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**ACADEMIC WRITING STYLE FOR MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS  
AND DOCTORAL THESES**

in

**Marketing or Communication Management**

**(MCom or MPhil and DCom or PhD)**

**Department of Marketing and Communication Management  
University of Pretoria**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION



The way in which academic content is presented is almost as important as the content itself. Sloppy presentation of scientific research distracts the reader of the quality of the content. It takes a lot of time to prepare academic documents, either in the form of a dissertation (thesis) or a scientific article.

The purpose of this document is to save you *and your study supervisor* time, a lot of trouble, and frustration by providing practical guidelines. It is best to do things right from the outset. It is in your own interest to follow these guidelines diligently!

## 2. THE STRUCTURE OF A DISSERTATION OR THESIS

A Master's dissertation and/or Doctoral thesis has to comply with a specific and a set lay out of introductory or preliminary pages. The sequence of these so-called preliminaries should be as follows:

- Title page
- Declaration
- Acknowledgements
- Financial assistance
- Abstract or synopsis
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- List of tables
- List of references
- Appendices



### **Please note:**

- **The use of functional capital letters**

Only use functional capital letters (that is capitals letter for proper nouns) in the headings, for example, Financial assistance (not Financial **Assistance**); Table of contents (not Table of **C**ontents).

- **The numbering of pages**

These introductory pages (also called the preliminary pages), *except for the Title page* should be marked in Roman numerals, that is (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), etc. The actual content (text or body) of the research report (dissertation/thesis) starts on page 1. That is in Arabic numbers, i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.

### 2.1 Title page

The wording and lay out of this page must be in accordance with guideline G.58 of the General Regulations of the University of Pretoria:

.....  
(The full title of the script in capital letters)

by

.....  
(Full name of the student in capital letters)

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MCOM / MPHIL MARKETING MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATION  
MANAGEMENT**

**DCOM / PhD MARKETING MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT**

(Select the applicable one)

**in the**

**FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

(Please note, Economic and not Economics)

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**SUPERVISOR:** .....

**CO-SUPERVISOR:** .....

(If applicable)

**Date of submission**

(Do not write "Date of submission", only indicate the date)



**Please note:**

- The lay out of the page must be centred on the page.
- The words "Supervisor" and "Co-supervisor" are preferred to "Study leader" and "Co-study leader".
- *Do not number this page.* The pages that follow (up to the first page of the actual content of the research script) must be numbered in Roman numerals, i.e. (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) etc.



## 2.2 Declaration

The following declaration must be made before a Commissioner of Oath on submission of the research Script:

“I declare that the Master’s script, which I hereby submit for the degree MCom Communication Management at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.”

## 2.3 Acknowledgements

Recognition for people and institutions who contributed to the research can be given on this page. The layout and order most frequently followed are as follows:

“I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the following people and institutions for their contribution to this research script:

- My supervisor, Professor ..... and co-supervisor, Doctor ..... for their assistance, guidance and encouragement throughout the study;
- My family and friends for their faith in my abilities, continuous support and encouragement;
- The institution where the research was conducted, as well as the contact person;
- Statomet at the University of Pretoria with the name of the contact person for the analysis of the data;
- The person who conducted the proof reading of the text; and
- Any other person, institution, being or pet the student wishes to thank for their contribution and/or support.”



### **Please note:**

This is only an example. You should follow your own heart.

## 2.4 Financial assistance

If financial support was given to the research by the National Research Foundation (NRF), the following acknowledgement must be included on a separate page:

“Financial assistance provided by the National Research Foundation (NRF) in respect of the costs of this study is hereby acknowledged. Opinions or conclusion that have been expressed in this study are those of the writer and must not be seen to represent the views, opinions or conclusions of the NRF.”



### **Please note:**

This only applies if you have indeed received financial assistance from the NRF or any other institution (other than your Dad or Mom!)

## 2.5 Abstract



An abstract (also called a synopsis), which is very similar to an Executive Summary, of not more than 350 words in English should be compiled by the student and included in the introductory pages of the dissertation/thesis.

### **Web site**



Write an abstract

[www.wordpowr.co.uk/essence.htm](http://www.wordpowr.co.uk/essence.htm)



### **Please note:**

An abstract is a complete summary of the total scope of the research that was undertaken and should also include the major findings and conclusions of the study. It is not a research proposal that only states the aims and objectives of the proposed research.

Use the following as broad guidelines to direct you:

- What were the aims of the research?
- Why was the research important and original?

- How was the research conducted?
- What results were obtained from the research?
- What are the conclusions?
- (What difference does it make to the existing Body of Knowledge?)
- What recommendations can be made deduced from the findings?
- What recommendations can be made for further study on the same topic?
- Figures, tables, graphics, etc. should be included in the abstract.

## 2.6 Table of contents

The table of contents must be comprehensive and very accurate. The sequence of the chapters is relatively standard and the headings of at least the first (Introductory) and the last (Conclusion) chapters are also generally standardised.

A masters dissertation normally consists of about eight chapters and, while a doctoral thesis is usually more extensive. *The following serves as a general guideline for a typical Table of contents:*



### **Please note:**

Headings in the text should correlate 100% with the headings in the Table of content.

[Numbering ]	[Title of Heading]	[Page number]
<b>CHAPTER 1:           ORIENTATION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND</b>		
<b>[INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND]</b>		
1.1	INTRODUCTION (Sets the broad context of the study.)	1
1.2	PROBLEM STATEMENT (Must provide the rationale for the study.)	2
1.3	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES (State specific research objectives)	3
1.4	HYPOTHESES    (If applicable) (Deducted from the objectives. Must be correctly formulated and testable. Only the alternative hypotheses can be stated.)	4

1.5	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	5
1.5.1	<u>Concepts</u>	5
1.5.2	<u>Constructs</u>	5
1.6	DEFINITION OF TERMS	
1.7	DELIMITATION OF RESEARCH or STUDY (The scope: what forms part of the research and what is not included in the study.)	7 8
1.8	DEMARCATION OF STUDY or STUDY EXPOSITION (The layout of the chapters to follow)	9

The first chapter is usually the shortest chapter.

About 20 pages.

