

# **A Guide to Academic Writing in Linguistics**

Department of English Language and Linguistics  
Rhodes University

Contributing writers include: Mark de Vos, Maxine Schaefer, Ian Siebörger

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# A Guide to Writing for Linguistics

Welcome to the Linguistics Department. This is a guide to writing at university, specifically in the Linguistics Department.

We have created a whole book on writing academically because the only way we assess you in the Linguistics course, is through writing. This writing takes the form of essays or tests, during the term, and a three hour exam at the end of each semester. The majority of this booklet will focus on writing for essays.

Another reason for dedicating a whole book to academic writing is that it is not as easily acquired as speech. Writing has to be learned; you went to school to learn how to write, but most people do not have to be taught how to speak. Similarly, academic writing must also be learned. Although it is still writing, it comes with a list of “rules” that must also be learned.

This booklet takes as its main principle the idea that academic writing is not really about writing per se. When lecturers talk about “academic writing” what they usually mean is that academic writing is a way of reifying underlying thought processes or semantic functions. For this reason, instead of providing a list of technical details characterizing good writing, we take care to identify the underlying cognitive and/or semantic functions which good writing tries to express. For example, instead of focusing on plagiarism, we first explore the question of authority in academic writing, of which in-text referencing is just one specialized instantiation. Only when students understand authority in academic writing will they truly understand plagiarism as being more than a set of technical rules.

# **Formal Departmental Rules Relating to Assignments**

## **1.1 Times**

Assignments must be submitted on time. We have a large number of students and late submissions make it exceptionally difficult to maintain a functioning peer review system. Consequently, late submissions can actively sabotage the learning experience of the rest of the class. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% per calendar day (including weekends and public holidays) calculated from the day after the due date up to and including the day they are submitted.

## **1.2 Space limit**

Each essay will be given a specific space limit or word limit. This should be carefully noted. Such limits are in the interests of both students and staff. For the student they encourage brief and structured presentation, and for the staff they reduce the very considerable burden of reading which a large batch of assignments often entails, enabling us to give closer attention to papers of reasonable length. So please aim at submitting work which is economical, coherent and planned. A lecturer may refuse to mark any essay which is substantially over or below the word limit. In this case, you will be granted your DP and a mark of 0% and/or the lecturer may ask you to resubmit if they deem it appropriate.

## **1.3 Format**

All assignments must be typed in 1.5-spacing, using 12-point Times New Roman on A4 paper. Use only one side of the page and leave a line between paragraphs. Do not indent the first line of a paragraph. Margins should be “normal”, i.e. 2.5cm.

## **1.4 Handing in**

- All draft assignments for peer review must be submitted electronically through RUconnected. This is a DP requirement.

- All final assignments must be submitted BOTH online on RUconnected and/or Turnitin AND in hard copy. This is a DP requirement.
- Students who do not submit draft copies, or who do not upload their work to RUconnected will be penalized. Penalties may include withdrawal of DP certificates, mark deductions or a 0% score. These are applied at the discretion of the course coordinator.

**Important:** Do not give essay to a friend to hand in for you. This often results in copying or essays not being handed in at all, and in such cases you will receive 0% for your essay.

### **1.5 Return of assignments**

We make every effort to return your written work to you within two weeks of handing in. Your tutor will return your marked assignment during a tutorial. If you are absent on the day when the assignments are returned, you must collect your essay from the secretary in Room 19.

### **1.6 If you fail an essay**

If you fail an essay, you can resubmit a new, reworked version within 7 days to be marked. This will be marked out of a maximum of 55%.

### **1.7 Assignment front page**

It is important to set out your front page correctly. It should include the following information:

- The name of the course e.g. English Language and Linguistics 1
- Your student number
- The declaration of academic integrity (i.e. The plagiarism declaration)

Below is a template showing how your front page should be laid out:

English Language and Linguistics 1

Thursday tutor's name

Student number

Thursday tut time

Date

Tut room number

[Title of assignment]

Declaration of academic integrity

I recognize that plagiarism is academic theft and is wrong, regardless of the presence or absence of a plagiarism declaration. Plagiarism occurs when people use another person's ideas, words or intellectual property without referencing them properly. There are many kinds of plagiarism, but common kinds include:

- Using another person's words directly without using quotation marks or referencing them.
- Paraphrasing another person's words without referencing them.
- Using ideas or making claims that have been influenced by other people's insights without acknowledging one's intellectual debt to them.
- Using poor or inadequate referencing or bibliographies.

I have acknowledged other people's ideas, words where I have either paraphrased them or quoted them directly and I have used quotation marks and appropriate referencing. I acknowledge that although it is acceptable (and even encouraged) to work together with other students (e.g. in a study group or in a tutorial), each student must write their own assignment and use their own words. I have also not allowed anybody to borrow or copy my work. I know that if I am found guilty of plagiarism, I will be punished for it and it may also be placed on my permanent academic record thus damaging my reputation. I am aware that this assignment constitutes work product of the Linguistics department and may be stored and used for auditing, educational and/or research purposes. I am aware that if I have any questions about any of these issues, I can contact my tutor, lecturer or head of department who will explain it to me.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Introduction to academic writing

If you have not yet, you will realize that the writing required of you at university level is quite different from the writing you did for school. The writing required from you at university level is called academic writing and it has a number of conventions which apply to it. Now, do not be alarmed. Although you may feel that you have been dropped in the deep end and told to ‘swim’, this guide to writing serves as your ‘life jacket’ to writing for this department, and you may even find it useful for writing for other departments. The aim of this guide is to make these academic writing conventions explicit or clear to you so that you will know what characteristics of writing make it academic.

## 2.1 Why do I have to write essays?

Language is central to the learning process: every aspect of education, teaching and learning is saturated with language and language use. Lecturers use language to convey information and knowledge; textbooks and manuals use language to convey complex ideas; in the business world and in our careers, information is passed on and created with language in emails, memos, letters, reports, books and technical manuals.

The kinds of information used depend heavily on the medium of communication. Short-term communication may well occur as oral communication (e.g. an instruction from your boss, a discussion in a meeting etc.). But long-term communication that needs to pass the test of time is almost always written down. While there are important areas where oral language is used to convey knowledge and information (lectures, oral examinations), written language is much more prevalent precisely because we are creating knowledge for the long term. For this reason, most educational and career contexts make extensive use of *written* language.

Also extremely important is the fact that, not only do we convey information with writing, but we use writing to create our own knowledge, to explore ideas, to open our ideas up for debate and to get ideas straight in our heads. It is very important, for you to get practice in thinking and writing about the ideas of other authors and how they relate to other ideas – both your own, based on your experience, and those that you have become familiar with in the rest of your academic training. This process of “wrestling” with ideas is an important one because, if done properly, it requires you to process the information in an active way so that it becomes part of

your own body of internal knowledge: in other words, you really learn in a meaningful way. For these reasons, university education includes being able to express oneself through writing. Essays are one kind of academic writing and they are very useful in developing the types of language and writing skills that are essential for success at university.

## **2.2 Writing with the audience in mind**

One of the main purposes of academic writing is to communicate academic findings to an audience. We can thus visualize academic writing where, as the writer, you are the speaker, and the reader is a listener. Now, one important part of a conversation is that conversational partners take turns. If the listener does not agree with the speaker, s/he uses her/his turn to comment on what the speaker is saying. However, in academic writing, the reader/listener does not have this chance to respond, even if s/he does not agree with the writer. In order to make one's writing convincing, you, as the writer, have to anticipate or imagine what the reader will think, or already knows, and then address their concerns in your writing. In this way, you can convince the reader of your standpoint.

