



Business School

The UTS Business School **Writing Guide**

The UTS Business School Writing Guide: How to succeed in your written assessment tasks

Welcome to the UTS Business School Writing Guide: how to succeed in your written assessment tasks. Research and written communication skills are required competencies of all students and at all levels of study, and the UTS Business School is committed to encouraging and supporting students' development of communication competence as an integral part of their learning. We are equally committed to ensuring they graduate with a high level of communication competence as part of their attainment of the core graduate attributes, equipping them to be work-ready. This guide is an important element in that commitment.

The guide is intended to assist you, whether you are an undergraduate or postgraduate student as you prepare your written assignments. It incorporates examples to illustrate the key characteristics of writing in the Business School, and it is packed with information, UTS resources, ideas and advice, much of it based on feedback from former students. We hope you will see this guide as your indispensable companion during your studies.

It is important that you read and use this guide in conjunction with your subject outlines and/or assignment briefs. The advice provided in this guide is of a general nature, and it is always important that you tailor your written assignments to the specific requirements of each individual task.

Teaching and Learning Centre

UTS Business School

UTS PO Box 123

Broadway, NSW 2007.

uts.edu.au/about/uts-business-school

“It’s like having a little toolkit of writing skills that I carry around with me and use each time I meet a new kind of writing task.”

(UTS Business student)

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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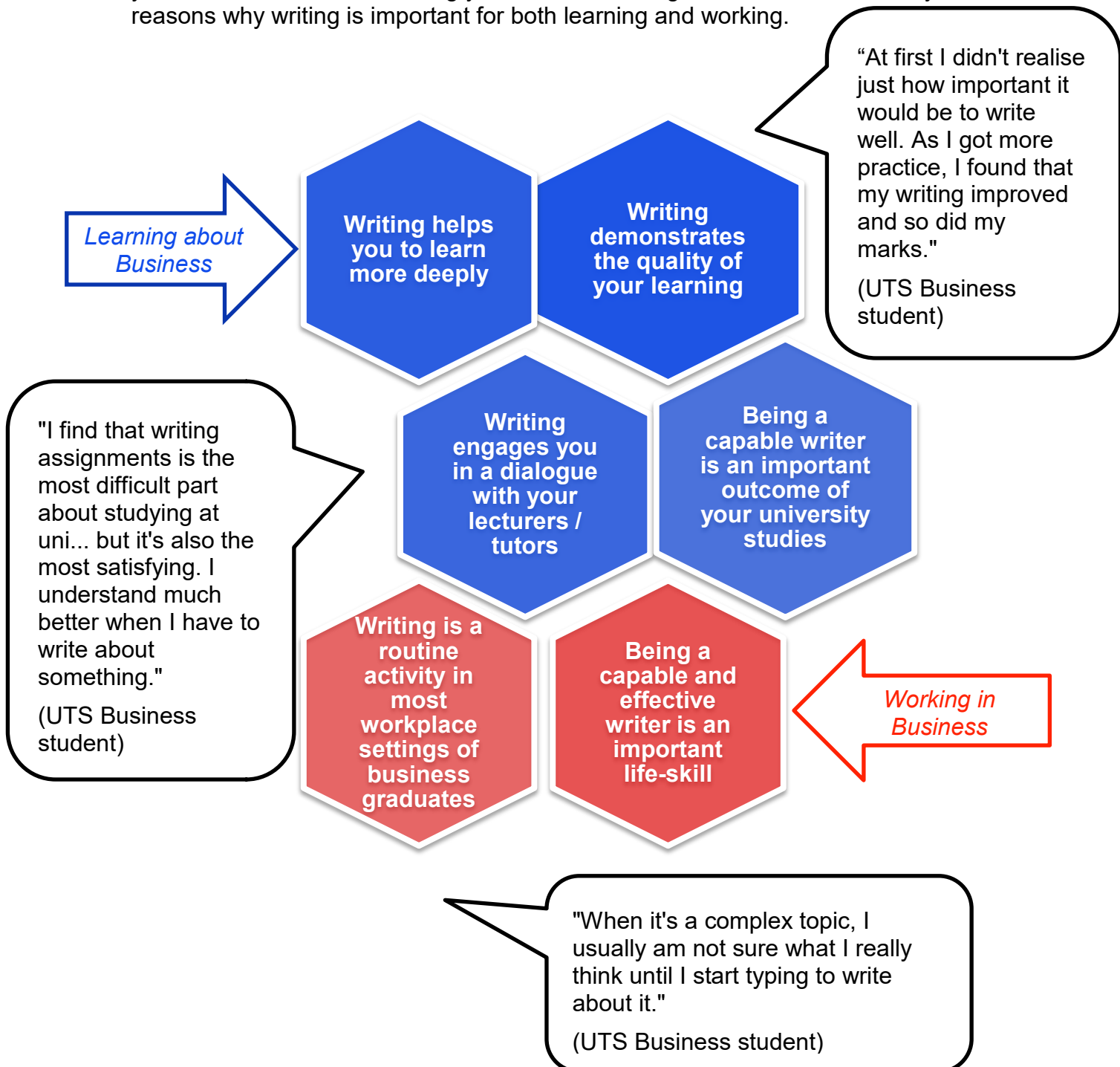


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Writing in the UTS Business School

Why is writing important in Business?

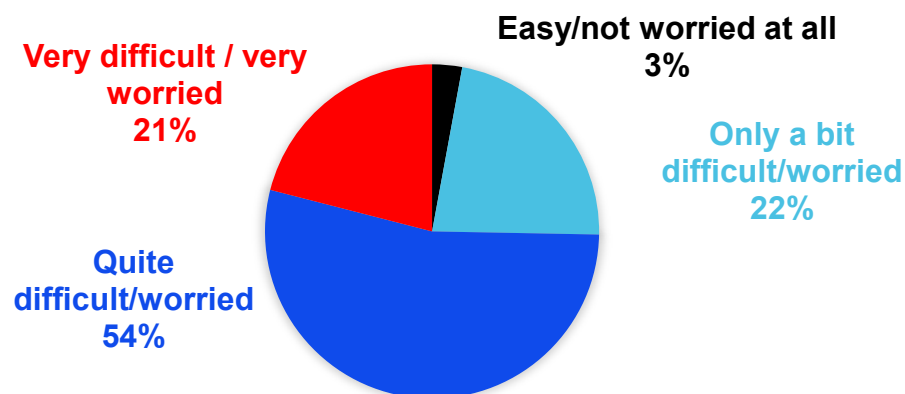
Writing is an essential practice to develop both for your academic study and for your work in business following your studies. The figure below shows six key reasons why writing is important for both learning and working.



What do UTS Business School students think?

In preparation for this 2018 version of the UTS Business School writing guide, a survey link was sent out to all current students in April 2018 asking about their experiences of academic writing, and what support they felt was needed from a writing guide. From the group of respondents, 56% were undergraduate students and 44% were postgraduate students.

How difficult do you find writing assignments in the UTS business school? If you have not yet written any assignments, how worried are you about writing assignments in business?



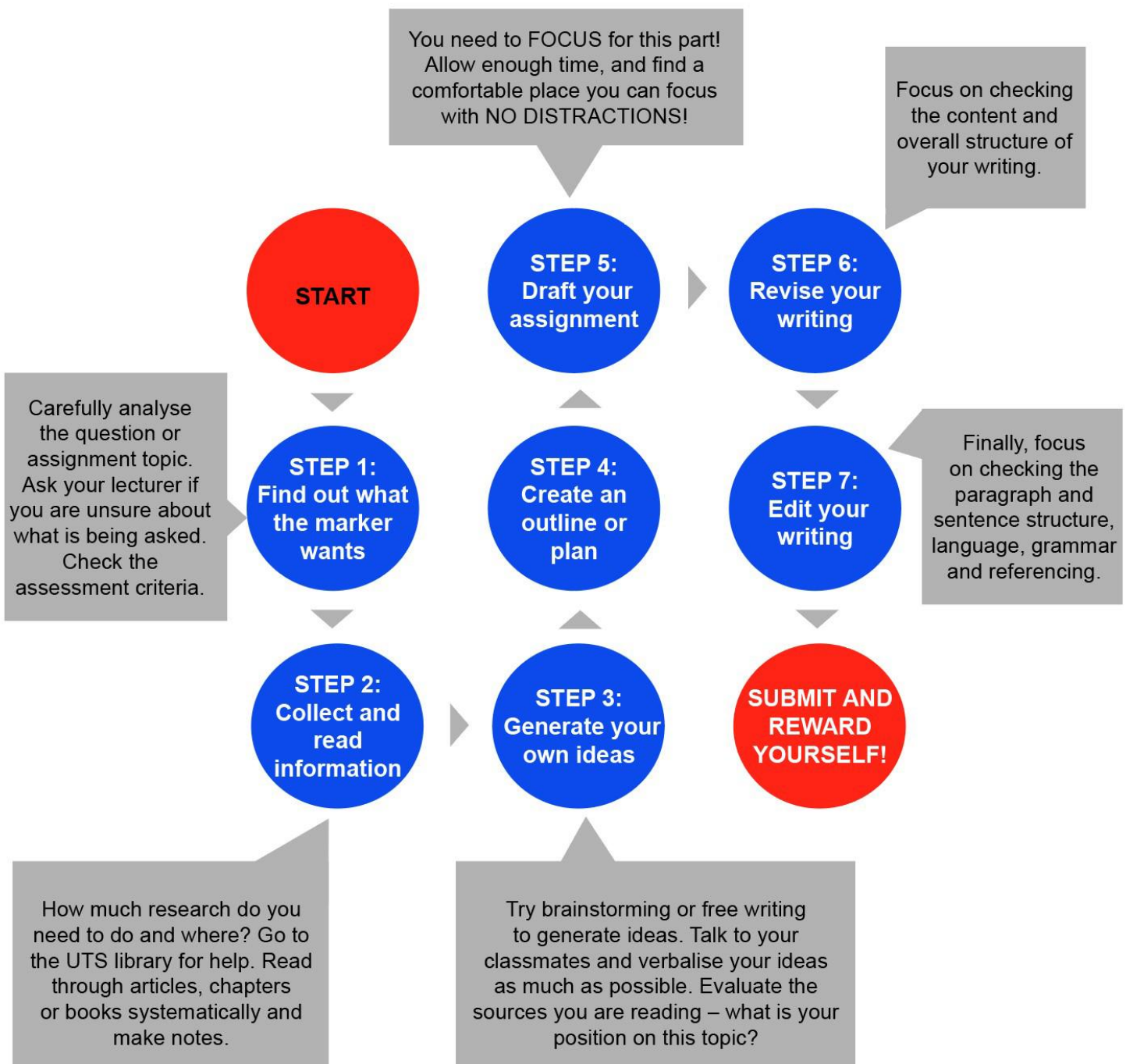
The pie chart above shows that the majority of the survey respondents (75%) felt that writing assignments was quite or very difficult, or they felt quite or very worried about it. An important message here is that it is normal to feel that writing is a challenge, and that almost everyone needs to seek help. This writing guide is one form of help available to you; other forms of help include the UTS Library resources, and resources provided by your tutors and lecturers.

Students were also asked about what types of help they would like to be included in this guide. The most popular ideas, which have all be included, were:

- an annotated example of a written assignment (74% of respondents)
- ideas about assignment structure (66% of respondents)
- ideas about the types of language to use (58% of respondents).

The writing process

Writing assignments is a more detailed process than you might initially think. To produce really good quality writing, you will probably need to go through most or all of the steps in the diagram below, as suggested by Emerson (2009, pp. 28-32).



STEP 1: Find out what the marker wants

**STEP 1:
Find out what
the marker
wants**

STEP 1 involves **understanding the assessment task itself** in terms of what the task is asking of you, and how you will be assessed.

This section focuses on how to understand the **key question words** in an assessment task, and some important questions to ask yourself at this stage. The 'how to write' sections later in this guide also unpack the purpose of different types of writing task.

What do different key question words in assessment tasks mean?

