PSLR WRITING WORKSHOP:
LANGUAGE, STYLE AND CITATION

Outline

I   INTRODUCTION

Text = Communication of meaning: AIMED AT AN AUDIENCE!

Requirements:
- Clear
- Correct
- Precise
- Logical
- Adhere to custom in the field (ito references & register)

Always:
Read your work!!!
Edit as you work!!!
Proofread your work!!!

Your best friends are:
- A dictionary
- A book on usage and style
- A spell checker – limitations
- A professional editor
- Patience!!!

II   GENERAL "POINTERS"

NB NB NB: Writing is REWRITING!!!!!

Do not start a week before the submission date
Do not tell yourself that you first have to read all the material before you can start writing
Do not write a bit and then leave the article for a week or two
Do not think that you need to start at the beginning and continue towards the end
Do not leave the references / bibliography until the end

III   SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND STYLE

a)   Tenses
General rule: Stick to one tense in one sentence!

Report things that happened in the past in the past tense:
"the defendant **drove** recklessly"

Legislation, conventions, discussion papers: use the **present tense**
Article 4 of CRC **states** that " …"

Reporting opinions / arguments of other authors: use the present tense: "van der Walt is of the opinion that";

"Slabbert argues that …"

Court cases: **Past tense for decision**: "The court found that …"; "The court held that …"

b)   Sentence flow

Use short, clear sentences!

Follow correct word order – S-V-O (or further information)

Do not separate the subject and the verb, e.g.
        Any person who – XXXXXX XXXXXX XXXXXX - is guilty of an offence.

Rather use "A person is guilty of an offence if that person ... " or "A person is guilty of an offence who …"

Ensure subject-verb agreement

Logically-linked words should be proximate to another

Avoid conditionals at the beginning of sentences

Place words at the end of a sentence for emphasis, or at the beginning

Qualifications & points of detail should not interrupt the flow of the sentence

NB NB NB: Where possible, use active voice

Adhere to the principles of plain language:
- Avoid too many technical terms & archaic words (hereto, hereinafter, aforesaid, witnesseth, hereunto, to wit)
- Avoid Latin terms
- Avoid doublets and triplets (Good and sufficient, due and owing, final and conclusive, full force and effect)
- Avoid inflated words (endeavour v try, fair v equitable, get v come in possession of)
- Use "shall" correctly:
- Only for the imperative – where someone is compelled to do something / refrain from something – eg "The lessor shall maintain the premises"

AVOID REDUNDANCIES: LESS IS REALLY MORE!!!

"… in deciding the case the court said that …"   v

"The court decided that …"

Also:

The final result

The resulting conclusion

The court continued to state that

The judge went on to say that

Basic fundamentals…

Basic starting point…

A certain amount of…

Due to the fact that…

The fact of the matter is…

With reference to …

Am hopeful that – hope

At that point in time – then

Despite the fact that – although, even, though

c)   Discourse markers

What are they and why are they used??
　　　to signpost logical relationships
　　　to influence how readers react
　　　to express attitude

E.g. Anyway, finally, furthermore, obviously

To number / order points: first, first of all; second; fourthly

Adding something: also; moreover; besides; in addition / additionally; instead

Linking similar things together: similarly; equally; likewise

Introducing something that contrasts with expectations (often in conjunction with but): however; in fact; on the other hand; rather; nevertheless; yet; nonetheless

On the contrary – the opposite of what has gone before

Causes and results: so; then; consequently; therefore; hence; thus

To show something is generally true: on the whole; in general

Examples / narrowing down: for instance; notably

Restating: in other words; in a sense; that is

Rounding off: in conclusion; in summary; to sum up
- "However" and "therefore" = ALWAYS followed by a comma!
- Rather write these words at the beginning of the sentence

NB NB NB: If you use however, therefore or moreover as a conjunctive adverb (combining words) a semi-colon is placed before the word and a comma after the word

IV   LANGUAGE USE

a)   Articles

A / AN / THE
Whether we use a or an depends on the pronunciation of the sound which immediately follows (spelling not NB!):
　　　an umbrella; a union
　　　an hour; a horse
The: the egg; the problem

b)   Hyphenation

Roman Dutch / Roman-Dutch origins
Land reform / land-reform strategies
Multiword adjectives: well-liked; self-centred; people-orientated

c)   Abbreviations

The general rule: Write out word in text, use abbreviations only in footnotes
Often-used word: Put acronym in brackets the first time used, then use only the acronym in text, e.g..
　　　United Nations (UN) ….. The UN treaty on ….
Abbreviations often do not end in a full stop!
No full stop when the initial letters of a word is used – SAA, USA, CNN
Acronyms – AIDS, UIF

When in doubt, find a dictionary or language guide

d)   Spelling
Very NB – edit for spelling
It is a common belief that … I believe in miracles …
The proof is in the pudding… I want you to prove my innocence…
I'm almost done! What a relief…Relieve my pain…
The rule?

e)   Who and whom
Use "who" when it will serve as a subject in the sentence; use "whom" when it will serve as an object:
The man who is wearing the black shirt"

v

"The man whom I spoke of"

f)   Use of capitals
Capitals at the beginning of sentences & proper nouns
Consider:
Constitution / constitution
Act / act
Section / s / sec
Para / par / paras / pars
High Court / high court
State / state
Minister / minister etc
The rule?

V   PUNCTUATION

a)   The apostrophe

To combine words:
Does not = Doesn't – used in speech rather than academic writing!!!!
To show possession:
        The court's decision (singular noun)
        Employee's v employees NBNB
        Books' covers (plural nouns)

b)   Commas

Used to separate words or phrases in a list – books, pens, pencils and erasers (NO COMMA before and / or!)
Commas indicate where one phrase or clause ends and another begins – The plaintiff's car hit the newsstand, and the defendant failed to stop.
Before and after words like nevertheless, therefore and however.
Introductory words or phrases are separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma:
        Once again, the judge ruled in favour of Phoebe.
Avoid using a comma between two main clauses. This is referred to as the "comma splice" error. Rather use a full stop, semi-colon or a conjunction – A Census was taken. The government needed statistics.
Inside quotation marks

c)   Semi-colons

The semi-colon is a long-pause that balances two equally-important, related or parallel ideas – It was 8am; the road was wet.
Antithesis – Indicates opposite ideas – In summer she swims; in winter she skates.
It joins two main clauses where there is no conjunction – not to be used in academic writing
Semi-colons can be replaced by a full stop or conjunctions such as: and, but, so, for and although.
Outside quotation marks

d)   Colon

It indicates a list, an explanation or an idea is following
It introduces a quotation – obviously not when you are integrating the quotation into your sentence
Outside quotation marks

VI   CITATION

An academic article is a demonstration of your ability to conduct **independent** research:
- Conceptualisation
- Research;
- Argument; and
- Writing

If the work of others is used – you must acknowledge it!
How?
- Exact words: "inverted commas" & footnote acknowledging source
- Ideas: footnote acknowledging source

Also use phrases such as:
- Kleyn argues that;
- Tladi suggests that;
- Kok disagrees with this argument, stating that; etc

NBNBNB: if no inverted commas / inverted commas & footnotes = plagiarism
After every sentence acknowledgement, not just after a whole paragraph!

Many cases plagiarism from internet – copying over of sections of text from journal articles without acknowledgement

TurnItIn – programme used by journal editors

VII   CONCLUSION

- Researching and writing an academic article can be exciting and rewarding!
- However, never an easy task – writing and rewriting usually take time and effort
- If at first an article is rejected, try again and again!

Again remember:

- Read your work!!!
- Edit as you work!!!
- Proofread your work!!!