

## PREPARING ASSIGNMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Students should research, prepare, and submit assignments at as high a standard as possible. The student will find that they get out of an assignment what they put into it. Remember too that if your assignments are carefully prepared and presented they will be useful for examination revision and also become a very valuable part of your own personal reference library.

### ASSIGNMENT WRITING

#### Time Allocation

Apportion your time so that you get the assignment submitted by the due date. Most assignments will require the following time allocation.

- (a) Planning and research about 40%,
- (b) Writing about 40%, and
- (c) Referencing, revising and proof reading, etc., about 20%.

#### The topic of your assignment

Careful analysis of the topic is the very first task. Make sure you read (and write out) the actual topic accurately. Students often write on topics of their own devising rather than the topic set. e.g., a student may be required to submit a paper the following topic:

*“Critically evaluate the introductory problems in Hebrews, under the following headings: To whom was Hebrews written? Who was the author/s? What problem/s gave rise to the letter? How did the author/s address the problem/s.”*

This topic requires the students to discuss four things, which should be taken in systematic order, i.e.,

- (a) To whom was Hebrews written?
- (b) Who was the author/s?
- (c) What problem/s gave rise to the letter?
- (d) How did the author/s address the problem/s?

#### Preliminary reading

Students should always consult (*in this order*):

- (a) Your unit plan;
- (b) Your textbook;
- (c) Your course notes &/or course reader;
- (d) Bible dictionary &/or Encyclopedia;
- (e) The library catalogue (both computer & cards);
- (f) Journal indices.

#### In-depth Understanding

**Advanced Diploma** assessment items focus primarily on assessing students' knowledge, comprehension and application, but students should work toward developing skills in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Always try to present both sides of an argument. If you feel an argument is weak or that a case is overstated you need to explain why it is weak, etc., and how you feel the statement could be modified to more accurately reflect your interpretation of the data.

**Diploma of Ministry and Bachelor of Ministry** assessment items seek to assess candidates' abilities in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and not just knowledge, comprehension and application. In degree level units you are not asked to agree with any author but to critically evaluate material presented. B.Min students must present both sides of an argument. If an argument is weak or a case is overstated you need to explain why it is weak, etc., and how the statement could be modified to more accurately reflect a correct interpretation of the data.

**Graduate Diploma** assessment items in addition to degree level study seek to assess candidates' abilities in extensive research and the critical evaluation of the topic at hand. The student should also be able to carefully articulate their own position in the argument.

### **Relevant Reading**

The following is a guide to the minimum reading required for each level of study:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| For 100 level units: | At least 4 references                                 |
| For 200 level units  | At least 5 references                                 |
| For 300 level units: | At least 7 references (including 1 journal article)   |
| For 400 level units: | At least 8 references (including 2 journal articles)  |
| For 500 level units: | At least 15 references (including 3 journal articles) |

### **Structure**

In writing your assignment one of the first things to do is to work out the structure. Prepare an outline (or plan) for each section. Always construct an argument about which you want to convince your reader. Develop it logically, step-by-step, and flesh it out with relevant material.

Avoid all irrelevant material. Ensure everything you write is directly related to the topic. When you present a point make sure the connection between the point and your argument is clear. If anything does not directly contribute to your argument – leave it out.

### **Writing**

Having done your research and having constructed an outline of the paper, you are now in a position to begin the actual writing of the assignment. Begin by writing a first draft. Next expand and develop it into the final draft. At this stage try to get someone else to read it (or alternatively wait a day or two and re-read it yourself), and make any changes that seem desirable.

### **English**

Assignments must be written in good diction, phraseology, and style. "Frequent and careful use of both a dictionary and a thesaurus . . . and the study of compilations of faulty English expressions presented in handbooks of writing will prove to be helpful" (Metzger, 1961, p. 20). Each paragraph must flow smoothly. Avoid a "jerky" structure and avoid writing in point form. Please check (or preferably have someone else check) the English before final typing. Run the spell-checker over the assignment after the final typing too! Especially ensure that the English flows correctly when inserting a quotation, e.g. "When the disciples asked Jesus why He taught them in parables, He replied, 'The knowledge of the secrets . . . ' (Mt 13:11)."

or "Trench (1948) says that parables never 'transgress from the actual order' (p. 1) but rather nature is consistent with our understanding".

Be sure to show where quotes start and stop by inserting the exact quote in inverted commas. If you insert anything in the quote do so within braces, i.e. [ ]. If you leave anything out of the quote, indicate this by the use of three dots, i.e. . . . , e.g. "the chosen field of research has been treated in some quarters with a degree of intolerance . . . [however, he ] argues his case well . . . [and] has kept firmly on a path that accords with academic impartiality".

