

An assignment which can also be called a research paper is a piece of academic writing which relies on the authors own research on a particular topic. It also includes an analysis and interpretation of these research findings.

The following sections outline how to write a good assignment and show that you need to have more than just the knowledge of the topic your assignment is based on (A research guide, 2018).

Section 1: Starting an assignment: Choosing a topic.

Your interest in a topic can influence the amount of time and effort you put into your assignment so therefore choose a topic that interests you.

Narrow the topic down. Concentrate on a particular aspect of the topic and focus on this, for example:

For example: Social Care – Social care in Ireland – The state of Social care in Ireland 2005 – 2018.

Check with your lecturer to make sure he/she approves of your topic before you start to research it.

If you are unsure about what is required by you for the assignment read the assignment again and seek clarification from your lecturer.

Choose an area of the topic you can manage. Don't choose an area that is very technical, learned or very specialised.

Don't choose a topic that has a limited range of source materials (A research guide, 2018).

Section 2: Looking for Information:

When looking for information on your assignment check the CIT library website. The *MultiSearch* function on the library website searches all physical and electronic holdings in the library. From this you will get an idea of how much information is available.

Physical holdings include:

Books	Journals	Official publications from organisations
Government publications and reports	Dictionaries and encyclopaedias	CD's and DVD's

Electronic holdings include:

e-Books	e-Journals
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Tips:

- Check the library home page and CIT subject help guides for useful websites and other useful resources.
- Check your module descriptor from the library home page to find useful resources recommended by your lecturer.
- Use search engines such as google but take particular notice of domain name extensions. Make sure the website is **reliable, accurate and up to date**.
- Check the purpose of the website, is it genuine or does it have a less obvious agenda?
- Check the origin of the website from the homepage address of the site:

.ie (Irish website)	.co.uk (British website)	.ac.uk (British educational website)
.org (non-profit organisation)	.com (commercial organisation)	.edu (American educational website)

- Some domain names are more reliable than others.
- Check to see if the webpage is an official website.

For example:

www.hse.ie – Health service executive of Ireland	www.hsa.ie – Health and safety authority of Ireland
www.bera.ac.uk – British education research association	www.iosh.co.uk – Institution of Occupation Safety and health

- Be careful of personal homepages on the internet since their quality can often be unreliable.
- If no author or title of the web page can be identified then it may not be suitable for academic purposes.
- Read through the various sources and evaluate. Take notes, photocopy or printout information that is relevant to your assignment. Bookmark relevant webpages.

- Keep a record of full bibliographic information e.g. (author, title, year of publication, publisher, place of publication, URL's, creation dates or modification dates as well as dates of access). Any source without bibliographic information is useless since you cannot cite it or put it into your list of references at the end of your assignment (A research guide, 2018).

Section 3: Making your essay/thesis statement:

- In general your assignment will require an essay/thesis statement. This statement is the main idea behind your assignment. The arguments you give in your assignment should be based on this central point.
- Ask your lecturer if your assignment requires an essay statement if you are in doubt.
- The main body of your assignment will consist of arguments to support this essay statement.
- The essay statement should be provided in the introduction of your assignment or the second paragraph depending if the assignment is longer.
- Your essay statement will change while your ideas develop that is why you need to organise and analyse your materials and ideas before you write your essay statement. Your essay statement can only be made once you have finished your assignment.
- Don't use general statements. These statements and arguments may turn out to be too fuzzy. Instead use a particular subject. Your assignment should present something new to your lecturer making it interesting and informative to read.
- Don't cite other authors in this section. Don't copy from other authors instead display your own ideas using your own words.
- Your essay statement should explain to your lecturer how you interpret the area of your research. It should tell your lecturer what to expect from your assignment. It should **answer the question you were asked**. Your essay statement should display your claim which other people may want to criticise.
- Your essay statement should be strong. If you are able, give it to your lecturer to review it. Otherwise you can judge it yourself.
- Check that your essay statement answers the question of your assignment. Check to see if your stance can be opposed. If it can't then maybe you have just given a summary instead of providing an argument. Check to see if your essay statement is particular enough. It shouldn't be too general.

- Does your essay statement state a general fact or does it provide new or interesting information to your lecturer. Check to see if the body of your assignment supports your essay statement or whether they are different. Analyse them and make changes if it is necessary. It is normal to make changes to your assignment during the process of writing and reviewing.
- Well organised ideas help create a good assignment (A research guide, 2018).

Section 4: Assignment outline:

Most assignments will follow the structure presented in Table 1. Ask your lecturer for clarification on this.

