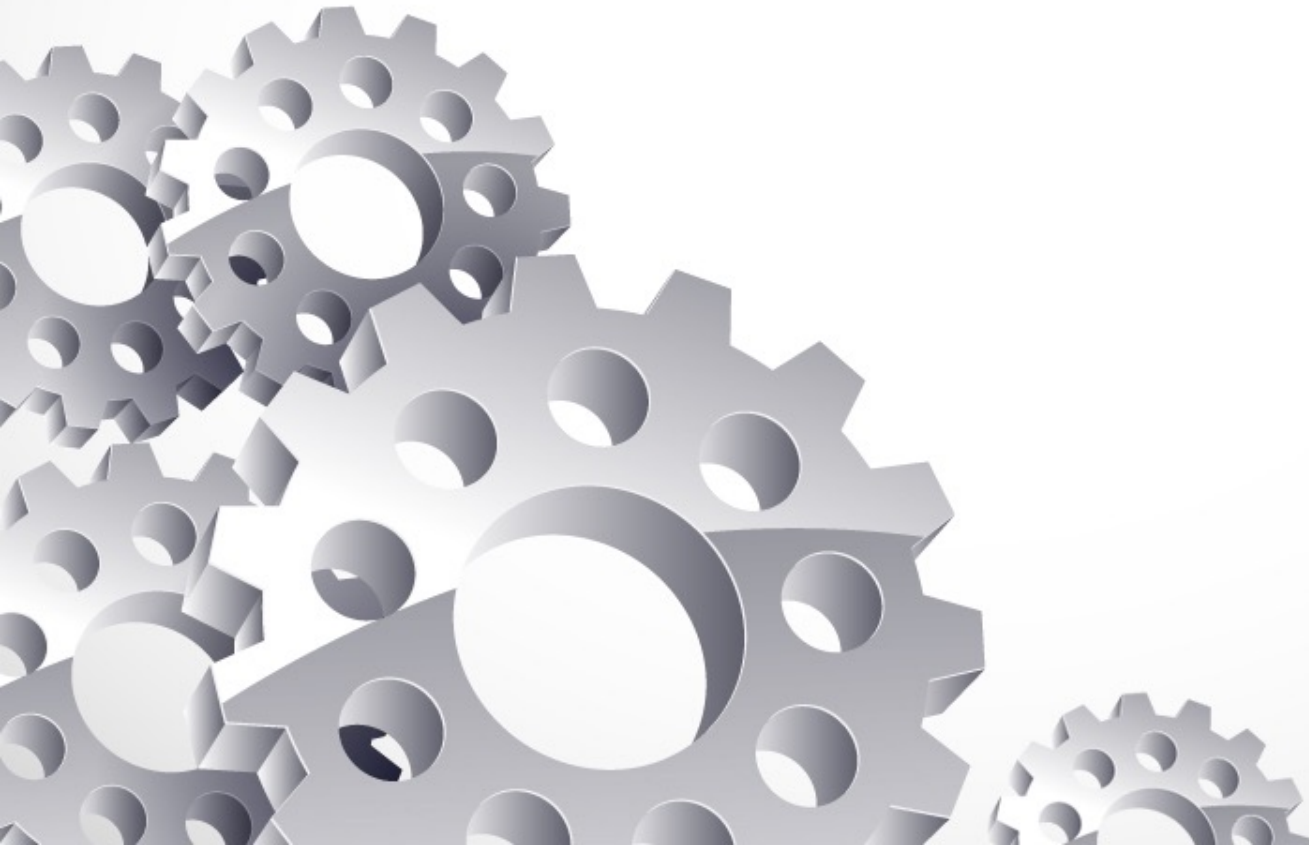


# **Communication Skills for University Success**

*SSL101 – MOOC 4*



# **Communication Skills for University Success**



- **Participating in University Discussion Contexts**
- **Interpreting, Researching & Planning Written Assignments**
- **Writing Effective & Concise Written Assignments**
- **Giving Persuasive & Engaging Presentations**

# 1.1. Participating in Lectures & Tutorials



- Lectures:
  - Preparation: Review readings before and after the lecture
  - Participation: Take notes and ask questions, if appropriate
- Seminars:
  - Preparation: Read in detail; prepare questions and observations (Brick, Herke & Wrong, 2016)
  - Participation: Actively participate in discussions; set small, achievable personal goals to build your confidence.
- Tutorials:
  - Preparation: Keep up with course content; be aware of your areas of difficulty
  - Participation: Complete activities and problem sets; ask questions.

