

# Academic Literacy Workshops

a handbook for students and instructors

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## **Academic Literacy Workshops: a handbook for students and instructors** **2011 (1st edition)**

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This handbook is based on a series of workshops developed in collaboration with Lucia Thesen of the Postgraduate Writing Project at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED). Many of the materials drawn on for these workshops were developed during my time working as a consultant at the UCT Writing Centre, which is part of the Language Development Group at CHED.

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# Academic Literacy Workshops

a handbook for students and instructors



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### For instructors:

This workbook contains the material for a series of short supporting sessions on writing and research skills for students at University. Most of the material should be useful for all levels of student, from undergraduate to postgraduate. Each session, if run as a workshop, will last approximately 45 mins to 1 hour. Instructors can walk through the material with their students, or create powerpoint slides and use the material as a presentation.

There are a number of worksheets where students can engage with and practice the skills. They can do this during the workshop, on their own or in pairs. Solutions to these worksheets are provided on page 47.



# Chapter 1: Introductions and Conclusions

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## A workshop in academic literacy

This workshop outlines the basics of academic writing and how to structure academic texts. It discusses the 'academic argument', and thesis statements. It also provides a useful checklist for students to help them edit their essays.



## Some writing fundamentals for academic essays and assignments

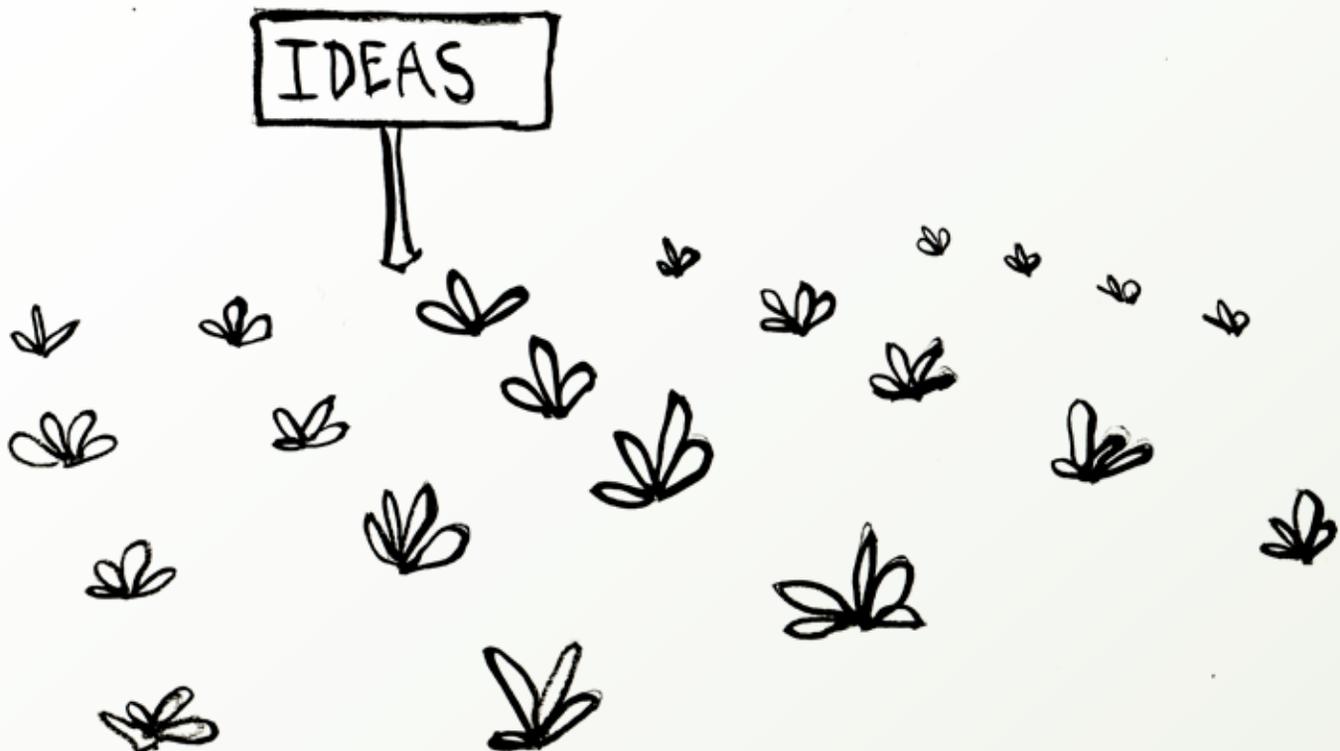
Academic writing may be unfamiliar to many students, those new to University or those who are returning after an absence.

Essays are required in many courses so that instructors can assess a student's understanding of a particular topic. But in addition, the instructor is also assessing your writing. This may not be obvious in the assessment criteria – but the chances are, if you can put together a good essay then you are more likely to get a good grade.

An essay structure is a very simple structure, but many students are not told about this structure and can therefore easily get it wrong.

The most important thing to be aware of, is that academic essays should have a central argument, or point that the writer is trying to make. This is sometimes referred to as a thesis statement.

This document gives you some basic information on structuring an academic essay, and writing a thesis statement.



## The structure of an academic essay

An academic essay follows a very basic simple structure in most cases:

1. Introduction
2. Body of the essay
3. Conclusion

This three-part structure allows the writer to set the scene, expand on the issue, and then sum up their findings.

This structure can be expanded on depending on the type of writing activity; some academic writing can be more complicated. For example, a research dissertation may contain additional sections: the literature review, the methodology, and the data analysis. But these are all within the body of the essay and the basic structure remains: even a PhD dissertation needs an introduction and a conclusion.



## Introductions

### *What goes in an introduction?*

- ▶ Set the context – give some history or background (let the reader know who, what, where, when and why)

- ▶ Define some important terms (new terms that are important to the topic)

- ▶ Raise a question/topic that you will answer in the essay

- ▶ State your approach, or position, or thesis, on the topic

- ▶ State briefly the points to be covered in your argument

## Thesis Statements & Academic Arguments

### *What is a thesis statement?*

- ▶ It is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader
- ▶ A thesis statement is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The topic of an essay might be ‘design appraisal’ but the thesis statement could be ‘life-cycle costing shows that the choice of elements can...’; or ‘design appraisal is an important aspect of an asset’s life because...’
- ▶ It tells the reader what your position is on the subject matter under discussion
- ▶ It is directly related to your conclusion (what you have learned through the process of researching and writing the essay)
- ▶ It is your argument – the reason for writing the essay

### *What is an academic argument?*

Similarly to when you have an argument with a friend, an academic argument involves putting across your opinion and trying to prove that you are right. But in an academic argument, you do this by using the writings of other authors, as well as from empirical research that you have done and data that you have collected. In an academic argument you don’t just try to shout someone down, or make claims that your opinion is right just because you think it is – you have to back up your claims with **evidence**.

An academic argument is carefully constructed and follows particular conventions that have turned into the structures that are expected of academic essays, dissertations and articles today. We call these conventions things like ‘**literature review**’, ‘**methodology**’, ‘**data analysis**’ and ‘**referencing**’.



## Conclusions

### *What goes in a conclusion?*

- ▶ Refer back to the introduction/thesis statement to provide unity

- ▶ If you had a proposition or hypothesis, state whether it was proved or disproved

- ▶ Explain the importance of what you've argued

- ▶ Refer to the bigger context (again)

- ▶ Point out your limitations – what you have not been able to cover

## Quick Checklist

### *What to check when you've finished your essay*

#### *Thesis statement*

- ▶ Have the requirements of the assignment topic all been met?

