

**SKI1009**

## **Introduction to Academic Skills II**



**Period 5**  
**2017/2018**



## **General Information**

## Description of the course

The transition from secondary school to tertiary education is often experienced as a rather challenging one for students, especially considering the expectations at university with regard to students' academic skills such as essay writing, critical and analytical thinking, and argumentation. It is therefore imperative to support and train students from the start to take on a professional ethos with regard to their university studies and their personal (academic) development.

In this course, you will be encouraged and expected to take their academic development into your own hands. Tutorial groups and practical sessions will focus on acquainting you with the core academic skills necessary to be successful at university. Moreover, the sessions are set up in such a way that you will be able to put your new skills into practice in the regular courses that run parallel to this skills training. Through continuous reflection on your personal learning process in combination with periodical assessment of this process, you will be able to conclude this course with a clear overview of your competencies with regards to general academic skills as well as specific skills such as academic study skills, literature research skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, academic writing skills, management and organizational skills.

This course is part of a semester long programme spanning three periods. All three courses will be interactive and will support your work in the courses that run parallel to this skills training. In this second part of the programme, we will focus on improving your study skills, honing the writing skills you acquired during the first part and writing a research plan in a group.

### *Objectives of the course*

This course aims to acquaint students with the academic skills necessary for UCM, and to facilitate students' development of these skills.

### *Structure of the Course*

In this course, we will not follow the regular PBL method. Instead, this course is set up in such a way that the tutorials and seminars are interactive and focus particularly on practicing the specific academic skills through individual or group exercises, small assignments, discussions and group projects.

## Useful Reading Material

You do not have to purchase a book; we will provide you with reading material on StudentPortal. We recommend using the Little, Brown Handbook. This can be found in the Reading Room.

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2011). *The Little, Brown Handbook* (12th ed.). New York: Pearson Longman. (other editions can also be used)

The UCM Style Guide (all students will receive a copy of the guide during their first tutorial of SKI1008).

## Attendance requirements

The attendance requirement for the six tutorial meetings is 85%. You are allowed to miss one regular tutorial without further consequences, providing that you have a valid reason. If you miss more meetings, you will have to apply for an additional assignment (request forms are available online via StudentPortal). In order to qualify for an additional assignment you have to have valid reasons for all missed sessions. If you do not meet the attendance requirement, you are not eligible for a resit. You automatically fail the course if you miss over 30% of the scheduled meetings.

The study skills workshops in week 2 and 4 (**Study Smart! Reflection & Study Smart! Practice**) of the course are **mandatory** (100% attendance requirement) and are not considered one of the regular tutorial meetings to which the 85% attendance requirement applies.

## Assessment

This course contains 2 moments of assessment:

1. **Writing Review Assignment** (individual grade, **60%**)
2. **Research Plan Assignment** (group grade, **40%**)

*Handing in assignments via SafeAssign*

Your assignment needs to be uploaded as a **Word** document. Save and name your assignment as follows:

Your name – Course – Tutorial Group number – Assignment  
(e.g.: Sam Smith – ItAS1 – 04 – Writing Review Assignment)

*Deadlines*

The particular deadlines and requirements for the assignments are outlined on page 6. Submitting the soft copy or the hard copy late can result in the deduction of points from the assignment grade. Not submitting a paper results in No Grade.

*Resit Policy*

Students who initially fail the course, but who have complied with the compulsory attendance requirement and took part in all of the assessment during the course are eligible for one resit.

The overall grade for this course consists of a grade for the Writing Review Assignment (60%) and the Research Plan Assignment (40%). The resit serves the purpose of lifting your overall grade to sufficient/above 5.5. It does not replace the overall grade. Hence, the resit can be either on one of the two graded assignments. In case of a resit, you will have to redo that part of the assessment for which you received the lowest grade. You can either rewrite the assignment for which you received the lowest grade, incorporating the feedback you received, or receive a new assignment from the course coordinator.

In order to receive a grade for the assignments you will have to do a serious attempt at passing the assignments. If it is not deemed a serious attempt, you will not receive a grade and you will not qualify for a resit.

## Course overview: Sessions and deadlines

**Come prepared to class!** Please note that we expect you to read the description of every session **before** class. At the top of every session description, there is a small box explaining what you have to prepare for that session.

WEEK	ACTIVITIES	DEADLINES
Week 1	Lecture (mandatory)	
	Session 1: Writing revision and conciseness	
Week 2	Session 2: Study Smart! Reflection <b>(100% mandatory)</b>	
Week 3	Session 3: PBL role play	<b>Deadline Writing Review Assignment</b> April 29 <sup>th</sup> 2018 at 23.59h
Week 4	Session 4: Curriculum Planning	
	Session 5: Study Smart! Practice <b>(100% mandatory)</b>	
Week 5	Session 6: Research plan and group formation	
Week 6	Session 7: Peer review and course evaluation	
Week 7	No class	
Week 8	No class (exam week)	<b>Deadline Research Plan Assignment</b> June 1 <sup>st</sup> 2018 at 17.59h

## Contact information

For any questions, remarks or problems contact your tutor and/or the course coordinators, either in class or via email.

Alice Wellum, MA, MSc – *corresponding coordinator*

UCM Zwingelput 4, Room 1.034

[alice.wellum@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:alice.wellum@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Lonneke Bevers, PhD

UCM Zwingelput 4, Room 1.030

[lonneke.bevers@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:lonneke.bevers@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

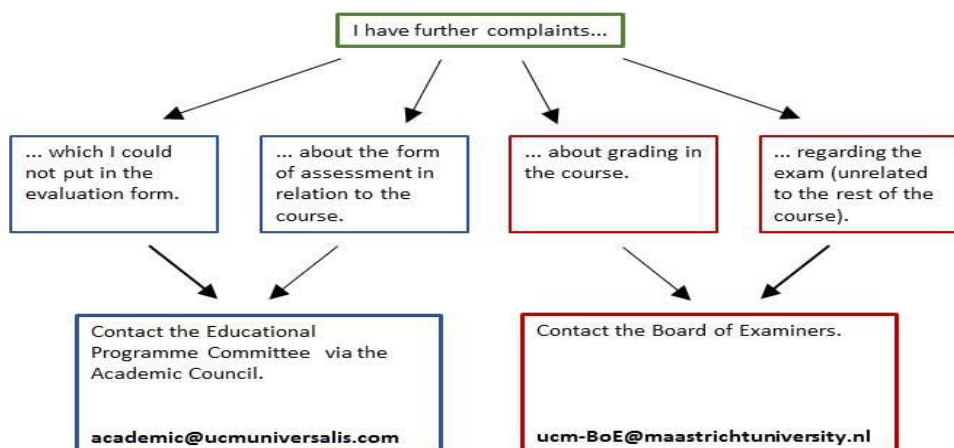
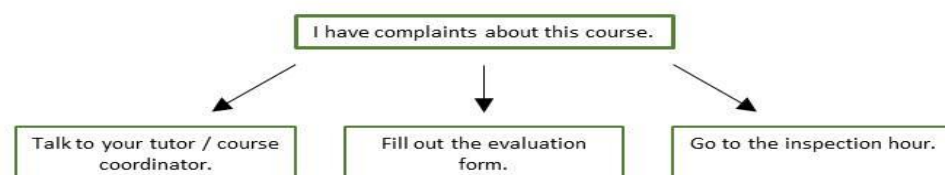
Eduard Lezcano Margarit, MSc