<b>CHAPTER 2:</b>	<b>[TITLE OF CHAPTER]</b>	
2.1	INTRODUCTION	16
2.2		
2.3		
2.4		
	[Etc.]	
2.10	CONCLUSION	37

<b>CHAPTER 3 :</b>	<b>[TITLE OF CHAPTER]</b>	
3.1	INTRODUCTION	38
3.2		
3.3		
	[Etc.]	
3.10	CONCLUSION	68

[Etc.]

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	(Description of the research methodology used.)	
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[CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS]**

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**Please note:**

**Comments on the headings in the final chapter**

▪ **Recommendations: show your insight**

If applicable, formulate recommendations based on the knowledge and insight gained from your research. By this time you are fully aware of the fact that research

is hard work (and an expensive undertaking). Use this opportunity to make as many sensible and scientific recommendations as possible. This is where you can “score points” and add to the body of knowledge. After all, you are – should now be – quite knowledgeable on your specific area of research.

▪ **Conclusions: draw accurate conclusions, as it is the essence of research**

Conclusions arise from research: without them research would be futile. The essence of the final section of the research thesis/dissertation or article is the formulation of conclusions. Use this opportunity to show your academic mettle. Although insight can be reflected in the reasoning and the arguments throughout the report writing, statements made in the conclusion on the research findings should be critically appraised. Researchers should interpret correctly the differences and the similarities between theories, methods of approach and the findings of their own research. Draw your own correct and logical conclusions and formulate them in your own words based on the factual findings and theoretical foundations.

Do not add new theoretical information to the conclusion when you refer back to the theory in the different sources. In other words, it is good practice to refer back to the theory – to indicate how your findings prove or differ from the body of knowledge that already exists – but do not elaborate on the theory or bring new theory into the discussion.

▪ **Limitations: point them out so that you will not be penalised**

Briefly discuss any limitations that the reader (and your internal and external examiners!) should bear in mind when evaluating your article and its findings, conclusions and recommendations. Typical examples could be “a convenience sample was drawn in order to cut back on costs ...” or “... students were used as subjects due to their availability on campus”.

▪ **Recommendations for further or future research: share your knowledge**

These recommendations do not pertain to recommendations on how to solve the research problem. The purpose of these recommendations is to afford future researchers the benefit of your research experience on this specific topic. For example, what would you advise them to look into or to research in greater detail?

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**Please note:**

▪ **Descriptive title (names) of headings:**

The suggestions made here for the headings are merely that: suggestions. The final headings used, will be determined by the type and purpose of the research undertaken. Your study supervisor will give you further guidance. Do not record headings beyond sub-subheadings, for example beyond 2.2.3.

▪ **Introductions and conclusions to each chapter:**

Every chapter – except for Chapter 1, which serves as an over all introduction to whole the study – starts with an Introduction and ends with a Conclusion. The Introduction introduces the contents of the chapter and gives an indication of the content that will be covered in the chapter. The chapter concludes with a Conclusion that recaps (*very briefly*) what was covered, *but more importantly, draw your own conclusions on the content of the chapter*. In other words, the Conclusion should not be a mere summary of the chapter. The last paragraph of the Conclusion gives a brief overview of what will be covered in the next chapter. The next chapter then starts with an Introduction of what will be discussed in that particular chapter. It sounds like repetition, but it should not be. The purpose of the Introduction and the Conclusion is to guide the reader and is a technique that should be mastered by all Master and Doctoral students!

## 2.7 List of figures and the List of tables

The List of figures and the List of tables are exactly the same (in terms of purpose and lay out) as the Table of contents. *The List of figures includes all the figures, diagrams, sketches, photo's and other graphic presentations used in the study, while the List of Tables provides a list of all tables used in the research project.*

[Numbering ]	[Title of Heading]	[Page number]
7.1	Number of students per course	17
7.2	Female students in the Final year	18

**Please note:**

Chapter 1 will rarely include a figure or a table.

- The 7 in the example above indicate the number of the chapter and the 1 was the first table in that chapter.
- The title, as well as the page on which the figure(s) and/or table(s) are presented must be given.
- The List of tables - which is given after the List of figures - *starts on a new page* and follows the same lay out as the List of tables.

## 2.8 List of references

The terms below are commonly used with considerable confusion. The following definitions of each might help:

- *Bibliography:*  
An extensive list of publications on a subject or by on author.
- *Literature list:*  
Everything written on a specific subject. Does not cater for unpublished sources such as speeches and interviews.
- *List of sources:*  
This denotes a document or account from which information may be gleaned. Therefore includes references to interviews, speeches and papers read at conferences.
- *References:*  
References that there is more information on the subject elsewhere. Appear especially at the end of scientific articles in academic journals.

**Please note:**

Use "List of references".

## 2.9 Appendices

The purpose of Appendices/Addenda/an Annexure are to avoid long explanations or additions that tend to impede the flow of the text. Avoid too many appendices. Only really necessary information should be considered for

inclusion. a questionnaire (that has not been filled out) or an interview schedule must be included in an appendix.



**Please note:**

▪ **Questionnaire:**

A copy of the questionnaire that has not been filled out (or a copy of the interview schedule), as well as the cover letter if it was a separate document should be included.

▪ **Name of appendix, number and page number:**

Note that the descriptive title (name) of the Appendices/Addenda should be indicated; that they should be numbered; and that the page numbers for each should also be given. The heading (e.g. APPENDIX 1) and the descriptive title (e.g. QUESTIONNAIRE) are written in capital letters.

### 3. REQUIREMENTS OF SCIENTIFIC WRITING

#### Reading material:



▪ **Web site**



Academic writing - what is it?

<http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwc/handouts/whatisit.htm>

#### **Writing skills for scientific papers are unique**

Scientific report writing or academic writing style is different to other styles of writing. The distinguishing factors from other writing styles are that it should be factual, correct, concise, systematic and a clear train of thought should follow a logical line from the introduction to the conclusion. Academic or scientific writing style is not easy, but it is an essential part of scientific practise and should be mastered on Master's level!

#### **Be objective**

Scientific writing should be factual and the research findings should be reported objectively. It should not contain any generalisations, inaccurate statements, allegations or sweeping statements such as "the extraordinary explosion of the use of the World Wide Web has lead to ..." Avoid any pompous remarks such as "The

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results from this project could be used to revolutionise ...". Obviously no slang, vulgar or popular use of language is allowed.

