

Centre for Academic Development

Academic Jargon List

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is the principle of being honest and ethical when doing your work. It means your work should genuinely be your own and you should give credit to anyone else whose work you've used. [See our guide to Academic integrity](#)

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is a term that refers to all kinds of academic wrong-doing such as plagiarism or cheating. Misconduct is taken seriously and is usually investigated by the Student Investigation and Resolution Team (See 'SIRT' below). It can result in anything from a loss of marks in one assignment, to being dismissed from the University in rare and extremely serious cases.

Argument

An argument is the stand-point or judgement you have formed about the issues in your assignment question. In many assignments, you will have a main argument as well as supporting arguments. In academic writing, arguments should be based on evidence. [See our guide to arguments.](#)

Asynchronous (see also synchronous)

Asynchronous means at different times. It is a term often used in online learning to describe an activity that people can do at a time that suits them, such as posting on a discussion board and coming back later to read further comments. [See our guide to online communication](#)

Banner

Banner is the brand name for software that we use at Brookes to manage student information. On the student webpages, the system is called Student Information and it is the system that you use for things like registration, module choices, and marks. You may hear people calling it Banner, but they just mean Student Information. [See the Oxford Brookes Student Information pages.](#)

Blue cards / Blue marking cards

Blue marking cards are for you to attach to your assignments or exams if you have a diagnosed specific learning difficulty (SpLD) such as Dyslexia. Lecturers will take this into

account and mark, as far as possible, for content only. [See this page on Blue marking cards](#) and also [see this page on assessment for Dyslexia or other SpLDs](#).

Citation

A citation means the part of your reference that is in the body of your assignment, such as the name and date (Jones, 2018) or footnote ¹. This matches up with the full details in your reference list at the end. The word citations can also be used to refer to references in general, for example, 'You must include citations in your essay'. [See our guide to referencing](#).

Coherence

Coherence is a term often used to mean how well a piece of writing makes sense. If writing has coherence it has well structured sentences and paragraphs that connect to each other, and the meaning of these sentences is clear to the readers. [See our guide to sentences](#) and also [see our guide to paragraphs](#).

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to how well a text is linked together using correct grammatical structures. One way in which writing has cohesion is if the parts of sentences are connected by linking words like 'and', 'but', 'such as'.

Critical

Being critical means questioning ideas. It involves many processes of thinking, reading and analysing. Being critical is more than just criticising or finding weaknesses. You should also think about how well the ideas are supported by evidence, how appropriate that evidence is, and how they fit with other ideas. For more, [see our guide to critical thinking](#).

Degree classifications (1, 2:1, 2:2, 3)

Your degree classification is your final degree grade. At university this is usually classed as a 1st (first) or 2:1 (two-one / upper second) or 2:2 (two-two / lower second) or 3rd (third).

| Classification | Overall mark |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1st | 70% and above |
| 2:1 | 60-69% |
| 2:2 | 50-59% |
| 3rd | 40-49% |

Although marks are expressed as percentages it is very rare (except in some mathematical subjects) to get 100%. The percentages relate to a band on a marking scheme not an absolute score out of 100. So 63% may seem like a low mark, but it would class as a 2:1 and is a good mark.

Ethics

In research, ethics is the system of ensuring research is conducted in a way that is honest, fair and does not harm people. It refers to processes such as asking for participants' consent and making them aware of how their data is stored and used. Researchers usually have to get approval from an Ethics Committee to show that they have these processes in place before they can start a research project.

Evaluate

To evaluate means judging the value of something. In a university context, it usually refers to judging how strong a piece of evidence is, or how well evidence has been used to support an argument.

Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional Circumstances is something you can apply for if serious personal events occur that affect your ability to study or submit work. If your application is successful you may be able to have extensions to deadlines or alternative assessments. You usually need to have some form of evidence, like a doctor's letter, for your application. If your issue is short-term or quickly resolved, you can apply for the 24 hour grace period for assignment deadlines (see 'grace period' below) instead of making a full Exceptional Circumstances application. For more information [see Brookes' guide to the Exceptional Circumstances policy](#).

First person (see also third person)

Writing in the first person means using your own perspective and terms like 'I' and 'me' or 'we' and 'us'. People are often advised not to use the first person in academic writing. However, the first person is used when writing reflective assignments that ask you to analyse your own experience and development.

Formative assessment (see also summative assessment)

A formative assessment is designed to give you an opportunity to practice and get feedback. The marks from a formative assignment don't count towards your overall grade.

