

The Unofficial First Year Guide

Introduction

Welcome

Hi guys and welcome to the Southampton Business School!

First for the formalities: This is absolutely and unequivocally an UNOFFICIAL guide to your first year at the SBS. The guide was written by SBS students for incoming freshers. Think of it as us giving you advice we wish we had when we started our business courses at SBS. Within this guide, we will be blunt, to the point and offer genuine advice on how you can kick start doing well on your degree. The guide has one purposes: To give you our tips and tricks to you so that your MARKS will be higher. That's right, we are going to tell you how you can raise your marks on your coursework.

Naturally, we'll give you the low-down on how to achieve this. We only wish that someone told us what is contained within this guide! Seriously. Sit down. Grab a drink, maybe some snacks. Read it. Understand it. Apply it. Any questions about it? Tweet/ DM @SBSBusProgs or ask anyone from the Business Programmes Co-Design Group. The same people that created this guide will answer any question about it through that Twitter account- which is only run by students. Finally, we probably need to say once again that this guide **is not endorsed by the uni or school** in any way. We are merely handing down our secrets in written form, instead of verbally, so that everyone can benefit from them. On a personal note, we hope to see you soon, whether that be at uni, on a night out, at a sporting event or a society meet-up! Welcome to the University of Southampton (obvs the best uni)!

Why we wanted to create this guide

Honestly, it stems from the marks we received, as a cohort, on our first semester coursework assignments. That was the first moment we actually saw that higher education is in another category when compared to even the best secondary schools. We don't want to scare you, far from it! The mistakes we made seem so painfully obvious now and weren't that difficult to fix the second time around, but they did cost us dearly. We wanted to make this unofficial guide to give you the opportunity to not make the same mistakes we did as we underwent our transition to uni and academic life. The first thing to tell you is that Six-Form/ College/ High School is very different to university in a lot of ways, but perhaps the largest difference is the independence of your studies and learning. As such, it is what you make of university and its resources that will determine its worth and value-really! Occasionally, we need to remind ourselves that we are choosing to be at uni.

We hope you like writing, because that is basically the entire basis of assessment in most modules at SBS, and rightly so. Yet, it does possess its challenges for incoming students. It will be expected that in any essays you write this year (i.e. the bulk of university coursework assessment) should be properly referenced, structured and written academically, include sophisticated and appropriate terminology and show an informed argument, in addition to answering and arguing your 'research' question on a topic. These writing requirements, while not directly linked with the studying of business, encompass the minimum requirements for any work to be of an acceptable academic standard. There is no 'smoothing over' or leniency for first years in these matters (if only!).

First years are held to the same standards as final years. A typical weighting of marks on a first year assignment is shown below:

- Evidence of active weekly inquiry and research that engages consistently with module sessions and materials (20%)
- Clarity of analytical thought and reasoning well expressed in writing (20%)
- Ability to craft meaningful and coherent questions that reflect the range of material engaged with each week (20%)
- **Accurate referencing and quality of presentation (20%)**
- Evidence of reflection on how ideas may or may not have relevance in business contexts (20%)

Please note the bolded marking criteria! That is where this guide helps and where we failed last year. This is a free 20% - if you simply reference accurately and write academically! These should be easy marks and are easy marks! Also note that marking criteria 1 and 5 also require 'evidence' and this is synonymous with referencing. It could honestly be argued that the majority of your essay marks have something to do with referencing! Honestly. It's important, not just to ensure you do not breach the academic integrity policy, but in regards to your final MARK on the assignment.

We will now go over three aspects on how to ensure you get the maximum amount of these marks! This consists of:

1. The SBS Writing Policy
2. Referencing in the Harvard Style
3. Writing Academically

This is where the insider knowledge starts to be revealed. Part of the reason that some of us did so poorly on this last year is that, while the above is VERY easy to grasp, there are some VERY, REALLY perspicuity and minute details that need to be followed (as established by precedence) that staff will be unforgiving if you do not exactly follow (especially in terms of the Harvard Referencing System).

Now is a good time to mention again that if you should have any questions whatsoever about the guide, do not hesitate to get in contact with us on Twitter (@SBSBusProgs) and we will respond to tweets or direct messages as soon as possible!