Steven Pinker puts this very well in an article in the *Guardian*:

These principles are harder to convey than the customary lists of errors that get recycled from one traditional style guide to the next. The real problem is that writing, unlike speaking, is an unnatural act. In the absence of a conversational partner who shares the writer's background and who can furrow her brows or break in and ask for clarification when he stops making sense, good writing depends on an ability to imagine a generic reader and empathise about what she already knows and how she interprets the flow of words in real time. Writing, above all, is a topic in cognitive psychology.

(Pinker 2015)

To write well, students and writers must develop a sense of their audience: who they are writing for. One way of doing this is to imagine a dialogue occurring in your head as you write where somebody else, a generic reader, is asking you questions as you write:

- *What do you mean by that phrase exactly?*
- *What does that word mean? Do you think your audience will understand it?*
- *How does this relate to the argument you are trying to make?*
- *You are arguing for X but what if the reader thinks of Y counterargument?*
- *Do you think you have given enough evidence for your position to be persuasive?*

In this way, the writer constructs an imagined dialogue where they are responding to important questions as though they were responding to their audience.

Good writing takes the reader's supposed knowledge into account. One aspect of the imagined dialogue is estimating how much background knowledge the reader has. This background knowledge includes a shared sense of general knowledge about the world, cultural understandings, life orientations, disciplinary language and concepts and technical, disciplinary vocabulary. One major question is whether the reader knows and understands the technical terminology we need to use? The same way we use slang when talking to our friends to show that we are all friends, we use academic jargon/terminology to mark ourselves as members of the academic community. At university you learn new names for concepts you already know (such as *grammar* referring to *phrase structure rules*, *articles* are also called *determiners*), or you learn about new concepts with names you did not know before (such as *discourse*, *syntax*, and *metafunction*). It is therefore very important that you use this academic terminology because how else will the academic reader know you are a serious linguist (or psychologist, or sociologist or biological scientist *etc.*) unless you use the words used in that academic discipline?

In the Linguistics department, you can assume that the reader knows what the academic terms mean. This means that you do not have to define every academic term you use in your essay. Rather, as already said in 2.2, your use of the term in context will show that you know what it means. When writing for Linguistics, make sure you use the terminology you learned in the course. Your ability to use this terminology in context shows that you understand the course content.

### 2.3 Structuring basics: the PEDAL principle

When you ride a bicycle, you use the energy of your legs to pedal the bike forward. Each time you pedal, the bike moves forward a bit. But to get anywhere, you need to pedal repeatedly: it is a cyclic system. The same applies to writing. Let's analyse how to "pedal" your argument forward. First of all, it is important to distinguish between the underlying Function vs how the function is expressed in a text – they are not the same thing.

The textual function relates to the meaning that we are trying to express. These relate to the argument and the planning and/or structure of the argument. You can keep an argument inside your head or express it orally i.e. it does not need to be written down. Examples of function relate to things like:

- Introducing an argument
- Introducing and describing evidence for the argument
- Interpreting the evidence in a persuasive way
- Concluding your argument
- Relating discourse given vs discourse new information in persuasive ways
- And many other similar things

Once we have worked out the function (i.e. what we want to achieve), we need to think of how to write this down in the most persuasive and clear way. We need to ask ourselves: what types of sentences do we need to write down to fulfil the textual function? This allows us to actually construct sentences and paragraphs and to write them down.

Although there are many ways of structuring paragraphs and arguments, in Linguistics 1 we encourage you to use the PEDAL system (for some of you this might be familiar as the PEEL system). PEDAL stands for: **P**oint, **E**vidence, **D**escription, **A**nalysis and **L**ink. Each paragraph must consist of the following components, preferably in the order given here.

	Function	How it is sometimes expressed in a text
<b>Point</b>	What is the point you are trying to get across?	Your topic sentence. This is usually the first sentence of your paragraph. It tells the reader what the paragraph is about. There should be only one main point per paragraph.
<b>Evidence</b>	What evidence or data will you use to support your point?	Evidence can take a variety of forms including: in-text referencing, data (numbers, words, sentences), graphs etc. Evidence can be introduced with phrases like: <i>for example; to make this claim concrete; this is shown by</i> etc. Evidence can also occur as numbered examples or bullet points in the text.
<b>Description</b>	Evidence and data can be confusing or hard to understand so describe or “unpack” the data. Provide context where necessary. Help the reader understand the data on its own terms.	<p>Description of evidence often depends on the theory or content of the essay. So there are many ways to do it. Here are some examples.</p> <p>This graph shows that X increases over time.</p> <p>These three words are all synonyms.</p> <p>These words describe a lexical set of “Anger”</p> <p>The following sentence is not accepted by speakers of this dialect.</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Explain how the evidence/data demonstrates your point. Does your evidence show what you intend it to show?</p> <p>There is a subtle distinction between description of data (as neutrally described as possible) and analysis of evidence (theory dependent). Sometimes Description and Analysis sections of a paragraph are the same.</p>	Analysis of data is often introduced with phrases like: this data shows that; this graph demonstrates how; what this evidence suggests that; this data explains how, so we can conclude that, etc.

<p><b>Link</b></p>	<p>Once you have made your point, then how does it link to the next part of your argument? Is it a cause of the following part of the argument, is it a point in addition to the next part of the argument, does it contrast with the next part of the argument? How does it link to the bigger picture that you are trying to persuade your audience of?</p>	<p>Links can take a number of forms. They can be either the last sentence of a paragraph or sometimes the first sentence of the next paragraph. Examples of phrases associated with linking are: <i>in the first place; first, second, third; in the light of; moreover; in addition; although this may be true; on the other hand, conversely, however, but, although, if...then, with this in mind, because of, this results in, for this reason, so, therefore, in conclusion, on the one hand, on the other hand, this contrasts with, this is similar to, conversely, however, in contrast, etc.</i></p>
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Once you have mastered the basics of how to build a paragraph with PEDAL, you can move on to more advanced uses of the system (e.g. introducing some of the components in a different order; omitting some components; using some components implicitly etc.). However, you are strongly encouraged to use this system during your first year.

# **Building an argument: Kinds of arguments and kinds of essay structures**

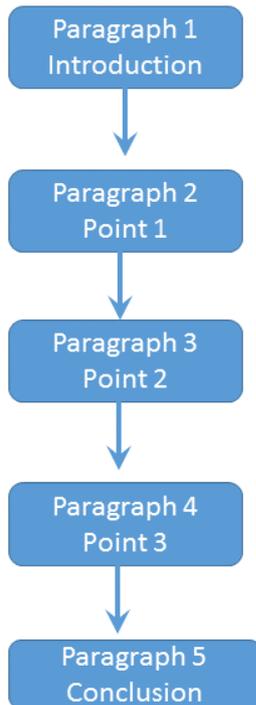
Let's extend the metaphor of riding a bicycle to writing an essay. When you ride a bicycle, you need to pedal repeatedly in order to make the bike move. If you only pedal the bicycle once you won't get far. Similarly, in writing, if you write just one paragraph, you can't create very complex arguments. An essay or research report consists of many paragraphs (all constructed with the PEDAL system) linked together in ways that are mutually supporting in order to create a complex and coherent argument. Once again, it is important to distinguish between the underlying textual functions within the essay and the exact way these are implemented on paper with sentences and words.

Your writing should be logically set up so that the reader knows how all your claims are connected. This means that you should have an introduction, conclusion and a body of paragraphs which follow on logically from one another. There are many different types of arguments and when you write an essay there is no single right or wrong kind of argument. Similarly, there are many essay structures that you can choose but most often one type of argument will fit better than another.

