THE GREAT GUIDE TO
STUDY AT CQU NIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your studies with CQUniversity Australia. Learning at university and TAFE requires a range of approaches, with different skills required across various activities. Sometimes you will learn independently, while at other times you will collaborate with others in team-based activities. You will need to learn how to: make the most of online or in-class lectures, tutorials and other sessions; take notes; access and engage with resources and activities in Moodle (our online learning management system); and also learn about a variety of assessment types that we use at CQUniversity. As an individual, you need to find out what works best for you across these activities, and play to these strengths.

This guide offers suggestions and helpful advice. Importantly, it also provides links to additional information and resources in each section, plus a list of sources for further study in the final section so that you can find out more about each topic. This will help you to develop your skills as a lifelong learner so that you can continue to improve your abilities and knowledge beyond your university and TAFE studies.

Please make yourself familiar with the contents of this guide. We hope that it will support you throughout your studies and will help you develop the confidence to succeed.

CQUniversity wishes you well with your studies.
You will probably find that your studies at CQUniversity will be very different from those of high school. For full-time students, the time required is equivalent to a full-time job. Courses of study are taught and assessed as individual units, each of which has a specific code.

Each unit provides an outline of the main aspects of study through an online publication called a unit profile, which provides details of:

- the learning outcomes (what you will be able to do upon successful completion of the unit)
- a weekly study schedule and time commitment (to guide your learning)
- textbooks and other resources
- teaching contacts, and
- the assessment tasks including submission dates and other key details.

Given the time commitment required to make the most of your studies, it is important to develop effective planning and time management skills.

While at university, your aim should be to improve your critical thinking skills—searching for the facts and evaluating everything you read and hear, especially the opinions of others. You also need to develop your skills in providing evidence to support your views, by researching a topic and providing details of all sources of information used for a particular assessment task. The other sections of this guide provide advice and information on many of the key aspects of successful study.

In most instances, your materials and learning tasks will be available through the Moodle site. These may include recordings of lectures and other videos, so it is important to have regular access to a computer with reasonable speed of data transmission. You may also need to attend residential schools (short blocks of face-to-face learning at a particular campus) or you may have regular online conference sessions with your teachers. Please read each unit profile to make sure you know what is required for your successful learning.

Most of the material you will need for your learning will be available in Moodle. If you are a TAFE student, your material may be mailed out to you, made available in TAFE Moodle or provided to you in class. The remainder of this section gives some guidance on ways to enhance your learning.
UNDERSTAND THE KEY ELEMENTS OF CQUUNIVERSITY’S UNITS AND COURSES

Each unit has a unit coordinator who is responsible for the unit—in larger units, the coordinator will work with other teaching staff across several campuses. Every course has a Head of Course—your academic School’s website will give details of the key staff. When communicating with university staff, provide them with your name and student ID number and be specific with your enquiry—for example, give details of the unit code and name in an email or telephone call. For broader questions, contact the Student Contact Centre or your Campus/School staff. For higher education students, access the Orientation Online Moodle unit, which provides new students with further support, guidance and links to resources. Check out the University’s policies and procedures—you will also find links to the key policies in a section of your online unit profile. For TAFE students, your unit has a specific orientation that will help develop your understanding of what the requirements are to be a successful learner.

PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE DURING FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS AND ONLINE

Be active in your learning. Listen and ask questions; actively participate in class discussions, or through online discussion forums in Moodle; get involved in what is happening in the unit, including social and other aspects. Active participation is even more important for distance students, since it will enable you to learn collaboratively and feel less isolated. Use the discussion forums to interact with other students and to ask questions of lecturers and teachers. Residential schools are also a good way to meet other students and teaching staff.

USE THE STUDY MATERIALS FOR YOUR UNIT

There are a variety of learning materials you will be using for your study, including:

» Study guide: in some units, this will be the main resource to guide you in your learning, and may include links to online resources and websites.

» Learning resources: these will support your study, and may include links to journal articles and readings, problems/solutions, cases/examples, websites, etc. Your unit Moodle site will be set up to provide these resources in a structured way, so that you can make the best use of them during the term. The library also provides Course Resources Online and Library Guides for some units.

» Laboratory manual: for units with a practical component, this provides instructions for your lab classes, taken on a weekly basis or in block mode (residential school).

» Textbooks: used in some, but not all units. Your unit profile will advise if you are required to purchase any textbooks. If you are, they are available from the CQUUniversity Bookshop.

» Trades students will usually have workbooks, paper-based and/or electronic, which may require employer sign-off.
USE THE SQ3R METHOD TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR STUDY MATERIALS

» Survey: Look through the study guide or study materials and identify the main topics from the headings or the first sentence of each paragraph—this will give you the big picture of what is covered within the text.

» Question: Ask yourself, “What am I about to learn?” If the study material contains statements of aims, goals, purpose or objectives, these will help you answer this question.

» Read: Try to read actively for maximum retention and understanding. For example, read aloud to yourself (in private) so that you make use of sight, sound and movement.

» Recite: After each paragraph or sub-section stop, look away from the text, and repeat to yourself, either aloud or in your mind, what you have just read. If you cannot recite the key aspects, re-read the paragraph until you can.

» Review: When you have completed a whole section, go back and write down a summary of the main aspects of the section. Writing is an important means of processing information, and of learning.

PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES AND BE PART OF THE CQUNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

While your time at university is a serious commitment, it is also an opportunity to meet others and socialise. Online students will often interact online, building up friendships with fellow students through Moodle and social media. You may well meet other students who remain friends for life.

NEVER BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Staff across the University are there to help; you should feel comfortable asking questions of lecturers, teachers and others, who will assist whenever they can. Without questions, staff will not know what it is that you do not understand, and they will not be able to help you find the answers. It is also more than likely that your peers may also not understand. Never be afraid, we encourage you to ask anything.
MANAGING TIME AND TASKS

University and TAFE units can be described in terms of the number of hours required for engaging with the weekly study material. This includes time for your readings, reflection, unit activities, and doing your assessment tasks. However, it is equally important to realise that there are additional workloads that you need to consider when managing your time.

