



School of Business

# Style Guide

Version 1.6

<b>Table of Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Layout</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Cover Sheet	4
2.2	Front Cover	4
2.3	Font	5
2.4	Line Spacing and Margins	5
2.5	Paragraphs	5
2.6	Typing Conventions	5
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Table of Contents and Page Numbering	6
3.2	Section Numbering	6
3.3	Figures and Tables	6
3.4	Headings and Paragraphs	7
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Assignment Types</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1	Report	8
4.2	Essay	9
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Researching and Writing Your Assignment</b>	<b>11</b>
5.1	Information Sources	11
5.2	Sentences and Paragraphs	11
5.3	Punctuation	12
5.4	Spelling	12
5.5	Language and Writing Style	13
5.6	Proofreading	113
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Referencing</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1	Plagiarism	15
6.2	Within Text Referencing	16
6.3	References/Bibliography	16
6.4	Library Guides on Referencing	18
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Late Submission Policy</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Assessment Absences</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>E-mail Etiquette</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>References</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A Plagiarism Disclaimer	22
	Appendix B GMIT Plagiarism Policy	24

**List of Figures** **Page**

Figure 2.1 Sample Layouts of Assignment Front Covers 4

**List of Tables** **Page**

Table 3.1	Numbering Style	6
Table 4.1	Sample Report Structure	8
Table 4.2	Key Words Used in Essay Titles	9
Table 4.3	Essay Structure	10
Table 5.1	Signposting Language	12
Table 5.2	Basic Punctuation	12
Table 5.3	Sample Assignment Introductions	13
Table 6.1	Listing Printed Sources in a Bibliography/Reference List	16

## Section 1 Introduction

This guide aims to introduce a style of writing and presentation that is appropriate for assignments for assessment purposes within the School of Business at GMIT. The guide outlines *Business English* conventions used in the world of business. You will communicate more effectively and ensure that you do not ‘throw away’ marks through careless writing or presentation by using these guidelines. In addition to following the recommendations in this guide students are encouraged to:

- read business reports, which are available in the library
- become familiar with the style and presentation of documents that will be expected of you when you leave college
- follow lecturers’ instruction in relation to assignments.

When completing an assignment ask the following questions:

- Do you know exactly what your lecturer has asked you to do?
- Can you choose the topic yourself and, if so, when must the proposal be presented?
- Are you familiar with the required format?
- Are there any additional requirements: for instance, are you required to make a presentation on your report?
- Do you have to submit interim progress reports?
- What is the maximum number of words for the assignment?
- What is the submission date?

Plagiarism i.e. passing someone else’s work as your own, is a most serious academic offence. To avoid the serious consequences associated with plagiarism you must follow the referencing guidelines described herein.

Layout, structure and style create an important first impression, influence your final marks and indicate your level of professionalism – the care, time and research quality you have put into your assignment. Always note feedback from lecturers. Student learning in college *should* be a process of continuous improvement.

## Section 2 Layout

### 2.1 Cover Sheet

You should complete and attach the coversheet contained in *Appendix A* to all assignments submitted as part of continuous assessment. Assignments will not be accepted without a cover sheet.

### 2.2 Front Cover

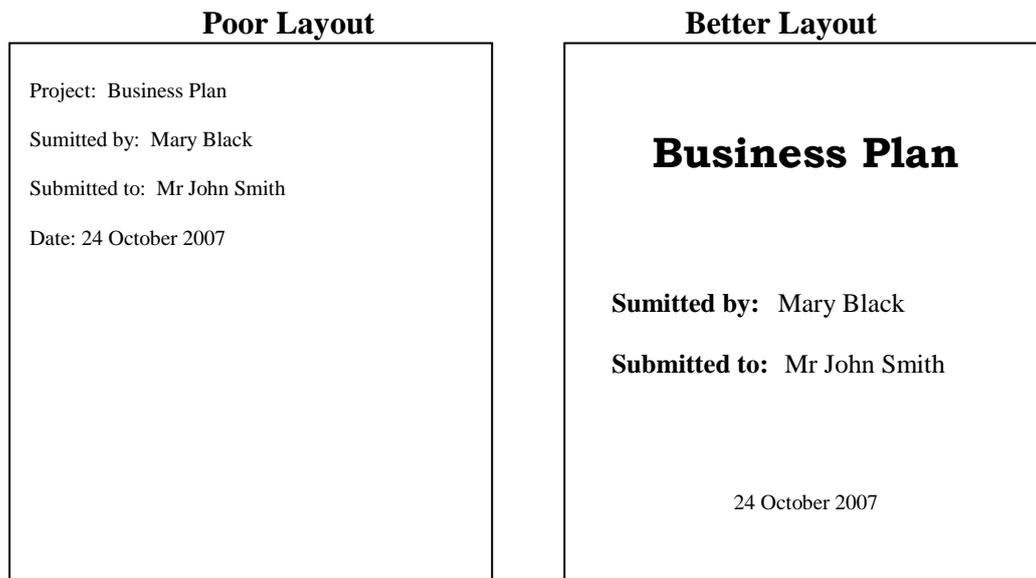
The front cover of your assignment should contain the following information:

