



CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COLLEGE

# Academic writing

## Writing at tertiary level

Most university assignments require an analytical style, rather than a descriptive one. It is most unlikely that the simple reporting of facts will ever be sufficient. Usually, the concepts under consideration will have to be explained or interpreted. Merely presenting unrelated or unexplained material, however relevant that material may be, is insufficient. The relationships within the material and between that material and the topic must be clearly explained.

### Preparation

Preparation of an assignment should not be attempted without a clear understanding of what is to be said. Consider the following steps:

- Carefully study the assignment question.
- Gain a clear understanding of what is required in the assignment.
- Understand the “directive” words: analyse, compare, contrast, examine.
- Determine the key concepts of the topic.
- What are the explicit and implicit issues inherent in the question?
- Are there any sub-questions?
- Can you use the main question and any sub-questions to break the assignment down into bite-size parts?

- How do these parts relate to each other?
- How do they relate to the topic as a whole?
- How can these relationships be examined in an essay?
- Will this correspond to the assessment criteria?

A careful analysis of these component parts will help to bring about an understanding of what is required in the assignment as a whole. This is also an important reason for reading widely, as wide reading will lead to a clearer understanding of the topic under discussion, and this in turn will lead to a clearer and more lucidly written essay. Attempting to write without really knowing clearly what to say will usually result in convoluted logic, tangled sentence structures and an assignment that is extremely difficult to understand.

Assignments are marked not only on content, but according to the criteria the lecturer has set. Therefore, it is essential that these criteria are kept in mind as assignments are written. Marks will be lost if the work does not meet the criteria for the assignment.

### **Academic genres**

There are a number of different types of assignment commonly required of students, including:

- Essays
- Reports
- Book reviews

- Annotated bibliographies

Table 1. provides brief descriptions of these academic genres.

Table 1. Summary of academic genres

Genre	Description
Essay	The English word “essay” comes from the Old French word “assaier”, meaning “to test” or “to try”. Writing an academic essay involves the ... process of evaluating, of weighing up a topic - you examine a statement, or a concept, or a situation to test its value, to find its strengths and weaknesses. When you have weighed up the facts you should come to some conclusion on what you've found (Curtin University, 2006).
Report	A report is a structured written presentation directed to interested readers in response to some specific purpose, aim or request. There are many varieties of reports, but generally their function is to give an account of something, to answer a question, or to offer a solution to a problem (Curtin University, 2006).
Business report	Business reports are required in disciplines such as accounting, finance, management, marketing and commerce. Often the type of assignment set is a practical learning task requiring you to apply the theories you have been studying to real world (or realistic) situations. In business, the information provided in reports needs to be easy to find, and written in such a way that the client can understand it. This is one reason why reports are divided into sections clearly labelled with headings and sub-headings (University of Wollongong, 2000).
Business case study	Case studies are written summaries of real-life business situations based upon data and research. In reading a case study a picture of what has happened to a company over a period of time can be gained. These could include events such as organisational change and strategy decisions within an organisation as well as outside factors and influences. A case study can be a shortened, second hand version of a real-life situation (University of Auckland Library, 2006).
Book review	A book review is a reaction paper in which strengths and weaknesses of the material are analyzed. A book review is not a retelling of the text. Students are often assigned book reviews as practice in careful analytical reading. Book reviews should focus on the book's purpose, content, and authority. The reviews include a statement of what the author has attempted to convey, an evaluation of how well the author has conveyed his/her idea(s), and presentation of evidence to support this evaluation (East Carolina University, 2006).

Annotated Bibliography	An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited (Cornell University, 2006).
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Sources:

Cornell University. (2006). *How to prepare an annotated bibliography*. Retrieved from

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>

East Carolina University. (2006). *How do I? Write a book review*. Retrieved from [http://www.ecu.edu/cs-](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/reference/display.cfm?id=78)

[lib/reference/display.cfm?id=78](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/reference/display.cfm?id=78)

*StartUp – Study skills: Writing skills*. Retrieved from <http://startup.curtin.edu.au/study/writing/index.html>

University of Auckland Library. (2006). *Case studies*. Retrieved from

[http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subjects/bus/topicguides/case\\_studies.htm](http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subjects/bus/topicguides/case_studies.htm)

University of Wollongong. (2000). *Unilearning website*. Retrieved from <http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/>

A useful comparison of two of the most common academic genres has been provided below in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparing reports and essays

Reports	Essays
The purpose of a report is to convey specific information to provide the reader with information.	The purpose of an essay is to show how well you have understood the question and are able to answer it.
A report usually contains a description of events/results of research.	University essays usually require some form of argument in response to the essay question.
A report may often contain conclusions and recommendations	An essay will contain a conclusion, but including recommendations is rare.

Source: University of Wollongong. (2000). *Unilearning website*. Retrieved from

<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/>

Detailed instructions regarding the structure of specific academic genres are beyond the scope of this document. Lecturers will provide information about what is expected for an assignment.

## Essays

If the recital of facts does not make an essay, neither does the recital of opinions. Essays should not merely be uninformed opinion on a subject, nor is it sufficient to simply present the views or opinions of other people without, in some way, analysing those views or synthesising several views into a whole argument. Rather, an essay should demonstrate effective research, wide reading and opinions formed out of a sound understanding of the subject. The essay should provide a carefully reasoned and logical case, including supporting evidence, which clearly and specifically answers the questions or issues to be addressed. An essay question might call for the evidence for or against a given argument to be considered and for a decision about whether or not the evidence justifies the conclusions that have been drawn from it. Often the very assumptions that undergird the conclusions other people have drawn will need to be examined.

Gathering information is only the first step in writing an essay. Evidence needs to be sifted and analysed in the light of the question to be answered. The relevance of the information and how it fits into the argument must be decided. The grade awarded for the work will depend on the extent of the student's reading, the judgements made in selecting relevant information from the research, and effective thinking about how that information relates to the topic.