Family and work commitments and other life factors will impact on your time and will influence decisions you make about scheduling your studies. Learning how to balance these factors and how to manage your time is critical for your success at university.

The following will help you develop your skills in effective time and task management.

MAKE A PLAN AND STICK TO IT

Creating a time-based plan gives you something to work to. Start with a master timetable that covers all of the weeks in the University term. Make sure it is big enough to allow you to write or type into it. Fill in your assessment due dates, appointments, and block in study time by working back from assessment deadlines. This puts you on notice that you are taking your studies seriously. You are telling yourself that independent study time is as important as classes, job, family meals or other activities with fixed times.

Next, prepare a weekly planner that focuses on the key tasks and activities. Include some flexibility and contingency time within your planner—for example, it is a good idea to aim to complete your assessment tasks a few days or more before the final deadline. Once complete, put your planner somewhere conspicuous—for example, on a wall near where you study, as the first page of your ring binder, or on the fridge so your family/friends can help you stick to your timeline. You can also use the electronic calendar in your mobile phone or computer to help with key tasks and timelines.

GET ORGANISED

Be realistic about the time required to carry out tasks. A to-do list will help you to improve your task management. This can be prepared each evening after referring to your master timetable and weekly planner. It can be prepared on a notepad or on a computer or mobile device. It needs to be easy to carry around, so that you can record items as complete and make additions, as required. Your to do list can be as general, or as detailed, as you want. Its two main purposes are:

1. To remind you to do things; attend classes, appointments, meet deadlines, draft assessment tasks, etc.
2. To set priorities for the key tasks that you will do that day.
IDENTIFY YOUR TIME WASTERS

Success is all about using your time effectively. We all get the same ration of 24 hours a day 7 days a week. It is up to us how we use our time. There are non-study time-wasters that can take up a lot of your time, reducing the time available for study time. Keep an hourly diary of your activities as a reality check to make you aware of your time wasters.

Then take steps to either avoid them, or to keep them under control. From the perspective of effective study, your time wasters might include:

» Watching TV: be selective and plan your viewing.
» Partying: this can also have impacts afterwards if you are tired the next day.
» Browsing the web: this might include using social networking and online gaming sites, so you should set yourself strict limits.
» Commuting: this can consume a great deal of time, but may be advantageous if you can make use of the time.
» Work or sport: working or training for more than 15–20 hours a week can have a negative impact on full-time study. You might need to consider a part-time study load, or study across three terms.

LEARN TO SAY NO

Saying no to the less important things in your life is an important aspect of good time management. If you are tempted away from study by your friends or family, you need to use strategies to avoid temptation. Try putting a “Do not disturb” sign on your door/chair, or turning off your mobile phone. Try to study in a quiet place, where others know that you are not to be disturbed. Another strategy is to say to friends/family “I can’t come just at the moment, but I’ll be taking a break in half an hour, so how about a coffee and chat then?” However, sometimes you just need to decline and say no to avoid breaking the flow of your study.

SCHEDULE STUDY BREAKS AND REWARDS

It is important to make time for yourself. Break your study into chunks and work in short bursts, when your concentration will be at its maximum. After each burst of study, take a short break to help you assimilate the material and to avoid overload. Also schedule in rewards. For example, after a successful study session, reward yourself with something you like. You can even turn your time wasters into rewards, for example, by working on an essay and then rewarding yourself by watching a favourite TV program. After an exam or the submission of a major assessment task, try to schedule a larger reward, such as an afternoon with friends, a dinner with your family or whatever makes you happy.
WORK WITH OTHERS

Collaborating with others who are taking the same units can be an effective way to study, and can help with your motivation. By making the commitment to be involved in a face-to-face or online study session, you are less likely to cancel, as the others are relying on your support. You can keep each other going and offer suggestions, advice and friendly support. Even finding out that others are finding a particular topic difficult can help you keep going and be successful.

START: FIND WAYS TO BEGIN

Usually, the hardest part of time and task management is getting started. Procrastination—putting things off—is all too easy. If you find yourself falling into some of the symptoms listed below, then you may need to work on avoiding procrastination:

- Thinking about what you need to do, instead of doing it.
- Planning for too long, instead of making a start.
- Spending too much time on layout and presentation.
- Rescheduling tasks in your mind - saying to yourself, I’ll just do one other thing before I start. Procrastinators often re-re-reschedule, letting TV, emails or mobile phones distract them from the tasks at hand. This is the opposite of using such items as rewards and it will have a negative impact on your studies, unless you recognise and deal with procrastination.

It is important to find a way to start your task and break down any initial barriers. If you lack motivation, try to picture yourself walking across the stage in your cap and gown at your graduation ceremony, with family and friends in the audience, clapping. Or, use the reward system described earlier.

CONTINUE: FIND WAYS TO KEEP GOING

Once you make a start, it is important to keep going. Persistence is a quality that is vital to successful study, and to many other aspects of life. The motivational tactics described above can help you to keep going and be successful, as can effective time-management.

In order to persist and achieve success, it is important to think about tasks from a positive perspective. Try not to dwell on negative thoughts such as “I can’t do this because it is new and unknown” and focus on the positives like “I’ve tackled other new and unknown tasks before and have been successful, so I can do the same with this one.”
ACHIEVE A HEALTHY BALANCE

Whether you are studying part-time or full-time, studying at CQUniversity requires a balanced lifestyle, with a timetable that combines study and healthy recreational activities. Schedule time for regular physical activity, or take time to pursue your personal interests whether they are social, cultural or religious. These can also be used as rewards, for example when I have finished that essay, I’ll play tennis with friends. Overall, you need to sleep well, have a healthy diet and a positive outlook, to be happy during your time at CQUniversity. When you start to feel overwhelmed, talk to someone or focus on your future success and your recent achievements to help put things in perspective.
LOCATING SOURCES OF INFORMATION

To be successful at CQUniversity study, you will need to become ‘information literate’. This means mastering a set of six key skills that will make finding and using the right information for assessment tasks more efficient and more effective.