The SBS Writing Policy

If only it was written down. Alas, it is not, and somehow survives to this day- probably through lecturers having to repeat it every year at the beginning of the year. The problem with this is a.) Were you paying attention when the lecturer was telling you the writing policy? B.) Were you there when the lecturer was telling you the writing policy? C.) Did you write down the writing policy? Unfortunately, the majority of us had the wrong answer to these three questions, so we thought we would write them down for you so you'll always have them.

1. Word count is always +/- 10% inclusive. Always. Unless a lecturer tell you otherwise. (i.e. a 1,000 word essay must be no shorter than 900 words and no longer than 1,100 words) Simple.
2. Title pages, bibliographies, reference lists, and appendices do NOT contribute to the word count.
3. Do NOT. We repeat. DO NOT under any circumstances place your name, anywhere on your work. EVER. Even during the process of electronic submission via TurnItIn. The repercussions are almost too unsightly for us to mention.
4. Your student ID number is used to mark your papers. Place this on every page in some way. We recommend in the margin of each page.
5. You must ALWAYS have a Title/Cover Page and should include your student I.D., the module code, the assignment/ coursework title, and the word count. You may choose to put an individual title for the assignment/ coursework if you feel it appropriate. If the assignment is a group project, be sure to include everyone's student I.D. on it.
6. If using an appendix, ensure it comes after your reference list/ bibliography.
7. Number all pages in a margin, including bibliographies, reference lists and appendices if applicable.
8. Ensure paragraphs are indented
9. We would suggest only use New Times Roman, Arial, and Calibri for fonts. 11 or 12 sized for the essay and 14 up to 20 for titles, depending on the title's significance.

If you think we are joking when we say these things matter, you would be wrong. Seriously. Use this. You now are masters of the SBS Writing Policy! Easy enough!

Referencing in the Harvard Style

This is where the mighty fall. But they got up again second semester. You won't fall with this guide! We won't hear it! Referencing is a serious part of any academic essay. Why? Just accept it. It stems from academic integrity, intellectual property etc. and is actually engrained in copyright law. So don't reference properly and you are breaking the law. Really. We know it's ridiculous, but you'll easily get the hang of it. In every coursework/ assignment you do you will have to actively inquire and research into the topic of the essay. What you learn, and go to argue in your essay, must be given credit for. We won't bore you with the implications of not referencing, but we know you get the idea.

Firstly, referencing is life at uni. Literally. Everything a reference and a reference for everything. SBS do their referencing in the Harvard style (there are about 528,974 styles). Now, take a look at the official SBS referencing guidelines here:

http://library.soton.ac.uk/ld.php?content_id=4660789

You can see it's long. What a pain. Please just skim through it. This actually does have ALL the answers. We are not going to lie to you, there are some very annoying bits about referencing in the Harvard system. But fear not! We are giving you the quick tips that you need now! Here are our tips:

1. As you can see there about 14,000 different ways to develop a reference. In fact, Harvard changes yearly! They are all different- books, journals, newspaper articles, e-books. They are all different. Thankfully, we don't bother with any of that because we use RefMe- an online, automatic reference generator! Simply copy paste the website details/ ISBN number/ title of journal entry and it will autopopulate your reference. You can then easily copy and paste your reference into your reference list/ bibliography. Can you imagine all the time you would waste if you did that manually?! Here is the link: <https://www.refme.com/>. The university has a subscription to RefMe, so simply create an account using your uni email address and you'll have access to all of the 'premium' features. Make sure you ensure you reference in the Harvard Style.
2. Ensure your reference list/ bibliography is in alphabetical order, formatted with a hanging indention (this is demonstrated in the library guide).
3. Never place page numbers in in-text citations if not a direct quote (details below)
4. If you are creating an in-text citation for a direct quote be careful no include the correct number of 'p's in your in-text citation (details below)
5. If you are directly quoting from a source and the quote takes more than two lines, please follow the special 'Long Quote' format (details in library guide)
6. When in doubt, reference it.
7. Some parts of a reference are *italicised*. Ensure they stay that way.
8. Ensure you use *et al.* if there are more than two authors (details below). Most referencing sites do not do this as a matter of habit, including RefMe.
9. Appendices need to have an in-text citation as well, but the format is different. Please refer to the library guide.
10. Ensure you letter, not number, appendices. (details in library guide)

The second part of referencing is in-text citations. Get this. This is where you reference your reference list/ bibliography. This is completed at the end of a sentence that was from a source in your reference list/ bibliography. We are going to give a very student example of what all this means.