- Assignment Title,
- Submitted by: (Name and Student No.)
- Submitted to: (Lecturer Name)
- Date

The front cover should look professional. You should review the front covers of business and government reports to get ideas as to appropriate layout. You should consider:

- font size: neither too large or too small
- emphasis: bold or italics
- font type: too many different font types detract from your message
- layout: spacing should make use of the space available and be pleasing to the eye.

See Fig. 2.1.



**Figure 2.1** Sample Layouts of Assignment Front Covers

### **2.3 Font**

Choose a font that is easy to read e.g. Times New Roman. The font size should be legible e.g. 11 or 12 point.

### **2.4 Line Spacing and Margins**

Assignments should generally be presented in 1.5 or double line spacing. This makes them easier to read and leaves room for the lecturer to write advisory notes and corrections and write remarks. Left and right margins should be a minimum of 2.5cm. Do not leave a heading on its own at the bottom of a page.

### **2.5 Paragraphs**

Each paragraph should be introduced by a topic sentence: self contained, dealing with one major point in the evolving structure of the assignment as a whole. Remember: good paragraph usage is an indicator of good planning. In the past it was common to indent the first line of each paragraph. It is now more a more accepted format to leave a blank line between paragraphs instead. You should never have a paragraph with a single sentence.

### **2.6 Typing Conventions**

Leave one space after a full-stop and one space after a comma. Numeric references under ten are normally presented as words (e.g. six), whereas larger than that are normally written as numbers (e.g. 6,000).

Do not start every sentence on a new line. Sentences should be structured into paragraphs, or alternatively bullet points should be used for each new sentence.

## Section 3 Structure

### 3.1 Table of Contents and Page Numbering

All assignments should contain a clear table of contents, indicating sections and the page number they commence on. The front cover should not receive a page number. Pages other than the main body of the assignment e.g. Appendices, should be numbered using Roman numerals (i.e. i, ii, iii).

### 3.2 Section Numbering

Each Chapter/Section should be numbered, as should subsections as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Numbering Style**

Section 3	Marketing Plan
3.1	Overview of Marketing Environment
3.1.1	Political Environment
3.1.2	Socio-cultural Environment
3.1.3	Economic Environment
3.2	Market Research
3.3	Marketing Mix

### 3.3 Figures and Tables

The term ‘figure’ refers to diagrams and illustrations, while ‘tables’ refer to boxed numeric compilations and to lists. Figures and tables can help illustrate material that can be difficult to convey in paragraph format. You can create your own graphics in a drawing programme, scan them in or photocopy them on to the page. Every figure and table should be given a number and a caption and, if relevant, a source. Captions for tables should appear above the table and should describe their content, whereas the title for a figure should appear below the figure. They should use the following format:

Figure 1.3 Illustration of the Marketing Mix

Table 4.2 Population Statistics for County Galway

The first number refers to the chapter/section in which the figure or table is placed e.g. figure 1.3 is in chapter/section 1. The second number refers to the order of the figure/table within the chapter/section e.g. Table 4.2 is the second table in chapter/section 4. You should always refer to figures/tables within the text of your assignment, not merely include them e.g. ‘Table

4.2 illustrates how the population of Galway has continued to increase over the last ten years.’ By referring to the figure/table you are directing the reader’s attention to it, and suggesting why it is important. If the figure or table is not your own work you must state the source underneath (e.g. Source: Central Statistics Office 2005). In total the author/source of each figure/table should be alluded to 3 times:

1. In a caption, just above or below the image or table.
2. In your text.
3. As a reference in your bibliography/reference list.

For further details on how to reference figures and tables please refer to the GMIT Library Guide on same.

### **3.4 Headings and Paragraphs**

Headings and sub-headings help the reader by indicating the content of each section. They help break up large tracts of text into sections that are easier to read. Headings and sub-headings should be indicated by the numbering system previously described, but they are also emphasised using bold and/or font size to draw the reader’s attention to them e.g. main headings may be printed in bold font, 14 point, while subheadings may be printed in bold font, 12 point. Whatever method you decide to use to emphasis your headings and subheadings, remember to be consistent throughout your assignment. Do not put a full-stop after headings, sub-headings or titles.