#### *Paragraphs/sentences*

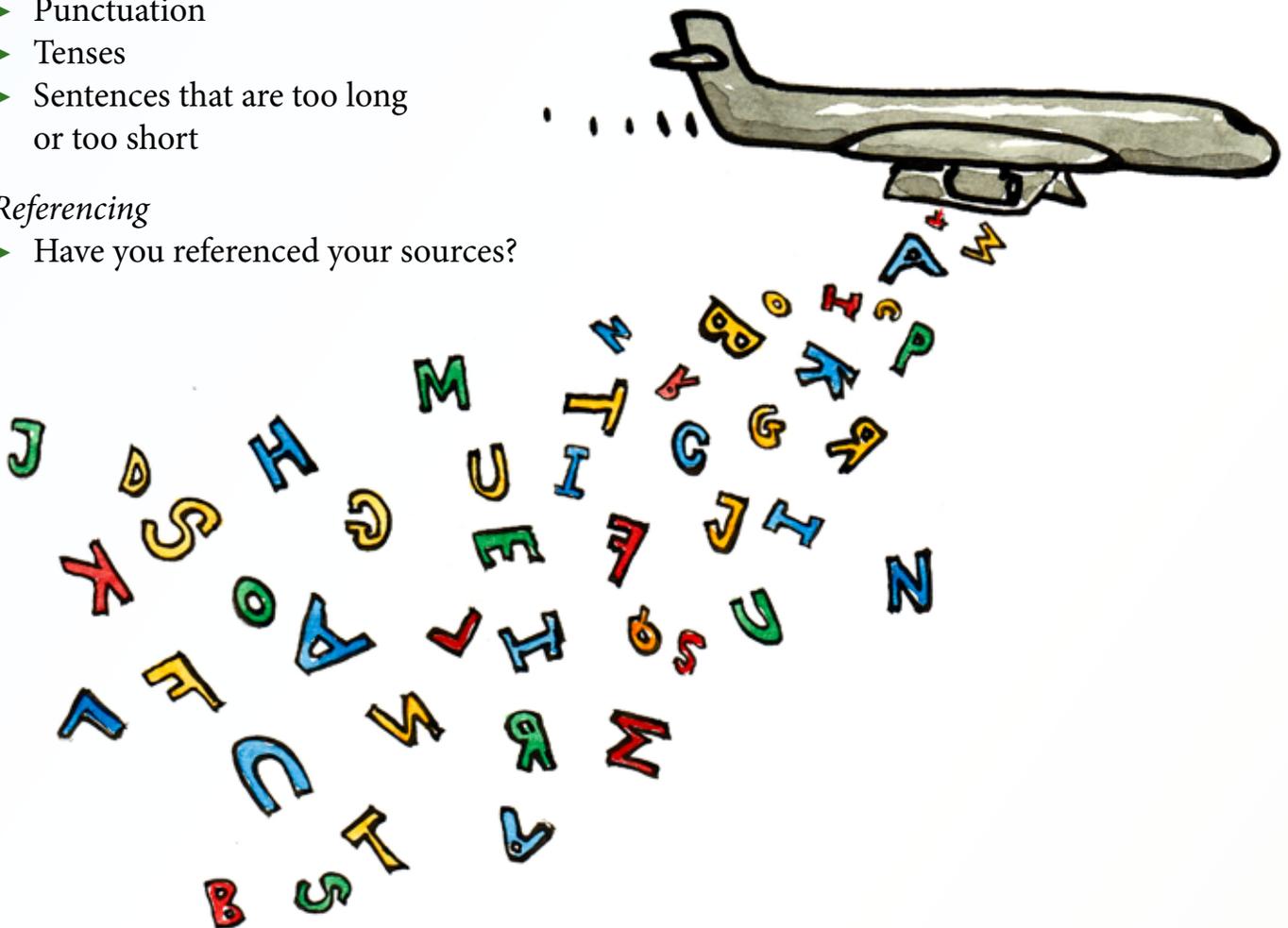
- ▶ Does each paragraph flow naturally into the next?
- ▶ Are there clear linking words and sentences between the paragraphs?
- ▶ Have the paragraphs been presented in the best possible order?
- ▶ Does each paragraph have a topic sentence and a clear main idea?
- ▶ Do the sentences in a paragraph have sufficient linking words so that the paragraph is fluent and logical?

#### *Spelling & grammar*

- ▶ Spell check
- ▶ Complete sentences
- ▶ Verb and pronoun concord
- ▶ Punctuation
- ▶ Tenses
- ▶ Sentences that are too long or too short

#### *Referencing*

- ▶ Have you referenced your sources?



## Chapter 2: Citation & referencing

---

### A workshop in academic literacy

This chapter discusses citation and referencing, plagiarism and searching for sources. Plagiarism is often misunderstood, and referencing and citation practices are very often confusing. Furthermore, searching for good sources can be a minefield; some of the tips in this chapter are aimed at simplifying referencing for students.



## Why and how we reference

### *Academic integrity and plagiarism*

- ▶ Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception.
- ▶ Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations or facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others.
- ▶ Plagiarism is fraud — pure and simple
- ▶ Plagiarism violates copyright laws
- ▶ Plagiarism violates trademark and unfair competition laws.
- ▶ A fundamental goal of education, especially undergraduate and postgraduate education, is to produce students who can express or articulate original thoughts — and be ethical in their use of the work of others.

Plagiarism is: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

### *How to reference*

- ▶ If you use the words of others, use quotation marks and reference the source
- ▶ If you use the ideas of others, make clear you are doing so and reference the source
- ▶ Paraphrasing is crucial, but even if you paraphrase well, you must still give the source
- ▶ It doesn't matter if the work cited is published or unpublished, or if it is the work of a friend, colleague, fellow student, professor, or anyone else, you must provide a reference
- ▶ It doesn't matter if your assignment is written or oral, an essay or a final thesis, text or images, you must still cite your sources

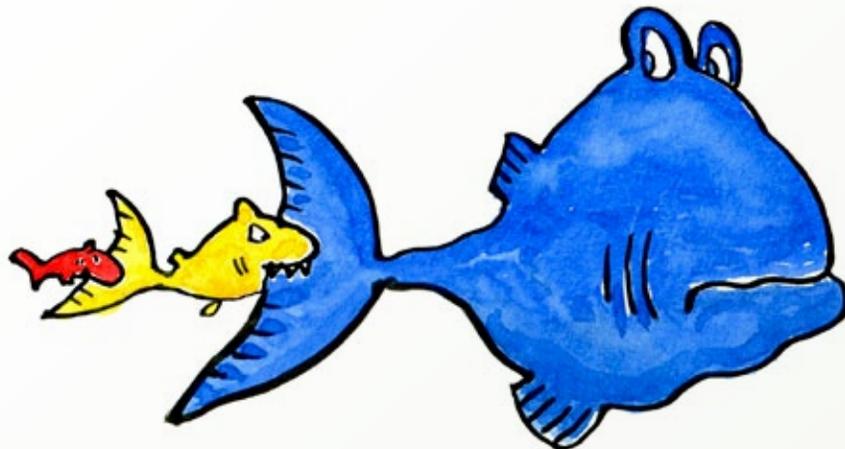
Cornell University reported in its February 3, 2003 student newspaper that approximately 800 college students from various universities were surveyed and about 25 percent of those surveyed “sometimes or very frequently” copied online text without properly crediting the source.

- ▶ One of the biggest problems is the internet – students copy and paste
- ▶ For this we have **TURNITIN**
- ▶ Lecturers can tell, even without Turnitin, if you are copy-pasting (there is a change in language)

Using the work of other people is valued in university, as long as you reference it properly

The purpose of referencing is

- ▶ to provide information to readers
- ▶ to show that you have developed your argument
- ▶ to give due recognition to those who's work has informed yours



“If I have seen further than others, then it is only because I stand on the shoulders of giants”

– *Sir Issac Newton 1676*

## In-text referencing and formatting the reference list (Harvard style)

Within the text of the document, work and ideas can be cited using the author's surname and year of publication (author-date method, or Harvard).

If the author's name is not part of the phrasing of the sentence, then it will be in brackets with the year (Hughes 2002) whereas if you are using the author's name as part of the text of the sentence, then only the year is in brackets. For example:

- ▶ According to Hughes (2002) ...
- ▶ One study found that 50% of students did not understand plagiarism (Hughes 2002).

The precise location of *direct quotes* within the source material can be given as page number(s) after a colon (Hughes 2002: 34–36).

In-text references enable authors' names to be looked up in the list of references at the end of the paper. The reference list is **sorted alphabetically**, by **authors' surnames**, and presented **without bullets or numbers**.

Different types of document are formatted differently in the reference list. This is because of the different information needed so that the person reading your work can find the documents you refer to.

### **Referencing a book**

Burns, T and Stalker, G M (1966) *The management of innovation*. London: Tavistock.

Walker, A (1996) *Project management in construction*. 3ed. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

### **Referencing a chapter in a book**

Flint, F O (1984) *Advances in light microscopy of foods*. In: G G Birch and K J Parker, (eds.) *Control of food quality and food analysis*. London: Elsevier Applied Science Publishers.

### ***Referencing a journal article***

Wantanakorn, D, Mawdesley, M J and Askew, W H (1999) Management errors in construction. *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, 6(2), 112–20

### ***Referencing a thesis***

El-Askari Khaled Mohamed, S (2000) A methodology for expenditure planning of irrigation infrastructure using hydraulic modeling techniques, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Engineering, University of Southampton.

### ***Referencing a conference presentation***

Ashton, P and Gidado, K (2001) Risk associated with inadequate site investigation procedures under design and build procurement systems. Conference paper presented at the 17th Annual ARCOM Conference, 5–7 September 2001, University of Salford.

### ***Referencing a webpage***

SAHO (South African History Online), (2007a). Music and Culture as an Act of Resistance [online]. Pretoria. Available from: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/handson-classroom/classroom/pages/projects/grade9/lesson1/unit3.htm> [Accessed 27 September 2008]

### ***Referencing a web download***

Gear, S & Ngubeni, K (2002) Daai ding: sex, sexual violence and coercion in men's prisons [online]. Johannesburg: CSVr. Available from: <http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/gender/daaiding.pdf> [Accessed 27 September 2008].

## Examples of correct and incorrect referencing

### **Correct:**

In a previous study, Jones found “the consequences of iron deficiency in infancy are devastating” (Jones, 1994).