## 1.2. Participating in group work

- Purpose: To practice working efficiently and cohesively in teams
- Group work is a joint activity; mutual goals are carried out through communication to establish joint commitment, done in projective pairs (Clack, 2005, 2006, 2012)
- Two types of first actions: proposals and announcements



# Group Work



- Think back to high school, or work, and identify an occasion where you had to work in a group.
- Was it successful or unsuccessful?
- What kinds of issues did you have, and how did you try to resolve them? If you didn't resolve them, what would you have done differently now you have the benefit of hindsight?
- What made the experience positive?

## 2.1. Interpreting Essay Questions



- Analyse the question!
  - Key concepts
  - Other terms, parameters, contexts, processes
- Explore the question: what are you meant to do?

## 2.2. Understanding and Interpreting Report Assignments



- Professional reports
  - Designed to acquaint you with writing in your field
  - Imagined audience may have different expectations
- Research reports
  - Designed to help you learn research methods in your field
- Researching your report's rhetorical situation
  - Number of authors, structure, audience
  - Ask your lecturer, or check question or outline

# Understanding the question



Consider the following assignment question from an introductory course on ecology.

Analyse the ecological threat of the common European rabbit on Australia's diverse ecosystems. What are the benefits of using conventional methods of control, such as baiting and trapping, over biological controls? Consider both environmental and economic issues in your response. Outline a plan to deal with the issue of European rabbits in one of Australia's national parks.

1. What kind of text is this question asking you to write? Can you tell? Explain your choice. If you aren't sure what kind of text it is asking for, explain what your next step would be if you were given this assignment question.
2. Write a list of "spoken language" questions (who, what, where, why, how) that you could ask when analysing this question.
3. Look at one other person's post and comment on their response.



## 2.3. Conducting Research for Essays



- Organise yourself & make a plan
- Always comes AFTER you have understood, analysed & generated OWN ideas
- We research in order to:
  - Support, explain or clarify certain points
  - Add detail to or more accurately define specific ideas
  - Research concepts, aspects, expert opinions or issues that we don't know
  - Build and focus arguments

(Cottrell,2013; Greeham,2013; Sowton, 2008; Van Geyte, 2013)

## 2.4. Conducting research for reports & proposals



- Research report
    - Use original data along with primary and secondary sources
    - Original data presented in middle, and other sources presented at beginning and end of report
  - Professional reports
    - Amount of research often lower than essays and research reports
    - Research justifies or supports activities or solutions
    - Research usually presented in the beginning
- (Nesi and Gardner, 2012; Swales and Feak, 2012; Yeung, 2007)

# **How do you use research in essays, according to lesson 3.3a?**

**Check two options.**

- a. To add authority to our arguments.
- b. In order to copy the other sources' text and use it in our own.
- c. To clarify our main ideas
- d. To make it look like we have read a lot.



# Researching



Consider the following assignment question from an introductory course on ecology.

Analyse the ecological threat of the common European rabbit on Australia's diverse ecosystems. What are the benefits of using conventional methods of control, such as baiting and trapping, over biological controls? Consider both environmental and economic issues in your response. Outline a plan to deal with the issue of European rabbits in one of Australia's national parks.

1. If you received this question in a course, what would you do first?
2. What kind of research would you need to do in order to answer this question?