• Title page (Title of the assignment, Author of the assignment, Name of Institute and Date as well as Student number and Lecturer). Check with your lecturer for a full list of details to be provided on your Title page.
• Abstract (Provide a summary of the assignment usually 250 words or less). Check with your lecturer to see if this is required and for a recommended word count.
• Introduction (Background information on the topic and your essay statement) Check with your lecturer for an appropriate word count for the introduction.
• Assignment body which can be further broken down into other subsections depending on length of assignment and nature of the research e.g. Methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion. Check with your lecturer to see what subsections are required in your assignment and how to arrange them. Ask your lecturer for an appropriate word count for the main body of the assignment or individual subsections.
• Reference list or Bibliography list. Check with your lecturer to see which kind of list is required for your assignment.
• Figures, Tables, Appendix. Check with your lecturer to see if this is optional or required in your assignment.

- An **outline** enables you to logically organise and arrange your topic before you start writing. In your outline the points mentioned should flow logically from one to the other. A good assignment is written with the help of a good outline. Make sure that your outline contains an *Introduction*, a *body* and a *conclusion*.
- **Introduction:** State your essay statement and what is the purpose of your assignment. State why you are writing the assignment. Outline how you will approach the topic in the assignment. Is your assignment an analysis of a problem, a factual report, a book review or a comparison? Outline briefly the points you intend to cover in your assignment and why it should be interesting to read.
- **Body:** Here you make your arguments to support your essay statement. For each stance you take find 3 supporting arguments. The first argument should be strong and finish with the strongest argument for each position you take.
- **Conclusion:** Mention your essay statement again. You can reword it or summarise it. Provide a summary of your arguments. Explain your conclusion and why you have come to this particular point (A research guide, 2018).

Section 5: The organisation of your notes:

Use your outline to organise all the information you have gathered. Here your research data needs to be critically analysed. Check that the information you use is accurate, factual and up to date by using the best sources available. Views that oppose your views should also be mentioned if they help support your essay statement. This stage is crucial in the writing of your assignment. You will analyse, evaluate and sort the information you have gathered and learn about your topic which is the reason you are doing the assignment. You need to communicate your ideas and findings to others effectively through written words. Irrelevant information can be excluded from your assignment. Only include information that you understand. Do not **Plagiarise** make sure all the information you mention is stated in your own words. Document all ideas, arguments and quotes borrowed from other authors accurately. Keep a record of bibliographical information that you have used in your assignment. Organise your notes in a way that best suits you (A research guide, 2018).

Section 6: Writing your assignment:

Start with the first section of your outline. Gather all relevant notes. For each idea or argument you plan to use in your assignment summarise, paraphrase or quote directly. Use whichever technique best suits you. Flow through the sections in your outline logically and in order. Organise your assignment as outlined and as mentioned in the introduction. Mark paragraphs that need to be edited later. Remember that your assignment may need to be rewritten again until you are happy with it (A research guide, 2018).

Section 7: Revise your assignment:

Look for content errors by reading your assignment. If necessary rearrange ideas and arguments to follow your outline. Check facts and figures again. If you need to reorganise your outline then do it, but keep the purpose of your assignment and reader in mind.

Check if your essay statement is clear. Check to see if you missed anything from your outline. Check to see if your arguments flow logically. Make sure all sources are cited properly so as to avoid plagiarism.

Is your essay statement backed up with good, strong supporting arguments? Are the points you have made in your assignment clear.

Do a spell check and read your assignment again to check for grammatical errors. This will improve the quality of the assignment. If you are able, get someone to proof read it to spot mistakes that you have missed.

Each paragraph should start with a proper topic sentence. Support your arguments with documented examples or proof.

Check for run-on or unfinished sentences. Check for repetitious or unnecessary words. Check for varying lengths of sentences. Do paragraphs or ideas flow logically and smoothly into the next?

Check for spelling or grammatical errors. Check to see if quotes are properly cited and punctuation and spelling correct.

Check that citations are in the correct format and are accurate.

How to write an assignment for CIT Undergraduate students

Try not to use contractions. Use the term 'cannot' as opposed to 'can't' or 'do not' instead of 'don't'.

Use the third person i.e. avoid using "I think" or "I suppose".

Stay objective but make your points clear.

Is there a sense of completion at the end of the assignment? (A research guide, 2018).

Ask your lecturer which referencing style you should use. (*Please see our Referencing guides on the CIT library home page).

Section 8: The final draft:

Read your assignment question again making sure you understand what is expected of you and that your assignment meets the requirements laid down by your lecturer. Know how your assignment will be corrected.

Get someone to read your assignment to check for spelling, punctuation, duplicated or missing words.

Make sure your assignment is neat and tidy, since there are usually marks for presentation.

Usually your assignment will need to be typed but check this with your lecturer. Print your assignment on a good quality printer (A research guide, 2018).

Further Reading (**Available from CIT Library*).

"Doing your undergraduate project" by Denis F. Reardon (2006).

"How to improve your assignment results" by Colin Neville (2009).

"How to write a BA thesis: a practical guide from your first ideas to your finished paper" by Charles Lipson (2005).