

Assignment Assessment Criteria

The purpose of this document is to lay out the criteria for assessment of essay assignments at SATS in a way that is clear to students and assessors. This document, in conjunction with chapters 1-6 of *Academic Writing and Theological Research*, constitutes the authoritative guide for assessment at SATS.

Assessors are expected to use this document in two ways:

- They should abide by its contents in all their assessment of essay-style assignments.
- They should use it for feedback comments to the students by pointing them to the relevant paragraphs. The comments have been carefully formulated to be clear, comprehensive, and courteous.

General criteria

- A. The assignment must be presented in keeping with the requirements laid out in Smith (2008, chapters 1-6). Each essay must have the following components: cover page, title, introduction, body, conclusion, and bibliography. The cover page should be formatted according to the example on page 94, while the body of the paper should be presented in keeping with the guidelines set out on page 87.
- B. All assignments need a table of contents unless specified in the assessments instructions for the particular course. A table of contents is required in two cases: (a) essays longer than 3000 words and (b) submissions containing more than one assignment.
- C. Short essays (fewer than 1000 words) do not require internal headings, but students are free to use headings to add clarity to their work if they so desire. In place of headings, a short essay should use paragraph divisions to divide the content into its major parts. The introduction, conclusion, and each main point of the body should each be a single paragraph. Short essays should have a title and, where appropriate, a bibliography.
- D. As a general rule of thumb, we do not *require* students to consult additional sources in order to pass, but we do *reward* them for doing so. In other words, students are *required* to consult and interact with all the materials we provide (e.g. study guide, reader, textbook), and they are *rewarded* for consulting and interacting with additional scholarly sources. We say this is a general rule of thumb because it is materially affected by the level of the course and the nature of the assignment.

- E. Academic sources can be used with different levels of competence. At the novice level, the student simply *quotes* the source as the authority; stringing a series of quotes together is an inadequate form of writing, since it does not demonstrate understanding. At the intermediate level, the student *uses* the source; he does not quote it, but puts it in his own words and interacts with it. At the advanced level, the student critically compares and evaluates multiple sources and motivates his personal conclusions. In his assignments, a student should never just quote sources (novice level); he should put them in his own words and interact them (intermediate level) or critically evaluate them (advanced level).
- F. Assignments in which students are required to answer a series of short questions are not considered to be essay assignments. In such assignments, students may simply write the number of the question and give it a direct answer. These assignments do not need an introduction or a conclusion, but they do need a bibliography indicating the sources consulted to answer the questions.

Specific assessment comments

Below are a number of standard comments you can make to students. Every student should have a copy of this document and a copy of Smith (2008), so you can refer them to the comments below by pointing to the number of the comment. Here is an index to help you find the relevant comments quickly. To navigate directly to a comment, click on the number.

INDEX OF COMMENTS

Application

Ministry, 44

Personal, 45

Bibliography

Absent, 26

Alphabetise, 29

Single bibliography for all assignments, 28

Works Cited, 27

Citations

General, 18

Formatting, 19, 22

From Reader, 24

Conclusion, 10, 11

Content

Argument or logic flawed, 41

Critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, 40

Knowledge of the topic, 39

- Meaning unclear, 36
- Needs more reading and research, 38
- Not followed instructions, 37
- Scripture use, 42
- Formatting
 - Balanced divisions, 07
 - Font, 13
 - Headings, 05, 06
 - Line spacing, 12
 - Margins, 14
 - Naming of the file, 15
 - Numbering of assignments, 04
 - Numbering of pages, 16
 - Paragraph divisions, 02
 - Word limit, 03
 - Title missing, 01
- Introduction, 08, 09
- Quotations
 - Overuse, 20
 - Formatting, 21
- Sentence Construction, 31
- Sources
 - Unsuitable, non-academic, 25
 - Over-dependence on one or two, 30
- Spelling and Grammar
 - Careless errors, 32
 - Consistency, 33
- Style
 - Clichés, slang, 34
 - Preachy, 35

Assignment Format

01. You need to provide your essay (assignment) with a suitable title. The title should indicate the topic of the essay in no more than 12 words. Do not use the entire assignment question as the title. Rather, provide your own brief, descriptive title.
02. Please mark the beginning of a new paragraph by using one of the following two methods: (a) adding a 12-point paragraph space between paragraphs or (b) indenting the first line of a new paragraph. If you choose to add a space between paragraphs, do not do this by hitting the <Enter> key twice. Rather, add 12 points above or below each paragraph. In MS Word, you can do this by holding down the <Ctrl> key and hitting the <0> key.