# Essays - Deductive arguments



- Title
- Intro
  - Explain your position
- Body
  - Least persuasive argument supporting position
  - Persuasive argument supporting position
  - Most persuasive argument supporting position
- Conclusion
  - Reestates your position (sometimes with adaptations)
- References

(Brick et al., 2016; Cottrell, 2013; Greetham, 2012; Reinders et al., 2012; Thomson & Droga, 2012)

# Planning Reports and Proposals



- Research reports
  - General - Specific - General
  - Introductions - Methodology - Results - Discussion/Conclusion
- Professional reports
  - General - Specific
  - Opening - Identification of problem - Presentation of data - Processing of data - Closing

(Brick, Herke & Wrong, 2016; Nesi & Gardner, 2012)



## The language of explanation essays (time, cause and effect)

accordingly	causes/caused/causing	leads/led/leading to
after	due to	meanwhile
and	during	results/resulted/resulting in
as	effects/effectuated/effecting	so
as a result	ending in/with	since
as a result of	finally	subsequently
as well as	first of all	therefore
at first	firstly/secondly/thirdly	then
at this/that point	for example	thus
at the same time	for this reason	to begin with
because	had/has the effect of	to conclude
because of	hence	until
before	indeed	when
but	if..., then...	when A happens, B happens.
consequently		

## The language of discussion essays

accordingly	finally	indeed
alternatively	first of all	likewise
although	firstly/secondly/thirdly	moreover
and	for example	nevertheless
apart from	for instance	on the contrary
as	furthermore	on the one hand
as well as	however	on the other hand
at this/that point	in addition	on the whole
at the same time	in a similar way	otherwise
because	in brief	similarly
besides	in conclusion	then again
but	in contrast	to illustrate this
consequently	in fact	to sum up
conversely	in summary	whereas
even though	in the same way	

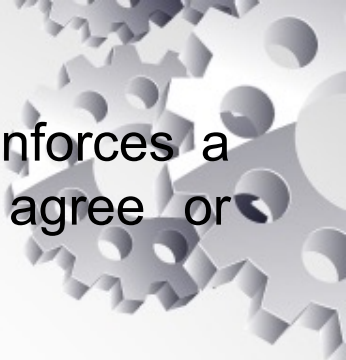
# Drafting Essays



- Start where you feel the most comfortable
  - Edit for language, style & length
    - Introduction
      - No more than 10%
      - A map, a microcosm & a marketing tool (Sowton, 2012)
  - Body
    - A series of linked paragraphs that convey main arguments
    - Integrated references
  - Conclusion
    - Last thing your audience reads
    - State how your arguments lead to your conclusion: answer
- (Alexander et al., 2008; Brick et al., 2016; Cottrell, 2013; Greetham, 2013; Reinders et al., 2002)



“For all its revolutionary gestures, *Fight Club* ultimately reinforces a conservative, hegemonic model of masculinity.’ Do you agree or disagree?



**Which of the following is the best example of a thesis statement for this essay question?**

- a. Subject positions allocated to male characters range from the patriarchal and hegemonic through to the highly feminised.
- b. Despite the masculine themes of *Fight Club*, the movie contains a significant feminist subtext which questions rather than reinforces a hegemonic model of masculinity.
- c. Possibly *Fight Club*’s most striking scenes are the fight scenes in the ‘fight club’ itself.
- d. A conservative, hegemonic model of masculinity can be seen in both the narrator’s relationship with Tyler Durden and in the activities of the fight club itself.

# Formatting & Proofreading Written Assignments for Submission



- Paragraph
- Font & line spacing
- Images
- Quotations
- References
- Grammar, spelling & punctuation
- Your detail

(Behrens & Rosen, 2010; Burke, 2013; Sowton, 2012)

# Formatting?



Consider the following example assignment. (Note: it is written in Lorem Ipsum, a nonsensical, improper version of Latin, so don't try and understand it!)

Identify three (3) issues with the formatting.

You will find the word document attached. See if you can fix the formatting and then post it as an image with your comments below. Have a look at how other people have changed it!