These six skills are:

» identifying the type of information needed
» planning the information search using the right tools
» gathering the information
» evaluating the search results
» managing the information ethically, and
» presenting the final assessment task in the correct format.

These skills will develop over time and your assessment tasks are designed to incorporate these skills over the course of your study.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE CQUNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Library resources and services are available online, wherever you are and whenever you need them. Including (but not limited to):

» Library Search: An online search tool that allows you to search most of the information sources held by the Library. Library Search will simultaneously search for: ebooks, books, book chapters, journal articles, DVDs, course resources online, music etc.

» Library databases: The Library subscribes to a wide range of individual databases across all fields of study. The Library provides a list of subject-specific databases relevant to your program. Using a specific database may be more appropriate than Library Search for some assessment tasks.

» Study and Research Tools: The Library publishes online guides which outline the different types of information sources related to your area of study. Information in these guides includes links to specific journal titles, relevant databases, professional associations, relevant websites and more.

» Course Resources Online (CROs): CROs are specific online resources made available within your Unit Moodle site as an online unit reading or supplementary reading. You can find out if your unit has any of these online resource types by searching with your unit code in Library Search.

If you need help to locate the right sources of information, call or visit your campus library, where staff will be happy to assist. See: http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/contact-us

For more information on developing these six key skills check out the University Research and Information Skills Moodle site: See: https://moodle.cqu.edu.au/course/view.php?id=2926

Use your Student ID to log in.

Library Search can be accessed at: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/library

For the list of databases available at CQUniversity Library, refer to: http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/databases-by-subject

Study and Research Tools can be accessed at: http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/

Find Course Resources Online via the Library page, search with your course code at: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/library
Your lecturers and teachers will provide guidance on appropriate scholarly sources for specific assessment tasks. For example, Wikipedia is not an appropriate source for university-level assignments and there is far more to it than simply Googling a topic or phrase and using information found in the first few search results. Learn to identify and plan which information sources and search tools you need to use for your academic assessment tasks.

**USING BOOKS**

Most courses at CQUni have prescribed textbooks and some also recommend supplementary textbooks. Find out more at: [http://bookshop.cqu.edu.au/texts.asp](http://bookshop.cqu.edu.au/texts.asp)

Or in your course profile, available from your Moodle site.

Details about borrowing Library Resources are located at: [http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/borrowing-students2](http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/borrowing-students2)

Academic texts provide background information on a topic, add breadth or depth to a topic, or help to place the topic in context with other important issues. This can include comprehensive accounts of research or scholarship, historical data, overviews, and expert views on particular themes or topics.

Your unit profile will indicate if a specific prescribed text is required. Library Search can be used to check if the Library has a copy you can borrow. However, purchasing your own copy is highly recommended as there are only a set number of texts available from the Library and short term borrowing limits apply.

If you don’t know the title of a specific book, you can use keywords based on your assessment topic (e.g. organisational behaviour, artificial intelligence) to search Library Search. Search results will include ebooks, hard copy books and book chapters.

**USING JOURNALS**

The Library produces a range of Library Guides to help you to select and use information sources. See: [http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/](http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/)

A scholarly journal is a collection of articles written by specialists in the discipline and is written to inform, report and make original research available to the wider academic community. Most journals are now published online, rather than in print. Use journals to find:

> original research on a topic
> reviews/overviews of research conducted on a specific topic
> factual documented information to reinforce opinion/position, or
> information about a very specific aspect of a topic.

Most scholarly journals are evaluated by other experts in the field before being accepted for publication. This process is called peer review, and ensures the validity of the information published. It is important to note non-peer reviewed content such as editorials and reviews may also be included in scholarly journals.

You can check if the Library has access to a specific journal by searching the journal title in Library Search (e.g. Early childhood education journal).

Most assessment tasks require you to reference a minimum number of journal articles based on a specific topic (e.g. leadership, cybersecurity). You can use Library Search, or one of the journal databases relevant to your program, using keywords in your assessment topic and specific refinement tools to find the most appropriate information for your task. The University Research and Information Skills Moodle site can help you with developing these search skills.
USING REFERENCE SOURCES

Reference sources offer an enormous amount of concise information: background information, topic overviews; information about important dates, events, and people associated with a topic; terminology and definitions related to a topic; details of sources for further reading. The main types are:

» Dictionaries: Subject-specific dictionaries provide definitions and basic explanations about words used in a particular field, e.g. The Oxford Dictionary of Psychology.

» Encyclopedias: These are grouped into two main types: general encyclopedias and subject-specific encyclopedias. Subject-specific encyclopedias can be a useful starting point if you need background information or an introduction to a topic. They are written by experts, and as well as articles, overviews and explanations may also include maps, diagrams, graphs, illustrations and other reference materials.

» The Oxford Reference Online collection provide access to a wide range of online dictionaries and encyclopedias e.g. The International Encyclopedia of Education.

USING NEWSPAPERS OR ONLINE NEWS

These record daily news stories at local, national and international level and can be quite useful information. However, it is important to appreciate that these are not primary sources, since they are written by journalists rather than specialists or experts.

Developing your evaluation skills will help you look for signs of prejudice or editorial bias. The Library subscribes to various specific newspapers - e.g. Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Australian etc. You can use Library Search to locate specific newspapers. Use search engines such as Google to find online news websites – e.g. www.news.com.au.