## Section 4 Assignment Type

### 4.1 Report

In business writing, reports are a widely used form of communication, so it is important that you master the style and layouts of reports. A sample structure for a report is contained in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Sample Report Structure**

<b>Report Structure</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Title Page	Should contain report title, author, who it is submitted to and the date.
Acknowledgements	List those who assisted in completing the report
Executive Summary	This section should normally be no longer than one page, and should give an overview of the entire report. Therefore it is generally written last.
Table of Contents	Should include the section and subsection numbers, headings and page number
List of Figures	Should include the figure number, caption and page number
List of Tables	Should include the table number, caption and page number
Introduction	This should normally give the context and purpose of the report and indicate to the reader how you will progress. It may be appropriate to include separate sections on the objectives of your report and your methodology.
Chapters/Sections	This is the main body of the report. Each section should deal with a major section of your report and sub-sections should be used where appropriate.
Conclusions	This is a summary of your findings. You may comment on their significance.
Recommendations	This sections suggests actions that should be taken in light of your findings.
References	All your sources as referred to in your report should be listed, alphabetically, using the Harvard Referencing system.
Appendices	Appendices may be used if there is material that you wish the reader to access, but is not necessary to the main body of the report e.g. tables from which you have extracted statistics, a piece of legislation which you refer to. Each appendix should be labeled e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B. Each appendix should be given a heading and its source stated. An appendix should not be included unless it is referred to in the main body of your report.

## 4.2 Essay

If you have been given an essay topic, you should examine the exact wording of the question. Have you been asked to describe or discuss, to assess or analyse? You need to have a clear understanding of what you have been asked to do. Table 4.2 lists definitions of key words commonly used in essay titles.

**Table 4.2 Key Words Used in Essay Titles**

Account for	Give reasons for; explain why something happens.
Analyse	Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features.
Comment on	Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read or heard in lectures. Avoid purely personal opinion.
Compare	Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate the relevance or consequences of these similarities.
Contrast	Set two or more items or arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences. Indicate whether the differences are significant. If appropriate, give reasons why one item or argument may be preferable.
Critically evaluate	Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models, or items are preferable.
Define	Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show that you understand why the definition might be problematic.
Describe	Give the main characteristics or features of something, or outline the main events.
Discuss	Write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); give argument for and against; consider the implications of.
Distinguish	Bring out the differences between two (possible confusable) items.
Evaluate	Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be cases to be made both for and against.
Examine	Put the subject 'under the microscope', looking at it in detail. If appropriate, 'Critically evaluate' it as well.
Explain	Make clear why something happens, or why something is the way it is.
Illustrate	Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.
Interpret	Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.
Justify	Give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why a decision or conclusions were made, considering objections that others might make.
Narrate	Concentrate on saying what happened, telling it as a story.
Outline	Give only the main points, showing the main structure.
Relate	Show the similarities and connections between two or more things.
State	Give the main features, in very clear English (almost like a simple list but written in full sentences).
Summarise	Draw out the main points only (see 'Outline'), omitting details or examples.
To what extent	Consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true. (The answer is usually somewhere between 'completely' and 'not at all').
Trace	Follow the order of different stages in an event or process.

**Source:** Cottrell (2003)

Before writing your essay, you must determine its structure. All essays should have a beginning, middle and end: in other words, an introduction a main body and a conclusion. Table 4.3 suggests a structure for essays. Refer to Cotrell (2003) for more detail in relation to planning and structuring your essay.

**Table 4.3 Essay Structure**

<b>Structure</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Introduction	Explain how you interpret the question. Identify issues that you are going to explore. Give a brief outline of how you will deal with each issue, and in which order. (Length: about one-tenth of the essay)
Develop your argument or line of reasoning	<p>Paragraph 1 This paragraph covers the first thing your introduction said you would address. The first sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph. Other sentences develop the topic of the paragraph. Include relevant examples, details, evidence, quotations, references. Lead up to the next paragraph.</p> <p>Paragraph 2 and other paragraphs The first sentence, or opening sentences, link the paragraph to the previous paragraphs, then introduce the main idea of the paragraph. Other sentences develop the paragraph's topic.</p>
Conclusion	The conclusion contains no new material. Summarise your arguments and main themes. State your general conclusions. Make it clear why those conclusions are important or significant. In your last sentence, sum up your argument very briefly, linking it to the title. (Length: about one tenth of the essay).
References	List all the books, articles and other materials you have referred to within the essay.

**Source:** Cottrell (2003)

## **Section 5 Researching and Writing Your Assignment**

### **5.1 Information Sources**

Your assignment should involve external research and will not be solely personal opinion. Secondary research involves consulting existing materials such as journal articles and government reports, while primary research is original investigation specific to your assignment. The library at GMIT has an extensive range of research resources including electronic resources that allow you to access thousands of journals and other printed materials not held in the library. Also, there are a number of leaflets in the library that explain library services, and staff are happy to assist you in accessing materials within the library. It is important to remember that the extent and the quality of the research you conduct is a factor considered by your lecturer when grading your assignment.