**Agreement** - Watch 'agreement' - singular with singular and plurals with plurals.

**Objectivity** - Be objective and eliminate first person references, e.g. write "This assignment will present an outline of " rather than "In this assignment I hope to be able to present". Assignments are "written in the third person. This means that words such as "I, we you, mine, our your," etc., as well as commands and exhortations, ought as far as possible be avoided" (Metzger, 1961, p. 13).

**Use of names and titles** - "All authors should be referred to impartially by their surnames, omitting titles, degrees, institutional connections, and the like." (Metzger, 1961, p. 13).

**Inclusive language** - "The word 'man' can mean either *human beings* or a *male human being*. Its use as a generic term has resulted in some inaccuracy and perceived exclusion of women" (Jecks, 1986, p. ii). In both writing and speaking, students should avoid such gender bias and write in inclusive way, e.g. use 'humans' instead of 'men', 'humanity' instead of 'mankind', or use 'people' or 'persons', etc. Select appropriate personal pronouns – this is often best done by using the plural, 'they', instead of 'him' or 'he/she'.

**Foreign words** - Type foreign words (transliterated into English) in italics, e.g. *parousia*.

**Numbers** - If a number can be written in one word, do so (e.g. twelve rather than 12, but 24, not twenty four).

**Rhetorical Questions** - While rhetorical questions are fine in sermons, they have no place in an academic paper. You must supply answers not questions.

**Use Active verbs** - Try to avoid passive verbs where possible. Active verbs generally convey the meaning more clearly.

**Personal pronouns** - When you use a personal pronoun it should always refer back to the nearer antecedent. If not, use the proper noun to avoid confusion.

An "E" in the column of a marked assignment means that the English is poor, incorrect or vague.

## **Documentation**

Be careful to document all categorical statements with quotations or biblical references, e.g. "An allegory has many points, e.g. The Good Shepherd (Jn 10:6-

18) whereas a parable has only one main point, e.g. The Good Samaritan (Lu 10:25-37)."

"When a student desires to use the thoughts of others, either as propositions, interpretations, or exact quotations, honesty compels acknowledgment. This is done largely through annotation:

- (a) A direct quotation should be accompanied by a footnote indicating the source.
- (b) A citation of facts should similarly be accompanied by a footnote indicating the source" (Metzger, 1961, p. 13).

## **CITATIONS**

### ***Cite books not people***

When citing a reference in your assignment remember that you are citing a particular book, not a person, e.g. you are not quoting the man "William Barclay" but the book "Barclay (1969)", which is a book shown under that abbreviation in your reference list.

### ***Cite contemporary sources***

Aim at making most of the works cited in your paper dated in the last decade. In this way you show you are familiar with contemporary scholarship. From the very beginning students should attempt to quote at least one journal article, but Diploma and Level One students should not feel obligated to cite the deeper, academic journals.

### ***Primary sources***

Students often cite a secondary source when the primary source (e.g. Eusebius, or some other church father) is available in the college library. Avoid secondary sources as far as possible.

### ***Ancient authors***

When citing ancient authors, do not give usual data, instead show book and chapter reference, etc., e.g. Josephus (*Ant.* 8,4,1) or *Eusebius* (*HE.* 4, 5, 7)

## **SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments given to students at Perth Bible College are mostly research reports and also essays.

## **REPORTS (NON ESSAY WORK)**

### **PRESENTATION**

When ready for submission a report consists of seven parts:

- 1 Assignment Cover Sheet,
- 2 Title page,
- 3 Contents page,
- 4 Introduction,
- 5 Body of the Report,
- 6 Conclusion, and

## 7 Reference List.

### 1 Assignment Cover Sheet

Copies of *Assignment Cover Sheets* are available from the Student Office. *Assignment Cover Sheets* are purely for administrative purposes, and as such are not really part of the report.

If you have been granted an extension date, the extension form must also be attached (to show the authorization for the extended date).

### 2 Title Page

The title page contains:

- (a) The Title of the Report (near the top of the page),
- (b) The author's name (near the centre of the page),
- (c) A block near the bottom of the page containing:  
Assessment Item Number,  
Unit Title and Number,  
Lecturer's name, and  
Date Due.

### 3 Contents Page

The contents page comprises a list of sections or chapters of the report, showing the page number on which each commences.

### 4 Introduction

The Introduction commences on a new page. Every report should commence with an introduction which briefly introduces **both** the topic being considered **and** how the report will approach the topic. The introduction should occupy about 10% of the report.

