

Improving your study, assignment and exam skills

This guide gives details of online resources and books in Oxford Brookes University Libraries which are relevant to improving your exam, assignment and study skills, particularly at undergraduate level. It is divided into nine sections:

- Study skills
- Academic writing
- Essay writing
- Report writing
- Presentations
- Exam preparation and technique
- Dissertation preparation and writing
- Plagiarism and referencing
- Upgrade study advice service

NB: The titles listed here may not be held at all three of our Library sites – please check the Library Catalogue (<http://prism.talis.com/brookes/>) to find out which titles are held at Headington, Wheatley and/or Harcourt Hill Libraries.

If the title you are interested in is not available at your closest Library site, you can use the 'reserve' button on the Catalogue and have the title transferred to another Library site.

The resources listed here are suggestions - you may want to check with your module leader or academic advisor if there are any specific resources you should use in your studies.

1: Study skills

General books

Burns, T. and Sinfield, S. (2008) *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at university*. London: Sage. 378.170281 BUR

Cottrell, S. (2008) *The study skills handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 378.170281 COT

Northedge, A. (2005) *The good study guide*. Glasgow: Open University Press. 378.170281 NOR

Payne, E. and Whittaker, L. (2006) *Developing essential study skills*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall. 378.170281 PAY

Books for mature students

Becker, L.M. (2009) *The mature student's handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 378.1980941 BEC

Dawson, C. (2006) *The mature student's study guide: essential skills for those returning to education or distance learning*. Trowbridge: How To Books. 378.170281 DAW

Pritchard, L. and Roberts, L. (2006) *The mature student's guide to higher education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. 378.19824 PRI

Books for part-time students

Gatrell, C. (2006) *Managing part-time study: a guide for undergraduates and postgraduates*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. 378.1980941 GAT

Wilson, E. and Bedford, D. (2009) *Study skills for part-time students*. Harlow: Pearson Longman. 378.170281 WIL

Books for international students

Lewis, M. and Reinders, H. (2003) *Study skills for speakers of English as a second language*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 378.170281 LEW

Lowes, R. et al. (2004) *The international student's guide: studying in English at university*. London: Sage. 378.19829 LOW

Reinders, H. et al. (2008) *The international student handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 378.170281 REI

Online study skills tutorials

A variety of free online tutorials to help improve your study skills are available on the Birkbeck University Study Skills webpage. You can find a full list of all the tutorials available at:
<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/subguides/studyskills/studyskillsweb>

2: Academic writing

Materials on improving your academic writing usually focus on two main areas – using correct English and your writing style.

Correct use of English means using punctuation and grammar to create coherent sentences that will help you to create a logical argument.

Writing style considers how you present your work – how you introduce the information that backs up your point of view, how you can link one point in your discussion to the next, how to create a flowing and easy to read discussion - to help you develop an effective and persuasive argument.

Books

Bailey, S. (2006) *Academic writing: a handbook for international students*. Abingdon: Routledge. 808.042 BAI

Copus, J. (2009) *Brilliant writing tips for students*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 808.066 COP

Creame, P. and Lea, M.R. (2008) *Writing at university: a guide for students*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. 808.042 CRE

Oshima, A. and Hogue, A. (2006) *Writing academic English*. New York: Pearson. 808.066 OSH

Rose, J. (2007) *The mature student's guide to writing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 808.042 ROS

Other titles on academic writing are available from the Library – search the Library Catalogue with the keywords 'academic english' to see these titles.

Online academic writing tutorial

A free online tutorial on academic writing is available on the University of Toronto website and is available at: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>

3: Essay writing

These essay writing materials focus on practical topics including planning ahead, targeted reading and note taking, different types of essay, creating a clear essay structure and editing draft essays.

Books

Godwin, J. (2009) *Planning your essay*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 808.066 GOD

Greetham, B. (2008) *How to write better essays*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 808.066 GRE

Levin, P. (2004) *Write great essays! A guide to reading and essay writing for undergraduates and taught postgraduates*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. 808.066 LEV

Other titles on essay writing are available from the Library – search the Library Catalogue with the keywords 'essay writing' or 'academic writing' to see these titles.