## Lorem Ipsum

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# Understanding and Researching Presentations



- The rhetorical situation
  - Media: Face to face, one way interaction; presentation slides; handouts; whiteboard
  - Place: Classrooms
- Research varies with purpose and structure; generally based on course materials

(Cottrell, 2013; Dannels, 2000; Edwards, 2004 cited in Alexander et al., 2008)

You are studying a unit titled 'Pedagogy and Professional Practice' as part of your education degree. 10% of your final mark is a reflective blog, where students must reflect on course content and relate it to their experiences in the classroom. Students are also expected to respond to others blog posts.

***What is the purpose in this rhetorical situation?***

- a. To write a blog
- b. To reflect on your own and other students' ideas and experiences
- c. To assess students
- d. To gain marks

# Planning presentations



- Plan before software!
- Basic structure: introduction, body, conclusion
- Specific structure options:
  - Chronological order
  - Narrative structure
  - Comparing points of view, or Residues approach
  - General to specific
- Storyboard: don't use software!
- Then create slides & notes with presentation software & review

(Andreson et al., 2004; Duarte, 2010; Morgan, 2011; Reynolds, 2012)

# Preparing Visual Aids for Presentations



- Purposes of visual aids: to make complex ideas clearer, to provide evidence, to entertain
- Greater range of visual aids in presentations
- Think carefully about the readability of text and images
- Organise information within and across slides
- Consider the purpose of information graphics

(Anderson et al., 2004; Duarte, 2008; Tufte, 2006)



# Academic spoken language?



Look at the following paragraph taken from the same essay we looked at in Module 4:

ANHS1600 Foundations of Ancient Greece

“What are the different contexts in which poems given in the course reader were performed? What is the relationship between content and occasion? Should we interpret these pieces in this light?”

Word limit: 1,500

Pindar diverges from typical Anacreon poetry as there is a much greater emphasis on choral poetry in his extant oeuvre, which, while broadly classified as similar to monody by many scholars, can differ quite greatly; Kurke, for example, suggests that there is an “immediately perceived shift in formal features and level of style, as well as in occasion and social function” (2000, p.79) between monody and choral poetry. The most obvious difference between the two forms of poetry is that choral poetry was performed by a chorus, rarely a single person, and usually on stage to a large audience rather than the small, intimate gatherings of the monody. Due to this plurivocal nature choral poetry is often more intricate and complicated in its structure and style than monody, and it is these characteristics that are abundantly clear in Pindar’s Pythian VII.

Have a go at re-writing this paragraph to sound more like the kind of spoken language appropriate for an academic presentation?

Comment on at least one other person’s post!

# Writing your script



- Language
  - Balanced between academic & informal
  - Not complicated
- Structure
  - Explicit & clear
  - Use signposting throughout
- References
  - Necessary!
- Script -> Notes!

(Reinders et al., 2008; Cottrell, 2013; Reynolds, 2012)

# Practising your Script



- Using information
  - Emphasise important words
  - Use step ups and step downs
- Practice
  - Manage time
  - In front of friends and family
  - Record yourself
  - Put points and take aways on small piece of paper

(Anderson et al., 2004; Burke, 2013; Cottrell, 2013; Hewings, 2007; reinders, et al., 2008)

# Delivering engaging presentations



- Make sure your technology works
- Check pronunciation
- Specify question time
- Breathe
- Engage your audience
- Use the space
- Act confident


(Burke, 2013; Cottrell, 2013; reinders et al., 2008; Renolds, 2012)

# Presentation styles



- 1. Have a look at some of the presenters mentioned in the lecture for 5.4b, check out some of the popular Ted Talks or watch a recording of your favourite public speaker.
- What aspects of their presentation styles do you like the most?
- Check out what some of the other people in the course have said!
- 2. Describe your presentation style. If you haven't done many presentations, that is OK – just describe it theoretically!

# Audience Engagement & Finding your Own Style



- Use quizzes or discussion questions to engage your audience
- Plan responses to possible questions
- Try not to be defensive
- Ask for repetition or pause before answering
- Throw a question back to the audience
- Prepare controversial questions for discussion

(Burke, 2012; Cottrell, 2013; reinders, Moore & Lewis, 2008; Reynilds, 2012)