

Essential Aspects of Academic Practice (EAAP)

Section 1: Identifying Academic Practice in Assignments

The EAAP guides focus on use of citations, quotations, references and bibliographies. It also includes advice and techniques for summarizing and paraphrasing in written documents and oral presentations.

1. Links to regulations, good practice statement and list of accepted reference styles

Before working with the EAAP guides make sure you are familiar with the university's regulations on unacceptable academic practice (UAP) and the university's statement on good practice. Also consider any advice given by your department.

- Academic Quality and Records Office (AQRO): Regulations on unacceptable academic practice
<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/contents/regulation/>
- Aberystwyth University Academic Practice Statement
https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/skillshub/GoodAcademicPractice_English.pdf

IMPORTANT NOTE: This document uses Harvard as a referencing style. It is essential to identify and use the style that your department recommends. When you have adopted a reference style, be consistent in all aspects of its use.

- The common styles across Aberystwyth University include:
 - Harvard
 - APA (American Psychological Association)
 - MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association)
 - MLA (Modern Language Association)
 - IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers)
 - Footnote/Endnote

2. Identifying academic practice in assignments

In all academic assignments we need to show understanding of the main principles underlying any discussion or investigation. Our own critical interpretation, use of methods, development of original ideas and contribution to knowledge needs to be visible in relation to the specific

context of published work in academic and/or professional fields. As academic writers we can contribute to these fields with new or adapted ideas, but at all stages it is essential to acknowledge the sources that our own ideas are based on. If the reader can clearly see which ideas are your own and how those ideas relate to established knowledge, your own work stands out as being more distinctive. It also clearly identifies where it belongs in academic and professional terms.

Problems with academic practice are not unusual and they are not isolated. Developing, or conforming to an academic style is a very important part of learning processes and learning how to study at university. Students often have difficulties, however, with use of citations, quotations, references, bibliographies, summarizing and paraphrasing. These practices are often seen as unfamiliar, due to differences in academic culture and background and the ways in which writing may have been assessed prior to studying at university.

Many problems occur due to lack of planning and time management. On other occasions this may be complicated by personal circumstances that are beyond a student's control. In other cases, there may be a lack of awareness about the rules and regulations of academic practice, or students may find it very demanding to work in a new subject area, sometimes in a foreign language. In most cases students do want to work to the best of their ability, but may resort to use of ideas from published or online sources, without adequate interpretation, argumentation and referencing.

The most common problems include uses of:

- citations
- quotations
- interpretation of quotations
- references
- chains of references
- bibliographies
- paraphrasing
- summarising
- inappropriate resources
- assignment structures (essays, reports, etc.)
- expectations of assignments and markers

- planning and time management
- overload of multiple assignments due in a short space of time

The outcome of this is that we usually see levels of duplication of unacknowledged use of specific words, sentences or paragraphs, or specific sequences of ideas that are very close to published ideas. In these cases, it is clear that the ideas are too specific to be considered common, or shared, knowledge. The ideas could only be included after consulting reference sources and as such those sources must be acknowledged in the text and in the list of references (or bibliography) included at the end of the work.

What kinds of assignments do you have?

- Essays
- Reports
- Dissertation
- Exams (seen and unseen)
- Presentations (with and without supporting documents)
- Seminar discussions (with and without supporting documents)
- Multimedia, or web-based documents (e.g. websites, wikis)
- Reflective critical commentary on creative or performative work
- Laboratory reports
- Field work reports
- Book reviews, journal article reviews, bibliographic reviews
- Other _____

Consider the extent to which you need to acknowledge reference sources in any of the assignment formats indicated above. Which aspects of any of these do you need to develop?

Next: EAAP Section 2: Ways of Acknowledging Reference Sources

If you cannot find advice on any of the skills you need to develop, send an email with brief description to aberskills@aber.ac.uk / sgiliauaber@aber.ac.uk