### 5 Body of The Report

Reports should be carefully written in correct English and set out in paragraphs each of which develops one central idea. The use of paragraph headings helps the reader to identify major topics being presented and helps the student in later revision.

### 6 Conclusion

As with the introduction, the conclusion occupies about 10% of the report. The conclusion presents no new material but rather summarises the arguments presented in the body of the report and ties the whole work together. It should give the writer a sense that the paper is now finished.

### 7 Reference List.

Whenever quotations occur in any report the correct procedure (as shown later) must be followed. All reports of 800 words or more in length are required to have a "**Reference List**" attached. These are the books, articles, etc., that have been quoted in the report proper and give full bibliographical details so that readers can follow up on quotations if they so desire. **Only** references actually cited in the body of the report are listed, but **all** references cited must be listed. Correct referencing conventions must be used in the report and in the Reference List. List them in alphabetical order of authors' surnames as shown below. Do not list versions of the

Bible - simply give the standard abbreviation after the quote (if other than the NIV), e.g. "(John 10:30 AV)". The Reference List commences on a new page.

## ESSAYS

### PRESENTATION

When ready for submission an essay consists of four parts:

- 1 Assignment Cover Sheet,
- 2 Title page,
- 3 Body of the essay, and
- 4 Reference List.

#### 1 Essay Cover Sheet

Copies of *Assignment Cover Sheets* are available from the Student Office. *Assignment Cover Sheets* are purely for administrative purposes, and as such are not really part of the essay.

If you have been granted an extension date, the extension form must also be attached (to show the authorization for the extended date).

#### 2 Title Page

The title page contains:

- (a) The Title of the Essay (near the top of the page),
- (b) The author's name (near the centre of the page),
- (c) A block near the bottom of the page containing:  
Assessment Item Number,  
Unit Title and Number,  
Lecturer's name, and  
Date Due.

#### 3 Body of The Essay

Essays should be carefully written in correct English and set out in paragraphs each of which develops one central idea. The body of the essay must contain an introduction, a focus statement, the main body of the essay and a conclusion.

*Introduction.* "The introduction sets the broad context for an essay. It provides relevant background material and/or establishes the importance of a topic. It then leads the reader to the focus" (Day, 1972, p.5).

*Focus Statement.* "The focus statement clarifies the particular purpose for writing within the context established by the introduction. The focus statement outlines the scope of the essay and delineates the main segments of the discussion, explanation, or argument.

For example, an appropriate focus statement which could lead from the first part of the introduction outlined in the previous section appears below.

*Given the importance of these understandings, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the communication process and the factors which can facilitate or impede good communication" (Day, 1972, p.5).*

*Main body.* This consists of a planned sequence of paragraph clusters and paragraphs which elaborate on the main points contained in the focus statement" (Day, 1972, p.5).

*Conclusion.* "The conclusion usually contains either a summary of the main ideas linked back to the focus statement or an evaluative statement" (Day, 1972, p.5). It should not contain any new ideas.

For further information, please see Day, B. (1972) *Writing at University*. Perth, WA: Edith Cowan University (available at PBC Library Closed Reserve).

#### **4 Reference List**

Whenever quotations occur in any report the correct procedure (as shown later) must be followed. All essays of 800 words or more in length are required to have a "**Reference List**" attached. These are the books, articles, etc., that have been quoted in the report proper and give full bibliographical details so that readers can follow up on quotations if they so desire. **Only** references actually cited in the body of the essay are listed, but **all** references cited must be listed. Correct referencing conventions must be used in the essay and in the Reference List. List them in alphabetical order of authors' surnames as shown below. Do not list versions of the Bible - simply give the standard abbreviation after the quote (if other than the NIV), e.g. "(John 10:30 AV)". The Reference List commences on a new page.

## **FORMAT FOR REPORTS & ESSAYS**

All work submitted should be typewritten on A4 paper. Type on one side of the paper only, with 25mm margins. Typed papers must use **double spacing** and a 12 pitch font. Pages should be stapled together at the top left hand corner. Please do not submit assignments in plastic sleeves, etc., as they must be removed before the lecturer can write comments. Submit only a **copy** of your work - NEVER submit the original, in case it is lost in the system!

**Widows and Orphans** - In printing your notes, avoid a heading (or the first line of a new paragraph) at the end of a page ("a widow"). Similarly avoid the last line of a paragraph at the top of page ("an orphan").

**Short quotes** - Short quotes simply flow on and should not interrupt the logical flow of ideas. However, long quotes (5 lines or more) are indented and typed in single space.

