**Unit 7: Academic Style**

**SECTION A ACADEMIC STYLE**

**Activity 1: Individual Reading – Identifying Important Components of Academic Writing Style**

One of the main objectives in this course is to enable you to produce augmentative writings in an academic and professional writing style. The following activity helps you distinguish better what is an academic paper and what is not. Read the two research paper extracts below and consider the following questions:

1. How would you describe:
   * Extract 1?
   * Extract 2?
2. Which is more ‘academic’?
3. Identify the ‘non academic’ features of the other Extract

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| --- |
| * What impression does each extract give of the author? * Which extract would you rather reference in your own work? Why? * Which author would you employ on the basis of their research paper? * If you were the editor of a scientific journal, which of these papers would you publish? * If you were a professor marking these papers, who would you give the better mark to? |

**Extract 1**

*According to recent research by the Mauna Loa Observatory, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has reached an all-time high. Following extensive research, scientists at the Mauna Loa Observatory concluded that the CO2 level in the atmosphere is now 387 parts per million (ppm), which is a rise of almost 40% since the industrial revolution and the highest for at least the last 650,000 years. The research, published by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, also confirms that carbon dioxide is accumulating in the atmosphere faster than originally expected. The annual mean growth rate for 2007 was 2.14ppm - the fourth year in six to see an annual rise greater than 2ppm. From 1970 to 2000, the concentration rose by about 1.5ppm each year but since 2000 the annual rise has leapt to an average of 2.1ppm.*

**Extract 2**

*The amount of carbon dioxide in the world's atmosphere is really high, I think that this is very worrying for scientists and the general population. Apparently, the CO2 level in the atmosphere is now 387 parts per million (ppm), which is a really big rise of almost 40% and the highest for at least the last 650,000 years! This research was published by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These people also confirm that there is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It's accumulating faster than they thought it would. The annual mean growth rate for 2007 was 2.14ppm, this is happening all the time now, it the fourth year recently to see an annual rise greater than 2ppm. From 1970 to 2000, the concentration rose by about 1.5ppm each year but since 2000 the annual rise has gone up an average of 2.1ppm.*

   http://www.mondofacto.com/study-skills/writing/how-to-use-academic-writing-style/01.html

**Wrap-Up: The Influence of Writing Style**

Activity 1 serves the purpose of illustrating how much influence the style of a written piece can have on the reader, irrespective of the content. Academic writing style is the accepted style that should be used for essays, reports, scientific writings, dissertations, theses and other formal written pieces. In fact, most written assignments at university should be written in an academic style. The easiest way to demonstrate academic writing style is to use examples.

This infamous poem is obviously not written in an academic style:

*Roses are red,*

*Violets are blue,*

*Sugar is sweet,*

*And so are you!*

However, if it was written in an academic style, it would read like this:

*Recent studies have shown that although many roses are indeed red, they can be found in a multitude of colours including, pink, yellow and and orange (Dimmick et al, 2005, Bill and Ben, 2006). Violets, however, have been shown to be almost always blue, with some exceptions noted in the excellent work carried out by Titchmarch et al (2008). In addition, but not directly related to this, sucrose has been shown to produce a sweet flavour when consumed my most adults (S. Martie at el 2001, M. Asrbar 1996). Although one would personally describe the subject in question as a 'sweet', this is not scientifically sound as the subject is not, of course, an item of confectionery*.

Obviously, in this situation, academic style writing would not be the style of choice! However, it is a useful demonstration of the type of style you should be aiming for.

**Activity 2: Identifying Common Errors in Academic English**

This activity will introduce you to 12 Common Errors in Academic English.

1. Watch the following clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZQgd2sPxpk> (7:43 mins)
2. As you watch, note down some of the examples.
3. Afterwards, with a partner, try to think of one or two errors that you have made or tend to make for some of the categories.

# Share your examples with the rest of the class.

# Discuss with your partners how you can avoid these errors in the future

**Activity 3: Practising Academic English Language Features**

The following tables show some recommended and non-recommended language features of academic writing. Read them through quickly.

