Politics Postgraduate Campus
Student Presentation & Style Guide

Session 2016-2017

• MA in Human Rights & Global Ethics
• MA in International Relations & World Order
• MA in International Security Studies
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Introduction

This guide aims to offer advice to enable you to improve the quality of your assessed work. It also contains detailed information on appropriate conventions for referencing your written work. Additional advice is available in a number of places, for example the University of Leicester’s interactive Study Skills site: http://www.le.ac.uk/oerresources/ssds/studyskills/index.htm and http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/careers/ld/index

Politics and International Relations has a preferred style for assessed work which you must adhere to in all cases. This guide provides details of the style you must adopt in all the work you submit.

Students need to ensure that all essays conform to the style guide, as set out below. Essays that do not conform to the guidelines will have marks deducted, because the essay will have failed to meet the standard of presentation required of academic work submitted.

Essays submitted with one or more of the following will be penalised:

- an incomplete bibliography;
- incomplete citations without including page number(s) where necessary; and
- web-page citations without the full address and date when accessed.

Finally, students must demonstrate their familiarity with, and understanding of, at least some of the material recommended on module reading lists. Students do not have to use this material exclusively, but if you submit an essay that does not draw on any, or only very little of the reading material, it risks failing to properly engage with the relevant academic literature and debates on the topic. This is likely to affect the quality of the essay and consequently the mark awarded to it.

All Assessed Essays and Dissertations MUST BE word-processed.

Type should be double-spaced throughout except for indented quotations, endnotes or footnotes and bibliography. Pages should be numbered consecutively and you must begin your bibliography on a new page at the end of the assignment. Make sure your STUDENT REGISTRATION NUMBER is on the front page of your essay along with the module number and the question that you are answering. Do not include your name.

Open-access computer laboratories are provided in most of the main teaching buildings and are available for your use throughout the day, and in some cases, the night. The campus network, which extends to many of the University buildings off campus, provides high-speed access to the central computer systems supporting a wide range of standard software applications, and to the outside world through e-mail and the Internet via the Eduroam network.

If you wish to make use of the computer laboratories at night and at weekends, you will need to obtain a Swipe Card to enable you to gain entry to locked buildings after hours. Students should see The Postgraduate Administrator for a form. You will need a £5.00 deposit to obtain a Swipe Card.

This guide covers most common points and questions regarding style. You will make a very good first impression with your work if it is well presented and follows these simple instructions.

Note Taking

In order to complete any MA course it is vital to produce a set of notes, taken from seminars, books and articles. Remember that there are no lectures at MA level, and you should not rely on tutors to give you all the information you need. You must develop your own knowledge through reading, discussion and note making. These notes must eventually provide you with the necessary interpretations, arguments, facts and academic debates with which to answer essay and exam questions during the year. The purpose of this section is to give some general hints on how to go about writing notes. As with essay writing it is impossible to make any hard and
fast rules about note making. Everyone will write different notes on the same book or on the same seminar. Notes need to suit your own taste, and very different approaches can be equally effective.

It is important to realise that you should not try, and do not need, to be equally expert on all the topics covered by any given course. Whilst using seminars to provide your overview, and basic platforms of knowledge and ideas, you should always aim to specialise and read deeply into those topics which interest you the most. It is vital that you engage throughout each module with the original academic theories, debates and perspectives. Go well beyond textbook treatments.

Ultimately a set of notes, on each of the topics you have chosen to cover, should be:

- comprehensive enough to answer a range of questions fully;
- easy to understand - usually by being divided into several major headings, each of which may have a number of sub-headings, and with a wide range of short, clear analytical points, backed up by some selected factual illustrations (dates and events, or statistics, etc). In any notes you should include a form of shorthand as far as possible, e.g. UK for Britain; gov for government; WW2 for Second World War; 19thc for nineteenth century;
- a mixture of arguments and facts, but with the emphasis on argument and analysis. This will ensure that the assessed essays you write are also based first and foremost on analysis of competing perspectives and academic opinions. Notes should avoid mere chronology. Dates and events should ILLUSTRATE an argument, NOT become a substitute for it.

Your notes will come from two main sources:

1. Academic Books and Articles (using Bibliographies) - These are clearly vital in order to explore the views of political scientists, but they can be complex and long. The problem here is scale: there are numerous books and articles on any bibliography and each can lead to long, detailed notes. You need therefore to be selective, both about the number of books and articles you read, and what you note about them. No one expects you to read all the books on a reading list: reading lists need to be quite long however to prevent too much competition between students for a few books.

Regarding the number of books to read: be guided by the module reading list and any advice that tutors might give. It is wise to read one up-to-date general text or introductory article first, because it should sum up the state of debate on an issue and draw out the main points. But you should then move on to a few more detailed studies, until you feel that you have a sound understanding of the major problems on any subject, and are able to write a fair answer to any essay question you have been asked.