### **Plagiarism:**

There have been many studies of iron deficiency. They found the consequences of iron deficiency in infancy are devastating (Smith 1992; Jones 1994; Kumar, 1985).

### **Correct:**

Previous studies suggest cognitive losses due to iron deficiency are caused by interference with the dopamine receptor system (Smith, 1992; Jones, 1994; Kumar, 1986).

### **Plagiarism:**

Cognitive losses due to iron deficiency are caused by interference with the dopamine receptor system. (No references provided.)

(**Note:** this is plagiarism even if the references are listed in the bibliography.)

### **Correct:**

Our study tests Jones’ (1994) hypothesis that iron deficiency affects cognition through the dopamine receptor system in the brain.

### **Plagiarism:**

The proposed study tests the hypothesis that iron deficiency affects cognition through the dopamine receptor system.



By Frits Ahlefeldt

## Worksheet 1

---

Insert the correct in-text references, and format the end reference for the following:

Figure 1 indicates that as at 2004, about 89% of quantity surveyors have been using computers for quantity surveying services. There has been some tremendous growth in the number of surveyors who have been using computers from 1996 to date. A similar trend is noticed in the personal and corporate use of computers for quantity surveying services.

A study of computer usage by Nigerian quantity surveyors. *ITcon* Vol. 10 (2005),  
Olukayode S. Oyediran and Koleola T. Odusami, pg. 291–303

## Sources (and UCT online resources)

If you search for literature in normal google or similar search engines, you will end up with a lot of ‘popular’ sources, like news articles, blogs, or opinion pieces. These types of information sources are often not ‘credible’ in academic writing.

In order to find credible writing by other academics you can use dedicated search engines. There are many of them around, a good one to start with is Google Scholar.

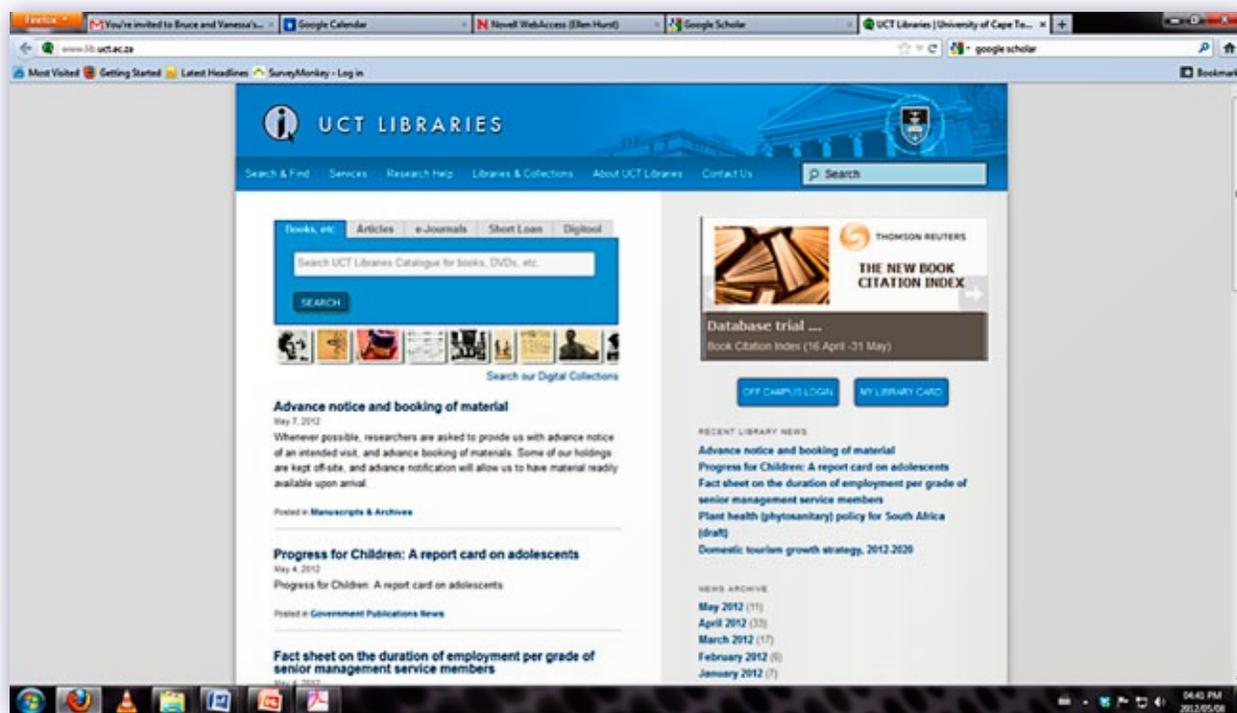


Google scholar searches academic journal databases, so it weeds out all the unsuitable websites and provides you with links to scholarly journal articles.

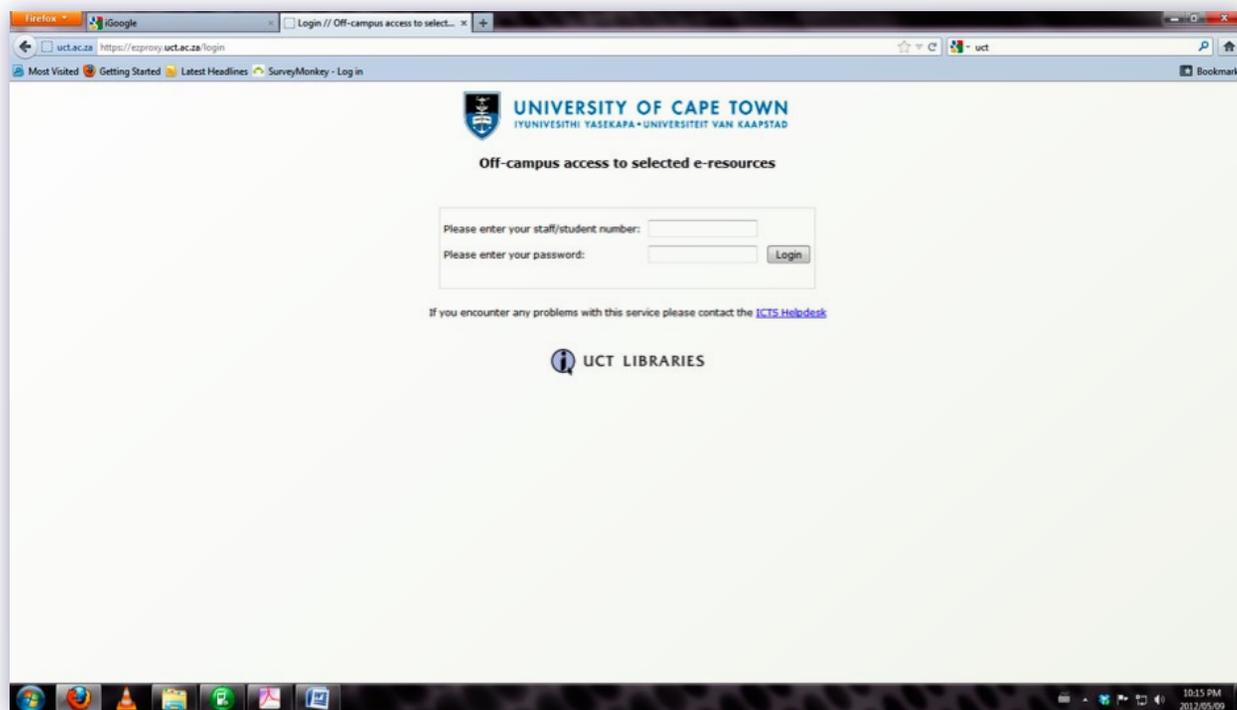
To access these scholarly articles, you are often asked to pay. However, the University of Cape Town (and many other academic institutions) have paid institutional access fees to hundreds of journals so students can have free access. If you are working on campus, these journals will usually recognize that you have access rights. However, if you are working from home, to get access rights you will need to log in through the ‘EZProxy’ system.