GPA

GPA stands for grade point average. It is a system of showing your overall achievement in your degree. At Brookes, you will get both a degree classification (see above) and a GPA for your degree.

| Percentage | Grade | GPA |
|------------|-------|-----|
| 75-100 % | A+ | 4.5 |
| 70-74% | A | 4.0 |
| 65-69% | B+ | 3.5 |

| | | |
|--------|---------|-----|
| 60-64% | B | 3.0 |
| 55-59% | C+ | 2.5 |
| 50-54% | C | 2.0 |
| 45-49% | D+ | 1.5 |
| 40-44% | D | 1.0 |
| 0-39% | various | 0.0 |

For more information [see this page explaining GPA](#).

Grace period

The grace period is an opportunity to submit work up to 24 hours after the deadline and still have access to the full range of marks available for that piece of work. The grace period means if you have a short-term, self-resolving issue (like a stomach upset) that occurs on the day of an assessment, you can apply to use the 24-hour grace period. You must notify the University that you are using this grace period on the day of the deadline. [See this Brookes page on the grace period](#) for more information.

Journal

A journal is an academic publication that is published regularly and normally focuses on a specific area of research. Journals contain articles that are research papers written by academics. These articles are usually peer-reviewed (see below) and are often considered the most up-to-date and leading form of academic research. If your lecturer asks you to refer to journals in an assignment, they probably mean they want you to use journal articles as a main form of evidence.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are the aims of a course or module. They describe what you should be able to do, or the knowledge you will have, once you have completed the course or module. The assignments should test whether you have achieved these learning outcomes.

Lecture

Lectures are a common form of teaching in large groups at university. Your lecturer delivers key information about a topic, often using slides. The slides are usually put on Moodle (see below) in advance. Normally you listen to a lecture and take notes, but some lectures can involve discussing ideas in groups or voting in polls. Usually you save any questions until the end. [See this guide to getting the most out of lectures](#).

Marking criteria

The marking criteria describe the standard associated with each grade for the different aspects of your work that are being assessed. They are shown on a table like the example included below. There are often different criteria depending on the type of assignment. The marking criteria for each assignment should be put on Moodle (see below).

| Mark range | 70%+ | 60-69% | 50-59% | 40-49% |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Quality of sources used | Excellent range of reliable sources used throughout | Good range of reliable sources used throughout | Adequate range of reliable sources used in most of the work | Limited range of sources used |

Matrix

The matrix is the table with a shaded box to show where your grade is, according to the marking criteria (see above).

Mindmap

A mindmap is a way of planning, note-making, or generating ideas that starts with the topic in the middle and has lines branching out to connect different ideas relating to that topic. It is more visual and less linear than other forms of note-making. [See our guide to mindmapping.](#)

Model

At university, a model usually means a structure or framework that breaks down a process or occurrence into a series of stages, and can describe cause and effect. You can use a model to help you analyse something more deeply.

Moodle

Moodle is the name of Brookes' virtual learning environment (VLE). It is where all the documents and information relating to your course are stored. Each of your modules has a different area on Moodle where you'll find important things like deadlines, reading lists, lecture slides and recordings, and where you submit your assignments.

Office-hours

Office-hours are the time during the week that a lecturer will set aside for students to come to see them. Unlike the normal meaning of 'office-hours' this time is not every day 9am-5pm, but usually a few hours on specific days.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is putting someone else's writing into your own words. Ideas that you paraphrase are still someone else's so they need to be referenced. When paraphrasing, it is also important not just to change a few words in a sentence but to genuinely re-write the whole sentence into your own style. [See this guide to paraphrasing.](#)

Parentheses

Parenthesis is another word for brackets - ()

Passive voice

The passive voice is a grammatical structure and is in contrast to the active voice. In the active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. For example, 'I added the chemical to the mixture.' In the passive voice, the subject of your sentence receives the action. For example, 'the chemical was added to the mixture.' The passive voice can be used in academic writing to avoid the first person (see above).

Peer-review

The peer-review process is often used by academic journals (see above) as a way of ensuring quality in research. Before being published, journal articles are usually sent to 2 or 3 experts in the same subject for feedback and to check that the research has been conducted well.

PIP

PIP is a term for the old student information system at Brookes. It has now been replaced by Student Information. However, you may still see the out-of-date term PIP used in handbooks or old material. [See the Brookes' Student Information pages.](#)

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas as your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Plagiarism is considered a form of cheating. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to understand why and when to reference properly. [See our page on plagiarism](#) for more information.

Poor academic practice

Poor academic practice is more of a grey area on the borders of academic misconduct but it should still be avoided. Examples of poor academic practice are using too many quotations even if they are referenced properly; paraphrases that are too close to the original text; or incomplete or inaccurate referencing.