On individual books, don’t simply read everything from cover to cover: some books are worth reading as a whole but generally you should use books selectively, looking only at sections that are relevant to your needs. You need to distil from books their main arguments, to note down some factual illustrations that back arguments up (dates; events; actions of key characters; statistics; etc.) and sometimes to write out key, telling quotes (but make sure these are properly referenced).

It can be difficult to understand the main arguments of a large book at first and the problem is always what exactly to note down. To some extent this requires practice, but it is possible to distil the main arguments from a book by reading either the introduction, or the conclusion, or the introductions and conclusions to individual chapters. At these points almost every book contains a summary of its main points. Once you are aware of the main arguments, then any subsidiary arguments and any illustrations or good quotes should also begin to stand out.

Some students believe in ‘skip-reading’: they simply read the first sentence of each paragraph. In some books this may not be a bad idea but in general it is a rather crude way of going about things! However it can be useful to skip-read a book at first in order to get the gist of what it is saying - then go back and read it in greater detail.
Again, practice should enable you to keep notes on books to a minimum. But initially you may find yourself writing down debate more than the essential arguments and illustrations. It may be wise to practise writing notes with an article rather than a book, because articles can be just as valuable as books but are shorter, give a precise idea (in the introduction) of why they were written and usually make their main arguments clear in the conclusion.

‘Primary’ source materials such as diaries and memoirs by those involved in events, or collections of documents, can be used to reinforce and illustrate arguments, and can help to bring events to life, but they also may be biased and have a limited perspective. On the other hand, they may contain lots of ‘unwitting testimony’ about the life, times and society in which they were written.

After reading several books and articles you should be able to distinguish several approaches to a question. It is then vital to note down these differences: it is of course vital in essays to show that you understand different schools of thought on an issue, the various arguments used to back them up and any differing interpretations of evidence. Whatever the source, be very clear about whose words you are quoting, when noting down other peoples’ words from a book, article, or in a seminar.

2. Seminars

Seminars are the main taught elements on taught Masters courses. They can normally be expected to cover the main lines of debate on a topic, provide some clarity on the key fault lines in a debate over complex issues, and help student understanding of key terms and academic theories. The key piece of advice here is: ALWAYS WRITE DOWN THESE MAIN ARGUMENTS AND POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG SCHOLARS, e.g. over definitions of a key word or concept.

Think: why do scholars disagree? Where do I stand in this debate? Where would I look to test my opinions? Have I garnered a balanced range of evidence? It is tempting to write down dates, events and other facts, and it is important to have a basic grasp of these. But, the arguments and critical analysis matter most. Arguments might be more difficult to grasp than facts, but you need to develop the ability to note them down. Sometimes it is advisable to stop writing and listen to the arguments for a time.

In seminars, students will be expected to explore and debate key issues and arguments. This requires preparation by all students. Those who do not prepare adequately for a seminar will not understand or be able to contribute to the debate and if only a few people contribute to the debate, its value as a chance to explore and clarify issues will be diminished. Everyone should try to read AT LEAST two or three items from the reading list before a seminar. The main purpose of seminars is to talk and think, and so the amount of notes you can take will vary and may be only half a side or so. It will depend on the quality of discussion and its coherence. It can be difficult to follow the drift of debate, even if everyone tries to make relevant and sensible points, and the discussion will never be as coherent as a book. Neither is it a lecture, though it is likely to begin with a paper presented by a student (which should be accompanied by a short summary hand-out) and this may have some features of a lecture. It should not become a monologue by the tutor, however short the students are on ideas.

Seminar Papers

All modules are assessed in part by a seminar paper (the structure of this is slightly different on PL7093). Please see Blackboard for guidance and advice on critical reading and writing.

Assessed Essays

Essay Writing Workshop and Assessed Essay Plans

Embarking on your first piece of assessed work at postgraduate level can be daunting, especially for students whose first language is not English or who are not used to essay work as a form of assessment. To help you
through some of these difficulties, we hold an Essay Writing Workshop early in the first semester. Details concerning date, time and venue will be circulated by the Postgraduate Administrator nearer the time.

You will also be asked to submit one-page essay plans for each module. These are not part of the formal assessment of the module, but are a vital opportunity to get written feedback prior to submitting your essay.

If you are unsure about expectations of academic essays in Politics and International Relations, particularly in a UK university setting, see the dedicated essay skills section in Part 3 of Oliver Daddow, *International Relations: The Essentials* (SAGE, 2013).

**Dissertations**

**Dissertation Handbook and Workshop**

You will receive a dissertation handbook in January, which will contain a wealth of information about the requirements for, and assessment of, the dissertation. There will also be a dissertation workshop in January.

**Referencing**

This is used to indicate the source of information, ideas and direct quotations in your essays. This includes books, articles, discussion papers, newspapers, government documents, official publications, web-sites and so on.