A good essay develops an argument, rather than presenting opinions or prejudices. Personal prejudice or partiality should never be allowed to distort judgements about the evidence. It is important to be willing to look at all the arguments, not just one side, and to be ready to revise an opinion if necessary.

## Information sources

Once you have your assignment or research topic, begin to gather information from authoritative reference sources. The Librarians will be happy to show you how to use the various research tools within the library and may suggest other sources of information.

Sources of information include:

- Reference books (e.g., dictionaries and encyclopaedias) to define your topics and refine your search.
- Text books and the recommended readings provided by your lecturer.
- Online library catalogues.
- Newspaper articles.
- Journal articles.
- Current research from the worldwide web.

Depending on the resources available and the length requirements of your assignment, you may find it necessary to widen or restrict the scope of your topic. To refine your search it can be helpful to consider questions of “who”, “how”, “when”, “where”, and “why”.

All sources of information are not equivalent or equal, especially when selecting material to cite in academic writing. Table 3 lists several types of source document in order of credibility for the purposes of supporting academic writing. In general, cite documents higher in the table rather than those lower down:

Table 3. Hierarchy of source documents for academic writing

Order	Description	Example(s)
1.	Peer-reviewed publications	Journal articles, conference papers
2.	Research-based writing leading to a recognised degree such as Master's	PhD theses, Master's dissertations
3.	Non peer-reviewed academic <sup>1</sup> publications	Books written by academic authors
4.	Non-published academic writing	Conference papers
5.	Other writing by an author with a doctorate or professorship <sup>2</sup> in the field	Online articles by academic authors
6.	Books by non-academic writers	
7.	Non-academic periodical writing under an editor	Magazines, newspapers
8.	Collaborative online writing, subject to peer review and editing	Wikipedia
9.	Self-published works	Self-published books
10.	Non-edited writing for a wide audience	Newsletters
11.	Personal writing	Blogs, forum posts, comments on online articles, emails

**Notes:**

1. Academic writing refers to "the academy" – the worldwide community of universities and other recognised higher educational institutions, including CHC.
2. In the U.S., most lecturers have the title "professor"; in the UK and Australia denotes a position of higher status, and thus greater credibility to an author.

## A working reference list

As you examine each source, make a separate note of each fact or quotation you might want to use in your assignment. Unless you are very good at manipulating text with your word processor, it might be wise to use index cards when preparing notes. Be sure to:

- Fully identify the source of the information (include all required pieces of information, such as the page number on which the information appears).
- Try to summarise the information in your own words (paraphrasing); use quotation marks if you copy the information exactly.
- Give each listing a simple descriptive heading. This will provide the authoritative basis for your assignment's content and documentation. By arranging and rearranging the listings and using your descriptive headings, you may well discover a certain order or different categories, which will help you prepare an outline. You may find that you need additional information, or that some of the listings may not be appropriate and should be set aside or discarded.

## Preparing and using outlines

Using an outline can help you organise your material and can also help you discover connections between pieces of information that you were not aware of when you started the assignment. It can also make you aware of information that is not really relevant to the assignment or material that you have duplicated.

A **Working outline** might be only an informal list of topics and subtopics for the assignment.

The working outline can be revised as you discover new material and get new ideas that ought to go into your paper. Most word processing programs have outlining features with automatic formatting that make it easy to create and revise outlines. It is a good idea to keep copies of old outlines in a computer folder, in case new versions of the outline lead you in false directions that you later abandon.

A **Final outline** should enhance the organisation and coherence of your research paper. Material that is not relevant to the assignment as revealed in your outline should be deleted; other weak sections may need to be expanded to create a sense of balance in your argument and presentation. A final outline can be written as a topic outline, in which you use short phrases to suggest ideas, or as a sentence outline, in which you use full sentences.

## Plagiarism

Any assignment submitted as part of CHC work must be the original work of the student who submits it. Although the thinking which goes into preparing the assignment will be based on research and reading, the paper submitted should constitute the student's own ideas, or an evaluation and critique of the ideas of others, and should be written in the student's own words. The ideas and words of others that have been used in forming opinions must be acknowledged where they occur in the text.

CHC defines plagiarism as the action or practice of using someone else's ideas or phrasing and representing them as your own, either on purpose or through carelessness, without acknowledgment. Ideas or "phrasing" includes written or spoken material, from whole papers and paragraphs to sentences, statistics and graphs, and even phrases. "Someone else" can mean an author of a book or journal, an electronic resource such as material found on the worldwide web or another student. Plagiarism also relates to work that is produced co-operatively between two or more students without the lecturer's consent.

### Types and degrees of plagiarism

The term "plagiarism" includes a variety of academic misdemeanours, ranging from comparatively minor paraphrasing errors to outright theft of another person's work. Note that each of the following is an example of plagiarism, and so similar cases may be dealt with as such by CHC:

*A student copies a paragraph from an online article, changes a few words so that it is not a verbatim quote, and then acknowledges the source. This is known as "sham paraphrasing". Even a key phrase copied*

from another writer must be placed in quotation marks, to show that it was not written by the student.

*A student paraphrases from another article, but does not cite the source.* This is “illicit paraphrasing”. Ideas taken from another author’s work must be acknowledged as such.

*Two students collaborate on an assignment, and then submit two copies of the work that are identical, in part or in whole. Unless a lecturer has clearly and explicitly stated that collaboration is expected on a piece of assessment, assume that it is not permitted. A student copies entire sentences or paragraphs verbatim from a text without acknowledging the source.* This is “verbatim copying”, and is a serious breach of academic standards of honesty.

*A student submits an assignment that was previously submitted for another subject.* This is known as “self-plagiarism”, “recycling” or “double-dipping”. If you have an assignment to write that is similar to an assignment already written and submitted for another unit or course, check with the lecturer about reusing any of that material.

*A student submits an assignment that was written by (and perhaps purchased from) someone else.* This is “ghost writing”; a student who does this is guilty of clear dishonesty.

