

Editing your own work

Before you hand in any assignment it is important that you carefully edit it. This means checking it on a number of levels from correct grammar and punctuation to ensuring you have answered the question fully. Use the checklists below before submitting.

Have you answered the question?

One of the main reasons students do poorly in their assignments is because they have not fully addressed the question being asked. It is therefore important that you analyse the question carefully at the beginning of the assignment writing process.

	Yes	No
<p>Consider the:</p> <p>–directive words (what are you to do? eg. ‘discuss’, ‘analyse’) - have you done what was asked?</p> <p>–content words (what are you to write about?) - have you stayed within the content area asked in the question?</p> <p>–limit words (what limitations are required eg. in terms of time, place etc) – have you stayed within the limits of the question?</p> <p>One way to demonstrate that you have answered the question is to use key words from the question in your paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at your introduction. Does it include key words from the question? • Skim through the body of the text. Do these words occur throughout? • Does your conclusion contain these words? • Is each point you make relevant to the question? • Is your supporting evidence relevant to the question? 		

Have you followed the guidelines?

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your paper meet all the requirements you were to follow? • Is it an appropriate length? (Approximately 10% more or less than the required length may still be acceptable. Once you get beyond this you are likely to lose marks.) 		

Is the overall structure satisfactory?

Try to read your assignment as if you were the marker rather than the writer. This way you will be able to be more critical of your draft assignment. Many people find it easier to do the editing on a hard copy rather than from the computer screen.

	Yes	No
<p>Skim read to determine that you have a clear and logical structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -an introduction in which you provide the background and outline of the body? -clearly identified sections that correspond to a logical plan -a conclusion in which you sum up? • Do your ideas flow logically? • Is your connection expressed through appropriate connecting words and phrases such as on the other hand..., similar findings..., finally...? 		

Rewrite or re-organise any sections that are not complete and clear or which do not fit well.

Is it well structured at the paragraph level?

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you developed only one idea per paragraph? • Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence that states the point you want to make in that paragraph? • Do the other sentences in the paragraph relate to that topic, adding evidence, explanations, elaborations or examples from the literature? 		

How are your individual sentences structured?

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does each sentence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -make sense by itself -express one clear idea -contain a subject, a verb, and probably an object? • Is it neither too long nor too short? • Is each sentence grammatically correct? (For instance, are you consistent in your use of tense? If you have a singular subject is the verb also in singular form? Have you used articles with most singular nouns?) • Have you used appropriate punctuation? 		

Have you referenced correctly and consistently?

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you correctly included in-text referencing whenever you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -quoted -paraphrased -summarised? • Does each in-text reference have a corresponding item in the reference list? • Is your reference list formulated according to the required referencing convention? 		

What about your language use?

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your language appropriately formal (with no slang or contractions)? • Is the spelling correct (especially of jargon words and authors' names)? • Have you used inclusive language (avoided use of racists or sexist language and use of gender specific terms – e.g. instead of using 'mankind' use 'humankind' which is inclusive of both sexes)? 		

The final check

	Yes	No
<p>Read your assignment aloud and check for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your ideas flow logically from one to the other? • Are the sentences neither too long nor too short? • Can you find any typing mistakes or missed or misused words? • Have you overused particular words or sentence structures? • Does any of the language sound clumsy or inelegant? <p>Also check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you attached a cover sheet? • Have you clearly identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -yourself; your lecturer/tutor; the course name and code; the assignment topic; page numbers; the submission date? 		

Make sure that you keep a carefully filed copy of your assignment.

(Adapted from CLPD 1985 *Editing Your Own Work Learning Guide*, Adelaide University, Adelaide.)