EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LEARNING

Unit 5: Writing

Success in achieving your degree at the University of Edinburgh will largely depend on your ability to express yourself in written English. Assessment will be based principally on the texts you prepare and produce for your programme of study, such as examination answers, essays, projects, dissertation or thesis.

Coping with the writing demands of academic study can be a source of anxiety for many students – both native and non-native users of English.

Task 5.1

What was the most recent written examination you did at university? (NB: Not for an English language test, like IELTS or TOEFL) What did you find was the hardest part of writing it?

Task 5.2

When you have thought about that question, listen to Ayako talking about written exams at Japanese university:

http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/preparing_for_course_work_and_exams.html

What does she say are the main differences between Japanese and British examinations? And what advice does she give for preparing for exams in the UK?

To compare your answer with the Feedback, click here

There are two basic requirements in successful academic writing. First, your writing has to be of high **quality** – for example, it must show competence in handling the subject-matter, it must be clearly expressed, it must conform to academic conventions of style and organisation, and it must be carefully presented. Secondly, on most programmes of study, students are also required to produce a substantial **quantity** of writing.

Writing can be seen from two perspectives: the **process** through which a writer composes a text, and the **product** they achieve by the end of the process. We are going to look at each of these in turn.

The writing process

Exactly what is involved in the process of writing a university assignment will depend on factors such as your academic subject and which year you are in, but is likely to include at least some of the following stages:

Preparation:

- specifying the **topic** and **aims**
- **searching** for relevant literature
- **reading**
- making **notes**
- collecting and interpreting **data**
- **planning** (thinking, drafting an outline)
- **discussion** with supervisor and other students
- **revising the outline**

Writing:
- **drafting**
- **evaluating** critically, further **planning**, further **discussion**
- **revising/redrafting** (making substantial changes to content and organisation)
- **editing** (making minor changes, e.g. to individual sentences)
- **proof-reading** (checking for mistakes in language, data, presentation, etc.)

The relative importance of particular stages will vary according to the type of assignment. For shorter assignments, such as an essay, you will have only a few weeks available for the both *preparation* and *writing*. In a major piece of research writing, such as a PhD thesis, the *preparation* stage may last two years or more.

Individual students vary greatly in the way they approach the stages in the process. For some, the stages proceed more or less in a *linear* sequence. For others, the process is *cyclical*: activities listed above under 'planning', for example, may continue during the writing phase.

In a research study conducted at Newcastle University in England, 22 international postgraduate students were interviewed about how they had written their Masters dissertations (Shaw, 1991). In the extract below, Shaw summarised the differences between the students' approaches to writing. We have highlighted in green two key expressions in the extract, which are discussed in Task 5.3.

> *Nine interviewees reported planning in a good deal of detail before writing, while six wrote down ideas and then fitted them together. One interviewee - a "radical brainstormer" – described writing draft paragraphs on loose paper and then ordering them and writing connections. Another – a "radical planner" – worked by getting a very*

detailed plan clear in his mind, then writing a draft in mixed English and Indonesian, then rewriting it in English, and then getting it checked before writing a third draft for submission to his supervisor.

The seven who were in the middle of the planning-brainstorming cline reported simultaneous and recursive planning and writing ("Writing helps you to sort out your ideas"). Many interviewees mentioned the value of leaving the text fallow for a short time; one described his process as writing a rough draft as completely as he could, reading it through and correcting the English, leaving it for a day or two, and writing a second draft.

The majority (19 students) wrote first in "rough English" or "bad English" and corrected this after they had got the ideas in order and connected.... The other three aimed to write in correct English from the outset, though one admitted that later revising the content tended to make this a wasteful activity....

Most interviewees described themselves as writing at least three drafts before being satisfied. Two of the three who aimed at writing correct English in their first draft said that they would only write two drafts; they were perhaps rather unrealistic altogether. Comments that one might add material even after the third draft were frequent.

