

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

WRITING AN ASSIGNMENT

PRESENTATION

Your essay must be typed, double spaced, on one side only of the paper. If you cannot type it yourself, arrange for someone else to do so. Include a title page containing: your name, the title of the essay, and the date of its completion. Make sure that each page is numbered, and staple all the sheets together.

STRUCTURE

Your essay should be set up as follows.

- title page, including your name, address, and the subject.
- table of contents, or outline
- acknowledgements if appropriate (of your typist etc.)
- list of abbreviations (if any)
- then the body of the essay, broken up into either chapters, or sections, with appropriate headings and sub-headings
- appendices if needed
- a note on your methods of research.

DOCUMENTATION

A complete bibliography should be provided, listing the sources that you drew from and/or researched (see below, under "Research".)

FOOTNOTES

A system of footnotes or endnotes should be included. The reference in each note should be given in the normal manner: *book title, author's name, publisher, place of publication, date, page number*. It is important that you clearly identify any part of the essay that does not strictly contain your own ideas or words. Direct quotes from another work must be set in quotation marks, with the source identified in a note.

ORIGINALITY

It is not expected that your work will be entirely original. You are free to draw from other materials (with proper acknowledgements). However, you should also introduce as much original research, thought, or experience, as you can.

RESEARCH

To gather materials you should use resources like the following:

- published books
- unpublished writings
- interviews
- journals and magazines
- leaflets, brochures, etc.
- government publications.
- audio and/or video tapes, etc.

VISION CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

WRITING A THESIS

Please take time to read these guidelines. You may lose marks if they are not followed.

TOPIC

Before starting your essay or thesis its theme must be approved by a faculty member. Please send us the title and a brief summary of what you propose to write. The topic would normally be: a biblical theme; an exposition of some area of Christian doctrine; related to some specific aspect of Christian service, ethics, life, or ministry; the structure, work, worship, history, future, etc, of the church; or the like.

PRESENTATION

Your essay must be typed, double spaced, on one side only of the paper. If you cannot type it yourself, arrange for someone else to do so. Include a title page containing: your name, the title of the essay, and the date of its completion. Leave generous margins on all sides of your sheets, so that there is adequate room for comments to be made by the person who grades it. Make sure that each page is numbered, and staple or bind all the sheets together.

STRUCTURE

Your essay should be set up as follows.

- a title page, which should contain your name, address, the subject, and the date of completion
- a table of contents, or outline, which should reflect as closely as possible the headings and subheadings used in the thesis
- acknowledgements if appropriate (of your typist, illustrator, etc.)
- a list of abbreviations (if any have been used)
- then the body of the essay, broken up either into chapters, or sections, with appropriate headings and sub-headings
- any appendices that may be needed
- a note on your methods of research

DOCUMENTATION

A complete bibliography should be provided, listing the sources that you drew from and/or researched (see below, under "Research".) An addendum at the end of this document gives further information on how to set up footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies.

FOOTNOTES

A system of footnotes or endnotes should be included (see Addendum, below). The reference in each note should be given in the normal manner: *book title, author's name, publisher, place of publication, date, page number*. It is important that you clearly identify any part of the essay that does not strictly contain your own ideas or words. Direct quotes from another work must be set in quotation marks, with the source identified in a note. Passages that substantially echo another's person's ideas or words should also be identified in a footnote or endnote. Deliberate plagiarism or known plagiarism is not permissible within today's literary ethics.

ORIGINALITY

It is not expected that your work will be entirely original. You are free to draw from other materials (with proper acknowledgements). However, you should also introduce as much original research, thought, or experience, as you can. Credit will be given for the following: the *number* of books or sources researched; the manner in which you have *organised* your material; the degree to which you have successfully *analysed* and *understood* your material; and the extent of your *creative* or *original* thought or presentation.

RESEARCH

To gather materials you should use resources like the following:

- published books
- unpublished writings
- interviews
- journals and magazines
- leaflets, brochures, etc.
- government publications.
- audio and/or video tapes, etc.
- your local library

STYLE

Write in a formal style, but avoid being too impersonal, abstract, or indirect. Give attention to correct spelling. Although this is not a course in English grammar, you can lose marks if your essay indicates carelessness or laziness. After all, spelling help is no further away than a dictionary. If you find writing difficult, use short and simple sentences. Don't try to be more clever than you are. Get a more literate friend to check your work and offer suggestions for correcting faulty grammar or wrong spelling.