Start off by writing down the main points you hope to make in your assignment. These notes will help you in the next stage of essay-writing in which you decide how to structure the points you wish to make in your essay. It is often helpful initially to make a list of these points, without much detail, so that you can see them all at a glance and rearrange them until you have a logical structure where each point leads to the next and builds into a strong argument. This will make the writing up stage much easier. You need to bear in mind that the reader is not only looking for evidence that you have read the relevant authors' work, but also that you can structure the information clearly.

### ***3.1.1 Linear structures***

Linear structures occur when each paragraph is a development of the previous one and the paragraphs thus follow each other in a natural way.



Linear structures are well suited for things that follow each other in a natural sequence. Examples include stories and historical narratives where each paragraph describes a scene that comes after the previous one. Other examples where this structure is useful is when you are describing a sequence of events (e.g. how to do a task).

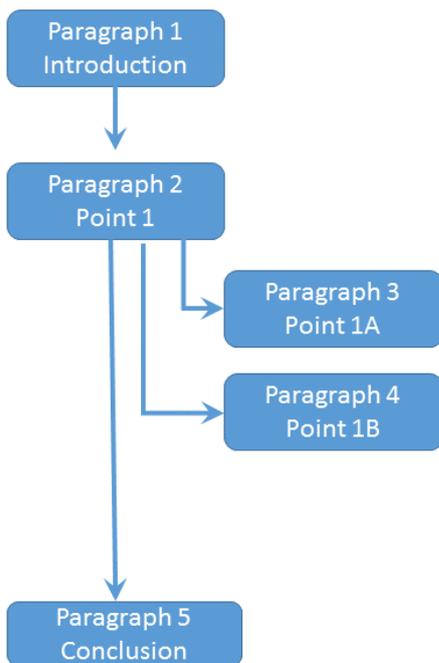
- First x happened, then y happened
- Initially the ANC used peaceful protests but in 1961 the decision was made to use armed struggle.
- To make a cake you must first sift the flour and then add eggs

This structure is also very useful when following a line of argument or when developing a proof where each step depends on the previous one.

- First, let's assume that X is true. If X is true, then Y follows from this. If we are correct about Y, then Z must be the consequence. Therefore we argue that X causes Z.

### **3.1.2 Embedded structures**

Another type of essay structure is called an embedded structure and it is perhaps one of the most common types. In this structure, several paragraphs may each independently elaborate on a point, but the paragraphs are not themselves closely related to each other. For example, in the following graphic the main point is presented by paragraph 2. However, paragraph 3 provides an elaboration on this main point (e.g. it could be an example, or a case-study, or a reason to support point 1 etc.)



This type of structure is very useful when you want to introduce multiple arguments to support a point you want to make.

- There are three reasons to study linguistics (a) because it is exciting (b) because it is socially relevant and (c) because it is valued by employers.

It is also very useful when you want to compare and contrast arguments.

- Political Marxism is seemingly not as popular as it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are three reasons why this may be true. There are also two reasons why this might not a valid point.

### 3.1.3 *Complex structures*

There are many more structures than these. But with these basic two types, you can combine them in various ways to build more complex types of arguments and essay structures. Be creative and use the combination of structures that you feel best suits your requirements for a particular task.

There is a useful structure which is often used when presenting an argument. If, for example, you are asked to argue whether or not a particular theory is valid, your essay is more likely to succeed in convincing the reader if the way you structure the information builds a strong argument for your case. It might look something like this:

- Introduction
- Points which support the argument (arranged carefully so that they lead from one to the next)
- Points which do not support the argument, together with reasons why these points can be discarded, or are less important than the points which supports the argument
- Conclusion (in which you summarize the main points for your argument and mention briefly why you have rejected the counter-argument)

If you are asked to compare two authors' views (or two competing theories, etc.) then this structure would effectively be double:

- Introduction (in which you usually state which author/theory you agree with)
- Points which support the views of Author A
- Points which do not support the views of Author A
- Points which support the views of Author B
- Points which do not support the views of Author B
- Conclusion (in which you weigh up the points for and against A and B and state clearly again which author's view you support)

Sometimes it may happen that you think both views are equally valid or invalid and you should then say so and provide a synthesis of the two or an alternative explanation, as the case may be. This is not recommended unless you are very sure of yourself and your grasp of the issues, however. You should bear in mind that the authors you will be writing about are professional people who, while quite capable of making mistakes like any other human, have been working and reading and writing in the field for a lot longer than you have. It is a good habit to question constantly while reading, to decide for yourself whether the arguments put forward are valid or not and whether the approach taken by the author applies equally to the context you are considering. For example, an article written in America might not apply to South African conditions. However, one should be realistic and remember that it is unlikely for a professional author's viewpoint to be entirely without merit.

## Authority in writing and referencing

It is a basic rule in academic writing that every statement you make must be supported, unless it refers to a fact that is very widely known (e.g. *English is the language of commerce in South Africa.*). We call this Evidence. Evidence for statements can come from various sources:

- Personal observation: one would usually make this type of statement in the interpretation section of an analysis assignment – but do make sure that your data does in fact support your statement. You would also make statements based on personal observations when your topic tells you to relate theories to your own experience.
- Data: data is an important type of evidence. If our arguments are well substantiated with data of various types, then it can help to make our arguments more compelling. There are many different types of data including anecdotal data, empirical/statistical data, qualitative data, observational data etc. Ultimately, it is one of the purposes of the university to collect more data and interpret it to create new knowledge. This is what you are expected to do as you become more experienced as a university student.
- Relevant authorities: these include books and journals. In some cases you may want to reference websites – but most websites are a bit dodgy, so don't believe everything you read on the Internet. For example, Wikipedia is not considered a legitimate academic authority although the quality of information it provides is usually very good. However, it is a good idea to use Wikipedia to get started: Wikipedia provides good references that you can use to learn more about the topic and to expand your search to include other sources. A website should only be cited if its author (either a person or organization) and date is clearly displayed, and if this person or organization is a reputable authority in the field. For example, Statistics SA would be considered a reputable source of statistics on how many people in South Africa speak a particular language. Ask.com would not be considered a reputable source of information on anything linguistic.

All sources other than yourself must be acknowledged, that is, referenced. The reason for this and how to do it are discussed below.

#### 4.1 Making claims supported by evidence

You will find that academic writing differs slightly from department to department but has a number of shared characteristics. Probably the most noticeable aspect of writing at university level is that your written work must make a claim, statement or point. You are writing an essay to provide information (claims) to the reader.

Your assignment will have an overall claim/point such as:

- “isiXhosa and isiZulu exist on a dialect continuum.”
- “This is a light-hearted conversation among participants who know each other equally well.”
- “The use of child-directed speech with infants enhances infants’ language acquisition.”
- “While promoting an overt sexist ideology, the text also perpetuates a less overtly presented capitalist ideology.”

But each paragraph that expands on this overall point/claim will have a point as well, and be linked to the overall point of the essay.

You know what a claim is now. But it’s not enough to only have a claim. For instance, a 5-year-old child can make a claim, such as “my imaginary friend is sitting there”. But this type of claim is not very persuasive because (a) the child is not seen as an authoritative source and (b) there is no evidence supplied to back up the claim. At university we teach you how to support the claims you make with evidence. In this way, you build up a series of arguments for why the reader should believe what you are saying.

Here is an example. While reading the back of a tube of toothpaste I noticed a claim made by the company: “Dentists recommend the [brand name] brand”. Unfortunately this claim was not supported by evidence leading me to ask the following questions:

- Which dentists recommend this brand?
- How many dentists recommend this brand?
- Are they even good dentists who recommend this brand?
- Why should I believe them?

