Guide to Writing for Assessment

BA (Hons) Education

Good academic conduct
Academic writing
Presentation
Referencing and Citation
Ethical considerations
Assessment criteria

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Welcome to this writing guide.

You will find a lot of information here to help you do well in your written assignments on your BA (Hons) Education course.

The documents is divided into two main parts:

- **Academic Writing for Written Assignments in Education** (pages 3-12).
  This section will give advice on how to write, how to reference, and where to find support.

- **Good Academic Conduct** (pages 12-15)
  This section will show you how to avoid plagiarism, collusion, etc.

The two parts are closely linked, and we advise you to read through the whole of the document before you write your assignments, and to refer to it when you need to.

Enjoy your writing from all of us on the BA (Hons) Education degree!

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**Recommended Reading:**


**NOTE: this guide must be read in conjunction with the BA (Hons) Education Programme Handbook and the Module Handbooks**
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Academic Writing for Education Assignments

Basic guidelines to help you to write well:

1. Encourage confidence in your reader by displaying integrity throughout your writing; back up all your points with evidence and reference the sources of your evidence.
2. Ensure your style is appropriate, clear and succinct and that your focus is easily deciphered by your reader.
3. Draw on relevant theory and research that helps you to develop a good discussion, but avoid over complex references to literature that you do not fully understand.
4. Make sure that your word choice is comprehensible to all and explain any abbreviations you use.
5. Ensure your work is relevant: answer the question. Your conclusion should sum up your discussion. Avoid including points in your conclusion that you have not already examined in your main essay.
6. Use paragraphs or sub-headings whenever appropriate to divide the work up into its different sections.
7. Sum up the progress of your discussion throughout your reflective commentary i.e. summarise each stage and link the previous to next stage of your discussion.
8. Be careful that your grammar is accurate and supports clarity in writing. Common errors include mis-use or missing apostrophes. The apostrophe indicates ownership and missing letters. Be careful to position the apostrophe in the correct place, especially when indicating plural ownership i.e. the teacher’s questions (teacher is singular here thus, the apostrophe comes before the s) and the pupils’ responses (pupils is plural here hence, the apostrophe comes after the s).
9. In practice-based assignments you should write in the first person using ‘I’ because you are drawing on your professional experiences and context and demonstrating your own learning. Even when you are using the first person and writing reflectively your work should remain formal in style i.e. no contracted forms like it’s, she’s etc or colloquialisms such as O.K.
10. If you are not writing from a practice-based perspective please take advice about whether to write in the first person or not. Always demonstrate what you have learned through the assignment – not just what is already written by others.
11. Be very aware of the required word length stated in the assignment brief. It is acceptable for your work to be a maximum of 10% longer or shorter than this, but if this percentage is higher, your grade will be affected. Appendices and reference lists are not counted within your word length.
12. Appendices should only be used to provide supporting information and are not assessed.

Presentation

1. Work should be word-processed using only one side of each page.
2. Apply broad margins and double-spacing.
3. All pages, including appendices, should be numbered in sequence.
4. It is essential that you ensure the anonymity of pupils, teachers, schools etc in your work. See: https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011 for more guidance.
5. If your work contains graphs, tables or charts, make sure to label these with a number and a title. The convention is to place the label above charts and tables, and below figures, but please follow your tutor’s advice on this if they suggest a different format.
6. Appendices should be clearly constructed and only include the material which you refer to in your commentary or essay.
7. Proofread your work carefully: poorly presented work, including errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and referencing can affect your assessed grade.

You may ask someone else to proofread work for you. This will involve highlighting but not correcting grammatical and spelling mistakes. They must not correct your work or change the content or structure as by doing that the work would no longer be your own. Further guidance can be found at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite/Student/proofood.php. Staff at the Language Resource Centre can provide a list of professional proofreaders: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/langcen/

The University Writing Development Centre

The Centre aims to promote good writing practice in all subject areas and help undergraduate and postgraduate students to develop their academic writing skills in a supportive environment. Key priorities are to support students in the transition from secondary to higher education and from undergraduate to postgraduate study. The Centre offers tuition, guidance and advice on all aspects of academic writing, including:

- understanding assignment and examination questions
- planning, structuring and revising assignments
- using reading sources without plagiarism
- developing an argument
- writing analytically and critically
- using an appropriate authorial voice
- writing theses and dissertations
- using grammar and punctuation accurately and effectively
- learning from feedback on previous assignments

The Writing Development Centre is based in the Robinson Library. Please see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/ for more information.

Referencing and Citation – core information and library guides

Please refer to guidance provided in the Programme Handbook and in the Module Handbooks and online at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ecls/students/edupres.htm
Endnote Software

Endnote Software is a very valuable tool for referencing and citation. It is a reference database allows you to build up your own bank of sources. If you drag one of these sources into your text, Endnote will automatically put it the citation and build a list of references at the end of your assignment. Endnote is available on University PCs and via RAS. Help about the use of Endnote is available at the Robinson Library.

Ethical considerations in educational research

Ethics

The university takes breaches in ethical practice very seriously. It is however increasingly the case that schools themselves are becoming more involved in enquiring into their own practice and are becoming more familiar with the associated methodologies and approaches. You demonstrate that you have met the basic requirements in this context whenever you are involved in education research, and particularly when working with children and/or vulnerable adults. You are expected to read and reference the ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (2011) published by BERA, the British Educational Research Association. The latest version of the guidelines can be viewed by going to http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines.

When working with children and young people

Guidance about working with children and young people will be given at the beginning of those programmes or modules where that is relevant.

While you cannot seek permission from the pupils in the same way as you can from colleagues or peers (see below), you should seek permission from appropriate teachers before engaging pupils in a research task (e.g. completing a questionnaire or pupil diary). The pupils should always be informed of the purpose of any such activity (e.g. when giving out a questionnaire explain what their answers will be used for).

When working with teachers and other adults

Adults who are in any way involved with your research (e.g. being interviewed, completing a questionnaire or agreeing to be observed) should be asked to give their full informed consent. Teachers and others should be allowed to volunteer or decline to participate. They should always receive an outline of the methodology before the research activity takes place, so that they are able to make informed decisions about whether to participate.

Use of video

There may be times during your degree when you undertake research or presentation material when you need to video record events. Further guidance about the ethical use of
video will be given at the beginning of those programmes or modules. Key considerations are:

- It is essential to seek permission of those involved prior to videoing, and to comply with relevant policies in relation to this (e.g. if filming in a school, then the school’s policy must be adhered to).
- Although the use of video is becoming more common in many schools, it can still be a sensitive issue. There may be some pupils of whom the school does not have permission to make video recordings. In which case seek advice before proceeding.

Apart from gaining appropriate consent the most important issue relating to the use of video is that the recording should only be used for the purposes stated in the enquiry or presentation.

Essential notes on ethics in relation to the submission of the assignments

In your assessed work you must ensure complete confidentiality for all institutions, groups and individuals referred to in the assignment. You should consider the significance of the ethical perspectives indicated above throughout your assessments.