Question word	Meaning
Summarise	Give a simple, basic account of the main points of a topic
Describe	Explain a topic briefly and clearly
Outline	Deal with a complex subject by reducing it to the main elements
Illustrate	Give examples
Examine / Explore	Give a detailed account of something
Suggest	Make a proposal and support it
Reflect (on)	Think carefully about something, and consider different views and possibilities
Justify	Support a position or show that something is reasonable, right or true, using evidence
Discuss	Look at the various aspects of a topic, compare benefits and drawbacks
(Critically) Analyse	Divide into sections and discuss each critically/consider widely
Assess / Evaluate	Decide the value or worth of a subject

Adapted from Bailey (2011, p.32)

Understanding the assessment task

Emerson (2009) suggests asking yourself the following questions to help you understand your assessment task:

- Do you understand all the terms in the assessment question or topic?
- Can you break the topic down into parts – what are the major concepts?
- What do you already know about the topic?
- What level of detail does your assignment require? – also check the word length.
- Do you need a general discussion of the issue, an understanding of theory and ideas or a list of facts and statistics? (maybe you'll need all of these)
- Does your topic require historical information, material from the recent past or current data?
- Do you need to focus on particular countries?
- Has your lecturer suggested that you consult certain types of materials, such as popular or scholarly journals, newspapers or a particular database?

Assessment of written work



How will my written assignment be assessed?

It is important to consider how your written work will be assessed. When preparing for an assessment, you should access the assessment criteria (a list of dimensions the marker will be looking for) from the subject outline, or ask your subject coordinator, lecturer or tutor. Typical assessment criteria may include:

- How well you address the purpose of the assessment
- The relevance of your content
- Your analytical and critical perspectives on the topic area
- Your use of supporting evidence to provide authority and validity to your arguments or claims
- The structure and coherence of your writing
- The appropriateness of your language style
- Your language accuracy, written expression and punctuation
- The suitability of your overall written presentation

NB: this is a general list, and you should check with your subject coordinator and/or lecturer what the specific assessment criteria are for your assignments.

STEP 2: Collect and read information

STEP 2: Collect and read information

At this stage, you know what you need to do and how your writing will be assessed. **STEP 2** involves **collecting and reading information from different sources** – your own knowledge, your subject materials and the UTS Library – which you will then use in your assignment. You also need to **take notes**, and get started with **paraphrasing**.

Key questions for collecting information

In order to collect information for your assignment, you could start by asking yourself these questions:

1) What do I already know about this assignment topic?

- Brainstorm key ideas in a list or spider diagram to clearly see what you already know about the topic.

2) What readings suggested in the subject outline should I refer to in this assignment?

- Check with your tutor if you are unsure. Then read the texts carefully.

3) What other research do I need to do and where?

- Check with your tutor how many sources you need to find independently. You can use the UTS Library website and databases to search for source texts.

4) How am I making notes or keeping records or ideas as I read?

- Find an approach to notetaking that suits you – e.g. using sticky notes on pdfs, using software like Evernote or Onenote, or a paper notebook.
- You also need to keep a bibliographic record of what you read. You can use a referencing software (e.g. Endnote, Refworks) or online system (e.g. Mendeley) to help you. Here is an example for a book:

Authors' surnames and initials

Date of publication

Clegg, S.R., Kornberger, M. & Pitsis, T. (2012). Managing and organisations: an introduction to theory and practice. (3rd ed.). Sage.

Title of book

Edition number

Publisher



Image source:
<https://www.uts.edu.au/about/about-our-campus/news/exploring-new-uts-library>

The UTS Library provides many resources to help you with your search for source texts for your UTS assignments, for example:

<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/find>

<https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-researchers>

<https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-researchers/manage-your-information-and-data>

And for help with referencing: <https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/referencing/apa>

How do I transfer my reading into writing?

While collecting the information (through research and reading), you will need to make notes, and then integrate those notes and ideas into your assignment through paraphrasing and synthesising.

Paraphrasing = Expressing the ideas of others by rephrasing the original text into your own words. This means you are not copying, but instead showing that you understand the ideas.

Synthesising = Combining information and ideas from multiple source texts to develop and strengthen your argument.

You might start paraphrasing now, or you might wait until later in the writing process (Step 5 – Draft your assignment), but it is important to start thinking about paraphrasing early on.

When you are transferring your reading into writing, it is important to be aware of avoiding plagiarism, which is explained on the next page.

What is plagiarism and how can I avoid it?



Plagiarism is broadly defined as “taking and using someone else’s ideas or manner of expressing them and passing them off as his or her own by failing to give appropriate acknowledgement of the source to seek to gain an advantage by unfair means” ([UTS Student Rules, Student Misconduct and Appeals 16.2.1 \(4\)](#)).

Within this definition, examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- copying words, or ideas, from websites, reference books, journals, newspapers or other sources without acknowledging the source
- paraphrasing material taken from other sources, to change the words but keep the ideas, without acknowledging the source
- downloading material from the internet and including it as part of your own work without acknowledging the source
- copying work, such as all or part of an assignment, from other people and submitting it as your own work
- purchasing an assignment from an online site and submitting it as your own work
- requesting or paying someone else to write original work for you, such as an assignment, essay or computer program, and submitting it as your own work.

For more information on plagiarism, please see:

<https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/learning-and-teaching/assessment/preventing-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>

To avoid plagiarism, you will need to follow guidelines for academic integrity, which are:

- **write your own assignments (once you have written the assignment it is fine for someone to help you revise and edit your work, e.g. a HELPS advisor)**
- **paraphrase correctly**
- **use in-text references correctly**
- **include a full reference list in each written assignment, and this list should include all the source texts you refer to**







There are lots of examples of (good and bad) paraphrasing in the UTS quiz on avoiding plagiarism: <https://avoidingplagiarism.uts.edu.au/> -> select ‘Business’.



For help with referencing, go to UTS Library > Referencing > APA Referencing Guide <https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/referencing/apa>

9 steps for effective paraphrasing

Follow the 9 steps below to help you paraphrase ideas from source texts to include in your assignments. The example shown here is a good one, and it goes through the steps for a specific sentence that a student wants to paraphrase from a journal article.

Steps	Example
<p>(1) First, you need to fully understand the ideas and concepts of the original text. Read it carefully,</p> 	<p>Original text (from a journal article) 'In 2012, the subtle shift in production requirements from iPhone 4S to iPhone 5 and the speedup to meet Apple's delivery time placed workers under intense pressure.'</p>
<p>(2) Make notes summarising the original text. Note down only the key ideas, and in your own words.</p> 	<p>My notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>iPhone 5 came out in 2012</i>• <i>lots of pressure on workers</i>• <i>reasons: faster delivery time and changes to production</i>
<p>(3) Write the full bibliographical reference now, so you can reference your original text later.</p> 	<p>Full reference Chan, J., Pun, N. & Selden, M. (2013). The politics of global production: Applied, Foxconn and China's new working class. <i>New Technology, Work and Employment</i>, 28(2), 100-115.</p>
<p>(4) Ensure you keep the original specialised or technical words in your rewrite, to keep the meaning clear.</p> 	<p>(The sentence I want to use is from p.108)</p> <p>Words to keep</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• iPhone 5 (this is a name so it can't be changed)
<p>(5) To help you paraphrase more effectively, try to use 'synonyms' (alternative words with the same meaning) of the original words.</p> 	<p>Synonyms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'significant' = synonym for 'intense'• 'demanding delivery schedule' = alternative phrase for 'speedup to meet... delivery time'• 'changes' = synonym for 'shift'
<p>(6) Looking at your notes, try to rewrite the information fully into your own style, words and grammar. Try not to look at the original text.</p> 	<p>My paraphrase When the iPhone 5 was released in 2012, workers were under significant pressure due to the demanding delivery schedule and changes in the production requirements.</p>
<p>(7) Check that your sentence(s) use your own words and sentence/ paragraph structure, but still have the same meaning as the original text.</p>	<p>Changes made Some of the words have been changed (in red in the paraphrase above), using synonyms noted in step 5. The sentence structure is different, with 'workers' as the subject of the sentence. In the original text, 'the subtle shift' is the subject.</p>

(8) Use "quotation marks" to make it clear if you have used any terms or phrases exactly as they appear in the original source.



(9) Ensure you have added an in-text reference to the original text in your paraphrased version. Also add the page number if you used any "quotations".

(Quotation marks are not needed in this example, because I am not keeping any specific phrases the same).

Adding the in-text reference

When the iPhone 5 was released in 2012, workers were under significant pressure due to the demanding delivery schedule and changes in the production requirements (Chan, Pun & Selden, 2013).

Source: Adapted from <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/academic-writing/paraphrasing>

Example of synthesising

Synthesising is important because it shows that you have read broadly and deeply on your assignment topic, and that you have engaged in critical thinking. This paragraph from a case study analysis is a good example of synthesising.

The first sustainable initiative identified is 'Flare it up', an online dashboard (4 Pines Beer 2017a) which aims to integrate and engage the employees with the enterprise. A study conducted by Cohen et al. (2012) suggests that all core HRM processes in an organisation must support sustainable business strategies that can be categorised into areas of recruitment, development and reward, managerial support and communication. Certainly, 'Flare it up' has implemented these areas with its employees, creating a sustainable HRM environment through the engagement and participation of staff. Greenwood stated that in a sustainable HRM, "people are not only 'means' and their value goes beyond the financial value they produce for organisations" (Ehnert et al., 2014, p. 8). Similarly, 4 Pines has adopted a sustainable HRM caring about the alignment of the employee's goals with the selfie format (4 Pines Beer 2017b), maintaining constant communication with them and offering them economic and entertainment benefits.

There are four different in-text references used here within one paragraph to strengthen the analysis. Importantly, each reference builds up the argument – it is not just a list of source texts.

STEP 3: Generate your own ideas - Critical thinking and writing

STEP 3: Generate your own ideas

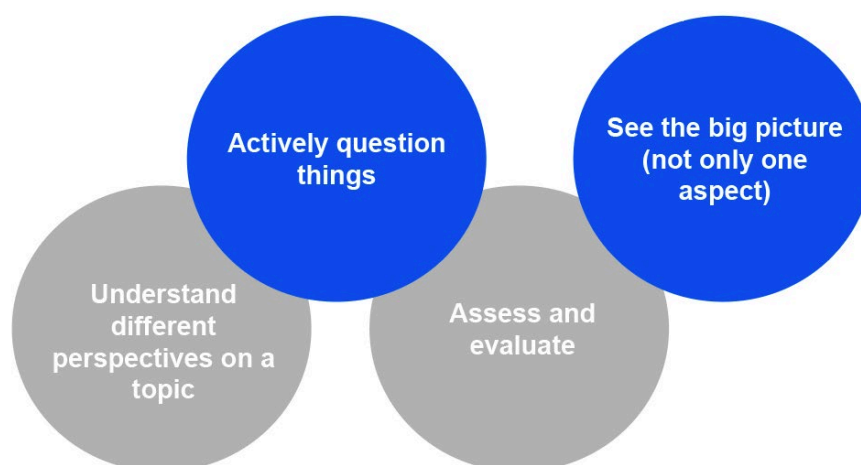
After **STEP 2**, which involves collecting information and reading various sources related to your assessment task, **STEP 3** is about generating your own ideas. This can be difficult, so ensure you leave enough time for **STEP 3**. At this stage, it is important that you start to **think critically**.

What does critical thinking actually mean?

'Analyse', 'evaluate' and 'create' are examples of assessment instruction words that encourage students to use critical thinking, but what does critical thinking actually mean? Here is a useful definition of **critical thinking** from Chartrand et al. (2012, pp.96-97):

[Critical thinking] means you want to understand more fully all the aspects and perspectives of people or ideas, not so you can judge or find fault but rather so you can evaluate more clearly and see the big picture and assess the value in something . . . critical thinking is all about you taking charge of your own thinking and owning your life.

