

# 1.37 General Presentation

The presentation of your written work is important: first impressions do count, and poorly presented work might lead your tutor/lecturer to think that the work has been rushed or that you do not really care about it.

It is important to note, however, that no matter how professionally your assignment is presented, it will not hide mediocre content. A poorly presented assignment with excellent content is always preferable to excellent presentation with poor content, although you should of course always aim for a combination of the two.

Particular faculties or courses may have their own guidelines for different aspects of presentation, so always check your own course documentation or with course tutors. What follows is general advice on the presentation of courses assignments which is usually, but not always, appropriate.

## Paper

Always use A4 size paper, unless another size is specified in your assignment brief. Printers at the University usually print on both sides of the paper as the default, and this is fine for your assignment, unless single sided printing is specified in your assignment brief.

## Word processing

You will almost always have to word process your work. If you need help or practice with the word processing packages available at the University, ask at the IT Helpdesk.

## Title page

Although you will always have to hand in your work with a faculty cover sheet, it is usually a good idea to include a title page at the beginning of your assignment, although this may not be necessary for very short pieces of work. A plain page with the relevant information is recommended. Try to avoid adding pictures and quotes as these are not suitable for academic work. (See the Title Pages Guide 1.24 for more information)

## Contents page

A contents page is usually included with longer reports.

## Covers

You may want to protect your work with a plastic sleeve or cover. Even if it doesn't, you may prefer to do so - this is fine. Don't put individual pages into plastic sleeves, though. The Library and Learning Centre has a limited selection of sleeves and covers for sale. Dissertations and theses may need to be bound. The University's Digital Print Services can do this for you - remember to allow plenty of time for this.

## Fonts

The recommended font is arial (please check your guidelines in case another font has been requested). Don't use Comic Sans!

The size for the majority of your text should normally be 10, 11 or 12, depending on the individual font (Times, for example, is small). The most important thing is that your text is clear and easy to read.

For headings and titles use a slightly larger size, but don't make them too big. Tutors/lecturers can spot when a student is trying to fill space because they don't have enough content.

## Formatting

It is usually advisable to avoid overuse of formatting such as bold, italic and underlining.

Bold is probably best used just for headings and titles and italics just for names or specialist words (instead of using inverted commas). Don't use italics for quotes incorporated into your text, although they can be used for longer quotes which are indented and separate from the rest of the text (see the [University's Referencing guide](#)). However, even in this case, normal text is preferable.

Underlining is best avoided, as is the use of coloured fonts.

## Line spacing

It is generally recommended that your text is 1.5 or double spaced, depending on the size of the actual font. In Word, the line spacing options are in the Page Layout tab.

The reasons for doing this are so that your tutor will be able to make comments and corrections easily, and also to avoid making your page a dense block of text with perhaps 500 or 600 words, which can be off-putting to the reader.

## **Margins**

Always have left and right margins of around 2.5 cm (1"). This again allows for comments to be made, and also ensures that when the pages are stapled or bound, no text is lost.

## **Page numbers**

Always include page numbers: they can go at the top or bottom, usually to the right.

## **Referencing**

See the [University's Referencing guide](#), and also check your course documentation. There are different ways of doing this, and variations within each system; make sure that you are consistent.

## **Dissertations and theses**

These will have stricter guidelines on how they should be presented. Check with your tutor/supervisor and if possible consult a model piece of work.

## **Copies**

Always keep a copy of what you hand in, and remember to regularly back up your work.