

Academic writing: what does it mean?

Writing styles vary. Different styles are used for different purposes and in different circumstances. They can be:

- very informal: in emails, texts, cards etc.
- very formal: in academic texts and articles, assignments, and theses.
- technical: aimed at specialists, using technical or scientific language and diagrams

Most of the writing required at Tai Poutini Polytechnic, including that used in assignments and assessment, is fairly formal and is called “academic writing”.

Academic writing can differ from department to department and subject to subject, but does have a number of common features:

- it has a specific theme or answers a specific question, using a logical argument
- it follows fairly strict guidelines or conventions
- it is
 - formal (no slang, no text language, no abbreviations or shortening of words, use full sentences rather than lists or bullet points, limit the use of acronyms)
 - objective (impersonal, avoid using the 1st person – I or me - unless you are instructed otherwise)
 - planned and well-organised with a recognized structure (the correct structure for an essay, a report, or a literature review)
 - well researched and referenced (acknowledging other writers and sources with the correct citation format as specified by your tutor. Most departments at Tai Poutini Polytechnic use APA Referencing)
 - grammatically correct and with correct spelling (use a spellchecker and edit/proofread thoroughly)

Good academic writing

- answers the question(s) posed
- provides evidence showing you have thought about, researched and understood the topic
- presents an argument supported by examples and other evidence
- is objective
- is well-structured
- reads well, flows logically from one section to the next
- is stylistically and grammatically correct
- is correctly referenced

Adapted from: Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. Academic writing. Retrieved from <http://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/study-with-us/study-resources-for-students/writing-and-formatting/academic-writing/>, 8 May 2013.

Further reading (available from TPP library)

De Luca, R. & Annals, A. (2006). *Writing that works: a guide for tertiary students*. 2nd ed. Auckland, N. Z.: Pearson Education New Zealand.

Emerson, L. (2009). *Writing guidelines for business students*. 4th ed. Melbourne, Vic.: Cengage Learning.

Hacker, D. & Sommers, N. (2013). *The pocket style manual : APA version*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St Martins.

Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. (2010). 6th ed. Washing, DC: APA.

Thoreau, M. (2006). *Write on track : a guide to academic writing*. Auckland, N.Z.: Pearson Education New Zealand.

Turner, K., Ireland, L., Krenus, B. & Pointon, L. (2009). *Essential academic skills*. Rev. ed. Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press.