Imagine there was a book called “How to Party in Southampton”. It was written by BNO #1 Bob James. It was written in 2016. This is the 1st edition. It was published in Southampton by Unay. I then found some interesting material in the book about nightlife in Southampton that I wanted to use in my essay about Nightlife in Southampton (if only!). Here is a small section of the awesome book:

Southampton is a great nightlife city for students. It is world renown for Jesters, the UK’s worst nightclub. However, University of Southampton students love it. There is a large debate over which night to go out in the week to Jesters. Some claim Mondays are the nights to go out to J’s, because there are 60p pints. However; with entry being £5, it is expensive for the average student. Most prefer Wednesdays because there are £2.50 Jesticles (a cocktail with 4 shots in it; though one would not notice), which always hits the spot and entry is free for most with a sports social. Also, because it is sports social night, most people know each other. Therefore, Wednesdays, with everything taken into account, is the cheapest and best night at Jesters.

This would be the reference in your reference list/ bibliography:

James, B. (2016) *How to Party in Southampton*. 1st edn. Southampton: Unay.

This would be the in-text citation:

There is large contention between University of Southampton students over which weekday is the optimum night for going to party (James, 2016). **No Page Number**

This would be the in-text citation if I directly quoted from the book and the quote was on page 14:

It cannot be argued that, “Therefore, Wednesdays, with everything taken into account, is the cheapest and best night at Jesters” (James, 2016, p.14). **One-page quote = 1 ‘p’**

This would be the in-text citation if I directly quoted from the book and the quote was on page 14 and ran through to page 15:

As a result of sports socials and low prices on cocktails, it is agreed that, “Wednesdays, with everything taken into account, is the cheapest and best night at Jesters” (James, 2016, pp.14-15). **More than one-page quote = 2 ‘p’s**

We thought it best to ask questions and provide the answers about the most common errors of referencing, so here they are:

Q: What do I need to reference?

A: This is a very good question and, actually, is difficult to answer. You obviously need to reference any new knowledge that you come across while writing your essay. This question becomes more difficult to answer if you already know information. In these circumstances, it is important to remember your audience (in this case academics). They will know a vast amount of information from experience and will be fluent in most business jargon. They are however still learning (aren't we all!) and may not know specific details of what you are referring to. In these cases, they would like a reference. It is safe to say that if you feel what you are writing is not general knowledge, but you somehow know this information before conducting research or inquiry into the topic you are writing on, reference what you are writing. You must find a source to back up your presumed knowledge. This is highly annoying, but it's safer to do it. Make sure to reference all figures.

Q: What if the source I am referencing doesn't contain an author's name? What should I do for both my reference list/ bibliography and my in-text citation?

A: RefMe and other sites should account for this and adjust both your reference and in-text citation. In most cases you would use the title of source. In the previous example of "How to Party in Southampton" a reference without a known author would look like this:

How to Party in Southampton (2016) 1st edn. Southampton: Unay. **No Author**

And an in-text citation like this:

(How to Party in Southampton, 2016) **Uses Title**

Q: My source has two authors; how do I cite this?

A: Using the "How to Party in Southampton" example, imagine if that book was written by both Bob James and Tom Harvey. The reference would look like this:

James, B. and Harvey, T. (2016) How to Party in Southampton. 1st edn. Southampton: Unay.

Inserts an 'and' between names

And an in-text citation like this:

(James and Harvey, 2016) **Inserts an 'and' between names**

Q: My source has more than two authors; how do I cite this?

A: This is the famous *et al.* Simply list the first author and write *et al.* after that name. **An important note here: Some cites do NOT do this. Please use *et al.* every time there is more than two authors!** An example using the “How to Party in Southampton” source is as follows, assuming there was more than two authors.

The reference would look like this:

James, B. et al. (2016) How to Party in Southampton. 1st edn. Southampton: Unay.