Here's how (if you are affiliated with UCT):

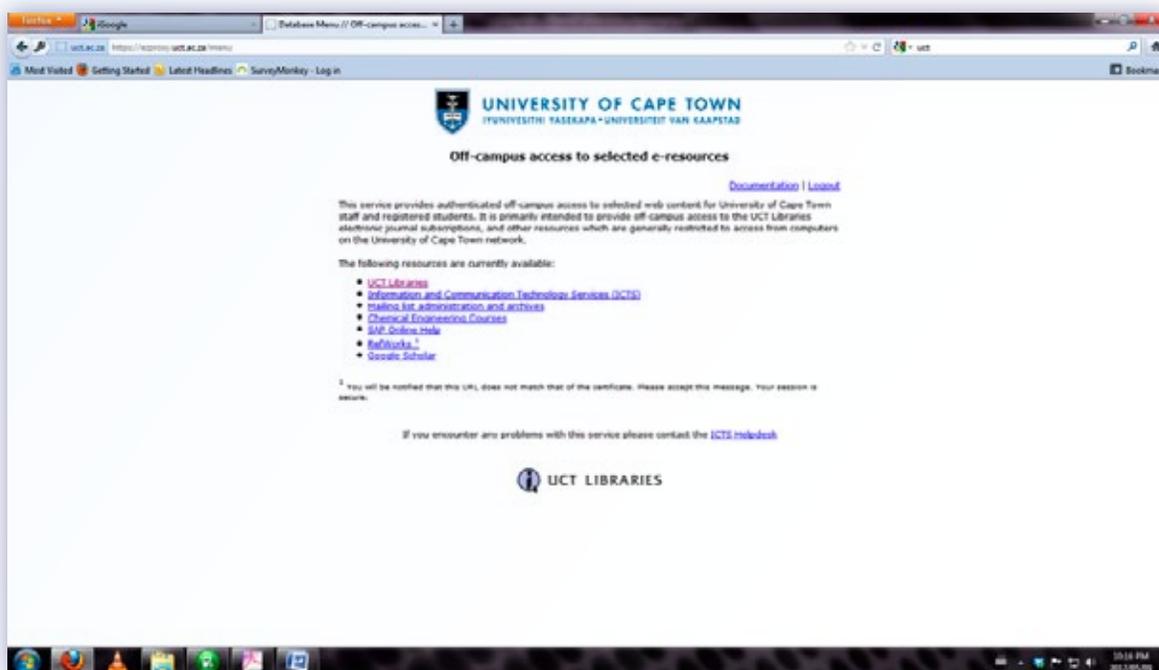
Go to the UCT libraries website (<http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/>) and press the Off-campus login (EXProxy) button (on the right hand side):



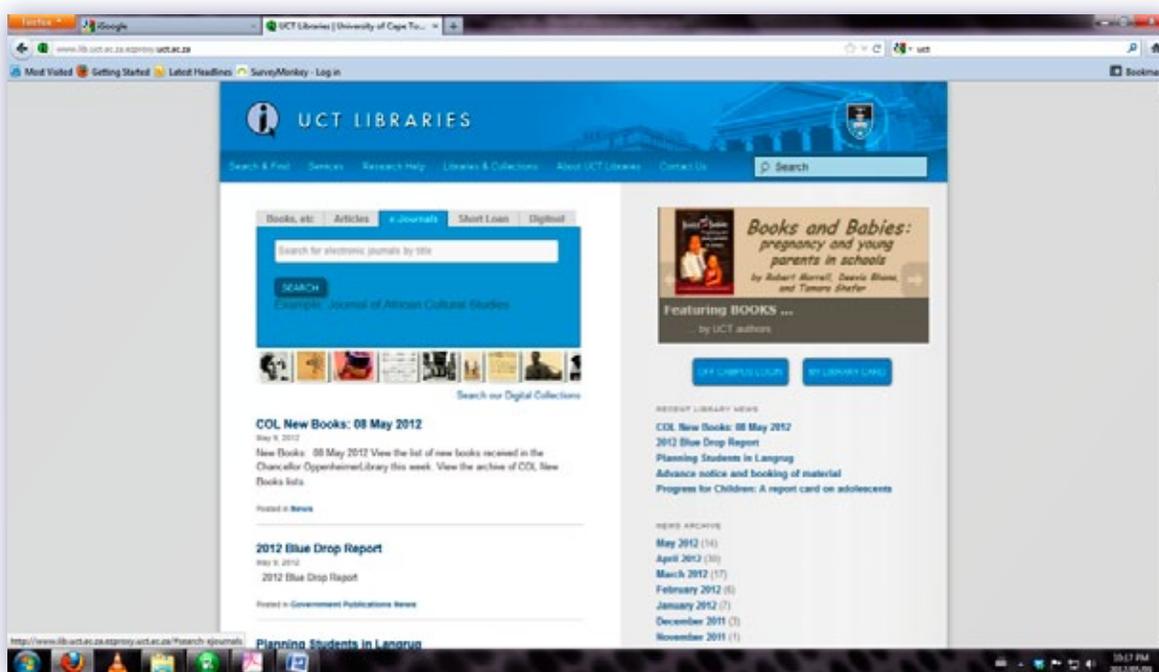
Enter your UCT student or staff number and password:



You are now in the EZProxy portal and have UCT access rights. Here you have a list of different resources – including Google Scholar. If you now search with Google Scholar, you should have access to all the journal articles.

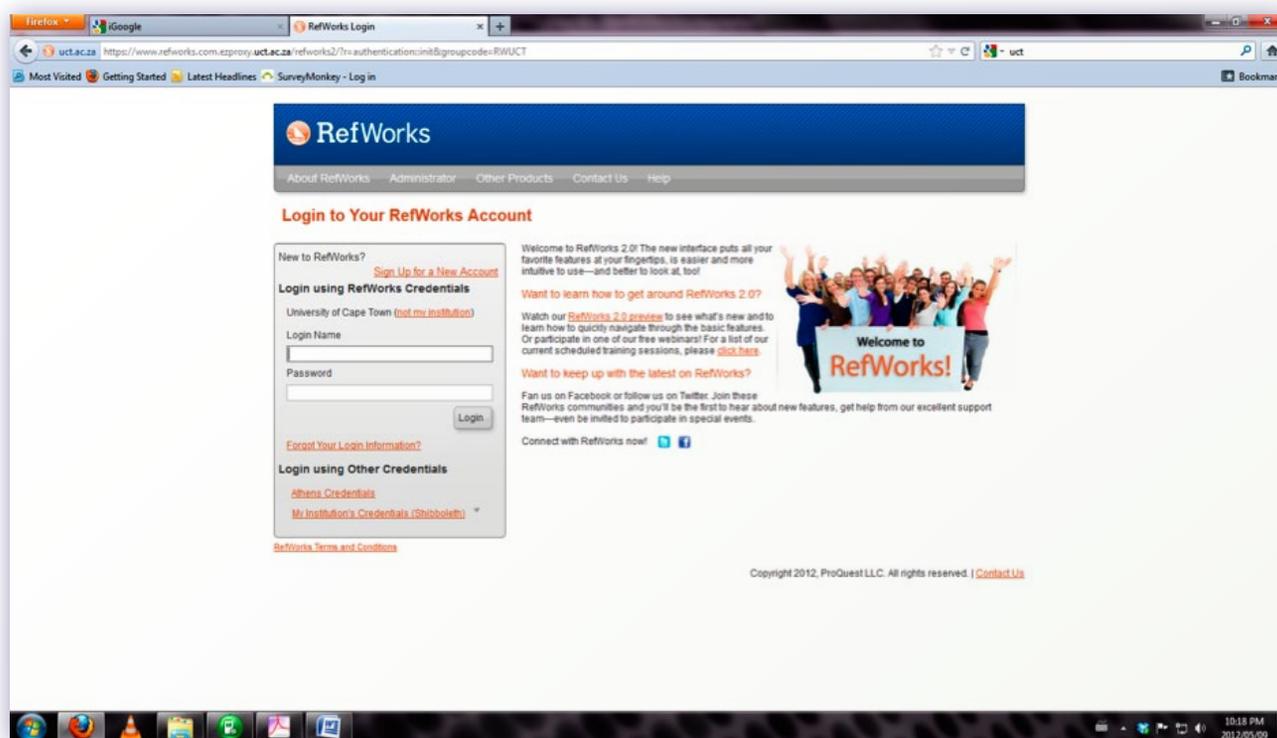


If you still have problems accessing a particular article, you can go and look for the journal in the UCT online library, to see if UCT has access. Go through EZProxy back to the 'UCT libraries' link, and search under e-journals for the article you need.



If you need more help with your research, the best people to ask about it are the library staff. On the main UCT library page, under 'Research Help' you will find a link to 'Subject Guides'. They will be able to help you with all your research needs!

One more important resource at UCT is 'Refworks'; an Online reference database that UCT students have access to for free. You can set up a Refworks account and store all your references in an online database, so you always have access to the references for the journal articles and books you have read. It also helps you compile a reference list at the end of your essay or thesis. Go to the Refworks website for more information (<http://www.refworks.com/>).