USING WEBSITES

Anyone can publish anything on the Internet and often information is neither checked nor peer-reviewed, therefore expect that information could be inaccurate, biased and/or out of date. There are many reputable websites providing up-to-the-minute news and information about current events, trends and controversial topics. Others contain government publications, research reports, conference/workshop/symposium papers, maps, and other resources.

Therefore, it is very important to develop your identifying and evaluating skills to assist you when searching for scholarly sources on the web. Google Scholar is a free search engine that can be used to search for scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed papers, theses and books.
All levels of government, from local to international, publish a variety of documents including parliamentary papers and records, legislation, census data, reports, and papers on specific topics.

Government information is generally regarded as authoritative, current and reliable, and can be used to: identify professional regulations and legislative requirements; provide insight into various events; report on national programs and topics subject to government inquiry; and provide statistical information.

Many government documents are now online.

**NEED MORE HELP?**

The Library provides a range of online resources and services to assist you with your studies:

» Library Guides will help you to identify the types of information sources of relevant to your course or unit.

» University Research and Information Skills Moodle site is the place to learn and practice the skills you need to find the best sources of information for your assessment topics.

» Ask a Librarian for assistance either face to face on your campus or online via Zoom. This service is available to all TAFE students, undergraduates, post-graduates and higher degree research students.

» Search our FAQs to see if your question has already been asked and answered.

You can also request assistance via one of several contact options.

If you need help to locate the right sources of information, contact the Library: [http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/contact-us](http://libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/contact-us)

Phone: 1300 666 620

In-person: ask at any Library Information Desk

Email: tasac@cqu.edu.au

Video Kiosks are available at all campus Libraries for IT help or to talk with a Librarian online.
EVALUATING SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Once you have located a particular source of information consider the following key questions:

1. Does the information meet the requirements of the task? E.g.:
   - Does the task require you to use particular types of information sources? (for example, peer-reviewed articles or primary sources).
   - Does the task specify a particular timeframe? (for example, a current analysis, historical perspective, or sources published in the last five years).
   - What is the scope or the task? (for example, broad coverage of the general literature, information on a specialised topic, or a discussion of alternative viewpoints).

2. Is the source of the information of suitable quality and reliability?
   Not all of the information you find will be suitable for use in your assignments. Using the following criteria can help you decide whether the information is appropriate for your task:
   - Currency: is the source up to date?
   - Reliability: how is the information and data validated?
   - Coverage: how broad is the scope?
   - Accuracy: is the information based on facts or personal opinion, and are any supporting references provided?
   - Authority: is the author an expert or specialist, with academic qualifications and recognition in the discipline?
   - Purpose: why was the information produced and who is the intended audience?

3. Other questions to consider:
   - Is the author of the publication an expert in the field?
   - What work or educational experience does the author have?
   - With which institution, organisation or company is the author affiliated?
   - Has the author written other publications? (check the library databases and Google Scholar)
   - Is the publisher well known?
   - Does the publisher stand to benefit directly from the research or argument presented in the book or journal?
   - Is the article peer-reviewed and published in a refereed journal (if important to your task)?
   - What sources did the author use? Check reference lists in journal papers.
   - Does the article address a topic from a certain time-frame and/or geographic area?
EVALUATING WEBSITES

Many websites are not subjected to the same evaluative and quality control processes used with traditional information sources such as books and journals. Information on web pages is also not stable, since it can be altered at any time.

Questions to ask include:

» What type of domain is in the website URL? For example .edu is an educational domain, whereas .com is commercial.

» Is it a personal website, or that of an organisation?

» Who published the website, and when was it last updated? You can Google the organisation, or author, to find out more.

» Are the author’s credentials and contact details listed on the website? Look for details at the top and/or bottom of the webpage to find out.

» What audience is the website aimed at? For example, Wikipedia is aimed at the general public and is generally not regarded as a scholarly source.

Find information about a publisher by searching for the publisher’s website using a search engine, and then looking for links that say About Us or something similar, for example, Cengage Learning, at: http://www.cengage.com.au/

For further guidance when evaluating websites, see: http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html

Watch a tutorial on evaluating websites at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_qR5lpnXBE
DEVELOPING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Once you have researched, located and evaluated sources of information, you will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of newly assimilated knowledge in your written assessment tasks. This usually involves following a particular academic style in your writing. Academic writing requires the use of more formal language than is used in everyday speech and text, which means no slang, no contractions (for example shouldn’t; won’t), no text message shorthand (txt spk) and no emotive language. It also involves demonstrating that you have used scholarly sources of information to support your narrative. Your spelling, grammar and punctuation should be accurate, your work logically structured, and your sentences and paragraphs well-formed.

During your time at CQU, you may be asked to write some of the following: annotated bibliography, case study, position paper, discussion paper, essay, book review, reflective journal and/or report. Each type has its own rules of style and format and it is important to find out about these before you begin—first check your unit profile and then consult your lecturers if you are unsure.

Before you begin composing your response to any assessment task, it is very important that you take time to analyse the question, topic or task you are addressing so that you know what to look for when reading and researching. The ability to compile a comprehensive set of lecture or tutorial notes will help you make sense of the information when it comes time to reading and re-writing for an assessment. A good set of notes will help with the writing of essays and will ensure that everything is said in your own words. Students who do not take lecture notes often end up copying material from books and the internet, which can lead to plagiarism.

WRITE USING COMPLETE SENTENCES

Academic writing requires complete sentences and precise language. Sentences are the basic building blocks of your writing; each needs to have a subject and a verb. You need to make sure that each sentence can stand alone and makes sense on its own. Reading aloud can help you decide whether the sentence is well-formed, with a clear meaning. As a guide, aim for less than 30 words per sentence.

Visit the Academic Learning Centre for further information at: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/services-and-facilities/academic-learning-centre

For more information on sentences, see: http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/writing/2b.html

For help with incomplete sentences, see: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/citation/fragments-and-run-ons
ARRANGE YOUR WRITING IN PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph is a series of around five or six sentences that are all related to a single point or idea. Typically a paragraph is about 200–250 words and starts with a topic sentence that states the main point you are making in that paragraph.