And an in-text citation like this:

(James et al., 2016)

Q: My source does not contain a publication date. What do I do?

A: Simply write ‘n.d.’ in replace for the date in both the reference and in-text citation.

Q: I’m unsure if I need to reference a certain part of my essay.

A: If you used a source to make your arguments, and it is not common knowledge that the target audience would know, reference it.

Q: How many references should I contain in an essay?

A: The official answer is how many references you need. Now if you like to reverse engineer your essay, we’d recommend about one source in your bibliography per 100 words. This is, however, quite arbitrary. There can never be too many references. Of course don’t reference common knowledge and remember your target audience (intellectuals and academics).

Q: What is the difference between a bibliography and a reference list?

A: Good question. A reference list consists only of the sources used in the writing of the essay. A bibliography includes everything one has read on the topic. Don’t confuse these. Look to assignment to see which the lecturer wants (It’s usually a reference list).

Q: Do I need to have an in-text citation to my appendix, if I have one?

A: Yes, although the formatting is slightly different. Please refer to the library guide on how to reference an appendix. Be sure to letter appendices, not number them. In most cases it is done at the beginning of the sentence that the appendix pertains to i.e “As shown in Appendix A,”.

Writing Academically

Writing academically is probably the most difficult skill to hand down. It is developed through practise and by reading things that other academics have written. But let there be no doubt- there is a proper way to write a university essay. In a way it's quite a game. It's a shame because in our experience few incoming students are taught how to write academically.

Academic writing is a form of intellectual expression used to formalise and set consistent boundaries for pieces of writing. Academic writing is likely to be different to the style of writing used by most people every day, therefore it is important to understand the characteristics and formatting of this particular style.

Two of the most important parts of academic writing are to make sure your writing is clear, structured, well-thought out, argued and expresses an intellectual array of vocabulary. Academic writing moves away from a more casual forms of writing and expresses a clear, more concise, and formal style of intellectual analysis. You can have the best essay content in the world, but if one doesn't write it academically your mark will not reflect its worth.

Below are our tips on making sure you nail this aspect as best as you can:

1. Format your essay academically. This is the most important tip. See below.
2. DO NOT USE 'I', unless **specifically** asked to. Do not be afraid to use 'one' as a subject in the singular third-person, i.e. One really likes to party.
3. Use sophisticated, not colloquial or vague language.
4. Don't be scared to write succinctly and to the point. Avoid whimsical 'artistic expression'. You are taking a business degree, not an English literature one (i.e. avoid metaphors, similes and symbolism).
5. Avoid the use of contractions.
6. Remember you are writing for intellectuals.
7. Form a clear argument. University lecturers like to see firstly a point, followed by evidence and then a deep analysis providing an argument from more than one side or angle.
8. The evidence that you have researched and been influenced by should be a wide variety of academic sources. (E.g. Books, articles, journals, reports.). Please don't use only online sources (if you guessed).
9. Use appendices to tie in relevant information about your argument into your essay without affecting the word count. Don't use appendices for the hell of it though. Make sure it has a clear need to be used.
10. We know it may be silly to mention, but use grammar correctly. Loads of us did not. Ensure your punctuation, especially comma usage, is correct and ensure your sentences are complete and not run-ons.

Structure

The structure of academic writing is integral to keeping your writing organised and presentable. It is important to think about the structure of your writing as it can often help strengthen arguments and make points clearer. Not all pieces of writing will require you to stick to this specific structure, but hopefully this will give you a general idea of the most basic academic structure:

- Title Page
 - Student ID
 - Module code
 - Module title
 - Title or work
- Abstract (not required for every piece of academic writing)
- Table of Contents (not required for every piece of academic writing)
- Introduction
 - Topic
 - Thesis Statement (summarises the main point)
 - Summary of the structure of the essay
- Body Paragraph
 - Topic sentence
 - Evidence
 - Overview of evidence
 - Concluding sentence
- Body paragraph
- Body Paragraph
- Conclusion
 - Linking of body paragraphs
 - Resonate thesis statement
 - Summary
- Bibliography/ Reference List
- Appendices (not required for every piece of academic writing)