

It is strongly recommended that you use this section as a check list before you submit every assignment.

4.1.1  General Points

- All pages are to be consecutively numbered.
- Use one side only of A4 paper.
- All pages should be secured with a staple in the top left-hand corner. Do not use paper clips or pins, and do not use presentation folders.
- Assignments must be typed or word processed, not handwritten.
- Ensure that your print-out is clear and easy to read.
- Spell check your paper, preferably using the Australian dictionary provided in your word processing program.
- Ensure that you keep a copy of your assignment in case the original is misplaced.
Supply an estimated word count on the cover sheet. The word count should include footnotes but exclude the reference list.

Include your name, student number, course name and course code as well as lecturer or tutor’s name.

4.1.2 Style

- Double line-space your assignment with the following exceptions: block quotes are single spaced; the reference list is single-spaced with a double line of spacing between each reference; and the abstract can be single-spaced or 1.5 spaced.
- Use a minimum of 12 point font and a maximum of 14 point font with the exception of headings and footnotes.
- It is common practice to use 2 spaces after a full stop and use one space following a comma, semi-colon or colon.
- Although academic writing for the social sciences is frequently written in a formal third person style, there is no strict convention for doing so. The first person, singular (I) or plural (we) are acceptable but students are encouraged to check with the lecturer in charge of their course before adopting a particular style of presentation. In an academic paper do not use an abbreviation such as ‘eg.’ or ‘ie.’ or ‘&’ or ‘etc.’ unless it is included in a bracket. In the main text write everything out in full: ‘for example’, ‘that is’, ‘and so on’.
- In an academic paper numbers consisting of one or two words like one, ten, twenty or two should be written out in full. Never start a sentence with a numeral. To illustrate; ‘47 irrigators were surveyed…’ should be written as ‘Forty seven irrigators were surveyed…’
- Numerals are used when the number is more than two words; for tabulation; statistical discussion; sums of money; addresses; dates; time; and page, chapter, volume numbers (for example, 2 June, 2000).
- **Be consistent in all you do.** For instance, the citation in your assignment must be written in the same way as the citation in the reference list; the form of citation used must be the same throughout your paper; and the size and style of headings must be consistent throughout your paper.
- Whenever possible include page numbers in your citations. As an example: Tisdell (1982: 289).

4.1.3 Quotes

- Whenever you are using a direct quote, the quote must be placed in quotation marks (unless it is more than three lines long, a ‘block quote’) and written as it appears in the original text. If there are obvious mistakes or discriminatory language in the quote, you should indicate that you are aware of the error by using the term ‘sic’ placed in square brackets immediately after the inappropriate language. The term ‘sic’ is Latin for ‘thus’.
- Block quotes are used whenever a direct quote is more than three lines long. A block quote is indented, typed in single spacing, with no quotation marks at each end.
- Whenever possible paraphrase information in preference to using direct quotes. Paraphrasing should not be too close. Try to put other people’s ideas into your own words. Paraphrasing the work of others however must still be acknowledged by citing page numbers. Direct quotes should be kept to a minimum.
Avoid cutting and pasting. Don’t add quotes and paraphrases to make your paper ‘look good’. You should fully understand what an author is trying to convey before citing any of their ideas. Use quotes and paraphrasing to support your argument.

4.1.4 Clarity

Never assume that the reader will know what the letters in an acronym stand for. The first time an acronym is used it must be enclosed in a bracket and follow the term it represents, which is written out in full. As an example: ‘Businesses owned by governments in Australia, Government trading enterprises (GTEs), include Australia Post and The Australian National Line. GTEs are concentrated in those markets where there is a natural monopoly or where there is extensive regulation.’

If English is not your first language it is recommended that you ask someone to read through your paper to check your English expression before submission. Don’t simply rely on the rough spelling and grammar checks offered by your software. The University of Queensland Student Support Services offer a range of support services for students to improve assignment skills.