So according to this definition, you need to:



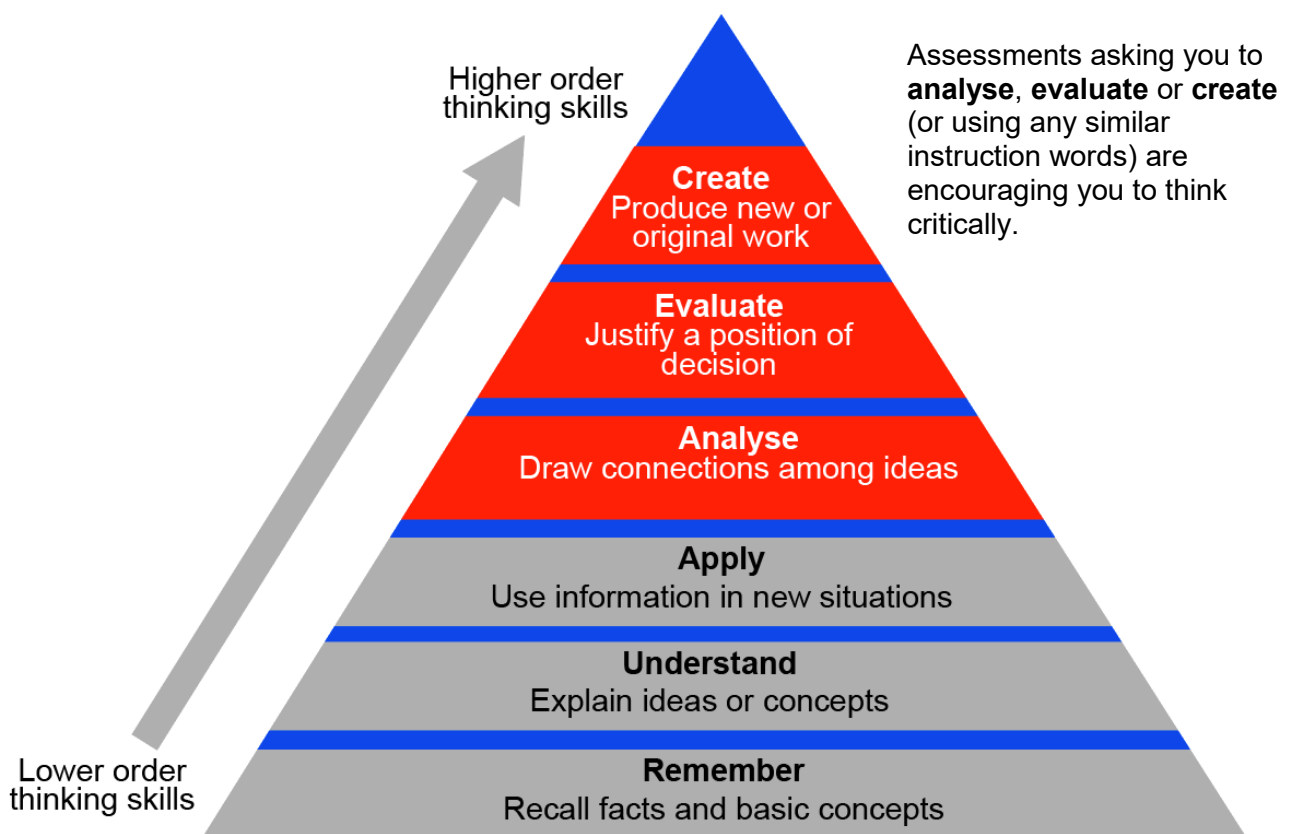
Bailey (2011) also points out that critical thinking means “not just passively accepting what you hear or read, but instead actively questioning and assessing it” (p.22).

Critical thinking in your Business School subjects

According to Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, the lower order thinking skills are 'remember', 'understand' and 'apply'. These are important foundational skills in any subject, and are generally tested by exams and quizzes.

The higher order thinking skills are 'analyse', 'evaluate' and 'create', and these are even more important skills at university because they involve critical thinking.

Most written assignments in the Business School will be testing these higher order skills, especially **analyse** and **evaluate**, so it is important that you show you are developing them.



Adapted from Bloom et al. (1956)

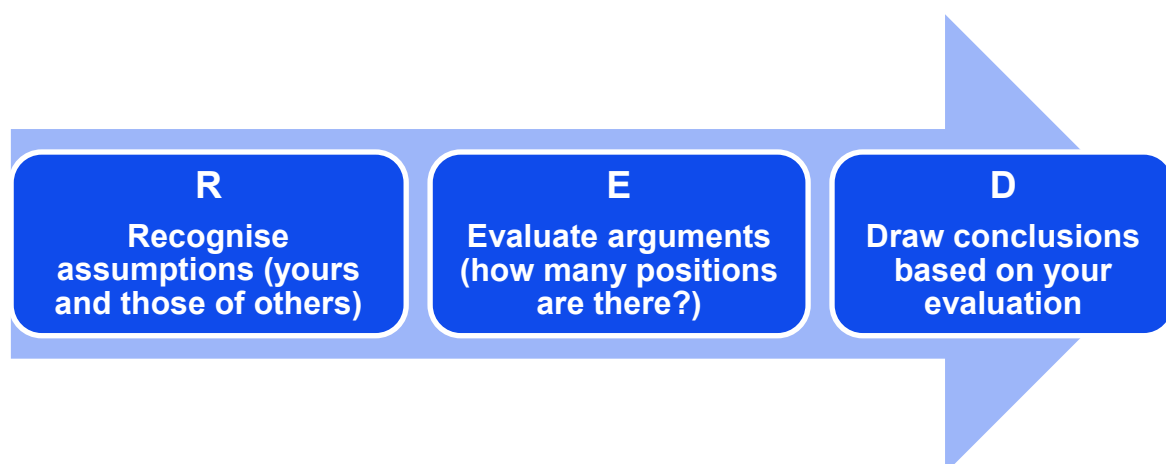
Here are some ways that you can engage in critical thinking through your UTS Business School subjects – some will be required by the subject, and others are behaviours that you can try to cultivate yourself:

- Keeping a self-reflective journal, either informally or for an assessment (such as a reflection or learning log).
- Engaging in open dialogue and discussion in the class room on a number of class exercises.
- Participating in role play activities.
- Peer and self-review assessment.
- Developing an understanding and applying concepts learnt to your everyday life (personal and professional).
- Assessing the validity of your assumptions, defending your judgements.
- Cultivating a line of reasoning for your reflective thoughts.
- Linking readings and reflecting on relevance to your learning.
- Seeing situations in a more multifaceted way.
- Being respectful of other people's views and trying to understand and listen even if you do not agree.

(This section has been adapted from the 'Student guide to reflective approaches to Managing, Leading and Stewardship, UTS'.)

A model for critical thinking

Block and Spataro (2014) and Chartrand et al. (2012) suggest using the following 'RED' model of critical thinking for Business university studies. You can use this model to guide your thinking whenever you have a topic to analyse for a written assignment:



Critical thinking when reading

Part of critical thinking involves being critical while reading articles, books and other resources, in order to recognise assumptions and evaluate the arguments presented. It is important to remain critical even when you know the resource is reliable and useful for your assignment (Bailey 2011). Bailey (p.22) suggests you ask yourself the following questions as you read:

- a) What are the key ideas in this text?
- b) Does the thesis (key argument) of the writer develop logically, step by step?
- c) Are the examples given in the text helpful? Would other examples be better?
- d) Does the author have any obvious bias (subjective opinion or preference)?
- e) Does the evidence presented seem reliable (trustworthy) and why (not)?
- f) Is this argument similar to anything else I have read?
- g) Do I agree with the writer's views? If not, why not?

Language to show critical thinking when writing

Here are some examples of useful phrases to use in your written assignments that show evidence of critical thinking. For more ideas about the language to use, see: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/>

Evaluating	Analysing	Evaluative adjectives
It is clear that...	There are different points of view on this topic, such as....	Positive This study/ article/ point is... useful / detailed / thorough / important / crucial / impressive
It is still unclear whether...	X and Y are similar/different in terms of...	Negative This study/ article/ point is... limited / problematic / unclear (somewhat) / unreliable / unsubstantiated / contested
X (the author) makes a valid / important point that...	There is clearly a difference between X and Y.	
X's argument seems logical because...	The relationship/connection between X and Y can be seen as...	
There is insufficient evidence to claim that...	In contrast,...	
I agree/disagree with...		

Self-evaluation checklist for critical thinking in your writing

This checklist consists of self-evaluation questions you can ask yourself when checking whether a sufficient level of critical thinking is shown in your written assignments. If you are unsure about any of these questions in relation to a written assignment you are working on, and you need some help thinking of actions you can take to improve each point, please see the table in Appendix 1 of this guide.

Self-evaluation questions	Yes / No
1. Am I clear on my position on this topic and the reasons for my point of view?	
2. Are my conclusions and/or recommendations clear, based on evidence, and written in tentative language* where appropriate?	
3. Have I analysed the structure of my argument and presented the reasons in the best order to lead clearly towards the conclusion?	
4. Have I made use of other people's research as supporting evidence to strengthen my argument?	
5. Have I cited the source of information for evidence and theories which I refer to?	
6. Is my writing mainly analytical and does it contain only brief, essential descriptive writing where needed, and not more than needed?	

* Tentative language means words and phrases you use when you need to be cautious and careful because something is not known for sure, or there are other possibilities (e.g. It is possible that... / It could be..... / One possibility is that.....)

Adapted from Cottrell (2017, pp.184-185)

STEPS 4 and 5: Planning and drafting - Types of writing in the Business School

STEP 4:
Create an
outline or
plan

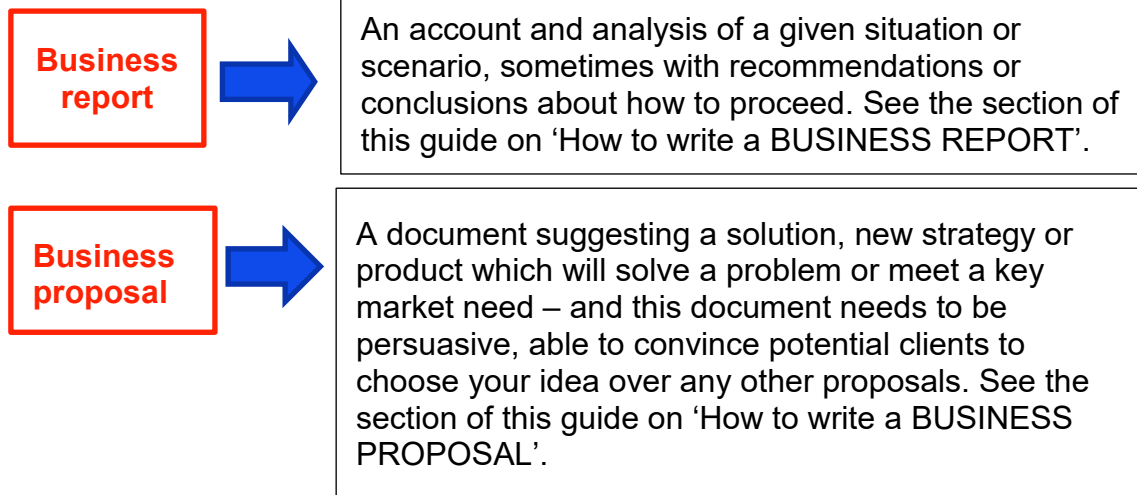
STEP 5:
Draft your
assignment

When you move on to STEPS 4 and 5 of the writing process, you need to know what **type of writing** you should be doing in order to understand the **purpose** and **structure** of your writing.

The five most common types of writing in the UTS Business School core subjects are shown in the table below. Your other subjects are likely to include similar writing tasks.

Types of writing	Core Business School subjects that require this type of writing (UG = undergraduate; PG = postgraduate)
Business Report	26100 Integrating Business Perspectives (UG) 26134 Business Statistics (UG) 21715 Strategic Management (PG) 21937 Managing, Leading and Stewardship (PG) 23706 Economics for Management (PG)
Business Proposal	24108 Marketing Foundations (UG) 21878 Organisational Dialogue: Theory and Practice (PG) 24734 Marketing Management (PG)
Case Study Analysis	25300 Fundamentals of Business Finance (UG) 21928 People, Work and Employment (PG) 25742 Financial Management (PG)
Reflection	21129 Managing People and Organisations (UG) 21878 Organisational Dialogue: Theory and Practice (PG) 21937 Managing, Leading and Stewardship (PG)
Essay	21129 Managing People and Organisations (UG)

What is the difference between a business report, plan and proposal?



What is the difference between a business report and a case study analysis?

A case study analysis is quite similar to a business report in terms of the structure and content.

The main difference is that with a case study, you are generally given a detailed factual account of a specific context (company and situation), which explains the situation and development or history of that situation.

You are then generally asked to respond by analysing the key factors, reasons, problems, or solutions involved in the case study.

See the section of this guide on 'How to write a CASE STUDY ANALYSIS'.