*A student copies from another student’s assignment or another person’s text without the person’s knowledge.* This is known as “purloining”, and is a serious breach of academic honesty.

## Examples of plagiarism

The following examples of incorrect use of quoted or paraphrased sections are based on the following excerpt from Sire's (1988, p. 24) book *The Universe Next Door*:

During the period from the early Middle Ages to the end of the seventeenth century, very few challenged the existence of God or held that ultimate reality was impersonal or that death meant individual extinction. The reason is obvious. Christianity had so penetrated the Western world that, whether people believed in Christ or acted as Christians should, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith. Even those who rejected the faith often lived in the fear of hellfire or the pangs of purgatory. Bad people may have rejected Christian goodness, but they knew themselves to be bad by basically Christian standards—crudely understood, no doubt, but Christian in essence. The theistic presuppositions which lay behind their values came with their mother's milk.

### *Verbatim copying:*

During a very long time, very few challenged the existence of God or held that ultimate reality was impersonal or that death meant individual extinction. The reason is obvious. Christianity had so penetrated the Western world that, whether people believed in Christ or acted as Christians should, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith (Sire, 1988)

This entire paragraph is almost a direct quote from Sire, yet there are no quotation marks and the original source is not mentioned. Note that merely including the citation (Sire, 1988) at the end of this paragraph is not sufficient; every paragraph, sentence or phrase that is a verbatim quote must be enclosed by quotation marks. The above is a clear example of dishonest writing which is not allowed at any university.

*Sham paraphrasing:*

Very few people, from the early Middle Ages to the end of the seventeenth century, challenge the existence of God, or hold that ultimate reality is impersonal or that death means individual extinction (Sire, 1988).

This paragraph includes key phrases in Sire, such as “from the early Middle Ages to the end of the seventeenth century” and “death [means] individual extinction”, which therefore should be inside quotation marks. By leaving these marks off, the writer is giving the (false) impression that all the words are his or hers, and that they are paraphrased from Sire’s original text. This is also dishonest, and constitutes plagiarism. Note that by trying to make the text fit, the writer has done damage to Sire’s original meaning. It would be far better to quote Sire verbatim in this case.

*Illicit paraphrasing:*

Since the Western world had up to that time been immersed in Christian thought, between the Middle Ages and the 17th Century people basically believed that God was real, and that death was not the ultimate end of an individual life.

This paragraph succinctly paraphrases Sire's ideas, but the source of the ideas is not acknowledged. It is normal practice to write about ideas already expressed in another writer's work. However the source(s) of these ideas must be acknowledged, both in text and in the reference list.

*Appropriate citation:*

As Sire (1988) explained, "for many centuries after the Middle Ages, most people assumed that God truly existed. Bad people may have rejected Christian goodness, but they knew themselves to be bad by basically Christian standards—crudely understood, no doubt, but Christian in essence" (p. 24).

This example contains a paraphrase and a quotation, both appropriately attributing the ideas to Sire's writing. Note that since the paraphrased section is based on the writing of Sire specifically from page 24, the in-text citation includes the page number. The second in-text citation does not include the author's name or the publication date, since it is clear that the quoted text is taken from Sire (1988), previously cited in the same paragraph.

### **Penalties for plagiarism**

The penalty for plagiarism is usually determined by the lecturer concerned, working within CHC policy. Plagiarism is considered cheating and may involve failure or repeating of the assignment, it could mean failure for the entire unit of study or course, or in very serious cases could lead to exclusion from CHC. Ignorance is no excuse, and carelessness is just as bad as purposeful violation. Honesty and integrity are at the heart of all academic discourse, and any violation of these principles has to be dealt with firmly and appropriately. It is the expressed

goal of CHC to help students to become responsible members of their Christian and academic communities.

## Using inclusive and unbiased language<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This section based on: Snooks & Co. (2002). *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (6th ed.). Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons.

### Gender-specific pronouns

Most gender problems can be avoided without the use of the awkward “he/she” or “him/her” construction by rephrasing a sentence so that the singular pronoun is avoided. For example, use “teachers”, in place of “a teacher”. An occasional “he or she” is all right, but after a while it becomes too demanding of the reader’s attention, and the device becomes more important than the message. Where a singular pronoun is necessary, use either the masculine or feminine consistently enough to avoid confusion. One way to avoid other clumsy constructions is to use plural pronouns “they”, “them” and “their”. Note that there is considerable difference of opinion among academics on this point. If in doubt, check with your lecturer.

### Options for avoiding gender-specific pronouns

Note the following advice regarding use of gender-neutral pronouns to fix a clumsy sentence such as “Every candidate must provide copies of the application to his/her referees”:

- Recast the sentence in the plural:  

Candidates must provide copies of the application to their referees.
- Leave the pronoun out altogether:  

Every candidate must provide copies of the application to referees.

- Recast the sentence to avoid pronouns:  
Copies of the application must be provided to referees.
  
- Repeat the noun:  
Every candidate must provide copies of the application to the candidate's referees.
  
- Use the alternative pronouns *his or her* or *his/her* (or *her/his*):  
Every candidate must provide copies of the application to his or her referees.  
Every candidate must provide copies of the application to his/her referees.
  
- Use the gender-free pronoun *you*:  
You must provide copies of the application to your referees.
  
- Use the gender-free pronoun *they*:  
They must provide copies of the application to their referees (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 59).

### **Sexist terminology**

A responsible, sensitive writer will never make demeaning assumptions about gender role.

Whether words such as “chairman” are sexist and hurtful, and whether their substitutes such as

“chairperson” are unnecessary and cumbersome, are arguments about which there are various opinions, but if we can avoid the argument or offence via the use of substitutes, it is worthwhile to do so.

### **References to individuals’ names**

Since naming systems other than those in English-speaking countries may place a family name before given name(s), the terms “given name” and “family name” should be used in place of “Christian name”, “first name”, “forename” or “surname” (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 58).