Online essay writing tutorial

A free online tutorial on how to write essays is available on the Birkbeck University website, and is available at: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/get-ahead-stay-ahead/skills/structuring_writing

4: Report writing

Books

Some of the books on study skills contain a chapter on writing reports, these include:

Burns, T. and Sinfield, S. (2008) *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at university*. London: Sage. 378.170281 BUR

Payne, E. and Whittaker, L. (2006) *Developing essential study skills*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall. 378.170281 PAY

Books specifically on writing reports include:

Bowden, J. (2008) *Writing a report: how to prepare, write and present really effective reports*. Oxford: How To Books. 808.066 BOW

Seely, J. (2002) *Writing reports*. Spain: Oxford University Press. 808.066 SEE

Other titles on writing reports are available from the Library – search the Library Catalogue with the keywords ‘report how write’, ‘report writing guide’ or ‘report writing’ to see these titles.

You can also check if there are any titles on writing reports in your particular subject – search the Library Catalogue with keywords like ‘report writing business’ or ‘report writing psychology’.

Online report writing tutorial

A free online tutorial on how to write reports is available on the OpenLearn website from the Open University. The tutorial is called *Essay and report writing skills* and is available at <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=398972>

5: Presentations

Books

Levin, P. and Topping, G. (2006) *Perfect presentations!* Maidenhead: Open University Press. 808.51 LEV

McCarthy, P. and Hatcher, C. (2002) *Presentation skills: the essential guide for students*. London: Sage. 808.51 MAC

Van Emden, J. and Becker, L. (2004) *Presentation skills for students*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 378.177 VAN

Other titles on preparing presentations are available from the Library – search the Library Catalogue with the keywords ‘presentations students’ or ‘presentations skills’ to see these titles.

Online presentations tutorial

A free online tutorial on how to prepare for presentations is available on the Birkbeck University website, and is available at: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/presentation-skills>

6: Exam preparation and technique

Books

Evans, M. (2004) *How to pass exams every time*. Oxford: How To Books. 378.170281 EVA

Levin, P. (2004) *Sail through exams! Preparing for traditional exams for undergraduates and taught postgraduates*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. 378.166 LEV

Tracy, E. (2006) *The student's guide to exam success*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
378.170281 TRA

Other titles on preparing for exams are available from the Library – search the Library Catalogue with the keywords 'exams success', 'exams skills' or 'exams pass' to see these titles.

You can also look at the general study skills books in section one as these often contain a chapter on preparing for exams.

Past exam papers

Copies of some past exam papers are available in all our Libraries. The papers that are not available in our Libraries have been prohibited from publication – this particularly applies to any exam papers that contain multiple choice questions.

At Headington Library past exam papers are kept on the shelves in the Photocopier Room on the Ground Floor. At Wheatley Library the papers are in Short Loan and at Harcourt Hill Library they are on the Quick Reference shelves.

Lists of the most recent exam papers held in our Libraries are available at http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/faqsanswers_exampapers.html

Online exam tutorial

A free online tutorial on how to prepare for exams is available on the Birkbeck University website, and is available at: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/get-ahead-stay-ahead/skills/exam-preparation>

7: Dissertation preparation and writing

For information on preparing and writing a dissertation pick up a copy of Library Research Guide 1: *Researching and writing a dissertation or project*. You can also access this guide at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/guides/researchingthesis.doc>

8: Plagiarism and Referencing

Information on plagiarism, including a definition of plagiarism and tips on how to avoid it, is available on the Library's plagiarism web page at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/skill/plagiarism.html>

On this web page you can also find information on PLATO – our online tutorial on understanding and avoiding plagiarism. PLATO is available as a self-registration course on the VLE in Brookes Virtual.

If you would prefer to look at a book for more information on plagiarism try:

Williams, K. and Carroll, J. (2009) *Referencing and understanding plagiarism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
808.02 WIL

For help with referencing the materials you use in your work, pick up a copy of Library Research Guide 2: *Citing your referencing using the Harvard (Author-Date) system* or Research Guide 3: *Citing your references using British Standard (numeric) system*.

You can also access these guides at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/guideintro.html>

9: Upgrade study advice service

Upgrade is the university's confidential study advice service for anyone who wants advice on study skills including:

- Time management
- Preparing for exams and exam techniques
- Effective reading
- Planning and writing assignments and dissertations

Upgrade have drop-in times at all the Oxford Brookes University sites where you can have a 10 minute chat with one of their tutors – you can find out about their opening times at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/upgrade/timetable.html>

Alternatively you can email Upgrade at Upgrade@brookes.ac.uk and arrange a longer 30 minute appointment with one of their tutors.