Excelling In Your Final Year At Uni

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Variety is the Spice of Life!

Different Schools... ....Different Rules

- Can you use ‘I’ in an academic text?
- Should an essay have section headings?
- How long is a report?
- Do you use primary or secondary research?
- Footnotes, endnotes or no notes?
- Harvard style referencing or MLA? What about APA?

Which school are you in? What is acceptable and what is unacceptable in your field?

Always check in your module handbooks or with your tutor if you are concerned about appropriacy
Getting Through Your First Year At Uni Aims

— To look at the differences between final year and the previous years

— To discuss lecturer expectation

— To look at ways to maximise your potential
You Made It!

Here you are, about to begin your final year – congratulations! Many students worry about the change in expectation when they reach their final year.

With the person next to you:

— Introduce yourself, and explain how and why you chose your subject

— What do you know about your final year:
  • Dissertation?
  • Project?
  • Exam?
  • Presentation?

— What do you think your lecturers expect from you?

— Are you excited, nervous or both?
Final Year Expectations

— Learner Responsibility
  • Independence and initiative to solve problems
  • Motivation and self-discipline, time management
  • Study groups with peers
  • Self Study

— Understanding your intelligence
  • Logical, spatial, musical, emotional, numerical ...
  • Audio, visual, kinaesthetic, social, individual, global, analytic ...
  • Morning, afternoon, evening...

— Research and criticality
  • Reading extended texts
  • Finding research, using databases, evaluating research
  • Thinking for yourself, applying knowledge and experience
  • Synthesising texts, theories, frameworks...
Criticality

There is also a much higher expectation of criticality in the final year. This means that you need to be ready to explore new avenues, challenge your assumptions and justify your arguments. This justification can come from research, logical reasoning or, in some schools, analysis and reflection of past events.

If you haven’t already, you may like to attend the Critical Thinking AWL Open Workshop.
Writing

It should come as no surprise that the level of writing – in terms of amount and quality – is higher in the third year. Here are some ways you can help yourself:

— Knowledge of the text requirements
  • Report?
  • Essay?
  • Literature Review?
  • Reflection?

— Referencing
  • Acknowledging sources, locatable sources
  • Shows wide reading
  • Substantiates claims, can distance claims too
  • Plagiarism: no plagiarist ever got a first!
  • Be aware of academic voice
  • Academic discourse: a social process, spans time and space
  • Reflect this in your writing
  • Fluid paraphrasing: rich variety in reporting verbs

The LDU runs a number of How To.. AWL Open Workshops, including sessions on referencing and different text types.
Reading~Writing Process

Give yourself as much time as you can, and don’t expect it to be a linear progression from study to writing.

The truth is, all these stages happen concurrently – writing is a circular process.
Critical Referencing

Reporting verbs can help improve your text in a number of ways. Why do you think this lecturer is bored by these reporting verbs?

- Smith (2007) claims …
- Smith (2007) says …
- ……(Smith, 2007).
# Reporting Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>admit</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>postulate</th>
<th>assume</th>
<th>believe</th>
<th>claim</th>
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<td>suggest</td>
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<tr>
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<td>support</td>
<td>acknowledge</td>
<td>examine</td>
<td>concede</td>
<td>recognise</td>
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</table>
Research and Reading

There are a number of ways you can improve your secondary research:

— Critical Reading
  • What sources? Why?
  • Synthesis
  • Analysis

— Get Comfortable With Texts
  • Learn to enjoy journal articles and papers
  • Learn ‘word attack’ and ‘guessing from context’
  • Learn to ‘survey’, ask, read, recall, review
  • Learn to ‘act curious’ to stimulate your interest
  • (ask why? why? why?)