### **Express yourself succinctly**

H.G. Wells said: "I write as I walk, because I want to get somewhere. And I write as straight as I can, because that is the shortest way of getting there."

Keep it short and concise so that it shows academic focus and clear academic thinking. It is easy to write long essays. Undergraduate students are particularly good at this. At postgraduate level, students are expected to formulate viewpoints academically and scientifically. This differs from "writing essays". However, "writing essays" should serve as good practise for academic writing.

A long research or business report is not an indication of academic excellence. A well-structured, academic and well-formulated one is. Never try to pad your research script or scientific article with extra information just to get the required length. You will disadvantage yourself, because you will score lower marks.

The right length is related to the integration of sources and the ability of a student to master the studied literature. What is integration?

### **Meaningfully integrate theory with theory and theory with research results**

Theoretical (secondary) knowledge should be integrated before researchers add the new (primary) knowledge that they have gained through the new research undertaken. This is the process through which the body of knowledge is built within a specific scientific field or sub-field of study.

Researchers must first contextualize their current research by giving the theoretical background in which this current research is placed. The essence of this part of academic writing style is to integrate the secondary research on the specific topic that already exists. Viewpoints of different authors on a specific subject (namely, the secondary knowledge) must be:

- integrated,
- assessed,
- analysed and/or
- synthesised.

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It should not be mere compilation of information and definitely not horizontal compilation without any depth. Various literature sources, research results, ideas and perceptions of authors should be integrated meaningfully and be presented logically.

**Here are some additional guidelines:**

- **It is unnecessary to “re-invent the wheel”**  
Just mention what is necessary to explain the essence/crux thereof. In other words, it is not necessary to redescribe a phenomenon from square one. The emphasis should be placed on what is necessary to comply with the aims/objectives of the study.
  
- **Consult the points of view of a number of authors**  
When a topic is discussed in the research, different viewpoints from different sources must be compared. They must be evaluated and integrated. Where do they differ from one another? Which author adds a subtopic, and so forth? For example: two researchers identify five components (or characteristics) of a phenomenon, but a third academic adds two more components. Use this in the discussion or argument to form your own point of view.

***For example:***

“Van Zyl (1995:89) and Grové (1997:24) identify two types of field surveys. Pansegrouw (1998:46) however adds another field survey technique, namely controlled surveys. The latter is especially important as it is a type of field survey (as opposed to a laboratory survey), but it offers the advantage that the survey could be controlled.”

In other words, indicate the importance of Pansegrouw's (1998) information for the present study.

- **Compare the viewpoints of different authors**  
If two authors differ from one another, use this as a point of discussion and form your own point of view on this. In other words, what is your opinion on this issue, and/or what is the importance of this to the present study?

***For example:***

“Both Edwards (2000:667) and Marais (2000:67) are of the opinion that laboratory surveys can only take place under controlled conditions. In contrast to this, Dietmar (2002:43) points out that one should allow scope for spontaneity.”

***Then write something like the following:***

“It should be kept in mind that spontaneity under controlled experimental circumstances is not predictable and, therefore, can not be manipulated. Especially the second element, namely, the inability to control the experiment, could have negative implications for the research and it was therefore, it was not considered as an option.”

Once again, formulated in this way, the information presented is applied to the present study. In short, the information has been assessed, synthesised (compiled) and integrated into the research report.

- **Show that you have consulted a number of sources on the same topic**

The researcher must demonstrate that he/she has read extensively on a subject and possesses the ability to integrate all this information.

***For example:***

“Du Rand (1987:88); Els (1986:56); Nieman & Cilliers (1957:89) as well as Nienaber (1994:12) operationalise the concept of external validity as the degree to which the results of a research study could be generalised to other similar situations.”

*Or:*

“Experts on the subject of experimental designs view a laboratory survey as a particularly useful survey technique (cf Du Rand, 1987:88; Els, 1986:56; Nieman & Celliers, 1957:9; Nienaber, 1994:12).”

***Note that the authors are mentioned in alphabetical order.***

In short, it will not suffice at Master's level to merely compile sources. Students are required to show insight into the subject.

**Systematic presentation by means of meaningful headings**



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The framework and the content of research articles should be presented systematically and logically in coherent sections and sub-sections. This can be done by means of meaningful headings. Headings are not merely the names for the sections. Headings are important indicators of scientific focus. The headings indicate how the student understood, processed and presented the theory and empirical part of the research study after taking the aims, objectives and proposed hypotheses of his/her study into account.

**Consider the following guidelines:**

▪ **Divide sections into subsections by means of headings**

The study must be structured meaningfully in different sub-headings according to the theme, aims or goals, objectives, hypotheses or research questions of the research undertaken. The title consists of certain concepts and constructs or building blocks, which have a bearing on the research question or problem. In the conceptualisation of the study within the particular theoretical framework of the research the major concepts, major constructs and the sub-constructs should be explained. Normally a subsection is dedicated to each one of these constructs.

(Note: *Goals* are broad, long-term and overall targets, whereas *objectives* are specific, short term, measurable and achievable.)

▪ **Avoid excessively long sections**

If there is too much information and sections get too long, they should be divided into shorter subsections by means of new headings. In other words: do not write pages and pages under one heading.

▪ **The handling of headings indicates scientific soundness**

The manner in which a student uses headings is usually a good indication of how well the learning material in the different sources has been integrated. Is it logical? Can a specific train of thought be identified? Are the writers in control of the information and can they steer the study scientifically in a specific direction?



**Please note:**

**There are no full stops at the end of headings.**

▪ **Use meaningful, independent headings**

The actual formulation of headings will depend on the content of the section or subsection itself. Relevancy and conciseness remain the important criteria in formulating headings. Students are strongly advised to be creative in the formulation of headings. Try and formulate headings that are, as far as possible, self-reliant: they can stand independently. In short, headings must have meaning within the relevance of the study. Put in another way, if one reads the headings on the Contents page, one should be able to have a clear indication of the researcher's train of academic thought!

Generic headings such as "Globalisation" or "Corporate Communication" are senseless. What about, for example, Globalisation?