The Library and Student Learning Development Team provide useful guidance on referencing and on useful software that can help you accurately format your references:

http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing

**Quotations**

Using quotations allows you to cite directly the ideas of others by using their own words. It enables you to support your argument by quoting directly from a comment made by, for example, a public figure. You may also copy a particularly good phrase or term from an author by putting it in quotation marks and giving the source in a footnote.

If a quotation is less than three lines long, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text. For example (using the footnotes system of referencing):

Following the Potsdam talks, Attlee told Churchill that Britain was “powerless to prevent the course of events in the Russian zone”.¹

If a quotation is more than three lines long, separate it from the text so that it appears as a separate paragraph. Start the quotation on a new line two lines down and leave two lines of space between the last line and the new line of text. Indent 2cm from the left and right margins. The whole quotation should be single-spaced. For example (using the Harvard referencing system):

Of late years it has been the fashion to talk about Gandhi as though he were not only sympathetic to the Western left-wing movement, but were integrally part of it. Anarchists and pacifists, in particular, have claimed him for their own, noticing only that he was opposed to centralism and State violence and ignoring the other-worldly, anti-humanist tendency of his doctrines (Orwell 1954, p.181).
When using quotations, please take note of the advice on plagiarism in the Postgraduate Student Handbook. In particular, you must be careful that you do not use so many direct quotations from a source, even if you cite them correctly (with quotation marks and proper references) that too little of the work constitutes your own work. Frequent quotations of large amounts of text may represent poor scholarship on the basis that we expect you to write up your findings largely in your own words rather than relying on those of others. Too much reliance on direct quotation will result in a reduction in your mark. If you are concerned about this issue, your tutors will be able to advise you.

**Referencing style**

We suggest that students use the author-date (Harvard) system.

Please have a good look at this style here:

http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/author-date

As an alternative, we do accept referencing using footnotes: http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/footnote

In either case you must take care to follow the precise conventions.

**Bibliographies**

It is essential to include a bibliography with full references to the sources cited in alphabetical order of authors. The precise format depends on which of the styles, above, you opt to use.

ALL sources cited in the essay must be included in the bibliography. A detailed and full bibliography is particularly important when using Harvard referencing, as without it, the reader has very little information about the sources used.

The Bibliography SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED in the word count.

**Referencing and Academic Integrity**

Principles of academic integrity apply to the work of everyone at the University, staff and students alike, and reflect the University’s commitment to maintaining the highest ethical and academic standards. A key part of this is acknowledging where and when, in the process of producing your own work, you have drawn on the work of others. In practice, this means that the ideas, data, information, quotations and illustrations you use in assignments, presentations, reports, research projects etc. must be credited to their original author(s). This process of crediting the work of others is achieved through referencing (see the section below on ‘Referencing styles’). Failure to do this properly is to risk committing plagiarism: the repetition or paraphrasing of someone else’s work without proper acknowledgement.

**What we mean by ‘plagiarism’, ‘self-plagiarism’ and ‘collusion’**

Plagiarism is used as a general term to describe taking and using another’s thoughts and writings and presenting them as if they are our own. Examples of forms of plagiarism include:

- the verbatim (word for word) copying of another’s work without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- the close paraphrasing of another’s work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, with or without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another’s work;
- the presentation of another’s concept as one’s own;
• the reproduction of a student’s own work when it has been previously submitted and marked but is presented as original material (self-plagiarism).

Collusion is where work is prepared or produced with others but then submitted for assessment as if it were the product of individual effort. Unless specifically instructed otherwise, all work you submit for assessment should be your own and must not be work previously submitted for assessment either at Leicester or elsewhere. For more detailed information on how the university defines these practices, see also: [www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/plagiarism](http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/plagiarism)

The University regards plagiarism and collusion as very serious offences and so they are subject to strict penalties. The penalties that departments are authorised to apply are defined in the Regulations governing student discipline (see [www.le.ac.uk/senate-regulation11](http://www.le.ac.uk/senate-regulation11) ‘Plagiarism and collusion: Departmental penalties for plagiarism and/or collusion).

Perhaps the best way to try to describe some of the dangers in this area is to take a concrete example. Consider the following passage:

“Yet events between 1989 and 1991 did not guarantee an easy future. Political reform in Eastern Europe had come swiftly but economic changes would be much more difficult to achieve and serious discontent was possible. Many were fearful of a new, reunited Germany.”


Compare the following hypothetical extracts from student essays:

(a) Yet events between 1989 and 1991 did not guarantee an easy future. Political reform in Eastern Europe had come swiftly but economic changes would be much more difficult to achieve and serious discontent was possible. Many were fearful of a new, reunited Germany.