4.1.5 Indicating your Intentions

Just as you indicated the overall aims for your entire assignment in your Introduction, so you need to let the reader know what you are going to do next, throughout the assignment. In a lengthy or complex assignment, the first paragraph at the beginning of every section should tell the reader what you are going to tell them in that section. Similarly, the final paragraph in each section should tie the contents of the section together in a mini conclusion.

In like manner, provide one or two connecting sentences if you are changing the direction of your argument, or introducing a new concept, or moving from one section to the next.

Finally, just as outlining your intentions at the beginning of a section helps to guide the reader through the paper, so too, as much as possible, paragraphs should be linked from one to the next, and so on. Linking one paragraph to the next with the first or the last sentence presents the assignment in a logical fashion, explaining everything as you go along.

Don’t devote too many words to saying what you’re going to do and what you have done. Keep the sign posting to the necessary minimum.

4.2 TABLES AND FIGURES

Used appropriately, tables and figures can be a very efficient way to convey a great deal of qualitative, as well as quantitative, information in a clear and succinct way.

4.2.1 Tables

Whilst tables are usually used for quantitative data they can also be very effectively used for qualitative data, especially when comparing information from a number of sources. When using tables ensure that:

- The entire contents of the table are double spaced.
• The grid lines are removed.
• Every column has a heading.
• Each table is numbered.
• There is a brief but descriptive title.
• The source of the table is cited if it is not your own original creation.
• The table will fit on the page (this may require you to reduce the size of the font, no less than 9 point).
• You have explained in the text what the table is all about and the analysis of the information in the table is appropriate.
• The table is placed as close as possible following reference to it in the text.

4.2.2 Figures

A figure is usually described as any type of illustration, other than a table, and includes charts, graphs, photographs, or drawings (APA, 1994:141). In addition to the above points, where applicable, when using figures ensure that:

• The figure is accurate.
• The figure is simple, clean, and free of unnecessary detail.
• If the figure is to be reduced, that any lettering, or detail is still dark enough and large enough to read.

The above points on tables and figures have been adapted from Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 1994:140-141;162).

4.3 NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

Great care must be taken not to use discriminatory language in academic writing. Depending on the context, disparaging terms can occur in relation to race, age, culture, religion, background, and disabilities. The most common, and yet normally unintentional, form of discriminatory language is sexist language. It includes terms such as his, him, her or she when referring to a position which could be held by either a male or female; mankind instead of humankind; or manned instead of staffed; air hostess instead of flight attendant, and so on. Further details about non-discriminatory language can be found in the Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers (AGPS, 1994). In addition, The University of Queensland’s Office of Equal Opportunity has produced a number of leaflets which are available, free of charge, to students and staff. One is called ‘A Guide for the Use of Non-sexist Language’ (OEO, 1998), the other ‘A Guide to Avoiding Racism through Language’ (Vice-Chancellor’s Committee Against Racism, 1995).

5. REFERENCING

This section provides information about when and how to reference within the assignment and then describes the presentation of the reference list. Complete and accurate referencing is essential for academic writing. There are three main reasons why full referencing is essential.
• The first is that when another writer’s work is used without being referenced the act of plagiarism has been committed.

• The second reason for referencing is so that anyone reading the paper can follow up any ideas or concepts that have been presented. This is especially important in academic writing where people involved in research may read the paper. One of the main ways of researching a topic is to read what other people have written and then follow up some of the references they have cited. Then, after those ‘follow-up’ papers have been read the researcher can continue the search-trail by tracking down more references cited in those follow-up papers, and so on. This is known as a bibliographical chain. This research is difficult if papers are not fully and accurately referenced.

• The third reason why referencing is important is that it adds credibility to the argument that you are presenting. As discussed in the previous section, if an argument is to have any credibility it must be supported by evidence. That evidence must be referenced.