(Shaw 1991: 197-198)

Task 5.3

1. Shaw contrasted two different types of writers: *planners* and *brainstormers*. What do you understand by the term 'brainstorming'?
2. **Leaving fallow** is an agricultural term: when a field is left fallow, no crops are grown on it for a period, to allow the soil to improve. Shaw

uses this expression as a metaphor. What do you think he means by 'leaving the text fallow for a short time'? Do you think this could be beneficial?

Check your answers here

Reflecting on your own writing processes

Task 5.4

1. **Where to begin writing** - Do you normally start your draft with the introduction, or do you begin at some other part? Why? At what stage do you write your conclusion?
2. **Word-processing** - At what point in the writing process do you start to use the computer? For example, do you make notes or first drafts by hand, or do you do all of these on the computer? Do you do your revising and editing on screen, or do you print out a draft first and mark changes on the paper, before going back to the computer?
3. **Redrafting** - When you write an academic assignment, how many drafts do you normally expect to make? Do you do the same in your own language as in English? (If not, why is that?)
4. **Using your mother tongue** - When writing in English, do you use your first language at any point in your writing process? Do you think in English when you plan? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using your language in the earlier stages of writing?

To compare your answers with the Feedback, click here

Second language researchers have tried to find out whether *effective* writers approach writing tasks in a different way from *less successful* ones. One case study (Zamel 1983) compared the writing processes used by skilled and unskilled non-native writers of English, and found that, for *skilled* writers in the sample, writing was

> *...a process of discovering and exploring ideas and constructing a framework with which to best present these ideas. This process is creative and generative and may not always be based on a clear sense of direction and explicit plan, but rather a plan that allows for further discovery and exploration.*
>
> (Zamel 1983: 180)

Good academic writers tend to see writing as a key part of the *learning* process, giving them freedom to **explore**, **develop** and **structure** their ideas. This approach to writing can be expressed in Language Learning Principle 6:

Be creative

Less skillful writers tend to be less flexible and creative. Poor second language writers often worry excessively about their English, rather than about creating a coherent structure for their ideas.

While skilled writers tend to *redraft* their work, making substantial changes to the content and organisation several times during the process, unskilled writers are frequently less willing to make major changes to what they have written. When making changes, they focus mainly on correcting grammar and vocabulary – *editing*, rather than *redrafting*.

Although there is no single 'good' writing method, you should expect to **revise** what you write at least once. It has been said that the main difference between successful and unsuccessful writers is that the successful ones re-write more. So don't expect to produce a perfect text straight away.

The written product

Ultimately, it is the finished product of your writing which will be assessed, so it needs to be considered carefully. Different language styles are appropriate for different types of communication.

Task 5.5

What do you think are the main differences between spoken and written styles of English? Make brief notes and then compare your answer with this website:

http://www2.elc.polyu.edu.hk/cill/eap/academicstyle.htm

That task highlighted some of the stylistic differences between speech and writing. Different kinds of writing also require different styles of language and organisation. Our Language Learning Principle 7,

Use different styles of speech

can be extended to writing as well.

Effective users of English as a second language are able to select from different styles to suit the different types of communication they are involved in.

Task 5.6

The following sentence would be quite typical of the rather informal, spoken style that academics often use in oral presentations and lectures:

> *In the last bit, I'll talk about one or two of the advantages of this procedure, like getting quicker results, and I'll mention a couple of snags as well.*

How would you adapt that sentence to make it suitable for inclusion in the introduction to a written paper? Underline the parts you would need to change, and rewrite the sentence in a suitable written style.

To compare your answer with the Feedback, click here

Most students – not only those writing in English as a second language – find it a struggle at first to achieve an appropriately formal academic style. One important aspect of this is making appropriate linguistic choices: most obviously in **vocabulary**, as we saw in Task 5.6, but also in **grammatical structure** and **punctuation**.

In the Resources and Advice sections of this unit, (and in the units on Grammar and Vocabulary), we highlight some ways of improving your abilities in this area.

However, there are other features of your writing, in addition to its style, which help to make it 'academic'. These features include the way you **structure** your texts, the use of **references to literature**, and **academic caution** in making claims.