Assignment Structure

03. Keep close to the required word count indicated in the assignment instructions. The word count indicates the level of depth to which you must answer the question. You should not be more than 10 per cent over or 10 per cent under the limit. If your essay exceeds the word limit by more than 50 per cent, the assessor will only grade the first half and award a grade out of half of the assigned mark. If your essay is between 10 and 50 per cent over the limit, it will be graded but will incur deductions. The cover page, table of contents, and bibliography are not counted towards your word limit.
04. Number your assignments exactly according to the numbers provided in the study guide.
05. For essays longer than 1000 words, you should provide properly numbered headings to improve the structure of your essay. 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' should be headings, but they should not be numbered. The body of the assignment should be divided into properly numbered and labelled headings. The heading should be an accurate description of the discussion that follows it. As a rule, do not use more than one level of headings; in long, complex essays, you may use two levels, but never more.
06. We recommend that you type all your main headings in bold font, including the Introduction and Conclusion, to make them stand out. Align all your headings and paragraphs against the left-hand margin.
07. As a general rule, the main divisions of your essay should be presented in a balanced manner; that is, the main divisions should be of approximately equal length. This is not an absolute rule, since there will be times when the logic of the assignment dictates that the sections are unequal (e.g. sometimes the instructions will prescribe unequal word limits for the sections). However, unbalanced divisions are often a result of poor planning (e.g. because you did not plan the essay as a whole, you used up most of your words on the first section, and ended up treating the other two sections in a superficial way).
08. Each assignment (essay) needs to have its own introduction. If you are submitting Assignments 1, 2, and 3 in a single batch, do not write one major introduction for all three; provide an introduction for each one. However, if there is a complex assignment—for example, Assignment 3 is divided in subsections 3.1-5—there should be a main introduction to the whole of Assignment 3, and the first paragraph of each subsection should serve as a mini-introduction to that part of the essay.
09. Your introduction should be a brief 'statement at the beginning of your assignment, which shows how you understand the question and how you plan

to answer it' (Pretorius, quoted in Smith 2008:13). It should briefly introduce the topic of the essay, state the purpose, and preview the argument or structure (cf. Smith 2008:14).

10. Provide a 'Conclusion' at the end of each individual assignment. Wherever there is an 'Introduction', there should be a corresponding 'Conclusion' (cf. 08 above).
11. Your 'Conclusion' should rest on evidence and arguments presented in your assignment; it should summarise the main findings of your assignment. The two techniques you should use in the conclusion are *review* and *summary*. Do not give long explanations, and never introduce new information in the conclusion (cf. Smith 2008:15-16).

Page Layout (see Smith 2008, ch. 6)

12. Type all your assignments in 1.5 line-spacing; do not use single or double spacing. Typing your assignment in a different line-spacing may result in a deduction of marks.
13. SATS requires that assignments be typed in Arial font, size 12. Typing your assignment in a different font or font size may result in a deduction of marks.
14. Use proper margins in your assignment. Avoid large indentations that waste a lot of space. The correct page settings are as follows:
 - Top margin: 2.5 cm or 1 inch
 - Bottom margin 2.5 cm or 1 inch
 - Right margin 2.5 cm or 1 inch
 - Left margin 2.5 cm or 1 inch
 - Gutter 0 cm or 0 inch
 - Header 1.25 cm or ½ inch
 - Footer 1.25 cm or ½ inch
15. For assignments submitted electronically, it is not necessary to type your name, course, and date at the top of each page (this practice was designed for hard copies, in case the pages got detached). For electronic submissions, please format the assignment cover page as shown in Smith (2008:94), and please save the assignment file in this format: [BrownJR_BIB1123_Assignment3](#).
16. Please number all your pages, either at the bottom centre or at the top right of the page. Do not put the page numbers in manually; use your word processor's page numbering function.

Citations (see Smith 2008, ch. 3)

17. Whenever you borrow an idea from someone else, you need to give credit to your source. If you use a source for your ideas and do not acknowledge it, you are guilty of **plagiarism**—even if you put the idea in your own words. *Avoid plagiarism by citing all the sources you use* (see Smith 2008, ch. 5 for a full discussion of plagiarism). Please check the document on plagiarism procedure. Depending on the level of plagiarism it could constitute an automatic failure. Assignments submitted without citation or bibliography due to accident, ignorance or carelessness should still be graded with appropriate deductions as per the plagiarism procedure.
18. Use in-text citations to acknowledge **all** your sources within the text of your assignment. Your citations must be formatted in keeping with SATS' requirements, which are described in detail in Smith 2008, chapter 3. The basic way of citing a source is to put the author's surname, date of publication, and page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence(s) that are based on that source. A typical example looks like this: (Brown 2008:97-98). This means the author was Brown, the book or article was published in 2008, and the material you are using is on pages 97 and 98.