UCM Zwingelput 4, Room 2.046

[e.lezcanomargarit@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:e.lezcanomargarit@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

## The Educational Programme Committee

The Educational Programme Committee is an advisory body at UCM. Its role is to ensure quality of education at UCM. There are four staff members and four students present in the Committee. The four students are representing the UCM student body in the Committee and are all simultaneously members of the Academic Council of Universalis. If you have any complaints or questions about a course or assessment, you are always welcome to send them an e-mail to [academic@ucmuniversalis.com](mailto:academic@ucmuniversalis.com) or to contact them via their Facebook page 'Universalis Academic Council'.



If you have any concerns regarding UCM (which are not concerning specific courses), you can contact the Academic Council for the issue to be raised in the Management Team.

[academic@ucmuniversalis.com](mailto:academic@ucmuniversalis.com)





## UCM Student Counsellor

The main role of the Student Counsellor is to offer a listening ear and support in times of trouble. In addition to offering support, together with the Office of Academic Advising, the Student Counsellor proactively monitors students' study progress. It is always a good idea to go see the Student Counsellor in case you are struggling with personal (psychological or social), family or situational issues, or if you would like to discuss study related matters. For curriculum-related matters, students should always contact your Academic Advisor or the Office of Academic Advising.

How to contact the Student Counsellor?

- via the contact form on MyUCM
- via email: [ucm-studentcounselor@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:ucm-studentcounselor@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
- during the Open Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10.00 am to 11.00 am in room 1.042.

**For more information, please visit the Support page on MyUCM.**

### Emergency or crisis?

**During office hours:** contact your General Practitioner (Family Doctor or 'Huisarts'). If you do not have a Family Doctor yet, you can find and choose one on this website: <http://www.hapmaastricht.nl/en/affiliated-GPs/>

**Outside regular office hours:** call the GP station (Huisartsenpost) +31 43 387 77 77 (in case of emergency) <http://www.hapmaastricht.nl/en/home-en/>

Mon - Fri 5.00 PM - 8.00 AM; Weekends from 5:00 PM on Friday to 8:00 AM on Monday;  
Holidays: Open 24 hours

Chat via [www.113online.nl/113online-english-version](http://www.113online.nl/113online-english-version)

Call: 0900-0113 (5ct/min)

You can also find health-related information via:

<http://mymaastricht.nl/>: the information portal for international students

<http://www.hapmaastricht.nl/en/student-and-expat-information/>

## UCM Writing Centre

UCM's very own Writing Centre provides one-to-one feedback moments and tutorials on academic writing. The Writing Centre can give you feedback on a draft or a completed paper and show you simple ways to improve it. Our sessions are free of charge and usually take around 30 minutes, although you can book as many sessions as you want. Please note we are a writing *coaching* centre – we will give you extensive feedback on your academic writing, but we do not proofread papers. We are, however, happy to brainstorm topics, help you understand and implement feedback from your tutor, check your APA referencing, and lots more!

While many students arrive shortly before the deadline with an (almost) completed paper, we have seen great results with students who come at the beginning of a period, without the pressure of a looming deadline. This is usually when we do a writing analysis –an examination of your writing based on previous papers. You are then welcome to come back and work with us to improve your writing in follow-up sessions, or you can leave with a personal checklist of items to watch out for in their future papers.

We see ourselves as learners too and as such, our sessions usually take place in a relaxed atmosphere. No student has the same question, and because of this, we can deal with a large variety of topics. To schedule an appointment, go to:

[https://fhs.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/m\\_edit\\_entry\\_gui\\_wc.php](https://fhs.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/m_edit_entry_gui_wc.php)

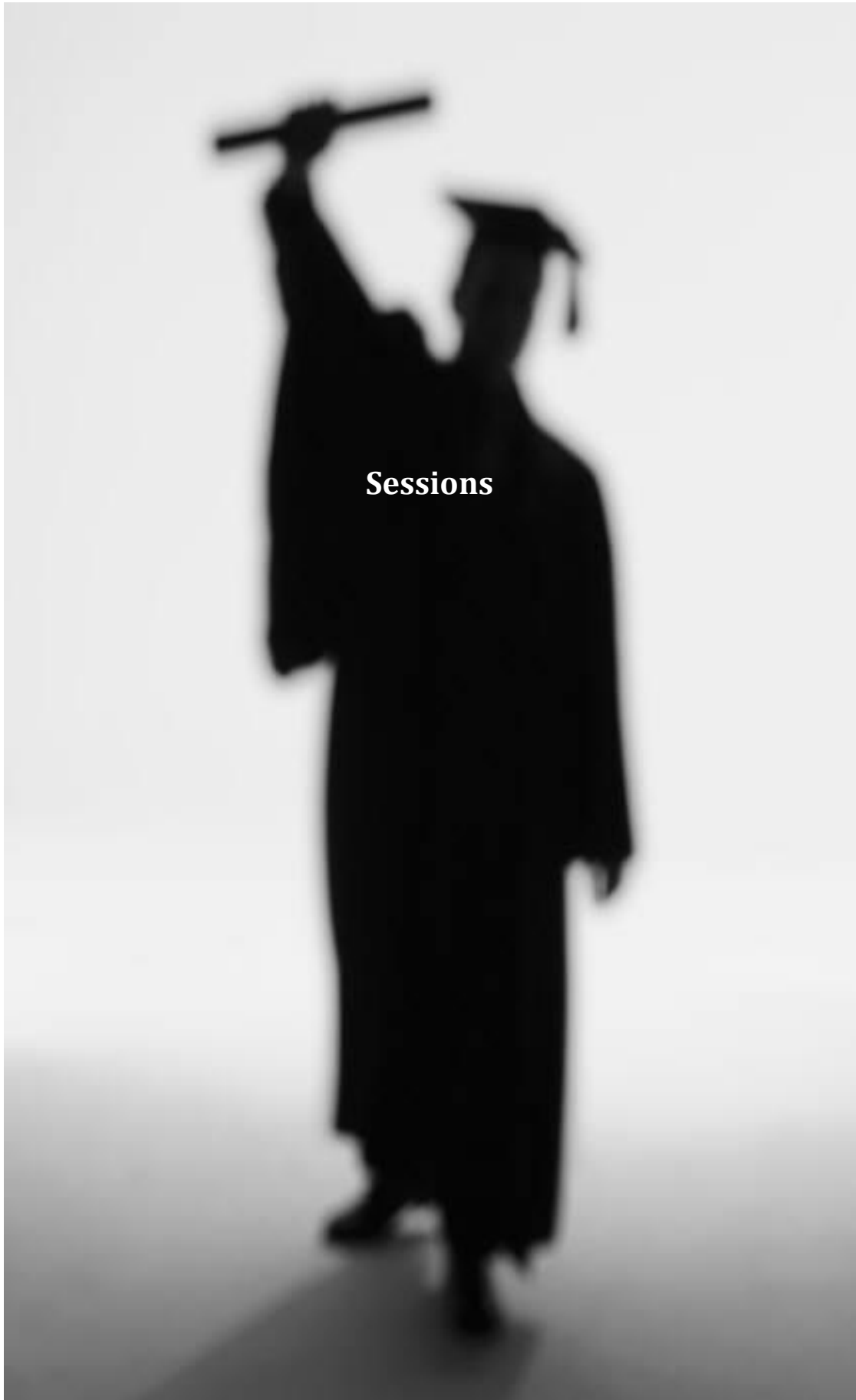
Note: you can only make one appointment at a time.