Other types of writing

*** Research proposal** *** Literature review** *** Research report**

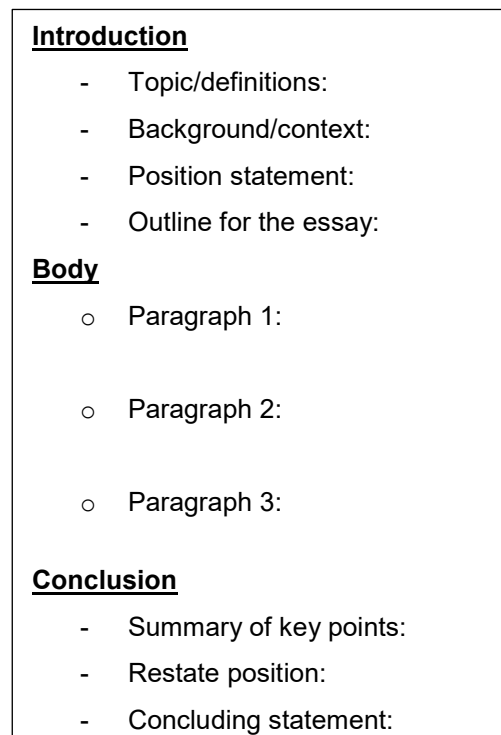
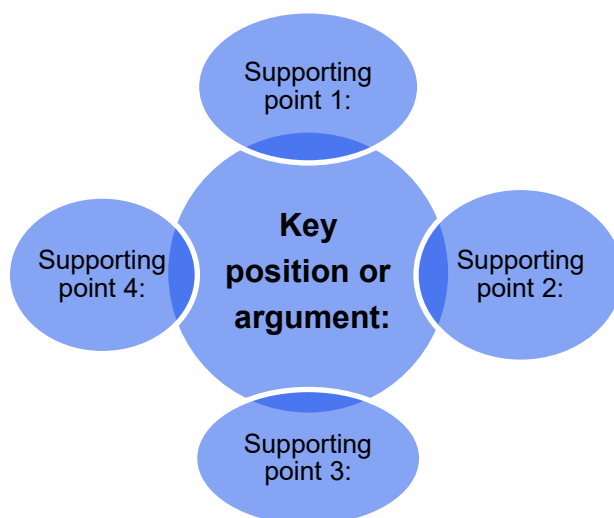
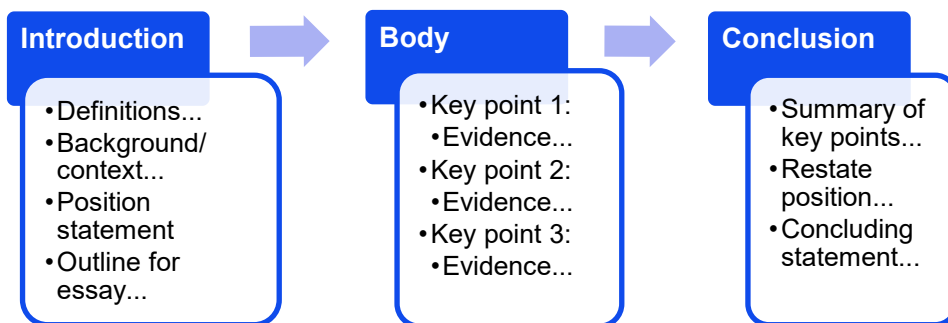
These three types of writing are generally required only for Undergraduate Honours, Masters by Research or PhD students, who are completing a substantial amount of empirical data collection and analysis. For this reason, they are not covered in this writing guide, but the UTS Library has guides to research writing:

<https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-researchers> -> Research writing

How do I continue with STEP 4 (planning) and STEP 5 (drafting)?

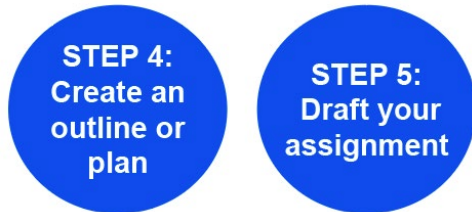
This section has so far reviewed the most common types of writing in the UTS Business School (business report, business proposal, case study analysis, reflection, and essay). At this point, you should have identified which type of writing is needed for your assignment. Next, you will need to make a plan or outline for your assignment, and then start writing!

- You might find it useful to read the *'How to write a ...'* section related to your assignment type first in order to get some ideas about the structure and language required.
- Then make a plan, in any format that works for you. A plan or outline generally includes the key headings and sub-headings you will use, and then your notes about the main points. Here are some ideas for the format of the plan, which would be for an essay assignment:





How to write a BUSINESS REPORT



Why am I being asked to write a report?

Reports are very relevant to real-life work, since you are likely to have to write reports in many different business-related careers. Reports also help you in applying key concepts from business research to real-life contexts and scenarios. Making connections between theory and practice is one of the key purposes of university study. Report writing is therefore a very useful skill that will assist you with your learning and your future career.

Different types of report

There are several different types of report, including business/professional reports, short reports and research reports. Business reports, rather than research reports, are the focus of this guide. For help with research reports, please see the UTS Library: <http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/writing-reading-speaking>

How should my report be structured?

The structure of your report depends on some of the assignment requirements such as suggested length, content and audience, but most reports follow some or all of these sections:

- Title page
- Executive summary
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Body (often including Analysis, Discussion and/or Recommendations – but it depends on your task, so check with your tutor, lecturer or subject coordinator)
- Conclusions (not always needed – check with your tutor, lecturer or subject coordinator)
- References
- Appendices



What kind of language should I use?

Your language should be formal, professional and concise. Here are some examples of useful phrases specific to reports:

Introducing the report	Reporting other people's views
The purpose of this report was/is to... The report analyses/ discusses / suggests/ recommends...	[Name (date)] believes / advises that... Several studies / reports show that... It is now generally accepted that...
Language for analysis / evaluation / judgement	
It is evident / clear that... There seems / appears to be (little)...	... is critical / important / crucial ... must / should be achieved / implemented

This is also a useful resource for academic phrases you might need for your writing: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

How should my report be presented?

Each major section of your report should begin on a new page. As Emerson (2009) suggests, use headings, sub-headings and/or numbering to make each section clear. Also use plenty of 'white space' to make your work look professional and easy to read.

Bullet points, graphs and tables are usually helpful to make key points stand out. Check with your tutor as well, as there may be formatting rules specific to your assignment task.

Example report

This report has been adapted from Emerson's 2009 book on writing for Business students. Only selected sections are shown to illustrate the structure and language you could use in your own report, depending on the task.

Report annotation key

These boxes give tips about the report structure or content.

Important language in the example is in **red font**.

These circles give tips about the language to use.

* Always check with your subject coordinator about what is required for your specific assignment task. As you read this example, think about the question in the blue thought bubble below.*



How is this example similar and different to the one I need to write for my assignment?

Title page

Conflict between senior management and supervising staff: Southland Branch, Communicate

The title should be focused and brief, but descriptive enough for the report to be clearly identifiable.

Page i

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report was to analyse management conflict at the Southland Branch of 'Communicate'. **Specific objectives were to** identify key problems and offer recommendations to Regional Management.

Problems were located in the organisation's structure, management style and lack of communication channels, especially between the branch manager and the supervisors.

The report recommends a major restructuring of the branch, training for key personnel and clarification of job descriptions.

The starting phrases of each sentence (in red) clearly summarise the purpose, aims, problems and recommendations.

The executive summary should describe the report's highlights, **NOT** describe what the reader will find in the report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	i
Table of contents	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Analysis of current situation	2
3. Discussion	3
3.1 <i>Business communication</i>	4
3.2 <i>Management styles</i>	5
3.3 <i>Organisational structure</i>	6
4. Recommendations	7
5. References	8
6. Appendices	9

The logical relationship between the sections should be signalled by numbering, indentation, font size or italics.

Each section of the report should be on a new page (which is not the case in this guide in order to save space/paper!).

1. INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by Ms J Evert, Manager – South Regional Office. **Its purpose is to** analyse and advise on how to improve management and communication practices at the Southland branch.

Southland branch is characterised by a lack of motivation at senior management levels. This lack of leadership, coupled with a flawed organisation structure, is not conducive to effective management or communication practices. There are also several young supervisors who are clearly executive material for the future but are causing friction with staff, as they lack interpersonal communication skills.

This report analyses these problems and offers recommendations on how to counter them to improve management and communication practices leading to stability and the continued growth of the Southland branch.

This is a general overview statement to identify the topic.

This paragraph describes the context of the report and the key issues.

This sentence clearly defines the objectives of the report and summarises what will be included.

[Paragraphs removed].

Page 2

2. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION

2.1 Southland's current organisation structure **is** inappropriate. There **is** an unnecessary layer of management between the branch manager and supervisors.

Most of the verbs in this section are in the present tense (simple or continuous) because this part describes the current situation.

2.2 Southland **is** currently **experiencing** communication difficulties among management, accountant, supervisors, and junior staff.

Numbering the key points makes them clear to the reader.

2.3 The branch manager **is experiencing** difficulties communicating with staff, since he has recently endured a serious personal loss. As a consequence, the whole branch **is failing** to achieve desired results.

2.4 The supervisors **lack** training and communication skills. Communicate will soon lose these potentially valuable staff if their manager fails to provide adequate support and supervision.

Most reports will have an analysis/discussion section where you need to analyse and justify the situation and/or possible solutions, and support your points with evidence from the particular case and the research literature. This section in particular requires you to show evidence of CRITICAL THINKING.

Page 3

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

In any organisation information flow is the life-blood of the business. Josephs (2007) **advises that** communication is the medium through which action is introduced into the structure of the organisation. Billings (2006) **believes that** without *effective* communication, businesses fail and relationships suffer or die.

Manager/Accountant

You could use sub-headings to identify themes – which shows you have synthesised (integrated) key information.

There is little effective management practice between these positions. The supervisory difficulties have surfaced many times, yet no training plan has been developed.

The branch manager infers he cannot handle the situation, yet with his vast experience he is in a perfect position to personally coach Harris, Maynard and Campbell to acquire the interpersonal skills necessary to work in harmony with their staff. Mace (2004) believes that the most effective way of providing for growth and development of subordinates is such coaching by line managers.

Reporting verbs such as 'believes that' are used to introduce what different authors (from books or journal articles).

Frequent references to the research literature show you can provide evidence to support your points.

Managers/Employees

Lack of confidence in both the branch manager and the three supervisors is illustrated by the employees electing not to use upward communication to register their grievances. They preferred to bypass their line supervisors and contact South Regional Office direct.

It is also evident that no facility is in place at Southland branch for staff to freely air any grievances. Sayers' (2008) approach is to have regular meetings so staff know what's happening in the work place and the executive know early of any problem affecting productivity.

The phrases 'is illustrated by' and 'it is evident that' introduce clear evidence from the work context itself.

Listening skills

Staff complain that all the supervisors, but Harris in particular, are arrogant, do not listen and snap orders. Conversations between Harris and his staff should be full two-way communication. However, based on his autocratic management style, he dominates the interaction. Gray and Bell (2005) indicate this leads to managers failing to hear what their subordinates are saying. Effective listening is crucial to effective communication, as it is an understanding between the source and the receiver that must be achieved before they can relate to each other.

..... etc.....

Not all reports have recommendations. If you need to include them, recommendations focus towards the future. They are subjective (the writer's opinion), but should take into account issues such as cost, location and acceptability to current policy or practice. Recommendations are also specific, telling the reader exactly what can be done.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 **Restructure** Southland branch by aligning the accountant's position on the organisational chart as purely a staff function. The unity of command illustrated in Appendix 1 provides for clearly defined lines of command and communication. The manager then overviews and coordinates all of Southland's activities.

Strong suggestions are made by using infinitive verb forms (*restructure, send, suggest, support*) at the start of each sentence.

4.2 **Send** branch manager on an appropriate management/communication training programme and perhaps **suggest** that he attend a grief counselling session.

4.3 **Support** the branch manager and provide motivational guidance.

4.4 **Assist** supervisors to develop improved methods of communicating with staff. The branch manager **should maintain** close contact with supervisors and appraise their performance every three months over the next year.

Strong suggestions are also made by using 'should + infinitive' (should maintain).

4.5 **Send** supervisors to an appropriate training course on supervision of staff.

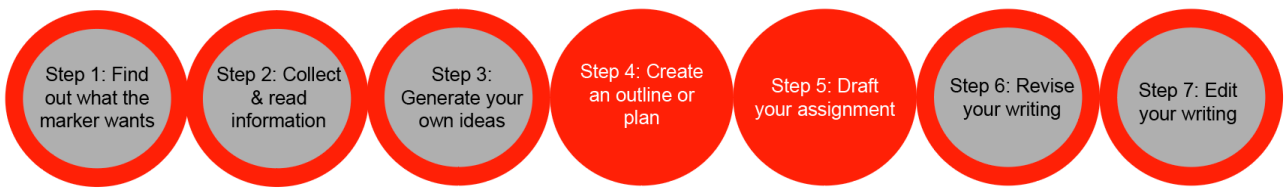
4.6 **Assist** the branch manager in working through job descriptions with staff.

CONCLUSION

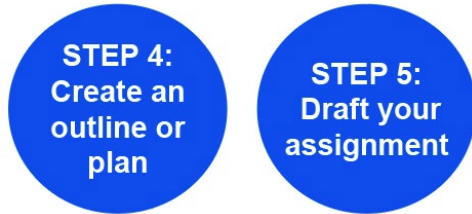
Not all business reports have 'conclusion' sections as you would expect to find in an essay. Check with your tutor, lecturer or subject coordinator to see if a conclusion is needed, and what it should include. Generally, a conclusion summarises the content of the previous document and may indicate briefly what action needs to be taken next.