However, if they had told me that The South African Dentist Association found that 95% of all 1 500 South African dentists in 2014 recommended this brand to patients then I am more inclined to believe their initial claim.

At the same time, a TV advert for a competing brand also said they were the #1 brand recommended by dentists. What questions can you ask yourself to explore this claim?

#### 4.2 Using Evidence in your writing

The claims we make about something must be supported by evidence. But not only must it be supported by evidence, the evidence must be relevant and of good quality. For most university courses, this evidence will be found in peer-reviewed journals, books or other academic sources in the form of referencing. Luckily in Linguistics, we get to work with many different types of evidence, of which external sources are just one option. These different sources of evidence are presented in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Types of evidence and examples

Type of evidence	Example
1. Appeal to authority = referencing external academic sources' ideas	Doke (1954) explains that isiXhosa is a Southern Bantu language, along with isiZulu, isiNdebele and siSwati.
= directly quoting external sources (use sparingly)	There are four maxims: quality, quantity, relevance and manner (Grice 1975).
= quoting from the text (use line numbers)	Baby talk is a "limited form of child directed language that is only used when addressing small infants" (Department of English Language and Linguistics 2015:17).
	Three words have positive connotations in lines 20-24: "happy", "joyful" and "contented". ( <i>Text analysis</i> )
	Participant T's most used discourse markers are "like" and "um" (lines 12, 23, 45). ( <i>Analysis of a conversation</i> )

Type of evidence	Example
2. Common sense or well-known undisputed facts	Water boils at 100°C  Language enables humans to communicate
3. Numerical data	<i>After doing a survey:</i> One percent of participants have Sign Language as their primary language.  Participant B speaks 23 times. ( <i>Analysis of a conversation</i> )  Fifty-three percent of respondents are female. ( <i>Survey data</i> )  In Text A, <i>kill</i> occurs as a process 43 times, and <i>killing</i> occurs as a subject four times. ( <i>Text analysis</i> )
4. Observational data	<i>After observing students at the Kaif:</i> Slang was used more when lecturers were not present in the queue.  <i>After observing students in a tutorial:</i> English was used as the language of communication by the tutor.
5. Examples – mostly used in answering test questions	English can have complex onsets and complex codas, e.g. in <i>twelfths</i> and <i>strand</i> .  Andifuni ukusebenza 'Neg-I want to-work'
6. Personal experience / anecdote	In my family, a married woman uses <i>isihlonipha</i> to show respect to her husband.  Immigrants do not struggle to integrate. My grandfather was an immigrant and had no difficulty in integrating into South African society.

This list of types of evidence may seem overwhelming, but you do not need to use every type for a Linguistics assignment. In fact, you need to select the most appropriate type of evidence for your essay, which will most often be appeals to authority.

You will probably find that each department specifies a different way of acknowledging sources. This is understandable because different methods of referencing have arisen in different disciplines. Within disciplines too, there will be differences between the various academic journals, which you may notice when you read articles from them. This is simply a fact of life and one that you will need to accommodate. Our standard form for referencing is set out below. Referencing refers here to two interlinked processes: acknowledging sources within the body of your assignment and providing a list of these sources at the end of your essay. Each of these will be dealt with in turn below.

### 4.3 Referencing

Referencing is *one* important way in which academic writing expresses the notion of authority in writing. Lunsford & Connors (1992: 577-578) provide the following guidelines on using material from other sources:

#### 4.3.1 *Material not requiring acknowledgement:*

- **Common knowledge:** when you state something that is common knowledge to most readers – e.g. *Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in 1994* – you do not need to credit the source of this information.
- **Facts available in a wide variety of sources:** A fact that appears in a number of textbooks, yearbooks, and encyclopedias does not need to be cited by reference to a specific source.
- **Your own findings from field research:** If you conduct field research, just report your findings as your own.

#### 4.3.2 *Material requiring acknowledgement:*

- **Direct quotations:** Whenever you use another person's words directly you must cite the source.
- **Facts that are not widely known or assertions that are arguable:** If the facts are unlikely to be known to your readers, or if an author makes claims that may or may not be true, cite the source.
- **Judgments, opinions, and claims of others:** Whenever you summarize or paraphrase someone else's opinion, give the source of that summary or paraphrase – it does not matter that the wording is completely your own, you need to acknowledge the source.
- **Statistics, charts, tables, and graphs from any source:** Credit all statistical and graphical material not derived from your own field work, even if you yourself created the graph from data in another source.
- **Help provided by others:** Personal communication with a friend, tutor, lecturer, etc., may give you an idea to clinch an argument, or help you refine the questionnaire and conduct the survey. Give credit to anyone who provides you with necessary help.

### 4.3.3 Quoting directly

When you use words from another source, mark them off with quotation marks, e.g.

- *These structured sequences are known as “adjacency pairs” (Brown 1983: 51).*

Even a single quoted word should be put into quotation marks if it represents a new concept – but only the first time you use it:

- *Sacks called these signals “backchannels” (1969:120). There are several backchannels....*

If you are quoting from a book or a journal, add in brackets, near the quotation, the author’s surname, the book or journal’s publication date, a colon and the relevant page number. This is done in different ways depending on whether or not the author’s name is part of the sentence:

If the author’s name IS part of the sentence it should look as follows:

- *Bhatia claims that this highlights the “tactical aspect of conventional language use” (1993:20).*

If the author’s name is NOT part of the sentence, it should be as follows. Note that the full stop to end the sentence comes after the brackets.

- *This part of linguistic analysis highlights the “tactical aspect of conventional language use” (Bhatia 1993:26).*

Quotations can be very useful when an author has expressed a concept or idea in a particularly clear or original way but you should be careful not to fill your essay with so many quotations that the reader cannot see whether or not you understand the issue yourself. When you do use the ideas or words of another author it is very important to give that person the credit for thinking them up in the first place. If you were to take an artist’s painting and pretend that you had done it, that would be stealing. In just the same way it is theft when you use, without acknowledgement, the ideas or words of a person whose life’s work is thinking and writing. Academic theft is called plagiarism and is taken very seriously.

It is important to remember that while you must obviously acknowledge the authors' *words* when you quote directly from their work, you also should acknowledge their *ideas* when you use them, even if you phrase those ideas in your own words.

**If the quotation is long** (i.e. 40 words or more) then it is not enclosed in quotation marks but, instead, is double indented (i.e. the left and right margins are moved in) as a separate paragraph and the reference appears immediately after the quotation on a new line, against the right margin:

*English, across Africa as a whole, enjoys positive stereotypes and high international prestige. It would appear from this study that speakers of English, particularly those who are mother-tongue speakers, are warmly regarded, and people are predisposed to think highly of them.*  
(Schmiedt 1991:27)

If the author's name is part of the sentence introducing the quotation, then the reference should be included as follows:

*Schmiedt reports that*

*English, across Africa as a whole, enjoys positive stereotypes and high international prestige. It would appear from this study that speakers of English, particularly those who are mother-tongue speakers, are warmly regarded, and people are predisposed to think highly of them.*  
(1991:27)

#### **4.3.4 Acknowledging ideas**

As mentioned above, it is important to acknowledge an author's ideas, even if you do not quote his or her words directly.

**When an author's name is introduced**, the date of the work should follow immediately in brackets:

- *Widdowson (1979) did research into textualization.*

Notice that no page number is given if there is no direct quotation.

**If the author's name is re-introduced** after a few intervening paragraphs or if another author has been mentioned in between, then the year should be given again:

- *Widdowson (1979) did research into textualization. An excellent example comes from Swales (1974) who analysed data from chemistry textbooks. Widdowson's (1979) own work showed that .....*

**If the author's name does not form part of the sentence**, but you are using his or her ideas, you should acknowledge the source (name and year) in brackets at the end of the sentence. Note that the full stop to end the sentence comes after the brackets.