**Table 1. Common Functions and Language Structures in Academic Writing**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Function** | **Typical language structures** | **Examples** |
| *To discuss abstract concepts in a precise and economical way* | Complex noun phrases | * **Continued exposure to such chemicals** can lead to **reduced functioning of the auto-immune system**. |
| *To refer to/comment on reading sources* | Reporting verbs | * **Smith (2004) demonstrates that** the influence of foreign trade has increased markedly in the last ten years. * **As Jones (1997) mentions,** both political parties were responsible for. |
| Other reporting structures | * **According to Chang (2007),** the Olympic Games were a major factor in… * For a summary of these arguments, **see Wei (2005)**. |
| *To show the relationships between ideas* | Complex sentences | * Republicans tend to see taxes as a penalty, **whereas** Democrats view taxation as a necessary means of providing social benefits. |
| Signpost words/phrases | * …not established until 1998. **For this reason,** it was not possible to create… |
| *To show caution in presenting arguments (often known as “hedging”)* | Various  - modal auxiliaries  - adverbs  - verbs  - quantifiers | * This **may** be aresult of several factors * This was **probably** caused by… * It **appears** that the main influence was… * **Some** studies suggest that… |
| *To appear “detached” and impersonal* | - impersonal structures  - the passive voice | * **It is useful,** therefore, to offer another explanation. * Complex systems of this nature **are** sometimes **considered** too costly in labour terms. |

**Table 2. Some Recommended and Non-Recommended Language Features in Academic Writing**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | “Incorrect” (i.e. not generally recommended) | Possible “improvements” (i.e. more typical in academic writing) |
| *Contractions* | This ~~doesn’t~~ allow user input. | * This does not allow user input. |
| *Imperatives* | ~~Stop~~ polluting the environment. | * It is essential for private citizens and corporations to stop polluting the environment. |
| *2nd person pronoun “you”* | ~~You~~ can find this kind of information in many web sites. | * Internet users can find this kind of information… * This kind of information can be found… |
| *Emotive language* | Eating processed food is ~~terrible~~. | * Eating processed food has several negative effects on health. |
| *Informal vocabulary* | Students can ~~get~~ ~~lots~~ of advice from peer counselors. | * Students can receive a great deal of advice from peer counselors. |
| *Rhetorical questions* | ~~Is this a good solution?~~ | * This does not appear to be an effective solution. |

**Activity 4: Practising Academic Style**

Now write 1 or 2 sentences in “academic style” on the topic of CityU, using the Youtube clip and above tables as guidance.

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**Activity 5: Academic Vocabulary**

As you saw in the above video and tables, you should be using vocabulary which is both formal and more advanced than everyday conversational language.

The following website gives more practice in ***Replacing Informal with Academic Vocabulary***

<http://webapp.ln.edu.hk/ceal/elss/sites/default/files/exercise/cate/writing/Summer%20Act6%20Replacing%20Informal%20Words/index.htm>

Do some of tasks A to E

**Activity 6: The Academic Word List**

The following website introduces the Academic Word list (AWL): <http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/index.htm>

Read the introduction and try some of the exercises for Sublist 1.

Try to use AWL vocabulary in your essay.

**SECTION B CITATIONS**

**Activity 7: Introduction to Reporting verbs**

Go through some of the tasks in <http://elss.elc.cityu.edu.hk/ELSS/Resource/Reporting%20Verbs/>

**Activity 8: Citation Style recap**

**Citations: APA Style Guide**

**In-text citation:**

**Example 1:** Duty tax has increased by 50% in the past 5 years (Smith, 2013).   
**Example 2:** Smith (2013) found that duty tax has increased by 50% in the past 5 years.

**Bibliography citation:**

1. **Online newspaper article**
   * **Format**: Author, A. A. (Year, Month date). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper*. Retrieved from URL
   * **Example**: Harrabin, R. (2003, July 2). Dyslexics turn to coloured specs. *BBC News.* Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\_news/
2. **Government publication**
   * **Format**: Author. (Year). Title of publication. Location. pp-pp.
   * **Example**: Continental Congress. (1989). Journals of the continental congress. Washington, DC. 904-937.
3. **Journal article**
   * **Format**: Author, A. A. (Year). Title of article: Subtitle of article. *Title of Journal, volume number* (issue number), pp-pp. doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx
   * **Example**: Sperry, R. W. (1986). Science, values, and survival. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 26*(2), 8-24. doi:10.1177/0022167886262002

**Citation tool:**

[http://www.bibme.org](http://www.bibme.org/)

<https://www.citethisforme.com/>

**City U Library APA style guide:**

<http://libguides.library.cityu.edu.hk/c.php?g=423781&p=2895468>

**Activity 9: Practising Writing Citations**

**Task 1 – Brainstorming arguments**

Brainstorm arguments for the following prompt:

**Millions of people worldwide are affected by hunger. Discuss whether GE(GM) foods can help alleviate the global food crisis.**

**Task 2 - Writing your thesis statement**

Decide your stance, pro or con, and write your thesis statement here:

**Task 3 - Reading sources and selecting relevant citations**

Read the sources and highlight the part(s) which is/are relevant to **YOUR** outline (sentences that are about the same idea and explain, develop, give examples of your main or supporting ideas). When you are making use of the ideas or arguments from the source, remember to use summarizing and/or paragraphing skills to reorganize the information in your own words.