### **5.2 Sentences and Paragraphs**

Keep sentences short and simple. Consider dividing sentences over three lines of typing into two or more sentences. Reading what you have written aloud is helpful in determining whether you have written a correct sentence, and where it is appropriate to insert commas.

There should be an obvious flow between paragraphs and sections within your assignment. Use 'signposting' language to direct the reader. See Table 5.1. Avoid one-sentence paragraphs. Repeated use of words within a sentence or paragraph can make a document boring to read, so use synonyms where possible. Microsoft Word has a thesaurus that may be useful when typing your assignment.

**Table 5.1 Signposting Language**

Introducing an additional idea	And, as well as, in addition, furthermore
Introducing an opposite or contrasting idea	But, however, although, nevertheless, despite the fact that, unlike
Introducing a cause or reason	Therefore, because, thus, as a result, due to, the effect of
Introducing a similar idea	Both, and, not only, similarly
Introducing an example	An example of, such as, for example
Introducing a conclusion	In conclusion, to conclude, finally, it can be concluded
Introducing order, sequence and importance	Will begin with, this will be followed by, will include, will conclude with, first, next, at the same time, after that, most importantly

### 5.3 Punctuation

Failing to use punctuation, or use it correctly, can alter your meaning or make your assignment difficult to read. There are many books available in the library and online resources that address this topic. Some key points are listed in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2 Basic Punctuation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Start every sentence with a capital letter.</li><li>▪ Finish every sentence with a full-stop, and every question with a question mark. Exclamation marks are rarely appropriate in formal business writing.</li><li>▪ Use commas appropriately to indicate a pause within the sentence. They are often used before linking words such as although, whereas, since, and while.</li><li>▪ Use an apostrophe to indicate possession of something e.g. Galway's population.</li><li>▪ Use an apostrophe to indicate the omission of a letter e.g. doesn't.</li><li>▪ Use colons to introduce lists.</li><li>▪ Use semi-colons to form two independent clauses which have a cause and effect relationship between them. An independent clause is simply a mini sentence: for example, GMIT is a great college; its students have no problem finding employment.</li></ul>
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### 5.4 Spelling

Are you using the correct word? Some words sound alike but have different meanings e.g. there/their, principal/principle, accept/except, effect/affect, practice/practise, here/hear, brake/break, lead/led, quite/quiet, seen/scene, were/where, to/too/two, compliment/complement. Peck and Coyle (1999 pp.37-50) explain the meaning of each of these words. Many texts held in the library address the issue of commonly misspelled words, and give rules and advice to help you improve your spelling.

## 5.5 Language and Writing Style

The style of language you adopt and the language you use is very important. Formal business English should be used in all assignments to create a professional impression. Table 5.3 gives an example of introductions to two student assignments, one of which is very basic and unacceptable.

**Table 5.3 Sample Assignment Introductions**

I am really excited to be examining the topic of how global warming affects businesses in Ireland as this is a topic I am really interested in. I will look at what global warming is and then I will see how it is affecting Irish businesses. I hope that you will find this topic as interesting as I do.

Global warming is a topic that is impacting and will continue to impact on a variety of Irish industries. The consequences of changes in the environment are so far reaching, that Irish companies cannot afford to ignore them. This report will examine the general causes and impact of global warming, and consider the steps being taken by a number of firms in Ireland to protect their businesses.

There is a difference between the language that is acceptable in spoken and written English. As a general rule, do not use the words ‘I’, ‘my’, ‘we’, or ‘our’ in formal writing. Avoid colloquial language e.g. ‘when researching global warming we were stunned to find....’. You should consider your words very carefully: for example, it might read better if you use ‘research’ rather than ‘find out’ or ‘examine’ rather than ‘see’. To become familiar with the style and language used in business, read business reports on a regular basis.

Write in an active voice, it is shorter and has more impact. Instead of writing ‘The Chinese market was studied in detail by Acme Ltd’, write ‘Acme Ltd studied the Chinese market in detail.’ When making recommendations in an assignment use positive language e.g. ‘This plan will deliver solutions’, rather than ‘Hopefully, this plan will deliver solutions’, or ‘This plan may deliver solutions’.

## 5.6 Proofreading

Always proofread your assignments for spelling and grammar errors, omissions and layout inconsistencies. Use the spell check and grammar check facility on your word processing package. However, a spell checker or grammar checker will not find all mistakes and may make erroneous suggestions. Ensure that your spell checker is set to UK/Irish English as American spelling is not acceptable e.g. organize, summarize.

