



"Sustainable transformation through innovation"
SCHOOL OF H&SS

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS - Ba.SW112

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LEGS

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INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Course Overview

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the essential skills in communication, academic writing, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The course aims to equip students with foundational knowledge and skills necessary for effective communication in academic and professional settings, as well as proficiency in using ICT tools for research, writing, and presentations. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking, academic integrity, and effective digital literacy skills.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Search and locate relevant reading materials in the library, online and from other sources
- Appreciate and explain the rationale for conducting systematic reviews of existing literature
- Be able to conduct systematic reviews of existing materials/literature
- Appreciate and be able to apply the various types of citation and referencing styles/approaches
- Apply different genres in writing
- Appreciate official/business communication

As a university student your approach to learning will most likely be different to that from your school days: you will choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities. Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, stress management, etc. Perhaps you will also need to reacquaint yourself in areas such as essay planning, coping with exams and using the web as a learning resource. Your most significant considerations will be *time* and *space* i.e. the time you dedicate to your learning and the environment in which you engage in that learning. We recommend that you take time now—before starting your self-study—to familiarize yourself with these issues.

Method of Delivery

Lectures and Class Discussions – 2 hours per week

Tutorials – 1 hour per week

Course Marking Scheme The following lays out how the actual course marking is broken down:

Assessment Marks

- 2 Assignments giving you 15 marks with a total of 30 marks
- Final examination 70% of overall course marks
- Total 100% of course marks

Some Important Readings

Bjork, L. & Rasanen, C. 2003. *Academic Writing: A University Writing Course*, Lund: Student Literature

Pears, R. & Shields, G. 2016. *Cite Them Right: The Essential Referencing guide*, London: Palgrave

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

UNIT 1

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION

Introduction

This section will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of academic communication, emphasizing its structure, purpose, and importance in scholarly discourse. Students will also learn how to effectively engage in academic writing, speaking, and discussions, which are crucial skills in higher education and professional settings. The goal is to develop students' ability to communicate effectively in academic settings, focusing on formal communication, listening, note-taking, and questioning techniques.

Unit Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

- Understand the features of academic communication.
- Develop effective listening and note-taking skills.
- Differentiate between formal and informal communication.
- Understand what constitutes plagiarism, why it happens and paraphrasing to avoid it.

Understanding Academic Communication

Academic communication refers to the exchange of ideas, information, and research findings within an academic or scholarly setting. Unlike everyday communication, academic communication is characterized by a formal tone, structured presentation, and evidence-based arguments. This type of communication is primarily aimed at contributing to knowledge and engaging with scholarly debates. It is writing which communicates ideas, information and research to the wider academic community.

Academic Communication or writing can be divided into two types, i.e. Student academic writing and Expert academic writing. These two forms differ in terms of what they are, the audience and purpose.

Student academic writing is used as form of assessment at university (or schools to prepare for university), your audience maybe your; Tutors or professors at university. The purpose is to demonstrate learning. *Expert academic writing* is writing for publication (in academic journals or books). The audience is other experts in the same field and the purpose is the creation of new knowledge. Although there are two types of writing, or different in terms of content, purpose and audience, the standards and requirements are the same for both. (For example a student driver and an expert driver have the same standards and requirements).

Importance of Academic Communication

Academic communication is essential for several reasons. Through academic communication, researchers and students contribute to the global body of knowledge, which fuels innovation, policymaking, and development. Engaging in academic communication help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as they analyse complex issues and present evidence based solutions. Academic communication facilitates networking and collaboration among scholars, leading to joint research projects, conferences, and publications. Strong academic communication skills are vital for career advancement in academia, research, and other professional fields. These skills enable individuals to present their work effectively and build their reputation as experts in their field.

Types of Academic Communication

Academic communication can take various forms, depending on the context and medium. Let us look at some of the key types include:

Academic Writing

Academic writing is the most common form of academic communication. It involves the production of essays, research papers, reports, theses, and dissertations.

Key characteristics of Academic Writing

- ❖ *Formal tone and language:* Academic writing avoids colloquial expressions/informal words and uses formal language. The language used is formal and objective. It avoids personal opinions and focuses on presenting evidence and analysis. Precision and clarity are prioritized.
- ❖ *Structure:* Academic writing typically follows a structured format, including an introduction, main body, and conclusion. Additional sections like literature reviews, methods, and references may be included depending on the type of document.
- ❖ *Audience-specific communication:* Academic writing is usually directed toward a scholarly audience, which means that assumptions about the audience's knowledge level are made accordingly.

- ❖ *Evidence-based arguments*: Ideas and claims are supported by evidence, such as research data, theories, and scholarly references. Proper citation and referencing of sources is a critical aspect of academic writing to avoid plagiarism and give credit to original authors.
- ❖ *Objective*: Emphasis is placed on the arguments rather than on the writer). For example “In my opinion”, “It can be seen that” -Be passive or impersonal.
- ❖ *Balanced*: Academic writing should give consideration to all sides of the issue and avoid bias, show how strong your claims are. Use hedges or boosters.
- ❖ *Critical*: information should be analyzed and evaluated and not just describe, critical writing requires a great deal of research.
- ❖ *Precise*: Use of clear and precise language. This will enable the reader to follow the ideas more easily. This includes the use of technical (i.e. subject specific) vocabulary). Sometimes such vocabulary may need defining for example if the term is not often used by other experts. You need to demonstrate understanding to your tutor.

Academic Speaking

Academic speaking involves oral communication within academic settings, such as presenting at conferences, delivering lectures, or participating in academic debates and discussions. Like academic writing, academic speaking requires clear and organized delivery. Ideas should be presented logically, with appropriate transitions between points. Effective academic speaking involves engaging the audience, often through interactive elements like questions, discussions, and visual aids (e.g., slides). Similar to writing, academic speaking employs formal language and avoids slang or overly casual expressions.

Academic Discussions

Academic discussions occur in seminars, workshops, and group work where students and scholars engage in dialogues about specific topics or research findings. Participants in academic discussions critically engage with each other's ideas, providing constructive feedback and alternative viewpoints. While debates may occur, they are conducted respectfully, with participants focusing on the ideas rather than personal attacks. Effective discussions require facilitation skills, where one or more participants guide the conversation, ensuring it remains focused and productive.

Peer Review and Feedback

Peer review is an essential component of academic communication, where scholars evaluate each other's work before publication. Peer reviewers provide constructive feedback (*Constructive Criticism*), suggesting improvements or identifying potential flaws in the research. Reviewers must remain objective and fair, assessing the work based on its merit rather than personal bias. In many cases, peer review is conducted anonymously to ensure unbiased evaluations.

Developing Effective Academic Communication Skills

To succeed in academic communication, students need to develop a range of skills. One needs to have writing Skills, which is the ability to write clearly, concisely, and coherently, with attention to grammar, punctuation, and academic style. You also need oral communication skills; this involves developing confidence in public speaking, as well as the ability to engage with an academic audience through presentations and discussions. Furthermore, you also require some critical thinking skill, as a student you must learn to critically analyze information, construct logical arguments, and evaluate evidence.

Effective academic communication relies on strong research skills, including the ability to locate, evaluate, and integrate relevant sources into written or spoken work. In order to achieve all this one requires to have some research skills. Time management is another crucial skill students should have, academic communication often involves deadlines, so students must develop time management skills to balance research, writing, and presentation preparation.

Academic vs. Everyday Communication

Academic communication refers to the formal and structured way of exchanging information in educational settings, such as universities, colleges, and research institutions. Unlike everyday communication, which can be informal, spontaneous, and conversational, academic communication demands a higher level of precision, clarity, and formality. Academic communication aims to convey complex ideas, theories, or arguments clearly and logically, often contributing to scholarly discourse. Everyday communication, on the other hand, is more about sharing information, expressing emotions, or maintaining social relationships. In academic communication, the tone is formal, objective, and neutral. It avoids slang, contractions, and overly emotional language, focusing instead on clarity and formality. Everyday communication is usually informal, conversational, and often emotive, allowing for the use of colloquial expressions. Academic communication typically follows a structured format, whether in writing (essays, reports, research papers) or speech (lectures, presentations). Everyday communication is often unstructured and may not require strict adherence to grammatical rules.

Formal Communication in Academia.

In academic contexts, communication should be respectful, professional, and polite. This applies to both written and spoken communication. Academic communication requires careful choice of words to ensure that ideas are conveyed accurately. Ambiguities and vague language should be avoided. Academic communication often involves citing sources to support arguments. Proper referencing is crucial for avoiding plagiarism and maintaining academic integrity. Students must learn how to write formal emails to faculty members. This includes using proper salutations, being concise and respectful, and closing the email with a polite sign-off. In academic settings, students need to articulate their thoughts clearly and contribute constructively to discussions. This requires the use of formal language and logical reasoning.

Examples

Formal Email Format:

- **Subject:** Clear and concise (e.g., "Request for Appointment" or "Question about Assignment").
- **Salutation:** "Dear Professor Kamangu,"
- **Body:** Brief introduction, clear purpose of the email, polite language.
- **Closing:** "Thank you for your time and assistance. Best regards, Lenford Kasungu."

Academic Discussion Example:

- "I would like to expand on the previous point by highlighting that recent research indicates... (Smith, 2020). This evidence supports the argument that..."

Effective Listening and Note-Taking

‘Why make notes anyway? Isn’t my memory enough?’ we hear you wonder. Unfortunately not. Few people have the mental brilliance or brain capacity to remember in detail everything they read or listen to, and hence we all depend on some form of notes to trigger our memory and stimulate a train of thought. But more than that, the act of note taking helps you to make sense of what you’re studying and aids your mental processes. Note taking helps you to understand the material, and as such, it’s a vital step in the preparation for your essay. Later on, when you have another essay to write on a similar topic or you’re revising for your exams, you may be glad you made clear, helpful notes. When you make notes, they aren’t for anybody else. You pick out what’s significant for you, for your essay, and hence the system you develop has to be memorable, easy to use and tailored to your needs. You aren’t tested on the quality of your notes, but on what you do with them. If nobody else understands your system that really doesn’t matter, as long as it works for you and helps you deliver an essay you can be proud of.

Often, note taking begins as you read the material: you may want to flag up an interesting point, jot down a question the text raises in your mind or signal a quotation you want to use. In the early stages of your note taking, you’re likely to want to make notes on the text itself. Good academic writing skills are embedded in a person’s ability to comprehend the spoken and written communication. Note taking and making helps to comprehend the written and spoken communication or material.

- ✓ Effectively listen, read, take notes and make notes.
- ✓ Positive attitude and willingness aid one’s ability to listen, once you are attentive and listening, it becomes easy to take notes that will make sense and easy to understand later on.
- ✓ Identify the main idea and sub ideas. Then be able to separate details from key issues. These can be taken note of by using short sentences, symbols or signs but should avoid over summarizing.

- ✓ From this, then good notes can be made for purposes of studying and producing good write ups such as essays and reports.

Listening is a crucial skill in academic settings, as it allows students to absorb, process, and retain information presented in lectures, seminars, and discussions. Active listening goes beyond just hearing words; it involves engagement, comprehension, and the ability to respond thoughtfully.

Note-Taking Methods

- *The Cornell Method:* This involves dividing your paper into three sections: one for main notes, one for key points or questions, and one for a summary. This method encourages active engagement with the material and makes it easier to review later.
- *Mind Mapping:* This visual method helps organize thoughts and ideas in a non-linear fashion. It's useful for brainstorming, connecting related concepts, and summarizing large amounts of information.
- *Outline Method:* Use an indented format to organize information hierarchically, with main points and sub-points. This is effective for lectures that follow a clear structure.

During Lectures, students should practice these note-taking methods to ensure they capture essential points from lectures efficiently. After Lectures it is also important for students to review and summarize notes shortly after class as this helps reinforce learning and identify gaps in understanding.

Active Listening Techniques

- ✓ **Concentration:** Stay focused on the speaker, avoiding distractions. This includes minimizing digital distractions, like phones or social media, during lectures.
- ✓ **Engagement:** Nod, maintain eye contact, and provide verbal affirmations when appropriate. These actions signal to the speaker that you are attentive.
- ✓ **Note-taking while listening:** Avoid writing down everything verbatim. Instead, focus on key points, concepts, and examples. Use symbols, abbreviations, and bullet points to organize information quickly.

Questioning Techniques

Asking questions is fundamental to deepening understanding, clarifying doubts, and engaging in intellectual inquiry. In academic settings, QUESTIONS can help drive discussions and uncover new perspectives.

Types of Questions

- *Clarifying Questions:* These are asked to clear up any confusion about the material. For example: "Could you explain what you meant by...?" "Professor, could you elaborate on how this concept relates to the earlier theory we discussed?"

- *Probing Questions:* These seek to dig deeper into a topic, pushing beyond the surface level. For example: "What are the underlying assumptions of this argument?" "How does this argument hold up when we consider recent developments in the field?"
- *Critical Questions:* These challenge ideas and encourage critical thinking. For example: "How does this theory apply in real-world scenarios?" "What are the potential limitations of this study, and how might they affect its conclusions?"

