

## Writing Assignments



**Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies**

**University of Kelaniya**

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## Introduction

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In spite of all kinds of electronic developments in the field of science and especially in the field of tertiary education, the written word still remains the single most important form for the obtaining, processing and transferring of knowledge. Without the ability to write clearly, logically and effectively, you cannot claim to have mastered the art of scientific writing to the full. For this reason, it is important that you develop this skill to the best of your ability. Particularly during undergraduate and honours studies, this skill is developed through the writing of assignments. Hereby three goals are aimed for. Firstly, whilst writing an assignment, your knowledge about a topic will be broadened. In the second place one gains experience in the process of doing research and in the third place one's ability to formulate and write improves immensely. The ability to write a good assignment is not something that happens automatically. This is a skill that is inculcated through regular practice and a deliberate effort to keep on evaluating your work against the stated criteria and to improve what was done incorrectly. It is in support of this process that this manual has been developed.

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An assignment can only be as good as the sources which you have used to write it. You can start once you have ensured that you have collected the best and most recent sources by means of a systematic literature study. If you know how to integrate this source material into a logical unit and to present your paper neatly, you can give your semester mark a good boost. This skill will have to be practiced right through your academic career.

**Why?**



## Planning

The planning of the assignment is very important - allow enough time and attention to this phase. In the first place, you have to think carefully about the topic. Very often this is where the battle is lost or won. Questions which should be considered include:

- What is the **aim** with the assignment?
- What is the **core issue**?
- What is the **extent** of the assignment?

In this phase you have to give attention to a number of issues.

- Carefully read the **lecturer's instructions** since he/she might include a suggested outline for the assignment.
- Determine where the topic fits in with the material already discussed in class.
- Read the relevant sections in the textbook or the study guide to orientate yourself.
- Again check the study guide to make sure of the envisaged aims with the assignment, make sure that you know what the core issue is, and then go on to the next step.

## Outline of an assignment

Formulate a framework or scheme. ALWAYS KEEP THE CENTRAL THEME IN MIND. Take care not to digress from the topic. Keep a balance between sections. If one section tends to become too long, consider dividing it into more than one section. Divide the information into subsections. In the subsections the different components of the topic should be dealt with separately, but integral as part of the logical whole. The method to be used for organizing the material will differ from assignment to assignment. It can be done chronologically, thematicchronologically or in any other way.

Regardless of what method is used, the presentation always has to be logical. It should be clear what the thread of the argument is, and the one argument must logically lead to the next one. Take care that there is balance between the different sections. Do not only concentrate on the sections that you find interesting. When writing a long assignment, it is better to use connecting sentences at the ends of concluding paragraphs. A useful hint is that one word in the final sentence of a section links to the following heading.

## Example of a logical framework of an assignment

The assignment should have a proper order. The followings are the general arrangement of an assignment. It may be vary depending on each course unit's assignment requirements.

- Title page
- Cover page
- Declaration
- Acknowledgment
- Executive Summary
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Body of the Assignment
- Conclusion and Recommendation
- References
- Appendices

## Headings

Keep headings as short as possible and keep consistently to the style that you have chosen.

## Collection of the information

Read, read, read. One should never be afraid of getting to know more than one is going to use in a specific assignment. It is only by reading extensively that one acquires the insight needed and realizes the extent of the topic. It is generally a good idea to move from the general to the more specific, and therefore to start with books and move to relevant journal articles. While you are reading, you can start making notes of details from the sources and begin to group this information in accordance with the assignment scheme or plan that you have already outlined. At this stage it is very important to thoroughly and accurately keep record of the bibliographic details of each source that you are using.

## Types of information sources

A certain type of information is to be found in a certain type of source. For example, do not expect to find a theoretical outline in a newspaper!

Here is an outline of information needs and types of information sources:

- definitions, descriptions: subject-specific dictionaries
- introductions, frameworks and brief surveys: subject-specific encyclopedias
- more complete, but still basic information: books
- the latest research data: subject-specific journals
- recent news reports: newspapers on the Internet.