It may be useful to leave your assignment and return to it after a day or two and read it with 'fresh eyes'. You should remember to regularly save your assignment and back it up on multiple storage devices.

## Section 6 Referencing

### 6.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is copying the words or ideas of others and passing it off as your own. It is a very serious academic offence. Furthermore, it is easily avoided. It is expected that you will read widely while researching your assignments and use this research in writing up your essay or report. However, you must credit the authors of all material you use. All sources used must be referenced within your text and in your references/bibliography.

You may quote, paraphrase or summarise another's work in your text. A quotation is the direct use of another's words. Paraphrasing is putting another's words into your own, while summarising involves providing a short account of someone else's work in your own words. It does not matter whether you use direct quotations or paraphrase or summarise the words of an author, you must reference your source. Failure to do so may result in a zero mark and/or being referred to the disciplinary committee. The GMIT Plagiarism Policy in this document in Appendix B. Every student should familiarise themselves with this important document.

The referencing system used by the School of Business at GMIT is the Harvard Referencing System (British Standard ISO 690), see below. You should follow the conventions described in the following sections to avoid plagiarism. The School will view plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, extremely negatively.

To correctly reference you must include both of the following in your work:

1. Citation: This is where you refer to the source of material within the text of your work.
2. Reference List: This is the detailed list of sources that you have cited within your text. Sometimes you may be asked to prepare a bibliography which is a list of all materials you consulted during your research whether or not you cited them within your text.

## Within Text Referencing/Citation

To cite a quote or paraphrased material, you must acknowledge the source by adding a reference. Insert the following after the quotation or paraphrased material:

Author's surname, year of publication and pages referred to in brackets e.g.  
(Brown 2006, p.44)  
(Smith and Jones 2000, pp.67-69)  
(Buckley et al 1999, pp 124-125) et al is used for within text referencing when there are three or more author.

Please note the punctuation used in the citations above, as this must be used consistently.

Alternatively, you can include the author's name as part of a sentence e.g.

Brown (2006 p.44) states that....

Sometimes you may need to quote an author who is quoted in a text you have read, although it is best practice to find and read the original source. If you are reading a book by Lee, and in that book there is a quote from an article written by Newman which you have not read, you would reference it as follows:

Research in County Galway concluded that "62% of teenagers send at least 10 text messages per day"(Newman 2000, cited in Lee 2005 p.6).

The page number is that in Lee's book, which you have read. The entry into your bibliography would also be the book by Lee.

If the author of the text is unknown you should use the name of the publication in lieu of the author's name in the citation.

## 6.2 References/Bibliography

In addition to referencing sources within your text, you must also include a list of sources at the end of your assignment. References include all material you have referred to. A bibliography is everything you have read. The purpose of including a reference list or bibliography is to allow the reader to source the material you have used if they wish to learn more.

All sources should be listed alphabetically, in the format shown in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1 Listing Printed Sources in a Bibliography or Reference List**

**Listing books:**

BROWN, J., 2006. *Human Resource Management*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Prentice Hall.

BUCKLEY, D., LENNON, R. and JACKSON, S., 1999. *Irish Human Resource Management*. Dublin: McGonnigle Press.

**Listing edited books:**

NEARY, E., 2003. 'The Rise of Guerrilla Marketing'. In: BODKIN, R., ed. *Marketing Today*. London: Open University Press, 102-47.

**Listing journal articles:**

SMITH, A. and JONES, B., 2000. 'Absenteeism in Small Irish Companies'. *Journal of Human Resource Management*. 22(1), pp.67-82.

**Listing newspaper articles:**

FANNON, R., 2007. 'Crisis in Midwest Firms'. *The Irish Times*. 22 June, p 4.

The key to referencing online material is to give as much detail as you can, to make it easy for the reader to locate your source e.g.

CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE, 2002. Population by Age, 2002 [online]. Available from: <http://www.csho.ie/census2002/population/age.html/> [Viewed 16 September 2006].

If you have retrieved a journal article from a website or electronic database rather than reading the hard copy you can reference it as you would a normal print version of the journal if you are confident that the layout is identical to the print version. If, however, the article is only available online you should reference it as follows:

McGraw, R and Keaton, A (2007) Branding is King [Electronic Version], Journal of Irish Marketing, 3(1) 66-8

McGraw, R and Keaton, A (2007) Branding is King, Journal of Irish Marketing, 3(1) 66-8. Retrieved 8 September 2007 from Emerald database.

If you cannot identify the author of an article on the internet, start your reference with the article title. Insert (n.d.) if no date is given for the article.