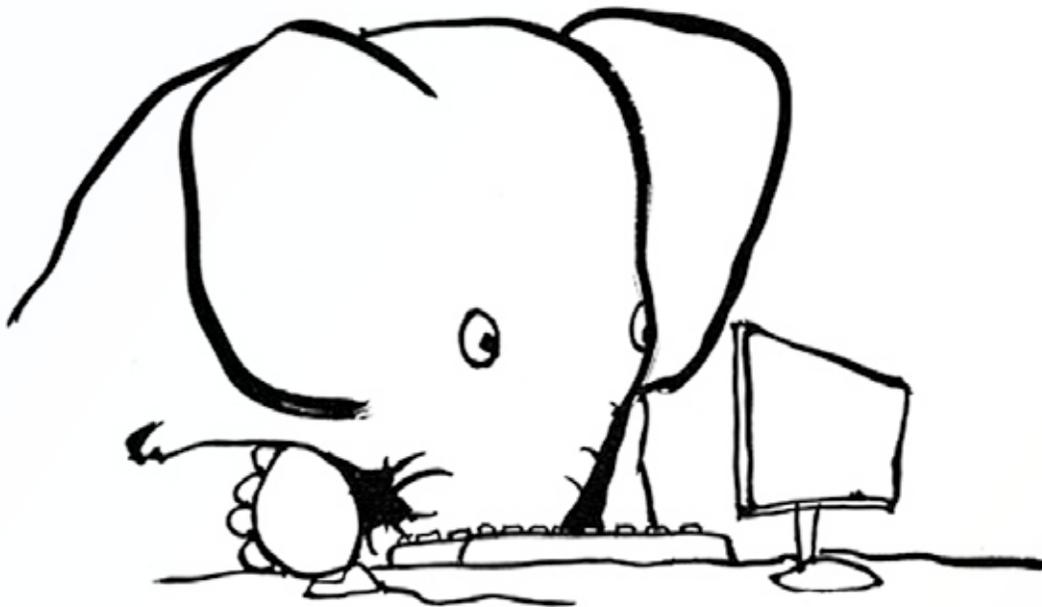
No matter whether you use referencing software or not, remember to keep track of all your references as you're searching and using them in essays – it will make things so much easier when it comes to compiling the reference list at the end! A good way of storing references is in a simple excel file, where you can list references, authors and keywords, and sort the data by any of these columns.

# Chapter 3: Reading

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## A workshop in academic literacy

Reading is fundamental to writing and research at University, but often gets overlooked – lecturers assume that students know how to read, and students assume there's only one way to read – but neither of these things is necessarily true! There are ways to read that can improve information processing, can help with building an argument, and importantly for many students, can save lots of time!! This chapter outlines different styles of reading that can be useful in different circumstances, and gives you tips on 'speed reading'.



## Styles of reading

*Scanning:* for a specific purpose

Like when you're looking up a name in a phone book: you move your eye quickly over the page to find particular words or phrases that are relevant to your task

Scan these parts:

- ▶ The introduction/abstract/preface
- ▶ The first and last paragraphs of chapters/articles
- ▶ The last section/chapter of an article/book
- ▶ The index

*Skimming:* getting the gist of something

Like when you're going through a newspaper or magazine: you read quickly to get the main points, skip the detail

Use it to:

- ▶ Preview a passage before you read it in detail
- ▶ Refresh your understanding of a passage after you've read it in detail
- ▶ Use it when you're trying to decide if a book in the library is a good one for your purpose/topic

*Detailed reading:* for accurate information

You read every word and work to learn something from the text

- ▶ Only for articles/chapters that you know are very relevant
- ▶ Skim first, then go back and get every detail
- ▶ Use a dictionary

## Active reading

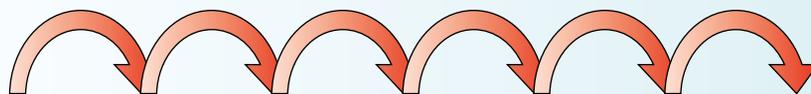
To ensure you're actively engaged with the text – not just passive reading

Always make notes:

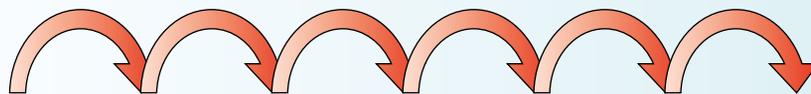
- ▶ *Underlining and highlighting (in photocopies)*: do this to the most important parts; use different colours for different aspects
- ▶ *Note key words*: try to make this thematic (linked to the topics that you are writing about). And remember: if it's not your book, make the notes in another document. For example, keep a file on your computer or keep a notebook for comments on the things you've been reading
- ▶ *Questions*: note down questions that arise as you are reading; do they get answered in the article?
- ▶ *Summaries – summarise in your own words*: the whole article if you're skimming or paragraphs if you're doing a detailed reading. Skim through again and check you've reflected the content accurately.



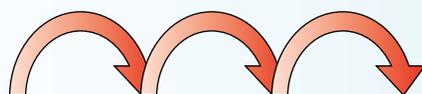
## Speed reading



➔ The average reading speed is 240–300 words per



minute. For the average reader, the eye fixes on



each word individually



➔ It is easy for your eye to recognise 4 or 5 words



in a single fixation without loss of understanding

## Worksheet 2

Now try speed reading for yourself.

- ▶ Don't try to increase the speed your eye moves
- ▶ Try to increase the space between fixations
- ▶ Tip: take a page of text and divide it into three with two vertical lines
- ▶ Use a pencil to point to the intersections and allow your eye to follow it

Try reading this piece of text using your pencil against the vertical lines:

### What is a global city?

Global cities emerge from a functional, rather than a territorial, organisation of the world economy. In other words, the economic world is no longer divided into territorial units. It is divided into units which perform different functions in the world economy. This is sometimes said to express a capitalist, rather than a statist, arrangement of forces. Rather than flows being channelled by states for their own ends, they are channelled by the 'world market'.

Advocates of the idea of global cities suggest that cities have now overtaken other spatial units such as states as the main focus of capitalist organisation. Functions are now divided between cities or city-regions.

The term 'global cities' is usually reserved for the top few cities with a truly global command role in the world economy. However, lots of other cities have undergone similar transitions. Many cities have turned into nodes within capitalism, with particular functions. It should also be added that some global cities are really massive areas consisting of several cities, sometimes with different governing regimes. For instance, the Hong Kong-Guangdong-Shenzhen region is usually treated as one big metropolitan region, as is the Randstad urban area in Holland.

Now summarise the text in the box below (without looking back at it). How much did you understand?

Speed reading takes practice – try to practice every time you read, you'll get better at it.

## Reading tips

Look for particular signals in the text:

- ▶ ‘three advantages of...’ or ‘a number of methods are available’... (lists will follow)
- ▶ ‘One important cause of... another important factor... the final cause of...’ (indicates a sequence – you can scan for the three causes)
- ▶ Points illustrated by examples – a topic sentence of a paragraph followed by an example

Read with a good dictionary, or an on-line dictionary resource

- ▶ Look at the full definition – some dictionaries just give synonyms (e.g. impetuous = rash) but a good dictionary will give you explanations and examples of use
- ▶ If you can’t find a good explanation for a term, ask your lecturer!

- Check the date of publication – is the information up-to-date?
- Read the title (obvious, but important!)
- Always read the abstract/synopsis first before the whole article
- The introduction and conclusion should be enough to tell you if the article is worth reading
- Check the contents page in a book for relevant chapters
- Look up references for your topic in the index
- Read the boldface headings in articles/chapters to see the structure
- Look at any maps, graphs or charts
- Make notes which identify key themes. Keep a spreadsheet with the author, title, and keywords (Refworks or excel spreadsheet); this will form the basis for your literature review.

# Chapter 4: Genres

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## A workshop in academic literacy

This chapter explains what genres are and why they are important to academic writing, and then describes some of the features of the key genre of a 'research report' (which can also be called a dissertation or thesis).



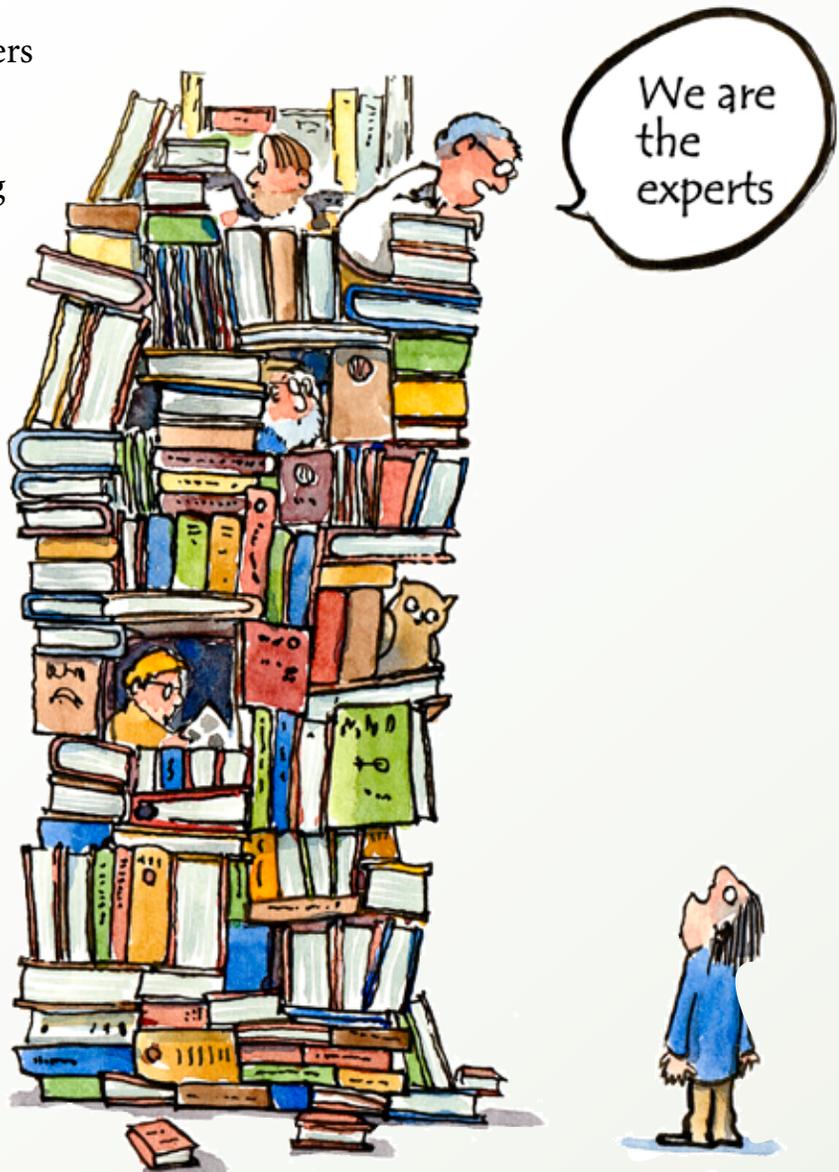
## What is academic research?