- *Attribution is an important convention in science (Bhatia 1993).*

If you discuss an author's ideas for an extended length (for more than one sentence), it is not necessary to reference the source in each sentence unless you mention another author in between. Just make it clear that the entire discussion is based on the ideas of this author.

- *Swales (1974) was studying the function of past participles. Pre-modifying participles, he found, textualize two different aspects of the text. He claims that attribution.....*

**If Author A cites Author B** and you want to discuss Author B's ideas but you haven't read their original work, you need to tell the reader where you read about them. So if you read about Gellner (1959) in Maton (2014), you would reference it as follows:

- *Ideologies are popular and powerful systems of thought (Gellner 1959, cited in Maton 2014).*

If you quote from Gellner, you will need to supply the page number of the original Gellner quotation, and the page number in Maton's book, e.g.

- *Ideology is "a system of ideas with a powerful sex appeal" (Gellner 1959:2, cited in Maton 2014:152).*

In the list of references at the end of the essay, you only list Maton (2014) and not Gellner (1959).

### **Multiple authors:**

(a) Two authors

If there are two authors, use both the authors' last names in the citation all the time.

- *(Smith & Wesson 1999:67)*

(b) Three or more authors

If there are three or more authors use all the authors' last names when you refer to the work for the first time.

- *(Smith, Jones & Wesson 1999:68)*

When you make subsequent reference to this work, only use the name of the first author and add the Latin phrase: "et al".

- *(Smith et al 1999:68)*

## **4.4 Bibliographies**

Some call it a reference list, others call it a bibliography, but the fact remains that at the end of your essay you have to provide the reader with a list of the sources you have consulted so that they can find them for themselves if they want to. A reference list is strictly a list of only those sources which you have explicitly mentioned in the body of your work, while a bibliography is a list of everything that you read that influenced your thinking, including all the sources you referred to in the body of your work. But seeing as you will be acknowledging all the ideas in your assignment which come from other sources, there isn't much difference between them. This list is attached at the end of your assignment and should be set out carefully according to the instructions below.

List all works in alphabetical order of (first) authors' last names.

### **4.4.1 If your reference is a book:**

Langacker, R.W. 1997. *Language and its Structure*. London: Harcourt Brace.

Lunsford, A. & R. Connors. 1992. *St. Martin's Handbook*. New York: St. Martin's.

#### **4.4.2 If your reference is a chapter in a book:**

Barr, H.J. & P. Henderson. 1995. "Linguistics for South African students". In T. Johnson, ed. *Linguistics for the Language Professions*, 122-134. Johannesburg: Sundown.

Note that the second and subsequent lines of the reference are indented and that the page numbers of the chapter are given after the title of the book.

#### **4.4.3 If your reference is an article in a journal:**

Greenback, P. 1994. "The language of dancehall dancers in Jamaica". *Journal of West Indian Language Varieties*, 6(2), 167-174.

#### **4.4.4 If your reference is a website:**

Department of English Language and Linguistics, Rhodes University. 2019. "Linguistics at Rhodes University". <http://www.ru.ac.za/englishlanguageandlinguistics>. 20 January 2019.

Note that the date of download is given at the end because websites change.

If you use more than one source by a particular author from the same year, you should label them "a", "b" and so on. The ordering of the labelling is based on the alphabetical position of the first word(s) of the title of the work:

Smith, A. 1998a. *How I won the Wild West*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Smith, A. 1998b. *The Wild West*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Note that the book called *The Wild West* is labelled "b" because T (as in The) comes after H (as in How) alphabetically. Do not insert the title of the book into the body of your essay; just insert the letter you have assigned to that book after the date, e.g.

For direct quotation:

- *Smith (1998a:26)*

For referencing ideas:

- *Smith (1998a)*

# Writing Academically as a Process

Your lecturer will tell you about your term assignment by making an essay brief available online on the relevant RUconnected course, which you should download, print and read. This brief will outline exactly what you need to do for your assignment. The first page will have a list of due dates for the stages of completing the writing process, as well as a short summary of your assignment topic. The assignment topic summary is useful to give you the general idea of what you need to do for your assignment. However, please make sure you read and follow the more detailed instructions at the end of the assignment brief.

In the Linguistics Department we emphasize the writing process as well as the final product or essay. When we talk about the writing process we refer to the steps of writing such as understanding the essay topic requirements, research, planning, drafting, peer reviewing, and revisions. All these steps are important to create a good final essay, and the department ensures that you go through these steps. These steps are each discussed below in more detail.

- Understanding the essay requirements
- Preparation
- Writing
- Rewriting and drafting
- Writing a final assignment

## *5.1.1 Understanding the essay requirements*

After you have read through the assignment instructions you may think you've got it. STOP. Make sure you really understand what you need to do to by closely examining the essay instructions. It is important that you understand what is required of you otherwise you might answer the essay question incorrectly.

Leibowitz (2000) provides a guideline of how to go about understanding the essay title or instructions. She suggests looking for three types of words in the instructions. The first type of words to look out for is **doing** or **task** words. These words answer the question "What do I have to do in my essay?" These words include: *explain, compare, discuss, summaries, or*

*critique*, etc. In your essay you need to make sure you perform the correct task. If the instruction told you to interpret what effect x has on something then you must interpret, not summaries.

You should also look out for **content** words. These words answer the question “What should my essay be about? Or “What information should I make sure to include so I have covered all my bases?” These words usually refer to ideas covered in lectures or manuals such as *language variation* or *ideology*.

Finally, you should look out for **limitation** words. In the Linguistics Department you have a word goal of 900 words. This means it is impossible to cover everything already identified as **doing** and **content** words. For example, if you were asked to “discuss language variation in South Africa” you could write a whole PhD dissertation if you were not limited as to how much discussing you had to do, or what aspects of language variation you had to address. Look out for words that tell you how to limit what you write in your essay. You know you only have 900 words so that’s your first limit. Look for words such as *only*, *few*, *salient*, *most important*, and *most interesting* etc. and address only what is relevant.

On your printed essay brief, you can highlight the three types of words in three colours, bearing in mind that sometimes the types of words might overlap. There are a few examples below in Table 2 to help you understand the different types of words and how to identify them. The examples are explained further below. Use this information to make sure you understand exactly what you must do for your essay.

Table 2. Examples of understanding the essay instruction

Essay Instruction	Types of Words
Example 1: Language in South Africa and Society  Drawing on the concepts you have learned during the course, argue that language variation exists in isiXhosa. To do this, you will need to identify and explain a few salient trends you see in the data.	Doing/Task words: <i>“drawing on concepts in the course”</i> i.e. make use of the terminology learned in the course “argue” “identify and explain”
	Content words: “concepts learned in class” “language variation exists in isiXhosa” “trends” in the “data”
	Limitation words: “a <u>few salient</u> trends” in “isiXhosa”