The other sentences in the paragraph should all relate to this topic sentence, providing additional:

» explanation
» evidence, and/or
» examples.

The final sentence in each paragraph should sum up the material on that aspect. It is often useful to revisit those final sentences when you write your conclusion.

There are different types of paragraphs. These include the following: cause-effect, problem-solution, thesis-illustration and comparison-contrast type paragraphs. These patterns differ in the way their topic sentences are written. For example, a cause-effect type paragraph might start with a topic sentence that states that a certain problem can be attributed to a number of factors. Similarly, a comparison type sentence will provide the aspect to be compared within the topic sentence, while a problem-solution type paragraph will start with a clear statement of the issue in the topic sentence and then seek to resolve it in the sentences that follow.

WRITING AN ACADEMIC ESSAY

Most academic essays follow a similar general structure, with three main components:

1. an introduction
2. a series of body paragraphs (the number will depend on the complexity of your topic, the information available and the word limit of your essay), and
3. a conclusion.

There is no need to use headings for these three components. An essay is one continuous piece of writing. Within each paragraph you must refer to (cite) the sources of specific information and ideas that you found during your literature research to support the topic that you are addressing. At the end of your essay, you should prepare a list of all sources (references), arranged alphabetically. If you compile a full record of your sources as you write your essay you will save yourself a lot of time and stress in the final stages of preparation. An academic essay will often contain an argument beginning with a contentious statement; the author will consider different viewpoints before arriving at a conclusion.

Use the assessment task details in your unit profile to structure your writing—these are available on your Moodle site.

Guides for CQUniversity’s approved referencing styles can be accessed via https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/services-and-facilities/referencing

For more on academic arguments, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/
WRITING AN ABSTRACT (SUMMARY)

Some essays and other assessment tasks ask for an abstract. This is a succinct summary of your essay and should state the following: the purpose of the assessment topic, the main areas/aspects covered, and the main conclusions/findings. It should be written as continuous text, without headings, numbers or bullet points (dot points). Most academic journals require authors to write an abstract for their papers, so these can provide useful exemplars on which to model your own writing.

WRITING A REPORT

Another type of assessment task you may be required to complete is a report. A report will often have a specific set of headings for the required sections. The section headings generally used in reports are: Title Page, Executive Summary, Table of Contents, Introduction (including aim, scope, background), Data Collection Methods, Data Analysis, Conclusions, Recommendations and References (check your unit profile for any specific instructions/headers).

Your writing must be formal and objective, rather than being based on your own opinions and unsubstantiated beliefs. Reports are generally more succinct and focussed, using graphs, dot points (bullet points) and graphics to explain things more succinctly. As with an essay, you should refer to all sources by citing them within your report and including them in the list of references.
REFERENCING

When you are preparing your assignments at University, you will usually need to refer to the work of other authors that you have consulted during your literature research. Each time you use information or ideas from a particular source, it is essential that you identify this by making reference to the source.

From a positive perspective, developing your skills in referencing will enable you to strengthen your academic argument and allows the reader (the lecturer/marker) to: see the depth and breadth of your research from the sources used; verify your work; and see how you have interpreted and applied the theories, ideas and research of others. Good referencing skills will be rewarded by higher marks in your assignments.

ESTABLISH WHEN YOU NEED TO USE A REFERENCE

A simple way to decide if you need to use a reference or not is to ask yourself, Did I think of this? If the answer is no, then it needs to be referenced—you must cite the source of the information. This includes information from books, articles, websites, DVDs, other print or electronic sources and any personal communications from experts/specialists. You also need to reference figures, tables, photos, diagrams and statistics. This is especially true of images cut-and-pasted from a website—if your written text is based on your reading of the work of others, then it needs to be referenced. If you are in any doubt in a particular instance, you should include a citation; it is far more common for students to under-reference than to over-reference.

PUT REFERENCES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

You need to consider the use of references in two places in your assignments. The first place is within each of your paragraphs. This is often referred to as in-text referencing, or citation; you will often use two or three references in a paragraph within the body of an essay. To convey a very specific piece of information, you can use a direct quote, which uses someone else’s exact words, but these should be used sparingly in your assignment. Paraphrasing—converting someone else’s ideas into your own words—is the preferred option; however, you still have to acknowledge your sources of information because, even though you have created the sentence, it is based on information from someone else.

It is important to pay great attention to these aspects of your work to avoid any charge of plagiarism (using ideas and words of another person and passing them off as your own).

Whether deliberate or unintentional, plagiarism carries severe penalties, and can be avoided by:

- Referring to (citing) all sources within your text, and listing them at the end.
- Using quotation marks for short, direct quotes, followed by details of the source, for example, “procrastination is the thief of time” (McGrato-Hill 2002, p.25).
- Using the correct layout for longer quotes: indent the whole section and use a slightly smaller font. For most academic assignments you should use quotes sparingly, since your lecturer will be looking for your analysis and personal input, based on the sources that you have consulted.
FOLLOW THE CORRECT REFERENCING STYLE FOR YOUR UNIT

Currently, CQUniversity has five approved referencing styles. These are: Harvard (author, date), American Psychological Association (APA), Australian Guide to Legal Citation, Turabian and Vancouver Style Referencing.

Check the assessment tasks in your unit profile to see which style you need to use, bearing in mind that it may differ for different units in your course.

ARRANGE REFERENCES IN THE CORRECT ORDER

The reference list is typically arranged in alphabetical order according to the author’s family name (surname), following the specific rules of the required style. Numbers, letters or bullet points are not used. If a source has no author, list it alphabetically according to the sponsoring body or organisation, for example, Education Queensland or CSIRO. Finally, If there is no author or sponsoring body, list alphabetically according to the title.