### **Avoidance of stereotypes**

Write about individual people, rather than referring to groups in a stereotypical way. The following comment is from the University of Colorado at Boulder’s (2002) online Style Guide:

Remember the prime directive: Write about people as individuals, not as members of some stereotypical group. ... Do not, therefore, write about engineering students as if they were all male. Do not write about professors as if they all dress in tweed and can’t remember where they parked their cars.

### **References to ethnic groups**

When referring to specific ethnic groups, make sure the term you use “really represent[s] the population in full” (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 56). The following terms are recommended:

- *Indigenous* – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (but avoid “non- indigenous” as it is seen as divisive). Avoid use of the term “native”.
- *Immigrants* – People newly from other nations.

- *LOTE* (“language other than English”) – in preference to NESB (“non-English speaking background”).
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- *Aboriginal peoples*
- *Australian Aboriginals*
- *Torres Strait Islanders*
- *Aborigine* – When referring to an individual.
- *Aboriginal* – When referring to an individual; also used as the adjective. Always capitalised when referring to Australia’s original inhabitants.
- *aboriginal* [No capital letter] – When referring to original inhabitants of nations other than Australia.

### **Writing about sensitive or controversial topics**

Christian writers, including students, write at times about topics that may involve the expression of views which do not agree with views commonly held by Christians. For example, a student enrolled in a Youth Studies course may interview “street kids” about their views of the Church: it would not be surprising to collect statements in such a study which included obscene language

and other potentially offensive language. This may require careful handling, in order not to cause offence or other problems with those reading the work. The following guidelines should be adopted for such topics:

- As in all academic writing, include material which advances your main points by illustrating or supporting your own statements.
- Do not shy from accurate expression of the truth merely because it may not agree with a reader's viewpoint; nevertheless, do not include potentially offensive or controversial statements merely to shock or titillate the reader.
- Use offensive language or terminology in your writing only when it is justified to quote another person verbatim; do not use such language in your own expression of your views.
- Use an asterisk (\*) as a substitute for each letter in a word that is considered to be profane, vulgar or obscene in polite society. Include the first letter of such a word only if it is necessary to indicate which profanity was expressed.

### **Referring to sexual matters, including sexual orientation**

Of all the views held by Christians, those on sexuality are possibly the most strongly held and the most controversial when discussed with other Christians, or to other readers outside the Church. In a spirit of striving to avoid offence whenever possible, writers should approach such topics with care and sensitivity. Write with civility and courtesy; avoid needless offence to any person. Guidelines for such discussion in academic writing include:

- Describe such matters using clear language which is restricted to factual statements as far as possible, rather than statements of opinion.
- Use correct medical or scientific terms where relevant, rather than vulgar or colloquial equivalents, except when the particular terminology is the subject of discussion, or when quoting a statement by another person.
- Use the terms “gay male”, “lesbian”, “bisexual” and “transgender”, where relevant to describe persons of particular sexual orientation. Avoid the term “homosexual” when referring to a person.
- Use the term “gender” rather than “sex” to refer to a person as male or female.

## Reviewing your work

Clear and concise writing is a great virtue in scholarship. Polishing up the final product can take your work to a more professional level. It is worth the extra effort to improve your final result.

Critically reviewing and proof reading your work is the final process in assignment writing. Some questions need to be asked:

- Does the assignment answer the question?
- Is the argument clear and logical?
- Is the paper structured to help the reader follow the argument?
- Are there any sentences or phrases which are ambiguous, obscure or liable to misinterpretation? If so, they need to be re-written.
- Is there any unnecessary wordiness, repetition and circumlocution (arguing in circles) that can be removed?
- Is there any slang, jargon or vagueness which could be replaced to aid clarity?
- Is the assignment padded with any unnecessary or long quotations, irrelevant or repetitive information, or unnecessarily long sentences?
- Are the sentences short and simple? It is best to truncate long, rambling sentences.

- Has the use of point or note form writing been avoided? Point form content needs to be re-written into sentences, unless the lecturer concerned has indicated that point form is appropriate.
- Do paragraphs relate to each other? The assignment should flow smoothly.
- Does the content fulfil the assessment criteria?

### **The mechanics of writing**

Tertiary students are expected to display a high standard of proficiency in the mechanics of writing. In an effort to cultivate a standard of academic excellence, every CHC program has compulsory assessment criteria related to the mechanics of writing. It is the responsibility of students to become aware of the resources available to help refine and further develop their writing skills, in addition to the resources pertinent to the discipline they are studying.

### **Spelling**

The standard for spelling at CHC is British/Australian spelling. When searching library catalogues or the worldwide web, note that you may need to search under both standards. One example that is significant for Social Science students is the spelling of “counselling” or “counsellor” - the British/Australian spelling doubles the “l” while the American spelling does not. Two other common differences from American spelling are that: Australian spelling uses “ise”, rather than “ize” (as in realise), and “our” not “or” (as in colour).

**Note:** When using direct quotations or referring to titles of works, do not change any spelling, but quote verbatim (word for word).

## Capitalisation

Capitalise:

- The first word of every sentence.
- The first-person singular pronoun, “I”.
- The first, last, and important words in a title.
- Words derived from proper names including nouns, verbs and adjectives, when the connection to the original name is relevant.
- Platonic, Freudian, Shakespearean, Christian, Hellenic, Homeric, Marxist, Newtonian, Wesleyan.
- Abbreviations of units of measurement derived from a person’s name, and litres.
- (since “I” may otherwise be confused with “1”). kW (kilowatt), N (Newton), mL (millilitre).
- Abbreviations of prefixes for metric units “mega” and above. M (mega), G (giga), T (tera), P (peta), E (exa).

- Proper nouns - names of people, companies, newspapers, books, days of the week, months of the year, historical events like World War I, races, nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions, church organisations, movements, sects, institutions, names of courses, brand names, countries and recognised geographical names.