5.1 PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of passing off as your own work another person’s writing, words, or ideas. You must make it clear which ideas and which words you have obtained from someone else. Superficial and minor changes do not disguise your use of the words of someone else. You commit plagiarism if you do not acknowledge the source of a direct quote, or a specific piece of writing that you have paraphrased, or even if you describe an idea or concept that you have heard or read somewhere without a reference or acknowledgement. Under the University of Queensland Act Statute 13, in conjunction with Assessment Rules 18, 1 and 26, plagiarism is subject to disciplinary action and can even result in exclusion from the University.

5.2 WHEN AND HOW TO REFERENCE

No matter how familiar the topic is, in an academic assignment every idea and every concept that rests on subject-specific knowledge must be referenced. There is, however, a concept known as ‘assumed knowledge’ which refers to information that is commonly known and rarely in dispute, and as such it does not need a reference. Assumed knowledge includes such things as the sun rises in the east, humans need fresh air, water, and food to survive, and demand curves slope down. However, when writing an assignment you are using your references partly to demonstrate that you have read widely, that you know who the authority figures are on whom your ideas are based, and you are not just making intuitive assumptions. When in doubt, include a reference. If the reader of the paper can read something that you have written and ask questions like: ‘Who says?’ or ‘How do you know that?’ or ‘On what do you base that comment?’ then what you have written needs to be referenced. The following list contains a few examples of material that must be referenced.

• Commonly, a claim will be prefaced with something like ‘writers agree that …’. The first thing the maker will say is ‘which writers’, ‘who are they’. If you use an attribution such as ‘writers agree’ you must include at least one or two references. So your claim might read: ‘writers, such as (reference; reference), agree that …’

• If you think of a common concept that you want to include in your paper, such as motivated staff are more productive, ideally, it should be referenced even though you
intuitively thought of it and didn’t actually read about it in the course of your research. This is because it is a concept that does not owe its existence to your own original creative thought. If you use it, you will have to search the literature for some ‘authority’ figure who has already said it. You can be assured that if you search you will find it there (and you will also learn more about the concept).

- All tables, or figures, or graphs that are not original but have come from another source must be referenced, complete with a page number, whether they are in the body of the paper or in the appendices.

- It is not sufficient to say that the information, for example, in your case study has come from numerous brochures, leaflets, reports and interviews with staff and management. They all must be individually referenced if they are used. As an example, if you take information about a company from its annual report then the annual report must be cited against that piece of information and then listed in the reference list. Likewise, if you take statistical information from an ABS publication, then that publication must be cited and listed in the reference list. Yet again, if you discuss information that you obtained during an interview, the interviewee’s name must be cited. However, personal communications are not normally listed in the references.

5.2.1 Referencing Systems

- The two main forms of referencing are the footnote or endnote form and the author-dated method, sometimes called the Harvard system. Nevertheless, within these two forms there are literally hundreds of variations as evidenced by the claim that the End Note 2 plus referencing software package ‘includes more than 300 styles’ (Nile, 1997:135).

There are two important rules for referencing:

- **Be consistent.**

- **Provide sufficient information for your reference to be found.**

These rules are applicable for both in-text citation (Section 5.3) and for listing the references (Section 5.5).

5.3 IN-TEXT CITATION

The following in-text citation examples all follow the American Psychological Association (APA), author-date method. Note the placement of commas, semi-colons, colons and full stops.

(i) **Direct quotation from any single source – book, journal, newspaper:**

Note that whenever possible you must include the page number(s) in the citation.
• Hanley and Spash (1993:122) state that ‘Economic value is measured by the summation of individual preferences; for valuation to lead to an optimal allocation of resources, individuals should be perfectly informed’.

• ‘Economic value is measured by the summation of individual preferences; for valuation to lead to an optimal allocation of resources, individuals should be perfectly informed’ (Hanley and Spash, 1992:122).

See sub-section 5.5 for an example of how this citation will appear in the reference list.

(ii) Combined paraphrase and direct quote from the internet:

• Ericsson, with 70,000 employees in over 100 countries have stated that one of their visions ‘is the learning organisation, where learning is an integrated part of the daily work’ (Ericsson, 1997).

See sub-section 5.5 for an example of how this citation will appear in the reference list.

