UOW History Style Guide

Revised March 2021

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the History Program.

This guide will assist students undertaking History subjects in two key areas: appropriate referencing and essay writing. The guide explains the accurate way of referencing the sources you use and the elements of an effective essay.

There are many different styles of referencing used in academic writing and this guide applies only to History subjects. Students submitting written work in other disciplines in the Faculty of the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) or other Faculties at UOW should seek direction on how to reference from relevant academic staff or consult the appropriate style guides.

If you have any questions about anything covered in this guide, be sure to consult with your tutor or lecturer.

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NOTE: This edition was revised by Rhys Smith and Rachel Macpherson, BA (Dean's Scholars) graduates with history majors and 2021 History Honours candidates. This version replaces the 4th rev edn of the History Style Guide (2020).

Referencing in History Essays

Why footnote?

Referencing is a central component of essay writing in History subjects. Footnotes (references placed at the bottom of the page) are used to provide evidence of the research undertaken in preparing an essay. They show the reader where you obtained the information and developed the arguments that make up your essay. In doing so, footnotes serve to appropriately acknowledge the work of others.

What to footnote?

For many students, footnoting is one of the more difficult essay skills to master. With time, and practice, the decision to 'foot or not to foot' will become easier.

What do you footnote?

a) direct and paraphrased quotations (see pages 14-16 on the difference)

b) statistical information

c) controversial points about which scholars disagree

d) detail or information not generally known

e) an interpretation offered by an individual historian.

The fact that the European settlement of Australia began with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 is hardly the subject of any historical dispute and therefore does not need footnoting. However, the reasons for the British government's choice of Botany Bay as the site for a penal settlement are subject to various interpretations. In any essay dealing with the settlement at Botany Bay, you would need to footnote the interpretations offered by different historians.

You will find abundant examples of these conventions in any of the books and articles listed for reading in the subject outlines.

As a rough guide, an essay of 2,000 words should contain between 15 and 20 footnotes.

How to Footnote using Microsoft Word

Footnotes should be:

- numbered consecutively throughout the essay: e.g. 1, 2, 3 …. 23, 24.
- inserted after punctuation (such as a full stop), and preferably at the end of a sentence to reduce visual 'clutter' in the middle of a sentence.
- located at the base of each page.

Footnotes are entered automatically in Microsoft WORD:

- Place the cursor at the end of the sentence. In the top horizontal tab list select 'References' then 'Insert Footnote' [also marked as AB1].

This will enter a number in superscript at the end of the sentence, and the cursor will drop automatically to a field at the bottom of the page.[1] That is where you enter the appropriate text for the source that relates to that sentence. If you double-click on the superscript number, your cursor will also drop down to the footnote where you can edit the text as needed.[2]

Avoid entering more than one footnote reference at a single location (such as 5 6 7). A single note can contain more than one citation, separated by a semi-colon (;). See the footnotes below for an example.

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[1] T. Turtle, 'Shells: A reconsideration', *International Turtle Review,* vol. 1, no. 76, (2020), p. 13.
[2] A. Tortoise, 'Shells: Why we need them', *Australian Tortoise Quarterly,* vol. 1, no. 76, (2020), p. 74; H. Crab, 'Mobile homes, mobile lives: a new history of shells', *Harvard Crustacean Review,* (2020), p. 83.

Footnote Conventions

1. Books

For the first footnote reference to a book, your citation should be set out as follows:

> First name Last name, *Title of the Book* (Place of publication: Publisher, year), p. relevant page number (or pp. page numbers).

For example:

> Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961), p. 64.

> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London: Fontana, 1997), pp. 67-71.

When a book is a reprinted or revised version of an earlier edition, it pays to note this, or to include the original publication date in square brackets directly after the new publication date. This indicates that you recognise the book is the product of an earlier intellectual context and debate.

For example:

> Myra Willard, *The History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), p. 25.

Or

> Myra Willard, *The History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967 [1923]), p. 25.

NOTE: If you find a book online (as an e-book through the library catalogue or through Google books), your citation does not include the URL (web address). The internet location in this instance is not part of the source and adds unnecessary clutter. For example:

Incorrect footnote citation:

> Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.5, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=Jw3emMU8VEkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Correct footnote citation (i.e. without the link to Google books):

> Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.5.

2. Chapters in Edited Books

A single chapter from a book that has an editor is cited as follows:

> First name Last name, 'Title of the chapter', in First name Last name (ed.) [or (eds) for more than one editor], *Book Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, year), p. relevant page number(s).