Alexander the Great, Microsoft, the Courier-Mail, Asian, Aboriginal, French, Jewish, Christian, Islam, Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism, Marxism, Amish, Brisbane City Council, Bachelor of Arts, Surf (laundry detergent), the Netherlands, the Three Sisters.

**Do not** capitalise a word such as “school” or “college”, where that word is used in its generic sense, including in subsequent references to a particular body or organisation (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 123).

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**Do not** capitalise terms which, though they were derived from a proper noun, have come into common usage in English as adjectives.

french chalk, herculean, roman numerals, venetian blinds, brussels sprouts, catholic tastes, congregational singing, orthodox belief, northern England

### Christian and religious terms

Capitalise proper nouns pertaining to deities and sacred texts. Traditionally, many Christian terms have been capitalised; current common usage is to avoid “deferential capitalisation”, and to use capitals only in specific contexts. As a general rule, decide whether you are using a term as a proper noun or title, or in a generic or adjectival sense. Capitalise the names of God, scriptures, and so on, when they are used as a title, or when referring to a recognised body of work:

God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, El Shaddai, the Bible,  
Allah, the Koran, the Gospel of John, the Epistles, the  
Pauline Letters, the Holy Scriptures

When religious terms are used generically (other gods) or adjectivally (the gospel writers), capitals are not used. However, it should be noted that there are diverse opinions among believers about the capitalisation of many terms that occupy a central position in the Christian and other faiths. You should judge each instance according to both its specific context and your own personal convictions. Above all, as in all matters of writing style, be consistent. The following phrases include examples about which there might be differing opinions regarding the use of capitalisation:

the Gospels, scripture, Jesus is our redeemer, the  
Christian ethic, biblical injunction, God's words of  
encouragement, the Word of God

Current practice is moving away from capitalisation of divine pronouns: “In the past, the capital letter assigned to God was often extended to the attendant pronouns—He, Him and His; You and Your; Thou, Thee and Thine—but this is now less common” (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 127).

Each writer should decide whether or not to capitalise these words, again according to context and personal convictions. Once again, the overarching principle to follow is to be consistent in your writing.

### **Place names**

The following advice describes appropriate use of place names for Australian writing, modifying the usual APA style which originated in the USA. This should be followed for CHC assignments, including when referencing the place of publication of a cited document.

- Assume that Australian capital cities are well-known to the reader, but other places are not.
- Refer to Australian capital cities by name, without state or country. For all other Australian cities, state the name and the state or territory. Do not refer to Australian suburbs. Instead, refer to the cities in which they lie (e.g., “Melbourne” not “Carlton, Victoria”).
- Refer to New Zealand cities by name and country.
- Refer to all US cities by name and state or territory, without country; abbreviate states’ names (see Table 5). Spell out “WA” as “Washington State” if there is any danger of confusion with Western Australia.
- Refer to all other cities by name and country.

### Place name abbreviations

Do not abbreviate New Zealand or Australian states' names when used in text; do abbreviate in references (see Table 4).

Table 4. Abbreviations of Australian States and New Zealand

Australian Capital Territory	ACT
New South Wales	NSW
Northern Territory	NT
Queensland	QLD
South Australia	SA
Tasmania	TAS
Victoria	VIC
Western Australia	WA
New Zealand	NZ

**Note.** Notice the capital letters and the absence of full stops.

Table 5. Abbreviations of U.S. States and Territories

Alabama	AL	Missouri	MO
Alaska	AK	Montana	MT
American Samoa	AS	Nebraska	NE
Arizona	AZ	Nevada	NV
Arkansas	AR	New Hampshire	NH
California	CA	New Jersey	NJ
Canal Zone	CZ	New Mexico	NM
Colorado	CO	New York	NY
Connecticut	CT	North Carolina	NC
Delaware	DE	North Dakota	ND
District of Columbia	DC	Ohio	OH
Florida	FL	Oklahoma	OK
Georgia	GA	Oregon	OR
Guam	GU	Pennsylvania	PA
Hawaii	HI	Puerto Rico	PR
Idaho	ID	Rhode Island	RI
Illinois	IL	South Carolina	SC
Indiana	IN	South Dakota	SD
Iowa	IA	Tennessee	TN
Kansas	KS	Texas	TX
Kentucky	KY	Utah	UT
Louisiana	LA	Vermont	VT
Maine	ME	Virginia	VA
Maryland	MD	Virgin Islands	VI
Massachusetts	MA	Washington	WA
Michigan	MI	West Virginia	WV
Minnesota	MN	Wisconsin	WI
Mississippi	MS	Wyoming	WY

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations should be used sparingly throughout your paper. Always indicate what an abbreviation means the first time it is used, by showing the name in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. An example would be Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Thereafter, use the abbreviation.

### Abbreviations with full stops

- Common Latin terms - etc. (et cetera - and so forth), i.e. (id est - that is), e.g. (exempli gratia - for example), et al. (et alii - and others).

- Reference abbreviations - Vol. 1, 2nd ed., p. 6, pp. 6-8.
- Time indications - a.m., p.m.

### **Abbreviations without full stops**

- Titles - Mrs, Mr, Ms, Ps (Pastor), Dr, Rev, St (for Saint), Sr, Jr. The plural of Mr is Messrs (We invited Messrs Lloyd, O'Hara and Taylor.); the plural of Dr is Drs (We consulted Drs Anway, Alexander and Price.); the plural of Mrs is Mmes.
- Abbreviations with more than one capital letter - RSPCA, GPO.
- Degrees - PhD, MD, BA, Med.
- Names of familiar institutions - CHC, SES.
- Countries - USA, UK.
- Names of states and territories - NT, NSW.
- Corporations - IBM, CNN.
- Famous people - QEII, JFK.
- Very familiar objects - TV, VCR, CD-ROM.