The following frequently asked questions are based on student enquiries:

» Is it sufficient to use a reference list with no in-text references?

No. There are two parts to the referencing process. First, each source is referred to in the text or main body of your writing, through citation (in-text referencing). Second, all the resources referred to in the body of your writing must be included in the reference list at the end of the assignment. The reference list and the in-text referencing must match. If a reference appears in-text it must also be included in the reference list and vice-versa.

» Do I have to refer to a source in each of my sentences?

Some of your sentences will offer your own example or a summary of the main evidence in the paragraph. You must, however, include an in-text reference whenever you refer to the work of others, including their ideas and theories, facts and information, and all statistics, figures and graphs. This would go normally at the end of the sentence where you first refer to the work. A typical paragraph within the body of your assignment normally would have in-text references in many sentences, excluding the first and last (the topic sentence and the concluding sentence).

» Are there differences between a reference list and a bibliography?

A reference list is a list of references you have referred to in the body of the assignment itself. In contrast, a bibliography (literally a list of sources) is only used for background reading and not referred to in the written assessment. You should aim to use a reference list, unless specifically instructed to supply a bibliography.

» How do I know if a journal article is a scholarly source?

Generally, a scholarly journal article would be in a peer-reviewed journal whose articles are only published after they have been approved by expert reviewers (referees). Most of the academic journals in CQUniversity databases are peer-reviewed, but magazines and news publications, such as the Business Review Weekly, are also included in some databases.

CQUniversity’s referencing guides are available online at: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/services-and-facilities/referencing/cquniversity-referencing-guides
ORGANISING REFERENCES

Trying to organise and manage lots of references for an assignment can be overwhelming. EndNote can help manage this task. All you need to do is download the software and take a tutorial. It can be frustrating at the start, but well worth the investment in time. CQUiversity has EndNote available for students to download and install on Windows and Macintosh. To get started follow these steps:

» Log into the Student Portal
» Click on IT Support under Student Support
» Go to Software and downloads
» Select EndNote
» Read the License Terms and Conditions of Use
» Follow the instructions for downloading a copy of EndNote to Windows or Mac.

TURNITIN

TurnItIn is a checking tool for originality. It identifies any text based materials you have used in your work, but you have no need for concern if you have referenced your information. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

Your submitted assessment automatically goes through TurnItIn and returns you with a report showing any similarity between your work and the work of others (including previous work by yourself). This report can assist you to avoid plagiarism, so be sure to check the report carefully and amend any concerns.
WORKING IN TEAMS

Group work is an essential part of life, both at CQUniversity and in the wider world. In fact, we all participate in group work throughout our lives, interacting with family, friends, schoolmates and colleagues. While social groups are different from work teams and study groups, they influence our approach to collaborating with others in more formal situations.

Team work can be interesting and rewarding, but can also be challenging and frustrating at times. Collaborating in groups at CQUniversity helps prepare us for the world of work and life. In addition, it can be an invaluable learning tool, as others in the group can provide ideas and support. Other benefits include making large projects more manageable, sharing skill sets and working together to solve problems. In your studies you may work in face-to-face settings or online groups. While these two modes are different in the ways in which interactions and collaborations occur, the general principles outlined below apply across both modes.

WORK OUT YOUR TEAM’S AIMS, PLANS AND RULES

At the beginning of your group activity, meet up with the other team members and decide on:

» The overall aims and specific objectives (a mission statement outlining what you want to achieve—seek help from your lecturers if you need to clarify any aspects of the team activity).

» A plan (this will be an initial outline, developed more fully during the early stages of the group’s activity).

» The ground rules and guidelines (for example, number and frequency of meetings, what roles are required in order to achieve your goals).

As the group becomes established, you can refer back to this document to ensure that everything is on track. You can update the document, for example to identify roles and responsibilities and fill in more details of the plan.

UNDERSTAND THE STAGES IN GROUP DEVELOPMENT

The main phases of group activity are often described in sequence:

1. Forming: this is the beginning phase, when the team first comes together. Members have not yet worked out their place within the group and may feel anxious about the task ahead. It is important to agree on an approach to tackle any disagreements.

2. Storming: this phase is the end of the beginning, where members share their ideas and roles emerge (team roles may either be specified by your teacher or lecturer, or more often, identified by the team).

3. Norming: by this phase, the group is now established and members are more aware of each other’s roles and characters. Personalities may become more evident and team roles are confirmed.

4. Performing: this phase is where productive work takes place, where tasks have been assigned and are carried out, issues are resolved, and members of the group feel free to engage with each other.

5. Adjourning (or mourning: this is the last phase of the group process, on completion of the team work. It is time to recognise the group’s achievements and to reflect on the process. Members may be sad, or glad, that it is over, depending on their individual experiences. After reflection and evaluation, it is time to move on.
APPRECIATE DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TYPES, INCLUDING YOUR OWN

In all groups, whether social or formal, most people will conform to certain roles and sociologists and psychologists have made extensive studies of these personality types. Some examples of team roles are: leader; organiser; encourager; worker; creator; analyst. While it is important to recognise a person's individual characteristics in terms of their role in the team, be very careful not to be too judgemental. It may also be appropriate to reconsider roles in the early phases, to enable some group members to take on new roles as the group develops.

Be considerate to others in your group; this will help ease tension and avoid conflict by creating a shared understanding of what is required. Be ready to compromise. Consider swapping roles or taking on positions which you have never tried before—you are likely to learn more when you push yourself beyond your comfort zone. You may also find that you need to take on more than one role if you have a particularly small group.

Consider the need for a mechanism for conflict resolution—consider incorporating ideas of fair work and open communication into your initial guidelines. It is far better to consider how best to deal with this in advance than to have to devise something in response to a disagreement within the group.