<p>Example 2: Language in Context</p> <p>Based on your analysis of the conversation, write an essay in which you discuss the most important features of the conversation (using evidence from your analysis) and interpret what effect these features have on the conversation's "flavour".</p>	<p>Doing/Task words:  <i>"based on your analysis of the conversation"</i> i.e. you have to analyse the conversation to write the essay</p> <p>"write"  "discuss"  "interpret"</p> <p>Content words:  <i>"based on the analysis of the conversation"</i>  <i>"features of the conversation"</i>  <i>"evidence from your analysis"</i>  <i>"<u>effect</u> these features have on the <u>conversation's flavour</u>"</i></p> <p>Limitation words:  "most important features"</p>
<p>Example 3: Language in Childhood and Education</p> <p>This essay requires you to write an essay on ONE of three topics. Use three additional references to argue for or against one of the claims.</p> <p>Topic 1:  Never use <u>baby talk</u> with children</p>	<p>Doing/Task words:  "write"  "use three additional sources" i.e. you need to do some research  "argue for or against"</p> <p>Content words:  "baby talk"  We can infer:  - Arguments for the claim "never use baby talk with children:"  - Arguments against the claim "never use baby talk with children"</p> <p>Limitation words:  "one claim/topic"  "<u>Three</u> additional references"</p>
<p>Example 4: Language in the Media</p> <p>Drawing on the terminology and framework of analysis described in the <i>Language in the Media</i> manual analyse the text to uncover the ideologies encoded in it. In particular, you should address the following question: What ideologies concerning transformation in higher education are encoded in this article?</p>	<p>Doing/Task words:  <i>"drawing on the terminology and framework of analysis in the ... manual"</i> i.e. analyse the text according to the manual and use the terminology  "analyse the text"  "uncover the ideologies encoded in [the text]"  "address the ... question"</p> <p>Content words:  "baby talk"  We can infer:  - Arguments for the claim "never use baby talk with children"  - Arguments against the claim "never use baby talk with children"</p> <p>Limitation words:  "one claim/topic"  "<u>Three</u> additional references"</p>

### **5.1.2 Preparation**

Once you have identified the type of question you are being asked to respond to you will have to prepare. Usually an academic essay topic is presented along with suggested readings and these readings are placed on Short Loan in the Library. Making notes from these readings is often a very satisfying experience in itself, but don't think that is the end of your preparation. The most important part is how you read those readings. It is important to read actively – to ask yourself constantly how each new piece of information relates to those which came before and also relates to information you have read in other sources. If you are using your own photocopy of the book or article you could make notes to yourself in the margins; if not, you could use a separate piece of paper. Make notes about each major point that relates to your topic and about arguments that contradict those of other authors. (This is especially important in essays where you are asked to compare the views of two or more authors.) If the writer makes an important point in a particularly succinct or eloquent way, you could make a note to yourself to consider using that author's words in a quotation (but see "Acknowledging other authors and sources" below). It is crucial, however, that you use the ideas of other authors in context – in other words, be very careful that the author was intending his or her ideas to come across in the way that you use them.

This approach obviously affects the kind of preparation that is required as well as the way you write your essay and these aspects are described below.

### **5.1.3 Writing a draft**

Once you have structured your essay you can begin to write. It's usually a good idea to write a rough draft of your essay first and then re-read it and alter it before printing it out in its final form. For more details on technical requirements and guidelines for style, see the separate sections elsewhere in this guide.

#### **5.1.3.1 Things to consider in making a draft**

Grammar and spelling make an impression. Careless editing and proofreading can indicate to the reader a general sloppiness and detract from the quality of the work. Being very careful about spelling, punctuation and grammar is also good practice for later life when people may judge you and your suitability for a job at least partly on the basis of your use of language. In

a department of English language and linguistics in particular, we feel we would be failing in our duty if we didn't alert you to the importance of language use. While we don't explicitly teach you how to write grammatically, we hope to instil in you a useful awareness of language. We will, therefore, indicate some (but not all) spelling and grammatical errors in your work.

Although writing style is often something of a personal choice, you should bear in mind that an essay or assignment in an academic context requires a certain formality. That said, you may use the first person pronouns (“*I*”, “*me*”, “*my*”) to refer to yourself and your ideas. This is particularly relevant when you are giving your opinion or interpretation. Phrases such as “the present author” to refer to yourself should not be used. Some students feel that using very long sentences and big words will make their essay more impressive but this is seldom true. More often long sentences lead to grammatical errors and meaning that is not clear. Similarly, using words that one is not really familiar with can lead to all sorts of confusion. In both cases it may be difficult for the reader to see whether or not you really understand the issues in the assignment. The use of relevant terminology is obviously required for the sake of efficiency and clarity, but do make sure you understand it and use it correctly.

An important part of writing well is writing clearly and much of this clarity can be attributed to the way in which the information is structured. You should follow the guidelines suggested above in the sections on the different kinds of assignments but also bear in mind that structure within sections is important too. It is often helpful to write temporary headings in the first draft of your essay and make sure that each point under a particular heading does in fact relate to it in some way. This will also help you to avoid straying from the topic of the essay. Then remember to remove your temporary headings when printing or writing out the final version for handing in. Headings are not necessary in Linguistics assignments.

Avoid very long paragraphs. A paragraph is a unit of meaning and signals to the reader that everything in it is connected. A paragraph that takes up a whole page, for instance, needs to be subdivided or cut shorter.

Various discourse markers (such as “but”, “however”, “therefore”) are very useful in structuring the information in your assignment and showing the relationship between different statements but again it is essential that you use these words accurately, e.g. if you use the word

“thus”, make sure that the following sentences does in fact follow logically from the previous one.

#### **5.1.4 Rewriting and redrafting**

Usually the first draft of an essay isn't very good. If we use writing to explore and think about issues, then it follows that the more we rewrite something, the deeper we engage with it. Therefore, you should probably never submit your first draft. It has been said that good writing involves rewriting and rewriting and rewriting and rewriting until it looks like it took no effort at all! Ernest Hemingway, one of the most important writers of the 20th century, puts it this way: “The only kind of writing is rewriting” (Hemingway 1964).

On another occasion he was being interviewed about his work.

Interviewer: *How much rewriting do you do?*

Hemingway: *It depends. I rewrote the ending of Farewell to Arms, the last page of it, 39 times before I was satisfied.*

Interviewer: *Was there some technical problem there? What was it that had stumped you?*

Hemingway: *Getting the words right.*

(Hemingway 1958)

While most students do not redraft their essays 39 times, it is a good idea to accept that redrafting is important and desirable and to commit to doing it. Getting into the habit of redrafting while you are in first year will pay dividends as you become a senior student.

## **5.2 Peer review and writing support in the Linguistics Department**

In the Linguistics Department, we recognize that becoming a good writer and a successful student means a commitment to planning, drafting and rewriting essays. In addition, we also recognize that good students are able to read texts critically, form opinions on those texts and explain them to others. In order to support these two sets of critical learning outcomes, we have instituted a peer review process and support for writing for all Linguistics 1 essay assignments. The support system will be explained to you in each module and includes:

- Planning essays and discussing them in your tutorials

- Writing a draft essay
- Providing feedback on the essays of your peers and receive feedback in turn
- Redrafting your essay and resubmit it
- In tutorials, considering your response to peer reviews.

While a peer review process may be new to many of you, it has many benefits. It exposes students to good and poor exemplars of texts; it provides an opportunity to develop critical reading and thinking skills; it institutionalizes the need to plan, draft and rewrite assignments; and it develops a sense of audience. However, by far the greatest benefit to students is not so much in the feedback they receive (although that is useful) but rather in being forced to read texts critically and to express this in writing.

# Plagiarism

## 6.1 The purpose of the department's Plagiarism Protocol

The Department of English Language and Linguistics has developed a protocol for dealing with instances of plagiarism. This section is adapted from this protocol. The protocol is intended as a brief, clear, easy-to-understand guide for staff and students in the Department of English Language and Linguistics on what plagiarism is and how to approach situations of suspected plagiarism. It explains what we view as plagiarism, how we evaluate the seriousness of a case of plagiarism, and what procedures should be followed if a case of suspected plagiarism is found. This protocol draws from the university's Plagiarism Policy, which can be found at <https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Plagiarism.pdf>.