## 6.4 Library Guides on Referencing

GMIT library provides a number of information guides online at <http://library.gmit.ie/screens/guidesinfo.html> which you may find useful including:

**Referencing and Citing Comprehensive Guide:** Detailed guide to referencing and citing using the Harvard System

**Endnote Guide:** Endnote is a software tool that helps you manage your references. Training in Endnote is provided by the library and a guide is available at: <http://library.gmit.ie/screens/gmitendnoteguide.pdf>

**How to Reference Figures and Tables:** Comprehensive guide to referencing figures and tables in your assignments and avoiding copyright issues.

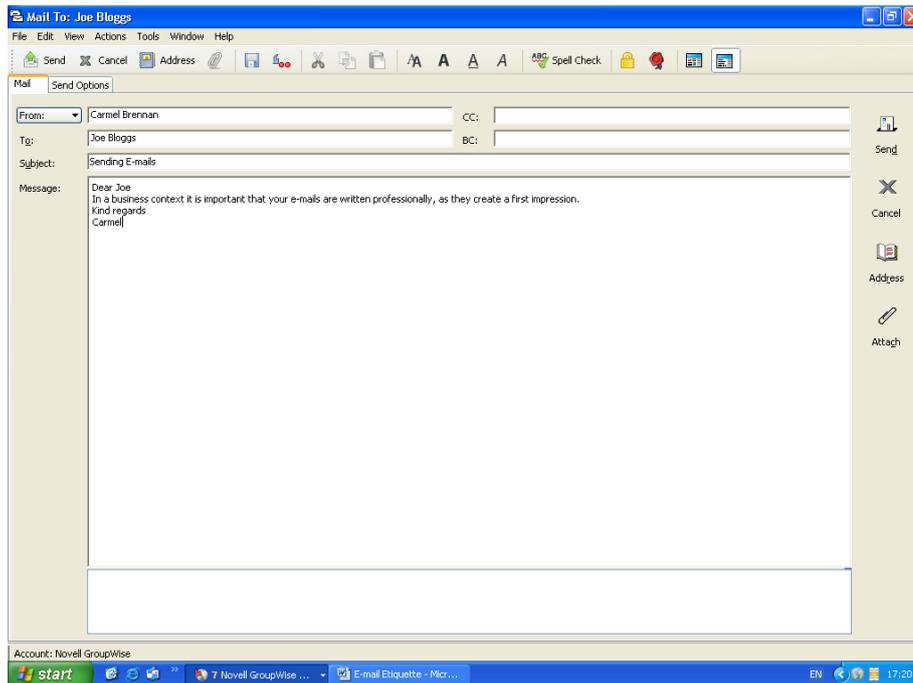
## **Section 7 Late Submission Policy**

It is the School of Business Policy that 10% will be deducted for failing to meet the submission deadline for an assignment, and that 10% will be deducted for each day that an assignment is late. For example, if you submit your assignment three days late, you will lose 40% of the marks awarded to the assignment. If your assignment is awarded a mark of 70%, you will lose 40% of the marks awarded. 70% less 28% will leave you with a mark of 42%.

## **Section 8 Assessment Absences**

Students who miss assessment should provide medical certificates or other evidence of the reason for having missed continuous assessments within 7 working days of the date of the assessment. Failure to do so will result in a mark of zero for the assessment.

## Section 9 E-mail Etiquette



- Put the e-mail address of the person you are directly addressing on the 'To' line, 'cc' is when you are copying/someone for information purposes only.
- All staff e-mail addresses follow the same format:  
[firstname.surname@gmit.ie](mailto:firstname.surname@gmit.ie)
- Subject line should indicate clearly the subject of your message.
- All e-mails should start with a salutation. Acceptable forms of salutation include Dear, Hello, or use of the intended recipient's first name.
- When communicating with staff you should give your programme, year, student number and mobile phone number.
- When replying to an e-mail click on 'Reply (include message)'. This allows your recipient to see your original message, and therefore reminds them of previous correspondence.
- Your e-mail communication represents you and should be professional using business English, correct grammar and punctuation.
  - No text language
  - No emotions
- It is normal to conclude an e-mail with 'Regards' or 'Kind regards'. Use a signature with your contact details, so the recipient doesn't have to e-mail you back to request your phone number if required.

## References

Cotrell, Stella (2003) The Study Skills Handbook, Second edition, Hampshire: Palgrave

Peck, John and Coyle, Martin (1999) The Student's Guide to Writing: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling, Hampshire: Palgrave

# **Appendix A**

## **Assignment Front Cover Sheets**



## Plagiarism Disclaimer

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Module: \_\_\_\_\_

Lecturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that plagiarism is a serious academic offence, and that GMIT deals with it according to the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism.