Strategies for Effective Questioning

- *Be Specific:* Avoid vague questions. Instead, focus on specific concepts, ideas, or arguments you want to explore.
- *Build on Prior Knowledge:* Frame questions based on what you already know, linking new information with prior learning.
- *Stay Open-Minded:* Approach questioning with a willingness to consider multiple perspectives and potential answers.

Plagiarism

‘What’s all the fuss about plagiarism? Why can’t I just cut and paste a few words from what someone’s written? Aren’t they the experts? How can I, a mere student, say something better than an expert can? Nobody’s going to know if I copy a few bits from elsewhere anyway . . .’ These are thoughts that may go through your head at some time in your university career, probably at moments when the pressure gets to you, either because you’re feeling out of your depth or a deadline’s looming. These are the times when you’re tempted to take desperate measures and plagiarise – take someone else’s words or ideas and pass them off as your own. You think that a little ‘lifting’ of sentences may conceal the gaps in your knowledge or speed up the writing process. Everyone’s tempted to plagiarise at some point, but you mustn’t. Plagiarising can have serious consequences for your university career.

What is Plagiarism and why it happens?

Cheating isn’t a new crime: it’s been going on since time immemorial. It’s just that the Internet with its ‘copy and paste’ feature makes it so quick and simple to do. And as the ease with which we can copy something over into our own documents has grown, so our attitude to misuse of this facility has hardened. You don’t go into someone’s house and steal their belongings, do you?

That’s theft. Similarly, you shouldn’t enter someone’s mind and steal their thoughts or creativity. Plagiarism is theft of intellectual property and is a crime as much as any other. For students at university, unattributed copying can happen for various reasons:

Plagiarising unintentionally: This is when you don’t mean to copy, but somehow you do. An example is when you note down a sentence from a book and omit to put quotation marks around it and record where you got it from and who wrote it. When you come back later to look at your

notes, you forget that the words aren't actually yours. As a result, you use them unchanged and unacknowledged in your essay. Your tutor recognises the sentence and accuses you of plagiarism.

Taking shortcuts: You're coming up against a deadline, and in your panic to finish on time, you find yourself lifting phrases, if not whole chunks, from a book or article, thinking that the most important thing is to meet the deadline. Well, you may meet the deadline, but you may also find yourself with 0% for the essay if your tutor spots the plagiarism.

Thinking you can get away with it: You may find an obscure passage in a book or on a page on the Internet, and it seems to say precisely what you need to say at that moment. You feel confident that your tutor doesn't know the original and that you can slip it in unnoticed. You're taking a big risk here, which comes from underestimating just how good tutors are at spotting these little 'lifts'. (Skip to the later section 'Seeing how tutors catch you out' for more on how eagle-eyed tutors are.).

Believing the author says it best: You're struggling to find a way to rephrase the author's perfect, concise, clear wording. Anything you write seems somehow inferior. So you just plonk the author's words into your essay and hope no one notices. But of course they do!

Considering the consequences

Be under no illusions: universities take cases of plagiarism very, very seriously. In your first year, you may not be fully aware of what you're doing and your tutor may be lenient with you. If it's your first offence, and depending on how much you've plagiarised (Plagiarising a sentence and Plagiarising a whole essay are different degrees of offence), you may be allowed to resubmit with a number of points deducted from your grade, or you may receive 0%. You need to have a good chat with someone about what you did and gain from the experience so that you don't do it again. Repeated or very extensive plagiarism, however, can have a significant effect on your degree, to the extent that you may not get one. You can be dismissed from your university if you're proven seriously and significantly to have tried to pass off another person's work as your own. Thinking about this, surely you're better to submit your own imperfect ramblings and get a third-class degree than to try to beat the system by plagiarising and ending up with nothing.



Avoiding Plagiarism- Writing in Your Own Words

As well as avoiding plagiarism, expressing an idea in words different from the original is important in your development, because by doing this you internalise knowledge and make it your own. But no one pretends that finding your own words is always easy. If it were, it would be no big deal and people would plagiarise far less frequently. Thankfully, we have some useful tricks up our sleeves to make your essay writing easier. The following sections show you how to paraphrase and how to summarise – techniques that help you to express ideas in your own words. The important thing is to have a strategy for analysing and paring down a text so that you can reduce it to the key points that are critical to the thrust of your essay and then express these in your own way. And as you do this, you need to avoid using direct quotations from the original unless absolutely essential.

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase, you rewrite text so that it conveys the same ideas but in words different from the original – using synonyms (words that mean the same as those they replace) and reworking the structure of a sentence. What you end up with is a text that's usually longer than the original, because the first author has in all probability been more succinct than you can be. But you're not going to have to paraphrase an entire text, you're just taking little pieces from here and there and meshing them together. You can't paraphrase absolutely every single word. Proper names such as job titles, names of people and places, dates and many numbers all resist paraphrasing; you risk sounding ridiculous. For example:

New research shows that cleaners are some of the happiest workers in Britain, along with child carers, medical secretaries, hairdressers and petrol pump attendants.

Do you want to paraphrase 'cleaners' by using the term 'cleanliness engineers' or 'sanitation officers'? You may want to say 'people who look after children' instead of 'child carers', or 'administrative staff in doctors' surgeries' for 'medical secretaries', but quite frankly the effort becomes a bit silly. Common sense tells you that you have to use the specific job titles. The accurate area may be crucial to interpreting the data. So do be careful and think before you make a simple substitution such as this.

Looking for synonyms

A thesaurus comes in very handy when you're searching for synonyms. Use the one in your word-processing software or an actual book. If you're not sure of a possible synonym, do check by cross referencing with what a dictionary says about the word.

A simple word-for-word transfer then gives you:

A recent study reveals that cleaners are among the most satisfied employees in Britain, together with child carers, medical secretaries, hairdressers and petrol pump attendants.

The sentence is already beginning to look different from the original, but it doesn't feel that different until you start playing around with it even further and use alternative forms of words.

Using other parts of speech

By different parts of speech we mean the different forms a word can take depending on its function in the sentence. So ‘employee’ (noun) is from the ‘employ’ (verb) family of words, which give us ‘employer’ (also a noun), ‘employable’ (adjective), ‘employed’ (adjective and past participle), ‘employment’ (another noun) and so on. By exploring the various parts of speech belonging to a word in the sentence that you want to paraphrase, you’re very likely to find ways to say the sentence differently. If you play around with the synonyms and the other parts of speech, you can come up with something that begins to sound quite a bit different from the original. Your sentence may then become:

British cleaners, child carers, medical secretaries, hairdressers and petrol pump attendants have been studied recently and found to be among those most satisfied by their jobs.

The key change here revolves around the substitution of the verb ‘study’ for the noun ‘study’ and restructuring your sentence around this change. So you’ve worked at the sentence and turned it around into something that’s nearly yours. Although the alternative words are yours, the basic idea isn’t and can never be. However well you paraphrase, you aren’t finished until you acknowledge the source. So you have to follow the paraphrase with the in-text reference (family name of author, date). You then give full details of the publication in the list of references at the end of your essay. Only when you’ve done all of this can you lean back and tell yourself that you haven’t plagiarised but instead you’ve rightfully acknowledged the author of the original.

Summarising

In ‘Paraphrasing’, you’re highly unlikely to need to paraphrase the entire thing. More often you feel a need to paraphrase a sentence or very short section. What you probably need to do with a text like the one above, a paragraph, a chapter of a book, or a journal article is to summarise it in whole or in part. While paraphrasing results in a version that’s similar in length to the original text and often even longer, summarising means a drastic reduction in length. By the way, your summarising skills come in useful if you ever have to write an abstract for an academic paper or an executive summary for a business report. Knowing how summarising works you need to understand these three words that typify a summary:

- *Succinct*, because you use a minimum number of words to convey the maximum of meaning.
- *Selective*, because you include only the essential information.
- *Short*, because it reduces the original to its essence. How short? No answer exists to this question, because it depends on what your purposes are. A summary can be of any length, even a single line.

Summarizing is the ability to identify and select relevant information about the main idea in the text is vital in producing a fruitful summary. A summary is a shortened version of a text. It is the way of how to inform your reader of what is the book about. It describes its main idea, and summarizes the supporting arguments that develop that idea. A summary is a simple and easy way to understand and doesn’t contain any idioms, metaphors, sayings, and complicated English style.

The review is almost always in the writer's own words. However, keywords can be used directly from the passage. Getting the main idea of the said article, stories, or essay it is the way of reducing and shorten the text to one-third or one-quarter its original size (Buckley, 2004).

Summarising techniques

For effective summarising follow these steps

1. If you've got a text in front of you that you need to whittle down to its essence, the first thing to do if it's a single paragraph is go through it underlining or highlighting the key phrases or ideas, or, if it's a series of sentences, the topic sentences (the sentences that sum up the main point of each paragraph).
2. Express the selected keywords or topic sentences in your own words by using your paraphrasing skills of looking for synonyms and exploring other parts of speech.
3. Try to join together the words you come up with in Step 2 into a coherent sentence or set of sentences. In your summary, you may have to juggle with the order in which the information appears in the original, in order for it to flow.
4. Add linking words to bring out the meaning where necessary.

When you've done this, you may have something that's still too long for your purposes, in which case you have to eliminate anything of secondary importance. You don't need any details or examples. Check for repetition of any kind and deal with it. Choose your words carefully and try to convey the main ideas in the minimum number of words. For example, the topic sentences, in the words of the text, are:

New research shows that cleaners are some of the happiest workers in Britain. The study of 35,000 employees found that the highest levels of job satisfaction were among those providing personal service, even if the pay is poor. Michael Rose of Bath University, who led the study, said a key element of job satisfaction was the potential to work part-time and unsupervised. One explanation offered for the high job satisfaction rate of medical secretaries, who are at the top of the league with 75% of them happy in their job, is that they are 'doing something useful'. The study divides overall satisfaction into material satisfaction such as money, promotion and security, and quality satisfaction, which involves the job, relations with the boss and hours. The report strongly warns against the rapid growth of telephone call centres.

Put these into your own words, and you may get something like:

A recent study has shown that service workers in Britain have the greatest job satisfaction. Of the 35,000 people interviewed, the service workers were more satisfied in their work despite poor salaries. Michael Rose from Bath University identified being able to work part-time and lack of supervision as important for job satisfaction. The most content were medical secretaries, who named the usefulness of their work as key. Both material satisfaction, for example financial, and quality satisfaction, for example environmental, were studied. Fast-growing telephone call centres are a cause for concern.

Depending on the context in which you're writing, you may further manipulate the text by stripping out information that you don't feel is significant, like this:

In a recent study into job satisfaction in Britain, Michael Rose of Bath University identified service workers as having the highest job satisfaction despite poor salaries. He saw reasons for this as including the possibility of working part-time, lack of supervision and the usefulness of the work.

The only thing left to do is to give the summary an academic feel. You don't mention first names or where authors are based unless that's essential, so you refer to the writer simply as Rose. You also tighten up by being more precise about the date of the research. Full details of the study then appear in the list of references at the end of your essay. In addition, a linking device such as 'according to' is common in academic writing to emphasise the fact that you're referring to the work of someone else, and it helps to join your summarising sentence(s) smoothly to what precedes it.

According to Rose (2001), check service workers have the highest job satisfaction in Britain despite poor salaries. He identified the possibility of working part-time, lack of supervision and the usefulness of their work as reasons for their contentment.

This is, of course, not the only way to summarise the text, and you probably have ideas of your own about how to express the key ideas. For instance, if in your essay you're going to discuss at length the situation of telephone call centre staff, then you reintroduce this point and reweight your summary by eliminating reference to the reasons for contentment among the happiest workers, because this is less important to what you go on to say.

According to Rose (2001), whereas service workers, despite poor salaries, have the highest job satisfaction in Britain, the fast-growing telephone call centres are a cause for concern.

As with many other things in life, practice makes perfect and the best way to get to grips with something is by doing it rather than by reading about doing it.

Unit Summary

In this Unit, students learned the foundational elements of academic communication, emphasizing its structure, purpose, and role in scholarly and professional contexts. The unit introduced students to the formal tone, structured format, and evidence-based nature of academic writing, speaking, and discussions, distinguishing academic communication from everyday interactions. Students explored the purpose of academic communication, including knowledge dissemination, engagement in scholarly debates, and professional development. The unit also covered key skills such as effective listening, note-taking, questioning techniques, and plagiarism which are vital for engaging with complex academic material. Students practiced academic writing and speaking, learning to organize their ideas logically, use formal language, and engage their audience thoughtfully. The importance of peer review and feedback was highlighted as a process that fosters objectivity and improvement in scholarly work. Additionally, students examined the differences between academic and informal communication, including tone, structure, and purpose. Emphasis was placed on professionalism and precision in formal academic contexts, from emails to

discussions. Through this unit, students built a foundation in essential skills for academic success, such as critical thinking, research, and effective communication, which are valuable both in higher education and professional environments

UNIT 2

RESEARCHING ONLINE

Introduction

In the digital age, academic research requires not only access to vast quantities of information but also the ability to filter, assess, and synthesize this information effectively. This section provides students with foundational strategies to navigate academic libraries, online journals, open-access publications, and various digital platforms. This unit emphasizes systematic approaches for gathering, analyzing, and evaluating scholarly resources to cultivate critical thinking and robust research skills. By understanding and applying these techniques, students will be equipped to conduct thorough literature reviews, identify credible sources, and utilize critical thinking to assess the relevance and reliability of information.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

- Develop and Apply Effective Library Search Techniques
- Conduct Comprehensive Searches in Online Journals and eBook Databases
- Access and Use Information from Targeted Institutions for Academic Research
- Effectively Use Google Scholar and Other Scholarly Search Engines
- Conduct a Systematic Literature Review Independently
- Enhance Critical Thinking Skills in the Evaluation of Academic Sources.