Some aspects of academic writing vary from culture to culture, and you will find that what is expected of academic writing at a British university may differ in various ways from what you are used to from your home country. International students, including those from Canada and the United States, find that they need to adapt their way of writing to meet the expectations of British university readers. In this section, we will highlight some of the features of academic writing that vary culturally.

Structuring your writing

The way you organise an academic text will depend on the purpose of the text you are writing. Types of texts written for different purposes are known as *genres*. Academic genres include *essays*, *reports* and *research proposals*. Essays and research proposals are typically structured like this:

Essay

Introduction

Main body (in sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the topic)

Conclusion

References

Research proposal

Introduction: background, justification for research

Literature review

Aims of the research

Research methods

Plan of research; time schedule

References

Task 5.7

What would you expect the main elements of a **research report** to be?

To check your answer, click here

Keeping your reader in mind

Whatever genre you are writing, it is important to look at your writing from the **reader's** point of view. We should try to write in a way that allows the ideas to be understood as easily as possible. Some ways to achieve this are by using:

- an ***abstract***, if required, which succinctly summarises the main aspects
- a ***title*** which expresses clearly the content of the paper
- a clearly set-out ***contents*** page with page numbers
- a systematic division into ***clearly labelled sections and subsections***
- an ***introduction*** which defines the *scope* and *aims* and outlines the *content* of the paper
- a ***conclusion*** (where appropriate) which draws the argument together and summarises the main points
- clear and appropriate ***graphics*** (diagrams, graphs, tables)
- an efficient and consistent ***citation*** system for supplying complete ***bibliographic*** details for all your sources
- a ***straightforward*** written style, avoiding long and complicated sentences, and ***making links between ideas explicit***

That final point, about *making links between ideas explicit*, is one of the areas of difference between writing cultures. Some languages are said to be *reader-responsible* in their typical written styles, while others are *writer-responsible*.

In more writer-responsible languages, of which English is one, the writer is expected to carry the main responsibility for communicating the message. In other words, it is up to the writer to make the reader's task as easy as possible – for example, by giving concrete examples to illustrate general or

abstract points, stating all the logical steps in an argument, and explaining the connections between ideas.

One important way to achieve this is to make careful use of 'signposting' language. Here are a few examples:

In the following section, ….

Firstly, … Secondly, … Finally, …

One further issue is …

In contrast to …., however, ….

Compared to …, ….

Moreover, …

For this reason, ….

One consequence of …. is that ….

This issue / problem / question / controversy / situation …

To summarise, …

In conclusion,…

In more **reader-responsible** languages, such as Japanese, the reader is expected to work harder to understand the ideas and logical relationships in texts, which tend to be less explicit. More is left for readers to *infer* (work out for themselves).

If your first language is more reader-responsible than English, you will need to give more detail, or make links clearer, when writing in English than you would in your own language. Otherwise, you may find that British readers will make comments such as "I don't follow this", "Why?", "Make this clearer" and "Give more detail" on your academic writing.

Task 5.8

Would you categorise your first language as reader-responsible or writer-responsible? You may be able to check it here:

http://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/research_findings/responsible.php

or here:

http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2007v16n3/12%20Xiukun%20Qi%20&%20Lida%20Liu.pdf

Supporting your arguments and using cautious language

When writing for a British academic reader, you must assume that they will evaluate your arguments **critically**. They will scrutinise the **evidence** you provide to support your conclusions. Academic writers rarely have absolute confidence in their conclusions, and the principle of *academic honesty* demands that you show that in the way you express your ideas.

The use of cautious or tentative language, known as *hedging*, is another characteristic of academic English. Some examples:

> ***One** possible explanation ... is ...*
>
> *This **may** indicate ...*
>
> *It is **suggested** that ...*
>
> *These findings **could** be interpreted as ...*
>
> *This **seems** to support ...*
>
> *A conclusion to be drawn from this **might** be that …*
>
> ***It is hoped** that the findings of the proposed study will shed light on …*
>
> *In this essay, **I have tried to show** that ….*

This is another area of cultural variation. In some academic traditions, less hedging is expected than in English, where expressions such as those listed above are common in many academic fields, particularly in the Discussion or Conclusion sections of texts.

