

The write method

Aileen Rohan from the INMO library team provides a practical guide to academic writing



ALMOST all academic courses require some form of written assignment as part of a student's assessment. Depending on the module, this could range from a 1,000-word assignment to be submitted online, to a 3,500-word literature review.

When writing at degree level, nurses and midwives need to demonstrate an understanding of evidence by summarising key elements and comparing and contrasting authors' views. Critical analysis is an important nursing skill in writing and in practice, and the approach to assignments is more or less always the same.

Often, the hardest part of the assignment is deciphering what is being asked. It is imperative that all criteria are addressed in order to avoid losing vital marks.

Ensure that you have checked the question, and know the required date and format of submission (electronic and hard copy are often required). You should then look at the topic and commence formulating your response.

Work out the themes and keywords needed for research purposes. It is advisable to begin your assignments as soon as possible – even if this is just doing a quick search to start the process.

Gather, read and critique literature

Searching for information can be time consuming, however, the INMO library can assist in this area. It is crucial that you don't spend all of your time just searching and reading.

As you are reading, document your thoughts. You need to read, interpret and structure the data that you have gathered.

Writing the essay

All assignments should consist of:

An introduction

This gives your reader an overview of what you will discuss in your essay. It should be written in the future tense.

The body

This makes up the bulk of the assignment. Here, you discuss each point in turn and use appropriate references.

Research studies should be presented in a logical order (eg. chronologically, thematically etc), while previous studies should be summarised and critically evaluated. This section is written in the present tense.

Every part of the main body of the essay must also be structured. Each paragraph has a structure: one main point only; explain the point; and finally show evidence or examples.

The conclusion

This restates all the key points in your essay and should be written in the past tense.

Some students find it helpful to approach the organisation of an assignment through the word count. Unless given instructions otherwise, aim to use 10% of the word count for the introduction and 10% for the conclusion.

It is important to double check all gram-

mar and spelling prior to submission. Ask a colleague or friend to read through the assignment to ensure it is legible, flowing coherently, and that there are no spelling or grammar errors.

References

Keep a list of all articles used and make sure to note the reference details of any photocopied articles or book excerpts, including the volume, issue and page numbers.

The Harvard referencing system is the usual method required by Irish universities and colleges. Further information on this is available from the INMO Library.

Plagiarism is a serious offence, so reference all assignments accurately.

Literature searching service:

The INMO library staff can undertake a literature search for you. The staff will take details on what you are looking for and search the relevant databases.

The resulting list will be sent to you, including 20-50 citations, which will give you an overview of the literature available on the topic. This service costs €6.

One2One information retrieval training

One2One training is on offer to assist members in searching the internet and electronic databases to find information.

This is a skill that is extremely useful for professional development and career advancement.

To avail of individual or group training, or for more information on any library service, contact the library team directly between 9am and 4.45pm, Monday to Friday. Alternatively, Tel: 01 6640614/06 or email: library@inmo.ie

Tackling an assignment

- Read, decipher and understand the assignment question
- Gather, read and critique the literature found
- Plan and write the assignment
- References
- Read the assignment information