

## What Makes a Good Management Essay or Assignment?

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## a good essay or assignment...

1. Describes and analyzes an actual situation drawing meaningfully on course concepts.
2. Supports or challenges course concepts with examples.
3. Synthesises and develops ideas from the course.
4. Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of relevant material.
5. Has a clear argument and builds to a meaningful conclusion.
6. Shows evidence of wide reading.

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## a poor essay or assignment...

1. Fails to be relevant or fails to address the topic.
2. Relies mainly on description with very little analysis.
3. Never tells the reader what the main point is.
4. Builds an argument on poor assumptions.
5. Simply regurgitates course material, with no wider reading.
6. Shows little depth, and gives little sense of 'grappling with a problem'.

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## Guidance from the University

<http://www.is2.bham.ac.uk/ppm/publications/skills/sk04prequotrefs.pdf>  
<http://www.i-cite.bham.ac.uk/>

"Plagiarism is the act of using or copying someone else's work and pretending that you thought of it or created it. In order to avoid suspicion of plagiarism it is important to make appropriate use of references."

taken from <http://www.i-cite.bham.ac.uk/Plagiarism.shtml>

If you quote from other's work, or use a specific idea or theory, you need to give an appropriate reference.

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## Examples

### Referring to a general idea:

Changes in the nature of organisations, and in the way we work, have implications for how we understand the relationship between individual employees and their employers (Sennet, 1998).

### You might want to refer to multiple authors (use a semi-colon):

the decline of organisational hierarchies also problematises extant models for career guidance (Collin & Watts, 1996; King, 2001).

### Multiple works by the same author(s) in the same year:

In simple terms, the elenchus has three stages (Morrell 2004a).

[later]

the Socratic method can remove potentially harmful assumptions, in the process identifying how a social script is inadequate in terms of addressing a complex, multifaceted concept (Morrell 2004b).

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## More examples

### Using a direct, short quote or phrase:

This has implications for the value of cultural capital, 'the extent to which individuals have absorbed the dominant culture' (Abercrombie et al., 1988, p. 58). [notice here the et al – indicating there are more than three authors].

### Using a direct, fairly long quote:

Within mainstream social psychology, Schank and Abelson are most famously associated with use of the term script. They define a script as: '... a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context ... Thus a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well known situation' (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 41).

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## Referencing – bibliography format

Now let's look how references are shown in the end 'references' or 'bibliography' section. Below are examples of different materials.

Book: Mellahi, K., Morrell, K. and Wood, G. (2008) *The Ethical Business*, Palgrave, London.

Book review: Morrell, K., (2003) review of C. Cooper, and D. Rousseau (Eds), 'Trends in Organizational Behavior Vol 8: Employee versus Owner Issues in Organizations', *Personnel Review*, 32(4): 526-530.

Conference paper: Morrell, K., Loan Clarke, J. and Wilkinson, A.J. (2003) 'Shocks, Images and Nurse Turnover', *Democracy in a Knowledge Economy*, Nagao, D.H. (ed), 63rd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Seattle, Washington, USA, August. [CD-ROM].

Contribution in edited book: Morrell, K., (2001) 'Business Strategy and Contingency Approaches to HRM', in *The Informed Student Guide to HRM*, Redman, T. and Wilkinson, A. (eds), Thomson Learning: 22-24.

Departmental working paper: Morrell, K., Loan Clarke, J. and Wilkinson, A.J. (2001) 'Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Employee Turnover - A Theoretical Assessment', *Loughborough University Business School Research Series*, No. 2001.2.

Journal article: Morrell, K. and Wilkinson, A.J. (2002) 'Empowerment: Through the Smoke and Past the Mirrors', *Human Resource Development International*, 5(1): 119-130.

Web site: Morrell, K. 'Essay Guidance', taken from [www.kevinmorrell.org.uk/handouts.htm](http://www.kevinmorrell.org.uk/handouts.htm), last accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2008.

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## Bibliography Examples

Here are sections from 2 journal articles showing how 'references'/bibliography' sections can look different. Formats and conventions vary, but you should be consistent. I recommend sticking to the format in the previous slide.

Janis, I. 1982. *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascos*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Jennings, M.M. 2004. 'Incorporating ethics and professionalism into accounting education and research: a discussion of the voids and advocacy for training in seminal works in business ethics'. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 19(1), 7-26.

Kanter, R.M. 1979. 'Power failure in management circuits'. *Harvard Business Review*, 57(4), 65-75.

Kanter, R.M. 2005. 'What theories do audiences want? Exploring the demand side'. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 93-95.

Katz, M.R. 1969. 'Can computers make guidance decisions for students?' *College Board Review*, 72, 13-17.

Knights, D. and McCabe, D. 2003. 'Governing through teamwork: reconstituting subjectivity in a call centre'. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(7), 1587-1619.

Okamoto, D. G., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2001) 'Changing the Subject: Gender, Status, and the Dynamics of Topic Change'. *American Sociological Review* 66(8): 812-73.

Proctor, S., Popalichewo-Orkalis, E., & Proctor, T. (2002) 'What Are Politicians Advertisers Really Trying to Tell Us? A Postmodern Perspective'. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 1(3): 246-61.

Rapo, P. (1991) *Don Quixote, Don Juan*. London: Penguin.

Schmid, K. C., & Ahlborn, E. P. (1977) *Script, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shakespeare, W. (1598-1602) 'Julius Caesar', in W. J. Craig (ed.) *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shamir, B., Arthur, M. B., & Rouss, R. J. (1994) 'The rhetoric of charismatic leadership: A theoretical extension, a case study, and implications for research'. *Leadership Quarterly* 5(1): 25-42.

Six Tea (six Century BCE (1971)) *The Art of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tatum, M. E. (1993) *Nineteen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdows, M. (1972) 'Churchill the Plague Fighter', *Quarantary: Journal of Speech* 15(2): 161-74.

Widdows, M. (1975) 'Blood, Soil, Stars, and 6,000,000 Words: Churchill Writing', *The Columbia Forum* 4 (Spring): 15-23.

Wittgenstein, L. (1921/2001) *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*. London: Routledge.

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## Indicative Structure

THIS IS NOT PRESCRIPTIVE!!!

Abstract – initial summary of what your paper says and outlining the argument in about 150 words.

Introduction – setting the context for the question, why it is important, how you are going to address it etc.

Initial review section(s) – introduce and critique main ideas from the literature (don't just list them – relate them to one another meaningfully).

Introduce a case(s) or contextualise in some way – it is important to show you can use relevant examples that are thoughtfully described and discussed.

Discuss implications – are there implications from the case(s) suggesting a theory works well or poorly, or that one theory is more suitable than another

Summary and Conclusion – recap what you have covered

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## General comments

Answer the question.

Try to answer it using a thoughtful and appropriate blend of theory and example(s) from practice.

Avoid being overly simplistic – there are no laws in management as there are in hard sciences. It may be a mistake to imply in your conclusion that you have found the perfect solution to a problem for example.

Try to avoid sweeping generalisations, e.g. 'In the 1920s organisations used Fordism, but now they use HRM'.

Some statements, particularly if they claim or assert something that could be challenged may need references to support them or contextualise them (for example, like the ones referring to organisational change shown earlier).

If you refer to something, make sure you do so accurately.

References like 'taken from lecture notes' do not look impressive and you should refer to the primary sources where possible.

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