Academic Referencing Skills for Access Students
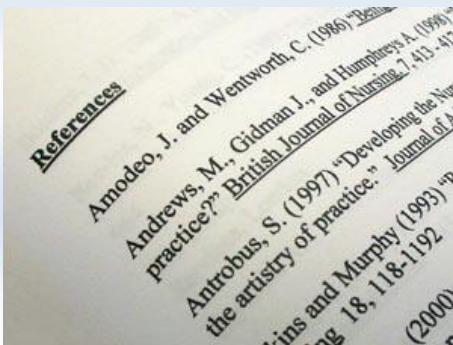
A summary guide from Laser Learning Awards

Welcome to this brief guide

From time to time we like to provide guidance to support Access students and this month we are focussing on referencing skills. We hope this guide will help you. Please check with the tutors on your Access course which referencing style they prefer and of course do ask them for further information.

Why referencing matters…

For many Access students coming to terms with the requirements of one of the standard academic referencing systems is a big challenge. However doing so will give you a key advantage over younger fellow students once you get to university. Most of these students will have taken the A level route into higher education and although some of them may have taken an Extended Project Qualification as part of their studies which does require the use of referencing, many of them will not have had direct experience of this skill.

At university for essay writing and especially for the longer dissertation style assignments, you will have to use a standard referencing system so getting ahead of the game now will be a big help. There will be enough to cope with at university without having to get to grips with referencing from a standing start.
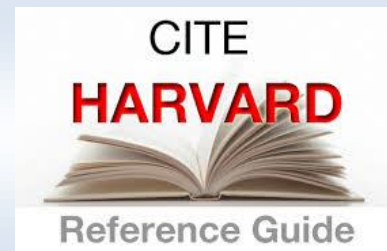
Using referencing in your writing

When writing an essay/dissertation/academic report – in fact almost any piece of academic writing, using references to sources enables you to lend weight to the credibility of your work because you have:

- properly based your writing on research,
- acknowledged the ideas and work of others rather than passing them off as your own,
- shown that you can consistently organise your work using the academic standards required by one of the major referencing systems.

There is a fine line between plagiarism (copying from other sources and passing it of as your own work) and the appropriate use of academic source material to support your writing. As an Access student, or an undergraduate student you are not usually expected to produce pieces of totally original writing based solely on your own research and insights. This type of work is usually associated with post-graduate study at Masters, Doctorate and beyond. So you will often be referring to the views of authors on a given topic or question.

LASER Resources for Access Students

We have a range of information specifically aimed at students studying on Access courses. Please see our 'For Students'[1] web pages. From here you can download a range of potentially useful forms and read more about the Access Diploma as well as follow links to external sources of information.

Our 'Guide to referencing for Access to HE students'[2] can be downloaded from our website. This guide should be really helpful in both giving you a short guide to referencing style and a pointer to where to go for more information. The guide contains a quick guide to both of the commonly used systems Harvard Referencing and the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) Referencing as well as where to find more information on the subject.

Other Referencing Styles

There are some other variations of referencing and if you are a science student and feel a bit left out then take a look at the website Scientific Style and Format[3] which has a quick guide to referencing for scientists.

Others include:

APA (American Psychological Association 6th edition) style guides[4]

MLA (Modern Language Association 7th edition) style guides[5]

Chicago style guides[6]

Auto Citation Website

Although we haven't used this site ourselves, 'Cite this for me.com' looks interesting. You can get it to automatically produce citations and if you sign up and pay a fee you can build up a bank of bibliographies, 'forever' as they say on the site! 'https://www.citethisforme.com/

Happy Referencing – from the LASER Access Team!

---

[1] http://laser-awards.org.uk/content2.asp?id=18
[2] http://laser-awards.org.uk/uFiles//Guide%20to%20referencing%20for%20Access%20Students%202014.pdf
[3] http://www.scientificstyleandformat.org/Tools/SSF-Citation-Quick-Guide.html
[4] https://www.citethisforme.com/guides/apa
[5] https://www.citethisforme.com/guides/mla
[6] https://www.citethisforme.com/guides/chicago-author-date