— Exploit Your Library:
  • Become familiar with library catalogues
  • Use the electronic directories and e-journals
  • Meet your subject librarian
  • Re-attend a library induction

Don’t forget the AWL Open Workshop How To Read Journal Articles can help you get to the crux of critical reading!
Study Groups

What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of studying in groups?
Take Part

Successful students are active students! Here are some ways you can engage with your studies:

— Host seminar sessions
— Lead a discussion group
— Develop your presentation skills
— Join groups / societies / the NUS
— Be active in group work
— Make networks
  • Different backgrounds
  • Different nationalities / cultures
  • Different opinions / experiences
  • … but avoid cheats and freeloaders!
Engage

At this stage it is very important that you show commitment to your lectures. Is this statement true or false?:

“As long as I turn up on time and take notes, I am showing commitment to my lectures”

Instead, meet and show commitment to your lectures by being:

— Enthusiastic about ideas
— Solution-focussed
— Curious and questioning
— Comfortable with disagreement (it’s academic!)
— Aware of your learning outcomes
— Ready to be ‘wrong’ (be brave!)
The MDX 20 Point Scale

To grade you on your assignments, Middlesex University uses a 20-point scale, where the higher the number the higher your success. True or false?

Scoring 1-4 on the scale is the very highest and means your understanding is wide and relevant, you are self-reflective, your thinking is abstract and original, you can generalise from what you find out and make great deductions. 5-8 is very good indeed. 9-12 is quite good. True or false?

Scoring 13-16 on the scale means your knowledge is adequate but very basic, you get the main point but that’s all, you can’t generalise so well, and you perhaps just dealt with one aspect instead of many. True or false?

Scoring 17-20 on the scale means you have failed because you have missed the point, lack the knowledge needed, or just repeat the same simple thing in different ways. True or false?

Which scores ensure a first?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Class of Honours Degree</th>
<th>Other Qualification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>DISTINCTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>UPPER SECOND</td>
<td>MERIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12</td>
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<td>PASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16</td>
<td>THIRD</td>
<td>PASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>FAIL - MARGINAL</td>
<td>FAIL - MARGINAL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compensation allowed</td>
<td>Compensation allowed</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>FAIL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compensation allowed</td>
<td>Compensation allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>FAIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compensation not allowed</td>
<td>Compensation not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>FAIL - Incorporating failure to participate in assessment necessary to achieve all learning outcomes. Compensation not allowed.</td>
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Levels In Higher Education

Level Zero: Learning at this level will reflect the ability to: apply **knowledge and skills** in a range of complex activities demonstrating **comprehension of relevant theories**; access and analyse information **independently** and make **reasoned judgements**, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.
Levels In Higher Education

Level One: Learning at this level will reflect the ability to: develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

(plus level zero)
Levels In Higher Education

Level Two: Learning at this level will reflect the ability to generate ideas through the **analysis of abstracts concepts**, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and **evaluate** information; exercise **significant judgement** across a broad range of functions; and accept **responsibility** for determining and achieving personal and group outcomes.

(as well as previous levels)
Levels In Higher Education

Level Three: Learning at this level will reflect the ability to critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilising specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

(plus all previous levels)
Levels In Higher Education

Level Four: Learning at this level will reflect the ability to display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision-making including use of supervision.

(plus previous levels)
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Top Tips

Consider:

• Your lecturers are professionals
• Your lecturers are trained educators
• External examiners and second markers are used
• You are an independent learner
• There are no short cuts
• You – and only you – are in charge of your progress

Greatest Boost?

• See study as fun

Greatest Danger?

• Procrastination
The Learning Enhancement Team

The LDU is here to help you! Here are some of the workshops you can attend:

— PRODUCTS:
  • Reflective Writing
  • Introduction to Dissertations Writing / Advanced Dissertation Writing
  • How to...
    — Write a Lab Report
    — Write a Literature Review
    — Write A Proposal

— PROCESSES:
  • Critical Thinking
  • Reading Journal Articles
  • Integrating Sources Into Your Writing
  • Using Your Voice Effectively
  • Understanding Assignment Briefs
  • Understanding Plagiarism and Referencing
  • Understanding Feedback
  • Academic Style
  • ReWise Exam Support
  • Get Your Assignment Ready
  • The Writing Space
Where now?

— Need more detailed assistance? Book a tutorial!

— Want feedback on a specific section? Drop in to Getting Your Assignment Ready!

— Want somewhere quiet to write, and get on the spot assistance? Try The Writing Space!

— Got a few quick questions? AWL Office Hours at [The Study Hub] are for you!

— AWL Open Workshops can be booked here!

• Suggestions:
  – How To... Workshops
  – Reading Journal Articles
  – Critical Thinking
  – Integrating Sources Into Your Writing
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It's QUESTION TIME!!