For example:

> Richard Waterhouse, 'Settling the Land', in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 56-7.

> Peter Read, 'Shelley's Mistake: The Parramatta Native Institution and the Stolen Generations', in Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (eds), *The Great Mistakes of Australian History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2006), p. 16.

3. Journal Articles

Published journal articles:

Most journal articles you will encounter are fully published academic sources. They are cited as follows:

> First name Last name, 'Title of article', *Journal Title*, vol. number, no. issue number (year), p. relevant page number(s).

For example:

> A. E. Dingle, '"The truly magnificent thirst": An Historical Survey of Australian Drinking Habits', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 75 (1980), pp. 227-30.

> Bain Attwood, 'Whose Dreaming? Reviewing the Review of the National Museum of Australia', *History Australia*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004), p. 279.

NOTE: Although journals are typically accessed online, the internet address (URL) is not included in footnotes.

In Press (yet to be published journal articles)

Some journal articles are accessible but have yet to be published. These articles are referred to as "In Press" and are cited as follows:

> First Name Last Name, 'Title of Article', *Journal title*, in press, (year), p. relevant page number(s).

For example:

A. Tortoise, 'Hard Shells, Hard Minds: Issues and Obstacles in Educating Reptiles', *Australian Tortoise Quarterly,* in press, (2021), p. 32.

4. Newspaper Articles

Newspaper articles are cited as follows:

First name Last name [if known], 'Title of article', *Name of Newspaper*, date, p. relevant pages.

For example:

'Australian American Trade,' *The Queenslander*, 5 July 1913, p. 35.

Michael Gawenda, 'It takes more than reality to destroy national myths,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 June 2005.

Sometimes there is no author, article title or obvious page numbers. In these cases, simply provide as much detail as you can, for example:

The Australian, 12 July 2000, p.3.

NOTE: Newspapers are typically accessed in digital form through databases such as TROVE. Again, the footnote does not include the web address (URL). The database is the finding aid and not an integral part of the source description. For example:

Incorrect citation:

'A trip across the world via Panama', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 August 1866, p.5, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/rendition/nla.news-article13134811.3.pdf?followup=ecb0d716b2fa8b62f92f33899a0bcf0c

Correct citation (i.e. without the link to TROVE):

'A trip across the world via Panama', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 August 1866, p.5.

5. Online Content

An internet source is only published online and is not available in physical (hard copy) form (unlike, for instance, a book that is also digitised or an academic journal article downloadable as a PDF). Such sources include government websites (that provide information on policy, legislation or statistics, for example), essays on sites such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography, or academic blogs.

Websites

Websites are cited as follows:

First name Last name [or name of organisation], 'Title of article', *Title of Website*, (date of publication) [if provided], URL of the actual web page [not just the main index or home page], (accessed: date).

For example:

Barbara Dawson, 'Colonial women in the Australian Dictionary of Biography,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (30 August 2012), http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/4/text26712, (accessed 23 February 2016).

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, *The People of Australia: Statistics from the 2001 Census* (2003), www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/_pdf/poa-2008.pdf (accessed 20 January 2009).

Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, 'Frances and Britain – colonial rivals, or co-imperialists?', 23 March 2017, *Imperial and Global Forum* blog, https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2017/03/23/france-and-britain-colonial-rivals-or-co-imperialists/ (accessed 3 April 2017).

Note: Websites are updated and change frequently, so it is important to include the date you viewed information as it may have changed by the time a source is checked.

Documents from a website:

Many documents are now hosted online, such as United Nations resolutions, or government reports. The necessary citation is quite similar to websites, only that page numbers are required. If the document does not contain page numbers, you can list the page number of the file type instead (for example, if the section you are citing is from the fifth page of a PDF, simply cite it as page 5). The citation format is as follows:

First name Last Name [or name of organisation], 'Title of article', *Title of Website, (*date of publication) [if provided], URL, (accessed: day/month/year), p. relevant page number(s).

For example:

United Nations, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *United Nations,* (10 December 1948), https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/, (accessed: 25 November 2020), p. 1.

Blog post:

Blog posts are a popular form of online publishing. They are often used by academics and experts to present an argument or idea in a less formal and more publically accessible format. However, blog posts are *not* considered robust academic sources and should only be used in a supporting role within an assessment.

Blog posts are cited as follows:

First Name Last Name, 'Title of Post', *Title of Blog* [blog post], (date of publication day/month/year), URL, (accessed: day/month/year).