We also have a weekly walk-in hour and support hours specifically for Capstone students. Check our Facebook webpage for more information!

<https://www.facebook.com/ucmwritingcentre/>

We are looking forward to welcoming you in the Writing Centre!

Alice Wellum, Hannah Stewart, Lea Ferguson, Angus Foster and Veronica Lifrieri



## Week 1. Session 1: Writing revision and conciseness

**Preparation:** Bring a **hardcopy** of a recent paper (preferably one you wrote in Period 4) to class. Bring a blank version – that is, not the graded one with feedback written on it. **Read** “Appendix A. The parametric method” on page 28 of this manual.

Now that you have written your first papers at university, it is time to reflect on the experience of writing. This session is all about the best ways to review and proofread your paper. Your tutor will guide you through exercises regarding this.

### Part 1:



Notes:

**Part 2:**

1. The point I wish to make is that the employees working at this company are in need of a much better manager of their money (26->10 words).
  
2. It is widely known that the engineers at Sandia Labs have become active participants in the Search and Rescue operations in most years (24->16 words).
  
3. After reviewing the results of your previous research, and in light of the relevant information found within the context of the study, there is ample evidence for making important, significant changes to our operating procedures (36->25 words).

## Requirements for the Writing Review Assignment (60%)

**Deadline: The Writing Review is due on Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 23.59h**

Submit a soft copy via SafeAssign and a hard copy via the green mailbox of the Office of Student Affairs. Please attach the official Cover Page to your hard copy.

### Writing Review Assignment

The best way to improve your own writing skills is to take revision seriously as a form of learning and of re-structuring your thoughts. At UCM, one tends to be so worried trying to get words on paper that writing revision is often neglected. This assignment gives you the chance to practice the noble art of reviewing your own paper. It will allow you to get a sense of the time and effort it requires – and of the benefits it can bring.

For this assignment, then, you will review one of your papers, preferably one you wrote in Period 4. Your task is twofold: 1) re-write the introduction and conclusion of your paper, as well as four paragraphs from the main section of your paper, and 2) review these according to the various writing topics we covered in Introduction to Academic Skills I and II. Remember what you learned in Introduction to Academic Skills I, as well as the first session of Introduction to Academic Skills II. You are free to choose the revision methods you employ, but you must use **at least two methods** to review your writing.

Your writing review should consist of two parts:

#### Part 1

This part should consist of **six sections**, one for each element that you review and rewrite (introduction, conclusion and the four paragraphs). For each of these elements, you should include:

- The **original** paragraph/introduction/conclusion
- The **improved** paragraph/introduction/conclusion
- An **explanation** of how you reviewed and improved the paragraph/introduction/conclusion

#### Part 2

Once you're done reviewing the paper, write a **general reflection** about the main virtues and flaws that you have discovered in your own writing. Finally, make a **checklist** of things to improve or take into account in your next paper ("Appendix A. The writing revision checklist", p. 29 of this manual). Keep this list! You will need it again in Period 6.

You don't need to include the reference list.

**Word count: There is no word count for Part 1; it depends on the length your original paragraphs and the length of the improved paragraphs. Part 2 should be at least 750 words, excluding the checklist.**

You can find some examples of what we expect on the next page!

**Some examples of what we are looking for****Introduction:**

- Does your introduction follow the structure of the “reverse pyramid”?
- Are all key-words in thesis statement/research question explained in the background of the introduction?
- ....

**Conclusion:**

- Does the conclusion synthesize the main arguments and answer the “so what?” question?
- Does it not introduce new major points?
- ...

**Paragraphs:**

- Are paragraphs structured, unified, and coherent?
  - Are there clear transitions within and between paragraphs?
  - ...
- 1)

**Sentences:**

- Are all sentences clear and concise?
- ....

In your self-reflection, do not just tell us that you do something and that it is effective/ineffective: tell us how you do it. For example:

*Most of my paragraphs are clearly structured with clear topic sentences. For example, the first paragraph has the following topic sentence: “People’s first names can have an influence on them.” In this case, “people’s first names” is the topic, and “have an influence on them” is the controlling idea. The paragraph’s explanation level sentences – “For example, some names can have a positive influence” and “However, some names have a negative effect” – both mirror the structure of the topic sentence by stating first the topic, then the controlling idea. In this way, parallelism has been achieved since the explanation level sentences follow the structure of the topic sentence. Also, synonyms that are not too far apart have been used, with “names” repeating throughout the paragraph, and “influence on them” being substituted for “positive influence” and “negative effect”.*

**Preparation:** No preparation needed for this session.

## Week 2. Session 2: Study Smart! Reflection

Study skills are at the core of academic education. As such, they deserve explicit attention, and during this training programme, they get that attention. One of the reasons why this is important is that for most students, the way they have to study at the university is new. It is fundamentally different from how they have studied in e.g. secondary school, where they had clearly defined materials to study. Students' strategies are known to differ widely and many students (reports differ from 60-90%) largely use *ineffective* strategies, such as highlighting and rereading textbook materials. Within the context of problem-based learning (PBL), which advocates active and constructive knowledge development, there is a need for incorporation of learning strategy training to optimize students' learning process. Step 6 of the PBL seven-step approach (self-study) is a blind spot for educators not only at Maastricht University, but at universities throughout the world.