In all essays the marker will be looking for some measure of original thought, and a good writing style.

This is particularly true of essays or theses required for the higher awards. A master's thesis would be expected to show a substantial measure of creative analysis, and a better-than-average understanding of the subject.

Even more is that true of a doctoral thesis, which would be expected to display superior handling of the subject, and a high level of originality.

The use of direct quotations can add interest to your writing. A short passage - no more than three or four lines - can be included as part of the paragraph you are writing. Make sure you put it in quotation marks. However -

"A longer passage should be separated from your paragraph, and indented, as this one is. Since it would not be appropriate for another author's work to be graded or corrected, longer quotes can be typed in single-spacing. You will, of course, acknowledge the source of the quote either in a Footnote or an Endnote."

Poetry should be centred, and set out as follows. Do not use double spacing. The poem could be set in italics, if you prefer.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh, no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd. (a)

The same rules should be followed for scripture citations. Short passages can be included in your paragraph; longer passages should be kept separate and indented; poetry should be laid out as poetry.

METHOD

Follow this procedure

- read all you can about your topic, taking notes as you read, and write an outline, or preliminary plan, of your essay.
- gather primary materials (based on your own experience and thinking)
- make sure that your notes contain a full record of each book, source, or interview, etc, from which you have drawn material.
- organise your notes to match your outline (it is a good idea to put each group of notes on a separate sheet)

(a) William Shakespeare, Sonnet.

- use headings and subheadings, making sure that they follow each other in a logical order, and assist in the development of your argument and the clarity of your presentation
- write a first draft of your essay.
- put the essay aside for two or three days
- get someone else to review it for you
- revise and correct the first draft
- if necessary, repeat the last two steps
- type out the final draft
- type the number of words in your essay on the title page. (Don't count the words individually. Work out the average number of words on one page, and multiply that by the number of pages.)
- send the completed essay to VCU.

ADDENDA

FOOTNOTES

These comments apply both to *Footnotes* and *Endnotes*.

Direct quotations from another work must always be marked by quotation marks in the body of your essay, and the source acknowledged in a footnote. A footnote may also be used to make an extra comment, or insert additional material, that would be disruptive if it were placed in the body of the essay. In your text you may indicate a footnote by a number, a letter, or some other mark.

For a work that has not previously been quoted in your essay, use the style shown in the footnote below for your Footnotes or Endnotes. Note the following:

- the author's name is given first (unless you have already given the full name in your text)
- followed by the name of the work (underlined)

- publishing details (including the date, if known); if required, the details (in quotation marks) of a chapter title, magazine article, etc; the page number. ^(a) Note the use of commas and semicolons.

For a work that you have quoted before, use either *ibid.* ^(b) or *op. cit.* ^(c)

Ibid. ("the same") is used when no other work has been quoted between this footnote and the one preceding it (even if several pages have intervened between the two quotations).

Op. cit. ("the work cited") is used when one or more footnotes stand between the original quotation and the present one. The author's last name must be included, unless you have mentioned it in the text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Your essay/thesis must contain a bibliography listing all the sources to which you referred while you were preparing it. The bibliography should be the last item in your essay, and it should be set out as follows, showing where appropriate a book, article, author, editor, compiler, etc -

Blacker, G. J., Dynamics of Grace; Blonheim & Sons, New York, 1974.

Conrad, C. C., art. "Christ & Culture", New Faith Journal, April 1993; The Foundations Society, Glasgow.

Davids, G. H., et. al. Eight Scholars Speak; J. J. Brown, London, 1976.

Ender, K. V., ed., Songs of Love; Lock & Co, London, 1991.

(a) Jonathon Browne (editor), Dictionary of World Religions, article "Islamic Prayer"; Thompson & Thompson, London, 1987; pg. 335.

(b) *Ibid.*, pg 398.

(c) Anderson, *Op. cit.*, pg. 35.