- Contractions (abbreviations which include at least the first and last letters) - Dept, Pty.
- Mathematical units - 15 kg, 15 m. Note that a space is required between the number and the abbreviation, and there is no “s” after these abbreviations even when the plural is indicated. A full stop is not used with metric unit abbreviations, except at the end of a sentence.
- Long, common phrases - IQ (Intelligence Quotient), rpm (revolutions per minute).
- Year indications – AD (Anno Domini [in the year of our Lord]), BC (Before Christ). Note that some writers use BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (the Common Era) as substitutes for these terms. However, CHC uses the labels “BC” and “AD”.

### **Words not to be abbreviated**

**Do not** abbreviate:

- Words such as through (thru), night (nite). Note that the abbreviated style of communication commonly used in emails, Short Message Service (SMS) text messages and instant messaging is not acceptable in formal writing.
- The word “and” with an ampersand (&). The exception to this is when separating names of joint authors for an in-text citation that is within brackets, and in the reference list.
- A title not attached to a name; i.e., see the doctor - not see the Dr.
- Days of the week or months of the year (in the normal flow of text).

- Words at the beginning of a sentence.
- People's names, unless those abbreviations have come to be accepted as nicknames for those individuals.

### Bible abbreviations

OLD TESTAMENT		NEW TESTAMENT	
Genesis	Gen.	Matthew	Matt.
Exodus	Ex.	Mark	Mark
Leviticus	Lev.	Luke	Luke
Numbers	Num.	John	John
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Acts	Acts
Joshua	Josh.	Romans	Rom.
Judges	Judg.	1 & 2 Corinthians	1 & 2 Cor.
Ruth	Ruth	Galatians	Gal.
1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Sam.	Ephesians	Eph.
1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Kings	Philippians	Phil.
1 & 2 Chronicles	1 & 2	Colossians	Col.
Ezra	Ezra	1 & 2 Thessalonians	1 & 2 Thess.
Nehemiah	Neh.	1 & 2 Timothy	1 & 2 Tim.
Esther	Esther	Titus	Titus
Job	Job	Philemon	Philem.
Psalms	Ps.	Hebrews	Heb.
Proverbs	Prov.	James	James
Ecclesiastes	Eccles.	1 & 2 Peter	1 & 2 Pet.
Song of Songs	Song.	1, 2 & 3 John	1, 2 & 3 John
Isaiah	Isa.	Jude	Jude
Jeremiah	Jer.	Revelation	Rev.
Lamentations	Lam.		
Ezekiel	Ezek.		
Daniel	Dan.		
Hosea	Hos.		
Joel	Joel		
Amos	Amos		
Obadiah	Obad.		
Jonah	Jonah		
Micah	Mic.		
Nahum	Nah.		
Habakkuk	Hab.		
Zephaniah	Zeph.		
Haggai	Hag.		
Zechariah	Zech.		
Malachi	Mal.		

### Abbreviations of Bible versions

Amplified Bible	AB
King James Version	KJV
New International Version	NIV
New King James Version	NKJV
Revised Standard Version	RSV
Jerusalem Bible	JB
The Message	TM

### Scientific names and common names

In botany and related fields, species of living organism are assigned scientific names which are unique to a species or variety. If a common name for that species exists, when first referring to the species indicate the common name in brackets after the full scientific name. For later references, the common name is used alone.

#### *First mention:*

Polemonium foliosissimum var. molle (Greene) Anway  
 (Towering Jacob's Ladder) (see Integrated Taxonomic  
 Information System, 2006)

#### *Successive references:*

Towering Jacob's Ladder

### Italics

Italics are used to distinguish certain words from others within the text. Underscoring signifies the same thing as italics; therefore it would be incorrect to use both within the same text.

Italics are used for:

- Titles of books, journals, magazines, plays, musicals, theatre, television and radio programs.
- Introduction of new terms and labels (the first time only).
- Statistical symbols (*t* test).
- Volume numbers in reference lists.
- Names of vehicles.
- Foreign words or phrases if they are not commonly accepted.
- Works of art.
- Famous speeches.
- Pamphlets and brochures.

Italics do not include punctuation marks (end marks or brackets, for instance) next to the words being italicised unless those punctuation marks are meant to be considered as part of what is being italicised. When an exclamation mark or question mark is part of a title, make sure that that mark is italicised along with the title.

**Do not italicise:**

- The titles of sacred works: the Bible, the Koran.
- The titles of books of the Bible.
- Common foreign words or phrases such as “bon voyage”.

It is important not to overdo the use of italics to emphasise words. After a while, it loses its effect and the language starts to sound like something out of a comic book. Noises or sounds are often written in italics: *Grr!* went the bear. However you would say “the bear growled” because “growled” reports the nature of the sound but does not try to reproduce it. Please note that entire quotes should not be italicised in student assignments.

## Numbers

The recommendation here is meant primarily for standard academic prose. Business and technical writing sometimes goes by a different set of standards, and writers of those kinds of text should consult a manual dedicated to those standards.

### Numbers expressed in figures:

- Numbers 10 and above - 12, 50.
- Numbers below 10 that are compared with numbers 10 and above - the 4th and 11th grades.
- Measurements - 3 cm, 5 mL.
- Decimals, percentages, and fractions - 2.4, 5%, 4¼. Use a zero before the decimal point for numbers less than one - 0.64.
- References to written numerals - The flashcard showed a figure 4.
- Finances: Tickets cost \$8.50. They spent \$1.1 million. Include a comma to separate thousands in financial figures (\$25,750), but in other contexts put a space to separate groups of three digits (12 600 350).
- Ranges - Between 18 and 25 students.

- Scores - The Soccerroos won the final game by a score of 3 to 1.
- Refer to dates in the order day, month, year, without commas (30 September 1959) . Avoid ordinals when writing dates, such as 30th September or 30th September.
- Time - 9:15 a.m. If you use the word “o’clock” spell the number - seven o’clock.
- Numbers of participants in a study - 3 subjects.
- References to a numbered series - Grade 8, Table 3, chapter 5, page 43.
- Scripture references - 1 Corinthians 13:1.
- To make plurals out of numbers add “s” only with no apostrophe - the 1990s.
- Do not combine words and numerals when one number follows another.