**Pagination** - The Title Page and Contents page are not allocated numbers, but all of the following pages (including the Reference List and Appendices, if any) in the assignment are counted. Number pages consecutively from the title page, by printing the page number in Arabic numerals at the top right hand corner of each page.

## **FINAL POINTS**

**Footnotes** Use footnotes only for documentation that breaks the flow of thought. "In academic writing it is sometimes desirable to put into a footnote discussion of modifying views or a summary of academic debate on a point, in order to prevent interruption of the argument in the text. Also, footnotes may occasionally indicate that fuller treatment of a certain point is to come later in the essay. **In general, however, footnotes should be used sparingly or the text reorganised to avoid them**" (WAIT, 1978, p. 2). If footnotes are used, they are numbered consecutively throughout each chapter.

**End Papers** - An index and abstract are not required.

**Appendices** - "Appendices are warranted primarily by a need to include important reference material which would otherwise interrupt continuity if placed in the body of the essay. A long quotation or a detailed table may provide good reason for an appendix, but only if its content is referred to in the body of the essay. On no account should an appendix be used to extend the writer's own argument, carried over as a footnote from the essay itself" (WAIT, 1978, p. 2). If you prepare visual aids, etc., for a seminar presentation, include a copy in your written assignment. Sometimes this will be included in the body of your paper, but generally as an appendix. In this way you will gain maximum marks, as sometimes the lecturer may mark your written paper before your seminar presentation is graded.

## **SUBMISSION**

Assignments must be submitted in accordance with the instructions given in the Unit Plan. This is normally by placing them in the "Assignments In" box in the General Office **on or before the Due Date**.

## **ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Marked assignments show only an interim grade, i.e., a 'CR', or a 'D', etc. Actual marks are not shown as assessed work may be subject to grading at the end of the semester. Lecturers write such helpful and positive comments on the papers as they feel are appropriate for the student's revision study. The Lecturer returns marked assignments to the students for review purposes. The *Assignment Cover Sheet* lists ten areas a lecturer may consider in assessing assignments. While 'critical and/or original thinking' may not always be required, these higher order skills should always be aimed at.

## **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

Criteria for allocation of marks in each area may include:

***Items relating to content:*** (Carries a possible 80%)

- (a) "*Topic clearly understood and logically argued*" - Is there clear evidence that the topic was clearly understood? Was the set question answered directly rather than rambling around the topic? Did the paper show careful organisation in the way material was presented? Was there a coherent, systematic, logical flow of argument? Was irrelevant material avoided? Was the relevance of the material presented clearly demonstrated?
- (b) "*All aspects of topic thoroughly covered*" - Does the paper fully answer the question? Are all parts of the topic covered? Have most of the main points been dealt with? Have the main points been dealt with in a substantial, rather than in a superficial, way?
- (c) "*A high level of critical and/or original thinking*" - Are there signs of critical thinking, rather than just accepting material because "it was in the book"? Are there signs of original thinking, or is material just dished up exactly from the book/notes?

- (d) "*Well aware of relevant interpretations and views*" - Was there a careful consideration of various views, showing evidence of wider, relevant reading?
- (e) "*Concepts and terminology clearly understood*" - Was the paper concise and clear in the use of terminology or was it vague and abstract?
- (f) "*Arguments carefully validated*" - Was material presented carefully considered and arguments carefully assessed? Was appropriate documentation for evidence presented supplied?

**Items relating to structure, mechanics & presentation:** (Up to 20% may be deducted).

- (a) "*Good Introduction and Conclusion*" - Were they both about 10% of the length of the paper? Did the introduction adequately introduce both the topic and the paper? Did the conclusion summarise/draw together the arguments presented without introducing any new material?
- (b) "*Citations accurate and appropriate*" - Did the paper have a Reference list attached? Were Referencing Conventions correctly followed? Were all sources of information acknowledged?
- (c) "*Length within required limits*" - Was the paper between 90% and 130% of the set length?
- (d) "*Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation*" - Was the per written in a concise, well written form, free from waffle and rhetoric? Were sentences smoothly constructed and free from grammatical, spelling and punctuation mistakes?
- (e) "*Format acceptable. Legible, clean copy*" - Did the paper include, Title page and Contents page? Was the paper in an acceptable format? Was it legible and neat?

## **APPEALS PROCEDURE**

If, for any reason, any student feels aggrieved by a lecturer's grading of any assessment item, the following procedure should be followed:

The student should go directly to the lecturer concerned and talk to the lecturer about the reasons for the grade obtained.

If the student is not satisfied with the reply from the lecturer, the next step is to seek a review of the decision via the grievance Procedures. See "Grievance Procedures" for details.