Searching for Information from Online Journals and eBooks/Publications (Including University-Subscribed Journals)

Universities typically subscribe to online journal databases, giving students access to a vast range of peer-reviewed articles, eBooks, and academic publications. Journals like JSTOR, Elsevier, Springer, and Wiley provide cutting-edge research and case studies from various disciplines. To optimize search efforts, students can use Boolean operators, limit searches by publication dates, and target specific fields or keywords. University libraries often provide remote access to these resources, enabling students to conduct research from anywhere. Accessing such subscription based journals ensures that the content is credible and current, often featuring primary research not available elsewhere.

Techniques for Effective Library Material Search & Use

An effective library search involves understanding how to navigate the library's catalogue and databases, which are designed to house a vast range of resources including books, journals, articles, and multimedia. Libraries typically use organized cataloguing systems like Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress Classification, which classify materials by subject to make them easy to locate. How best to search depends on what you are looking for and how much you detail already have. It really helps if you think about synonyms for your main terms before you start searching. If you're looking for information about what people do in their free time, you should think about the range of keywords you might use.

Key Techniques

- ✚ **Keyword Identification:** Identifying specific keywords related to the research topic can help retrieve relevant materials. For instance, if researching “climate change,” related keywords might include “global warming,” “environmental impact,” and “carbon emissions.”
- ✚ **Boolean Operators:** Using operators like AND, OR, NOT can narrow or broaden search results. For example, “climate change AND policy” finds sources that include both terms, while “climate change OR global warming” includes any sources mentioning either term.

✚ **Subject-Specific Databases:** Many libraries subscribe to databases tailored to specific disciplines (e.g., PubMed for health sciences, IEEE Explore for engineering). Choosing a relevant database helps access high-quality, discipline-specific resources.

✚ **Library catalogues (OPAC):** Most libraries use Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), which allow users to search for materials by title, author, subject, and keyword. These catalogues provide access to physical and digital resources that may not be available through regular internet searches.

Effective Techniques for Searching University-Subscribed Journals

- *Advanced Search Features:* Most academic databases have advanced search options where students can use filters like publication year, article type (e.g., review, research), and specific journal titles to narrow down results.
- *Using Boolean Operators and Search Filters:* Filtering by date can help students find recent studies, which is particularly useful in fast-evolving fields like technology and medicine. Boolean operators further refine searches.
- *Saving and Citing:* Many databases allow users to save searches, download PDFs, and automatically generate citations in formats like APA or MLA. This is useful for managing references in academic writing.

The Emergence of Free Access Journals/Publications: The Main Arguments

The Free access journals, commonly called open-access journals, allow anyone to read, download, and share research articles without subscription fees. This model addresses the financial barrier of traditional publishing and makes research more accessible, particularly in low-income countries. The main arguments include **Democratization of Knowledge**; which means that Open-access journals aim to make scholarly research available to everyone, thus democratizing access to information. On the other hand, there are **Potential Quality Concerns**, Some open-access journals may charge authors a publication fee, which critics argue could affect quality control. It's essential for students to verify the credibility of open-access journals by checking if they're indexed in reputable databases like Scopus or Web of Science among others.

Online Searching of Information or Publications from Specific Targeted Institutions

Searching within the digital archives of specific institutions, like the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations (UN), or national government agencies, provides access to specialized data, policy documents, and comprehensive reports. These sources are particularly valuable for policy, social science, and public health research. Many institutions offer free access to their publications, although some may require registration or limited access. Researchers can navigate these websites by looking for sections like “Research” or “Publications” and using internal search functions to locate documents by keywords or topic areas.

Using Google Scholar and Related Sites to Search for Peer-Reviewed Works

Google Scholar is a valuable tool for accessing scholarly literature, including articles, theses, books, and conference papers. It is a freely accessible search engine that indexes a wide variety of scholarly materials, including articles, theses, conference papers, and patents. While it lacks the strict indexing protocols of university databases, it provides free access to a range of peer-reviewed materials. Features like “Cited by” and “Related articles” help users find additional resources, track the influence of articles, and verify a study’s credibility by checking how often it’s cited. However, users should critically assess sources, as Google Scholar can also index less reliable content alongside academic publications.

Techniques for Effective Use

- **Using the “Cited By” Feature:** This feature allows students to track how often an article has been cited, which can help indicate its influence in the field.
- **Setting up Alerts:** Google Scholar allows users to set up alerts on specific topics, notifying them when new research is published in their field of interest.
- **Evaluating Credibility:** Although Google Scholar lists many credible sources, students should cross-reference citations to verify the quality and reliability of the sources they find.

Online Search for Information from Other Search Engines (i.e., Google, Yahoo, etc.) and Limitations

Popular search engines like Google and Yahoo are convenient and can quickly locate information on a wide range of topics. However, they index content primarily based on commercial algorithms rather than academic relevance, meaning search results may not always include credible sources. Information from commercial or general websites often lacks academic rigor, which can compromise the reliability of research. Researchers using these platforms should prioritize sources from reputable institutions and avoid relying on non-scholarly or unverifiable content.

Limitations

- **Commercial Content and Ads:** Results are often influenced by commercial interests, leading to the display of less reliable sources at the top of search results.
- **Lack of Peer Review:** Unlike academic databases, general search engines do not filter out non-academic sources, increasing the risk of encountering biased or inaccurate information.

Rationale for Systematic/Literature Reviews

Systematic reviews are structured reviews of literature on a particular topic, often following strict protocols that make them highly reliable. They are commonly used to summarize existing research, identify gaps, and suggest future study directions. For students, understanding systematic reviews is crucial in developing their own research skills. Systematic reviews offer an in-depth overview by consolidating findings from numerous studies, which can help in understanding complex

research areas. By synthesizing the literature, systematic reviews reveal areas where research is lacking (research gaps), helping students frame potential new research questions. Systematic reviews are commonly used in fields such as medicine and social sciences, where they help synthesize evidence for practical applications and policy formulation.

Conducting a Systematic/Literature Review of Accessed Materials

Conducting a systematic review involves various stages, including defining research questions, developing inclusion/exclusion criteria, and using tools like PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to manage data collection. Advanced tools, such as NVivo for qualitative data analysis and EndNote for reference management, aid in handling large volumes of data. A systematic review not only helps consolidate knowledge on a topic but also ensures transparency, as other researchers can replicate the process to verify findings.

Conducting a Systematic Review requires first defining a clear criteria, specifying what studies will be included or excluded based on factors like publication year, study design, or relevance. Data collection and analysis is by using software like NVivo or EndNote helps manage and organize references, making it easier to analyze data and draw comprehensive conclusions.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a fundamental academic skill, essential for analysing research, evaluating evidence, and drawing reasoned conclusions. Critical thinking is the process of evaluating information objectively, questioning assumptions, and examining sources for bias, reliability, and validity. In academic research, critical thinking is essential for assessing the credibility of sources, especially when conflicting viewpoints are present. Scholars need to analyze evidence methodically and draw conclusions based on logical reasoning rather than personal biases. Critical thinking also underpins the systematic review process by helping researchers make informed judgments about the quality and relevance of sources.

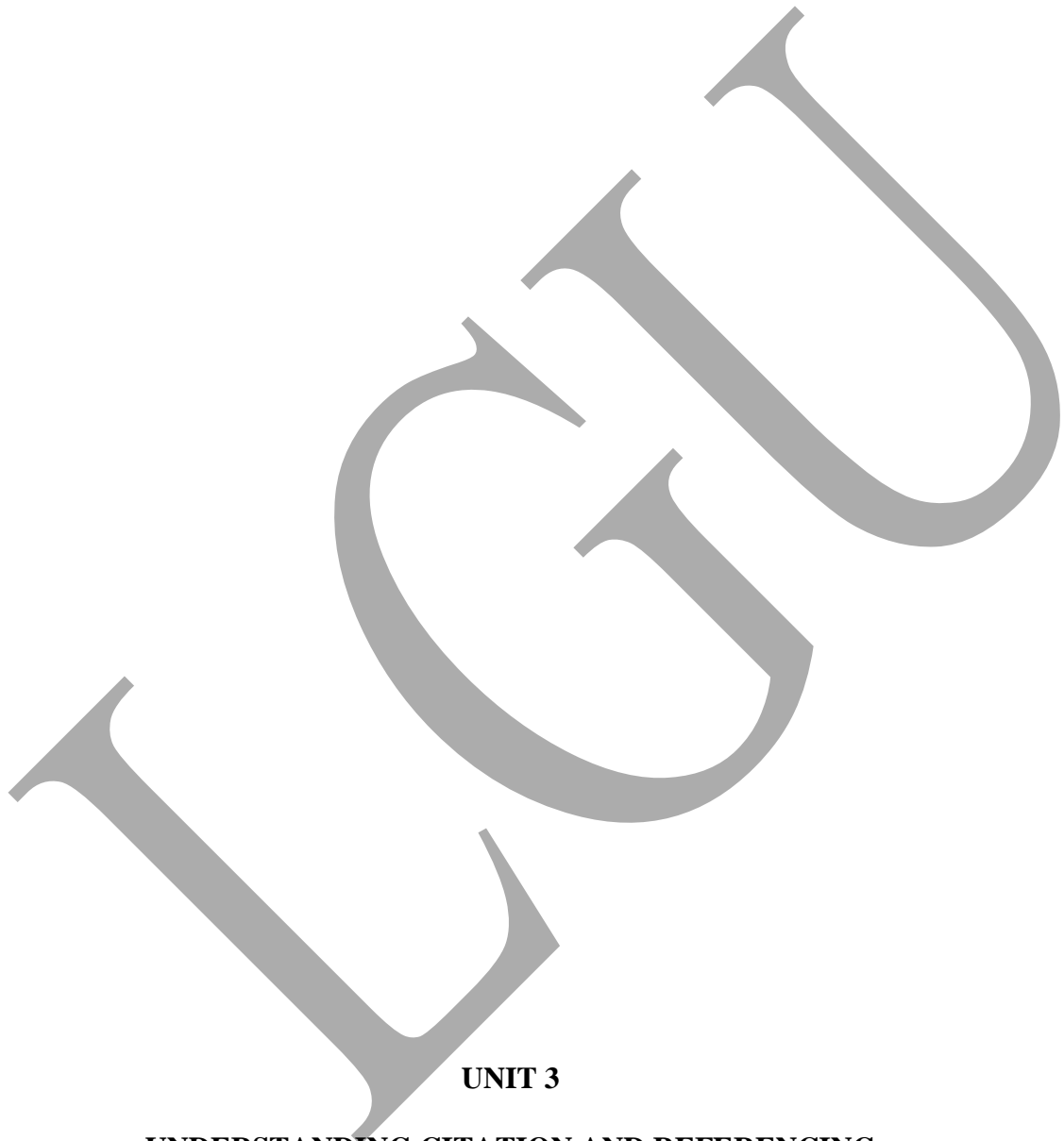
Application of Critical Thinking in Research

- **Evaluating Sources:** Researchers must assess the credibility of authors, the reputation of the publication, and the study's methodology.
- **Avoiding Bias:** Being aware of one's own biases is important in critically evaluating evidence. Good critical thinking requires open-mindedness and skepticism, allowing researchers to consider all perspectives.

Unit summary

In this Unit you learned essential strategies for locating, evaluating, and systematically reviewing academic materials. You were also introduced to techniques for effectively searching library resources and online databases, highlighting the importance of identifying credible sources within university-subscribed journals, eBooks, and institutional publications. In this unit, you have also covered the rise of open-access journals, exploring both their benefits and challenges regarding

quality. You also learned to use tools like Google Scholar to access peer-reviewed works and examined the limitations of general search engines for academic research. Additionally, this unit discussed the rationale and process behind conducting systematic reviews, guiding you in synthesizing research and identifying knowledge gaps. A focus on critical thinking has prepared you to analyze sources rigorously, enhancing their ability to assess information with depth and accuracy.