- What is the connection with globalisation to the study in question?
- What is its importance in terms of the present study?
- Why is it being discussed here?
- How does it relate to the aim, goal, objective(s) of the study?

▪ **Avoid long headings**

Avoid long, clumsy headings. If the heading gets too long, shorten it and write an explanatory sentence in the first line under the heading. Use colons (:) to expand on headings.

▪ **Stop at third order headings**

If the train of thought is logical, well structured and scientific, it should be unnecessary for the writer to make use of fourth order (or level) of headings (for instance, 2.9.1.1) and/or even fifth order headings (e.g. 2.9.1.1.1 and 2.9.1.1.2)! If smaller sub-subsections such as a list of statements, hypotheses, conclusions, recommendations, and so on, need to be added, then use symbols. For example, bullets (■) or asterisks (\*); numerals 1, 2, 3 or (i), (ii), (iii); or the alphabet (a), (b), (c). *Decide on one method and standardise throughout.*

- **Avoid a single subheading under a heading**

The structuring and division of a study must be considered carefully. If there is only one subheading under a heading, the student is not fully mastering the study material covered.

***For example:***

- 2.9 Experimental surveys
- 2.9.1 Quasi-experimental designs

But there is no 2.9.2. ← **This is incorrect.**

### **Guide the reader**

As the author of the research paper, research script or article (at a structured or course work Master's level), a dissertation (at a research Master's level); or a thesis (at Doctoral level), you take your reader on "an academic excursion". Readers, however, should receive a map to guide them along the way. In the text, the reader should be given guidance on what has just been completed, in which direction the author's train of thought is heading, and why. And how does this fit into the whole study?

***For example:***

"In the previous section, the different measuring scales that could be used in questionnaires were discussed briefly. Examples hereof are the Likert, the ordinal, paired comparison, linear, numeric and semantic differential scale. Seeing that the latter, the semantic differential scale, gives the researcher the opportunity to analyse the image of an organisation, this scale will be discussed in greater detail. It will be shown that the most important advantage of this scale, namely clear and effective reflection of an organisation's images, received a high priority in being selected as the scale of choice in the study."

This way the "wheel is not re-invented". Firstly, the other measuring scales were only discussed briefly and the most important scale in terms of the present study – the semantic differential – was discussed more comprehensively. Secondly, the reader was guided appropriately through the examples.

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### **The use of language determines readability and clarity**

The proper use of language is of the utmost importance. Students' ability to express their thoughts will contribute to the mark awarded because language competency is an integral facet of research.

- The style, spelling and sentence construction should meet the UK English language requirements.
- Writers should present thoughts clearly, unambiguously, concisely and succinctly.
- Avoid direct translations at all cost.
- Use words and concepts in context.
- Explain unfamiliar concepts and technical jargon where necessary.
- The script/article should read well: it should be easy to follow the writer's logical line of thought.
- There should be no language or printing/typing errors. Use the British or South African spell check!
- In short: both the language used and the writing style should reflect scientific thinking!

### **The use of capital letters**

Research indicates that capital letters are more difficult to read than either the small caps or the combination of the two. It is therefore advisable to avoid the use of only capital letters. Obviously it is in order to use them in headings, however a careful study of leading accredited journals will show that most of them prefer a combination of capital letters and small caps in headings.

Use only functional capital letters when a combination of the two is used. In other words, only use capital letters where they should normally be used.

For example:

- Conclusion and recommendations for further research, instead of:
- Conclusion And Recommendations For Further Research

It is, however, in order to state:

- Introduction and
- Problem statement

Note that Problem is in a capital letter, because it is the name of the heading. But, "statement" is in small caps, because it is the second word in the "name" of the heading.

**Be comprehensive, but brief**

Comprehensiveness is neither the opposite of brevity nor the ability to express oneself succinctly. To be comprehensive is to discuss and justify the most important facts, theories and models appropriate to the subject matter. The most important and most recent trends in the literature should have been consulted. This implies two more requirements of scientific writing, namely, the recency and applicability of information consulted and included in the research.

**Use recent and applicable information**

While it is important to first consult the basic and classic, primary and secondary reference sources (usually books), for the original theories and to elucidate basic aspects, the most recent literature (usually journal articles) should be consulted to indicate that the student's knowledge is up to date.

It is almost superfluous to add that the information should be applicable to the matter under discussion, yet students often err by using theory that is not directly applicable and does not explain the phenomenon at hand.

**Be accurate, be scientific**

As a researcher the student at postgraduate level should be a scientist in the true sense of the word. An Honours degree is an academic qualification, which indicates that candidates have proven themselves as scientists by having successfully gone through the process of academic research. On Master's level students should prove that they are the master of a specific sub-field of an academic field of study. To be scientific requires precision and conscientiousness. The Masters research article should not contain negligent mistakes or distortions of theoretical points of views or facts. If this was the case, science would not have existed and all knowledge would have been popular knowledge. An academic/scientific researcher should therefore be meticulous. Apply this principle throughout: in the reporting of the research and in the findings.

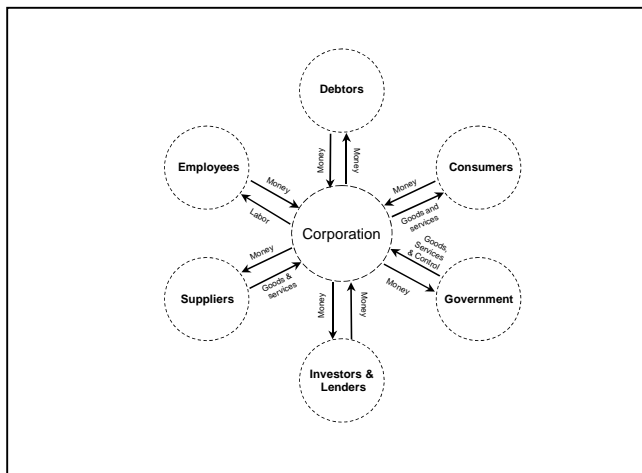
**4. TAKING CARE OF TECHNICAL CARE ASPECTS**

Marks are unnecessarily forfeited when one does not take care of the technical aspects. Take note of the following:

### Name and number all tables and figures

All tables and figures (including graphic presentations - which are also referred to as figures) should be named and numbered. Captions of tables and figures should be descriptive, though short and concise. Tables and figures should be discussed and/or interpreted in a paragraph before or after it. Readers should not have to guess the content or the meaning of the table or figure. Use the term “figure” rather than diagram or graph. Refer to the number of the table or the figure rather than “the table above”, “the table below” or “the following table”. Note that the word “Table 4” in the text, if one refers to a specific table, starts with a capital letter.