I have read and understand the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism and I agree to the requirements set out therein in relation to plagiarism and referencing. I confirm that I have referenced and acknowledged properly all sources used in preparation of this assignment. I understand that if I plagiarise, or if I assist others in doing so, that I will be subject to investigation as outlined in the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism.

I understand and agree that plagiarism detection software may be used on my assignment.

I declare that, except where appropriately referenced, this assignment is entirely my own work based on my personal study and/or research. I further declare that I have not engaged the services of another to either assist in, or complete this assignment.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note: Students MUST retain a hard/soft copy of all assignments.**

# **Appendix B**

## **GMIT Plagiarism Policy**



## **Policy on Plagiarism**

**As approved by the**

**Academic Council on 18 June 2012**

**and by the Governing Body on 28 June 2012**

## Table of Contents

1	Context.....	0
2	Definition .....	0
3	Prevention.....	1
4	Procedures .....	2
4.1	Detection.....	2
4.2	Prosecution .....	3
5	Penalties.....	3
6	Appeals Process .....	4
7	Bibliography .....	5
8	Appendix .....	6
	Plagiarism Disclaimer .....	6
	Lecturer’s Report on Alleged Plagiarism.....	6

# 1 Context

The purpose of this policy is to foster and maintain a culture of honesty and academic integrity in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. All staff and students have an obligation to act in an ethical manner, consistent with the requirements of academic integrity.

The aims of this document are to provide a definition of plagiarism and to outline the Institute's policy and procedures for dealing with alleged or suspected plagiarism. This policy applies to all registered students of GMIT and to all academic work (i.e. assignments, theses, projects, presentations, products, assessments, examinations, etc.) undertaken in all disciplines in the Institute. It is the requirement of staff and students to inform themselves of the content of this policy.

All cases of alleged or suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Registrar and dealt with under this Policy.

This Policy on Plagiarism shall be reviewed within the lifetime of each Academic Council (every three years) and updated when required.

# 2 Definition

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. It is the passing off of someone else's work as one's own, and is cheating. It is a form of theft of intellectual property<sup>1</sup>.

If an act of plagiarism involves more than one student, all parties are considered equally responsible.

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<sup>1</sup>Intellectual Property (IP) refers to creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names, images, and designs. IP is divided into two categories: a) Industrial property: which includes inventions (patents), trademarks, industrial designs, and geographic indications of source; and b) Copyright: which includes literary and artistic works such as novels, poems and plays, films, musical works, artistic works such as drawings, paintings, photographs and sculptures, and architectural designs. (WIPO 2004)

Plagiarism includes (among other things):

- The unacknowledged paraphrasing or use of other people's words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- The non-acknowledgement of sources.
- Unauthorized copying of another person's work.
- Unauthorised collaboration in an assignment or piece of work.
- Presenting work which has been produced collaboratively as one's own individual work.
- The procurement or sourcing, the recruitment of others to produce or source, and/or the passing off as one's own of any material from electronic or other sources.
- Unacknowledged copying of art or design work.
- Submitting one's own work without declaration of sources and references, or the falsification of references.
- The use of restricted or confidential information in an assignment or piece of work.
- Any of the above, in publication, prototype, or public presentation.

Cases of plagiarism can be unintentional and may arise through poor academic practice. Under GMIT policy this, nonetheless, constitutes a breach of academic integrity and is required to be investigated, evaluated, and dealt with appropriately.

### 3 Prevention

The Institute commits to a pro-active approach to the prevention of plagiarism through the development of good academic practice.

The advancement of knowledge and the development of concepts, ideas, artefacts and products are core aspects of what we do at GMIT. This also includes research in all its facets: thesis writing, laboratory work, report writing, the development of software, and the creation and design of artistic objects. It is the Institute's aim to inspire and encourage students on their path to becoming professionals by providing a positive learning environment and by cultivating academic trust between staff and students.

A two-pronged strategy has been adopted: a) A clear framework for the prosecution of plagiarism cases (as set out in this policy) is provided; b) Guidelines and aids are to be developed to assist in the avoidance of plagiarism.

Preventative measures include (among other things):

- Referral to this Policy in the assessment instructions to be provided to students.
- Provision, by the Institute, of training in the practices of referencing and citation and in the use of source material(s).
- Provision and maintenance, by the Institute, of a webpage containing a referencing guide, guidelines for writing essays and reports and links to plagiarism detection software and online tutorials.
- Requirement on all students, in respect of all work submitted, to include a plagiarism disclaimer declaring that the work has been completed in accordance with GMIT's Policy on Plagiarism. The form, containing the recommended wording, is included in the Appendix.
- Provision, on an annual basis, of staff training (Continuous Professional Development) in assessment design and formulation. There is a requirement for new staff to avail of training in this area during their first year of employment.

