

Academic Writing

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Session aims

- Planning your assignments
- Academic writing style and conventions
- Harvard referencing
- Critical approach

Assignment planning

- Planning assignments



Writing up your assignment

- Plan and stage deadlines
- Use software to keep you on track such as [this resource](#) from the University of Kent
- Remind yourself of the importance of a clear and coherent [structure](#)
- Write accurately, using an appropriate style
- Use a resource such as [Academic Phrasebank](#) to help with academic phrases

Academic writing...some reminders

- Academic writing tends to conform to a set of conventions (mostly unwritten rules)
- The following slides provide some tips to bear in mind...



- Support your writing with evidence



- Support each main point with ‘evidence’, i.e. reference to writers in the field, e.g. from your reading list, policy, reviews, statistics, OfSTED, DfES, and to your own practice

Drama activities can support the development of children’s speaking, listening and higher order skills (Wray, et al. 2009).

- **Avoid making absolute statements**

Instead, use cautious or tentative phrases ('hedging' language)

It could be argued that...

The evidence suggests/implies...

In some cases this...

On reflection, it appears that ...

- **Avoid making unsubstantiated generalisations (also know as ‘sweeping statements’).**
- This can happen when we make a statement in an all-inclusive way without allowing for any exceptions e.g.

This was a brilliant lesson and all pupils understood the learning outcomes.

Finding your voice...

- **Most academic writing is written in the ‘third person’ voice**

This helps to achieve some distance from the arguments/points being developed, i.e. the objective viewpoint.

Mead’s research indicates...

It could be argued that...

The following section of this essay will explore...

- **However, reflective writing is usually written using the ‘first person’ voice, i.e. from ‘inside’ the situation (the subjective viewpoint).**

During a recent placement, my observations led me to...

My analysis demonstrates...

On reflection, I feel that...

Harvard Referencing

Why do we need to reference?

- 'The basic principle of referencing is to support and identify the evidence you use in your assignment. You direct readers of your work to the source of evidence' (Neville, 2010:2).
- To protect yourself against charges of plagiarism

What does the 'Harvard system' mean?

- It uses author – date method
- References within your assignment text are given in brackets
- Detailed list of sources used is given in a bibliography (or reference list) at the end of assignment
- This should be in alphabetical order with the author's surname preceding the initials

Ways of referencing

Common forms of referencing *within* the assignment:

- direct quotation
- paraphrasing
- summarising (attribution)

- With a **Direct Quotation** - text is copied word-for-word and is placed in single 'quotation marks'.
- The reference consists of the source (author or organisation) year of publication and page number.

Direct quotation

Examples:

'Modern linguists recognise that English is always in flux and it is almost impossible to fix it' (Thorne, 2008:151).

or

Thorne (2008:51) states that 'Modern linguists recognise that English is always in flux and it is almost impossible to fix it'.

Or you could...(better still!) paraphrase

Here, you take the meaning from a source but use your own words.

Marsh (2009) emphasises the importance of clear objectives in planning.

There is no need for quotation marks or page number, however the author and date are cited.

Summary (attribution)

- This is where the author/authors are cited at the end of a sentence or paragraph
- You're telling the reader the statements given were influenced by that author or authors
- However, they're not a direct quote or paraphrase of what they have stated

