# Formatting your essay

When you submit your essay (assignment) for marking, there is a set format you must follow. There may be some small differences in format that your own lecturer may request of you, so make sure that you read and follow the instructions in your subject learning guides carefully. Following are some basic guidelines for you to follow:

1. Basic essay structure
2. Guidelines for using headings

## 1.  Basic essay structure

● **Title page**

The title page should contain: name, student number, unit title/number, question title/name, due date, unit coordinator, word count. You do NOT have to decorate the page (e.g. graphics, photographs) unless you are asked to by the lecturer.

On the computer – use your 'Font' & 'Paragraph' tools to work on the layout.

● **Margins**

Margins - minimum 2.5 cm, maximum 3 cm all around.

On the computer – use the 'Page Layout' tool to set up your margins.

● **Paragraphs**

Double **or** 1.5 space all of the essay paragraphs including 'long quotations' (more than 40 words) which should have NO quotation marks, be indented 1.3 cm to the right, and have the same spacing as the rest of the essay paragraphs. (Can vary with referencing system you are using.)

Leave 1 blank line between paragraphs **or** indent the first word (not both).
On the computer – use 'Paragraph' OR 'Line and paragraph spacing' for 1.5 OR double spacing.

● **Font**

Use a plain serif (e.g. Times New Roman) or sans serif (e.g. Arial) font. A serif font is easier to read. Suggested sizes are 12 for the text and 14 for headings.

DO NOT change fonts in the course of writing the essay.
On the computer – use 'Font' tools to select font, colour and appropriate style.

● **Pagination**

Put numbers in line with the right margin at the top or bottom of each page. Centre the number of the first page of chapters or appendices at the bottom. It is also acceptable, although less common, to centre all page numbers. Pagination is best done with Header and Footer.

On the computer – use 'Insert' >header or footer > insert your name, student number, assignment number/topic, page number.

● **Appendices**

Appendices usually follow the reference list.
Each appendix must start on a new page.
Appendices must be numbered—A,B,C or 1,2,3.
(see ASO fact sheet: Appendices)

● **Reference list/bibliography**

All referencing lists start on a NEW PAGE. Go the Academic Skills Fact Sheets > Referencing section. Select the correct referencing style for your discipline.

# 2. Guidelines for using headings

Headings are **signposts** that focus the reader on the most important content in a piece of writing. Provided that they are well structured, headings make longer pieces of writing easier to write and easier to read (for the marker). Look at headings systems in your unit reading material and you will get a 'feeling' for their structure and suitability. Follow these rules:

1.  Use headings only where allowed or required. An increasing number of academic discipline areas allow or require the use of headings. Check with the unit coordinator.

2.  Make sure that your choice of headings and subheadings make the organisation of material more manageable and speed up the location of specific information.

3.  Use **minimal** or **maximal** capitalisation, although the use of only minimal capitalisation is becoming more frequent in academic writing.

4.  Make sure that your headings are captions, not sentences, so use only internal punctuation, such as commas, colons, or semicolons.

5.  Left justify your headings unless asked to do differently.

6.  Decide on a hierarchy of headings and use it consistently throughout your work. Most student work requires no more than 3 levels of headings.

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**Level 1: Major headings** – will be larger type and bold with extra space above and below.

# The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care

**Level 2: Subheadings** will be bold and the same size or slightly larger than the body of the text with extra space above and below.

## The effects of radiation on living tissue

**Level 3: Subdivisions under subheadings** will be bold or italicised, not both.

*Implications for normal cells*

NOTE: All the above points are subject to course and faculty requirements. Check your Unit Outlines for specific guidelines.

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● **Capitalisation styles**

When you write headings, you should use a 'Capitalisation style'—either *minimal* OR *maximal* and stick to this style.

**Maximal** (Headline style). The first letter of every important word should be capitalised. The first word after a colon is **always** capitalised.

**The Oncology Ward: Nuclear Radiation and Client Care**

**Minimal** (Sentence style). Capitalise the first word, any other word that would normally take a capital, and the first word after a colon.

**The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care**

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For more detailed information on using headings correctly, go to the Academic Skills website. Click on Academic skills online and select from the academic writing online workshops
USING HEADINGS

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