REFERENCES

[References removed here – please see 'How to write a CASE STUDY ANALYSIS' or 'How to write an ESSAY' for detailed help with references. It is very important that you include a references section in all written assignments.]



How to write a BUSINESS PROPOSAL

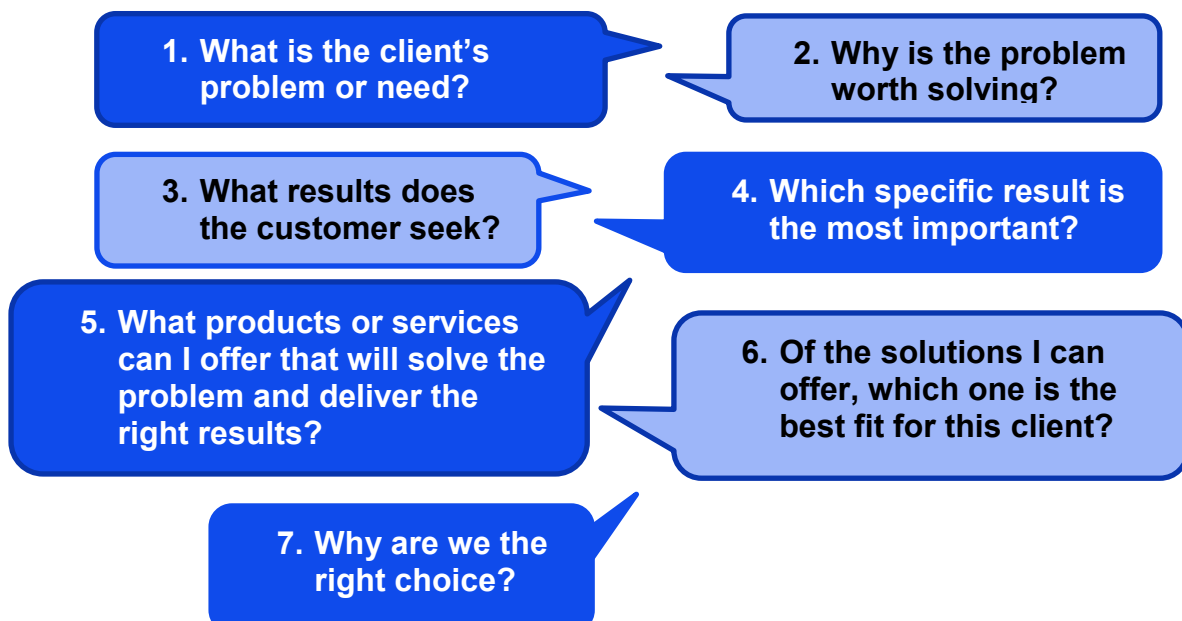


Why am I being asked to write a proposal?

Proposals are very relevant to real-life work, since you are likely to have to write proposals in many different business-related careers. For example, in your work you may need to propose a project to your boss, ask for funding, or to pitch for work as a consultant. Proposals also help you in applying key concepts from business research to real-life contexts and scenarios. Making connections between theory and practice is one of the key purposes of university study. Proposal writing is therefore a very useful skill that will assist you with your learning and your future career.

How should my proposal be structured?

The structure of a proposal is quite similar to a report, but the content of the body is generally more persuasive as you are trying to 'sell' an idea or product. Proposals also need to be client-centred in order to persuade your client (see below for persuasive language). Sant (2012) recommends that in order to create a client-centred message, you should ask yourself these seven questions:



A typical proposal might follow this structure:

- Title page
- Executive summary
- Table of contents (may not be needed)
- Introduction (which may include a Background to the situation/issue)
- Proposal/plan (description of what is proposed)
- Benefits/selling points (this is where you need to be persuasive!)
- Conclusions (not always needed – check with your tutor)
- References
- Appendices

What kind of language should I use?

Your language should be formal, professional and concise. It also needs to be **persuasive** – using emotive language to build up an impression of why your product or service is ‘better’ than other options or will ‘solve’ a problem. The words and phrases in the table below are examples of persuasive language – you might use some of them and/or find others that are more relevant to your proposal. To see how this language can be used, read the example proposal on the next pages.

Adjective + Noun	Adverb + Verb	Comparatives
a successful product	perfectly suit	a greater level of comfort
a practical service	expertly solve	more genuine collaboration
outstanding outcomes	greatly improve	a higher level of quality
a trialled and tested service	greatly enhance	better outcomes
a mutually beneficial solution	perfectly understand	higher revenue
satisfied customers	effectively manage	more profitable
General phrases		
Our [product/service] is unique in the way it...		
By implementing our plan/proposal, we expect you to benefit in terms of...		
As a result of following our plan, you will see...		
Our plan/proposal will ensure that...		

How should my proposal be presented?

Each major section of your proposal should begin on a new page. As Emerson (2009) suggests, use headings, sub-headings and/or numbering to make each section clear. Also use plenty of 'white space' to make your work look professional and easy to read.

Bullet points, graphs and tables are usually helpful to make key points stand out. Check with your tutor as well, as there may be formatting rules specific to your assignment task.

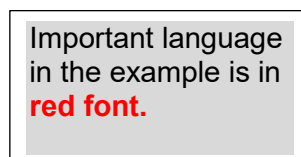
Example proposal

On the next four pages you will find extracts from two student proposals from a postgraduate management subject in the UTS Business School, along with some advice adapted from Sant (2012). The context of this particular proposal task was a company experiencing significant communication issues. The brief was to propose a form of communication training to help ameliorate these issues.

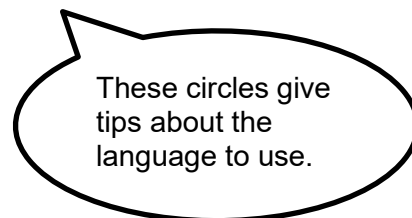
Proposal annotation key



These boxes give tips about the report structure or content.

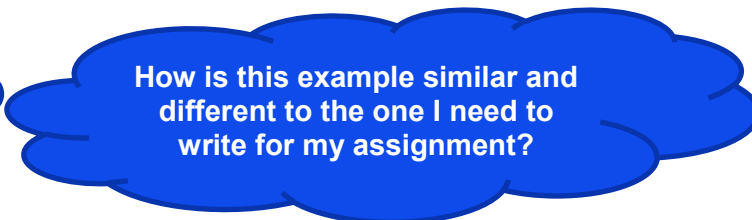


Important language in the example is in **red font**.



These circles give tips about the language to use.

* Always check with your subject coordinator about what is required for your specific assignment task. As you read this example, think about the question in the blue thought bubble below.*



How is this example similar and different to the one I need to write for my assignment?



Changing the Communication Culture at Company X

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Company X's core communication problem rests on Company X staff not effectively dealing with customer complaints. Effectively handling complaints is what separates you from your competition and ultimately what impacts on your brand equity (Tsai et al., 2014).

The first sentence states the core issue the customer wants to solve, and the second sentence states the desired outcome.

The key issues identified within the communication audit conducted by Company X highlighted a lack of general understanding between store staff and customers. Store staff do not feel that they are adequately equipped to handle customer complaints, therefore customers do not feel like their complaints are being adequately addressed. When customers feel they are not heard, they can become disengaged with the product and services of company X, negatively affecting Company X's brand (Tsai et al., 2014). From the staff's perspective, without proper training, they themselves become disengaged from their job responsibilities which in turn reflects on the company's brand awareness and reduced customer loyalty (Kahn, 1990).

This paragraph describes the customer needs and refers to relevant research sources.

The training program we propose will take company X employees through an **in-depth and structured methodology** that **will not only help** Company X **achieve its organisational goals**, but will also **allow** its workers to **understand the insights, build confidence** and **find the ability to implement the correct behaviours needed to effectively deal with customer complaints**.

This paragraph presents a summary of the solution.

Our company, TopTalk, has **a proven track record** of assisting a wide plethora of retail companies. Our training programs are **individually tailored** for organizations with communication challenges and we work with you **to achieve the results that are needed**. We are **the best in the business because we understand, ideate and implement programs to meet short, mid and long-term organisational goals**.

This final paragraph points out key value-added components or uniqueness factors.

The language highlighted in red is all **persuasive language** – to convince Company X that TopTalk will provide an effective solution. This language includes different combinations of words, such as adjective+noun (*proven track record*), verb+noun (*achieve its goals; understand the insights*), and set phrases (*the best in the business*).

BACKGROUND / RATIONALE

[This section might be included to provide a more detailed overview of Company X's issues than was already provided in the Executive Summary. An example is not included here, as the content really depends on your assignment task. This section would be mostly descriptive, where you are summarising the issues/problems that your proposal seeks to solve.]

SCOPE OF TRAINING

Customers generally tend to make complaints in person via direct contact with store staff. The manner in which these situations are handled plays a critical role in customer satisfaction and retention (Thorsten et al., 2009). Within a large retail company such as Company X, **a training program must cater to all levels from senior store managers down to junior team members.** Training each level allows a distribution of responsibility and equips all team members with the required skills to deescalate and deal with customer complaints. Training senior level retail staff will also enable the continual on-site training for all new and existing staff members of all age groups and work types (e.g. full-time, part-time, casual). Consistent training will most importantly provide the customer with reassurance that their complaint has been taken seriously and will be effectively handled. Murali et al. (2016) state that the customer's role within any business should not be under-estimated and that every business has a prime objective of satisfying their existing customers whilst attracting new ones. Company X now has the opportunity to provide their staff and customers with a mutually beneficial experience when dealing with customer complaints.

Figure 1 demonstrates the key focus areas and drivers of our Communication Training Program, and the aims and benefits of our program are further described in the next sections.

The 'scope' section describes who and/or what the solution will include. In this example, the author describes how the training will be conducted at different levels of the company.

This clause justifies the scope of the training, using the modal verb 'must'.

References to the literature are used to support the author's points.

When you include a figure or table, briefly explain it within the text, like this.



You might like to include a figure here or somewhere else in your proposal that clearly shows the key points about your idea/solution.

Also include a label for each figure and table you add to your proposal.

Figure 1: TopTalk Communication Training Program Focus Areas and Drivers

PURPOSE OF TRAINING

The main purpose of this proposal is to.....
[.....]

This phrase explicitly introduces the purpose of the proposal.

We have developed our tailored training program in order to achieve the outcomes listed below:

- **Provide** employees with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and expectations when problem-solving
- **Provide** guidance on the structure and agenda for a forum for managers and staff to have open discussions
- **Build** strong listening skills for Company X store staff to enable them to effectively deal with difficult customer encounters (Weinstein et al., 2015)
- **Establish** a simple customer feedback system that is easy to use and to follow-up
- **Ensure** the customer service training is implemented with each employee to provide a consistent level of service throughout the organisation/team.

The outcomes/objectives/deliverables should be clearly stated – using bullet points might work well.

Infinitives (base forms of verbs) are used here (**in red**) to introduce outcomes/objectives/deliverables.

[.....Some detail has been removed here.....]

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

TopTalk proposes the following high-level training program that not only focuses on the need to improve the communication between customers and staff but also on driving an increase in customer satisfaction.

The timeframe shown in Table 1 below allows for the training program to be implemented in a well-structured and safe working environment. Weeks 1-4 of the training will focus on..... From week 5 to 16 we will begin.....and continue to..... By the end of week 20

Here, the solution (training program) is broken down into a specific plan of week-by-week tasks, illustrated clearly with a table below.

Timeframe	Training tasks
Weeks 1-2	
Week 3	
Week 4	
Weeks 5-16	
Weeks 17-18	
Weeks 19-20	

Table 1: TopTalk Communication Training timeframe and training tasks

[.....Some detail has been removed here.....]

BENEFITS OF TRAINING

Customer complaints come with any retail business; it is how you deal with them that makes the difference to your brand. Our training program **will ensure that** each customer has an improved experience with Company X. As a result of sharing these positive experiences, Company X **will see higher levels of** employee engagement and satisfaction across the business, leading to **greater** staff retention and employees experiencing **a sense of increased** support from their management team.

By providing an effective and efficient process for the handling of customer complaints, TopTalk **expects you**

This section describes the expected benefits of the proposal, giving very specific beneficial outcomes in order to persuade Company X.

to see an increase in brand loyalty, customer retention and satisfaction, an increase in revenue opportunities by selling to satisfied complainants in the future and a reduction in negative word-of-mouth as well as a reduced likelihood of legal proceedings (Mitchell, 1993).