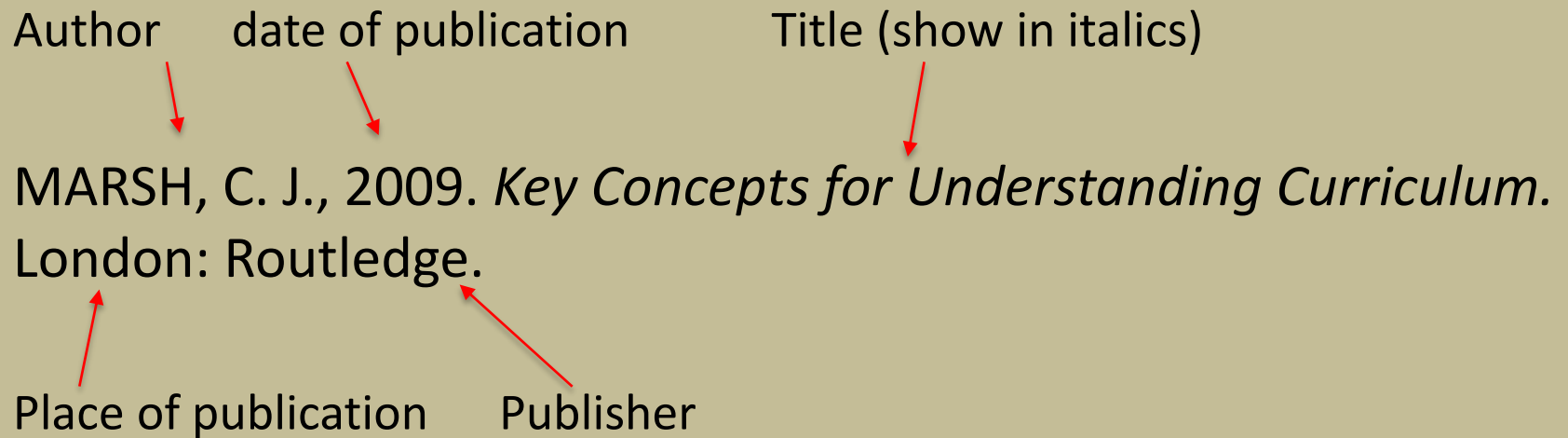
There is evidence to suggest that leadership styles vary according to the situation the leader is faced with (Girvin, 1997, Bloggs, 2002, Jones, 2009).

Full details of all sources used are given in the bibliography (or reference list) in alphabetical order

Author date of publication Title (show in italics)

MARSH, C. J., 2009. *Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum*.
London: Routledge.

Place of publication Publisher

A diagram illustrating the components of a bibliography entry. The entry is: MARSH, C. J., 2009. *Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum*. London: Routledge. Red arrows point from labels above and below the entry to specific parts of the citation: 'Author' points to 'MARSH, C. J.', 'date of publication' points to '2009.', 'Title (show in italics)' points to '*Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum*', 'Place of publication' points to 'London:', and 'Publisher' points to 'Routledge.'

For how to reference:

- books
 - journal articles
 - web sites
 - legislation
 - music
 - dance
 - official reports
 - guidance documents...and lots more
- download the Edge Hill University guide to
Harvard Referencing

Use references but use them with care!



- Show your discussion is evidence based by including appropriate references
- This will mean wider reading...beyond the reading list

BUT...

- References should support and not replace your own 'voice'
- Avoid temptation to string together numerous quotes as a substitute for real analysis
- Lots of quotations don't necessarily strengthen the argument
- Use several different *kinds* of sources
- Draw on contrasting or alternative viewpoints where possible

Remind yourself what it means to be a critical reader

When selecting your source ask yourself:

- Is it academically sound?
- What is the main argument?
- What conclusion does the writer reach?
- When was it written/does it reflect views of the time?
- Fact or opinion?
- What does it leave out?
- What perspective does it come from?
- Use critical reading to support critical writing

- Critical writing at level 6

It is accepted that....