**Figure 4.1 A dyadic view of stakeholder relationships**



Source: Ackoff (1994:39)

Or, if you have made changes to it, you can indicate the source(s) as follows:

Adapted from: Ackoff (1994:39) and Freeman (1984:25)



**Please note:**

**You do not give the full details of the source as it would be given in the List of references**

### How to work with numbers in the text

When referring to a number, use words for:

- the numbers from zero to nine
- any number at the beginning of a sentence

Try not to start a sentence with a number: modify it so that it does not start with a number or write the number in full.

Use figures/numerals for:

- the number 10 and larger numbers
- any number denoting the following:
  - unit of time or measure (60 seconds; 22 kg; 16m);
  - age (14 years old);
  - times and dates (16:45 or 2001-10-27);
  - percentages (75%);
  - currency (\$10);
  - numbers indicating sample sizes, even if it is smaller than 10;
  - percentiles and quartiles;
  - mathematical calculations;
  - ratios (1:10);
  - fractions or decimal figures (2,5);
  - readings on a scale (6 kg);
  - a series of four or more numbers (1 597; 1 693; 98 768); and
  - numbers that are grouped together for the sake of comparison (464 against only 4).
- Rephrase a sentence if numbers consist of a combination of words and figures.
- Place a zero before the decimal comma if the number is smaller than one.
- Commas are not used to divide large numbers into groups of three. The groups are divided by a space to the right and to the left of the decimal comma, e.g.: 56 876 408,00.

**Use the third person writing style objectively**

Avoid all personal references, such as “I”, “we”, “the author” or “the researcher”. In other words, avoid a subjective writing style. The only exception to this rule is “own underlining” or “own italicising”, or “own emphasising” which serves as editorial comment. (Incidentally, the latter – “own emphasising” - is preferred.)

***For example:***

*Our problems* should rather be: *The problems in this country*

*The author wants to add* should be replaced by something like:

*It should, however, be stated that the word communication should be added.*

**How to emphasise important information**

Select one method of emphasising important information and apply it throughout, for example, either italics or bold. Avoid underling and using capital letters. Use emphasis sparingly.

**Own emphasising of direct quotations**

If students want to emphasise part of a direct quotation, they must indicate it clearly so that the reader will know that emphasis is being placed on another author's words. This should be done by placing the selected section in either italics or bold, depending on the emphasising technique decided on. The following should be added in round brackets: "(own emphasising)". Please restrict such applications to the minimum.

**Quotations within quotations**

Quotations within quotations are indicated in single quotation marks within the double quotation marks.

**Incorrect direct quotations**

Direct quotations are unchanged word for word quotations of an author's exact words. Sometimes the original wording is incorrect. It is then up to you as the researcher or the scientist to indicate the mistake. For example: "It is a common concept [sic] to use marketing as a tool for ...." Note that "sic" indicates that you recognise the mistake and also note that it is placed in square [] brackets and not in regular round ( ) brackets.

**Adding words to make quotations clearer**

If you insert your own words to make sentences in direct quotations clearer, indicate this by putting the words in square brackets [ ].

**Use editorial comments very sparingly**

Editorial comments from the researcher who writes the script or the article should be avoided. If it is absolutely necessary, use [?] to indicate doubt, [!] for amazement and [!!] for utter amazement. Again, note the shape the brakes.



**Abbreviations are not allowed**

Abbreviations are not allowed in the text. There are three exceptions to this rule, namely, long names, abbreviations in tables and figures, and for units of measurement. Long names, which occur repeatedly, are written out in full the first time, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. The abbreviation is then recognised by the reader and may be used. For example: Redistribution and Development Programme (RDP).

Recognised abbreviations may be used in tables and figures in order to save space. Lastly, abbreviations may be used when referring to recognised units of measure such as kg., m., & cm.

**Foreign words**

It is suggested that foreign words are put in italics when it is absolutely necessary to use them. Rather avoid words such as *inter alia*, *uberhaupt*, *per se*, *vide*.

**New ideas in new paragraphs**

Do not discuss two concepts or ideas in one paragraph, especially if it involves long and extended information. This seems like an obvious requirement of academic writing style, yet students seem to still have problems with it. Group related literature together to form a logical and integrated unit and to prevent loose ends. Rather start a new paragraph for each new concept by employing the general principle of assisting the reader by writing one main idea per paragraph.

Each general paragraph should contain a *main idea* supported by a series of *sub-ideas*, which are elaborations of the main idea. Concrete evidence of these *sub-ideas* may be written in the form of *supporting evidence* of those *sub-ideas*. Sentences containing *supporting evidence* may be recognised by their containing expressions such as “for example”, “for instance”, “such as”, and so on. Between groupings or logical units one may use *transition paragraphs* that will link groups of paragraphs. Such paragraphs could summarise what has appeared and introduce the reader to what follows. *Transition paragraphs* contain only main ideas and have neither sub-ideas nor supporting evidence.

A paragraph containing just one sentence is, however, bad construction. It is better to give more information to the reader and in doing so, also guide the reader. In this way you kill two birds with one stone!

**A suggestion on the usage of he/she:**

Rather use the plural form: it is much easier and less cumbersome.

For example:

- A researcher should address a topic that interests him/her.
- Researchers should address topics that interest them.

**Beware of repetitions**

Under no circumstances should paragraphs be repeated. This observation might look too obvious to mention; yet it is a mistake often made in Masters research scripts or dissertations, as well as in Doctoral theses because of the easy “copy and paste” function in word-processing software.

