“Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task.”

L. Lennie Irvin

The main task of **academic writing** is to refine and focus an idea through research and interrogation, then to clearly state and properly support that idea with effective argumentation and adequate evidence. Any style of writing that stands in the way of your ideas is not serving your task: to communicate. Be sure to ask for specific requirements within your discipline.

There is a common misconception that academic writing should be difficult to read. How many books or articles have you read where the language obstructs the clarity of the writing and the meaning of the text? Good academic writing should be complex, but the complexity of your work should stem from the ideas presented and the depth of your discussion, not from the style of communication or the language used.’

Consider the 6Cs when thinking of good academic writing:

- **Considerate**: have a clear picture of your intended reader and tailor your writing to meet those expectations. Consider what knowledge they might possess and whether they have any potential biases.
- **Critical**: don’t absorb information in a passive manner. Engage with your sources and the topic by investigating ideas thoroughly.
- **Clear**: your primary aim should be communicating your ideas and your argument as clearly and directly as possible. Avoid confusing punctuation, long and convoluted sentences and any unnecessarily complex language.
- **Concise**: be direct and avoid any unnecessary phrases or paragraphs. Be mindful of any repetition and always try to ensure that your language directly communicates your ideas. Also, resist any unnecessary deviations that distract from your focus.
• **Coherent**: ensure that the ideas and evidence presented directly relate to your main point. Think carefully about the structure and linearity of your argument. Does your argument progress in a logical manner? Give careful thought to the ordering of your paragraphs and consider how they relate to one another.

• **Correct**: be sure that the information presented is accurate and that the general formatting and referencing adheres to the standards set by your discipline.

**Further help:**

Head to the Academic Skills website for a range of guides and other useful resources (http://library.soton.ac.uk/sash).

Visit the Academic Skills Hub at Hartley Library for academic guidance and advice. Drop in Monday to Friday, between 10:00-12:00 and 14:00-16:00 (http://library.soton.ac.uk/sash/contact-us).

Book a 30-minute appointment for one-to-one writing support, available to all students from Monday to Friday – remember to check the time and location when booking. Book here: http://library.soton.ac.uk/sash/academic-writing.