In summary, TopTalk sees this strategic communication training initiative as a driver for the development of a new competitive advantage. This training will allow Company X to focus on growth initiatives in comparison to the existing trend of declining growth over the last few years.

The language in red introduces the benefits of the proposal. This language includes verb phrases (*will ensure that*) and nouns phrases (*a sense of increased...*).

CONCLUSION

Sentence 1: Summary of the issue and proposed solution

Sentences 2-4: Persuade the reader again about your idea/product and the benefits it will have

Sentence 5: Sum up with a persuasive statement to convince the client to choose your proposal

The conclusion generally follows this structure – summarising and persuading for a final time!

REFERENCES

Mitchell, V. W. (1993). Handling consumer complaint information: How and why? *Management Decision*, 31(3), 21-28.

Murali, S., Pugazhendhi, S., & Muralidharan, C. (2016). Modelling and investigating the relationship of after sales service quality with customer satisfaction retention and loyalty – A case study of home appliances business. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 30(1), 67-83.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.01.001>

[etc. – other references removed]

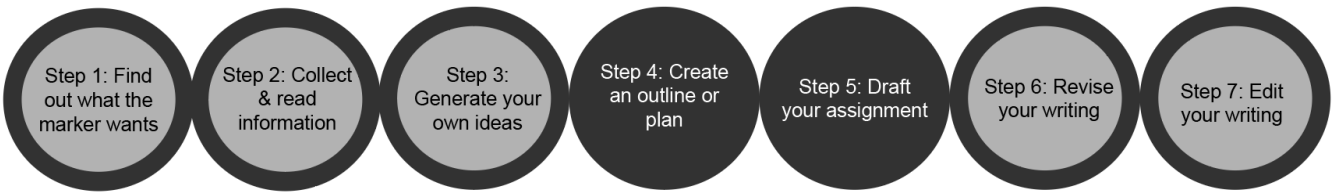
APPENDIX A: TRAINING PROGRAM

A proposal often has Appendices (Appendix A, Appendix B etc.) which include more specific details about the proposed solution.



NOTE: This entire paper has been submitted to Turnitin and other anti-plagiarism software. Under no circumstances copy from this or any other paper.

Some of the advice given in this 'Example proposal' section was adapted from Sant (2012).



How to write a CASE STUDY ANALYSIS



Why am I being asked to write a case study analysis?

Case study assignments are often used in Business education to give you a feel for both the complexities of the real world and how the theories, models and research being studied can be used in practice.

“In a case study you are given a written description of an organisational situation (either fictional or based on a real-life situation) and asked to analyse the situation according to the theoretical principles taught in a particular course or discipline.” (Emerson, 2009, p.34)

Generally speaking, case study assignment tasks require you to do one or more of the following:

- To analyse a case study which is given to you for the assignment task.
- To research a particular problem or issue, using case studies that you find from the published literature as examples to illustrate and analyse the problem.
- To collect information for yourself inside a particular organisation in order to prepare a case study.

How should my case study analysis be structured?

The written assignment for a case study analysis is essentially a type of report. You will probably be given a required way of structuring the assignment. If not, a common structure for presenting a case study assignment is:

- Introduction
- Body
 - Outline of the problems/issues in the case, their causes, and factors affecting the situation



- Relevant theories, concepts, models to help explain the case
 - Possible alternatives to address the problems/issues
- Conclusions
 - Reference list
 - Appendices

What kind of language should I use?

Your language should be formal and academic. The words and phrases you use should also make the case study analysis 'flow' well, so that descriptions, examples and evaluations are all clearly linked together. You should use sub-headings, and perhaps bullet points or diagrams depending on the specific assignment.

Example case study analysis

This is an example of student writing from a postgraduate subject in the UTS Business School. Students were given a detailed case study description of a company (in this case '4 Pines Beer'), and then asked to analyse the case study according to four particular issues – which are used to structure the 'body' of the analysis in the example below.

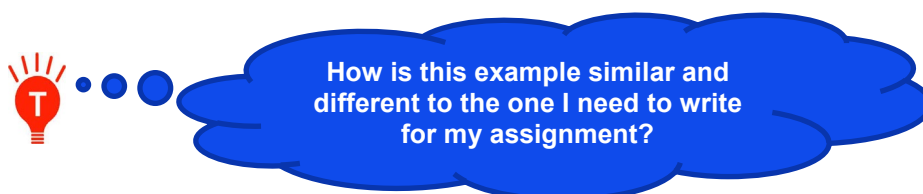
Case study analysis annotation key

These boxes give tips about the report structure or content.

Important language in the example is in **red font**.

These circles give tips about the language to use.

* Always check with your subject coordinator about what is required for your specific assignment task. As you read this example, think about the question in the blue thought bubble below.*



Introduction

4 Pines Beer is a medium-sized beer brewing company that is interested in applying sustainability principles to their business processes. Sustainability can be defined as “the ideas of ‘reproduction’ and ‘self-sustainment’ in order to ensure a system’s long-term viability or survival” (Ehnert et al., 2014, p. 8). **This case study report identifies** two company sustainability issues. **The report also discusses** how authentic these initiatives are by analysing theory around ‘authenticity’, and concludes that 4 Pines Beer is applying sustainability principles. The contribution of the sustainable initiatives to the Human Resource Management (HRM) of the organisation **is an important part of the case study** because they highlight the critical role of the HRM department in the operation and business model of an organisation. Last but not least, the sustainability initiatives of 4 Pines **will be analysed** in a medical context, including the differences that are present in the creation of value for companies.

The start of the introduction presents the case study context and defines the key term, ‘sustainability’ using a reference.

The introduction clearly outlines each ‘body’ part of the case study analysis, using the phrases **in red**.

Issue 1: Identification of sustainability initiatives & their authenticity

The first sustainable initiative identified is ‘Flare it up’, an online dashboard (4 Pines Beer 2017a) which aims to integrate and engage the employees with the enterprise. **A study conducted by Cohen et al. (2012) suggests that** all core HRM processes in an organisation must support sustainable business strategies that can be categorised into areas of recruitment, development and reward, managerial support and communication. **Certainly**, ‘Flare it up’ has implemented these areas with its employees, creating a sustainable HRM environment through the engagement and participation of staff. Greenwood stated that in a sustainable HRM, “people are not only ‘means’ and their value goes beyond the financial value they produce for organisations” (Ehnert et al., 2014, p. 8). **Similarly**, 4 Pines has adopted a sustainable HRM caring about the alignment of the employee’s goals with the selfie format (4 Pines Beer 2017b), maintaining constant communication with them and offering them economic and entertainment benefits.

These body paragraphs analyse the case study according to four issues – so the structure is very clear.

The author refers to theory from two research studies as a basis for their evaluative analysis. The words ‘*certainly*’ and ‘*similarly*’ then relate the theory to the case study.

The second initiative is..... [paragraph removed]

Issue 2: Authenticity of sustainability initiatives

Authentic sustainability relates to how organisations transform the complexity of the integration of sustainability into creative, original and innovative approaches.

According to Maio (2003), “authenticity is dependent on the integration of values into an organisation’s behaviours” (p.243). The ‘flare it up’ online dashboard is an authentic incentive because with the elaboration of the selfie format, that is a bi-annual evaluation of the performance and reflection of the staff, the brewing company is focusing on the alignment of employee-company goals which are related to their employee culture long-term goal (4 Pines Beer 2017a). On the other hand, in a study conducted by Morrow and Mowatt (2015), it was shown that authentic strategies concern opportunities for employees “to engage through personal commitment and transfer sustainable actions from their own practice to organisations” (p.659).

Consequently, with this investigation, the authenticity initiative ‘1 for the community’ is reflected in the commitment and participation of the employees with charity organisations, which can be seen as sustainable actions through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The author uses a variety of phrases to introduce research studies (*According to X..., A study conducted by X..., X stated that...*).

The author’s analysis and evaluation of the case study is shown clearly here with ‘consequently’, ‘is reflected in’ and ‘which can be seen as’.

Issue 3: Contribution of initiatives to enhancing positive social & human outcomes for the organisation’s human resources

[paragraphs removed]

Issue 4: How outcomes might differ for the similar initiatives in a different business context

[paragraphs removed]

Conclusion

To sum up, the theory confirms that 4 Pines has implemented two sustainable and authentic initiatives. In terms of sustainable HRM 'Flare it up' is an initiative that will allow the integration and engagement of the staff within the organisation. Furthermore, '1 for the community' engages the terms of CSR and sustainable development. Despite being a medium size company, 4 Pines is aware of the importance of being sustainable, intending to integrate different initiatives into its business. **The two sustainable initiatives that were previously analysed, 'Flare it up' and '1 for the community', can be said to have a positive social and human outcome for the organisation's human resources.** Finally, it was understood that extending the two initiatives of 4 Pines to the medical context does not add value to the healthcare industry with regards to increasing employee engagement and CSR. The context is different in both cases and other factors are required to achieve sustainable HRM in a medical workplace environment.

The first sentence of the conclusion directly answers the case study analysis task.

This sentence provides a clear, succinct evaluation of the initiatives, based on the evidence presented.

References

[...]

Ehnert, I., Harry, W., & Zink, K. J. (Eds.). (2014). Sustainability and human resource management: Developing sustainable business organizations. Springer.

Maio, E. (2003). Managing brand in the new stakeholder environment. Journal of Business Ethics, 44(2/3), 235-246.

[...]

Book reference: authors' surnames (in alphabetical order), year, title of book, edition no., publisher, place

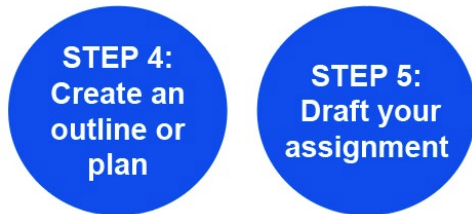
Journal reference: authors' surnames (in alphabetical order), year, article title, journal title, volume/ issue no., pages of journal



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How to write a REFLECTION



This section has been adapted from the ‘Student guide to reflective approaches to Managing, Leading and Stewardship, UTS’.

Why am I being asked to write a reflection?

Being reflective is an aspect of everyday life – it involves assimilating information and incorporating what is meaningful to you. It triggers further depth in understanding yourself and the phenomena around you and allows you to see things from a new perspective.

Reflection, and reflective writing, are therefore crucial aspects of **being critical** (see the section of this guide on critical thinking and writing). Reflection can help you better understand your subjects at university, help you develop different ways of thinking that will be essential in your Business careers, and can also be transformative in terms of your beliefs and opinions.

What is reflective writing?

Being reflective has been defined as:

“a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.”
(Boud et al., 1985, p. 19)

Reflective writing means not just writing a description: instead, you need to explain your viewpoint or perception. It also means you need to critically analyse your own thoughts and experiences.

The aim of being reflective is to improve your ability to:

- Think in different ways about your professional and academic practices.
- Understand and question how projects or activities were done and how they could be improved for future.



- Explore how theories and research findings can be actively applied to practice.
- Review and think critically about how you have experienced things.
- Explore how you deal with various situations, including how you would do things differently.

How should my reflection be structured?

The structure of your reflection will depend very much on your assignment task and what it asks you to do. For example, you might be asked to structure your reflection around different parts of your subject, or around specific tasks like a presentation or reflecting on peer feedback.

Reflections are generally more fluid and flexible than other types of writing because they are quite personal and critical reflection can be shown in a range of different ways.

What kind of language should I use? How should my reflection be presented?

These questions can be answered to a large extent by the **Academic Writing Analytics (AWA)** tool at UTS. This is a prototype tool that can give rapid formative feedback on your reflective writing in order to help you make your thinking more visible.

- ➔ Information about AWA and how to use it: <https://cic.uts.edu.au/tools/awa/>
- ➔ Access to the AWA tool to submit your reflective writing and receive feedback: <https://acawriter.uts.edu.au/>

The AWA tool is based on the content and language of your reflective writing, as follows:

Content:

- Initial thoughts and feelings about a significant experience (indicated with a blue square ■ at the start of the sentence)
- The challenge of new surprising or unfamiliar ideas, problems or learning experiences (indicated with a purple circle ● at the start of the sentence)
- How new knowledge can lead to change (indicated with a green triangle ▲ at the start of the sentence)

Language:

- Deep reflection, personally applied (**indicated in bold**)
- Expressions indicating belief, learning, or knowledge (indicated with underlining)
- Expressions indicating self-critique (*in red italics*)

- Words associated with strong feelings (*in green italics*)

Example reflection

The extracts of reflective writing on the next two pages are from a student reflective writing assignment in a postgraduate management subject within the UTS Business School. In this subject, students write a reflective log throughout the subject that includes: pre-subject reflection, mid-subject reflection, post-subject reflection, action guiding principles, and peer reflection.