UNIT 3

UNDERSTANDING CITATION AND REFERENCING

Introduction

In academic writing, **citation** and **referencing** are essential practices for maintaining academic integrity, building credibility, and situating one's work within the existing body of knowledge. Citations provide brief, in-text references to the original sources of ideas, data, or words that are not the author's own, while references are detailed lists at the end of the work that provide complete

information for each cited source. These practices not only honour the intellectual contributions of other scholars but also provide readers with a pathway to locate and verify sources, encouraging transparency and rigor in academic work. In this unit, we will delve into the definitions, purpose, and process of citation and referencing in academic writing. Students will learn about different referencing styles, when to use them, and how to apply them correctly in various contexts. By mastering citation and referencing, students ensure their writing is ethical, credible, and aligned with scholarly conventions.

Unit Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

- Define and explain the purpose and importance of citation and referencing in academic writing.
- Identify the key differences among various citation styles
- Develop consistency and accuracy in applying citation and referencing techniques
- Avoid plagiarism by understanding the ethical implications of citation and the consequences of failing to properly credit sources.

Citation: When you cite someone, you're acknowledging a source. '**Citation**' is a general word, but can specifically describe instances when you need to refer to a secondary source – when you need to note the original source even if you found the information from a different book or journal. The aim is to show exactly where the idea was presented. Citations are most common in undergraduate essays when students want to say that they've used one writer's interpretation of someone else's thoughts or theories.

A citation is a reference to a source within the body of the text, often including the author's name, publication year, and sometimes page number. Citations appear immediately following the material being referenced, indicating where the original idea or information came from. Citations are essential for distinguishing between the author's original contributions and sourced ideas or data. **Direct quotation:** Here you're using someone else's exact words. You should enclose these in quotation marks. You must state the source, date and page number. **Indirect quotation:** Here you paraphrase or summarize. You adapt the original text or refer to it using your own words, and so you have no need for quotation marks. You need to cite the source (author and date) and in some cases – usually when you're raising a very specific point – you should put the page number(s) as well.

Referencing: This catalogues all the sources to which you refer in your essay. The reference list and in-text citations should match exactly in terms of author and date, so if you mention a source in the main body of the essay, you must include this in the reference list entry. Similarly, no source should be in the reference list that doesn't feature in the main text. The list should be at the end of your document and ordered alphabetically by author, and you need to list full details of sources.

Bibliography is a list of everything you've read or researched for your essay or dissertation, placed at the end of your work. Depending on your tutor's requirements, the bibliography can include all the reading you've done – whether or not you discuss this directly in your writing – or be a list of

only what you've mentioned in your essay. You present the list in alphabetical order, by author, and include all types of sources in one list (so you mix web addresses or newspapers with books and journals in alphabetical order by author). You usually have either a bibliography or a reference list, but not both. You need to list full details of the source.

References in the body of the text: Here you're referring to the sources that come up as you go along; they're the mentions within sentences of people in your text, or quotations that you use to illustrate ideas. You usually include only the author and date (and page number if you use a direct quotation). You include in-text references as you write as well as in either your bibliography or reference list.

Citation and Referencing in Academic Writing

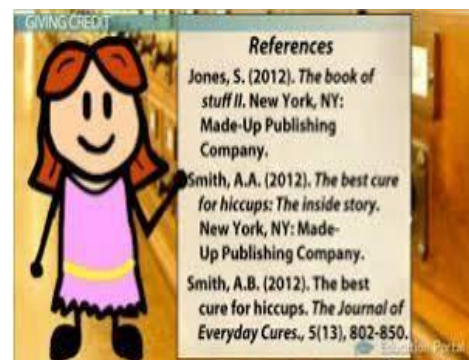
Citations and references are crucial for academic honesty. They provide a clear acknowledgment of others' intellectual contributions, preventing plagiarism and showcasing respect for the work of fellow researchers. Accurately citing sources enhances the writer's credibility by grounding their arguments in established research and expert opinions, lending authority to their work. Detailed references enable readers to trace the sources of ideas and claims, allowing them to verify the information and assess its reliability. Citing sources situates one's work within a broader academic conversation, contributing to the development of knowledge in that field and allowing others to build upon the writer's research. Referencing helps you avoid plagiarism by clearly distinguishing between your ideas and those sourced from others.

Different Referencing Styles

Where references differ is in their presentation. Many different systems for referencing exist. Here we look at some of the most common styles for referencing, but you should rely on your university and course guidelines for full details of what your tutors expect. Even academic fields differ in their approaches.

All references include the following:

- Author(s) and/or editor(s)
- Date of publication
- Title of chapter, paper or resource
- Title of book, journal or collective programme
- Publisher
- Place of publication or URL
- Date you accessed the work (if Internet source)



APA Referencing Style (American Psychological Association)

The APA style, particularly popular in social sciences like psychology, sociology, and education, is an author-date style. It also requires specific page numbers for direct quotes, promoting accuracy

and traceability. APA prioritizes consistency and clarity in source documentation. APA is essential in psychology and education due to its focus on source clarity and ease of locating quoted information, contributing to rigorous standards for academic credibility.

Chicago Referencing Style

Chicago referencing offers two systems: Notes and Bibliography, suited to the humanities, and Author-Date, more common in the sciences and social sciences. Notes and Bibliography uses footnotes or endnotes, while the Author-Date system resembles Harvard with parenthetical citations. The Chicago style's flexibility allows it to cater to various academic fields, providing a sophisticated system that can handle complex source types, making it ideal for comprehensive historical and literary studies. Notes and Bibliography Example (footnotes/endnotes)

John Doe, The History of Time (New York: Random House, 2019), 123.

Author-Date Style Example- In-text Citation: (Doe 2019, 123)

Reference List Example: Doe, J. (2019). The history of time. New York: Random House.

Vancouver Referencing Style

Primarily used in medical and scientific disciplines, Vancouver is a numerical citation style, where references are numbered sequentially in the text and listed in that order in the bibliography. Vancouver style is prevalent in the sciences, particularly medicine, where concise references enhance readability and facilitate quick reference tracking for researchers and professionals.

In-text Citation: As demonstrated by recent studies (1).

Reference List example: Adams J, Wright S, Johnson R. Medical research methodologies. Journal of Medicine. 2018;24 (3):113-120.

MHRA Referencing Style (Modern Humanities Research Association)

MHRA is used in the humanities, especially in English literature, and uses footnotes with superscript numbers in the text and a detailed bibliography. This style is well-suited to disciplines that frequently analyze primary texts, as footnotes allow detailed contextual information without disrupting the flow of the main text.

In-text Citation: The literature offers various perspectives on the topic.¹

Footnote example: ¹ Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, ed. by R.W. Chapman, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 30. Bibliography example: Austen, J. Pride and Prejudice. Edited by R.W. Chapman, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

MLA Referencing Style (Modern Language Association)

Common in humanities disciplines, particularly in language and literature studies, MLA style uses in-text citations with the author's last name and page number, and an alphabetically organized "Works Cited" page. MLA is ideal for literature and language studies, as its concise citation format supports detailed textual analysis without cluttering the writing with full bibliographic details in the main text.

In-text Citation: (Williams 42)

Works Cited Example: Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

OSCOLA Referencing Style (Oxford University Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities)

OSCOLA is used in legal studies for citing cases, legislation, and academic sources, relying on footnotes and a bibliography.

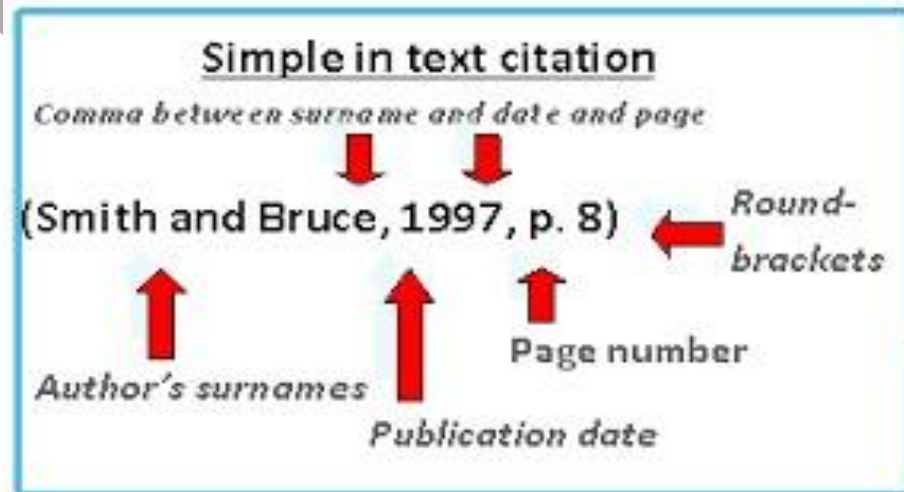
Footnote Citation: Smith v. Jones [2021] EWCA Civ 1, [10].

Bibliography example: Brown, John. *An Introduction to Legal Studies*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Harvard Referencing Style

This system's known as 'author/date' because that's how it works; you put the name of the author and then the date of the publication generally found in science, humanities and the social sciences, known for its clarity in identifying sources quickly within the text. It integrates author names and publication years in parentheses, with complete details provided in the reference list in alphabetical order. Ideal for disciplines like social sciences, where readers benefit from seeing the author and date alongside the cited material.

Examples



When you refer to a writer's ideas in your text, you need to provide the name, date and page reference. The reference should look something like this:

- According to Banda (2016:8-10), all citations in the text should be consistent.
- There seems to be a correlation between students' use of the library and high degree marks (Stone and Collins, 2012).

When you're citing the author in the text as you're going along, use the name if it occurs naturally within the flow of the text:

- Jones (2017) emphasized that citations in the text should be consistent (p.8). Or
- Jones (2017:8) emphasized that citations in the text should be consistent.

With instances of multiple authors (three or more), you can use the shorthand of et al. which means 'and others' or and colleagues. (You provide the full list of authors in the bibliography). The name of the *first author* should be given, followed by the phrase "et al".

- Jones et al. (2017) emphasized that citations in a text should be consistent.
- John et al. (2016) argue that all citations in a text should be consistent.

When you're referring to an organization, this is often in place of a specific author. Unless the organization specifies the author, it generally retains the rights to the work and so it is the author for the purposes of your referencing. Avoid abbreviating an organization's name the first time you mention it, otherwise your reader may not know what you're referring to:

- The simpler version has been created for teachers (United Nations, 2003). It is designed to help them adapt the theory to the classroom. In a further model, this is highlighted (UN, 2024:11).

You need to express secondary sources very clearly, so that your reader can see how they match with your bibliography:

- Harlot (1999) suggests that watching the news can disturb younger children who do not understand the context of the stories (cited in Sobrina, 2020:10).

Some people use "Ibid" when they want to cite the same author twice in a row. This does not apply in the Harvard system. You must write the full citation again.

Some Common Phrases you can Use in Citations

- According to....
- Banda (2016) argues that..... ■ Indicates that.....
- Observes that ■ Points out that.....
- Found out that.....
- Emphasizes that....

Reference from Bloggers

Surname, INITIAL(S). Year. Title of blog entry. Date blog entry written. Title of blog. [Online]. [Date accessed]. Available from: URL

Examples

- Beard, M. (2017). *How long can it take to write a paragraph?* 06 May. A Don's Life. [Online]. [Accessed 11 May 2017]. Available from: <http://timesonline.typepad.com/>
- American Red Cross. (2016). *Helping kids cope with disaster*. 10 November. *Red Cross Chat*. [Online]. [Accessed 11 May 2017]. Available from: <https://redcrosschat.org/>

Or

- UNDCP, (2002), *Lesson Learned in Drug Abuse Prevention: A Global Overview*, New York: Mentor Foundation. <http://www.mentorfoundation.org>. (Retrieved 10/05/14).

Online Book Referencing

- ✚ Surname, initials, year, title
- ✚ (online)
- ✚ The date you accessed the article
- ✚ The URL

Example

- ✓ Hollensen, S. (2011). *Global marketing: a decision-oriented approach*. [Online]. 5th ed. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall. [Accessed 10 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9780273726272>
- ✓ James, C. (2011). *Drug prevention programmes in schools: What is the evidence?* Mentor Uk. www.mentoruk.org.uk (retrieved 02/11/14).

Edited books

- Smith, C.M.M. (ed.) (2006) *Including the Gifted and Talented: Making Inclusion Work for More Gifted and Able Learners*, London: Taylor & Francis.
- Wallace, B., Fitton, S., Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Pomerantz, M. and Winstanley, C. (eds) (2007) *Raising the Achievement of Able, Gifted and Talented Pupils Within an Inclusive School Framework*, London: NACE and LG&T.

Chapter in book

- Winstanley, C. (2006) 'Inequity in equity: Tackling the excellence-equality conundrum' in Smith, C.M.M. (ed.) *Including the Gifted and Talented: Making Inclusion Work for More Gifted and Able Learners*, London: Taylor & Francis, pp. 22-40

For journals

Journal references look like this:

Author's surname, initials. (Year of publication) 'Title of article', Name of Journal, Volume number (part number): Page numbers. For example:

- Freeman, J. (1997) 'The emotional development of the highly able', *European Journal of Psychology in Education*, 12: 479-493

URL Web Addresses

Sometimes one can use URL Web Address for a reference. For a website from which you took general information, you should put the URL as well as some sort of title for the organisation or individual. What you need to check is that someone's able to find the page you're referring to.

