

Formatting your essay/report

When you submit your essay (assignment) for marking, there is a set format you must follow. There may be some small differences in format that your own lecturer may request of you, so make sure that you read and follow the instructions in your subject learning guides carefully. Following are some basic guidelines for you to follow:

1. Basic essay structure
2. Guidelines for using headings
3. What is included in the word count?

1. Basic essay/report structure

• Title page

The title page should contain: name, student number, unit title/number, question title/name, due date, unit coordinator, word count. You do NOT have to decorate the page (e.g. graphics, photographs) unless you are asked to by the lecturer.

On the computer – use your 'Font' & 'Paragraph' tools to work on the layout.

• Margins

Margins - minimum 2.5 cm, maximum 3 cm all around.

On the computer – use the 'Page Layout' tool to set up your margins.

• Paragraphs

Double **or** 1.5 space all of the essay paragraphs including 'long quotations' (more than 40 words) which should have NO quotation marks, be indented 1.3 cm to the right, and have the same spacing as the rest of the essay paragraphs. *(Can vary with referencing system you are using.)*

Leave 1 blank line between paragraphs **or** indent the first word (not both).

On the computer – use 'Paragraph' OR 'Line and paragraph spacing' for 1.5 OR double spacing.

• Font

Use a plain serif (e.g. Times New Roman) or sans serif (e.g. Arial) font. A serif font is easier to read. Suggested sizes are 12 for the text and 14 for headings.

DO NOT change fonts in the course of writing the essay.

On the computer – use 'Font' tools to select font, colour and appropriate style.

• Pagination

Put numbers in line with the right margin at the top or bottom of each page. Centre the number of the first page of chapters or appendices at the bottom. It is also acceptable, although less common, to centre all page numbers. Pagination is best done with Header and Footer.

On the computer – use 'Insert' > header or footer > insert your name, student number, assignment number/topic, page number.

• Appendices

Appendices usually follow the reference list.

Each appendix must start on a new page.

Appendices must be numbered—A,B,C or 1,2,3.

(see ASO fact sheet: Appendices)

• Reference list/bibliography

All referencing lists start on a NEW PAGE. Go the [Academic Skills Fact Sheets](#) > Referencing section. Select the correct referencing style for your discipline.

2. Guidelines for using headings

Headings are **signposts** that focus the reader on the most important content in a piece of writing and make longer pieces of writing easier to write and easier to read). Follow these rules:

1. Use headings only where allowed or required. Check with the unit coordinator.
2. Choose headings and subheadings make the essay organisation more manageable.
3. Use **minimal** or **maximal** capitalisation but minimal capitalisation is usually preferred.
4. Write headings that are captions punctuated with commas, colons, or semicolons.
5. Left justify your headings unless asked to do differently.
6. Decide on a hierarchy of headings and use it consistently throughout your work. Most student work requires no more than 3 levels of headings.

Level 1: Major headings – will be larger type and bold with extra space above and below.

The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care

Level 2: Subheadings will be bold and the same size or slightly larger than the body of the text with extra space above and below.

The effects of radiation on living tissue

Level 3: Subdivisions under subheadings will be bold or italicised, not both.

Implications for normal cells

NOTE: Check your Unit Outlines for course and faculty requirements.

• Capitalisation styles

When you write headings, you should use a 'Capitalisation style'—either *minimal* OR *maximal* and stick to this style.

Maximal (Headline style). The first letter of every important word should be capitalised. The first word after a colon is **always** capitalised.

The Oncology Ward: Nuclear Radiation and Client Care

Minimal (Sentence style). Capitalise the first word, any other word that would normally take a capital, and the first word after a colon.

The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care

3. Word count

The following is a guide only. Different units may have different requirements, so always follow the instructions in your unit material or ask your unit coordinator for clarification if you are unsure.

What is included?	What is NOT included?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The full text of the assignment, e.g.:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ESSAY: introduction, body and conclusion sections + all headings○ REPORT: abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion sections + all headings• In-text references• Footnotes that add information to the content of the assignment• Any tables or figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The title page• The assignment question• Headers or footers• Synopsis or abstract• The reference list or bibliography• Footnote references (e.g. History, AGLC4, Chicago)• Appendices

NOTE: A limit of 10% above or below the stated word count is often acceptable, but always check this with your unit coordinator. For **all units taught by the School of Law**, the stated word count is the maximum acceptable word count, and **penalties apply** beyond the stated word count.