Learning strategies are in fact procedural skills that can be practiced and perfected through instruction and training. Given its predicted effect on the effectiveness of students' self-study, this will likely affect grades and student study success in the long run. Over the last decade, the cognitive psychology of learning has provided insight into the learning strategies that clearly relate to improving student learning success. These strategies show a certain diversity but are all based on principles of *active retrieval of information from memory* and *distributing study sessions over time*. Evidence also exists on how to implement these two principles in different learning environments. This training programme aims at helping first year students to learn effective learning strategies and developing self-regulated learning Skills.

The training 'self-regulated learning' consists of an *awareness* part (getting to know effective strategies), a *reflective* part (getting to know yourself: what strategies do I use? How can I make them more effective), and a *practice* part (actually internalizing the effective strategies through repeated use and feedback). Today, we will go through the reflective part of the training. Your tutor will guide through this session.



## Week 3. Session 3: PBL role-play

**Preparation:** Reading Chapter 3 of Moust, Bouhuijs, and Schmidt (2017) on collaborative learning in the tutorial group.

You have been working in tutorial groups for over two months. You might feel that, by now, you get the hang of it, you feel quite comfortable in the role you have adopted in these groups, and you did pretty okay-ish on your exams, so you must be doing something well. No doubt, you also recognize the awkward silences when the discussion leader asks whether everyone is done reading, or the unsatisfying feeling that the free-rider, who never contributes a single word to the discussions, starts writing as soon as you start explaining. So even though you are doing fine, there might still be some things to improve upon in a tutorial environment – not necessarily as an individual, but as a group.

Role-plays have the potential to provide you with an “almost real” experience that let you to try out strategies in a safe environment, and allow you to benefit from the practice, where at the same time mistakes can be made with no drastic consequences.

In this role-play exercise, you choose an informal role you want to play (see descriptions below). That can either be a role you feel comfortable with, or a role you do not identify with at all, but want to try out just because it is fun. One student will act as a discussion leader and one as a note-taker; these people do not take on a specific informal role, they just acts as themselves. As a group, you will discuss one of the tasks below. The discussion leader needs to bring the discussion to a desired end: a list of learning goals that the whole group agrees to. The group members will act out their informal role, thereby either helping the discussion forward, or disrupting the group process. Try to keep the role you play as real to life as possible.

## Reflection

It is not uncommon for people to not act, because they feel it might cause inconvenience for the other person. As humans, we often tend to think for someone else, thereby filling in what might happen or how someone might feel. On the one hand, this helps us to anticipate, and weigh the risks and benefits of acting upon a situation. On the other hand, it very often holds us back from doing something, because we do not want to cause any trouble, or we are afraid of what might happen. But unless you ask or try, you will never know what the other person feels or thinks. That is why reflecting on what happened during the role-play is the most important aspect of this role-playing exercise.

Your tutor will give feedback on the situations that occurred, but the most valuable feedback you can get is from fellow students and yourself. How did you, as a discussion leader, feel when you had to ask the windbags to stop drivelling and start contributing? And how did you as a windbag conceive the intervention by the discussion leader? To do this, it is important to play your role, and, at the same time, keep track of what is happening. Be prepared to answer questions about how you felt when your mediation was dismissed, when everybody laughed about your joke, or when your request for structure was completely ignored by the rest of the group.

Your tutor will ask you at the end of each exercise to reflect on the following forms of feedback:

*Self-feedback* – keep track of what you think is going during the role-play. At the end of each exercise, write down what you think you did well and what you could improve on. Self-correction is a valuable tool to change your behaviour.

*Peer-feedback* – you may be able to provide valuable feedback to your peers, especially with respect to group dynamics. Share your observations when you notice how the dynamics in the

group were affected by something that was said or done. As a discussion leader or note-taker you can indicate in advance whether you would like to receive feedback on specific issues. One or two group members can take on the task to pay extra attention to these points. Be careful to keep peer-correction a positive and profitable experience for all involved.

*How-did-it-make-me-feel-feedback* – Some people feel uncomfortable correcting a peer, whether it is on content or on behaviour. It can be very insightful to hear from someone how it made them feel when you corrected them. E.g. hearing someone admit that they realised you were right when you told them to shut up, that it did not make them sad or angry when you tackled them on their conduct, may help you to cope with similar real-life situations in the future.

## **Roles**

Pick an informal role you want to play, either a role you feel comfortable with, or a role you do not identify with at all, but want to try out just because it is fun. Tell your tutor, but do not tell your group members. Having them guess afterwards what role you played, increases the fun.

### *Structuralist*

Your biggest concern is that other members of the group should contribute effectively. If a state of confusion arises within the group, you try to channel the contributions in such a way that the discussion can proceed in an orderly fashion and you suggest ways in which problems can be tackled.

### *Pacifier*

You feel responsible for the good personal relationships between the group members. You want to encourage a good working atmosphere and you step in as a mediator when rivalries occur in the group, or when there are personal confrontations between members of the group.

### *Windbag*

You have an opinion about everything and constantly want to express it even if no one else is interested. You are not really interested in what other people say; you butt in with your own remarks whenever someone else pauses to draw a breath. Your presence is not so much noted because of your valuable ideas, but because of your constant, irrepressible contributions.

### *Joker*

You constantly have a joke up your sleeve to jolly the group along. In tense moments, this may diffuse a difficult situation. However, you persist in telling jokes when the discussions take a serious turn, which blocks progress and interferes with group function.

### *Sniper*

You have a tendency to shoot down the contributions of others. You disagree with most of what is said and make this very clear (verbal and non-verbal, e.g. by shaking your head, by adopting an indifferent posture, or by sighing). You ask questions for which you already know the answer, and you feel satisfied when the other cannot answer it.

### *Prober*

You worry that the tutorial group might skip certain important issues. You believe that the subject should be looked at from every single angle. By constantly asking for and referring to details, you get in the way of group progress. Since you crammed your head with facts and have

a thorough knowledge of the issue, you can also help the group progress by explaining problems relating to detail.

### *Whiner*

You constantly give the impression that the issues have not been tackled or analysed properly. When the rest of the group agrees, you make some whining remark about a minor inaccuracy. One moment you are complaining about the task, the next about someone else's attitude.

## Tasks

Below you find five tasks for possible pre-discussions. As a group, select three to use in your role-play.

### *Little Luana in the park*

It is a beautiful day in spring and eight year old Luana is playing outside in the park. In the middle of the park is a small pond but Luana has been told not to go near it. Her nanny is taking care of Luana's younger brother when all of a sudden she hears a big scream. A passer-by sees the body of a small girl floating in the water, jumps into the pond and succeeds to get her out of the water.

The girl has been submerged in water for more than 15 minutes. As soon as she is pulled out of the water mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is applied. Everyone is astonished to see that the little girl is still alive.