**Numbers expressed in words:**

- Numbers below 10 (except when comparing them with numbers 10 and above) - six colours, nine books.
- Any number that begins a sentence or title - Three Blind Mice.

- Common fractions - one fifth of the class.
- Political and military units (for numbers of one hundred or less) - Seventh Precinct, Fifty-third Regiment, Third Battalion, Eleventh Artillery.

## Punctuation

Once again, one of the most important things to remember is to be consistent.

### The comma ,

Use a comma:

- To separate the elements in a series (three or more things), except the last two (the green, orange and yellow gerberas). Note that a comma should be used before “and” or “or” in a list, if needed to avoid ambiguity: He ate breakfast: cornflakes, toast and jam, and coffee.
- Before a conjunction (and, but, for, yet, or, so) to connect two ideas (The weather was too hot, so they went to the beach).
- To set off introductory elements, as in: However, there are other matters...
- To set off parenthetical elements, as in: The research, which had been conducted externally, raised further questions. By parenthetical

element', we mean a part of a sentence which can be removed without changing the essential meaning of the sentence. It basically means "added Information".

- When both a city's name and that city's state or country's name are mentioned together. (Lucy lived in Brisbane, Queensland, for 20 years).
- To separate coordinate adjectives. Basically, if you can put an "and" between the adjectives, a comma will probably belong there (the professional, experienced researcher).
- To set off phrases that express contrast: The puppy was cute, but very messy.
- Between a name and a title when the title comes after the name: Brian Millis, College Principal.

**Note:** for long numbers, the international convention is to use spaces between the groups of three digits (5 456 783), but the APA system specifies commas (5,456,783). For sums of money spaces are recommended (\$14 682), except where there is a potential risk of falsification. In such instances, for security reasons either the spaces may be eliminated or commas may be used (\$14682 or \$14,682).

Do not use a comma:

- Between a subject and its verb: Believing in the rule of law means...
- Between a date and the year: 30 September 1959.

- Between a name and suffix: Bob Smith Jr., Sandy Scott II.
- After the street number in addresses: 322 Wecker Road.

### **The semicolon ;**

Use a semicolon:

- To separate closely related independent clauses. My grandmother seldom goes to bed early; she is afraid she will miss out on something. The semicolon allows the writer to imply a relationship between balanced ideas without actually stating that relationship. (Instead of saying “because my grandmother is afraid she will miss out on something”, we have implied the “because”. Thus the reader is involved in the development of an idea – a clever way of engaging the reader’s attention).

- To separate elements in a series which themselves contain commas

(Books were required for Counselling, Social Sciences and Welfare; Business and Management; and Education and Humanities).

## The colon :

Use a colon:

- Before a list.
- Between a grammatically complete introductory clause (one that could stand as a sentence) and a final clause that illustrates, extends, or amplifies the preceding thought. If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter.

They have agreed on the outcome: Informed participants perform better than do uninformed participants (APA, 2011, p. 90).

**Note:** Apart from such uses, do not use a colon before a direct quote.

## The slash or oblique /

A slash is used to indicate a choice between the words it separates. The slash can be translated as “or”. There is no space between the slash and the letters on either side of it. Do not use “and/or” constructions. Write a phrase instead:

Monday, Tuesday, or both; not Monday and/or Tuesday.

There is, however, a space when the slash is used to indicate a line-break in quoted poetry: The woods are lovely, dark, and deep / but I have promises to keep. (This way of quoting poetry is limited to four or five lines of verse, within the normal flow of text).

A more recent use of a slash is in a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for a worldwide web address (<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar.htm>). Be especially sure not to include spaces and not to confuse the slash with its backward cousin, \ used to show computer file locations on drives.

### **The hyphen -**

At CHC fully justified text is generally preferred. Words are not to be hyphenated at the end of lines.

The main uses of hyphens are to:

- Create compound words: `six-year-old`, `out-of-date`.
- Add prefixes to words. The general rule here is when a prefix comes before a capitalised word or the prefix is capitalised, use a hyphen: `non-English`.
- Nearly always separate the prefixes “self”, “all”, and “ex”: `ex-husband`.
- Separate repeated letters when the prefix ends with the same letter that the prefixed word begins with: `anti-intellectual`, `co-operation`.

### The dash (em rule) —

The em rule (so named as it is about the width of a capital “M”) may be used as set out in the following examples:

- To mark parenthetical elements, a pair of em rules can be used to isolate a parenthetical expression within a sentence:

“National policies may change the decision-making environment water licensing reform is an example or provide guidance on suitable areas for government investment”.

Em rules are a good choice if the break is reasonably abrupt or if a word or phrase from the preceding clause is expanded on. Parentheses could be used, but they would give less emphasis to the bracketed text (Snooks & Co., 2002, pp. 106-107).

To clarify a statement, or to collect a complex list of elements, that could otherwise lead to confusion or ambiguity. For example:

Curiosity, reverence for nature, pleasure in conversation within a small circle of friends, respect for the privacy of the individual—all these qualities could, it was thought, be developed in anyone.

## The apostrophe “

An apostrophe is used to create contractions and possessive forms, but not plurals. The apostrophe shows where a letter or letters have been left out of a contracted verb, for example:

“I am” = “I’m”, “I would” = “I’d”, “I will” = “I’ll”.

Contractions should not be used in academic writing. An exception would be when quoting someone’s words in a transcript. Do not confuse “they’re” short for “they are” with the homophones “there” or “their”.

An apostrophe also indicates the possessive. The placement of the apostrophe depends on whether the noun that shows possession is singular or plural. Generally, if the noun is singular, the apostrophe goes before the s: dog’s tail. If the noun is plural, the apostrophe goes after the s: dogs’ tails. However, if the word is pluralised without an s, the apostrophe comes before the s: children’s books.

