

Academic Writing Style Guide



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Introduction

This guide is a summary of the writing style required of students of Setanta College. Knowledge of the guide is essential when compiling any Setanta College written assessments, projects or case studies.

Also ensuring that you are familiar with the Turnitin student manual, the Setanta College referencing guide and the Setanta College plagiarism policy found on moodle are of vital importance when completing assignments.



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Abbreviations, contractions and acronyms

In an abbreviation, the end of the word is omitted, for example, 'prof.' is an abbreviation for 'professor'.

In a contraction, middle letters are omitted, for example, 'Dr' is a contraction for 'Doctor' and 'contd' is a contraction for 'continued'.

In an acronym, only the first letter of each word is given, for example, WHO stands for World Health Organization. The acronym can make up a new word, for example, NASA. The word 'scuba' started out as the acronym for 'self-contained underwater breathing apparatus'. If you are using many abbreviations or acronyms, provide a list of them at the beginning of your assignment.

Alignment

Text should be left aligned. Do not use the Justify setting as this can lead to formatting and presentation problems. Left-aligned text is easier to read.

Appendices

Appendices should be named alphabetically (Appendix A, Appendix B) or numbered (Appendix 1, Appendix 2).

Font

Use a plain, easy-to-read font style, such as Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial. Use font size 12 for the body of the essay.

Headings

The use of headings in essays is optional. A well-crafted essay with a clear argument might not require headings. However, they can be used to guide the reader through the essay – acting like signposts and helping to focus both the student and the assessor. Be consistent with the size of headings, for example:

- Title (font size 16, Bold)
- Heading 1 (size 14, Bold)
- Heading 2 (size 12, Bold)
- Heading 3 (size 12, Italics)

Ideally, use the facility for headings in Microsoft Word (Home tab ► Styles) because this allows for consistency and generation of a table of contents, if required. However, if choosing to use the sizes outlined above, you will need to update the Styles settings to match them. Whatever headings you decide to use, be consistent. Only the first letter of the first word of each heading or subheading is capitalised (except in the case of proper nouns).

Line spacing

The recommended academic standard is 1.5. Single line spacing is not normally used in academic work except for quotations over twenty five words. Only put a single line space between paragraphs and be consistent throughout the essay.

Numbers

Numbers up to and including one hundred should be written in words; numbers over one hundred are presented as numerals. For example, 'There are seven days in a week and 365 days in a year.' The exception to this is when reporting statistics, for example, '70% of respondents favoured continuous professional development.'

Page numbers

Page numbers should be centred at the bottom of the page.

Paragraphs

Remember that paragraphs consist of more than one sentence. A paragraph should focus on a single idea, theme or argument. Linking sentences from one paragraph to another ensures coherence.

Direct quotations

Direct quotes having fewer than twenty five words should be enclosed in single quotation marks, and they should be integrated in the text as in the following example:

As stated in *Periodization Training for Sports* ‘the entire training program is aimed at achieving peak performance for the most important competitions of the year’ (Bompa et.al, 2005, p.4)

Use double quotation marks for a quote within a quote, for example:

Carrera states that ‘as a result of such adaptation, the CNS “learns” when and when not to send a nerve impulse that signals the muscle to contract’ (Carrera, 2006, p188).

Quotes having more than twenty five words should be indented, single spaced and presented in font size 11. Full terms should be spelt out before their acronyms, as shown in the following example for NSCA, when the acronym is being introduced for the first time:

The National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA, 2012) set out the following training methods for power development:

Methods for developing power in athletes include heavy resistance training (in accordance with the power requirements of the sport), ballistic training (which should constitute a considerable proportion of the training volume), plyometrics, and weightlifting. Resistance training for strength translates to gains in power performance, but probably not immediately. Tapering and recovery are important aspects of a training program that should vary according to the performance demands of sport. (NSCA, 2012, p.105)

Note: When providing a page number for a quote, it should be accompanied by the full in-text citation, as in the previous example: (NSCA, 2012, p.105)

References

All universities and colleges have their own home rules when it comes to referencing. Some are based on the Harvard, Chicago or American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. Setanta College uses the Harvard Referencing style. Please study the *Referencing Guide* found on Moodle and comply with its guidelines. All references cited in the essay must be contained in the 5 references list at the end of the essay and paginated with the main text body. Do not use the term Bibliography, which refers to all work, read but not included in the main body of the text.

Tables

Tables should be numbered and have a heading, for example: Table 1: Learning outcome assessment matrix. The format should be consistent throughout the essay.

US/British spelling Use British English spellings.

For example, words such as analyse, criticise, colour and programme should not be confused with American English spellings (analyze, criticize, color and program). Consult the Cambridge Dictionaries Online, or similar, to check spellings when you are not sure.

Word count

The purpose of a word limit is to give all students, across the University, a clear indication of the maximum length of a piece of assessed written work, the amount of work expected and therefore how much detail they should go into and how they should allocate time to one piece of assessed work in relation to others. Writing to set word limits is a skill required within some professions, as well as an academic skill. Word limits are set appropriate to the assessment outcomes.

The policy is that the coursework instructions for all levels within the student handbook will clearly state a maximum word count beyond which nothing will be marked. This maximum will include any margin for tolerance which has been set (i.e. a word count with +10% tolerances), if your module guide does not state that 10% tolerance will be given then it does not exist for that module. If an executive summary or abstract is required then a separate word count for this should be specified. More info on the word count can be found in the Student Handbook on Moodle.

Summary

Before submitting an essay, ensure that it complies with the following rules:

- Read continuous assessment guidelines carefully, and ensure you answer the question or address the issues that have been presented.
- For academic referencing, use the Harvard Referencing Style.
- Use simple, plain British English.
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Use consistent tenses.
- Have a clear structure, including an introduction and conclusion to the topic being pursued.
- Ensure there is appropriate flow to the paper with sections linking naturally to one another.
- Writing should be coherent with one paragraph following logically from another.
- Avoid non-sequiturs – where one idea does not follow from another.
- The assignment should be well laid out with appropriate line spacing, font size, paragraphs, page numbers and title page.
- Ensure you keep within the word count limit.
- Numbers one to one hundred are spelt out and numbers over one hundred are presented as numerals.
- Avoid plagiarism.

References

Ritter, R.M. (2002) *The Oxford Guide to Style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bomba, T.O.& Carrera M.C (2005) *Periodization Training for Sports*.

Hoffman, J.R. (2012) *NSCA's Guide to Program Design, Science of Strength and Conditioning Series*.



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