**Source A**

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| --- |
| Source: Batten, D. (2010) ‘*How Genetically Engineered food can solve our planets’ problems’*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.  The primary aim of GE (Genetically engineered) food is to cope with the expected increase on food demand in the next 50 years. To meet the estimated 70% increase, conventional farming will cause irreversible damage on the ecosystems of our planet, by destroying large amounts of wilderness and polluting water and ground with pesticides. GE foods offer a potential solution.  In the last 14 years of cultivation of GE foods, there has been no scientifically proved instance of damage done to human health. Conventional farming, on the other hand causes thousands of poisonings and other longer-term health related illnesses, which have been estimated at 300,000 per year in the world. Farmers are more particularly at risk with diseases linked to exposure to pesticides occurring in a much higher proportion in this group than in the average population.  Potential benefits of GE foods are manifold and include reduction of pesticide, health benefits to farmers and consumers currently being exposed to high levels of toxics, as well as increased profits to farmers. One of the most crucial benefits GE foods is that it dramatically enhances the crop yields, by up to 30% in many recorded cases. This, in turns, means that carbon emissions will be reduced, as less energy is needed to produce the same amount of food. As such, GE agriculture can play a critical role in making the future agriculture sustainable. Additional benefits are expected to include better health for consumers. The planting of Golden Rice, a GE variety that produces provitamin A, will help reduce illnesses. Children in many parts of the developing world are suffering from a myriad of illnesses related to vitamin A deficiency. GE foods can also be engineered so as to grow in inhospitable places such as East Africa where 75% of the world’s droughts have occurred in the last decade.  Both the quality of the seed and the farming practices are important in addressing the challenges facing agriculture and food supply on our planet. Government policies that address both aspects will be necessary to create an ecological agriculture that uses genetically engineered seeds. |

**Source B**

*Source: Shah, A. (2002) Genetically Engineered Food. Global Issues.*

Biotechnology could be the wave of the future and genetically engineered foods could really provide alternatives to help increase food production. However, there is a growing wave of concern from citizens, farmers and scientists who question the way the research is currently being handled by a few large, profit-hungry corporations. That is, as well as scientific debates on the merits of genetically engineered (GE) food, there are equally, if not more important, debates on the socioeconomic ramifications of the way such science is marketed and used. Critics believe:

* The problem of food shortages is a political and economic problem.
* Food shortages and hunger are -- and will be -- experienced by the poorer nations.
* GE Food is an expensive technology that the farmers of the developing nations would not be able to afford easily.
* Patenting laws go against the poor around the world and allow biotech companies to benefit from patenting indigenous knowledge often without consent.
* This is a very young and untested technology and may not be the answer currently.
* Crop uniformity, which the biotech firms are promoting, will reduce genetic diversity making them more vulnerable to disease and pests. This furthers the need for pesticides (often created by the same companies creating and promoting genetically engineered crops).

Hence this leads to questions of the motives of corporations and countries which are using the plight of the developing world as a marketing strategy to gain acceptance of GE food as well as dependency upon it via intellectual property rights.

A quick acceptance of GE foods without proper safety testing could show corporate profitability to be very influential, while a thorough debate and sufficient public participation would ensure that real social and environmental concerns are in fact adhered to.

There is also the issue of whether genetically engineered food is actually needed, given that agriculture in small biodiverse farms is actually very productive. It is economics and politics at all levels (international, national and local) which has often prevented food from reaching hungry people, not a lack of production. These same causes have also created, or contributed to, a lot of

poverty, which prevents people from being able to afford food.

**REMINDER:** Remember that the citations

* always include the author’s surname (Suen) and year (2010).
* can be direct quotations or paraphrases (the essay writer using his own words to report someone else’s ideas).
* are integrated into the paragraphs, that is they link to the ideas before or after.
* are followed by signpost phrases such as ‘clearly’, ‘therefore’ or ‘this shows us that…’ to explain to the reader why the citation was included.
* clearly identify which ideas are taken from another writer and where the essay writer (student)’s ideas start again.

**Task 4 - Citing your Source**

Choose 2 citations you have highlighted and use a reporting verb to quote them:

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