For example:

> Pippa Catterall, 'On statues and history: The dialogue between past and present in public space', *London School of Economics Blog,* (18 June 2020), https://bit.ly/2XwgB2B, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

Social Media:

Social media has become one of the primary platforms through which governments, institutions (such as the Red Cross), academics, activists, and corporations engage with the public. Whilst never a reliable source, social media can nevertheless be historically significant. Citing social media should be done with immense caution and only ever as supporting information to an argument that is backed by genuine academic evidence. Any social media cited *must* be from a publically accessible account.

Social media should be cited as follows:

> First name Last name (or username if not available), 'First part of post/comment...' [type of social media post, e.g. Facebook or Twitter], (date of publication – day/month/year), URL, (accessed: day/month/year).

For example:

> Jacinda Ardern, 'A quick message...', [Facebook post], (24 December 2020), https://bit.ly/35sL1ao, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

Social media videos:

Like social media, sites like Youtube and Vimeo have become popular platforms for distributing content, especially documentaries. They are also not considered academic sources, and should be used with caution.

Social media videos should be cited as follows:

> First Name Last Name (or account name), 'Title of Video', [video], Social Media Platform (producer (if known), date of publication – day/month/year), URL, (accessed: day month year).

For example:

> BBC Documentary, 'Age of Ice – Ep: 1 | The World of Stonehenge', [video], Youtube, (BBC, 12 October 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqdhkuMTNWU, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

These sites are also frequently hosts of old documentaries, films, and music that are now only available in an online format and only accessible through these sites. In this case, add when it was originally recorded and when it was uploaded.

For example:

> University of California, Berkeley, 'Malcolm X – Interview at Berkeley (1963), Youtube, (recorded October 1963, uploaded 12 June 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZMrti8QcPA, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

6. Film, Television Episode, or Documentary

Films, documentaries, and television episodes are increasingly accessed online. You do not need to cite the platform – such as Netflix or Stan – where you watched the film. Reliable production information for films and documentaries can be found at https://www.imdb.com/.

Films, TV episodes, and Documentaries are cited as follows:

> First name Last name (dir.), *Film Title* (Place of Production [if known]: Name of Production Company, year), (length) min.

For example:

> Alastair Fothergill and Jonathan Hughes (dir.), *David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet*, (Altitude Film Entertainment, Silverback Films, World Wildlife Fund, 2020), 1 hr 23 min.

> Vincente Diaz (dir.), *Sacred Vessels: Navigating Tradition and Identity in Micronesia* (A Moving Islands Production, 1997), 26 min.

7. Thesis/Dissertation

A thesis or dissertation should be cited as follows:

> First name Last name, '*Title of manuscript*', (PhD [or MA or BA Honours] dissertation, University name, year), p. page number.

> Note that the title is not italicised, but placed in quotation marks.

For example:

> Kerry White, '*Founded on Compromise: Australian Girls' Family Stories, 1894-1982*' (PhD dissertation, University of Wollongong, 1985), pp. 15-35.

> Shirley Nixon, '*The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council in Depression, Recovery, and War, 1926-1945*' (BA Honours dissertation, University of Wollongong, 1984), p. 10.

8. Primary Sources

Institutional publications:

Institutional publications (such as government reports) should be cited as follows:

Title of Document, 'Chapter or Title of Report', Title of Institution/Compilation, volume (year), page(s).

For example:

Royal Commission on State Banking, 'Report', Victorian Parliamentary Papers, vol. 4 (1895- 6), p. 10.

Primary sources contained in a secondary source:

Primary sources contained in a secondary source – for example, a letter or photograph published in someone else's book – should be cited as follows:

Description of document, in First name Last name (ed.), *Book Title*, vol. volume number [where relevant] (Place of publication: Publisher, year), p. page number(s).

For example:

'Heads of a plan' (1786), in Manning Clark (ed.), *Sources of Australian History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 72-5.

E. Marsden to Mrs Stokes, in Frank Crowley (ed.), *A Documentary History of Australia*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: Nelson, 1978), p. 64.

Unpublished primary material (contained in an archive or a museum collection):

Unpublished primary material – such as archival evidence – should be cited as follows:

Name of document, name of collection, file number/collection number, name of archive, place of archive, page number(s) [only if necessary].

For example:

Pacific Islanders Association Petition 1906, Department of External Affairs, 1906/6324, A1/15, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, p. 16.