There are variations in punctuation to SATS in house preferred style of author-date citations (Wilson 2004:132), and related bibliographic entries. For example, some that are representative of reputable author-date referencing styles, some add a comma between the author and the date (Wilson, 2004:132); others prefer to separate the date and page number with a comma (Wilson 2004,132); others separate the author and date with a comma, as well as the date and page number accentuated by the abbreviation p. such as (Wilson, 2004,p.132). These minor variations are not important; the most important thing is to be consistent in your method.

19. Do not type your citations in bold text, and do not place them between square brackets. In other words, both **(Brown 2008:98)** and [Brown 2008:98] are incorrect.
20. You are using too many direct quotations. When you use many direct quotations, it is difficult to judge how well you understand the material. Instead of quoting your sources, try to put their ideas in your own words and interact with their views (e.g. evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the source's idea; compare and contrast one source with another; discuss why you agree or disagree with the source). A well-written essay should have a number of citations, but very few quotations.

A high Similarity Index (SI) is not necessarily plagiarism. Students should however, ensure that the SI is less than 30%. If the SI is higher than the 30% students could be penalised.

21. You have not formatted your direct quotations correctly. Short quotations of three lines or less should be placed between quotation marks—US style uses double quotation marks (“ ”), while UK tends to prefer single quotation marks (‘ ’); SATS accepts either form, as long as you are consistent. Long quotations of more than three lines should be formatted as a block quotation. A block quotation is written in 1.5 line-spacing, indented on both sides, and does not have quotation marks.

22. Place your in-text citation *before* the full stop (period) at the end of the sentence. Do not end the sentence with a full stop, then add a citation, and then put a second full stop. The two examples below illustrate the correct and incorrect practices.

Correct: Jesus probably visited Capernaum before he went to Jerusalem (Saunders 1999:84).

Incorrect: Jesus probably visited Capernaum before he went to Jerusalem. (Saunders 1999:84).

23. Please make greater use of the resources provided in the course reader. While it is good to use other sources in addition to those the seminary provides (and you will be rewarded for doing so), it is not acceptable to use other sources instead of the ones provided. The reader contains *required readings*. We chose them because they are suitable academic sources that contain information we want you to know. In many assignments, failure to demonstrate knowledge of the required readings is grounds for being asked to resubmit.

24. When you cite a source from the course reader, cite it by the author of the article or extract you are using; do not cite ‘SATS Reader’ as the source. All SATS did was to compile the readings; the ideas contained in the readings belong to the people who wrote them. You must cite the source of the information. For example, if the reader contains an extract from Wayne Grudem’s book *Systematic Theology*, your citation should read (Grudem 1994:942); it should not read (SATS Reader, p. 84). Should the resources in the SATS reader not contain page numbers, please cite as follows: (Grudem 1994).

25. When you use sources in addition to the required readings to strengthen your assignment, try to use up-to-date, scholarly materials. For example, Matthew Henry’s commentary is too old and too devotional in nature to be a good resource; by all means use it in your devotional reading, but not in your assignments. Wikipedia is also not an ideal source, since the articles are not necessarily written by experts on the topic.

Bibliography (see Smith 2008, ch. 4)

26. Every assignment you write should contain a bibliography, which must be formatted according to the instructions in Smith 2008, chapter 4.
27. Your bibliography should be a list of *works cited*, listing only the works that you cited in your assignment (cf. Smith 2008:55-56). You should make an effort to reference and interact with all the relevant sources that you consulted.
28. When you submit a batch of assignments together (as a single file), it is best to provide a single bibliography at the end of all the assignments. It is not necessary to have a separate bibliography after each assignment.
29. Please arrange your bibliography in alphabetical order according to the authors' surnames. Do not number the entries in your bibliography, and do not place bullets in front of each entry.

Using Resources

30. Your essay is overly dependent on one or two key sources. It is not good practice to quote repeatedly from one source. Your essay would be better if you had consulted and interacted with other scholarly sources.

Paraphrasing

31. You need to work to improve your sentence construction, to make your writing easier to read and your argument easier to follow. Try to avoid long, complex sentences. Try to avoid writing in the passive voice. The best writing makes use of simple, clear, and direct sentences (see Smith 2008:28-31). If English is not your first language, make it one of your long-term study goals to improve your English style in each course.