Task 5.9

Underline the hedging language in these two examples, from the Discussion or Conclusions sections of research articles:

> *This paper has also presented some evidence, albeit limited and preliminary, that suggests it may not be advisable to teach all aspects of discourse intonation, even when working with relatively proficient learners.*
>
> (From Chapman, M. 2007. Theory and practice of teaching discourse intonation *ELT Journal* 61/1:3-11.)

> *Apart from the main medical indications for Caesarean section (previous CS, breech presentation), the results seem to indicate that individual practice style may be an important determinant of the wide variation in the rates of Caesarean delivery.*
>
> (From Signorelli, C. et al. 1995. Risk factors for caesarian section in Italy: results of a multicentre study. *Public Health* 109/ 3: 191-9.)

To compare your answer with the Feedback, click here

Acknowledging your sources

It is essential to **refer to sources** in your writing, to show that you are familiar with the relevant work in your topic area. It is equally important to **acknowledge** them; otherwise, it will be assumed that you are trying to claim credit for someone else's work.

At the University of Edinburgh it is a strict rule that you must acknowledge the sources of **all** the ideas and information which you refer to in your text; in other words, you must identify in your text the original works from which the ideas came.

There are basically two ways in which you can refer to, or *cite*, other work: you can **quote directly**, copying the author's own words from the original text; or you can use your own words to **paraphrase or summarise** the author' ideas.

Whether you quote or use your own words, if you mention an idea which is not your original opinion or finding, you must specify the source, even if you think it should be obvious to the reader.

Task 5.10

1. How are sources normally acknowledged in texts in your academic field?
2. How does one distinguish **quotations** from **paraphrases/summaries**?
3. You must give **full bibliographic details** of all sources cited, in the form of a list of References at the end, or – in some disciplines – in footnotes. What information would you give for:
   - **a textbook**
   - **a journal article**
   - **a paper in an edited collection**?

For feedback, click here

This rule applies not only to original research findings and theories, but also to extracts from textbooks, the use of technical terms which are known to have been 'coined' (invented) by particular individuals, and unpublished material, such as students' assignments (your own, or other people's), lecture handouts, etc.

In experimental sciences, the original designers of specific research procedures or equipment must also be cited.

Failing to acknowledge the sources you have used is known as **plagiarism**. As Bloor and Bloor (1991: 5) put it, "it is the duty of the writer to 'pay' for the use of others' knowledge with citations". In serious cases, plagiarism "may result in failure or disgrace".

To check that you know what plagiarism is (and is not), try the *Self-Test* on this website: http://ec.hku.hk/plagiarism/

The University of Edinburgh's guidance on avoiding plagiarism can be found at

http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Discipline/PlagiarismStudentGuidance.pdf

Make sure you read that guidance as soon as possible and ask your programme director or supervisor to explain anything that is not clear.

RESOURCES

In this section we look at some of the available sources of help in your academic writing.

Reading

Probably the best way to become familiar with the norms of academic writing in your field – how texts are usually structured, what kind of things texts do, and how things are typically expressed – is to **read** as much appropriate material as possible. Through experience of reading, we gain experience of the written genres of academic writing, and understand their typical patterns of organisation and language use.

Task 5.11

Below is the **introduction** to an economics article. The text of the introduction is 'jumbled'. What is the correct order of the fragments?

a *The plan of the paper is as follows. Section 2 discusses the concept of competitiveness in relation to the manufacturing sector. Section 3 analyses the determinants of imports and in particular the roles played by capacity utilisation and industrial standards. […] Section 6 concludes.*

b *Yet despite improvement in aspects of the sector's performance, and especially the stabilisation in the UK's share of OFCD manufactured exports (e.g. Mayes and Soteri, 1994), the growth of manufacturing remains slow, renewing doubts about competitiveness.*

c *The growth of UK manufacturing is now widely regarded as a vital element in the sustainability of economic recovery, not only because of the sector's contribution to external financing but also because of its importance as a source of technological change.*

d *The paper argues that the behaviour of imports provides important clues about the competitiveness of domestic manufacturing; it then uses econometric analysis to deepen understanding of the process of import growth, especially in relation to the role of non-price competitiveness.*

From Temple, P. and G. Urga. 1997. The competitiveness of UK manufacturing: evidence from imports. *Oxford Economic Papers* 49: 207-227.