A. W. Jose to Director War Staff, 19 March 1919, C. E. W. Bean Papers, Folder 115, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

Physical primary sources such as objects or paintings:

Primary sources like paintings and objects – for example, a piece of agricultural equipment in a museum – should be cited as follows:

The artist/creator's name, title of the work [or a description of the object if no title exits], date of creation, file number/collection number, name of location where it is housed, place.

NOTE: If sourced from a website, there is no need to add the URL.

For example:

Dick Roughsey, Mornington Island headdress, 1955, 2007.0045.0001, National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

Edited or translated primary sources:

Edited or translated primary sources should be cited as follows:

Author, title, passage or number of section, trans. Author(s) (Place of publication: Publisher, Year), page number(s).

For example:

Ralph Glaber, Histories, 3.18, trans. John France and Paul Reynolds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 125.

9. Repeated references

Secondary Sources:

For the second and all subsequent references to the same source you need only give the author's surname, an abbreviated version of the title, and the relevant page number(s).

For example:

1 David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 83.

2 Bain Attwood, 'Whose Dreaming? Reviewing the Review of the National Museum of Australia', *History Australia*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004), p. 279.

3 Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 84.

4 Attwood, 'Whose Dreaming?', p. 280.

Primary Sources:

For repeated references to primary sources, you should provide the title of the document, the file or collection number, and the relevant page numbers (if applicable).

For example:

1 Pacific Islanders Association Petition 1906, Department of External Affairs, 1906/6324, A1/15, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, p. 16.

2 Pacific Islanders Association Petition 1906, 1906/6234, A1/15, p. 16.

Use of *ibid* and *op. cit.*

The use of Latin abbreviations such as *ibid* and *op. cit.* was formally popular in referencing, but is now considered archaic. Do not include such abbreviations in your essay, instead use a shortened footnote as discussed above for repeated references.

Bibliography Conventions

The bibliography should include all works consulted for the essay. List them in alphabetical order by author surname (whereas footnotes list the authors first name first). Do not separate sources under different headings for books, journal articles and so on, instead list them together.

For books:

The citation style differs only slightly from footnotes. The only change required is that the authors surname should be listed first. For sources with multiple authors, only the first author should be listed surname first – the rest of the citation remains the same.

For example:

> Kiddle, Margaret, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961).

> Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London: Fontana, 1997).

For chapters in edited books:

Put author's surname first, and include page numbers (pp) for the complete chapter.

For example:

> Read, Peter, 'Shelley's Mistake: The Parramatta Native Institution and the Stolen Generations', in Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (eds), *The Great Mistakes of Australian History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2006), pp. 14-31.

For journal articles:

> Again, put author's surname first, and include page numbers (pp) for the complete article. For multi-authored articles, only the first author is listed with the surname first.

For example:

> Dingle, A.E, '"The truly magnificent thirst": An Historical Survey of Australian Drinking Habits', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 75 (1980), pp. 227-249.

For all other sources (internet, primary, etc):

You need only put the author's surname first. You do not have to list page numbers in the bibliography. If the author is an institution, such as the United Nations, you do not have to re-arrange the name.

For example:

> Dawson, Barbara. 'Colonial women in the Australian Dictionary of Biography,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (30 August 2012), http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/4/text26712, (accessed 23 February 2016).

> United Nations, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *United Nations,* (10 December 1948), https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/, (accessed: 25 November 2020).

The finished bibliography would look something like this:

BBC Documentary, 'Age of Ice – Ep: 1 | *The World of Stonehenge*', [video], Youtube, (BBC, 12 October 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqdhkuMTNWU, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

Catterall, Pippa, 'On statues and history: The dialogue between past and present in public space', *London School of Economics Blog,* (18 June 2020), https://bit.ly/2XwgB2B, (accessed: 12 January 2021).

Dawson, Barbara, 'Colonial women in the Australian Dictionary of Biography,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (30 August 2012), http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/4/text26712, (accessed 23 February 2016).

Nixon, Shirley, '*The Illawarra Trades and Labour Council in Depression, Recovery, and War, 1926-1945*' (BA Honours dissertation, University of Wollongong, 1984)

Read, Peter, 'Shelley's Mistake: The Parramatta Native Institution and the Stolen Generations', in Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (eds), *The Great Mistakes of Australian History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2006), pp. 14-31.

United Nations, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *United Nations,* (10 December 1948), https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/, (accessed: 25 November 2020).