Remember that “its” means “it is” or “it has”. **Confusing “it’s” (the contraction of “it is”) with “its” (the possessive of “it”) is perhaps the most common error in writing.** (Correct: The dog chewed its bone. It’s a new day.) Since contractions are rarely used in academic writing, there will be few occasions to use “it’s”.

It is no longer considered necessary or correct to create the plural of years or decades or abbreviations with an apostrophe. 1980s, PhDs, IQs, CDs.

Apostrophes **are not** used:

- To form plurals of ordinary nouns: photos, videos. However, an apostrophe is used to form the plurals of letters and digits: A's, 6's.
- In Australian place names involving possessives (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 86): Kings Cross, the Devils Marbles, St Marys.
- When a plural noun is “descriptive rather than possessive”, or for expressions of time (Snooks & Co. 2002, p. 87): drivers licence, girls grammar school, visitors book, six weeks time, three months wages, graduates procession. But for singular time references an apostrophe is needed: a day's journey, the year's cycle.

### **The full stop (US: period) .**

Use a full stop:

- At the end of a sentence that makes a statement.
- At the end of an indirect question.
- Only once at the end of a sentence, even if the sentence finishes with an abbreviation.

### **The quotation mark “ ”**

Verbatim quotes of another writer's words must be enclosed by quotation marks. Direct quotes should only be included when:

- They will enrich the assignment.

- They are crucial to your argument.
- The phrasing is particularly apt.
- The idea could not be expressed any more clearly or simply.
- They are relevant and necessary to support or illustrate your argument.
- They will not disrupt the flow of the essay.

Use quotation marks:

- To set off the title of an article or chapter in a periodical or book when the title is mentioned in text. Note that titles of stand-alone documents (books, journals, newspapers etc.) are italicised: Smith, in *"The Research Process"* in *Journal of Psychological Reasoning* stated...
- To introduce a word or phrase considered slang, to show an invented or coined expression.
- When a quoted section is less than five lines (APA style: less than 40 words) and can be placed within the text.

Do not use quotation marks for block quotations exceeding five lines (APA: 40 words) in length.

Type the quoted section in a new paragraph, indented five spaces (normally one tab space) from the left-hand margin.

**Notes:**

- If quotation marks appear within the text of a quotation that already has quotation marks around it (a quote within a quote). In Harvard style the quote will have single quotation marks, so the inner quotation should be set off with double quotation marks. In APA style the quote will have double quotation marks around it, and the quote within that quote will have single quotation marks.

APA: "in marketing your product or service you must  
'identify the uniqueness' of that product or service"

HARVARD: 'in marketing your product or service you must  
"identify the uniqueness" of that product or service'

- A period should appear outside the final quotation mark unless the quoted material is a full sentence and stands completely alone that is, without any "he said" or other carrier expression (Snooks & Co., 2002, p. 115).

As noted by Wigley (2003), "in marketing your product or  
service you must identify the 'uniqueness' of that  
product or service" (p. 45).

As noted by Wigley (2003, p. 45), 'in marketing your  
product or service you must identify the "uniqueness" of  
that product or service'.

In marketing your product or service you must identify the 'uniqueness' of that product or service.

In marketing your product or service you must identify the "uniqueness{" of that product or service.

### Square brackets [ ]

Use square brackets sparingly:

- Square brackets enclose explanatory words or phrases within quoted language.
- When you have changed a word to make the material fit into your sentence, enclose that changed word within square brackets. You may change the capitalisation of the first word of a direct quote without formally identifying the change.

[The School of Education] specified that..." (where the original quote was "They specified that...").

- Within quotations, enclose "*sic*" within brackets, to denote misspelled or inappropriately used words (note that this does not apply to American spellings in an American work). Always quote another writer's words verbatim in a direct quote.

The child wrote "I done [sic] my homework".

- When you have italicised words within quoted language that was not italicised in the original, you can note that change in brackets included within the sentence or paragraph.

"The original [italics added] results indicated that..."

- Use square brackets to enclose parenthetical material inside already bracketed text.

(The control group [n = 6] showed higher ability.)

### **The ellipsis ...**

The ellipsis consists of three evenly spaced dots with spaces between the ellipsis and surrounding letters or other marks. It is used when words are omitted when quoting material. The ellipsis can also be used to indicate a pause in the flow of a sentence and is especially useful in quoted speech.

### **The exclamation point !**

In academic writing, an exclamation point is used rarely, if at all. The exclamation point denotes the end of an emphatic declaration, or command; for example: “No!” If an exclamation mark is part of an italicised or underscored title, make sure that the exclamation mark is also italicised or underscored.

### **Brackets (US: parentheses) ( )**

If the material is important, use some other means of including it within your text without using brackets, even if it means writing another sentence.

Use brackets to include material that you want to de-emphasise or that would not normally fit into the flow of your text but you want to include nonetheless. If the material within brackets appears within a sentence, do not use a capital letter or end- mark to punctuate that material, even if the material is itself a complete sentence. If the material within your brackets is written as a separate sentence (not included within another sentence), punctuate it as if it were a separate sentence.

## **Spacing**

Use one space after colons, commas, semicolons, and after punctuation marks that separate parts of a reference citation.

The current policy for both APA and Australian Government styles is to use one space between sentences.

## **Paragraphs**

A paragraph should generally consist of three to seven sentences developing a single idea. A new paragraph should be commenced when the subject under discussion changes. Connecting words or phrases are used to show how the argument flows from one point to the next. Long paragraphs will lose the reader and should be divided into shorter sections. In academic writing a single sentence is rarely used as a paragraph.

## **Personal pronouns**

Personal pronouns should be avoided in academic writing. The subject of the assignment is the topic, not the writer. Personal pronouns include: I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, we, us, our, ours. Also avoid the term “the writer”. Always write in the third person unless the assignment specifically calls for personal experience or opinion.