Remember, there is no guarantee that the information on the Internet is accurate or credible. And if you do include a reference from the Internet save a copy of the information you are citing, because if you or your lecturer want to check on the reference at a later stage, it might have been removed by the time you go back there.

(iii) Paraphrasing:

• Classical economic analysis relies on the assumption that the economic agent has a specific goal, and that the economic agent is rational (Simon, 1976:130-1).

(iv) Citing two or more authors for the one paper:

Note that the names appear in the order that they appear on the book title page or the paper. They are not put into alphabetical order. For the first citation:

• Hanley, Shogren and White (1997) or (Hanley, Shogren and White, 1997)

For the second and subsequent citation:

• Hanley et al. (1997) or (Hanley et al., 1997)

(v) A paraphrase when a number of different authors, in different papers or books, have said the same thing.

Cite the names in alphabetical order separated by a semi-colon. Where possible, provide page numbers for the location of the material within each reference.
• Given a definition of optimality, decision rules are developed that result in an optimal solution consistent with the stated decision rule (Simon, 1959; Keeney and Raiffa, 1996; Nijkamp et al., 1990).

(vi) When different authors have the same last name include their initials for differentiation in the in-text citation:

• It is a manager’s responsibility to rethink their business strategy on a regular basis (Smith, P.T., 1994:24).

• Global companies must be concerned with universal values (Smith, A.D., 1983:19).

(vii) When the one sentence is made up of two or more ideas from different authors:

Note that each citation is placed at the end of the concept to which it refers.

• A major human resource challenge of the multinational company is international placements (Brett and Stroh, 1995:412) and the ‘seven Cs of international human resources management’ as described by Derek Torrington (1994:106).

(viii) Secondary source:

• Organisations are concentrating more on ‘the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of employees’ (Townley, 1989, as cited in Armstrong, 1992:135).

(ix) Personal communication:

This is similar to an interview, though, usually less formal.

• As David Suzuki (1992:pers.comm.) said…

This citation does not normally appear in the reference list.

(x) An organisation with a long name as the stated author:

As an example: World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). This is cited as:

• The Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (WCED, 1987) detailed in a simple and yet dramatic way…

See sub-section 5.5 for an example of how this citation will appear in the reference list.
(xi) When no publication date is available cite as ‘nd’ for no date:

- The Officecare program has been designed to raise environmental awareness amongst Australian office workers (Fuji Xerox, nd:3).

See sub-section 5.5 for an example of how this citation will appear in the reference list.

(xii) A block quote is used when a direct quote is longer than three lines:

Note that the quote is single spaced, indented on both sides, and has no quotation marks.

Environmental management is essentially conflict analysis characterised by technical, socioeconomic, environmental and political value judgements. A typical decision making process will be characterised by the search for acceptable compromise solutions, an activity which is compatible with the ‘satisficing principle’ inherent to procedural rationality. (Froger and Munda, 1998:175)

When the beginning of the original sentence is omitted from the beginning of the block quote this is indicated with three full stops […], known as an ellipsis. Similarly, if you end the block quote before the end of the sentence, then finish with an ellipsis to indicate that the original text continued on.

As an example:

… various hierarchical conflicts may emerge between regional government institutions and the central government, which again implies a multiple objective decision situation… (Froger and Munda, 1998:177).

(xiii) If an entire section is based on the one source, you can footnote the fact by stating:

This section follows the work of Simon (1976:130-31).

This form of referencing, however, should be done sparingly.

For a more detailed examination of referencing, consult the Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers (AGPS, 1994).

5.4 REFERENCE LIST VERSUS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Whilst the terms ‘reference list’ and ‘bibliography’ are often used interchangeably they do refer to different forms of lists and it is important to know the difference.

A Bibliography is the name given to a complete, alphabetical list of all the material you have consulted in the preparation and writing of your assignment, whether you have quoted the material or not (AGPS, 1994:145).
A Reference List is a complete list, in alphabetical order, only of the material actually cited in the assignment (AGPS, 1994:145).