Example

- <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/>
- <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2009-01-grg-abs-eng.aspx> (Retrieved 16/16/2010)
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publication2006/03/14135923/0> (Retrieved 28/12 /10) □
Challoner, J., www.explaining-science.co.uk. Accessed 10 February 2009.
- Science Museum, www.sciencemuseum.org.uk. Accessed 10 February 2009

For digital media

You also need to reference recordings, films and CD-ROMs with clarity:

Title (Year of distribution) Director [Format (DVD or video cassette etc.)], Place of distribution: Distribution company. Here's the example:

➤ *Etre et Avoir* (2002), Directed by Philibert, N. [DVD], Paris: Canal Plus

For visual materials

You may need to reference a table, chart, model or illustration in your work. You should reference this with the same level of detail as a quotation, if it hails from a published work of any description. If you have more than one diagram, you need to label them all with figure numbers. For example:

➤ 'Types of Sprinkler', page 469, in Brickell, C. (ed.) (1992) *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, London: Dorling Kindersley.

Tips for Accurate and Consistent Referencing

- Pay attention to detail: Each style has specific requirements for punctuation, italicization, and capitalization. For instance, APA uses italics for book titles, while MLA places them in quotation marks.
- Use quotation marks and page numbers for direct quotes: For instance, "Citing correctly is essential" (Smith, 2021, p. 45).
- Paraphrasing and summarizing: Even when rephrasing an idea in your own words, you must cite the original source.
- Review and edit references for accuracy: Check each citation against the style guide to avoid missing details that could affect readability and credibility.
- Use citation management tools: Tools like EndNote, Zotero, or Mendeley help organize references and ensure consistency across different citation styles.

Listing References at the End of Your Work

At the end of your essay, you need to present all your sources in your reference list or bibliography (the earlier section 'Getting to Grips with the Jargon' explains these). This is an essential component of the essay, validating what you claim in the body of the text. You must follow the accepted conventions to ensure that the reader can find the original sources to assess them personally and decide whether they agree with your interpretations. As ever, you need to check your course regulations with care, but generally speaking you must:

- Place your bibliography at the end of your essay.
- Put everything in alphabetical order (by author).
- Avoid separating books, articles and websites, or other sources, unless specifically requested to do so.
- Ensure that you format the bibliography to allow easy reading and to meet requirements.
- Use appropriate spacing and leave a line between each entry.

Unit Summary

In this unit, students have learned that citation and referencing are indispensable in academic writing. By understanding the purpose and function of citations and reference lists, students can avoid plagiarism, enhance the credibility of their work, and contribute ethically to their academic community. The unit has also covered different citation styles, each with unique formats and applications suited to specific disciplines. Each style whether Harvard for social sciences, APA for psychology, Vancouver for medicine, or OSCOLA for legal studies serves unique purposes, aiding clarity, credibility, and ease of reference for readers and researchers. Familiarity with these conventions enables students to communicate effectively within their academic communities and ensures adherence to high standards of academic integrity.

UNIT 4

ACADEMIC WRITING CONTEXTS/GENRES

Introduction

Academic writing encompasses a wide range of genres, each with specific conventions and purposes, designed to effectively communicate ideas, research, and insights. Understanding these genres such as essays, research papers, dissertations, reflective writing, and book reviews enables students to adapt their writing to meet the expectations of different academic contexts. Each genre has a unique structure, tone, and audience, influencing how arguments are constructed, evidence is presented, and conclusions are drawn. This unit provides an overview of major academic writing genres, highlighting their distinct features and guiding students on how to approach each with clarity and purpose.

Unit Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

- Recognize and differentiate between various academic writing genres.
- Identify the purpose, structure, and style of each genre, including essays, research papers, dissertations, book reports, conference papers, and reflective writing.
- Adapt their writing to suit the specific requirements of each genre, including audience expectations, tone, and organization.
- Apply critical thinking skills to organize ideas, present evidence, and construct arguments that align with academic standards.

Using Different Types of Writing

Academic writing demands different styles of writing. At University-level essays demand three different styles or genres of writing: descriptive, analytical and reflective. You need to be able to use these styles effectively in the main body of your essay, so in this section let's outline how each of them works.

Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing's useful for necessary context and background. Descriptive writing aims to provide a detailed depiction of a person, place, event, or object, often using sensory details. This genre is common in creative writing, but it also appears in academic writing where detailed observation is required, such as in qualitative research. The key features of descriptive writing include among others; sensory details: which entails that descriptive writing often includes details that appeal to the senses (sight, sound, touch, etc.). Descriptive writing focus on vivid imagery, the goal is to paint a mental picture for the reader, creating a clear and immersive description. It also focuses on individual aspects or characteristics of the subject. Example:

The city of Lusaka is a bustling urban centre, where the air is thick with the sounds of honking vehicles and the smells of street food. Its streets are lined with both modern office buildings and aging colonial-era structures, creating a stark contrast of the old and new.

Causal Analysis

Causal analysis involves exploring the relationship between causes and effects, aiming to explain why something happens and what results it leads to. In academic writing, this genre is often used in fields such as sociology, economics, psychology, and health sciences to understand phenomena and inform policy or practice. The key features include; Identification of causes and effects: The writer identifies a cause and the resultant effects, using evidence to show how one leads to another. The structure of causal analysis is often linear, with clear explanations of how one event leads to another (logical structure). The relationship between cause and effect is substantiated through data, case studies, or theoretical frameworks. Credible sources are crucial in supporting claims about

causality. This can include statistical analysis, case studies, or expert testimony. Let's take a look at the example below:

A study by Smith and Williams (2019) examined the causal relationship between air pollution and increased rates of respiratory diseases in urban populations. They found that higher levels of particulate matter in the air correlated with a significant increase in asthma-related hospital admissions, suggesting that long-term exposure to air pollutants is a leading cause of respiratory illness in urban settings.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves rewording a passage from a source text using one's own words while retaining the original meaning. It is an essential skill in academic writing because it demonstrates understanding, helps avoid plagiarism, and integrates sources into the writer's own work. The paraphrase must accurately reflect the original meaning without altering key concepts. The reworded version should be clear and understandable to the reader. Even when paraphrased, the original source must be properly cited to avoid plagiarism. For example:

Original: "Global warming has led to significant changes in weather patterns, contributing to more extreme weather events worldwide" (Jones, 2020, p. 35).

Paraphrased:

According to Jones (2020), the rise in global temperatures has altered climate patterns, resulting in an increase in extreme weather occurrences around the globe.

Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing a larger text or idea into a shorter version while retaining its key points. A summary highlights the most important aspects of a source and provides a brief overview without unnecessary detail. A summary is significantly shorter than the original text. Only the essential information is included, omitting minor details, examples, or lengthy explanations. The summary should be easy to read and reflect the central themes or findings of the original work.

Argumentation

Argumentation is the process of presenting a reasoned case for or against a particular position or idea. In academic writing, argumentation is used to persuade the reader of the validity of the writer's thesis or viewpoint. An argument should begin with a clear, concise thesis statement that presents the writer's position. Supporting claims with credible evidence such as data, research findings, or logical reasoning is crucial. A well-rounded argument acknowledges opposing viewpoints and refutes them to strengthen the writer's position. Arguments are typically organized

into an introduction, body paragraphs presenting evidence, and a conclusion summarizing the argument. For example;

In their article on climate policy, Green and Harris (2021) argue that government subsidies for fossil fuel industries should be redirected toward renewable energy sources to combat climate change. They present evidence that such policy shifts would reduce carbon emissions and foster sustainable economic growth in the long term.

Technical (Report) Writing

Technical writing is used to communicate specific, often complex, information in a clear and concise manner, typically for a specialized audience. It is common in fields like engineering, medicine, and computer science. Avoids ambiguity and focuses on factual accuracy. Often includes sections such as an abstract, introduction, methodology, results, and conclusion. Visual aids are often used to help convey technical information. For example;

The report by Xie et al. (2020) on cyber security measures for financial institutions outlines the necessity for multi-factor authentication systems to safeguard against data breaches.

It also presents a detailed cost-benefit analysis, showing the effectiveness of such systems in reducing cybercrime incidents.

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing seeks to convince the reader to adopt a particular viewpoint or take a specific action. It is widely used in advocacy, marketing, and policy-making. The writer takes a definitive stance on an issue. Persuasive writing often appeals to the reader's emotions to drive action. Alongside emotional appeals, logical arguments supported by facts, statistics, and expert opinions strengthen the persuasive effort. For instance,

In his op-ed on renewable energy, Patel (2022) argues that governments must invest in solar power infrastructure to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate the climate crisis, stating that “investing in renewable energy is not just a matter of environmental responsibility, but economic necessity.”

Expository Writing

Expository writing explains or informs the reader about a specific topic, often providing step-by-step information, instructions, or explanations. The goal is to explain complex ideas in a simple, straightforward manner. Often follows a clear and systematic structure, such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, or problem and solution. Expository writing is factual, free from personal opinions or emotional language. For example;

A report by Johnson (2021) on the water cycle breaks down the key stages—evaporation, condensation, and precipitation—providing clear definitions and examples of each process to help students understand how water circulates in nature.

Journals & Letters

Journals and letters are personal forms of writing that communicate thoughts, feelings, or information. While they are often informal, journals, especially, can also serve as a reflective tool in academic settings. These forms of writing are often informal and conversational. Journals often explore the writer's thoughts, experiences, and insights. Letters may be used for formal or informal communication between individuals or institutions. Example;

In her journal entry, Mitchell (2023) reflects on her experiences studying abroad, noting how the challenges she faced in adapting to a new cultural environment enhanced her understanding of global diversity.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing tells a story or recounts an event, often using a chronological structure. It is widely used in creative writing but also appears in research and case studies. Narrative writing involves characters, settings, conflict, and resolution. Events are often presented in the order they occurred. Sensory details and figurative language help bring the narrative to life. Like in the example below;

In his autobiography, Mandela (1995) narrates the experiences of his early life in South Africa, his political awakening, and the subsequent years of struggle against apartheid, using vivid imagery to capture the emotional and physical hardships of his journey.

Poetic Writing

Poetic writing is characterized by its use of rhythm, symbolism, and metaphor to evoke emotions and convey meanings that are often complex and abstract. Poetic writing often employs metaphors, similes, and symbolism to create layered meanings. The structure and sound of the language contribute to the emotional effect. Poetic writing often expresses deep meanings in few words, inviting interpretation. For example;

In "The Road Not Taken," Frost (1916) uses the metaphor of a traveller choosing between two paths to symbolize life's choices, and the emotional weight these decisions carry.

Unit Summary

In this unit, students explored the various contexts and genres of academic writing, gaining insights into the unique characteristics and requirements of each. They learned how different genres, from essays to research papers to dissertations, serve distinct purposes and communicate information to specific audiences. This understanding equips students to tailor their writing approach depending

on the genre, ensuring they meet academic standards and clearly convey their ideas. By mastering the features of each genre, students can effectively contribute to scholarly conversations, demonstrating academic integrity, critical thinking, and adaptability in their written work.



UNIT 5

APPLYING DIFFERENT ACADEMIC WRITING GENRES

Introduction

Academic writing is diverse and includes various genres, each designed to meet specific purposes in the scholarly and professional world. This unit explores different academic writing genres such as essays, reflective writing, research papers, book reports, translations, dissertations/theses, conference papers, and academic journal writing. Understanding and applying these genres allows students to communicate ideas effectively, engage critically with source material, and demonstrate mastery in their fields. By studying these genres, students will develop the skills needed to select and adapt their writing to best suit the academic or professional context.

Unit Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Differentiate between the various academic writing genres and understand their distinct purposes.
- Apply the appropriate structure and stylistic elements for each writing genre.
- Develop the ability to analyze and adapt writing based on the genre requirements.
- Understand the importance of audience and purpose in shaping academic writing.

Types of Academic Writing Genres

Academic writing genres vary widely based on purpose, audience, and discipline. Each genre has distinct conventions and structures that serve different roles in scholarly communication.

Books and Book Reports

Books: In academic contexts, books are substantial works often used as key references in research or for study in higher education. They provide deep and comprehensive insights into a specific field or topic, typically authored by experts or scholars. Academic books may include textbooks, reference books, or monographs. Books offer comprehensive arguments, detailed discussions, and in-depth analysis. They are often peer-reviewed or edited by academic presses, adding to their credibility. Books usually have an introduction, multiple chapters, and a conclusion that ties together the findings.

Book Reports: A book report is typically a student's critique or analysis of a book. It evaluates the book's content, thesis, and contribution to the field. Book reports help students engage critically with readings and express their understanding and perspectives. A book report has the following structures; Introduction which introduces the book (title, author, publication year) and its main theme or thesis. A Summary providing a brief overview of the book's contents. Analysis/Critique offering a critical evaluation, addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the book, and a conclusion reflecting on the book's overall contribution to the field or topic.