Academic research is one of the primary functions of a University. Alongside teaching, academics are expected to conduct research in their fields of expertise, and then publish this research in the form of conference papers, books, and articles in academic journals.

Most writing in academic institutions follows a regular pattern in terms of how it is structured and written. This also applies to postgraduate research reports: reports at Honours, Masters and PhD levels tend to follow a very similar structure to an academic journal article.

The structure is made up of chapters which follow 'genre' conventions. These conventions can be unfamiliar and can be bewildering when we begin our research. Many students particularly have difficulties with the literature review chapter /genre.

This document is intended to begin to explain why genres exist, to describe some of these genres (the 'research report' and its chapters), their features and purpose, and then to highlight some aspects of academic genres that can act as 'signposts' to help when you are writing up your research.



## What is a genre?

▶ Anne Freedman (1994): Genre is like a ceremony or ritual

▶ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: A particular type of art, writing, music, etc, which has certain features that all examples of this type share

▶ Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995): Genres are intimately linked to a discipline's norms, values and ideology

▶ Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995): Genre knowledge embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point of time

The purpose of a genre within academic writing is to meet a requirement of the discipline, for example, demonstration of knowledge of other authors working in the field (literature review); recognition of limitations (methodology); thoroughness (analysis) and so on. But genres aren't always neutral; power is at work within genres.



“Like other forms of discourse, genres are also socially constructed and are even more intimately controlled by social practices. Genres are the media through which members of professional or academic communities communicate with each other... Interactions and conversations enable consensus, on the one hand, and have a regulatory or limiting effect on the other, as to what should or should not be admitted into a community's body of knowledge.”

– Bhatia 1997

## Worksheet 3: Genre Examples

Look at the following examples of written genres: can you work out what kind of document they each came from?

(1)

The declaration was in two counts. In the first count, the plaintiff alleged that she, as patient, entered into a contract with the defendant, a surgeon, wherein the defendant promised to perform plastic surgery on her nose and thereby to enhance her beauty and improve her appearance; that he performed the surgery but failed to achieve the promised result...

(2)

A total of 102 prisoners face execution in Japan. Many of them are elderly and have spent decades in near isolation.

(3)

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft

(4)

So she sets her four-month-old daughter Lily down on her back on the living room rug, and goes, watch this...

(5)

Sales of our advanced technologies, which represented a larger proportion of our net product sales than routing, increased by 21% in fiscal 2008, due primarily to strength in sales of our unified communications and video systems products.

(6)

In the USA, the issue of homogeneity of the spatial units has led to the consideration of non-contiguous spatial groupings which combine areas of similar economic base. Shulman and Hopkins (1995), Mueller and Ziering (2001) and Mueller (2003) all look at cities with similar dominant industry employment bases such as manufacturing, transportation, government services, and so on.

## Format of a research report

A research report contains a number of different genres within it. Each serves a different purpose, form and style of writing.

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Acknowledgements
4. Plagiarism declaration
5. Table of contents
6. Lists of tables and Figures
7. **Introduction**
8. **Literature review**
9. **Methodology**
10. **Analysis**
11. **Conclusion**
12. Reference list
13. Appendices

The items highlighted in colour are the central five sections of a research report, and often correspond with chapters, e.g. *Chapter 1: Introduction*.

## Format Detail

**Title Page incorporates:** The title of the work, your name in full, the month and year, then.... Research Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of ... in the Department of ..., at the University of ...

**Abstract:** The work shall contain a short abstract (summary) of not more than 300 words, indicating the topic investigated, procedures followed, and conclusions reached, but should not contain any illustrative matter. A preface or abstract provides the author with the opportunity of explaining the purpose of the work, its problems, methodology and scope.

**Acknowledgements:** if any (Optional). People who have assisted in the preparation of the document should be formally acknowledged.

### **Plagiarism declaration**

**Table of Contents:** The table of contents should contain a list, with page numbers, of all preliminary matter, chapters and other divisions, references or notes, appendices (if any), bibliography and index (if any).

**Lists of Tables and Figures:** Separate lists (with page numbers) are required for tables, figures, (i.e. maps or diagrams), and photographs. Likewise a separate list containing the abbreviations utilised in the document must be incorporated in the preliminary pages.

**Introduction:** (Chapter 1) describing the topic, its significance, the research question and hypothesis/proposition (if applicable), the research approach and the contents of the document.

**Literature Review:** Chapter(s) that provides a review of the current literature in your research area.

**Methodology Chapter:** Review of methodologies used in works cited in the literature review and justification for the research method you have chosen.

**Analysis:** In which the topic is developed, the research is presented and the data collected is analysed.

**Conclusion:** (the final chapter) presents your conclusions. This should contain no new material and should relate back to the problem as stated in the introduction.

**List of References actually used:** The most common style of referencing at the University of Cape Town is the Harvard System. Check with your lecturers what referencing style they want you to use. The work of others must be properly acknowledged. This rule applies to drawings, graphs, tables, photographs as much as to quotations, whether direct or indirect.

**Appendices** A, B, C, etc. if required.

## Worksheet 4: Examples from dissertation

Can you identify which of the following examples comes from which section of the thesis (Introduction; Literature Review; Methodology; Data Analysis; Conclusions)? Think about the link between the style of writing and the purpose of the chapter.

(1)

su- qond' e- dorp- i famdukwana  
NEG2-go(Z)- LOC town(T)-LOC today(T)  
'Do not go to town today'

In this second example, we see dorp again prefixed by the locative e- and a shortened locative suffix (which would normally be -ini). Tsotsitaal via [or vaya] is replaced by the Zulu qond 'go', while the Tsotsitaal term famdukwana is an addition. The basic frame su- followed by e- remains the same as in example 1.

(2)

This thesis uses qualitative methods. As Coupland (2007: 209) argues, quantitative methods are more suited to studies of speech features in common such as dialect markers, than in looking at stylistic shifts and dynamism, and therefore would be inadequate to decipher what sets Tsotsitaal apart as a phenomenon.

(3)

The argument has been presented that the linguistic features of Tsotsitaal are primarily lexical, and that the lexicon is highly variable. There do, however, appear to be a core set of terms which are common across varieties. Beyond this, Tsotsitaal is constituted by substantial lexical innovation.

(4)

Research Questions

- ▶ Is Tsotsitaal a language of criminals?
- ▶ What kinds of identities have been and are being historically and culturally produced through the use of Tsotsitaal?
- ▶ What typifies Tsotsitaal? (e.g. grammar, lexicon, 'style')

(5)

Calteaux (1996) addresses this variation by utilising Giles, Bourhis & Taylor's (1977) accommodation theory model. Coupland (2007: 209) suggests this is a better model of actual language in use than linear scales of variation. Rather than focusing on the speaker as the speech producer making choices from a repertoire, speech accommodation (and the similar audience design model) looks at factors such as audience influence on variation.

# Chapter 5: Literature reviews

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## A workshop in academic literacy

The literature review is often the chapter or section in a piece of writing that students struggle the most with. This workshop explains some of the logic behind a literature review, and provides tips and advice for writing one.



## What is a literature review?

A summary and critical appraisal of writings by scholars and researchers on a particular topic

- ▶ To establish the most recent authoritative theory around a subject
- ▶ To find out the most widely accepted empirical findings on a subject
- ▶ To identify the available methods with proven validity and reliability
- ▶ To ascertain the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts, hypotheses etc.

A literature review involves discursive writing – it presents themes and concepts; and integrates ideas.



“Two processes are at work side by side, the reception of new material and the digestion and assimilation of the old; and both are essential...”

– Lord Raleigh 1884

A literature review is a synthesis of:

- ▶ What has already been written on the topic
- ▶ What has not been written on that topic (or is written in such a way that it is conceptually or methodologically inadequate)
- ▶ How the researcher’s proposal addresses the ‘gap’, silence or weakness in the existing knowledge base

Reviewing the literature does not mean simply reproducing it, but involves showing the relatedness of the literature to the research project.