This writing sample has been submitted to the AWA tool, and includes the feedback on reflective writing that the tool produced. The AWA feedback is shown using the key above (coloured shapes, underlining, bold, red italics etc.). There are also additional comments in comment boxes on the right hand side, and the key for these comments is on the next page.

Reflection annotation key

These boxes give tips about the report structure or content.

These circles give tips about the language to use.

* Always check with your subject coordinator about what is required for your specific assignment task. As you read this example, think about the question in the blue thought bubble below.*



How is this example similar and different to the one I need to write for my assignment?

Mid-subject reflection

At this stage of our learning, I feel the assumptions I made at the beginning of the course have been in some ways confirmed, yet in other ways challenged. ■ ● My initial thoughts on leadership and management were compatible with the ideas presented in classes, but I do feel my understanding has been deepened by lectures and in particular the readings from Ann Cunliffe (Cunliffe, 2014; Cunliffe & Luhman, 2012). ■ **Cunliffe's resource helped me consider the importance of theory in influencing the practice of management and to view n**

Describing how initial thoughts have changed and why, with clear links to the subject literature and evidence of deep reflection.

Verbs like 'consider' and 'think' indicate reflection and developing beliefs.

personal experiences with management through a more critical lens.

Stewardship Theory has highlighted the need to think about the bigger picture as a leader, considering multiple perspectives when making tough management decisions (Davis et al., 1997). Stewardship was one of the concepts that I knew little of when commencing this course. I am now beginning to grasp the principles and how *they can enrich my approach* to management strategy, such as the way leaders need to inspire and motivate their followers to take personal responsibility for their work and build on their moral courage (Hernandez, 2008).

Here the author shows how they might change their approach as a result of their learning (this is self-critique).

Post-subject reflection

At the conclusion of this subject, I can look back on the preconceived ideas I had about managing, leading and stewardship and see a deepening understanding of how these terms intertwine. I see my personal journey towards management has been shaped by the theories and ideas explored through readings, classes and lectures.

One of the big issues faced in business management today is the idea of moral accountability. Past business scandals have highlighted a lack of accountability across all levels of organisation for the moral wrong doings. ● Milgram (1974) demonstrated this alarming reality through his shock therapy experiments where we saw people willing to shock human subjects to death as long as they were not held personally accountable for their actions. The same example is seen in the Enron case study, where traders and employees across the company were willing to lie, scheme and break the law in order to make a profit. The needs of customers and the community were blatantly ignored in the attempts to make short-term profit goals and no thought was given to long-term consequences. ■ ● **These *shocking examples* really opened my eyes to the potential for ordinary people to be callous and ruthless in business when viewing the world through such a narrow profit-driven lens. ■ I think the concept of stewardship in business is essential so that our society can function harmoniously, with people intrinsically motivated to act**

This is a clear topic sentence introducing a paragraph reflecting on one specific topic - 'moral accountability'.

The words '*shocking examples*' show the author's strong feelings. This sentence shows deep reflection through the words '*really opened my eyes to...*'

The author's opinion is shown through the words '*is essential*', and they show a concern for society in general.

on good moral principles and working towards creating shared value (Hernandez, 2008).

Action Guiding Principles

Going forward as a leader and a steward, I *want to be more assertive* when debating issues with other colleagues, as one of my main shortcomings is being too accommodating to others at the expense of my own needs. ● Along with that strong assertive stance and self-confidence, *I need to maintain* my empathy for others in the workplace. ● In my current position, I have a sound understanding of what it is like to both manage others and be managed and I do not want to forget what it feels like to work in the lab, away from the business decisions. These lab staff are essential to the business and need to be represented in any closed book meetings that decide their working conditions. ▲ **I hope to demonstrate leadership responsibility in my future dealings with senior management so that each party is fairly represented.**

▲ When I move into a management role, I want to ensure I connect with others and maintain that humane aspect to my authority. By establishing a collaborative, team environment I believe tasks will be completed more efficiently. Transparency and an open flow of information *will* help build trust and as a manager I want to be approachable. In this way, problems or areas of concern *can* be proactively identified and solutions discovered as a team.

This paragraph includes several instances of self-critique, where the author reflects on how they plan to change their practice.

These sentences show how the author hopes to use knowledge gained from the subject to enact change in the future.



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- Cunliffe, A. L., & Luhman, J. T. (2012). Key concepts in organization theory. Sage Publications.
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How to write an ESSAY

STEP 4:
Create an
outline or
plan

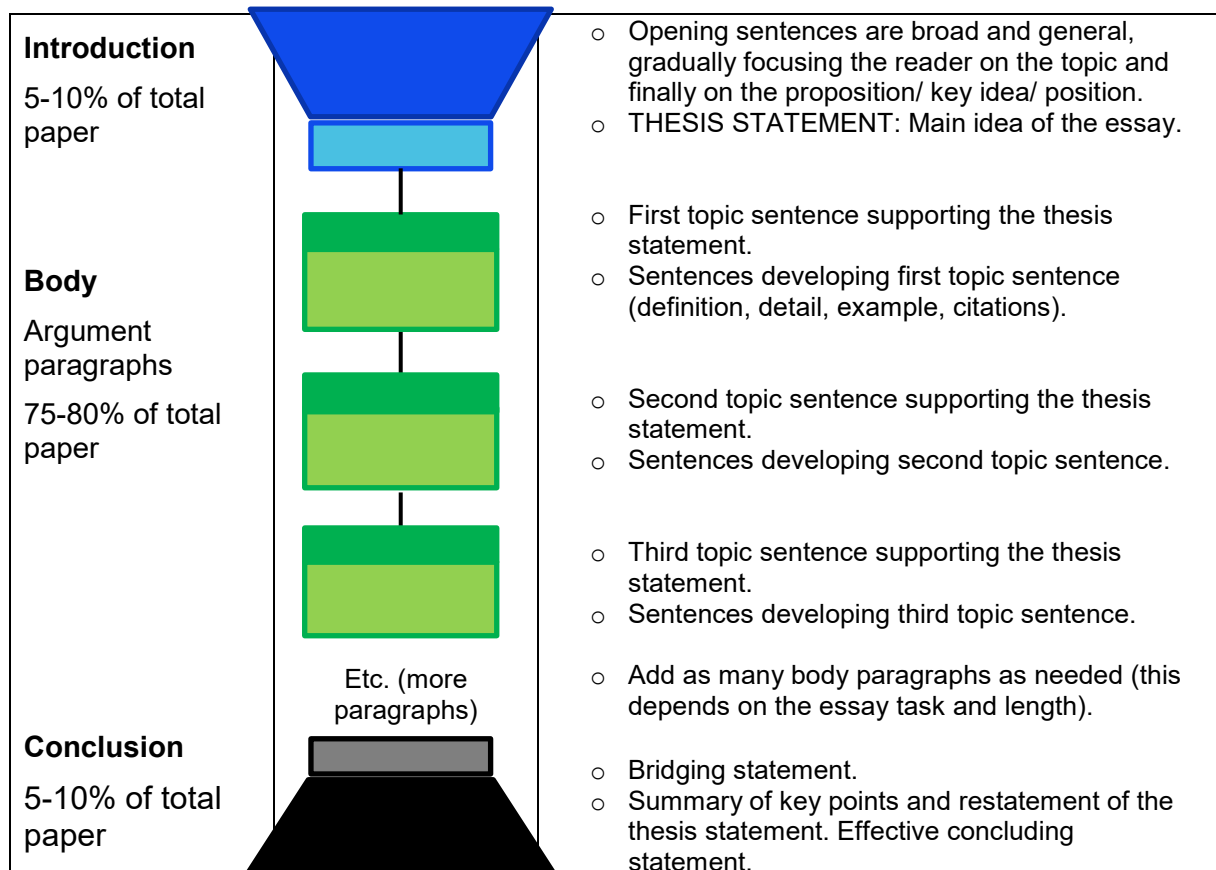
STEP 5:
Draft your
assignment

Why am I being asked to write an essay?

Not because your lecturers want you to suffer! Tissington and Hasel (2017) explain that essays are used as assignment tasks in order to both develop and test your knowledge, and to help you to think logically and critically.

The main purpose of an essay is to convince the reader that your position or point of view is valid, well-justified, and well-supported by relevant research. You will need to integrate evidence from research (e.g. journal articles and books) into your essay to support the argument. Most essay questions will ask you to develop your own argument or 'position' on the topic.

How should my essay be structured?



Basic essay structure, adapted from Emerson (2009, p. 56)

What kind of language should I use?

Your language should be formal and academic. The words and phrases you use should also make the essay 'flow' well, so that descriptions, examples and evaluations are all clearly linked together.

Example essay

This is a sample student essay from an undergraduate management subject in the UTS Business School. We would like to acknowledge UTS:HELPS in providing the essay below, and some of the annotations. You can find the full version of this essay on the HELPS website here:

<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/sample-written-assignments>

Essay annotation key

These boxes give tips about the report structure or content.

Important language in the example is in **red font**.

These circles give tips about the language to use.

* Always check with your tutors about what is required for your specific assignment task. As you read this example, think about the question in the blue thought bubble below.*



How is this example similar and different to the one I need to write for my assignment?

Question:

“Discuss the claim that post-bureaucracies are more suitable than bureaucracies in delivering change and innovation to an organisation.”

Most essays start with an introduction paragraph, which introduces the topic, defines key terms, states the writer's position, and outlines the content of the essay.

A **bureaucracy is** a systematic organisational structure that is hierarchical and rigid which focusses on centralised power. This centralised power provides the organisation with the authority to direct and control employees via an autocratic leadership style. Each employee specialises in an area, however, this specialisation can actually de-skill employees. **In contrast, a post-bureaucracy employs** a horizontal structure

The key terms 'bureaucracy' and 'post-bureaucracy' are both defined early in the introduction.

with decentralised power which enables employee empowerment (Clegg et al., 2012). **This essay will argue that** post-bureaucracies are better at delivering change and innovation. **In the first section, I will discuss** the use of concertive control as a device to deliver change and boost production. This position is in contrast to the views of Weber (Clegg et al., 2012) arguing that bureaucracy is the most efficient method to manage. **The second section will explore** the influence of soft power and its efficiency in delivering innovation compared to bureaucracy. **Finally, in the last section, I will explore** the idea that change is inevitable and management can only integrate change into their system in post- bureaucracies as bureaucracies are too rigid to effectively do this.

This is the writer's position statement, or 'thesis' ("This essay will argue...")

The first words of each sentences make the purpose of the sentence (definition, position or outline) very clear.

The writer clearly outlines what the essay will cover ("In the first section,... The second section...")

The **body** of the essay will consist of several paragraphs. Each paragraph should focus on one key

One of the key strengths of post-bureaucracies is their use of concertive control. **This type of control** shifts power from management to staff but maintains 'corporate' control through company values. **These values** guide employee behaviour, **for example** towards improving production and delivering innovations. **One such example is** ISE Communications where the workers are empowered to work in small teams, make decisions and introduce innovations, **for instance**, changes in the handling procedures of the organisation. **Hence**, concertive control through management's soft power has encouraged staff to be more involved with the product and has developed their sense of responsibility for the overall management process. Values are used to 'teach' new team members about the existing 'rules' in the team which limit resistance (Barker, 1993).

The topic sentence introduces the first key argument.

A real life illustration of a company is used here.

Linking phrases connect parts of the argument (explanation, example) together clearly:

- *this/these* + noun
- *for example/ instance*
- *hence*

This paragraph introduces an argument that contrasts with the first body paragraph.

In contrast, Weber argues that a bureaucracy and ‘the coercive’ control exercised by its systems and rules is the most efficient method of management (Barker, 1993). **This position asserts that** coercive control promotes efficiency and production. **An example is** Ritzer (2011)’s model of McDonaldization which is a highly rationalised and cost-efficient concept using four key mechanisms: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. Efficiency refers to the implementation of the most efficient method of production and involves roles and tasks, calculability refers to pricing, predictability to standardisation through ordered routines (Clegg et al., 2012) and control to the standardisation of the product. **This efficient process** of standardisation means that McDonald’s delivers change only by altering current processes and enforcing new procedures which are also reflected in a modulated company culture.

Another real life example – McDonald’s system of management – is given and supported with a reference.

Using ‘this + noun’ is an effective way of referring to the idea in the previous sentence (e.g. ‘Efficiency’..... ‘This efficient process...’)