Translations

In academia, translations allow key works to reach a broader audience. Translators must ensure that both the meaning and the scholarly intent of the original text are preserved. In subjects like philosophy, classical studies, and literature, translations play a critical role in making texts accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries. There are key considerations that a translator should pay particular attention to; Translators must retain the original meaning, cultural nuances, and academic rigor. Translations should read naturally in the target language while maintaining fidelity to the original. Understanding and preserving the original context is crucial to avoid misinterpretation of key concepts.

Essays

Essays are a common form of academic writing that allow students to present arguments, analyze ideas, or reflect on a subject. Essays can range from literary analyses to argumentative or research based pieces. They provide a platform for critical thinking and structured expression. Essays have three main components including; Introduction whose main aim is to engage the reader, offer background information, and a thesis statement outlining the essay's main argument. Body Paragraphs introduces a new point, supported by evidence (citations from scholarly sources), and a conclusion summarizing the main points and restates the thesis, offering final reflections.

Reflective Writing

This genre involves analyzing personal experiences in relation to academic theories or learning objectives. Reflective writing is common in fields like education, healthcare, and social work, where personal growth and application of theory to practice are key components. The key components in the structure are; the description which outlines the experience or situation. Analysis discussing how the experience relates to theoretical knowledge or academic content. The outcome reflecting on what was learned and how it may influence future behaviour or decisions.

Research Paper or Research Article (Scientific Analysis/Paper)

These are formal documents used to communicate original research findings, typically in the fields of science, social science, and humanities. Research papers contribute new knowledge to a field and are often published in academic journals. Research papers have the following sections or components in their structure;

- i) Abstract: A brief summary of the research question, methods, results, and conclusions.
- ii) Introduction: Defines the research problem and outlines the purpose and significance of the study.
- iii) Literature Review: Surveys existing research and highlights gaps the current study aims to fill.
- iv) Methodology: Describes the research design, data collection, and analysis methods.
- v) Results: Presents findings objectively, often with tables, figures, or charts.
- vi) Discussion: Interprets the results, explaining their implications and how they fit into the broader academic discourse.
- vii) Conclusion: Summarizes the key findings and suggests avenues for further research.

Conference Paper

These are research-based presentations delivered at academic conferences. Conference papers allow scholars to share their work with peers, receive feedback, and contribute to ongoing discussions in their field. They are often shorter and less formal than journal articles but may later be expanded for publication. The key components in the structure of conference papers is the Introduction that presents the research question and its relevance. Body summarizing the methodology and findings in a concise manner, and lastly, the conclusion that offers insights, poses questions for further research, and invites feedback from the audience.

Writing for an Academic Journal

These are scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Writing for academic journals involves conducting original research or producing theoretical insights and communicating them to a scholarly audience. Journal articles are often highly specialized and contribute new findings or ideas to a specific academic field. Similarly to research reports journal articles have components as follows:

- i) Abstract: Summarizes the entire paper, including key findings and conclusions.
- ii) Introduction: Outlines the research question and its significance.
- iii) Literature Review: Provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on the topic.
- iv) Methodology: Details the research design and analytical approach.
- v) Results and Discussion: Presents the findings and their implications.
- vi) Conclusion: Summarizes the contribution of the study and suggests future research directions.

Dissertation and Thesis

These are extensive, original research projects submitted as part of a master's or doctoral degree. A thesis is usually required at the master's level, while a dissertation is expected at the doctoral level. Both require significant research, critical analysis, and contributions to the student's academic field. The key features in the structure include;

- i) Introduction: Introduces the research topic, research question, and objectives.
- ii) Literature Review: Surveys relevant literature, identifying gaps that the research will address.
- iii) Methodology: Explains the research methods and approaches.
- iv) Results: Presents the data collected during the research.
- v) Discussion: Analyzes the results in the context of existing research.
- vi) Conclusion: Summarizes findings, discusses limitations, and suggests future research.

Unit Summary

In this unit, students have explored the structure, tone, and purpose of various academic writing genres, from essays and research papers to dissertations and academic journal articles. They have learned to differentiate these genres, identify their unique characteristics, and apply suitable writing techniques based on the intended audience and purpose. By understanding these diverse formats, students are now better equipped to choose the appropriate genre for academic or professional tasks, present ideas effectively, and engage critically with sources in ways that meet

disciplinary standards. This knowledge lays a foundation for versatile academic and professional writing, supporting their continued success in scholarly pursuits.

UNIT 6

BUSINESS/OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Effective business and official communication is essential for success in professional environments. This unit introduces students to key components of communication used in organizational settings, from creating resumes and preparing for job interviews to managing digital correspondence and crafting speeches. Students will learn to communicate professionally across different mediums and settings, tailored to specific objectives and audiences. By mastering these forms, students enhance their employability and adaptability in diverse professional environments.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

- Develop professional resumes/CVs and write job applications tailored to specific roles.
- Prepare effectively for job interviews and understand typical interview dynamics.
- Differentiate between and appropriately use various forms of official communication, such as memos, advisory notes, and minutes.
- Utilize effective strategies for managing emails and other digital correspondence.
- Analyze the dynamics of individual and group interactions to improve collaboration and communication in a professional setting..

Business communication is the process of sharing information within or outside an organization to achieve business goals, build relationships, and enhance operational efficiency.

Communication is a vital part of our daily routines. We sit in school and listen to teachers. We read books and magazines. We talk to friends, watch television, and communicate over the Internet. The workplace is no different. Experts tell us that 70–80 percent of our working time is spent in some kind of communication. We're reading and writing memos, listening to our co-workers, or having one-to-one conversations with our supervisors. Communication involves at least two people: the sender and the receiver. In this module, we'll look at four types of communication between senders and receivers: writing, speaking, listening, and conducting meetings. Each one is important to your success in the workplace. For example, a poorly written cover letter can prevent you from being hired for a job. On the other hand, the ability to write effectively and make clear presentations can make the difference between your being promoted or being left behind. As Ken Matejka and Diane Ramos (1996), explain in their book *Hook 'Em:*

Speaking and Writing to Catch and Keep a Business Audience, "You need effective, persuasive communication skills for career advancement."

A communication skill that's often overlooked is listening. Yet recent surveys tell us that we spend 45 percent of our time listening. Do we listen carefully to what people are telling us? According to one study, we hear only one quarter of what's being said. The rest of the time we're daydreaming or just tuned out completely. Listening, writing, and speaking are all skills we use in meetings. Today, meetings are a common method for making decisions. More and more work is done by teams of people who come from different areas of a company. They accomplish many of their tasks in team meetings. In these situations, we must be able to speak and write clearly so others can understand us and listen carefully to what they say. Sadly, we waste many hours in meetings because of poor communication.

Types and forms of Communication

It is imperative to understand the different forms or categories of communication, in which people engage in. This is because these different forms of communication demand unique sets of skills or tactics.

Internal Communication: Communication that occurs within an organization among employees. It can be formal, like memos and reports, or informal, like instant messaging. For examples; Company announcements, team meetings, departmental memos. Internal communication can either be formal or informal. Formal channels include official documents, memos, internal reports, and newsletters. Used for conveying organizational policies, procedures, and updates. On the other hand Informal channels include instant messaging, informal emails, and conversations. Often supports quick decision-making and fosters team cohesion, e.g. Project updates, employee newsletters, and departmental reports.

External Communication: Communication that occurs between the organization and external parties such as customers, suppliers, and stakeholders. Professionalism is crucial in external communication to maintain the organization's image. External communication can also either be direct with the use of channels like emails, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings with clients or stakeholders, or can be Indirect using channels like marketing materials, press releases, and public relations statements.

Oral Communication: this involves exchange of messages or information using spoken words and is commonly referred to as communication by word of mouth. This occurs in different interaction set ups such as meetings, talks, discussions, presentations, interviews, speeches and so on.

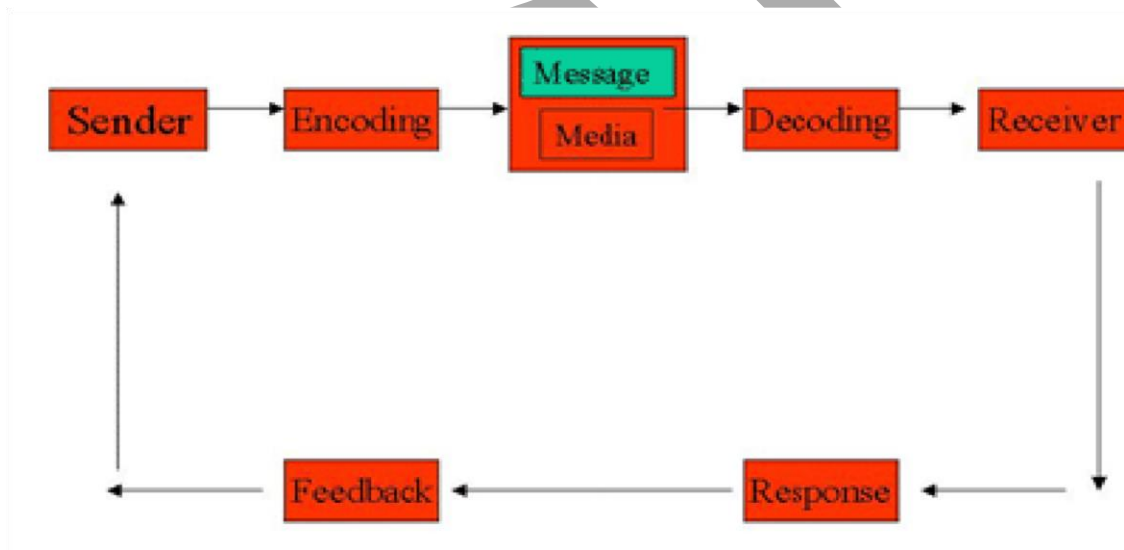
Written Communication: this form of communication entails the creation of a 'hard copy' of the message or simply written messages or words in the form of business letters, reports, research papers, articles, note taking etc.

Non-Verbal Communication: this is the wordless form of communication which takes the form of postures, body language ,facial expressions, eye contacts, tension, breathing and tones etc. The main distinguishing feature of this form of communication is the use of body language to convey messages. Cues or signs are the main tools used in this type of communication and is essentially wordless.

Interpersonal Communication: this is a type of communication that occurs between individuals, mainly involves a small number of persons. The messages exchanged are often a mix of feelings and ideas, a number of sensory channels are involved and feedback is immediate because the physical distance between the individuals is often short. This form of communication distinguishes individuals who are able to understand the emotions that are behind messages or information being shared or exchanged. As a result participants need to be Emotionally Intelligent and appreciate the difference in personalities and characters. Individuals should aim to make use of different tips or techniques for purposes of enhancing the effectiveness of these respective forms of communication.

The Process of Communication

Communication is the sharing or exchange of ideas or information among two or more people. This is often referred to as a process because it involves six core elements that interact in a complex manner and is often unconsciously done. The six elements in the communication process are: sender, receiver, message, method, aim and situation as shown below:



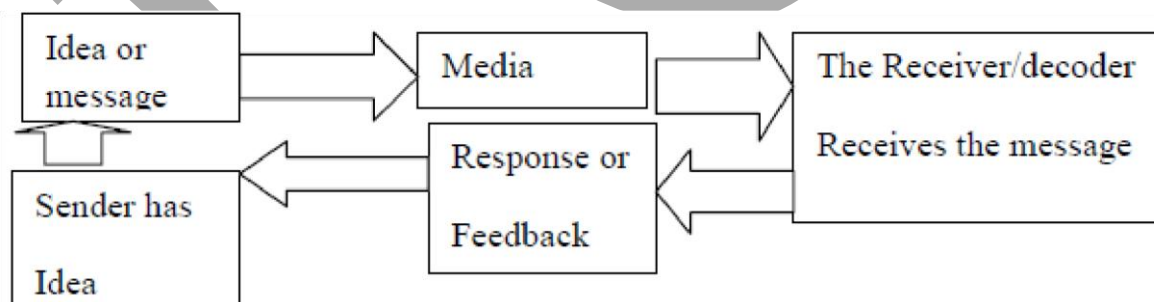
The main stages or elements or components in the communication process are as follows:

- i) **Context** –This is basically the environment in which the communication takes place. Communication is affected by the environment or context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, chronological or cultural. Every communication proceeds with a context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context or environment.
- ii) **Sender or Encoder** - is a person who sends the message. A sender makes use of symbols such as words or graphics or visual aids, signs to convey the message and produce the required response. For instance, you are a training manager conducting training for a new batch of employees. Sender could also be an individual or a group or an organization. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message and the response or feedback. The verbal and non-verbal

symbols chosen are essential in ascertaining the interpretation of the message by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender.