Spelling and grammar

32. You are responsible for proofreading your assignments to avoid careless errors. Although it is our policy not to penalise second-language English speakers for expressing themselves imperfectly, this does not excuse careless errors that could have been corrected by using your word processor's spelling and grammar functions. Your assignment contains spelling, typing, and grammatical errors which your word processor would have highlighted for you to correct.
33. You need to be consistent in your use of English spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The seminary uses UK English as its language standard. We request you to set your language to UK English, but we will not penalise you for using US English as long as you do so consistently.

34. You need to be careful to avoid using slang or clichéd expressions. In an academic paper, it is best to write in either 'formal' or 'standard' language, but never in 'slang' or 'clichéd' English (see Smith 2008:30 for an explanation of the different language styles). Never use SMS jargon (e.g. write 'for you' not '4 u', and 'through' instead of 'thru'). Avoid language that is derogatory or offensive towards other people or groups (e.g. sexist, racist, or condescending).
35. Avoid a 'preachy' style, unless you have been asked to produce a sermon or write devotionally. It is quite proper to use expressions like 'hallelujah', 'amen brother', and 'come Lord Jesus' when preaching a sermon in church, but it is not appropriate to write this way in an essay or a term paper.

Content

36. You need to work to improve the clarity of your writing. Because of the manner in which this essay is written, it is difficult to discern the level of your understanding. To remedy this weakness, you may need to do one or more of the following: (a) avoid 'padding' your essay with unnecessary material, which obstructs its flow; (b) be careful of too many repetitions; (c) link your paragraphs together, so that the logical relationship between your major thoughts and points is clear; (d) write your essay *in your own words*; if you merely quote and paraphrase what others have said, it is difficult to know how much you understand.
37. It appears that you have not read the assignment instructions carefully enough, because you have committed one or more of the following errors: (a) you have not interpreted the question correctly; (b) you have not answered the question correctly; or (c) you have not followed the instructions given.
38. You need to do more reading and research on this topic. Your essay is weak in one or more of the following areas: (a) it does not evidence wide enough reading; (b) it does not evidence sufficient research of the topic; or (c) it does not evidence the use of appropriate sources.
39. Your essay has not *demonstrated* knowledge of the topic at the level of depth required by the outcome. This is not to say you do not have the required level of understanding, only that your assignment has not demonstrated it. In most instances, this means your essay is weak in one or more of the following areas: (a) you have not clearly identified the central issues of the topic; (b) you have not dealt with the topic—or key aspects of it—in sufficient depth; (c) you have not used appropriate terminology, or you have used key terms inappropriately; or (d) your overall discussion of the topic evidences key gaps or deficiencies in your knowledge of the topic and its related issues.

40. The level of this assignment called for you to demonstrate the skills of analysis, critical thinking, and/or synthesis. This means your essay should provide evidence of analysis (breaking the topic down to its constituent parts), critical thinking (in-depth analysis and reflection on the parts, including evaluating the views expressed in the source materials), and synthesis (putting it back together by summarising findings and conclusions). These elements of your essay require development.
41. You have not developed the logical argument of your essay in a sufficiently clear and coherent manner. This could mean a number of things: (a) the premises of your arguments might be inadequate or unstated; (b) the logical connection between points or parts of the argument might not be apparent; (c) the conclusions might not follow from the arguments (and premises) you have presented; (d) the manner in which you have structured the essay may make it difficult to follow the logic of the argument.
42. The manner in which you have used the Bible in this assignment leaves room for improvement. Your assignment evidences one or more of the following weaknesses with respect to the use of scripture: (a) the overall perspective is not biblically or theologically sound; (b) you have not referenced and/or discussed scripture sufficiently in your essay; (c) some of the biblical texts you reference are not correctly interpreted or applied (the final point takes into account that different church traditions interpret certain texts differently to others); or (d) you have used lengthy quotations from scripture as a way of 'padding' your essay. (Long quotes seldom add value to the argument. In most instances, it is best to provide the scripture reference, and then summarise the passage in your own words, discuss its relevance to your point, or provide commentary from a good Bible commentary.)
43. Avoid including lengthy quotations from scripture. This is a way of 'padding' your essay, and seldom adds value to the argument. In most instances, it is best to provide the scripture reference, and then summarise the passage in your own words, discuss its relevance to your point, or provide commentary from a good Bible commentary.
44. It would be good to see more reflection on proper application to ministry. As a rule, this requires that you describe your ministry context, demonstrate awareness of the ministry issues involved, and reflect on how the topic you are discussing ought to impact upon ministry practice.
45. This assignment lends itself to some reflection on personal application (i.e. how you ought to apply the truths you have discussed in your own spiritual life). It would be good to see you reflecting on how you should respond.