### *Not me! The phenomenon of unrealistic optimism*

In a study 85 heterosexual students (males and females) were asked to estimate the chances that they would contract a sexually transmittable disease. Then they were asked to give an estimate of the chance that another student of their age would acquire such a disease. The results were as follows:

	Estimate of risk	
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Another student</i>
Syphilis	11.1%	25.9%
Gonorrhoea	12.5%	19.2%
HIV	9.4%	22.9%

### *The European refugees crisis*

In 2015, more than one million refugees have entered the European Union and thousands are still arriving every day. In response to the massive influx of refugees, political debates have sparked all over Europe.

Especially in Germany - which has the highest inflow of refugees - the situation is tense. The country is split over the situation. On the one hand, a welcoming culture has developed and many support Chancellor Angela Merkel's policy "Wir schaffen das" ("We can do this"). However,

on the other hand, the high numbers of arriving refugees have caused opposition in Merkel's own party, and many Germans are becoming increasingly frustrated with her 'open-door-policy'.

Other European countries are divided over Germany's welcoming policies and call out to Angela Merkel to restrict the intake of refugees. It seems like Germany, and Europe in general, is confronted with the conflict between moral standards and limited options.

### *The perfect baby or no baby at all?*

In the past having a baby was a big surprise; only when a child was born did its parents know its sex, the colour of its eyes, or whether or not it was disabled. Whether the child was smart, athletic or prone to certain diseases would only become known as the child grew up. However, with the aid of modern medical technology, we can know increasingly more about our children, long before they are born. While we have been able to predict the sex of a child for quite some time, today we can check foetuses for many diseases and other genetic predispositions.

Now that parents can know who their child will be long before he or she grows up they could decide that they are unhappy with the child-to-be. It is now possible, at least technically, for them to decide to terminate a pregnancy because the child will be disabled or have a birth defect, or because it will be more vulnerable to cancer than others. In the future parents could potentially, upon learning that the child will be ugly and is likely to lead a life of ridicule, decide not to have the child. They might even decide that their child will not be athletic or intelligent enough for their liking, and abort the child for these reasons. But when should parents, as a matter of morality, be allowed to use these new possibilities, if at all?

### *Education is not a Substitute for Intelligence, or is it?*

Everyone knows what it means to be intelligent, right? An intelligent person is someone who does well in school, gets high grades, and so on. Well, that's the easy answer. We also have lots of descriptions for people which appear to have at least a similar meaning to being intelligent, such as 'streetwise' or 'shrewd'.

There are further complications. Getting high grades in school counts as intelligence, but what about people who get high grades when doing mathematics but score pretty low on languages? Does intelligence have different aspects, and if so how many? As many as there are topics taught in school? If you include gymnastics, then an Olympic gymnastics performer could be called very intelligent.

To be intelligent implies the existence of the opposite, and the adjectives 'less', 'more' and 'most' refer to gradations of this. How dumb can you be? Or how smart for that matter, and how is that decided?

## Week 4. Session 4: Curriculum Planning

**Preparation:** Bring your course planning materials! Course catalogue, registration form and curriculum matrix. Bring your laptop too if possible, so that you can fill out the UCM Compass Tool.

At the end of the Intro Days, you sat down for two hours to plan your curriculum at UCM. Two long hours. The deadline for course registration is approaching and it is time for you to start thinking about your choices once again. You will also have to make an appointment with your academic advisor and discuss your course choices with them. This session will focus on preparing for the meeting with your academic advisor by starting to work on the planning of your curriculum.

We will identify a few common issues encountered while planning your curriculum and we will discuss them as a group. You are encouraged to discuss these issues with your fellow students. Maybe you can answer some of their questions, and vice versa!

## Week 4. Session 5: Study Smart! Practice

**Preparation:** No preparation needed for this session.

Study skills are at the core of academic education. As such, they deserve explicit attention, and during this training programme, they get that attention. One of the reasons why this is important is that for most students, the way they have to study at the university is new. It is fundamentally different from how they have studied in e.g. secondary school, where they had clearly defined materials to study. Students' strategies are known to differ widely and many students (reports differ from 60-90%) largely use *ineffective* strategies, such as highlighting and rereading textbook materials. Within the context of problem-based learning (PBL), which advocates active and constructive knowledge development, there is a need for incorporation of learning strategy training to optimize students' learning process. Step 6 of the PBL seven-step approach (self-study) is a blind spot for educators not only at Maastricht University, but at universities throughout the world.

Learning strategies are in fact procedural skills that can be practiced and perfected through instruction and training. Given its predicted effect on the effectiveness of students' self-study, this will likely affect grades and student study success in the long run. Over the last decade, the cognitive psychology of learning has provided insight into the learning strategies that clearly relate to improving student learning success. These strategies show a certain diversity but are all based on principles of *active retrieval of information from memory* and *distributing study sessions over time*. Evidence also exists on how to implement these two principles in different learning environments. This training programme aims at helping first year students to learn effective learning strategies and developing self-regulated learning Skills.

The training 'self-regulated learning' consists of an *awareness* part (getting to know effective strategies), a *reflective* part (getting to know yourself: what strategies do I use? How can I make them more effective), and a *practice* part (actually internalizing the effective strategies through repeated use and feedback). Today, we will go through the practice part of the training. Your tutor will guide through this session.

## Week 5. Session 6: Research plan and group formation

**Preparation:** No preparation needed for this session.

Today you are going to start working on an extensive research paper that you will complete during the Project Period (Period 6). You will work in small groups on a topic of your choice. The only condition for the paper is that it be interdisciplinary and analytical.

As a last assignment for SKI1009, you're required to write a *research plan* to guide your work during Project Period. During today's session, we will go through some brainstorming exercises and research strategies. Your tutor will guide you through these exercises.

## Requirements for the Research Plan (40%)

**Deadline: The Research Plan is due on Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 at 17.59h**

Submit a soft copy via SafeAssign and a hard copy via the green mailbox of the Office of Student Affairs. Please attach the official Cover Page to your hard copy. Note that you only have to submit one copy per group.

### Research Plan Assignment

Writing a paper by yourself is already a messy thing. Writing a paper in a group – well, you'll see. Writing a research plan will help you to set clear goals and to ensure that everyone has the same expectations for the paper. Your research plan should show that you have put a lot of work into thinking about the topic, that you have gathered enough information and literature, and that you are able to organize your ideas in a clear and logical way.