The objectives of a literature review are to:

- ▶ Address a research question or thesis
- ▶ Critically appraise research for validity
- ▶ Synthesise and summarise current knowledge
- ▶ Identify controversies in literature
- ▶ Formulate questions for future research (gaps)

You should have a thesis statement for your literature review: your thesis statement will not necessarily argue for a position or an opinion: it will argue for a particular perspective on the material.

## How to manage sources in your literature review

You can think of a literature review as an upside-down triangle: you start with broad themes at the top (beginning) which set the scene. Slowly you focus and distill it until you are writing about the articles most relevant to your own study by the end of the chapter. In this way, you use the literature review to prepare the ground for your own research.



## How to structure your literature review

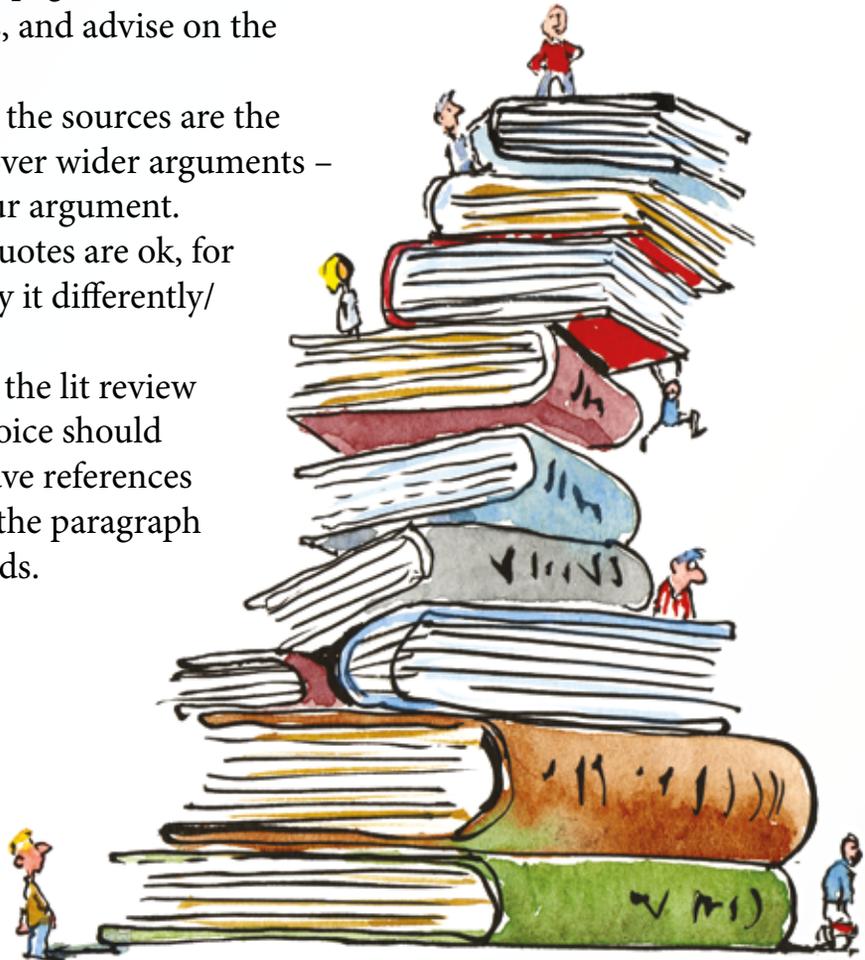
Organise by important topics and subtopics – you could try to develop a mind map to organise the review

Subsections of the literature review should include

- ▶ Introduction to lit review: idea of the topic, such as central theme or organisational pattern
- ▶ Body of lit review: Discussion of sources: arranged chronologically, thematically, or methodologically. Or, the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates
- ▶ Conclusions/recommendations of lit review: Discuss what you have drawn from the literature. Where might the discussion proceed? (e.g. identifying the gap your own research will fill)

Tips for writing the literature review

- ▶ Aim for a coherent, logical summary
- ▶ Use headings, sub-headings, and paragraphs to keep related points together
- ▶ Give general information before detail
- ▶ Keep it simple (words, sentences, and grammar)
- ▶ Use Cohesive techniques (see page 40)
- ▶ You may evaluate the sources, and advise on the most pertinent.
- ▶ Limit your topic – make sure the sources are the most relevant. Don't try to cover wider arguments – only those that pertain to your argument.
- ▶ Use quotes sparingly. Short quotes are ok, for emphasis, or if you cannot say it differently/better.
- ▶ Keep your own voice – while the lit review presents others' ideas, your voice should remain front and centre. Weave references to sources, but start and end the paragraph with your own ideas and words.



## Rhetorical moves in literature reviews

The literature review involves a series of ‘moves’ (rhetorical moves) that result in a logical argument:

**Move 1:** Point out the most significant and relevant sources of information to date

Read everything, but only include in your background/lit review those sources that teach you something significant about the causes, constraints and potential resources for addressing the problem.

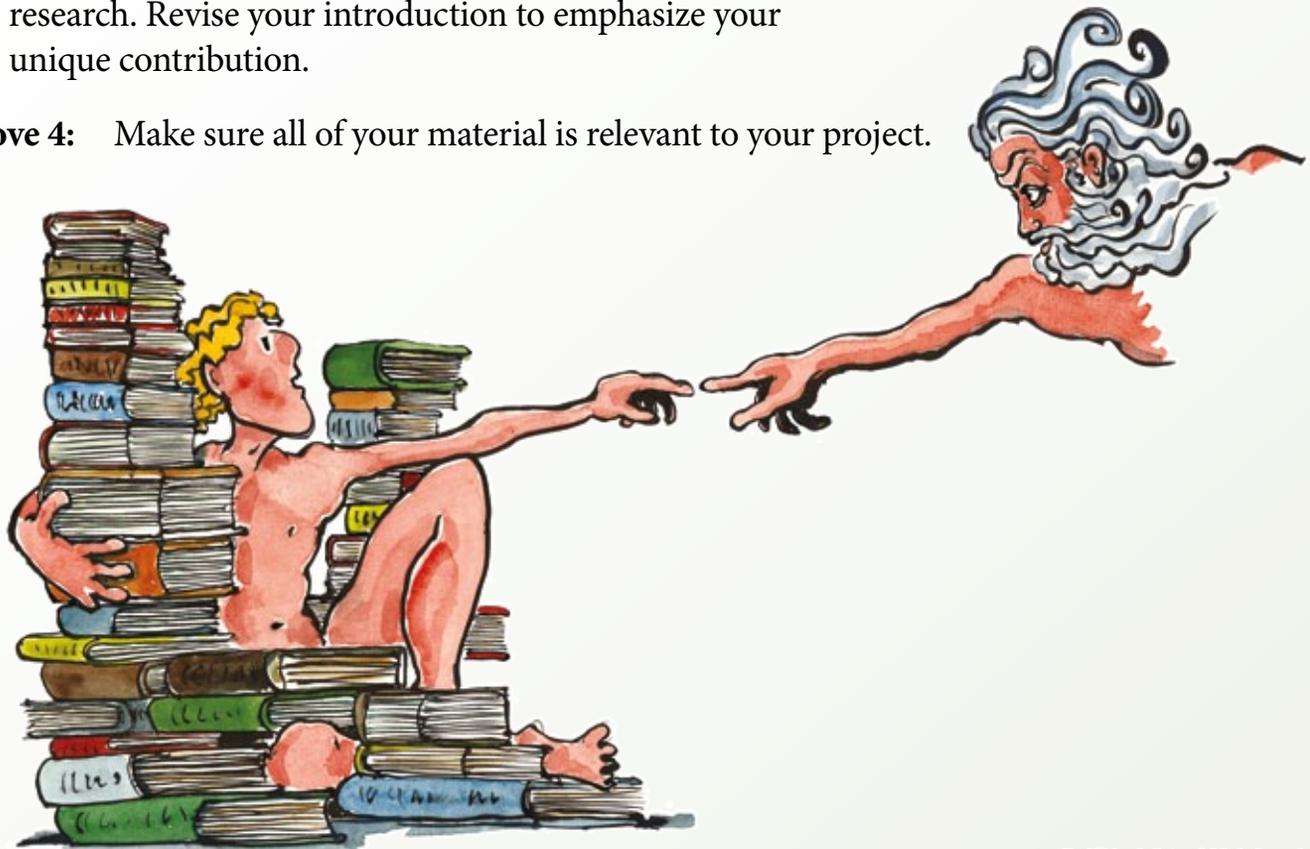
**Move 2:** Identify consistent patterns and points of agreement about these causes, constraints and resources across these texts.

Develop a grid of common points about these causes, constraints and resources. Organize your source notes underneath these points. Use these points as headings or topic sentences in your report. The review should not be a list of article summaries, but a discussion of key points about the problem, supported by sources.

**Move 3:** Identify inconsistencies and unresolved issues across these texts, to establish what is not known.

Name these gaps and unresolved questions as the focus of your research. Revise your introduction to emphasize your unique contribution.