For the solution, click here

To solve that task successfully you had to use your knowledge of the typical structure of introductions to academic articles – knowledge that is acquired through reading.

In the Advice section of this unit, you will see that several of the Edinburgh students there refer to reading as an important source of knowledge about academic writing. **Published journal articles** provide samples of successful academic writing. (The

EEL unit on Reading provides further advice on using academic articles).

In addition, you may be able to inspect **sample course assignments** written by previous students on your programme – ask your programme organiser or supervisor. Copies of Edinburgh **PhD theses** are held in the University Library.

Feedback

Writing academic assignments can seem a very lonely and competitive activity, and student writers often suffer anxiety and stress as they worry about the acceptability of what they are writing. It is a good idea to discuss your ideas with someone else on your programme and get their advice, at an early stage in the process (for example, when you have written an outline or first draft). That should help you to feel more confident about what you are doing, and can highlight problems in time for you to take appropriate action.

Task 5.12

Who could you discuss your plans for assignments with?

To compare your answer with the Feedback, click here

Spelling

Many students who use computers to write their assignments rely on spell-check programs. Although very useful, spell-checks are not foolproof. Firstly, the spell-check will only recognize words that have been programmed in. It will query every occurrence of a name or uncommon technical term, for example.

More importantly, the computer does not understand the *meaning* of what you write, so it will accept any worlds it recognises, even if they are in fact misspellings of other words.

(Did you spot the example in the previous sentence?)

Similarly, it cannot detect common slips such as *their* for *there*, *it's* for *its*, and *practice* for *practise*.

There is no substitute for carefully checking a printed draft of your text. If you have problems with English spelling, *Collins COBUILD English Usage* contains a guide to the general rules.

Websites

As usual, we recommend you start at Andy Gillett's website http://www.uefap.com/links/linkfram.htm for links to some excellent resources for improving your academic writing. Many of the websites we list below can be accessed from there.

The *UEfAP* site also contains Andy Gillett's own materials on various aspects of academic writing:

http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm

Academic phrasebank (John Morley, Manchester University)

A large collection of typical **academic expressions and sentence-patterns**.

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

The Chicago Manual of Style Quick Guide gives very clear advice on two alternative **citation** systems – *author-date* and

notes and bibliography – for citing paper and electronic sources. (NB: There are other systems, too. Ask in your School for advice on which you should use.)

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Make sure you read the University of Edinburgh's advice on acknowledging your sources

http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Discipline/PlagiarismStudentGuidance.pdf

and ask your programme staff to explain anything that is not clear.

Books

The series called ***Short Guide to Writing about…*** (published by Pearson) contains some excellent books on writing in various fields, such as *A Short Guide to Writing about Biology*, by Jan A. Pechenik.
http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/bookshop/detail.asp?item=100000000416792

Making Your Case, by Rebecca Stott, Anna Snaith and Rick Rylance (Longman, 2001**).** A practical guide to essay writing.

How to Write Essays, by John Clancy and Brigid Ballard (Longman, 1998).

How to Write Better Essays, by Bryan Greetham (Palgrave, 2001).

Academic Writing, by Robert Bailey (Routledge 2006)**.** The basics of academic writing, for non-native speakers.

The Mature Students' Guide to Writing, by Jean Rose (Palgrave, 2001). For people returning to education after a gap.

Academic Writing for Graduate Students, by John Swales and Christine Feak (Michigan, 2004). For non-native English speakers.

Writing at University, by Phyllis Creme and Mary Lea (Open University Press, 2003). A guide to writing essays and other assignments.

Scientists Must Write, by Robert Barrass (Routledge, 2002). A practical guide for scientists and engineers.