## 4 Procedures

All allegations or suspicions of plagiarism are prosecuted by the Registrar.

A record of all cases of plagiarism upheld shall be registered on the Institute's centralised database of plagiarism offences. The access to this database shall be restricted to the Registrar's Office. The database shall be maintained in accordance with policies and procedures currently observed by the Disciplinary Committee.

The Registrar shall ensure consistency in the handling of all cases of plagiarism across the Institute.

### 4.1 Detection

When plagiarism is alleged or suspected:

1. The member(s) of the academic staff concerned shall contact the student(s) to inform him/her/them that plagiarism is alleged or suspected and that the Institute Policy on Plagiarism will be automatically invoked.
2. The Head(s) of Department shall be informed in writing by the member(s) of the academic staff concerned of the incident of alleged or suspected plagiarism. The form shall be accompanied by supporting documentation, i.e. substantiating example(s) of the alleged or suspected plagiarism.
3. The Head of Department(s) shall invite the student(s) to furnish a written response regarding the alleged plagiarism.

## 4.2 Prosecution

1. The Head(s) of Department shall seek confirmation from the Registrar's office as to whether previous cases of plagiarism involving the student(s) concerned have been upheld. Previous infractions will have a bearing on the severity of the penalty recommendation.
2. The Head(s) of Department with the lecturer(s) shall recommend a penalty should the allegation or suspicion be upheld or admitted to by the student concerned.
3. All documentation shall be sent directly to the Registrar, who convenes the Disciplinary Committee.
4. Where a complaint or suspicion of plagiarism is upheld by the Disciplinary Committee or admitted to by the student concerned, minor penalties (see Section 5) proposed in non-award stages may be ratified by the Disciplinary Committee.
5. In all other cases (award stages and/or recommendation of major penalties) where a complaint or suspicion of plagiarism is upheld by the Disciplinary Committee or admitted to by the student concerned, the standard procedures for Disciplinary Committee hearings shall apply, as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.
6. All parties involved (student(s), reporting member(s) of the academic staff, Head(s) of Department, Head of College/Centre, and Registrar) shall receive a report on the outcome of the process. This shall include the final ruling and any penalty imposed.

## 5 Penalties

In cases of alleged or suspected plagiarism, any of the penalties from the list below may be recommended should the allegation or suspicion be upheld or admitted to by the student concerned.

Where a complaint or suspicion of plagiarism is upheld or admitted to, the Disciplinary Committee shall impose penalties on a case-by-case basis, taking account of previous infractions where such have occurred.

Any of the following penalties shall be imposed, either separately or in combination where appropriate:

Minor Penalties:

1. A reprimand (a verbal or written warning).

2. A zero mark with provision for a repeat attempt/resubmission. Repeat/resubmission will be considered as a second attempt and the assessment mark will be capped at the minimum pass mark.
3. A zero mark for the assignment with no opportunity to repeat/resubmit in the current academic year.

Major Penalties:

1. A zero mark for the full module, irrespective of the percentage allocation and credit weighting of the assessment which was plagiarised.
2. Exclusion from assessments and/or examinations for a specified period, potentially resulting in the temporary suspension of academic progression.
3. Suspension from the programme.
4. Expulsion from the Institute.
5. Deprivation of award.

## 6 Appeals Process

The decision of the Disciplinary Committee may be appealed to the Appeals Subcommittee of the Governing Body within two weeks from the date of issue of the decision. Any of the student(s), reporting member(s) of the academic staff, Head(s) of Department, and Head of College/Centre involved in the particular case may lodge an appeal.

The standard procedure for an appeal to the Governing Body Appeals Subcommittee shall apply as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

All parties involved shall receive a report from the Governing Body Appeals Subcommittee on the outcome of the appeals process. This shall include the final ruling and any penalty imposed.

## 7 Bibliography

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## 8 Appendix

### Plagiarism Disclaimer Lecturer's Report on Alleged Plagiarism



### Plagiarism Disclaimer

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Module: \_\_\_\_\_

Lecturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that plagiarism is a serious academic offence, and that GMIT deals with it according to the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism.

I have read and understand the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism and I agree to the requirements set out therein in relation to plagiarism and referencing. I confirm that I have referenced and acknowledged properly all sources used in preparation of this assignment. I understand that if I plagiarise, or if I assist others in doing so, that I will be subject to investigation as outlined in the GMIT Policy on Plagiarism.

I understand and agree that plagiarism detection software may be used on my assignment.

I declare that, except where appropriately referenced, this assignment is entirely my own work based on my personal study and/or research. I further declare that I have not engaged the services of another to either assist in, or complete this assignment.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note: Students MUST retain a hard/soft copy of all assignments.**