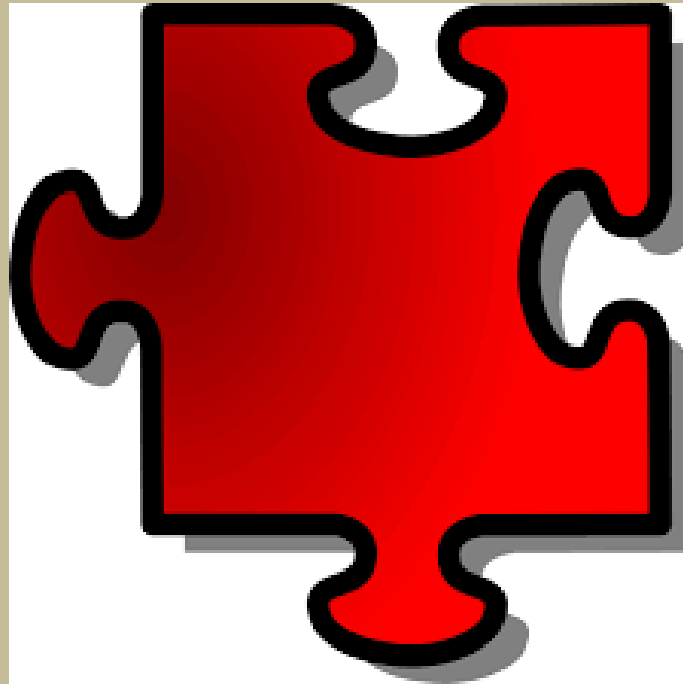
- Your writing will, up to a certain point, contain *descriptive* elements
- Necessary to 'set the scene' or outline the range of perspectives or arguments
- However, the expectation at level 6
- is to demonstrate a significant degree of *critical evaluation and analysis* through your writing

Think about your previous
experience of academic writing

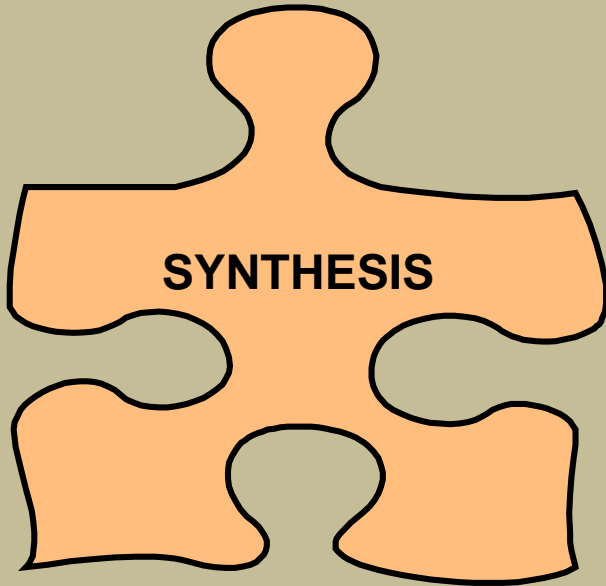
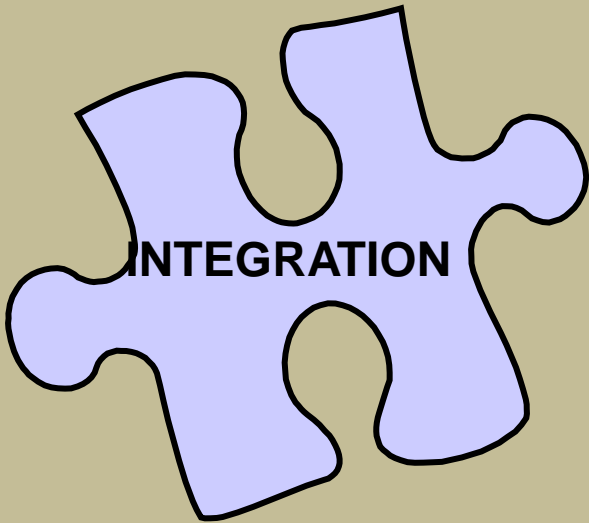
At undergraduate level the
expectation is that you:

- Meet the Learning Outcomes *answer the question*
- Write clearly *good sentence construction, grammar, punctuation*
- Adopt an academic style *using an appropriate 'voice', and a cautious or objective tone as necessary*
- Begin to develop a critical perspective
- Include appropriate references – *to the literature, legislation, professional guidance, practice*
- Structure your writing – *show a clear introduction, main body and conclusion*
- Present your argument in a logical and coherent order
- Proof read *because we can lose up to 10% of marks for errors that could have been corrected!*

- How is writing at level 6 different?
- It isn't necessarily *different*...
however the emphasis in the marking changes
- The aspects of writing that you've developed at UG level continue to be important
- But with the added expectation that your writing will now demonstrate greater **analysis, integration, synthesis and evaluation**
- So what does this mean?