The research plan should consist of the following sections:

- An introduction describing the necessary background information, the relevance of the topic, the working research question and the tentative thesis statement.
- An **outline** of the main body of your paper (i.e., not the introduction or conclusion). The outline should be written in full sentences, without bullet points or keywords. For every section of your paper, you should explain:
  - what topic the section will discuss;
  - how that section helps you to support your thesis (or to answer your research question);
  - and what sources you will use to back up your ideas.
- An explanation of the **interdisciplinary** character of the paper, specifying how different academic or scientific disciplines help you to answer your research question or to advance your thesis.
- A section describing how every **author** contributes to the paper. What knowledge do you bring to the group? What courses have you taken that are relevant to the paper? What skills do you think you can contribute?
- An explanation of your **research strategy**, specifying the databases you will use, the keywords you will use, whether you use thesaurus/MeSH terms (and if so, which). You have the tools to find relevant literature on your topic, so you are expected to do so. Note: using GoogleScholar or LibSearch for your initial search to get into the topic is fine, but for your systematic literature search these should not be the only databases you use. If your search relies only on these databases, you need to show us that you first did a comprehensive search of other databases in the system and did not find sufficient information for your topic. However, given that your topic is an interdisciplinary one it seems unlikely that you could not have used another database for a sub-topic.
- A plan or schedule of the Project Period, including official deadlines, internal deadlines and task distribution. You should at least schedule time for conducting a systematic literature search, selecting the relevant literature, reading it, brainstorming ideas, drafting, revising, proofreading and formatting.
- A reference list (APA style) with the sources that you plan to use for your paper.

**Word count: minimum 2,000 words (of which a minimum of 1,500 words should be dedicated to the outline).**



## Week 6. Session 7: Peer review and course evaluation

**Preparation:** Bring two hard copies of your Research Plan draft.

### *Peer review*

Today, we will do a peer review session where you read the draft of another group and give feedback on how to improve it. Your group will also receive feedback from another group. You should use this session to fine-tune and finalize your research plan. We will also pay close attention to your research questions and thesis statements.

### *Evaluation*

After the peer review session, we will open the floor for a course evaluation. You are asked to provide feedback on the skills training that you've received during this semester, and you will have to fill in an evaluation form. These forms will be handed out to you after the last class of each course at UCM. The evaluation forms give you the change to make yourself heard. You can give feedback and suggestions as to what may need to be changed about the course or the skills training. Praise and criticism are equally important. You can find the course evaluations from previous academic years in the Reading Room. The Board of Studies takes a close look at courses that receive low evaluations.

### *Course evaluation*

The last 10-15 minutes of this class will be used to evaluate the course. What did you especially appreciate? What could be improved? Please, provide constructive feedback. Teaching and developing educational modules is a continuous process. We will use your input to further develop our course.

## **Week 7 – No class**

**There is no tutorial in this week.**

## Week 8 – Exam week

There is no tutorial in this week.

*Good luck with your  
exams!*

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A. Writing Review Tools

### The parametric method

1. Circle the prepositions (of, in, about, for, onto, into).
2. Draw a box around the "is" verb forms.
3. Ask, "Where's the action?"
4. Change the "action" into a simple verb.
5. Move the doer into the subject (Who's kicking whom).
6. Eliminate any unnecessary slow wind-ups.
7. Eliminate any redundancies.

Example:

In this paragraph is a demonstration of the use of good style in the writing of a report.

Action in sentence; eliminate slow wind-ups

*Revision*  
This paragraph demonstrates good style in reports (or) ...good style in report writing.

The doer is in the subject

### The reverse outline

1. First, number all the paragraphs in your paper.
2. On a blank sheet of paper, write the research question or thesis statement at the top. Next, divide the paper into three columns. In the first column, write as many numbers as you have paragraphs going down from the top left corner to the bottom left corner. Leave at least 2 lines of space between each number (you'll probably have to continue on to the next page).
3. Thirdly, in the *middle* column, write down the topic of each paragraph. Try to use as few words as possible. If you find this tricky, go back to your paragraph and underline the key-words used in topic sentence of the paragraph; this usually determines what the paragraph is about.
4. In the *right-hand* column, write down how the paragraph topic advances the overall argument of the text. Again, be brief.
5. Evaluate your paper's structure. Step 3 will tell you if your paragraph is not focused and clear, for example if it contains too many key-words or too many concepts. Step 4 will tell you if each paragraph fits in the overall organization of your paper. You may also notice that some paragraphs should be changed or moved to another place after completing this step.

Adapted from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/689/1/>

## The writing revision checklist

[illegible]

## Appendix B. Brainstorming tools

### How to find your research question and thesis statement<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes it's difficult to decide on a research question. Assuming that you already have a rough idea about the topic of your paper, the following steps will help you to define an initial research question to start your research.

1. Ask yourself: **What do I know about the topic?** If you have already discussed the topic in class, then you will already have some background in it. If you haven't, take a look at the suggested literature that is relevant to your topic. In addition, spend some time looking up extra information on the topic.
2. Write down at least **5 facts, keywords and concepts** that are relevant to your topic:

Keywords, facts, concepts:

3. What are you interested in researching for your project? What is your **general topic**? Look at the key concepts in the box above and narrow it down.

General topic:

4. Ask yourself **who or what is impacted** by your topic.
  - a. People
  - b. Animals
  - c. The environment
  - d. Existing theories
  - e. ...

5. **What aspect** of your topic are you interested in? Is there a theme or category that you'd like to focus on? The causes? The effects or implications? The solutions?

Aspect of your topic that you are interested in:

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Research Question Generator of the University of Michigan:  
<https://umich.instructure.com/courses/824/modules/items/79077>

6. Ask yourself **when**. Are you interested in the current situation? In the past? Are you interested in a specific event? Looking to the future?

When:

7. Ask yourself **where**. Consider countries, regions, states, types of places like workplace, schools, online, urban, rural, etc.

Where:

8. Fill out the table below with the answers from steps 3 to 8.

Key words	
Topic	
Who or what is affected?	
What aspect? (cause, effect, solution)	
When?	
Where?	

9. Pull the elements together to create your research question.

Research question:

10. Now that you have your question, ask yourself what your answer to the question is. Just write down what you think. This is not the final answer, just your first hypothesis. Trust your intuition.

11. Take your research question and tentative thesis statement together and answer the following questions:



- a. Does the research question allow you to **take a position** in your thesis statement?
  - i. YES/NO
  - ii. If not, then how can you improve it?
- b. Does the thesis statement require **multiple arguments** to support it? Does it allow for **counter-arguments**?
  - i. YES/NO
  - ii. If not, then how can you improve it?
- c. Does the thesis statement require you to consult **multiple sources of knowledge** in order to defend it?
  - i. YES/NO
  - ii. If not, then how can you improve it?
- d. Is the research question **narrow** enough? Can you do the research needed to defend your thesis statement within the **time and length** given for the paper?
  - i. YES/NO
  - ii. If not, then how can you improve it?
- e. Are the concepts and the relationships indicated in the research question **specific** enough?
  - i. YES/NO
  - ii. If not, then how can you improve it?

Notes:

## Creating a basic outline

Now that you have defined and fine-tuned your research question and thesis statement, you should come up with an outline of your paper. Follow the instructions to get started with a basic outline. Make sure to time yourself!