**Verbs that can be used**

In academic writing scientists or authors never “feel”: that is reserved for emotions in their personal lives! Acceptable alternatives are to use “The author

- acknowledges”;
- comments”;
- asserts”;
- maintains”;
- concurs”;
- notes”;
- claims”;
- mentions”;
- postulates”;
- states”;
- declares”;
- contends”;
- illustrates”;
- identifies”;
- demonstrates”;
- reports”;
- reasons”;
- argues”;
- discusses”;
- develops” and so on.

Citations should fit into the flow of your writing. The following phrases below might also be useful:

- Rensburg (2003:7-9) clearly indicates that ...
- Du Plessis (2000: 10) has investigated ...
- The study of North (2001:4-14) notes that ...
- Van Heerden (2001:12) challenges the view that ...
- Fischer (2002:2) refers to ...
- Bezuidenhout (1999:13 –17) provides evidence ...
- De Beer (2003: 145) is of the opinion ...
- Prinslo and Jordaan (1998: 28) point out that ...
- It is imperative that ... (Kotzé, 1997: 13-15).
- It has been argued that ... (York, 2000: 45).

## 5. PROBLEMS WITH REFERENCING TECHNIQUES



### Reading material:



Kotze, T. 2002. *Referencing in academic documents*. Official guideline of the Department of Marketing and Communication Management.

### Source referencing and cross-referencing techniques

Two kinds of referencing are used: *source referencing* from sources such as publications, interviews, internet, and so forth, where information or direct quotations have been borrowed, and the occasional *cross-referencing* to places else where in the same text where statements are provided, supplemented or explained. It has been suggested that researchers “guide” their readers through a lengthy research report by using cross-referencing (See Topic 2 – and this also serves as an example of cross-referencing!) The abbreviation “p.” for page (Latin for *pagina*) may be used to indicate the page number.

Use the guide for the department of Marketing and Communication Management titled *Referencing in academic documents*, compiled by T Kotzé in 2002, as it is the only official guideline of the Department. *The manual should be studied from beginning to end!!*

***Please note:***

**Do not refer in the text and/or in the list of references to the guidelines for referencing by Kotzé.**

The different referencing techniques discussed in this guideline are not going to be repeated here, as the focus will fall on common mistakes often made by students:

**There is a difference between primary and secondary sources**

A lot of mistakes occur around this aspect. Primary sources are sources (books, articles, and so on), which you have actually read and handled yourself. Secondary sources comprise information from a source, which you have not seen – have not had in your hands - but which is cited in another source, which you have read. *It is unethical to treat secondary sources as primary sources* and you should indicate when sources are secondary sources:

“According to Jefferson (quoted by Lansberg, 2000:111), research can be ...”

or:

“According to Jefferson in Lansberg (2000:111), research can be ...”

***Please note:***

- The latter example is preferred.
- Only sources that you have directly consulted are listed in the list of references. Thus only Lansberg (2000) will be in the list of references.
- As the purpose of references are to avoid plagiarism; to enable readers to verify quotations/information; and to allow them to follow up the cited author's arguments, it should be easy to find the secondary source on the indicated page of the primary source.
- It is preferable not to refer to secondary sources.
- Students should make an effort to acquire the original source. If this is totally impossible, students may refer to secondary sources, but the correct referencing technique should at least be used.

***Do not rely too heavily on one author in a specific section***

Use at least two to three sources to discuss one topic. This is especially true for articles as articles because, in essence, articles are a condensed version of a Masters script or a dissertation or a doctoral thesis.

**Arrange a list of authors in the text alphabetically**

If more than one source is quoted in order to prove a point or to indicate that more than one source was consulted, the sources must be listed in alphabetical order. An example used in Topic 2 can be repeated here:

*For example:*

“Du Rand (1987:88); Els (1986:56); Nieman & Cilliers (1957:89) as well as Nienaber (1994:12) operationalise the concept of external validity as the degree to which the results of a research study could be generalised to other similar situations.”

*Or:*

“Experts on the subject of experimental designs view a laboratory survey as a particularly useful survey technique (cf Du Rand, 1987:88; Els, 1986:56; Nieman & Celliers, 1957:9; Nienaber, 1994:12).”

**Be aware of how information is integrated**

*Look at the following example:*

“... focuses on building a shared vision and a learning culture (Van der Merwe, 1991:13). Van der Merwe (1991:13) asks the question ....”

It looks as if information was merely compiled on computer, which is not allowed.

*Rather use:*

“... focuses on building a shared vision and a learning culture” (Van der Merwe, 1991:13). The same author asks the question ...”

**Note the following common mistakes:**

- the word “and” is used between the names of authors in full sentences in the text: Romenyi, Money and Price (2000) suggest ...
- the ampersand sign “&” is used between the names of authors in brackets in the text : “... own name (Romenyi, Money & Price, 2000:63)
- *et al* should be in italics: (Romenyi *et al*, 2000:63)

### Use a variety of the methods to refer to sources

Do not just refer to the source by simply putting it in brackets at the end of each paragraph.

*For example:*

“A system can be defined as a set of interrelated parts that work together to achieve predetermined goals according to the specific plan or design (Plunkett, 1994:121).”

*Rather use:*

“According to Plunkett (1994:121), a system can be defined as a set of interrelated parts that work together to achieve predetermined goals according to a specific plan or design.”

### Important rules to remember about referencing

- Use direct quotations sparingly.
- Only quote the original author directly if a statement was made in a particularly striking way; if the precise wording is very important to the current research; or if the words describe or underline your opinion on the subject in a very precise manner.
- Avoid long direct quotations
- If you insert your own word(s) to make the meaning clearer, indicate this by putting the added word(s) in square brackets, namely, [].
- If you leave words or a part of the sentence out, indicate this by using three full stops “...” known as an ellipse.



**Please note:**

**Leave a space open, then ellipse, leave a space open again, and the next word. For example: “ The introduction could be short, accurate ... but it should also be comprehensive.”**

### Important rules to remember about the list of references

- Sources must be sorted alphabetically according to the author or the first component of the referenced item.
- One list of references – not separate lists for different types of sources (books, journals and the internet) - must be compiled.