Willard, Myra, *The History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

Avoiding Plagiarism: How to Quote and Paraphrase

1. Quotations:

Quotations should be used only:

• when they state pithily some point you want to make

• to show a point of view you support, or wish to critique

• in the case of primary source material, provide evidence for your argument

Use direct quotations sparingly. Excessive use of quotations, especially from secondary sources, is a sign that you are not thinking for yourself. Even when you agree completely with an author's argument, it is better to put the argument in your own words. After all, most authors have the luxury of several thousand words at their disposal to argue a case. You do not.

When quoting directly, place the quotation within single quotation marks (' ') and for quotations within a quotation use double quotation marks (" "). If you wish to use a quotation longer than a couple of sentences (50 words), indent the material quoted. When indenting, you do not need to use inverted commas. The fact that the material is indented shows the reader that you are quoting directly from a source. Quotes never appear in italicised font.

For example:

Discussing the racial politics of Federation in 1901, Stuart Macintyre argues,

Above all, White Australia was a denial of the country's original inhabitants. They were absent from the ceremonies that marked the advent of the Commonwealth. They were eliminated from the art and literature that served the new national sentiment ... Aborigines were even deprived of their indigeneity by the members of the Australian Natives Association, who appropriated that term for the locally born Europeans.2

As in the above example, any words you omit or edit out from a quotation should be indicated by three consecutive dots (i.e. ...).

Square brackets [ ] should be used to indicate words that have been added to the original quotation, often done to provide context, and words which have been altered within a quotation.

2. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing, or summarising in your own words what an author is saying, is usually preferable to quoting. You need to keep in mind where the idea comes from but try to put this idea into your own words.

Paraphrasing is a skill that is learned over time. It is an important part of essay writing as you are trying to condense an argument. It also prevents your essay from looking like a string of quotes stuck together with no argument of your own.

PLEASE NOTE: paraphrasing is not simply changing a word here or there, but providing a summary of the argument of another author. A common problem is a half-hearted attempt to change merely a few words, which leaves the passage essentially as an unacknowledged quote. This is known as plagiarism and strict penalties apply.

Here are two examples which attempt to paraphrase the following quotation from Hobden and Jones:

Given that Marx was an enormously prolific writer, and given also that his ideas developed and changed over time in significant ways, it is not surprising that his legacy has been open to numerous — and often contradictory — interpretations.3

b) A poor effort at paraphrasing:

Marx was an enormously prolific writer, but his ideas developed and changed over time in significant ways, so it is not surprising that his legacy has been open to many

— and sometimes contradictory — interpretations.4

c) A better effort at paraphrasing

Hobden and Jones argue that due to the fact Marx wrote so much over an extended period of time, scholars have different views about what his ideas mean, and sometimes these scholars will disagree with, or even contradict, each other.5

The problem with the first attempt is that while a few words have been changed, the syntax (sentence construction) and even the expression remain largely the same. This is effectively a quote, but it has not been acknowledged as such. Instead the student is attempting to claim as their own the work of two other authors. This is both intellectually dishonest and a form of plagiarism — passing off the work of others as your own (see below).

The second attempt is clearly reworked in the student's own words, but remains faithful to the sense of the original quotation and is acknowledged carefully.

Paraphrasing problems, if not deliberate, come from trying to write essays quickly and without adequate research. You always need to have some distance between your sources (from which you take notes) and your final essay (which is compiled from your notes). You should have your argument clear in your head and in a draft plan before you begin writing.

3. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work without proper acknowledgment. It may consist of:

• copying another's argument

• reproducing significant portions of material from a source that is not properly acknowledged

• copying material submitted by another student

Sometimes students may unintentionally plagiarise material. For example, if you quote the actual words of an author without indicating that the passage is a direct quotation by using indentation or inverted commas, yet footnote the passage, it is still plagiarism.

Plagiarism is often the result of poor study methods. The practice of writing notes copied word-for-word (verbatim) from a source as you read is a dangerous one. It is easy to forget that the notes are verbatim and to use them as your own. The only parts that you should copy verbatim are those absolutely delightful, pithy, witty, or incisive turns of phrase that cannot be bettered. When transcribing, always put them in quotation marks and note the relevant page number(s).

As a rough rule of thumb, when writing your essay or tutorial paper, it is better to over footnote than run the risk of unintentional plagiarism.

The minimum penalty for obvious plagiarism is failure of the submitted piece of work. If the case is serious enough, plagiarism can mean a failure in the subject and even expulsion from the University.