(b) As events between 1989 and 1991 showed, there was no guarantee of an easy future. Although political reform in Eastern Europe had been swift, it would be much more difficult to achieve economic change. A new, reunited Germany was feared by many.

The first is a direct word-for-word copy, and everyone will be able to recognise it for what it is, but both are examples of plagiarism. The second version, as you will recognise, does little more than rearrange the wording of the original quotation. Neither gives any indication of the source of the points.

Now consider these examples:

(c) Young points out that although political reform came quickly in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, economic reform was likely to be much more difficult to achieve. Moreover, he points out that many feared the power of a reunited Germany.²

(d) There was considerable anxiety at the time of reunification about the potential power of a newly united Germany. Yet some commentators argue that there was actually little to fear from a reunited Germany.

Example (c) makes proper acknowledgement of Young’s work, but if your essays contains only this kind of paraphrasing, albeit properly referenced, it will not receive a very good mark. Example (d) shows how to present the ideas of others within a structured debate, and it is a much better way to go about things.

The distinction between properly referenced writing and plagiarism can sometimes be a grey area, but there are some general guidelines which will help you to avoid trouble in the form of accidental plagiarism. You will see that some of the trouble can spring from the way you take notes on a subject: in other words, problems can creep in long before you write up your essay. Plagiarism, then, is a charge of which you should be aware all the time.

Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Use your own words as far as possible when you are writing notes, as well as essays. Read the work of others but reflect on what they say, write down your own version of this, and draw your own conclusions about the cogency of their views. Make a careful note of page numbers of quotations and interpretations/opinions as they appear in the sources you read.

2. When making notes from sources, summarise the points as succinctly as possible. If you copy verbatim phrases/sentences/passages, make sure that (a) these are in quotation marks, so that when you come back to them later - perhaps weeks or even months later - you will remember that these are not your words; and (b) you record the name of the author, title of the work and page number of the source immediately afterwards. You should also make a note of internet sources when you access them – the webpage may not exist a couple of months later.

(a) Students sometimes think that they cannot express an idea any better than the author of an article or book. In such cases, you might want to include the words in your essay as a quote: if so, put it in quotation marks and provide a citation. However, do not let your essay become a series of quotes devoid of your own ideas and assessment. The vast majority of the words in an academic essay must be your own.

3. When you write your essay, impose your own structure on it. Do not follow the structure of another source or simply repeat the structure you gained from a lecture. Writing an essay plan before you begin work on the essay proper will help to organise your ideas and structure. In a postgraduate essay, we are looking for your assessment of the topic and the sources you have read. Essays that rely heavily on the structure and ideas found in these sources will not be a true reflection of your own thinking and will not

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receive a very good mark. Try to provide your own assessments of the topic and the material you have read. In Politics and International Relations, there is rarely a single ‘right answer’.

4. Make sure the essay contains references to the sources of any particular points you make. References should be made either using the Harvard in-text referencing system or in the form of endnotes or footnotes (either may be used, as long as you are consistent). Your references must be in line with the guidelines set out in this handbook and, in particular, should include relevant page numbers. It is not sufficient simply to include a bibliography with no references in the main body of the essay.

(b) Providing references is not a sign of weakness in an academic essay, but shows that you have read and understood key texts. References to academic texts can also lend support to your own assessments. Many cases of plagiarism can be avoided by proper referencing - when in doubt, cite your sources! You can never realistically provide too many references, but you can provide too few.

5. Make sure that the sources you have cited in the essay appear also in the bibliography at the end.

6. If you refer to a particular source which you found cited in another work, make this clear; do not claim to have read the original source if you have not. Take, for example, the following quotation which appears in Lowi and Ginsberg, American Government.

“Although the Three-fifths compromise acknowledged slavery and rewarded slave owners, nonetheless, it probably kept the South from unanimously rejecting the Constitution.”

This comes from a book by Donald Robinson, Slavery in the Structure of American Politics. However, unless you have actually read this book, which the person marking your essay may be inclined to doubt, you should carefully check the advice on secondary referencing on the appropriate webpage:
http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/author-date
http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/footnote

Use of Internet Sources

During the course of your studies, you are highly likely to make use of a variety of online resources. These may include the official sites of organisations such as the EU or the UK government, professional or personal websites, online versions of newspapers, electronic journals etc. You should be careful in your use of online sources, as many of the web pages you will find in your searches may not be appropriate for use as sources in academic work. This could be because some of the sources and materials that you will find on the web may have not been refereed and vetted by other scholars as an acceptable source for academic work, as most books and journals have been, or because the material is of a personal or overly political nature. If you are unsure about using a particular online source make sure your subject tutor confirms to you that it is an acceptable source before using it. Furthermore, students must ensure that they treat online sources in exactly the same way as other bibliographical sources, such as books and journal articles, by citing text that is directly quoted or paraphrased from online sources.

Remember that Wikipedia is NOT a valid academic source.