- All primary sources referred to in the text must be specified in the list of references.
- And all sources specified in the list of references must have been used in the text! It does happen that students list a source in the list of references, but that particular source has not been quoted in the text. Often, this happens when a source is deleted from the text, but the writer forgets to do the same within the list of references. Please check and double check the references used.
- Secondary sources should be indicated as such and will automatically fall under the primary sources in the list of references.
- Sources that you have consulted, but that you have not cited in the text, should not be included in the list of references.
- If more than one publication of the same author is used, arrange them chronologically from old to new according to the date of publication.
- If more than one publication of the same author is used *and* the publications were published in the same year, arrange them alphabetically according to their titles and number them by adding an alphabetical letter to the date.

## 6. BUT IS MY RESEARCH ETHICAL?

Ethical academic writing is of the utmost importance. Numerous books and articles are devoted to this topic. Ponder on the points listed below:

### **Reporting of results**

Data should never be fabricated. Errors found after publication should be corrected in the same medium where the initial findings were published.

### **Plagiarism**

Copyright should be acknowledged and direct quotations from other works must be kept to a fair minimum. The suggestion for an average length article is 500 words. The main motivation for this rule is so that it does not impair the market value of the original work.

**Publication credit**

Credit goes hand in hand with responsibility for the published work. A ruling on the listing of principal authors and minor contributors must be set out clearly in a guideline compiled by a specific Department or Faculty.

**Guidelines for crediting**

Guidelines must also be set for giving credit to supervisors and/or study leaders in the work of a student. Clear guidelines will prevent an imbalance of power between student and lecturer that, in turn, could influence the credibility of the publication and the moral responsibility for the published research findings.

The policy in the Department of Marketing and Communication Management is that the academic supervisor is appointed co-author after the student as the primary author.

**Conserve the integrity of the research**

In addition to these aspects, it is important to keep the research and the research findings independent and to conserve the integrity of the research irrespective of the source of funding for the research.

Recognition should be given to a research funding institution, such as the National Research Foundation (NRF) in South Africa or the organisation where the researcher is employed. However, it is clearly stated that views the expressed or the conclusion drawn from the research results, remain that of the researcher and do not represent the funding organisation.

**7. HOW WILL MY ARTICLE BE EVALUATED?**

The following are examples of evaluation criteria used by academic journals when considering articles for publication. It is a compilation of various sources on the subject and should give you a clear understanding of the criteria that the external and external examiners will use:

**Purpose and relevance of the article**

- Is the topic relevant for publication in the specific journal?
- Is the purpose of the article clearly stated?



- Is the title explicit, brief and appropriate?

### **Theoretical soundness of article**

Is the research topical and of high quality?

- Is it based on a sound theoretical basis? Is the article conceptually rigorous?
- Is the author familiar with the nature and objectives of the field of research?
- Is the literature review adequate?
- Are key concepts defined and explained consistently throughout the article?
- Is the article theoretically sound, based on:
  - Sufficient background to form a frame of reference for the research that follows.
  - Author's understanding of the theory and his/her application thereof to the research / discussion that follows; and
  - Is the issue presented in context?

### **Research methodology used**

- Are the research problems and hypotheses postulated in the problem statement addressed in the article?
- Are research goals stated clearly?

### **Writing skills**

- Does the author show skill at utilising the appropriate technique(s) required for the research and/or discussion?
- Is the content systematically developed, adequately argued and presented in an orderly manner?

### **Ethical issues**

- Are the arguments presented valid and factually correct?
- Are contentious claims and statements validated by the data?
- Are data reliable, valid, relevant and trustworthy?
- Are data accurately and objectively interpreted?
- Do conclusions follow logically from the reasoned exposition of the data?
- Are recommendations relevant to the data and the conclusions?

- Is the article proof of the author's ability to evaluate the academic and scientific value of the findings and/or arguments?

### Style of the publication

- Does the writing and presentation style of the article adhere to writing and presentation style for scientific publication?
- Does it comply with the editorial and technical requirements of the specific journal? (This information can be found in all academic journals where the editors invite articles for submission.)

### Contribution to field of study

- Does the article contribute to communication or marketing research and theory building?

## 8. HOW TO STRUCTURE A RESEARCH ARTICLE



### READING MATERIAL:

#### ▪ Journals

- 📖 Perry, C., Carson, D. & Gilmore, A. 2003. Joining a conversation: Writing for EJM's editors, reviewers and readers requires planning, care and persistence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(5/6):652-667. (Available on the Emerald database.)
- 📖 Remenyi, D. Money, A. & Price, D. 2000. Preparing academic papers for publishing. *Southern African Business Review Special Issue on Information technology*, 4(2): 59-67.
- 📖 Smith, D.C. 2003. The Importance and Challenges of Being Interesting. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 31(3):319-322. (Available on EBSCOhost's EJS database at <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp?ArticleID=HV3CLR9VGTFWJW2JC6T2>)
- 📖 Summers, J. O. 2001. Guidelines for conducting research and publishing in marketing: from conceptualization through the review process. *Journal of the*

*Academy of Marketing Science*, 29(4):405-415. (Available on EBSCOhost's EJS database at <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/Article.asp?ContributionID=2194142>).

- 📖 Varadarajan, P.R. 1996. From the editor: Reflections on Research and Publishing. *Journal of Marketing*, (October):3-6. (Available on EBSCO's Business Source Premier database).

### Web sites



- 📖 Coming to grips with reading and writing academic articles:

[www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/~agraham/guides/guidec.shtml](http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/~agraham/guides/guidec.shtml)

- 📖 How to write a scientific paper:

<http://www.nmas.org/JAhow.html>

- 📖 What is an academic paper?

