

1. Good academic practice

1.1 Successful study at university depends on the development of academic style and good practice in all kinds of assessed work. The majority of assessment is based on essays, reports, exams and other types of written work. A significant amount of assessment also takes place through oral work in presentations, seminars and other spoken activities. Such activities are often supported with written multimedia documents such as PowerPoint slides. Making sure that all your written documents and orally performed events fall within guidelines for good academic practice is essential not only to passing assignments, but also towards developing levels of excellence in academic work.

1.2 Good academic practice begins with time management and planning. It is essential to create a working guide to all your assignments that are due within and across modules and semesters. A number of difficulties will inevitably occur if work is left to accumulate, causing students to rush to complete multiple assignments within a short period of time and forget or avoid essential features of referencing and style. Allowance must be made well ahead of deadlines for the editing, redrafting and finalizing of all your assessed work. It is also necessary to make sure that adequate revision and preparation takes place for your exams and other more spontaneous assignments, such as oral presentations and other performed events.

1.3 It must also be noted that the variety of assignments and formats (e.g. essay, report, presentation, web-based documents) has significantly increased in recent years. This has happened in relation to the expansion of the Internet and digital technologies and in particular, the demand this places on the need for students to develop professional communication skills. You may find yourself working with a wide range of assignment formats, each requiring its own particular interpretation of good practice in an academic context.

1.4 Reports, web-documents, social media pages and a wide range of publicity or public engagement materials that students may be required to write, often follow professional guidelines set outside academia, where attention to detail on referencing is not always viewed as essential for the dissemination of information. In a university however, these types of documents must be seen as hybrid documents that emulate professional or socially oriented styles, but which also need a rigorous approach to referencing. Oral presentations, along with any supporting documents also require adequate referencing and these types of assessment are increasingly being recorded as combined multimedia documents via lecture capture technologies.

1.5 Good academic practice takes into consideration a wide range of skills and abilities and the work that you do needs to be situated within, or in relation to, existing academic fields. Student work supports and is supported by wider academic and professional communities and to engage with this it is necessary to acknowledge all sources that your work shares a relationship with. In general this involves the citation of reference material that supports the emergence of an individual or group perspective on an identified issue. This requires specific attention to detail in acknowledging the use of sources that not only identify which resources you have used, but which also creates a network to further study that form an essential part of good reading, study and research practices.

1.6 As a common courtesy and measure of mutual respect, all students, academics and professionals share the responsibility for identifying the sources of their work. This also serves to identify and exemplify original aspects of an individual or team's work, which may potentially disappear into the background without adequate differentiation between acknowledged reference sources and independently determined arguments, theories, practices and recommendations. Good referencing also serves as a foundation for knowing ideas, resources, options and courses of action in academic and professional life, which ultimately is the initial reason for choosing to study at university.

1.7 Referencing and academic style

1.7.1 Aberystwyth University can be viewed as a collection of different academic and professional communities, each of which has its own specialisms that connect directly to the wider UK context for higher education and also to the global context. Each of the academic departments and institutes works with a range of academic practices and styles, which will vary across the university. All departments, however, share the common practice of referencing, even though the ways in which it is done may differ in style.

1.7.2 Good practice in referencing begins with identifying the range of resources that may be recommended within, or identified in relation to a given module. These include primary reference sources that are part of the reading list and which are considered essential reading. It may also include secondary reference sources that may be identified independently through the reference network of the primary sources or through additional use of libraries and online facilities.

1.7.3 It is essential to determine which reference sources are suitable for citation and review in an assignment and within this it is necessary to be highly selective with the wide range of available sources. The Internet has become a global tool for searching and identifying immediate sources of information and this may satisfy the initial search for definitions and longer descriptions. It is necessary to look at web resources very carefully to identify authorship and originality and whether the information is based on academic reference material. It is not enough to cite commercial or information web sites as all academic and professional knowledge is part of a wider network that is primarily informed by published scholarly work. Smaller examples of working practices may be drawn from online sources, but these serve to illustrate or exemplify key principles that have been drawn from the published academic or professional work in a given academic field.