Writing Up Research, by Robert Weissberg and Suzanne Buker. (Prentice Hall Regents, 1990). The structure and language of research reports, for non-native English speakers.

English in Today's Research World, by John Swales and Christine Feak (Michigan, 2000).

Inside Track to Successful Academic Writing by Andy Gillett, Angela Hammond and Mary Martala. (Pearson 2009). A comprehensive study skills guide on what is required for effective writing. http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/Bookshop/detail.asp?item=100000000274678

ADVICE FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

As in other units, we end with the thoughts of international students at Edinburgh, reflecting on what has helped them improve their own academic writing during their time here. Read them carefully and then do Task 5.13.

1. First of all, I think a good way for improving writing, especially for academic purposes, is a lot of reading. At first I started to read any parts of academic papers which I recognized to be related to my subject area. Sometimes there was not too much relevance in the whole text, but I tried to continue reading to find more frequent sentences for linking the different parts of the discussion, and working out all of the sentences which I felt could be used in my own writing. Sometimes I explore the sentences which are exactly what I want to say, then I use them for writing in my own research subject. I think this procedure can really improve writing for academic purposes and also understanding the essence of others' writing.

2. I believe writing is a consequence of your ability to write in your native language.

3. I had problems with connectors, so I made a table with connectors and the translation in my mother tongue, and each time I have to write an essay, report, etc., I use it.

4. I think the most important thing for academic studies is writing, because it is important for writing their essays and theses or dissertations, also for answering exam questions.

   I have improved my writing which I still have problems with by

reading different academic handbooks and literature. At the same time I have improved my academic vocabulary. Also when I read a subject I try to summarise it in my own words and that helps me to understand the subject and improve my writing.

5. I think the most useful thing is to have a text in one's own language and to see how the text would be written in English. This is not something people usually do: in fact, when reading an English text, attention is usually paid to how the text would be written in one's own language.

   I think that it's useful to read a bilingual text (e.g. a book), start from one's own language, trying to translate, and then verify how the text has been translated (or was originally written) in English.

6. I use a computer thesaurus. I do quite a lot of writing for the popular press and I notice that I tend to use some words over and over again. So I use the thesaurus to get more variety into my writing. I ask a native speaker to check the new words to make sure they're OK.

7. Practising essay writing is the basic element in developing one's language skills. I have always liked writing essays, especially, because I had learnt its techniques in classes. I believe that an understanding of essay writing skills and practising them is a useful means towards success. In addition, I would like to remind students of English that simplicity is needed for better and more coherent writing. Simplicity is success!

8. Sometimes, when I read a book or an article in my subject, I come across clauses or sentences which explain in a very accurate, concise way concepts which I would have used longer sentences to express. I find very useful and helpful incorporating the grammatical form of such sentences in other places in my own writing. When I am writing my essay or answering an exam question, I usually use sentences from the references I have read. As a result I get another advantage, which is to improve my vocabulary. However, due to my less ability in grammar, I need help from some of my classmates who are native English speakers.

Task 5.13

We have shown those eight students' comments in random order. Try to put them into groups of similar techniques.

To compare your answer with the Feedback, click here

Task 5.14

Do you think any of these suggestions are not useful? Feedback here

That's the end of this unit. If you have found any web links no longer working, or if you would like to suggest other informal learning techniques for this unit, please email me at A.J.Lynch@ed.ac.uk

Prof. Tony Lynch
English Language Teaching Centre
University of Edinburgh

Writing

Study notes and answers

Task 5.1 is an open question.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.2

You can check your answers in the transcript below. The differences between Japan and the UK are shown in red. Ayako's advice is shown in blue.