## 6.2 What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism refers to the practice of presenting material which has been written by someone else as your own work. Any use of material that is derived from the work of another person constitutes plagiarism if you hand in an assignment under your own name which contains any unacknowledged material (sentences, diagrams, data tables or any other work) which:

- Is copied from an assignment written by another student
- Is copied from a document downloaded from a website
- Is copied from a published article or book chapter
- Has been created for you by someone else
- Has been created by a group of students (unless the topic of the assignment specifically called for group work in some form)

The way to acknowledge the work of other people in your assignments is to reference according to the guidelines in this book. Any material in an assignment from sources other than you that is not referenced will be regarded as having been plagiarized.

This means that if you use even one sentence or parts of a sentence or parts of a diagram from another author and do not reference it, you have plagiarized. Any words which you copy word-for-word from another author must be put in quotation marks, and an in-text reference in brackets must appear after them. The text (book, journal article or website) that the words come from must also be listed in the reference list at the end of the assignment. When you do not copy words from other authors, but take their ideas and put them in your own words (i.e. paraphrase them), you do not need quotation marks, but must still provide an in-text reference in brackets and put the text in your reference list.

If you are unsure whether some parts of your assignment constitute plagiarism or are referenced incorrectly, please ask your lecturer or tutor to look at it and give you advice before you submit it.

### **6.3 Declaration of academic integrity**

As a safeguard, we require you to include a signed declaration on the front page of all your essays, confirming that the work is your own. This statement should read as follows:

#### **Declaration of academic integrity**

I recognize that plagiarism is academic theft and is wrong, regardless of the presence or absence of a plagiarism declaration. Plagiarism occurs when people use another person's ideas, words or intellectual property without referencing them properly. There are many kinds of plagiarism, but common kinds include:

- Using another person's words directly without using quotation marks or referencing them.
- Paraphrasing another person's words without referencing them.
- Using ideas or making claims that have been influenced by other people's insights without acknowledging one's intellectual debt to them.
- Using poor or inadequate referencing or bibliographies.

I have acknowledged other people's ideas, words where I have either paraphrased them or quoted them directly and I have used quotation marks and appropriate referencing. I

acknowledge that although it is acceptable (and even encouraged) to work together with other students (e.g. in a study group or in a tutorial), each student must write their own assignment and use their own words. I have also not allowed anybody to borrow or copy my work. I know that if I am found guilty of plagiarism, I will be punished for it and it may also be placed on my permanent academic record thus damaging my reputation. I am aware that this assignment constitutes work product of the Linguistics department and may be stored and used for auditing, educational and/or research purposes. I am aware that if I have any questions about any of these issues, I can contact my tutor, lecturer or head of department who will explain it to me.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### 6.4 Assessing the severity of plagiarism cases

The university recognizes three categories of plagiarism. These are explained in the following excerpt from “A Summary of the Common Faculty Policy and Procedures on Plagiarism for Students”:

*Category A:* Such cases (minor infractions) are dealt with by staff, either through education, mark penalty or repeating of work. If such a case arises, you should speak to the lecturer about the issue, so that you do not make the mistake again. If you are dissatisfied, you can ask that the matter be referred to a departmental committee. You should be aware, though, that this committee hears the matter afresh, and may impose a heavier penalty than your lecturer did.

*Category B:* These are more serious cases, and must be referred to a Departmental Plagiarism Committee to be investigated. You will be given the evidence against you, and will be called to a hearing, which will be before a committee of two members of staff. **The university policy requires that this hearing be conducted according to due process, and the policy sets down very clear procedures that must be followed.** You must appear at this hearing, and you may be represented by a fellow student or a staff member if you wish. The lecturer will present the evidence against you, and you will have a chance to respond. The committee members will also be entitled to ask questions of you. You are encouraged to be honest in this hearing. Please note that ignorance is not a defence, but may be relevant to the penalty you receive. If you are found to have committed this category of plagiarism, the penalties may range from a loss of

marks to a mark of 0 being awarded, to the removal of a DP. You may also be required to re-submit work to show you have learnt a lesson.

*Category C:* Such cases (extremely serious, warranting possible rustication or exclusion) are referred by the Head of Department to a Senate Plagiarism Tribunal for a hearing, a finding and a potential penalty. These procedures may be found in the main policy document.

The department uses a “points system” to assess the severity of cases of plagiarism. The following table lists the criteria against which we assess cases of plagiarism on its left-hand side. The top row indicates the points that are allocated to specific circumstances according to these criteria.

<b>Points</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Student year</b>	First year	Second year	Third year	Postgraduate
<b>Previous offences (if any)</b>		1 Category A offence	1 Category B offence	2 or more Category B offences
<b>Amount the assignment is worth</b>	Tutorial workpoints		Module assignment or test	Research Report / ProfComm Report assignment
<b>Scale of offence</b>	Up to one paragraph / one diagram	Up to one page	Multiple pages	Entire assignment
<b>Source of plagiarized material</b>	Journal article / book / Internet		Other student	
<b>Nature of offence</b>	Poor paraphrasing but where source is referenced in text (i.e. use of synonyms with similar but not identical sentence structure and sequence of ideas)	Direct quote without quotation marks, but where the source is referenced in text	Paraphrasing without acknowledging the source in the text (irrespective of whether it is in reference list or not).	Direct quote without acknowledging the source in the text (irrespective of whether it is in reference list or not)

The number of points allocated to a plagiarism case is the sum of the points allocated to each cell in the table that applies to the case. Once the sum of these points has been calculated, the

following table provides a guide suggesting which category the case should be placed in, and what the penalty should be.

<b>Number of points</b>	<b>Suggested category</b>	<b>Suggested penalty</b>
<b>1-8</b>	A	-30% <sup>1</sup> and resubmit assignment for DP purposes
<b>9-13</b>	A	-50% and resubmit assignment for DP purposes
<b>14-16</b>	B	0 and resubmit assignment for DP purposes
<b>17-18</b>	B	DP withdrawn for plagiarism (DPWP)
<b>19-23</b>	C	DP withdrawn for plagiarism (DPWP)

Since we believe that these penalties should play an educative role where possible, we ask students found guilty of lesser cases of plagiarism to resubmit their assignments with the instances of plagiarism rectified for DP purposes. The lecturer responsible for the assignment in question must be satisfied that the assignment is no longer plagiarized before the student is allowed to retain his/her DP.

The penalties and category classifications given on this table are only suggestions, and lecturers or plagiarism committees may decide to give stricter or more lenient penalties depending on the circumstances of the situation.