1.8 Citations, quotations, paraphrasing, references and bibliographies or list of references

There are a number of features that define academic style and these include formality of language, use of specialist terminologies and the set of stylistic attributes commonly referred to as referencing skills. Understanding the differences between *citations*, *quotations*, *paraphrasing*, *references* and *bibliographies* or *list of references* can be quite challenging at first, as some of these terms are used interchangeably. There are a number of different style guides, such as Harvard, APA, MLA, MHRA and others. Each department of the university has its own requirements for which style guides should be used and it will identify these through departmental handbooks that should be available on the web or via Blackboard. Each style guide will organize the following points differently, but they will all share common features of good academic practice. It is essential to follow the guidelines set by a department and where a student is studying modules in different departments, it may be necessary to use two or more different style guides. Consider the following points in relation to the style guides recommended by your department to identify how each feature should be used in the full range of assignments that you will work with.

1.8.1 Citations

A citation includes the name of an author or a group of authors, a reporting expression (e.g. *according to X...*, *Y argues that...*), the year that the source was published and where available, the page number or range of pages where the cited information is located. It connects directly to a review in a student's own words (*paraphrase*: see 1.8.3) or an exact repetition of the author's original words (*quotation*: see 1.8.2). The two main types of citation are *integral citations*, where the author's name appears in the sentence itself and *non-integral citations*, where the author's name appears in brackets or in a footnote or endnote. All citations must be accounted for in the bibliography or list of references (see 1.8.5).

1.8.2 Quotations

A quotation is the direct and exact repetition of cited author's work. A quotation must be contained within "quotation marks" and it must be accompanied by a citation for those exact words. If the quotation itself contains further sub-quotations or citations to other authors, it is necessary to create a chain of references (see 1.8.4) in the bibliography or list of references (see 1.8.5).

There are no exact guidelines as to how long a quotation can be, but good practice suggests that a quotation of less than two lines should be contained within the paragraph structure. It must be set within quotation marks and it must have an accompanying integral or non-integral citation. Quotations of three lines or more (to a general maximum of five to seven lines) are generally set in an independent text block with a line break between the previous and following paragraphs. Each quotation will be accompanied by a citation. All quotations must be interpreted in relation to the developing critical discussion in the assignment.

1.8.3 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the adaptation or rewriting of another author's ideas in your own words. Paraphrasing is an essential skill in academic writing as it enables you to summarize what a published author has written at the same time as connecting it to your own emerging argument and critical analysis. Good paraphrasing is a challenging skill and it takes practice in observing the fine line between the representation of another author's ideas in your own argument and faithfully summarizing what that author has said. As with quotations, paraphrased ideas must also connect to your own emerging argument or perspective. All paraphrased ideas must be accompanied by citations.

When paraphrasing it essential to identify between shared common knowledge about the subject matter and the personal expression and interpretation of the original author. Key words (e.g. earth, Internet, public administration policy) need to be kept the same, unless you are seeking to define and interpret them specifically. Personal expression is where it is important to be careful as writers add their own critical voice to their arguments. Too much repetition of personal expression causes a text to look very similar to the original cited sources, even if most of the words have been changed.

1.8.4 References

A reference is a single entry in a bibliography or a list of references. These will be found at the end of an essay, academic paper or academic book. Sometimes publishers may leave them out and they may also be missing in some professional and media reports. In any academic work they are essential. References may be organized differently in different style guides, but broadly all references include:

- Name of single author or names of multiple authors, including their initials or first names
- Indication of whether the author is sole author or editor
- Title and sub-title for the work
- Indication of edition for second edition or later
- Location of publisher
- Name of publisher
- For journal articles, name of paper, name of journal, volume, edition and page numbers will be included
- For chapters in edited text books, the full reference for the chapter is included with the addition of stating which edited collection it appears in.

- For web sites, notification that it is an online source and date of access will be included and web-site address will commonly replace publisher details

A wide range of sources can be included in a bibliography and style guides should indicate specific ways of writing references. If any of this information cannot be found, particularly with web sites, question whether it is the right kind of resource for your assignment.

1.8.5 Bibliographies or list of references

In the strict sense of these terms a bibliography is a list of all works consulted in the researching, planning and writing or scripting or an academic assignment. A list of references on the other hand is a list of all the works cited in the assignment. These terms have become interchangeable in many academic contexts and in most assignments it is only necessary to indicate the cited works.

A note of caution is required here, however, as any ideas you have derived or developed after reading other published sources, or which can be compared with other published sources must be cited to avoid any doubt that you are using ideas without acknowledgement. It is good practice to cite the development of such ideas in your work in order to show how your own original thinking has evolved in relation to these works.

The bibliography or list of references again will be written according to the style guide that your department uses. It will include all sources in alphabetical order of surname.