WORK EFFECTIVELY IN ONLINE GROUPS

Forming relationships in the virtual world is quite different from the real world. When speaking with others face-to-face we use many non-verbal communication cues to help us understand and to pass on our own messages. Consequently, online, text-based communication can be more challenging than speaking face-to-face. Remember what is written and posted cannot be retracted, so always read your posts and emails carefully before you send them. For very sensitive topics, consider drafting a response and waiting until the next day to re-read and revise, if necessary.

When communicating through online text: check your wording for hidden tones and potential misunderstandings; never post in anger; always look for spelling mistakes and ‘txt spk’; and try to leave your mouse pointer away from any clicks that may submit your entry or email before you are ready.

Online communication through video-conferencing or phone-conferencing has its own challenges. When using this approach for team meetings, decide on some rules of participation, for example:

» The team leader decides who is to speak next.
» Try to avoid interrupting or talking over each other.
» Speak clearly and slightly more slowly than you would for a face-to-face meeting.
» Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
» Try not to multi-task, for example, texting, or talking to others in the room.
GIVING AN ORAL PRESENTATION

Some units at University will require you to prepare and deliver an oral presentation. While this may seem daunting, it is a good opportunity for you to build confidence in speaking in front of an audience, and in leading a discussion about a specific topic. The process can be divided into three distinct stages:

1. preparation
2. practice, and
3. presentation.

The majority of your work is done during the first two stages, so that by the time you deliver your topic, you can feel well prepared and confident.

PREPARE EFFECTIVELY, TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

Unless your audience cannot read for themselves, you don’t need to do it for them. If you have to use the occasional quote or phrase, let the audience read the text for themselves. Aim for key words and phrases, rather than text-heavy sentences.

Prepare your presentation in broadly the same way you would prepare an essay, that is, research your given question or topic by locating, evaluating and reading through various sources of information, and then consider the position that you will take (sometimes termed your thesis). During preparation you should consider your audience’s knowledge on the topic. You need to pitch your information so that it is challenging but not overly technical. New terms need to be explained on first use.

The introduction and conclusion are especially important. One approach to starting a presentation is to find an interesting and engaging way to introduce your topic and grab the attention of your audience: perhaps a surprising fact or figure, or a contentious statement. Make sure that you also end strongly, with a clear concluding statement.

USE APPROPRIATE VISUAL AIDS TO COMPLEMENT YOUR PRESENTATION

The main difference between an essay and a spoken presentation is that a spoken presentation involves an additional visual element—including yourself, the speaker, and any additional visual aids that you choose to use. Visual aids can help to maintain audience interest and they can act as a prompt for the main elements of your delivery.

Presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint, is favoured by many students to create, edit and use slide shows based on images and text. In addition to PowerPoint, consider using the whiteboard, or taking along real objects. Remember that visual aids should enhance your presentation, not take it over.

Tips for preparing and using PowerPoint slides include: aim for 1–2 minutes per slide; keep the design simple—less is more; use images in preference to words; text, when used, should be in dot point form, with no more than 3 dot points of up to 6 words per dot point on each slide (do not write a script or you
will end up reading aloud to your audience); use a font size of no less than 36 point for title and 28 point for text; limit animations and clip art; label all figures and graphs; use references to cite sources, and include a reference list at the end.

**PRACTISE YOUR PRESENTATION**

Before your presentation, have several practices and maybe consider recording yourself. After practising a few times, consider possible improvements. It is a good idea to present to friends or fellow students and seek their honest feedback. Pay particular attention to the organisation of your talk, and memorising your main elements. Think about the approach used by effective speakers that you have heard, and whether any of their methods might work for you. Think about where you will stand in the room and where you will look—try to engage the whole audience across all parts of the room. Trial your equipment in advance. When practising your talk, focus on your pace and volume, timing, and room preparation.

**TACKLING THE BIG DAY**

Aim to be positive—your practising should have given you the confidence that you are ready to present. Choose appropriate clothing. Make good use of non-verbal communication—look around the room, use gestures when speaking, make eye contact and involve your audience. Remember that it is a presentation, not just a reading. Direct your audience and indicate when questions may be asked. Do not be afraid of difficult questions as it means you have inspired your audience. Open the topic up for discussion among the group. This can engage your audience and can often be a sign of a good presentation.

**WHAT NEXT?**

After the presentation, you should seek valuable feedback from fellow students and your teacher or lecturer. This will help you to improve for your next presentation. You should also evaluate yourself—how do you think it went? Do not be too critical as speaking in front of an audience is a challenging task. The skills you gain in presenting will also help you in lecture question time, class discussions and tutorials.
TACKLING ASSESSMENTS

Assessment is an important part of your TAFE or CQUiniversity studies. It measures your achievements against the intended learning outcomes of the unit and can diagnose your problems to help you learn more effectively.

There are several terms and definitions with which you should become familiar. Assessment tasks carried out during a unit are often termed assignments (e.g. essays), while end-of-unit assessment tasks are typically examinations (exams). Peer assessment is where you provide input on the work of other students, whereas self-assessment requires you to evaluate your own work.

UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

All units will have a number of assessment tasks that you will undertake during the term. Those most often used are:

» Written assignments: essays, dissertations and reports.
» Numerical exercises and mathematical problems where there is a formal correct answer.
» Practical assessments: often assessed from a written report, or by in-class observation of practical skills.
» Problem-based exercises: often investigated in teams to reflect real world problems.
» Oral presentations: talks on a particular topic, presented individually or as a group.
» Quiz: these can use different forms of questioning, including multiple choice, short answer and true/false.
» Exams: these can be closed book (no texts can be taken into the exam room) or open book where either (i) listed texts or (ii) any texts can be taken into the exam room.

FIND THE DETAILS OF ALL ASSESSMENT TASKS WITHIN YOUR UNIT

Start with the current unit profile—this will provide details of each assessment task, together with their weightings, due dates, topic description and assessment criteria. The unit website, in Moodle, may also provide additional information to help you get the most out of each assessment task. Make sure that you understand the size and scope of each task. Do not leave things to the last minute and make sure you submit it by the due date, as penalties are imposed for unauthorised late submission of assignments.