- iii) **Message** -A message is a key idea that the sender wants to communicate. It is a sign that stimulates the response of recipient. Communication process begins with deciding about the message to be conveyed. It must be ensured that the main objective of the message is clear and known.
- iv) **Medium** -A medium is a means used to exchange or transmit the message. The sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message. Otherwise, the message might not be conveyed to the desired recipients. The choice of appropriate medium of communication is essential for making the message effective and correctly interpreted by the recipient. This choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication. For instance, a written medium is chosen when a message has to be conveyed to a small group of people, while an oral medium is chosen when spontaneous (instant) feedback is required from the recipient as misunderstandings are cleared there and then.
- v) **Recipient or Decoder** - This is a person for whom the message is intended or aimed or targeted. The degree to which the decoder understands the message is dependent upon various factors such as knowledge of recipient, their responsiveness to the message, and the reliance of encoder (sender) on decoder (receiver).
- vi) **Feedback** -is the main component of the communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of the message by the decoder. Feedback may be verbal such as through words or non-verbal in form of smiles, sighs, etc. It may take the written form such as memos, reports, letters etc.

The simplified model with only five stages or elements or components is shown below;



- i. **Sender** – is somebody responsible for transmitting the information. The idea is born here which becomes a message which must be sent in such a way that the receiver will be able to understand.
- ii. **Message** – The sender then encodes the idea into a message ready for communication or transmission to receiver. Encoding is a process by which the sender puts the idea into a message and in a form suitable for sending to receiver.

- iii. **Media** – This is a physical channel through which the message is sent or transmitted to the receiver. The choice of medium is dependent upon many factors such as nature of message, the cost, time and the environment.
- iv. **Receiver** – The person who receives the message or to whom the message is directed. At this point the receiver decodes the meaning of the message or the interpretation thereof. Decoding is the process by which the receiver interprets the meaning of the message received.
- v. **Feedback** – is the reaction to the stimulus that the receiver sends to the sender. Its at this point where communication is determined to have taken place. If the receiver interpreted the message from sender clearly it means it has met its intended purpose and has clearly been interpreted and appropriate feedback given.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Conceptualizing a message, information or idea for purposes of communicating is one thing, but getting the right or correct interpretation of the conceptualized message is another thing. This is because often messages are misinterpreted or the wrong message gets to be delivered to the recipient due to different things. This results in communication being ineffective. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the common barriers to effective communication.

Use of jargon- this happens when words or phrases that may not be understood by an average person are used. For instance, if a doctor uses technical words or phrases in explaining to a patient, the patient may not understand what the doctor is trying to say. Simplify language when necessary and avoid using jargon without explanation. Encourage clarification and feedback to ensure understanding.

Emotional and Psychological barriers- This happens when emotions or mind sets influence communication. For example, a brilliant student may be emotionally distressed and psychologically challenged due to the critical illness of a beloved one, this will make him or her engage in effective written communication in an exam or test. Practice mindfulness to stay calm and focused during communication. Take a step back to calm down before engaging in important communication. Practice empathy to understand the emotions of others and respond appropriately. Encourage an open, non-judgmental environment to reduce communication anxiety.

Physical and environmental barriers- there are many things in the environment that may cause communication breakdown for instance, wall, noise or even weather. Noise can make it difficult to listen during communication, while hot weather often make people unrest less or doze which makes it difficult to communicate especially in a classroom set up. Use reliable technology and ensure a conducive environment for communication (e.g., quiet space, good lighting). Minimize distractions during important conversations or meetings.

Religion, Cultural and Taboo- Often times, this results in communication break down because some ideas and information shared may be acceptable in one religion or culture but not in another. For instances, religious messages and understanding is different among Christians and Muslims.

In order to remedy this; develop cultural awareness and sensitivity, also adapt communication styles to be inclusive of diverse perspectives.

Language- This is one of the most common causes of communication breakdown. Messages or information in one language may have completely different meanings in another and may be offensive. Thus, extra care must be taken in translating messages from one language to another.

For instance in Bemba the word 'PESONDE' means on EARTH' but a similar Lamba word 'POSONDE' means 'OUTSIDE'.

Gender Differences- this refers to the difference in sex (male and female). For example, a man may say certain things to fellow men which may not be perceived offensive but if the same is told to women, it may be perceived to be offensive

Information overload- This is yet another common cause of communication breakdown. When too much information is communicated at the same time, there are chances that the recipient may not understand this information. For example if a boss gives too many tasks or instructions to his subordinates at one go, there are high chances that the subordinates will not effectively carry out the instructions or tasks.

Inadequate Information- this is the opposite side of a coin to information overload. This occurs when little information is given. For example, if a person is told to prepare chicken for lunch, but no specific instructions are given on the method (boiled, grilled or fried), this information may be considered to be inadequate or general.

Information Distortion- This occurs when the original information or message is altered along the communication process. This often happens in oral communication especially one people are asked to orally pass on the information to different people. For example, the original message could be "DO NOT BE SELFISH" while the final message could be "YOU ARE SELFISH".

Denotations, Connotation and Abbreviations- Denotations refer to when people mean what they say while Connotations refers to situations in which people mean different things from what they say. While Abbreviations are short forms of words or names etc. For example ASAP (As Soon as Possible), 24/7 (the whole week), kid (a child), Networking (socialising), Minting Money (High Returns) etc.

Rules for Good Communication

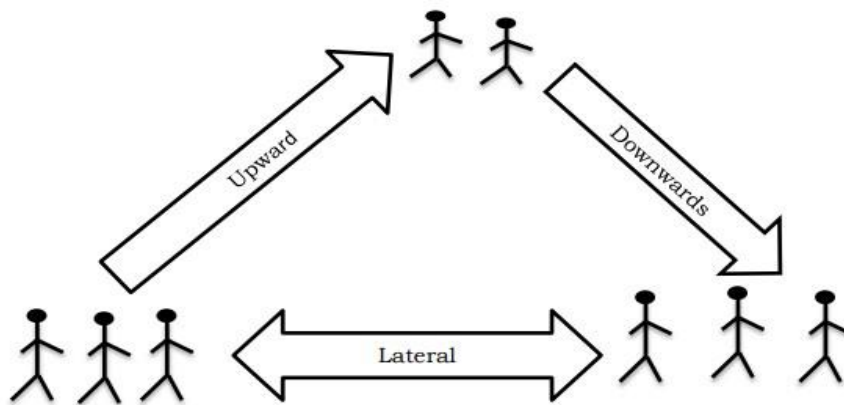
Despite the several barriers to effective communication, people can still engage in effective communication. There are many tips for good and effective communication.

- ✓ Be clear and transparent
- ✓ Use simple English
- ✓ Be well prepared
- ✓ Be generic
- ✓ Be assertive
- ✓ Do not assume things
- ✓ Encourage two way communication

- ✓ Pick a good time to talk
- ✓ Use good body language
- ✓ Listen and be attentive
- ✓ Be consistent, firm and fair

Communication in Business Settings

According to Kninnick and Parton (2005) research by labour organisations indicate that interpersonal skills and basic communication skills are two of the eight essential attributes that are needed by individuals to be successful at work. This is because people inevitably engage in communication as they work. Communication in an organisation flows in different directions- down ward, upward and lateral. For instance, for purposes of controlling and direction, managers engage in downward communication. To get information and feedback from their subordinates, communication flows in the upward direction. For purposes of team work and group coordination, the flow of communication is said to be lateral. However, these directions or flows of communication in recent years have evolved due to technological advances that enable speedier and more efficient ways of communicating as necessitated by market needs. This has resulted in the emergence of diagonal communication, which is the flow of communication in all directions.



Graduates should expect to engage in professional communication, especially the written and oral form. Often oral and written communication in the work place goes hand in hand. For example, the financial manager will be expected to prepare a monthly report on the financial position of the organisation. The report would then be orally presented and discussed with management during the monthly management meeting. This is expected from the heads of department in any organisation. Therefore, written and oral communication is inevitable and vital in the work place. The most common forms of written communication in work place set ups are: Business Letters, Reports, Minutes, Resumes, CVs, Application Letters, Job Descriptions and Letter of Offer.

The 4 Cs of Successful Writing

All good writing starts by defining your purpose and knowing your audience. But that's only the beginning. There are four other elements that you should keep in mind. They are known as the 4 Cs:

1. Concise
2. Compelling
3. Clear
4. Correct

The Cover Letter

Cover letters (also called job application letters) usually accompany resumes. Both the cover letter and resume are sent to an employer when you are applying for a job. The resume lists your qualifications for a job in detail, and the cover letter discusses them briefly. If you want to write a concise cover letter, or any other type of letter, it's important to understand the purpose of the letter before you begin writing. The purpose of a cover letter is to persuade an employer to interview you for a job. The next step is to know your reader. What will the reader find most persuasive? You should list only the experience and skills that you possess that are mostly likely to convince the reader to interview you.

One of the most effective methods of writing is called the pyramid style. In this type of writing, you place the most important information at the top of the pyramid, or the beginning, and you present it as simply and concisely as possible. You follow this with the second most important point, the third, the fourth, and so forth. This is the same style that newspaper reporters have used for years to write news articles.

In a cover letter, the most important information to include is the position for which you are applying. Otherwise, the reader won't know why you are writing. This information goes in the first paragraph. You may also wish to include where you heard about the job opening. The second paragraph should describe the one or two skills or work experiences that make you most qualified for the job. This is where you hook the reader's attention by telling her something she cares about and persuading her to consider you for the position. A third paragraph might mention several additional but less important qualifications you possess. Conclude the letter by asking for an interview.

Format of Business Letters

You may be aware that most organizations and companies do follow their own format or style of writing business letters. However, whichever style is followed all letters can be broadly broken up into four components: 1. Heading 2. Opening 3. Body 4. Closing

- i. **Heading;** A very important component of a letter containing vital information on the company or sender, reference number and the date. Many organizations do ensure that these are provided in such a manner that the institution's image is enhanced. The logo,

company formatting on the letterhead all do add up to the creation of an impression in the mind of the reader.

- ii. **Opening:** The opening comprises the inside address of the recipient the attention line and the salutation. *Inside Address* of the recipient is always written on the left hand side margin of the letter. *The names of recipient, designation, job title are spelt out.* These details are then accompanied by the full address of the reader. *Attention Line* is used in the letter when it is addressed to a department in the organisation instead of a specific person. It expedites the process as this line is always typed below the address and above the salutation. It begins in the left hand margin. *Salutation* – it has several ways in which it is written. If the attention line has been used and the name of the addressee is either not known or not put in the letter, the salutation should take the form of *Madam or Sir*. As far as possible, efforts should be made to find out the name/s of the receiver so that the salutation carries the correct name/s and are correctly written and spelt. In business letters there is always a colon that is used after the salutation while the informal letters use a comma.
- iii. **The Body:** –Whereas the opening sets out the tone and pace of the letter, the body or the middle sustains the interest. The body has two parts namely the subject line and the message. *The Subject Line;* the writer could prepare the reader for the main content of the letter by adding the subject line immediately after the salutation. It is written almost in the similar line as the attention line. It is either written in capitals or underlined and starts on the left hand margin and word “subject” is followed by a colon. E.g. Subject: Training Workshop. *The Message;* with the opening having developed interest in the reader and reads on, the message section transmitted the details. For the sake of effectiveness in main message transmittal, normally a two paragraph scheme is followed. In the first paragraph, the writer tries to build on the attention that has been captured by the subject line while in the second paragraph the writer tries to furnish the reader with details so that the interest can be sustained.
- iv. **Closing:** In any written communication, at the time of writing letters, there is leave taking, as in oral communication. *Complimentary Close* –This closes both in tone and style. It is contingent to the salutation with change in the latter; the complimentary close also undergoes a change.

Salutation	Close	
Dear Jane:	Cordially,	
Dear Mrs Bwato	Sincerely,	
Madam:	Yours truly,	
Sir:	Yours truly,	
Dear Sir:	Yours faithfully,	
Dear Sir:	Respectfully yours,	

You will note that after the complimentary close there is a comma that is used.

The company and writer's signature –Some companies or organisations follow a system of putting the company signature beneath the complimentary close in capitals. Of course it is optional and indicates that the company is sending the letter legally and all responsibility lies in the company. Under normal circumstances the writer after the complimentary close puts his/ her signature in hand written which is followed by the identification i.e. the job title, name of department of work.

Reference Initials –They are used only if the writer's name is not included in the letter. When the writer's name is omitted from the letter, the initials are written first and are followed by the secretary's initials. If there are three initials, the first indicates the person who signed the letter, the second initials belongs to the person who wrote the letter, and the third indicates who typed it. E.g. VNB/ft/am

Enclosure Notation – When something is affixed to the letter in the same envelope, an enclosure notation is used. It helps the receiver to ascertain that all the references made to in the letter have been attached. E.g. Enclosure, Encl., Enclosures:

Carbon Copy and Blind Carbon Copy notation – There could be a number of copies of the original letter meant for different people. Details should be indicated in the letter through which the recipient also gets to know the people who will be reading the mail and normally done below the enclosures. E.g. cc, CC, cc:, CC:

The blind carbon copy (bcc) is written when the sender does not want the receiver to know that the same mail is being sent to someone else. This notation does not appear on the original, it is typed on the uppers left hand corner of the letter. However, both notations cc and bcc notations should appear on the writer's copy of the letter.

