

Presenting your work

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Structure

There will be variations for particular assignments, but a general set of contents would look something like this....

Front page

Abstract

Contents

Introduction (Your page numbering starts here, as well as your word count)

Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3 (etc)

Conclusion

References

Appendices

Front Page – this single page should usually contain the title of the course, the assignment title, candidate's details (name and / or student number), word count and date. This is provided as a prepared pro-forma for you to complete.

Abstract – This is a short outline of your whole assignment. It should be written in the past tense and summarises the focus of the paper and the main conclusions. It is not an introduction. It is usually no longer than about 150 words. It is usually placed centrally on its own page with single line spacing.

Here is an example abstract from a research paper –

There has been an increasing interest in reflective practice in nursing. There is literature as to its apparent advantages and benefits, but very little empirical research into clinical outcomes consequent to reflective practice. This study attempted an initial exploration into this area. A retrospective, three-phase, multi-method study in a single Department of Nursing was conducted. Focus groups were used to clarify the research questions and aid in the design of a questionnaire which formed the principal data collection method. Telephone interviews were also carried out which validated the findings. The results suggested that reflective practice was regarded highly and that most respondents identified significant, long term changes to clinical practice resulting from it.

Contents – A single page where all the section sub-headings, reference page and appendices are listed alongside the page number where they can be found.

Introduction – The size of an introduction will vary but as a guide, it is usually approximately 10% of the total word count. Contents will also vary, but it should set the scene for the main body of the assignment. Generally, it will contain some background information on the topic, a rationale for the choice of topic and an outline of the structure adopted. This should be based on the reading you have undertaken and / or a recognised framework which is appropriate to the topic (eg a model, or theoretical construct).

Headings 1, 2, 3 etc - The main body of the work arranged in a suitable structure, developing the topic in a logical sequence. Ensure that the headings are clearly depicted and there is a format for a hierarchy of headings, sub-headings and sub-sub-headings which is consistently applied.

Conclusion – This is a very important part of the assignment. As a very rough guide, it should contain approximately 10% of the total word count. It is

appropriate to include a brief summary, but should go beyond this to explore the implications of the main findings. All conclusions should derive from the findings in the main body and personal opinion should be carefully avoided. No new material should be introduced in your conclusion.

References – An alphabetically arranged list of all the sources referenced in the main body using the APA referencing system. (See section on how to reference).

Appendices – Used only for supporting material that is appropriate. For example – if a code of practice is mentioned in the main body and cannot be referenced (ie it is unpublished) then it may be included as an appendix. Work in the appendices is NOT marked, so you must take care not to include material which should be a substantive part of the assignment.

Word count – Most assignments have a specified word count. This is very important in terms of setting a standard and ensuring fairness. Assignments submitted which exceed the word count are seen as an attempt to gain an unfair advantage..

Where a single maximum figure is given, then you must ensure that your word count does not exceed that. Markers will stop marking once the maximum is reached. Where a range is specified, then your word count must fall within that range.

The word count must be stated accurately and include everything in your work from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion. The front page, contents page, abstract, reference list and appendices are **NOT** included.

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Presentation Protocol

There is a set of requirements for the presentation of academic work. Some exist for very practical reasons whereas others may be regarded as custom and practice. Nevertheless, a neat, uniform approach to presenting your work is desirable and may influence the marks awarded to an extent. All work must be typescript. Very particular requirements exist for the submission of the dissertation and you will have instructions on this separately.

Pages – Type/print on one side of each page. It is better if possible to start each new heading on a new page.

Margins – Wide margins of about 3cms left and right.

Line spacing – Use double or 1.5 line-spacing (this document has 1.5 line spacing).

Font – Use 12 point standard font such as Times New Roman or Arial. Work must use a black typeface.

Electronic submission is required for all of the modules. The same guidelines should be followed and the work submitted in Microsoft Word format only unless instructed otherwise.

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Deadlines and extensions

In academic institutions this is always an important issue. Deadlines for submission of assignments are there to:

1. Provide a standard for the work – ie the work must be completed within a fixed period and this is part of the challenge of the task.

2. To ensure fairness – that there is equity between students within a cohort and to make work comparable with previous cohorts.
3. Ensure that markers, external examiners and Exam Boards can process the results in good time.

To that end, the assignment must be submitted by midday on the day set as the deadline. There may be exceptions to this rule and you will be advised of this in the assignment guidelines. Assignments submitted after this deadline, in the absence of an agreed extension can only be graded as 0%.

Extensions to deadlines may be applied for using the appropriate forms. This needs to be done in advance of the deadline, allowing time for it to be processed. They can only be granted for situations where **exceptional** circumstances prevented you from submitting. This tends to be dealt with sympathetically, but care is taken to ensure fairness. 'Exceptional' rules out circumstances which may have been predicted, or where the student could not have reasonably made alternative arrangements. For part-time students 'pressure at work' is sometimes cited, but this, in itself, may be insufficient. Whilst a very real problem, it is something faced by all part-time students, so particular pressure would need to be cited eg covering for a colleague off sick. It should be noted that IT failure (either hardware or software) is not considered a reasonable excuse for failure to submit on time. You are therefore strongly encouraged to keep a back up copy of all your work, making sure version control is not a problem.

In each case of an application for an extension, some form of supporting documentation or evidence is required. This can be a doctor's paper if illness was a problem, or a letter from an employer outlining an exceptional work problem.

Unfortunately should you miss the deadline in the absence of an agreed extension, then a late application cannot be accepted and your work may be given an automatic 'fail'. Where you have problems, then always keep in touch with the course director/ lecturer. They will be sympathetic but may be

constrained within policies and the need to maintain fairness. Other options may be available if you are having problems, such as suspending studies for a period of time. The message to take away from this section, is that good time management is essential, as well as a commitment to study regularly.

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