**Move 4:** Make sure all of your material is relevant to your project.



By HikingArtist, ref: Michelangelo

## Cohesion in academic writing

When writing, try to use a range of words so that your writing doesn't become boring or repetitive. Try these synonyms for a start:

### ***Additive words***

Also, and, as well as, at the same time as, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, too, not only ... but also.

### ***Amplifications words***

As, for example, for instance, in fact, specifically, such as, that is, to illustrate

### ***Repetitive words***

Again, in other words, that is, to repeat

### ***Contrast words***

But, conversely, despite, even though, however, in contrast, notwithstanding, on the one hand /on the other hand, still, although, though, whereas, yet, nevertheless, on the contrary, in spite of this

### ***Cause and effect words***

Accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this reason, since, as, so, then, therefore, thus

### ***Qualifying words***

Although, if, even, therefore, unless

### ***Emphasising words***

Above all, more/most importantly, significantly

### ***Order words***

Afterwards, at the same time, before, firstly /secondly, formerly, lastly, finally, later, meanwhile, next, now, presently, today/yesterday/last week/next year, subsequently, then, until, ultimately, while, historically, in the end, eventually

### ***Reason words***

For this reason, owing to this, therefore

### ***Example***

For example, for instance

### ***Explanation***

In other words, that is to say

### ***Attitude***

Naturally, of course, certainly, strangely enough, oddly enough, luckily, fortunately, unfortunately, admittedly, undoubtedly

### ***Summary***

Finally, in conclusion, in short, to sum up



## Worksheet 5

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Try to rewrite the following paragraph using some of the words above.

The arguments over origins of the variety of Tsotsitaal from Sophiatown have influenced perceptions among scholars of what constitutes Tsotsitaal. Slabbert and Myers-Scotton (1997: 325), argue that Ntshangase's distinction between Tsotsitaal and Iscamtho is correct. They argue that these two varieties are independent 'code-switching patterns' which have 'fossilised', meaning that the Matrix Language can be predicted. They argue that that they are different varieties based on Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model. They argue that Iscamtho's matrix language is Zulu (or another Bantu language). They argue that Tsotsitaal's matrix language is Afrikaans. They argue that a language is best classified according to its grammatical frame. They argue there are ambiguities surrounding the naming of these varieties.

## Phrases and sentences for academic writing

These are common phrase forms in academic writing. See how many you can use in your literature review!

### *providing a context*

- ▶ Recent work in the field has shown that .....
- ▶ There has been much discussion about .....
- ▶ It is generally assumed/known that .....

### *situating your writing/stating your aim*

- ▶ This paper considers/looks at .....
- ▶ This discussion focuses on .....
- ▶ This essay analyses/shows .....

### *outlining the structure*

- ▶ This paper first considers ..... and then looks at .....
- ▶ The first section of the essay deals with ..... and the second half deals with .....
- ▶ This study is divided into three main sections: firstly, ..... is considered; secondly, ..... is analysed; finally, ..... is done.

### *referring to another author's idea or opinion*

- ▶ Marx puts forward the idea that .....
- ▶ In Lacan's view, .....
- ▶ According to Phillipson's perspective .....
- ▶ Jacobsen argues that .....

### *providing support*

- ▶ This shows that .....
- ▶ A clear example of ..... is .....
- ▶ For example, .....
- ▶ Wang's findings (2000) support this idea.

### *making a concession*

- ▶ Yamamoto's study provides much relevant information.
- ▶ Khumalo makes several interesting points.
- ▶ Cohen argues convincingly that .....

### *showing disagreement*

- ▶ While the discussion makes some good points, there are serious problems.
- ▶ There are several flaws in Smith's argument.
- ▶ Valdez' argument cannot be accepted for several reasons.

*comparing*

- ▶ Whereas Ahmed argues for ....., Kinsey presents a case against it.
- ▶ Surinam is considered to have a developing economy, however, France .....
- ▶ As with Britain, France is considered to have a developed economy.

*making a strong statement*

- ▶ China is, without a doubt, the world's .....
- ▶ Certainly, .....

*weakening a statement*

- ▶ This is possibly .....
- ▶ Some members of the population seem to .....
- ▶ Naidoo's argument is not completely valid .....

*speculating*

- ▶ South Africa could become .....
- ▶ This may result in .....
- ▶ This could potentially cause .....
- ▶ It may be the result of .....



# And finally ...

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## Writing Skills Checklist

### *Macro Issues*

#### Focus/Purpose

- ▶ Have the requirements of the assignment topic all been met?
- ▶ Any suggestions on how the assignment could be more focused?
- ▶ Is the language/presentation relevant to the audience?
- ▶ Does the presentation provide enough evidence to persuade the audience?
- ▶ Is the information presented in a logical and understandable way?

#### Structure: Coherence

- ▶ Does each paragraph flow naturally into the next?
- ▶ Are there clear linking words and sentences between the paragraphs?
- ▶ Have the paragraphs been presented in the best possible order?
- ▶ Are the graphs clearly explained in the text?

### *Micro Issues*

#### Paragraph Structure

- ▶ Does each paragraph have a topic sentence and a clear main idea?
- ▶ Does the topic sentence indicate clearly what the paragraph is about?
- ▶ Are all the supporting statements relevant to the topic?
- ▶ Are the supporting statements presented in the best possible order?
- ▶ Do all the supporting statements have elaborating detail which is relevant, convincing and logical?
- ▶ Are quotes clearly indicated by inverted commas and followed by author/date referencing?

#### Cohesion

- ▶ Do the sentences in a paragraph have sufficient linking words so that the paragraph is fluent and logical?
- ▶ Do the connections follow one another logically?
- ▶ Have a variety of linking words been used?
- ▶ Is the linking word appropriate for the meaning of the sentence?

### Appropriate Academic Register

- ▶ Have you referenced your sources?
- ▶ Are there any colloquialisms or slang?
- ▶ Are there any contractions (e.g. don't)?
- ▶ Is the writing concise? (i.e. not long-winded, verbose, repetitive; no euphemisms, clichés, or exaggeration)
- ▶ Has first person or third person voice been used appropriately and consistently?
- ▶ Have the graphical representations of data been integrated into the writing?
- ▶ Are the graphs clearly explained in the text?

### *Language*

Check the following:

- ▶ Spelling
- ▶ Complete sentences
- ▶ Verb and pronoun concord
- ▶ Punctuation
- ▶ Tenses
- ▶ Sentences that are too long or too short.

## Solutions

### Worksheet 1

Figure 1 indicates that as at 2004, about 89% of quantity surveyors have been using computers for quantity surveying services (Oyediran & Odusami 2005). There has been some tremendous growth in the number of surveyors who have been using computers from 1996 to date (Oyediran & Odusami 2005). A similar trend is noticed in the personal and corporate use of computers for quantity surveying services (Oyediran & Odusami 2005).

#### Reference:

Oyediran O S & Odusami K T (2005). A study of computer usage by Nigerian quantity surveyors. *ITcon* 10 291–303.

### Worksheet 3

#### 1. court proceedings

indicators include lexicon (plaintiff; defendant), punctuation, tone (precise, verbose?)

#### 2. news article (journalism)

the author does not include evidence or sources – unsubstantiated claims, exaggeration? ('many of them are elderly, and have spent decades in near isolation' – how many? How elderly? How many decades, and how isolated?)

#### 3. poetry

poetry is one of the most robust genres, it has developed over a long time and often follows strict rules (number of syllables, rhyming etc)

#### 4. online blog

some students say 'conversation' or 'transcribed interview' – the excerpt looks like speech because of the colloquial formations ('she sets her'; 'and goes')

#### 5. financial statement

lexicon (sales; 21%; fiscal) and 'commercial' aspects – forefronting the growth in sales

#### 6. academic literature

lexicon (homogeneity; consideration of non-contiguous spatial groupings); referencing practices; dense writing (excessively so?)

### Worksheet 4

1. Analysis
2. Methodology
3. Conclusions
4. Introduction
5. Literature review

## Source of workbook materials

Reading tips (chapter 3) Developed from materials made available by the Nottingham Trent University and the University of Southampton

Research report outline: adapted from RIBA dissertation handbook.

'Rhetorical moves in literature reviews' adapted from work done by Lorraine Higgins and John Trimbur, WPI.

'Cohesion in academic writing' and 'Writing Skills Checklist' by Arlene Archer of the UCT Writing Centre

'Phrases and Sentences for Academic Writing' by Sheryl Cooke of the UCT Writing Centre

## More resources for writing available on the internet

There are many resources available on the internet to help us with our research and writing. Just remember to be discerning. Try to source material from academic institutions where possible; your own institution is likely to have writing resources online, or you can try other institutions with .edu or .ac in their web address.

For a start, you can try the Purdue writing lab which has great resources even for non-Purdue students: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>



## The Writing Centre at UCT

The Writing Centre is a dynamic skills-based unit, created to provide a walk-in, one-on-one consultancy service for students from all faculties, and all academic levels of the university.

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