Letter Arrangement Styles

Letter arrangement styles vary from person to person and from organisation to organisation. The styles do demonstrate the tone of the letter. There are mainly three styles namely full block, semi-lock, open styles.

Full Block Style; All notations and paragraphs begin on the left hand margin. It is comparatively easy to type as no paragraphs are made and it also saves on the typing time. It is neat and has a business like tone to it.

Semi – Block Style; A very common style as it encompasses the traditional style of writing and brings together with it the ease in formulating the message that is present in a full block style. In semi block style, it lists addresses or quotations are incorporated by indenting the same.

Open Style; it is the most traditional as well as informal style of letter writing. It does not adhere to the fixed paragraph formulation scheme. All paragraphs are indented with some notations on the left and some on the right and gradually this style is being outmoded.

Curriculum Vitae

The Latin words Curriculum Vitae (CV) literally mean “ Course of Life’ ’A CV is a summary of your qualifications and experience. It is objective in nature and provides no detailed insight in your capabilities as a prospective applicant. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is self-portrayal document used in job application. It gives the potential employer a brief but factual summary of the job seeker’s relevant life – private and public as may be relevant to the job.

The document gives particulars of the applicants’ events in their lives in some chronological order. The more modern practice, however, is to start with the latest and move backwards to the earliest. However, the CV is designed by you the applicant.

Main features and parts of a CV

Below is a sample of a CV highlighting the main features or contents.

PERSONAL DETILS/BIODATA Name: Sex Date of Birth Place of Birth Marital Status Contact Details / permanent address					
EDUCATIONAL / ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Period</th><th>Institution</th><th>Qualification</th></tr></thead></table>			Period	Institution	Qualification
Period	Institution	Qualification			
WORK EXPERIENCE <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Period</th><th>Institution</th><th>Job Title</th></tr></thead></table>			Period	Institution	Job Title
Period	Institution	Job Title			
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION Give details of other skills and capabilities not included elsewhere. Things such as your job challenges, what aspects of job you specialise in, workshops and conferences attended,					
INTERESTS Your pass time interests. The employer would like to engage a human being not a work machine. A human being accumulates pressure from work and should have somewhere to dissipate that pressure through. Extracurricular activities or what you like doing in your spare or free time.					
REFEREES Contact details for at least two and up to three people drawn from educational, employment and other activities like church, clubs, etc. Consult them to seek their approval to vouch for you.					

You will realize that the CV does not reveal what the gain was from work experience as it is difficult to secure an answer from the biographical details cited in it. In a CV you will note that educational qualifications as well as work experience are presented in reverse order starting with the latest.

The Resume

It is a summary of skills, accomplishments and education written to capture the attention of the reader. It can be a summary of about one to two pages. Its basic purpose is to secure an interview. Some of the characteristics are, it can be tailor made to for a company and a job that an individual wishes to apply for. It is geared towards a specific goal and it is more descriptive than a CV as it discusses the qualities of a candidate such as the positions held, the content has to be accurately interesting and related to the objectives of the company.

A resume helps you to sell your traits by providing pertinent and unique details that stand out, assists in relating skills and achievements necessary for the job. At the time of writing a resume bear in mind that the company does not know anything about you. Thus the manner in which you present the information about yourself will generate interest and heighten possibility of being summoned for interviews. There is no single fixed style of writing a resume, the emphasis is on making it goal oriented and job specific. However, the following various sections within a resume could be included;

- i. Name and Address – such as name, institute address, permanent address, e-mail address and telephone numbers.
- ii. Career objective or Career goal
- iii. Educational or Professional Qualifications
- iv. Related Course Work, Special Projects, Academic Awards
- v. Work Experience
- vi. Skills, Abilities
- vii. Activities and Awards
- viii. References – unless the company asks for the references do not mention them.

Remember also to use dynamic words to describe your accomplishments. Always try to use verbs in the active voice, not the passive voice. “I was given the Employee of the Month Award,” uses a passive verb, which sounds weak. Present this information in a stronger way by writing: “Voted employee of the month.” Instead of saying “I was appointed assistant department manager,” say, “Advanced to assistant department manager.” Finally, instead of writing “I was asked to train other clerks,” writes, “Trained other clerks.”

Descriptive words also make your writing more compelling, and these words can be especially powerful on a resume. Don’t exaggerate what you have accomplished, but use descriptive words to bring it to life. Instead of saying, “completed a training course,” write, “Successfully completed sales-training program.” If you are a “fully experienced” stock clerk, say so. If you have “extensive knowledge” of computers, include that information as well. These simple descriptive words stand out on the page and attract the reader’s attention.

Professional Email Etiquette

Email is subject to the same rules that govern other types of writing. That is, the writing should be clear and concise. Information should be presented in a compelling manner, with no mistakes in

grammar, punctuation, or spelling. The purpose of the communication should be clearly stated, and it should be delivered in a way that appeals to the reader. Readers, they say, are “turned off by large chunks of text.” They also urge you to keep your language simple. “If a word confuses your readers and sends them scurrying for the dictionary, it has broken their concentration,” Angell and Heslop (1994) explain. “Simple and familiar words have power.”

Professional email etiquette involves a set of guidelines to ensure clarity, respect, and professionalism in written communication. An effective email begins with a clear, concise subject line that summarizes the email’s purpose, helping recipients prioritize their responses. The greeting should be polite and formal, using appropriate titles and names, such as “Dear Dr. Smith” or “Hello Mr. Johnson.” The body of the email should convey information in a straightforward manner, with well-organized paragraphs and, when applicable, bullet points for clarity. Tone is essential; maintaining a respectful and polite approach, even in complex or challenging messages, reflects professionalism. Proofreading the message for grammar, spelling, and tone before sending is critical, as is attaching all referenced documents and labelling them clearly. Concluding with a courteous closing, like “Best regards” or “Sincerely,” and a signature containing the sender’s contact information and position allows recipients to respond easily and appropriately. Promptly replying to important emails, ideally within 24 to 48 hours, shows consideration and reinforces a reputation of reliability and responsiveness in professional communication.

Report Writing

Report writing is a structured approach to presenting information, findings, analysis, and recommendations in a formal and organized format, making it essential for effective decision making within an organization. A well-written report typically begins with a title page that includes the report’s title, the author’s name, date, and the organization’s name, followed by an executive summary a concise one-page overview highlighting the purpose, main findings, and recommendations. The introduction sets the stage by explaining the report’s purpose, background information, and objectives, providing the context for the analysis. In the main body, findings are presented in an organized manner, often using headings and subheadings for easy navigation, along with visuals like charts and graphs to aid understanding. The report concludes with a summary of key insights and actionable recommendations based on the findings, guiding readers toward practical next steps. All sources are listed in the references section, adding credibility, while any supplementary data, calculations, or additional materials are included in the appendices for comprehensive support. This systematic format helps ensure that reports are clear, informative, and useful for the target audience, supporting both clarity and decision-making.

Types of Reports

In business and academic settings, various types of reports serve distinct purposes, providing structured ways to communicate information, analyze data, and make recommendations.

Progress reports track the status of ongoing projects, offering updates on completed tasks, current activities, and any challenges encountered. They provide a snapshot of where a project stands and are typically used for keeping stakeholders informed.

Analytical reports delve deeper into data and research findings, examining trends, comparing options, and drawing conclusions to aid in decision-making. These reports are commonly used to analyze the viability of new initiatives or assess operational performance.

Feasibility reports evaluate the practicality and potential success of a proposed project or idea, factoring in available resources, projected costs, benefits, and risks. Feasibility reports help organizations decide whether a project should proceed, pivot, or be abandoned.

Research reports provide in-depth insights into a specific topic or area, detailing methodologies, data, and findings, often in an academic or scientific context. These reports add value by contributing to knowledge within a field or supporting evidence-based decisions.

Incident reports document unexpected events, such as accidents, technical issues, or security breaches, detailing the circumstances, impact, and potential causes. Organizations use incident reports to prevent future occurrences and improve safety protocols.

Evaluation reports assess the effectiveness of projects, programs, or processes by comparing actual outcomes to goals, thus providing insights into areas for improvement or scalability. Each type of report follows a specific structure to meet its unique objectives, ensuring the information is conveyed clearly and purposefully for its intended audience.

Proposal Writing

Proposal writing is a structured way to present a plan or solution to address a specific problem, often with the goal of securing approval, support, or funding. Proposals are persuasive documents intended to convince the audience of the value and feasibility of a proposed project, product, or service. There are various types of proposals, including:

- **Sales Proposals:** Aim to persuade potential clients to choose a product or service by emphasizing its benefits, features, and competitive advantages.
- **Project Proposals:** Used within organizations to outline new initiatives, specifying objectives, timelines, resources, and anticipated impacts.
- **Research Proposals:** Common in academic or scientific settings, these outline a study's goals, significance, and methodology, and are often submitted for grant funding or academic approval.

A well-crafted proposal follows a clear structure to present its case effectively. It begins with a title page that includes essential information, such as the proposal's title, author's name, organization, and date. This is followed by an executive summary, which provides a brief overview of the proposal, summarizing its purpose, objectives, and key points. This section is crucial as it allows decision-makers to quickly grasp the proposal's core message and potential value.

The proposal then addresses the problem statement, which defines the issue or need the proposed project or solution seeks to address, providing necessary context and underscoring the importance of action. Next, the objectives of the proposal are outlined, describing specific goals and measurable outcomes that the project aims to achieve.

The methodology or proposed solution section follows, detailing how the project will be executed. This includes:

- **Steps and Strategies:** Key actions to implement the solution effectively.
- **Timeline:** A schedule of tasks and milestones.
- **Required Resources:** Personnel, materials, or equipment needed to complete the project.

For proposals that require funding, a budget and cost analysis section provides a breakdown of projected expenses with justifications for each cost. This section demonstrates transparency and ensures that all financial aspects have been carefully considered.

The proposal concludes with a summary of its value and impact, often reiterating the main points and suggesting next steps. This conclusion emphasizes the benefits of the proposed solution and aims to leave a strong impression, encouraging the reader to support or approve the proposal.

Effective proposals are clear, persuasive, and well-organized, with each section tailored to meet the interests and expectations of the target audience.

Techniques for Effective Presentations

A presentation is a structured, spoken communication, often accompanied by visuals, intended to inform, persuade, or educate an audience on a specific topic.

Delivering a compelling presentation requires a combination of planning, organization, and strong communication skills. The purpose of effective presentation techniques is to engage the audience, convey information clearly, and leave a lasting impact. Whether presenting in a business meeting, academic conference, or training session, there are several key techniques that can enhance the quality and effectiveness of any presentation:

Preparation and Structure

Start by defining the objectives of the presentation. Know what key messages you want the audience to retain and tailor content accordingly. Organize the presentation into a clear structure with an introduction, main points, and conclusion. This framework helps the audience follow the flow of information easily.

Understanding the Audience

Research the audience's interests, knowledge level, and expectations. Tailor the language, examples, and depth of information to suit their needs. Use terminology and references that resonate with the audience, making complex ideas easier to understand.

Effective Visual Aids

Create visual aids, like slides or handouts that support key points without overwhelming or distracting the audience. Visuals should enhance, not replace, the spoken content. Use images, charts, or graphs to make data more accessible and relatable. Limit text on slides to emphasize key points and avoid clutter.

Engaging Delivery Style

- **Maintain Eye Contact:** Establishing eye contact with the audience builds rapport and keeps them engaged.
- **Use Clear and Confident Language:** Avoid jargon unless necessary, and speak at a moderate pace with clear articulation. Vary your tone to emphasize important points and avoid monotony.
- **Incorporate Gestures and Movement:** Natural hand gestures and occasional movement around the stage can add dynamism to the presentation, making it more engaging and less rigid.

Handling Questions

Encourage questions from the audience to clarify information and ensure understanding. Anticipate likely questions and be prepared to provide thoughtful answers. When addressing questions, repeat or rephrase them for the benefit of the entire audience, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

Practice and Rehearsal

Rehearse the presentation multiple times, paying attention to timing, flow, and transitions between topics. Practice helps reduce nervousness and ensures smoother delivery. Consider recording practice sessions or presenting to a small group to gain feedback on areas for improvement.

Using Technology Effectively

Familiarize yourself with any technology or equipment you will use during the presentation, such as projectors, microphones, or presentation software. Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties, such as printed copies of slides or a script, to ensure continuity.

Unit Summary

This unit has equipped students with foundational skills in business and official communication. Students learned to craft professional resumes and application letters, handle job interviews

confidently, and use various forms of official communication effectively. Email management strategies and techniques for writing and delivering speeches were also covered. Additionally, students gained insight into individual and group dynamics, preparing them for successful, collaborative interactions in the workplace. With these skills, students can communicate competently and adapt to a wide range of professional settings.

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