#### Examples

1. If a first-year student (1 point) with no previous offences (0 points) plagiarizes two pages (3 points) in her Language in the Media module essay assignment (3 points) from an Internet site (1 point) and quotes without acknowledging the source in the text (4 points), the case will receive  $1 + 0 + 3 + 3 + 1 + 4 = 12$  points. This means that the case is likely to be treated as a Category A offence. The student will normally receive a 50% mark penalty and will have to resubmit her essay for DP purposes.
2. If a second-year student (2 points) with no previous offences (0 points) plagiarizes a few paragraphs, but less than one page (2 points) in his module assignment (3 points) from another student (3 points) and does not acknowledge the source in the text (4 points) the case will receive  $2 + 0 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 14$  points. This means that the case

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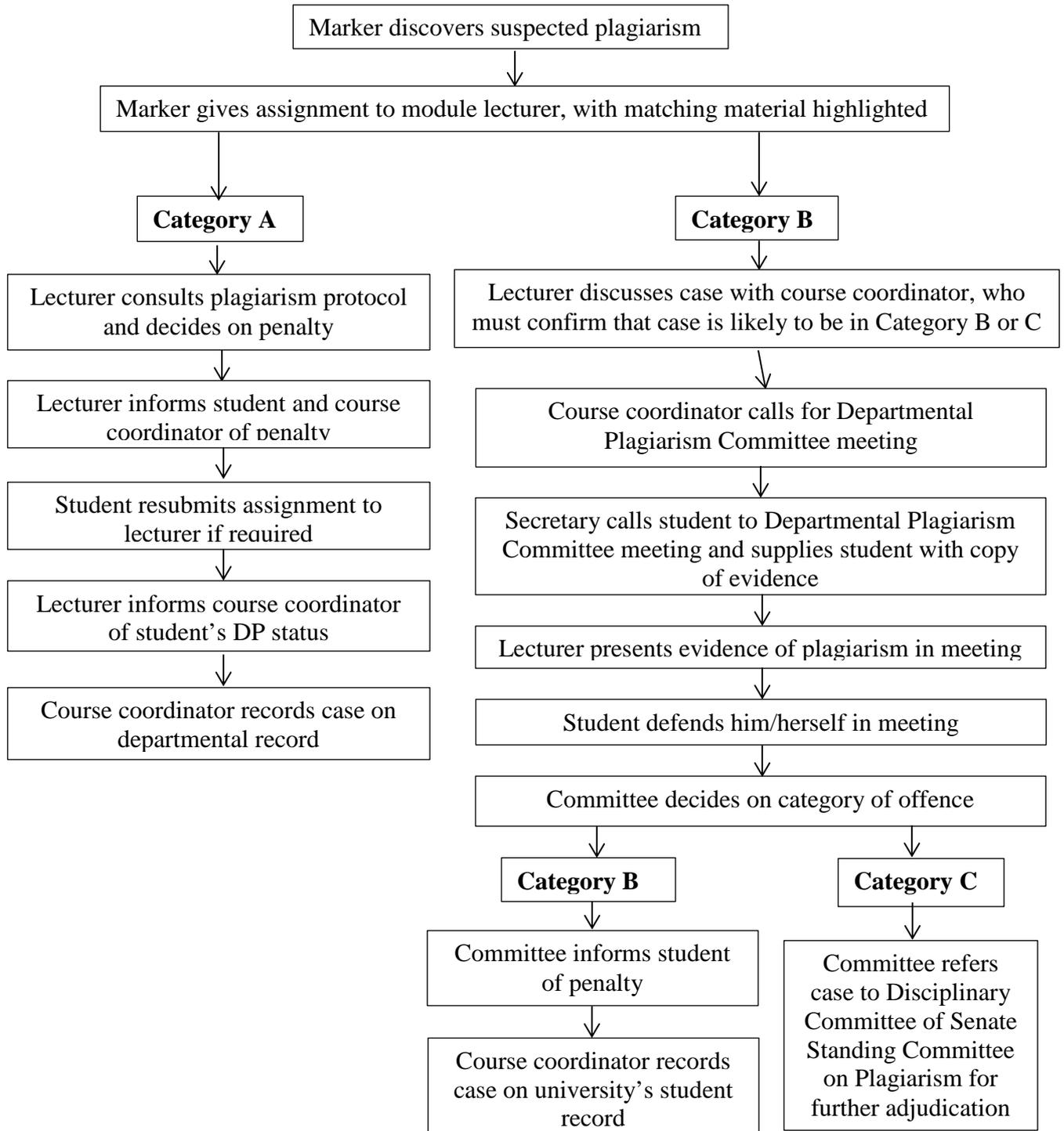
<sup>1</sup> Where the suggested penalty is a mark deduction, that mark deduction should be calculated as a percentage of the student's original mark for the assignment. For example, if a student was originally awarded 62/100 for an assignment and has 50% deducted as a penalty for plagiarism, his final mark should be 31%.

is likely to be treated as a Category B offence. The student will normally receive 0 for the assignment and will have to resubmit his essay for DP purposes.

3. If a third-year student (3 points) with two previous Category B offences (4 points) plagiarizes her research report (4 points) in its entirety (4 points) from a past student (3 points) but paraphrases it rather than quoting directly (3 points), the case will receive  $3 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 21$  points. This means that the case is likely to be treated as a Category C offence. The student will normally have her DP withdrawn for plagiarism.

## **6.5 What happens when plagiarism is suspected**

The following flowchart explains what procedure should usually be followed when the marker of an assignment has reason to suspect that plagiarism has been committed:



## 6.6 Plagiarism exercise

This exercise is designed to help you understand what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. Plagiarism is, roughly, the use of someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment. It is a very serious problem and can be seen as "academic theft". Plagiarism carries heavy penalties at Rhodes. You should make sure that you know how to avoid it. The exercise below is based on Indiana University (2003). For more information on referencing in this department, please read the rest of this guide carefully.

### Sample Text

*One of the most closely investigated forms of animal communication is the 'dance' performed by a honey bee when it returns to the hive, which conveys precise information about the source and amount of food it has discovered. Several kinds of movement pattern have been observed.*

(Crystal 1987: 397)

### Bad paraphrase of the sample text

*One of the most closely studied forms of animal communication is the honey bee "dance" performed by the bee when it returns to the hive. This conveys precise information about the quantity of food it has found. Scientists have noted several different types of movement pattern.*

Why it is a bad paraphrase and therefore plagiarism:

- \* The writer has only changed a few words and the structure is still almost the same as the original.
- \* No reference is provided for any of the facts.
- \* It doesn't convey the content accurately. For example, it only mentions the quantity not the source of the food.

### Good paraphrase of the sample text

*Honey bees perform a dance after discovering food for the hive and this form of animal communication has been studied extensively. There is a variety of 'dances' used and these are thought to supply other bees in the hive with fairly accurate information concerning the whereabouts and the quantity of the food source (Crystal 1987).*

Why it is good and therefore an acceptable paraphrase:

- \* Accurately conveys the same content but in a very different format from the original.

- \* It is referenced by giving the author's name and the year of publication – this indicates that the ideas in the paragraph were taken from this source.

### **Good combination of paraphrase and quotation**

*Honey bees perform a dance after discovering food for the hive and this form of animal communication has been studied extensively. There is a variety of “dances” used and these are thought to supply other bees in the hive with “fairly accurate information” (Crystal 1987:397) concerning the whereabouts and the quantity of the food source (Crystal 1987).*

Why this is acceptable paraphrasing:

- \* The information is recorded accurately.
- \* Both the direct quote (including author, year and page number) and the ideas (just author and year) are referenced.

### **Terms you need to know OR What is common knowledge**

Some facts are common knowledge i.e. they are so well known that you don't need to reference them, e.g.:

*South Africa held the first democratic elections in 1994.*

However, you must reference facts and figures that are not generally known. You must also reference any opinions, interpretations or analysis.

*According to Meer (1995), Mandela led the 1994 elections from the front and with his characteristic charisma and charm managed to win many hearts.*

The idea that Nelson Mandela has charisma and charm is an interpretation or an opinion so it needs to be referenced.

Now try the following exercise on your own.

*Twins have often been observed to talk to each other in a way that is unintelligible to adults or other children. The phenomenon has been variously labelled ‘cryptophasia’, ‘idioglossia’, or*

*'autonomous speech'. Estimates of incidents are uncertain, but some have suggested that as many as 40% of twin pairs develop some form of private speech, especially in the second year.*

(Crystal 1987: 247)

1. Write a poor paraphrase of the above text. Explain why it is a poor paraphrase.
2. Write an acceptable paraphrase and prepare an explanation of its merits.
3. Write an acceptable paraphrase and quotation combination.

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