Professor

In UK universities, the title of Professor relates to a specific job role as a senior academic member of staff. Most of your teachers at university will be lecturers or senior lecturers, not professors. You wouldn't normally call someone 'Professor' as a mark of respect unless they held that specific job role.

Quotation

A quotation uses the exact words of an author or speaker in quotation marks ('...') for example, 'You may write me down in history / With your bitter, twisted lies, / You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise' (Angelou, 1978). A quotation needs to be referenced. Sometimes you hear people using the term quotation to mean any way of referencing people's ideas but this is incorrect. A quotation is a specific word-for-word reproduction of an author's words. [See our guide to quotations](#) for more.

Reference

Referencing is the whole system of acknowledging other people's work within academic writing. A reference usually has two parts:

1. a short reference in the body of your writing, often called an in-text citation; and
2. a full reference in the reference list at the end of your assignment.

For more information [see our guide to referencing](#)

Reflection

Reflection is a type of academic writing that involves looking back at an experience or incident and learning from it. It is common in Healthcare and Education subjects. You normally use the first person (see above) when writing reflectively as it is about your own perspectives. [See our guide to reflection](#).

Rubric

Rubric is another name for marking criteria (see above).

Seminar

Seminars are a common form of small group teaching. You usually have some reading to do in advance as preparation. The seminar is normally led by a lecturer but it mainly involves discussing ideas with other members of the group.

Signposting

Signposting is using phrases to tell your reader what you will cover in an assignment and when you are moving on to a new topic. Signposting phrases can include things like, 'This essay will cover...' and 'Another important theme is...'

SIRT

SIRT stands for the Student Investigation and Resolution Team at Brookes. This team is responsible for all matters relating to academic misconduct (see above), appeals and complaints. [See the SIRT page](#) for more information.

Source

A source is any kind of text (see below) from which you take ideas or evidence. Sometimes people use the terms 'primary source' and 'secondary source' to categorise sources. It can be difficult to make an exact distinction between primary and secondary sources as different academic subjects use different kinds of sources, so what counts as 'primary' and 'secondary' can vary. Generally, a primary source is a first-hand account or raw data, such as an original artwork or interview transcript. Whereas a secondary source interprets or writes about other sources, such as a textbook or a review of a play.

SpLDs

SpLDs stands for specific learning difficulties. This can also be called neurodiversity and means differences in the way the brain processes information. These differences can make it harder to learn in an education system that has been dominated and designed by more neurotypical people. Specific learning difficulties can include dyslexia, dyspraxia/DCD, attention deficit disorder, dyscalculia, or autism. If you have been diagnosed with an SpLD, or think this may apply to you, [contact the Inclusive Support Service at Brookes](#).

Summative assessment (see also formative assessment)

Summative assessment is a form of assessment (such as a final exam) that counts towards the overall mark for your module.

Synchronous (see also asynchronous)

Synchronous means at the same time. It's a term often used in online learning to describe activities that people participate in together as it happens, such as attending a live-streamed lecture. [See our guide to online communication](#).

Synthesise

Synthesise means to bring things together and combine. At university it usually means being able to bring together a number of ideas or sources to form a more complex and detailed understanding of a topic.

Text

A text is any form of communication that you take information from. It doesn't just have to be written, for example, it can be a painting, film, sculpture, advert, image, or music.

Thematic

A thematic approach is a way of structuring your writing that is based on a series of sub-topics or subjects relating to the overall idea or text you are analysing.

Thesis

A thesis has two meanings. It is a statement or main idea to be proved through the presentation of supporting evidence. You may hear people say that an essay should begin with a thesis statement that outlines the main argument or position that the essay will take. A thesis is also a longer piece of academic writing, usually at postgraduate level, like a PhD thesis.

Third person (see also first person)

Writing in the third person is a way of taking an external or more impersonal position. Your tutors may ask you to 'write in the third person'. When they say this, they usually mean that you should avoid more personal words like 'I, we, you and us'.

Turnitin

Turnitin is text-matching software that your markers can use when you submit an assignment to see how you have used and referenced sources. It is also the online system that tutors use to provide feedback on your assessments. Turnitin will provide you with a similarity score, which tells you how similar your writing is to other texts in the database. This is not a plagiarism score. It needs human interpretation to see why the matches have occurred. [See our page on Turnitin](#) for more information.

Tutorial

A tutorial is a form of teaching that can be one-to-one or in small groups. It usually involves discussions or looking closely at work.

VLE

VLE stands for virtual learning environment. It is the online platform used to deliver and store course materials at a college or university. Brookes' VLE is called Moodle.

Voice

In academic writing, your voice combines your own style of writing along with what you want to communicate about the issues being raised in the assignment or discussion. Rather than just repeating what other people have written, your voice is your unique perspective on the issues.