- It can help to think of yourself as putting together an academic jigsaw puzzle



Putting the pieces together

analysis, integration, synthesis, evaluation

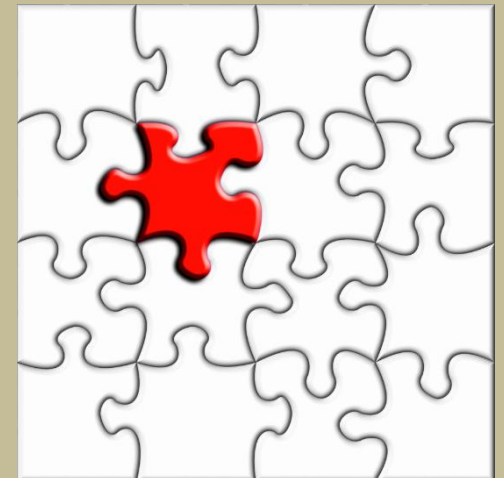
- Read the literature
- Choose the pieces which fit with your question (analyse)
- Put them together to start building your assignment
- The bringing together of pieces of theory and pieces of practice is known as **integration**.
- And is part of the process of **analysis**

Putting the pieces together

analysis, integration, **synthesis, evaluation**

- At earlier UG levels, you *refer* to the literature, practice theory, legislation etc.
- At level 6, you *comment* on its relevance, significance, the implications...in other words, what it means, explain!
- Make links with other perspectives – look out for confirmation of an idea
- Comment on when someone is saying something different
- Evaluate them all – their worth!

- **An evaluation of the issues you discuss is your interpretation of the facts**
- **By doing this, you're choosing where the pieces of the jigsaw fit together and you're growing 'new' knowledge**
- **This is known as synthesis**



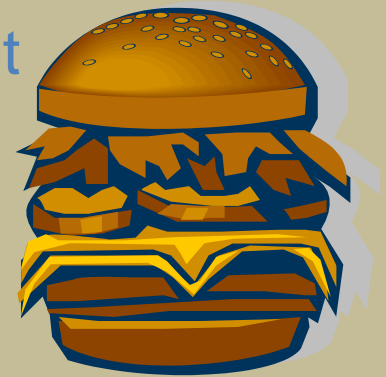
Completing the jigsaw (conclusion)

- Good marks at level 6 are tied to what you do with all of this
- The key to this is to evaluate what you have found and make a decision as to what is important
- Your 'voice' needs to be heard in the writing

Your voice needs to be 'heard' all the way through your writing

Less like a bit of solid meat
(literature/literature/literature) with a little bit
of dressing (comment/interpretation)

and



More like a multi decker sandwich
(literature/comment/literature/interpretation/
literature/link to own practice/comment)

Example conclusion at level 6

- Restates the question and lead towards a summary of *your interpretation* of the key ideas
- Decides the best way forward, by highlighting key implications for practice or making recommendations
- Acknowledges “grey” areas, ambiguity, problems or unanswered questions

- Word count constraints mean that you need to balance the different components of your writing



Topic/
issue/
incident

Description

**What ?
When?
Who?
Where?**

Analysis

**Why?
How?**

Evaluation

**What if?
So what?
What next?**

Further help

- 1:1 support with writing/referencing at the Ask Desk, 1st floor University Library
- Academic writing workshops (Steps to Success) – see link for booking on Go page and Learning Edge
- Edge Hill University website
<http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ls/assignment-help/>
- By email at Askus@edgehill.ac.uk
- By telephone: 01695 650800