Transcript: **What to expect from exams in the UK**

Tutor: *So Ayako, you've been studying at a university in the UK for quite a long time now, haven't you?*

Ayako: *Yeah.*

Tutor: *How long's it been?*

Ayako: *It's...like...about nine months now.*

Tutor: *Really? You must have experienced a lot of things.*

Ayako: *Yeah.*

Tutor: *Have you taken any exams?*

Ayako: *Yes. It was very different from what I expected.*

Tutor: *Really? What are exams in Japan like then?*

Ayako: *Exams in my country...it's very different because* ***teachers mainly tested if students could remember key words and important facts,*** *so they weren't so worried about my opinions. So in Japan we had to do a lot of memorising and also the question style was different because* ***in Japan we have more multiple choice questions.***

Tutor: *In Japan did you always get assessed by exam or did you also have course work?*

Ayako: *Yeah.* ***Usually we're assessed by exams so we didn't have so much course work****...or something.*

Tutor: *Oh really? And in the UK what have you found?*

Ayako: ***In the UK we have to do exams and also course work like essay(s) or a report.*** *And in the UK, in the exam,* ***teachers test whether you really understand the information,*** *not just know the details. Also,* ***you have to show your own opinion,*** *so you have to write a lot more, and* ***in an exam you are given a whole answer booklet that you have to write your answers in.*** *In Japan, we usually just wrote our answers on one sheet of paper because we didn't have to write so much.*

Tutor: *Oh right. That's interesting.*

Ayako: *Another thing I was really surprised (about) is that I had to use a pen because* ***in Japan we use a pencil in exams.*** *In my first exam in the UK, the examiner came over to me and said, "What are you doing? Why are you using a pencil?" I was really surprised. In the end, the examiner gave me his pen!*

Tutor: *Really? That's a really funny story. What advice would you give to other students coming to study in the UK?*

Ayako: *First I should say,* ***please bring your pen*** *and use your pen! Also* ***past papers (are) really helpful, because they give you a good idea what the questions are like*** *and also help you to plan how much time you should spend on each question and maybe you can plan, and you can organise. When you are revising your materials...your stuff...it's also important to not just learn the facts, but also think about your opinion on the key topics, so...yeah...critical thinking is very important.*

Tutor: *Ah. Okay then, and what would you say about stress? Do people get stressed about exams?*

Ayako: *Yeah. I think most people feel nervous because we (have) never experience(d) before what the exams (are) like in the UK, but in Japan also before the exams we feel nervous so...yeah...it's the same.*

Tutor: *So what would you normally do to help you relax?*

Ayako: ***Maybe talk to your friends and talk to your personal tutor.*** *Maybe they will give you really good, helpful information or suggestions. You can talk about how you should revise or how you should study...something like that.*

Tutor: *Okay, and how long would you suggest starting revising before an exam?*

Ayako: I think if it's longer it's really better so...at least you need two weeks definitely.

Tutor: *Thank you very much Ayako. That's really, really interesting, thank you.*

Ayako: *You're welcome.*

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.3

'Brainstorming' here means suggesting or writing down ideas quickly, as they occur to you, without considering them carefully or organising them.

'Leaving the text fallow' means putting it aside and not looking at it for a period (a few days). This process helps you to see your text 'with fresh eyes', and can help you be more objective and critical in evaluating your writing.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.4

These are open questions. Here are some comments:

1. Students who think of writing as a *linear* process may find it more natural to begin drafting with the introduction. Others may find it easier to begin elsewhere. An academic interviewed for a research study at Edinburgh made the following comment:

> It's odd, you see. You think you know what you're going to say, but I think you don't. You only know when you've done it what you've said. So you go back, and write your introduction, saying what it is you're going to say!
>
> reported in Anderson (1993: 54)

2. The same interviewee also said, "although I use a word-processor I can't compose on a word-processor, because it's too rough a draft". Many people find they need to print out a draft to see overall shape of the text, and to proof-read thoroughly.