When writing university assignments only use a reference list, unless you have been asked to do something else.

5.5 REFERENCE LIST FORMAT

It is important that you present your references in a style that is consistent throughout. If you are in doubt about the style of presentation you are advised to check with the lecturer in charge of your course.

- Use single line spacing with a double line of space between references.

- Do not number the references or use dot points at the beginning of the reference.

- Indent the second and subsequent lines of the reference by one tab space.

- All references must be listed in alphabetical order by the first author’s last name.

- Do not make a series of separate lists for journals, books, interviews and so on. Combine all references in the one alphabetical list.

- When listing more than one reference by the same author, list in date order.

- When listing more than one reference by the same author published in the same year, differentiate by adding a,b,c, and so on after the year. To illustrate: 1997a; 1997b; 1997c.

- All book titles and the titles of journals are to be either underlined or typed in italics.

- All titles of journal articles are to be typed in normal font and enclosed in single quotation marks.

- References must include the names of all listed authors, in the order in which they appear in the publication. If you choose to write the author’s first name in full, rather than just the initial of their name, then you must provide this information for all listed authors.

(i) Referencing books

- Books must include the names of all the authors, the year of publication, the book title, the publisher's name and the city of publication. Following are two examples of how to reference the same book. The first example has the title underlined and in the second example the title has been typed in italics. In addition, the first example provides the first name of each author in full, the second example provides the initials only. After this example, all further examples will use italics for the titles and initials for the first name of authors. It is stressed that both styles are acceptable but that you must be consistent in your choice.
(ii) **A paper or chapter from an edited collection**

- A paper from an edited collection should be referenced as follows.


(iii) **Journal articles**

- All journal articles must include the names of all the authors, the year of publication, the title of the article, the title of the journal, the volume number, issue number if appropriate, and page numbers of the complete article. An issue number should be provided in situations where the pagination is not continuous through the volume of the journal.


(iv) **Conference papers**

- Conference papers that have not been published in Conference Proceedings should be referenced with the full details of the conference, including the organisation holding the conference, the title of the conference and the location of the conference.


(v) **Newspaper article**

- Newspaper articles should be referenced in a similar manner to a journal with the name of the journalist first, the year of publication, the heading of the article, name of the newspaper, date of publication, and page on which the article appeared.

- If the newspaper, magazine or journal article does not have the journalist’s by-line then lead the reference with the name of the paper. The second example, below, would be followed if the article has no journalist’s by-line and no article title.

Economist. 1994. 'Regulate us please'. The Economist 8 January: 330:54


(vi) **Citation of abbreviations or acronym**

- The citation in the paper must be the same in the reference list. Therefore, if an abbreviation or acronym has been used in the in-text citation, as an example, (WCED, 1987:213), then for consistency and to keep the reference list in alphabetical order reference as follows:


(vii) **Older books**

- When older books have been reprinted both the reprint year, as cited in your assignment, and the original publication date, put in square brackets, should appear in the reference list. All details, other than the original publication date, will relate to the reprint edition from which your citation came.


(viii) **Government reports or statistical information**

- A selection of government reports or statistical information published by the government is referenced below.


(ix) Internet sources

- All Internet sources must be reference in a similar manner to newspaper articles with the Internet site included, and the date stated on the site if available, plus the date you visited the site.


A more detailed list of suggested forms of Internet referencing can be found at the following sites.

- [http://www.ipl.org/ref/QUE/FARQ/netciteFARQ.html](http://www.ipl.org/ref/QUE/FARQ/netciteFARQ.html)
- [http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/bibliography/MLA/mlamenu.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/bibliography/MLA/mlamenu.htm)

(click on link at bottom of page - “Citing Sources from the Internet”)

(x) Videotape

- Reference a videotape as follows. Note that as the tape has also been produced by Fuji Xerox and has no stated production date, ‘nd’ is used.


(xi) Computer software program

- Reference a computer software program as follows.

REFERENCES


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