1. Write down your research question and tentative thesis statement at the top. (1 minute)
2. Write down everything you know (or all your ideas) about the topic of your paper. (3 minutes)
3. Write down everything you don't know about the topic of your paper. Formulate questions. (3 minutes)
4. Take a look at what you wrote down. Do some facts, ideas or questions belong together? If yes, group them into clusters. If some information seems irrelevant, eliminate it. (2 minutes)
5. Organize the clusters you came up with in a logical order. As yourself: what I need to figure out before I can answer my research question? What information should come first, what second? What questions do I need to answer before I can answer the research question? (3 minutes)

The order of the clusters (with their facts, ideas and questions) is the tentative overall structure of your paper. Now you know what sub-topics and sub-questions you need to research in order to answer your research question. Go on and do it.

Notes:

## Creating an advanced outline

After you've conducted the literature search for your paper, it's time to compose an advanced outline. This will help you to get a clear idea of what you want your paper to look like and it might help you to detect some blind spots in your argument that still require research. Take a blank sheet of paper and write down the answers to the following questions. Follow the steps and don't forget to time yourself!

### PART 1

1. What is your research question?
2. What is your thesis statement?
3. What background knowledge must the reader have in order to understand your research question and your thesis statement? Make a list of facts, information and ideas that you consider relevant. (2 minutes)
4. What arguments support your thesis? What argument could contradict your thesis? Make a brief list with all your arguments and counter arguments. (3 minutes)
5. How many sections will the body of your paper have? What will each section discuss? Make a list and give tentative titles that make clear what the section is about. (2 minutes)

### PART 2

On a separate piece of paper, draw 3 columns and one row for each section of your essay. Number the sections. Then fill out the following information for each section, one section at a time.

1. In the left column, write down the main claim of the section. (2 minutes)
2. In the middle column, make a list of the arguments that support the main claim of the section. (3 minutes)
3. In the right column, try to answer the following question: How does the main claim of this section support or contradict your thesis statement? (2 minutes)

### PART 3 (5 minutes)

Look at the overview of your sections and the arguments made in them. Now ask yourself: How do the claims and arguments in every section, taken together, help me to answer my research question? Write down your answer.

## Suggested Readings

Note: This list does not cover all relevant skills in academia: they are merely suggestions for readings that may help you get started on the development of your personal and academic skills. Most of these readings are available via Safe Assignment. The Little Brown Handbook is recommended as a course book. Copies are also available in the UCM reading room.

### On Academic Skills

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2011). *The Little Brown Handbook* (12th ed.). New York: Pearson Longman.

- Chapter 10 on Taking Essay Exams

Lee-Davies, Linda (2007) *Developing Work and Study Skills*. London: Thomson Learning. Chapter 18 – Stress management, pp. 181 – 196.

### On Reflective Thinking and Writing

Cottrell, S. (2003). *Skills for Success: The Personal Development Planning Handbook*. London: Palgrave. Chapter 7: The Art of Reflection

### On Critical Analytical Thinking and Writing

Cottrell, S. (2003). *The Study Skills Handbook* 2nd edition. London: Palgrave MacMillan. Chapter 10: Critical Analytical Thinking, pp. 221-238.

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2011). *The Little Brown Handbook* (12th ed.). New York: Pearson Longman.

- Chapter 6 on Forming a Critical Perspective
- Chapter 8 on Reading Arguments Critically

McMillan, K., & Weyers, J. (2011). *How to write essays & assignments* (2nd ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson. Chapter 7: Thinking Critically, pp. 77 – 85.

### On Academic Writing

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2011). *The Little Brown Handbook* (12th ed.). New York: Pearson Longman.

- Chapter 1 on Assessing the Writing Situation
- Chapter 2 on Developing, Discovering and Shaping ideas
- Chapter 4 on Writing and Revising Paragraphs
- Chapter 7 on Writing in Academic Situations
- Chapter(s) on APA referencing

Payne, Elaine & Whittaker, Lesley (2006) *Developing Essential Study Skills* 2nd edition. London: Prentice Hall. Chapter 15 – Essay Writing. (reading room & library)

McMillan, K., & Weyers, J. (2011). *How to write essays & assignments* (2nd ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson.

- Chapter 10 on Academic Writing Style
- Chapter 12 on Improving your Grammar

## Speed Studying

(Copied from: Lee-Davies, Linda (2007) Developing Work and Study Skills London: Thomson Learning)

A core skill for effective study is the ability to read in the right way. Contrary to taught practice in schools, this is not cover-to-cover nor from the beginning to the end of a text.

Rethinking the use of books is crucial to an effective use of time and maximum information gathering. For the purposes of adult education and lifelong learning, books and other study texts need to be treated very differently from novels and leisure reading. Study texts should be approached in an organized and, frankly, quite ruthless way. A broad range of reading is required in higher education and goes beyond one core text. There is just not the time to pour over everything in detail, so a system needs to be adopted to gain the necessary breadth.

### Start 'speed reading'

A simple management tool has been created to help with the process of speed reading. Try it out a couple of times and you will see how the practice can benefit you and even become a 'norm' for you. It will feel a bit awkward at first but bear with it.

Always start any reading exercise with an objective in mind. You need to have a focus so you naturally find information to match your needs. To gain breadth, try to read conflicting texts and articles to get different views.

S	Scan	<b>Scan.</b> Get an overview of the book or article by running your eye down the pages quickly. Look at the cover and contents as well as chapter headings, summaries and, yes, the pictures. This scan will identify large chunks of the book you don't need and importantly indicate where those you need are.
P	Plan	This is all done with your objective in mind. If you are looking for a particular argument also look for the opposite argument during your scan.
E	Expand	<b>Plan.</b> Now you have isolated the material likely to be of use to you, plan which exact pieces of the book or the article you will read further. Think about the order in which you will do this. Mark any particular bits that seem to oppose or complement each other.
E	Edit	
D	Digest	<b>Expand.</b> Now you can actually read the planned pieces in detail to get what you need. Remember to do this expansion with your objective in mind or

you will waste time. As well as content collection, also take on board the flavour of the writing and what you think of how the author has dealt with the topic. Being able to comment on or critique the content helps you understand it better and takes you to a higher level of more active reading.

**Edit.** Make useful notes for yourself – perhaps on clearly marked bookmarks. These should give the main points, indicate any quotes that could be used, what arguments to take and link back to your main purpose. They should also have key words outlined or detailed separately so you can skim through these when you need to. A good tip is to note some main points on another piece of paper and attach it to the front of the book so you can quickly source a particular theme more readily. You can see as you make notes that you are drawing in your 'expanded' reading more tightly. This is important in terms of memory retention.