## Databases

To locate information sources, you can use various scientific databases. The following types of databases are available:

- To search for books and e-books on a specific topic, use the library catalogue. The shelf number of the book or the link to the e-book is clearly indicated on the screen.
- International journals: Make your choice from databases like ScienceDirect, Scopus, JSTOR and many more.
- Gain access to the most popular databases via the library's web page
- Newspapers:
- Despite the absence of an authoritative body and the apparent abundance of unorganised information, the Internet could also be used for up to date information on different subjects.

## Keywords

For a search on a database you have to select appropriate keywords for your topic. You will then use these keywords in different combinations on the search screen of the database.

## Reading and understanding sources

Read the relevant sections in the source (for example a journal article) a few times. Often the concept is not clear at the first glance. Try to understand the logic of the section: first read through the headings and then concentrate on each of the subsections. If it is a photocopy or your own book, underline the core or key sentences or even better: write down the main idea in your own words. In reading it is always wise to move from the general to the specific. It is therefore a good idea to start with books or articles in encyclopedias on the particular topic. Take care not to repeat statements this occurs mostly when you use arguments from different authors, for example: Journals contain recent information / The information in journals is not old. When you are using information from different sources, you are “talking” to your sources – you are **in conversation with the authors**. Do not just quote a source and let it hang there. What

do you want to say with this argument or statement? What is the contribution of this quotation? What is your interpretation of the quotation? Quotations are like examples: discuss them and indicate how they complement your argumentation. In other words, explain and digest your quotations.

## The Title page

The assignment should be covered with a title page containing all the relevant information.

Title of the assignment

Course code

Course Name

Date

## FCMS Assignment Cover Sheet

The FCMS students are required to use the following cover page for their assignments.

# **F**ACULTY OF **C**OMMERCE & **M**ANAGEMENT **S**TUDIES

*University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.*

### **Name of the Department**

Course Code :

Course Title :

Academic Year :

Semester :

Year :

Lecturer/(s) :

Assignment Topic :

Student Number/ Name and contribution:

Student Number

Student name

Student contribution

*Please fill in the above information and then save this page as the first page of your assignment to be submitted.*



## **Declaration**

I/We certify that this report does not incorporate without acknowledgment, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my/our knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

.....

Signature of student/s

Name of the student/s

Students Number/s

Date

## The table of contents

This should contain all the headings of the assignment as well as the page numbers on which each heading starts.

Example:

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction.....	1
Scope.....	3
Analysis.....	4
Conclusions.....	10
Recommendations.....	11
References.....	12
Appendices.....	14
Appendix 1 - Cash Flow Statement for XYZ Holdings 2007-2008.....	14
Appendix 2 - Balance Sheet for XYZ Holdings 2007-2008.....	15

## Formatting requirements

Students are required to follow the following formatting requirements for your assignments.

### Font and Size

- Font type -Times New Roman
- Font Size
  - Body of the Assignment 12'
  - Headings of the Assignment 14'

### Margins

- Margins
  - Top 1' Bottom 1'
  - Left 1.25' Right 1'

### Spacing

- Line Space- 1.5"
- Paragraphs – Justified
- No Gutter position

### Headings

Main headings (in the front page) are centered, while side headings in the report are typed at the side of the page.

### Main Heading of Report

Use capital letters, e.g MANAGEMENT PROCESS

### Sub Headings

1. Introduction
2. Planning

### Paragraph headings

- 2.1 *Nature of planning*
- 2.2 *Benefits and drawbacks of planning*
  - 2.2.1 *Benefits*

### Page numbering of document

- The entire report must be consecutively numbered from the Introductory Chapter to the very end, including the appendices, using Arabic numerals. The pages

following the Table of Contents up to Chapter 1 will be numbered with Roman numerals. Place the page numbers at the bottom of the page and centered.

## **General Information**

- Submit Assignment through CAL. If lecturer required a hard copy of the assignment, binding of the Assignment should be environmental friendly. (Avoid spiral bindings and transparent sheet)
- Submission should be made on time
- Proper page numbering should be in Assignment and Power point presentation
- Reports must be free of erasures and manual corrections
- Reports must be error free. The entire report must be carefully checked for grammar and spelling mistakes before submission.