Ignorance is not an adequate excuse, neither is the claim that you have provided a reference. You must make sure that you always use your own words (except when quoting directly), that you acknowledge when you use the work of others, and that you avoid plagiarism at all times.

Please take the time to read the university policy on plagiarism. Further information can be obtained from: http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058648.html

General Advice for Essay Writing

An essay

• is an exercise in presenting an argument, within a prescribed length;

• requires you to assess and weigh evidence;

• should present a case;

• must express its argument in your own words;

• is neither a narrative, nor a chronology;

• should not consist of a series of quotations or paraphrased passages from various sources.

1. Question and Sources

Read the question carefully. What exactly is it asking you? Do any terms within the question need definition?

Analysing the question is the first step in essay writing, but you may find your initial response has to be modified or changed after you have done some reading. It is therefore important to continually ask yourself if you have defined the topic correctly, and if you really understand what you are being required to do. Misinterpreting the question is frequently the reason for a poor essay. This usually indicates that the student has not given sufficient thought to what was being asked.

As you write your essay, remember that you are being asked to do specific things with a specific topic. You are being asked, for instance, to explain, or assess, or evaluate, or account for, or discuss particular events, developments, or phenomena. You are not being asked to only describe what happened in a particular historic period, or merely to demonstrate how many facts you can collect about a certain topic.

You are usually expected to construct your own bibliography (or reading list) for an essay. Most essay questions are based, in part, on tutorial topics. The reading lists contained in the subject outlines or posted on the subject websites provide a good start, but they are not exhaustive.

Relevant material in other books and articles can be found by consulting:

• footnotes in books and articles listed in the reading guides

• bibliographies

• library databases

Remember, the Library staff are always available to help you, so ask them.

Undergraduate essays are primarily based on secondary sources. Where relevant, primary sources may also be used.

• Primary sources are those produced by participants and personal observers of events being studied, or are unpublished manuscripts. These include official records and privateobservations written at the time, newspaper articles, parliamentary debates and papers, contemporary statistics, etc.

• Secondary sources are those written by people after the event, usually other historians. So, for most subjects in the History Program, secondary sources will consist of books, book chapters, journal articles and substantial academic websites.

It is easier to approach an essay topic by reading the more general secondary texts before the more specific texts.

2. Note Taking

When taking notes from different sources for an essay, try to keep them succinct. This especially applies to the use of secondary sources.

• Do not transcribe whole passages from a secondary source or paraphrase secondary sources too closely by merely changing one or two words. You may inadvertently reproduce these passages in your essay without the proper acknowledgement.

• Read and summarise what your source is saying in your own words. This helps you understand what the arguments and ideas are actually about. Occasionally, a source will summarise exactly what you want to say. If this is the case, copy the material word-for-word and place quotation marks at the beginning and end of the transcription.

All essays require you to cite source material using footnotes. This requires you to identify both the source used and the page number from which the information was taken. The principles governing footnoting are discussed above, but there is a simple technique which will make the task easier. When taking notes for an essay, head the page with the full bibliographical information needed (see below); whenever you note down a direct quote or proceed to paraphrase a section from the source, be sure to note the page number(s).

By following this note-taking method, you will hopefully eliminate the last-minute frustrations of chasing up missing page numbers as you finalise your essay for submission, as well as protecting yourself from the possible charge of plagiarism.

3. Structure

An essay has four major components:

- Introduction
- main body
- conclusion
- bibliography

Introduction:

The introduction sets out the problem to be discussed and includes relevant definitions of terms used in the essay question. As a good rule of thumb, start with an opening sentence or two that restates the question as a statement. Then present the definitions and explain the scope of the essay. In another sentence or two, give a summary of the main points that will be discussed, stating clearly 'In this essay I discuss ...' or 'In this essay I argue ...'. Be as direct as possible.

Main body:

The main body argues your case, using evidence to support your line of argument. In making an argument it is useful to think of yourself demonstrating a point in a way that shows you are in control of your information, that is, you understand it and its implications. Remember to link main sections and paragraphs with a transition sentence (usually the first or last sentence of a paragraph). Try to restrict yourself to one main point/idea/issue per paragraph.

Conclusion:

The conclusion draws together the threads of your argument. Here you summarise the major issues, not adding any new material. The conclusion places the topic in a wider context: what could be the implications of your findings? Do they raise further issues to be addressed?

Bibliography:

Please see the detailed advice listed earlier in this guide.

The essay itself should be written in clear, concise and grammatical prose. Plan the essay with care. And remember that you may require more than one draft before the essay is ready for submission.