[http://webster.dartmouth.edu/~compose/student/ac\\_paper/what.html](http://webster.dartmouth.edu/~compose/student/ac_paper/what.html)

## 9. CHECKLIST

Use the following evaluation framework as a checklist for both the content and the technical care before you submit your research article. *NB: Please ignore sections 9 – 12 of the content until the final research article is submitted.*

SECTION I: CONTENTS	✓ or ✗
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
Is an adequate introduction and background to the study given?	
<b>2. PROBLEM STATEMENT</b>	
Is the reason for the research adequately motivated?	
<b>3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</b>	
Are the specific research objectives - based on the problem - clearly stated?	
<b>4. HYPOTHESES</b>	
Are testable hypotheses correctly formulated?	
<b>5. LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	

Are conceptual and operational definitions of the key constructs mentioned in the title and hypotheses?	
Are relevant previous research or conceptual work on the constructs discussed?	
Is a discussion of possible relationships between key constructs or expected differences between groups on the key constructs included?	
Is a discussion of possible measurement approaches and scales for each of the key constructs included?	
Is sufficient theoretical support for the hypotheses formulated for testing provided?	
Are sufficient and convincing reasons for possible "gaps" in the literature study provided?	
<b>6. RESEARCH STRATEGY (DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY USED)</b>	
Is the type of methodology chosen described or justified in terms of the following:	
▪ Quantitative versus qualitative?	
▪ Explorative versus formal?	
▪ The purpose of the research: descriptive or causal?	
<b>7. RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	
Are the main characteristics or features of the research design adequately described in terms of the following?	
▪ Experimental or ex post facto?	
▪ Time dimension (cross-sectional or longitudinal)	
▪ Research environment (field, laboratory or simulation)	
▪ Perceptions of subjects	
<b>8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	
8.1 Population	
Is the target population clearly defined?	
8.2 Sampling	
Is the sampling approach used described and <i>motivated</i> in terms of the following:	
▪ Discussing the sampling method used.	
▪ Discussing the method used for determining the desired sample size.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussing the sample size obtained, including reasons for not achieving the desired sample size.</li> </ul>	
8.3 Data collection	
Is an adequate <i>description</i> and <i>motivation</i> for the method of data collection (including any quantitative methods used) provided?	
8.4 Data analysis	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the process followed in preparing and analysing the data adequately described?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the software package used for data analysis (if applicable) indicated?</li> </ul>	
<b>9. FINDINGS</b>	
9.1 Descriptive statistics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are appropriate descriptive statistics for all questions in the questionnaire calculated, reported and interpreted (where applicable)?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are all tables and figures included in the article correct, complete and readable?</li> </ul>	
9.2 Inferential statistics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the test results for each of the hypotheses stated in the introduction tested, reported on and adequately interpreted?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the null and alternative hypotheses to be tested correctly stated?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the correct hypothesis tests for each of the stated hypotheses chosen?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are violations of the assumptions of all parametric hypothesis tests tested?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the processes and the results of each hypothesis test reported in a structured way?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the results of the hypothesis test interpreted and related back to the research objectives?</li> </ul>	
<b>10. LIMITATIONS</b>	
Are the limitations of the study (e.g. in terms of sampling, reliability and validity concerns, etc.) discussed?	
<b>11. CONCLUSIONS</b>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are appropriate conclusions based on the main findings of the study provided?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do the conclusions relate back to the research objectives?</li> </ul>	
<b>12. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY</b>	
Are recommendations for further study in the future included?	
<b>SECTION II: TECHNICAL CARE</b>	
<b>1. PRELIMINARIES</b> (Before the main body text starts on page 1)	
Is the layout of and information supplied on the title page correct?	
Is an Abstract (on a separate page) included?	
Does the Abstract provide a <u>complete</u> summary of the whole research report?	
Is the Table of Contents complete and correct? (In script not article)	
Is the List of Figures complete and correct? (In script not article)	
Is the List of Tables complete and correct? (In script not article)	
Do the wording of headings correspond a 100% with the wording in the Table of Contents? (In script not article)	
Do the heading numbers in the text correspond a 100% with the numbers in the Table of Contents? (In script not article)	
Do the figure / table captions listed in the List of Tables and List of Figures correspond a 100% with the captions used in the text? (In script not article)	
Have all tables and figures been supplied with correct captions (situated <u>above</u> the table or figure)?	
Have all tables and figures been supplied with correct and complete source references where appropriate (situated <u>below</u> the table or figure)?	

Have all tables and figures been numbered correctly? (Figures and tables are numbered independently starting from 1. Do not include section numbers in the numbering of tables / figures)	
Are the preliminary pages (i.e. Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Figures and List of Tables) numbered in Roman numerals: (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)?	
<b>2. TEXT</b>	
Are all pages in the body of the text numbered correctly with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.)?	
Have I used only one method of emphasizing ( <i>italics</i> , or <b>bold</b> or <u>underlining</u> ) throughout the report?	
Is there a line open between all paragraphs?	
Are the paragraphs in my report not perhaps too long? Can't I split long paragraphs to improve readability?	
Have I made any "sweeping" or unsubstantiated statements, such as "there is no literature available on this topic" or "this research will contribute to the body of knowledge"?	
Have I used an impersonal, objective writing style (One symptom of a subjective writing style is that the researcher refers to him-/herself directly. References to "I", "we" and even "the researcher" should be avoided.)	
<b>3. REFERENCING TECHNIQUES</b>	
Are all information sources (books, journals, e-mail messages, web pages) that have been cited in the text, included in the List of References at the end of the report and vice versa?	
Is the list of references ordered alphabetically?	
Have all the sources listed in the List of references been used/cited in the text?	
Have I used the correct referencing method in the text, as well as in the list of references?	
Have I correctly indicated the sources of all tables / figures taken or adapted from the literature? (Such references are provided <u>below</u> the table or figure)	

<b>4. APPENDICES</b>	
Do all the appendices have appropriate descriptive titles?	
Are all the appendices numbered up to the last page?	
Have all the appendices been tagged / "flagged" for easy cross-referencing?	
Are all the appendices included in the Table of Contents with their correct page numbers?	
<b>5. GENERAL TECHNICAL CARE</b>	
Have I checked my report for spelling and grammatical errors?	
Have I consistently used the past tense throughout the report?	
Have I used capital letters and abbreviations correctly?	
Have I consistently rounded off all numeric values in the report to two (2) decimals?	
Have I consistently "justified" the body text of the report (i.e. aligned the text evenly along both the left and right margins to form a square box)?	
Are all headings numbered correctly?	
Headings in capital letters (first order headings) should not be underlined.	
There should be no full stops at the end of headings.	
Have I used an A4 paper setting?	
Have all pages printed correctly?	
Have I consistently used 1½ line spacing in the body of the text?	
Is the font size of the body text correct set at 12 pt?	
Have I consistently used the same font type (i.e. Arial) and font size (12 pt) for the body text?	
Is the left margin set to at least 2 cm?	