However, while coercive control can promote efficiency in production and some change, it can impede innovation as everything is planned and standardised ‘top-down’. **This type of control** can result in a disengagement from company processes with at times disastrous results as was seen in the Challenger Shuttle tragedy (Dimitroff et al., 2005). Dimitroff et al. (2015) argue that political pressures on NASA and NASA’s subsequent pressure on staff ultimately contributed to ‘groupthink’, the situation where individuals agree with ideas for fear of being held responsible when actions go wrong (Dimitroff et al., 2015). **Hence**, bureaucracies may have clearly structured systems which can support innovation and change, **but** as demonstrated through NASA, this systematic nature can impact on innovation and judgement.

The writer shows here that they disagree with the position described in the last paragraph.

Frequent, accurate use of references to a range of sources.

[.... several paragraphs removed...]

Most essays have a conclusion, which summarises the key points and restates the position of the writer.

In conclusion, post-bureaucracies are a more appropriate method of delivering innovation and change into organisations. Systematic bureaucracy **may** be able to deliver change through coercive control which can stimulate efficiency and production. **However, generally** they see change as undesirable and allow it only through strict systems which **may** hamper innovation. **On the other hand**, post-bureaucracies provide **a more efficient and softer** method to change and innovate. They use employee empowerment or 'concertive' control to catalyse changes and innovations (Barker, 1993). Flexible leadership changes platforms and the focus on organisational culture also contributes to the success of these processes.

This first sentence is a restatement of the writer's position.

Here the writer restates the key arguments that support their position.

- * **Linking phrases** '*however*' and '*on the other hand*' indicate contrast between points
- * **Hedging language** ('*may*', '*generally*') softens strong claims and recognises that there are different possibilities.
- * **Comparative language** ('*a more efficient and softer*') is another way of showing the writer's position or judgement

Start your reference list on a new page. References are listed in alphabetical order according to the first letter of the first author's family name (e.g. 'B' for Barker).

References

[...]

Barker, J. R. (1993). Tightening the iron cage: concertive control in self-managing teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(3), 408-437.

[...]

Clegg, S. R., Kornberger, M., & Pitsis, T. (2012). *Managing and organisations: An introduction to theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Sage.

[...]

Morgan, G., & Spicer, A. (2009). Critical approaches to organisational change. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman, & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies* (pp. 251-266). Oxford University Press.

Journal reference: authors' family names (e.g. Barker) and first name initials (e.g. J. R.), year of publication, article title, journal title, volume/issue numbers, pages of journal, DOI if

Book reference: authors' family names and first name initials, year of publication, title of book, edition number, publisher

Chapter in a book: authors' family names and first name initials, year of publication, title of chapter in book, first name initials and family names of editors, title of book, pages of chapter, publisher, DOI if available



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For help with referencing, go to UTS Library > Referencing > APA Referencing Guide <https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/referencing/apa>

STEP 6: Checklist for revising



According to Emerson (2009), revising and editing are two different steps in the writing process. **Revising** means checking the content and overall structure of your writing, and should be done before editing. **Editing** is the final step before submitting your assignment, and it means checking the paragraph and

You can use this checklist as a self-reflection tool at the revising stage – a few days before submitting your assignment. The questions depend to some extent on the type of writing, so some of the questions might not be relevant.

Key questions to answer as you revise your writing	Tick when done or make notes here
<p>CONTENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Have I addressed the assignment brief and/or answered the assignment question(s)? 2) Is all the content I have included relevant to the assignment brief/question(s)? 3) Have I included the appropriate amount of detail? 4) Have I demonstrated my ability to be analytical and critical, e.g. through using different perspectives? 5) Have I fully developed my ideas with examples and evidence? 6) Have I included supporting evidence for my arguments, claims or key points? 7) Have I referred to a sufficient number of academic sources (books, journal articles, book chapters) for this assignment? 8) Have I referred to a sufficient number of non-academic sources (news articles, government reports, websites) for this assignment? 	
<p>OVERALL STRUCTURE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Have I included the required elements according to the type of writing? (e.g. introduction-body-conclusion for an essay) 10) Have I included sub-headings where needed, and are they succinct? 11) Have I presented my written work clearly and professionally so that the reader can follow the structure easily? 	

STEP 7: Checklist for editing



According to Emerson (2009), **editing** is the final step before submitting your assignment, and it means checking the paragraph and sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation, and referencing.

You can use this checklist as a self-reflection tool at the editing stage – shortly before submitting your assignment. The questions depend to some extent on the type of writing, so some of the questions might not be relevant.

Key questions to answer as you edit your writing	Tick when done or make notes here
<p>PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Have I used clear topic sentences* for each paragraph? 2) Does each paragraph develop one key point clearly? 3) Have I used signposting language and transition signals** to connect my ideas within each paragraph? 	
<p>SENTENCE STRUCTURE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Have I varied the length and structure of my sentences? 5) Can I cut out any unnecessary words? 6) Is there anything I could write more clearly, more simply? 	
<p>GRAMMAR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Have I checked the type of errors I normally make (e.g. word forms, tenses, subject-verb agreement)? 8) Have I checked for correct use of grammar and punctuation? 	
<p>VOCABULARY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Have I used formal and academic words rather than informal words? 10) Have I used (and appropriately referenced) key terminology that relates to my assignment? 11) Have I done a spell check of my document? 	
<p>REFERENCING</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12) Are quotations introduced smoothly and integrated fully into a sentence? 13) Have I used only a few selected quotations, and mostly paraphrased ideas from source texts? 14) Are sources acknowledged according to the correct referencing style for this subject (APA 7th or Harvard UTS)? 	

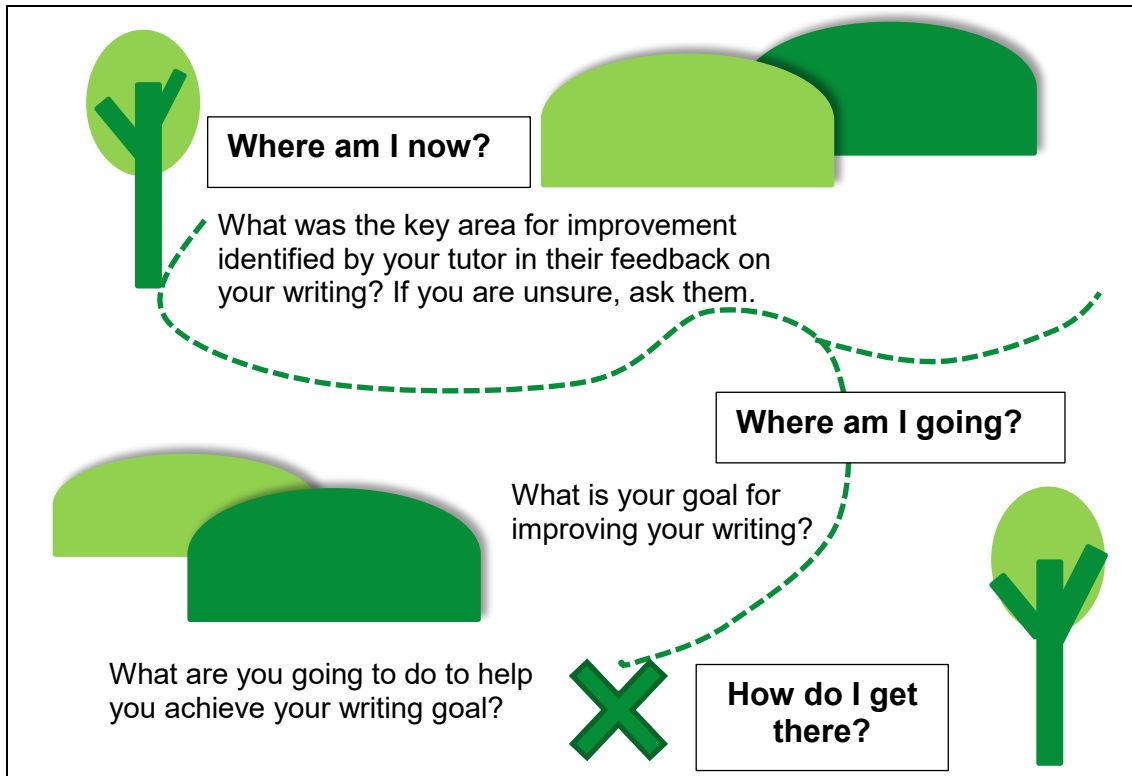
* Topic sentence = the first sentence of each paragraph that clearly introduces the topic of the paragraph

** Signposting language = phrases and words that indicate to the reader what each section and paragraph will contain and how ideas are linked (e.g. *The main argument is that...*, *This section will cover...*, *There are two key objectives of this report.....*)

** Transition signals = 'linking' words and phrases (e.g. and, but, also, however, although, in contrast, on the other hand, moreover, furthermore etc.)

Learning from assignment feedback

You will receive feedback from your tutors on each written assignment you submit. It is important that you do not just look at the grade, but take time to understand the feedback and how to apply it to developing your writing.



You could use this table or your own diagram to help you visualise your goal. The important thing is that you keep track of your feedback, goals, method (how to achieve you goal) and monitor this progress.

Where am I now? <i>(What area do I need to improve?)</i>	Where am I going? <i>(What is my goal?)</i>	How do I get there? <i>(What can I do to achieve my goal?)</i>	Have I got there? <i>(Have I achieved this goal?)</i>
e.g. My writing is too descriptive and not critical enough	e.g. To be able to write in a critical way, to show I have questioned and evaluated different arguments	e.g. Use the evaluation checklist in Appendix 1 of this guide	

References

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Appendix 1: Evaluating your writing for critical thinking

This checklist of self-evaluation questions was included in the 'critical thinking' section of this guide as a list of questions. Here you will also find some possible actions you can take.

Adapted from Cottrell (2017, pp.184-5)

Self-evaluation questions	Yes / No	Actions you could take if you are unsure or answered 'no'
1. Am I clear on my position on this subject and the reasons for my point of view?		Write your position down as a statement in one or two sentences. If you cannot do so, this suggests that your position isn't yet clear in your own mind. If possible, also check whether your point of view is clear to a friend or colleague who knows little about the subject.
2. Are my conclusions and/or recommendations clear, based on evidence, and written in tentative language where appropriate?		Write your conclusions first. Read these aloud; check that they make sense. Imagine someone tells you that your conclusion is wrong. What reasons would you give to defend it? Have you included all these reasons in your writing?
3. Have I analysed the structure of my argument and presented the reasons in the best order to lead clearly towards the conclusion?		If not, write the reasons out in brief and consider how each is linked to the conclusion. Check whether the argument 'hops' from one point to another. Cluster similar reasons together and indicate how each contributes to the main argument or conclusion.
4. Have I made use of other people's research as supporting evidence to strengthen my argument?		Check what has been written or produced on this subject by other people. Include references to relevant items that best support your point of view.
5. Have I cited the source of information for evidence and theories which I refer to?		Write out the details of the references in brief within the text (in-text citations – including author and date), and in full at the end of the writing.
6. Is my writing mainly analytical and does it contain only brief, essential descriptive writing where needed, and not more than needed?		Check whether all sections of descriptive writing and background information are essential to understanding your reasoning or are part of the conventions of the type of report (etc.) you are writing. Keep descriptions very brief, look for ways of summarising them and link them clearly to your main argument. Beware of wordy introductions.

Appendix 2: Study skills – Suggested resources

General support	
General study support and resources for UTS students	https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/study-support-and-resources
General information for UTS Business School students	https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/current-students-information-uts-business-school/manage-your-course
UTS Library support	
UTS Library Services for Students	https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-students
UTS Library Services for Students – Academic English	https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-students/academic-english
UTS Library Services for Students – Support for International Students	https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/services/services-for-students/support-for-international-students
UTS HELPS	
UTS HELPS (Student support service)	https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/about-helps
UTS HELPS – Resources for academic writing	https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/academic-writing
UTS HELPS – Sample written assignments	https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/sample-written-assignments
UTS Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial and quiz	https://avoidingplagiarism.uts.edu.au/
Other resources for academic writing	
Useful academic phrases for writing (Manchester University, UK)	http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/
Resources for writing (University of New South Wales, Sydney)	https://student.unsw.edu.au/writing
UTS Policies	
Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy (UTS Policy)	https://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities-policy.html
Coursework Assessment Policy (UTS)	http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/coursework-assessments-policy.html
Coursework Assessment Procedures (UTS)	https://gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/coursework-assessments-procedures.html



Teaching and Learning Team

UTS Business School

PO Box 123

Broadway, NSW 2007.

uts.edu.au/about/uts-business-school