**Digest.** A good practice is always go back and check your notes and marked sections, which does three things: it (a) checks your understanding of the content; (b) ensures you are more likely to remember it for longer; and (c) checks whether you have stuck to your objective and retrieved from the process what you set out to. This keeps the reading exercise active at all stages, saves time in terms of increasing your ability to remember what you have read and helps with closure so you can turn to another book or article with a fresh mind.

## Feedback on the paper

Source: modified, "Handout feedback paper" | PR103 Portfolio Plus | June, 2004

### I. General Elements

- 1). Layout: are headings, tables, text and figures presented correctly?
- 2). Headings
  - a) Did the author make proper use of headings?
  - b) Is there a difference between levels and sublevels/sections and subsections?
- 3). Grammar, accuracy, spelling and punctuation:
  - a) Is the grammar correct?
  - b) Are expressions clear to the reader?
  - c) Are terminology and vocabulary accurate?
  - d) Is the spelling accurate?
  - e) Is the punctuation accurate?
  - f) Are style and tone appropriate to formal academic writing?
  - g) Are there any awkward sentences that make the reader wonder what is meant?
- 4) Is the first person used (the use of 'I' is uncommon in scientific papers).
- 5) Did the author insert page numbers?

### II. Title page

- 1). Does the title page contain the required information?
  - a) Title and possible subtitle
  - b) "University College Maastricht"
  - c) Place, date
  - d) Name
  - e) ID number
  - f) Course code and title
  - g) Tutor name
  - h) Number of words
- 2) Is the title effective and do you understand it?
  - a) Is it too broad or not broad enough?
  - b) Does it reflect the content of the paper?
  - c) Does it grab your attention?
  - d) Is it in the form of a question?—you should avoid using questions w/in a title.

### III. Introduction

- 1) Did the author give sufficient background information to introduce the topic?
  - a) Is the background information relevant?
  - b) Is the significance of the topic made clear?
  - c) Is the problem clearly stated?
- 2) Is it clear what the paper will cover and the order it will be covered?
- 3) Problem statement or Research question:
  - a) Is the problem statement too broad or too vague?
  - b) Are there any unfamiliar terms in the research question? And if so, did the author explain these terms before introducing the research question?
- 4) Is there information in the introduction that you think is more appropriate in the body of the paper?

#### **IV. Body**

- 1) Does the body have a clear structure and develops in a clear direction?
- 2) Does the body provide more than one viewpoint of the problem and does the author demonstrate an awareness of the complexities of the problem?
- 3) Does the body progress effectively and logically towards the findings?
- 4) Does the body provide adequate evidence to support the findings?
- 5) Does the writer acknowledge weaknesses in any arguments that might support his or findings?  
Is she or he honest about the fact that there may be difficulties in reaching conclusive findings?
- 6) Did the author provide the reader with definitions where they are necessary?
- 7) Did you find that certain information was rather redundant and could have been left out?
- 8) Did you find that certain information was missing?
- 9) Do you think that some information would be more appropriately found in the introduction of this paper?

#### **V. Paragraphing**

- 1) Is it clear where paragraphs begin and end?
- 2) Are all paragraphs well balanced in length and content?
- 3) Are all paragraphs well structured:
  - Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
  - Does the paragraph content follow from the topic sentence?
  - Does each paragraph end effectively?
  - Does each paragraph deal with one topic or are any a mix of different topics?
- 4) Are there any one-sentence paragraphs?
- 5) Does the writer move easily from one paragraph to the next, i.e. are transitions logical and clear?

#### **VI. Conclusion**

- 1) Does the conclusion provide a short summing up? Do you have to wait until the conclusion for an answer to the research question?
- 2) Does the writer use references here? It is uncommon to reference the conclusion.
- 3) Does it make clear why the findings of the research are important or significant?
- 4) Does the conclusion have a strong ending?
- 5) Is the conclusion a satisfying compliment to the introduction?

#### **VII. References**

- 1) Are all references correct and complete, both in the text and in the bibliography?
- 2) Are all references in the text also mentioned in the bibliography?
- 3) Are all references in the bibliography also mentioned in the text?
- 4) Are all references according to APA style?
- 5) Did the author use enough sources?
- 6) Did the writer use reliable sources?
- 7) Are the references listed in an alphabetical order?

## Useful productivity apps/websites

### *Time-management*

- [BeFocused](#)/[Just Focus](#)/[Focuskeeper](#)/[Clear Focus](#)/ – apps that use Pomodoro technique to split your working time into 25-minute intervals
- o [Tide](#) – Pomodoro technique + relaxing background sounds
- [Forest](#) – an app that visualizes your concentration by growing trees when you are working and not touching your phone
- [Cold Turkey](#) – allows you to block distractions, such as social media for a set amount of time

### *To-do lists*

- [Todoist](#) – for creating tasks and subtasks, assigning priority labels under different lists
- [Trello](#) – to-do list app that is perfect for working on multiple projects at the same time

### *Proof-reading*

- [Grammarly](#) – an app that helps you to spot some grammatical mistakes that other word processors usually ignore

### *Writing*

- [The Writefull App](#) – includes useful features such as a synonym-in-context finder, word-frequency finder (is it “number” or “amount” of people?), word-gap filler (“Researchers have \_ on issues in this paper”), and a dictionary. Contrary to what the name indicates, this is a programme to be used on PC or MAC.

### *Note-taking*

- [Microsoft One Note](#)/[EverNote](#) – good tools for those who like taking notes electronically and are tired of switching between dozens of documents

### *Calendars*

- [Google Calendar](#)/[iCalendar](#) – apps to integrate your timetable/personal and other calendars to never miss a meeting again

### *Mind maps*

- [XMind](#) - great tool for brainstorming and structuring information by mind mapping

### *Online flashcards*

- [Quizlet](#)/[Anki](#) – study information in a flashcard form by playing games and doing quizzes



#### *Meetings/team management*

- [Doodle](#) - create a list of possible dates and times, invite people to comment and choose a timeslot that works for everyone!
- [Slack](#) - whether you work on a group project or with your student organization, this app helps you to divide your conversation into channels, attach files and collaborate in a more structured way
- [Google drive](#)/[Dropbox](#) – great tools for file sharing and real-time editing
- [Canva](#) – easy graphic design software for posters, online events and reports

#### *Habit-tracking*

- [Habitica](#) - a gamified app that helps you to develop good habits or get rid of bad ones

#### *Scanning documents*

- **Scannable** – allows you to scan documents with your phone and send them to your E-mail

#### *Learning languages*

- [Duolingo](#) – learn a language for free in a fun way by practicing 10-15 minutes/day

#### *Knowledge acquisition*

- [Pocket](#) –save interesting articles and read them offline with the original formatting
- **Podcast** (IOS)/[Stitcher](#) (Android) – add podcasts on your favourite topics and listen to them when riding a bike/walking/exercising at the gym/doing dishes
- [Goodreads](#) – set yourself reading targets, see what your friends are reading and find reviews for books