3. Some of our students at Edinburgh have told us they write *fewer* drafts in English than in their first language, because of pressure of time; writing in English takes them longer, so they have less time for revision. So it is really important to organise your time, to make sure you have plenty of time for revising and proofreading your draft text.
4. Many students find that thinking and writing in English at an early stage of drafting helps them write without the difficulty of translating from first language into English.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.5

Academic written language tends to be less personal, with more formal vocabulary, and carefully hedged. For further details, visit the website shown in the Task.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.6

Suggested answer:

The final section discusses some advantages of this procedure, such as the faster delivery of results, and also identifies some problems.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.7

Research reports conventionally follow the 'IMRaD' structure:

***I**ntroduction*

***M**ethods* (or *Materials and Methods*)

***R**esults*

(and)

***D**iscussion* (sometimes with a separate *Conclusion*)

There would also be a **References** section, and sometimes **appendices**. Published research reports are normally preceded by an **abstract**.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.8 is an open question. To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.9

> *This paper has also presented some evidence, albeit limited and preliminary, that suggests it may not be advisable to teach all aspects of discourse intonation, even when working with relatively proficient learners.*

> *Apart from the main medical indications for Caesarean section (previous CS, breech presentation), the results seem to indicate that individual practice style may be an important determinant of the wide variation in the rates of Caesarean delivery.*

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.10

1. Again, this is an open question. The 'author + date' style – e.g. Anderson (1993) - is most usual in the social sciences. Arts disciplines, such as literature, history, philosophy and law, tend to use 'notes and bibliography' styles. Other fields may use other systems.
2. Shorter quotations are shown with **quotation marks** ("..." or ' ... '); longer quotations are identified by **indenting** the text, (setting it in by several character spaces) and perhaps using a different font or line spacing.

   Page references should be given with all quotations. Other types of citation need only a textual acknowledgement (e.g. surname and date), with page references if appropriate.

   The surname may be included in the sentence:

   > Anderson (1993) has found that ...

3. All require author's surname, initial, date of publication, title (titles of books and journals are normally italicised, or underlined).

   Books also require place (city) of publication and publisher.

   Journal articles require the article title and the journal title, plus volume (and issue) number and page numbers of the article.

   Papers / chapters in collections need editors / editors' name(s), the title of the paper. If several papers from the same collection are listed, the collection is listed as a separate entry.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.11

The original sequence was:

c (background, asserting importance of general topic area)

b (specific problem to be examined)

d (thesis/aim and methodology)

a (outline of content/structure)

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.12 is an open question To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.13

Students 1, 4 and 8 highlight the benefits of **reading**, especially to provide models of appropriate expressions to use in their own texts. In other words, they are applying Language Learning Principle 11, **Learn some lines as wholes** (in the *EEL* unit on Speaking).

Students 2 and 7 emphasise the role of **writing** practice. Student 7 feels that the writing skills one develops in the first language are transferred to writing in English).

At a conference on teaching academic writing skills to international students, a member of the audience asked a presenter what advice he would give to a student who asked "What's the best way for me to improve my writing?". After a moment's thought, the presenter said "Read!".

This led to a lively debate. Some of the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) specialists in the audience agreed with this answer, but others took the view expressed by another delegate who said, "My advice would be: 'Write!' ".

Both writing practice and reading can make valuable contributions to developing your writing skills, in different ways.

To go back to the unit text, click here

Task 5.14

Again, an open question. But it is essential to remember the **risk of plagiarism**; although it is sensible to look for conventional phrases and grammatical structures which you can use in your own writing, if you copy part of another writer's text, you must include an acknowledgement in your text and list the source in the References.

References in this Unit

Anderson, K. 1993. '*UT supra crepidem sutor iudicet*: a genre-analysis approach to the pedagogical description of non-science academic discourse'. Unpublished MSc Applied Linguistics dissertation. University of Edinburgh.

Bloor M. and Bloor T. 1991. 'Cultural expectations and socio-pragmatic failure in academic writing' in Adams P., Heaton B. and Howarth P. (eds) *Socio-Cultural Issues in English for Academic Purposes*. Modern English Publications/British Council.

Reid J. 1984. 'The radical outliner and the radical brainstormer: a perspective on composing processes'. *TESOL Quarterly* 18/3: 529-534.

Shaw P. 1991. 'Science research students' composing processes'. *English for Specific Purposes*. 10/3: 189-206.

Zamel V. 1983. 'The composing processes of advanced ESL students: six case studies'. *TESOL Quarterly* 17/2: 165-187.