Based on circumstances and supporting evidence, you can request an assessment extension through the link within your unit Moodle site. An example is if you are ill when the assessment task is due. If you do not understand some aspect of the assessment process, ask your lecturer for further details—for example, through the online discussion forum in Moodle, or by email.
USE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA TO STRUCTURE YOUR WORK

Each assessment is worth a proportion or percentage of your final grade for the unit. Generally, the higher the percentage, the more time you should allocate to complete the assessment task. The unit profile should also provide details of the learning outcomes covered as well as the assessment criteria. These criteria and any marking scales are provided to help you focus on the main aspects of the task; use them to structure your work. For university students, many units are marked on a percentage scale (%), or as grades. It is vital to check each unit profile for details, but as a guide, grades are generally as follows:

» High Distinction (HD, 85% and above)
» Distinction (D, 75–84%)
» Credit (C, 65–74%)
» Pass (P, 50–64%), and
» Fail (F, 49% and below).

In some units, assessment tasks are graded on a Pass or Fail basis. For TAFE students, work assessments will be marked “Competent” or “Not Yet Competent.”

REVIEW YOUR WORK

After all of the effort that you have put into your assessment, it pays to allow enough time to check through your work and consider how well it covers the various aspects of the topic, and how well it addresses the assessment criteria.

To ensure that the content is appropriate and that technical errors have been picked up, read through your assignments twice before handing them in—once to check for errors of spelling and grammar and once to check content and meaning. Use spell check and grammar check functions to assist you, but avoid the American spelling of some words.

USE FEEDBACK TO LEARN

The valuable information that your lecturers provide on your assessment tasks will help you improve your next assessment and will help you develop your understanding of the topic material. You should make the most of feedback in units from the early part of your degree to help you do better in later units. Likewise, you can give feedback about your unit through the end-of-term unit evaluations.
TACKLING EXAMS

Many of the units at CQUniversity require you sit for an exam. Exam preparation helps you to revise and consolidate what you have learnt over the term or, in some cases, over the year. While exams can be stressful, thorough preparation will help you to stay calm and perform to the best of your ability and knowledge.

A good set of notes is important for exam revision. If they have been compiled properly they should be a comprehensive summary of what will be in the exam. Preparation should, to a large extent, involve revising and extending your notes.

DEVISE A REVISION STRATEGY

A good way to begin your exam preparation is to clear your work space. This is a new phase of the term. New learning has finished and it is now time for consolidation, revision and application. Prepare a revision plan, taking into account all the exams you have and the amount of time you will need to revise for each. Cover each week of term systematically. What were the key points, theories and ideas covered? Write a summary for each week, or each topic/aspect of the unit. Think critically about the unit content. If you were the lecturer of this unit, what questions would you ask to test if students understood? Form a study group to revise together, if this works for you. This can also serve as an environment to practise test questions. You might devise and ask each other questions about the unit content. Ensure that you check whether there are previous exams available for the unit. Complete the past exam questions and compare your answers with those in your study group. You can also collaborate with others if you are a distance education student—for example, by emailing, phoning, video calling, sms’ing, or instant messaging study group members.

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TAKE THE EXAM

You also need to prepare mentally for your exams. Make sure your revision plan includes breaks and rewards: for example, a swim, a run, a social event or a movie. It is important to remain motivated and to feel you are achieving your goals. When you feel tired, take a break. Also, make sure that you sit in good light and a reasonable distance from your computer. Revise well but do not overdo it. Know your limits! Try to remain positive—if you attended classes, and have understood and revised the content, you should do well.

Make sure you get enough sleep, both during your preparation and the night before your exam. Consider your diet too; you want to be well. Eat healthy food, drink plenty of water, and limit your nicotine, alcohol and caffeine intake. Make sure you exercise as much or more than you normally do. A jog or walk can be good for your body and concentration. Make sure you know exactly where your exam is being held, plan to arrive early, know exactly where your exam is being held and for how long.

Further info on exams is available at: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/exams-and-timetables
Contact Student Support Services if you require any special consideration during exams: https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/student-support/
CQUniversity’s exam procedures are outlined in the University’s Assessment of Coursework Policy (see under A) at: http://policy.cqu.edu.au/
Past CQUniversity exams are available in your My Units portlet in MyCQU: https://my.cqu.edu.au/
Or under the Assessment Information tab in each unit in the Handbook: https://handbook.cqu.edu.au/courses/index
Watch a student being interviewed about his top tips for the night before the exam at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk0ynsqBY2s
MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME DURING THE EXAM

Time will pass quickly, so be ready to use it effectively. Check the time before you begin and regularly throughout. Read the whole exam before beginning. Allocate appropriate time to the different sections. Do the sections that are worth more marks first. Write legibly. Ensure that you answer the question well: ask yourself “What exactly am I being asked to write about?” Leave some time towards the end to check everything before you hand in the answer book. Wherever possible answer every question that is required. If you become overwhelmed, try to stay calm and breathe slowly and deeply; take a short break and try to clear your head and get back on track.

Make sure you answer the question as properly as you can. At worst, and even if you are really unsure of what to write, make sure you write something - you might pick up some marks for it. You will get no marks for handing in a blank piece of paper. Above all, stay calm. Breathe deeply if you become overwhelmed, and re-focus. Reward yourself when your exam is done.

TACKLING DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXAMS

Online and open book exams are different from traditional closed book exams, where no additional materials are allowed in the exam room. In an open book exam, you are likely to have access to your unit materials. Your preparation should include bookmarking pages and re-familiarisation with your unit chapters, weekly topics and learning materials.

SOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Burns, T & Sinfield, S 2016 Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at University, 4th edn, Sage, London.


