

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' REFERENCING SKILLS

Referencing as an academic skill

There are many academic skills; referencing is one. In USQ's detailed list of academic skills, it is described as 'including authorities in writing.' Referencing is an academic skill which can be taught and developed in conjunction with other academic reading and writing skills [see academic skills development topic on the Learning and Teaching website link below].

Referencing as a graduate skill

Referencing is a component of the first and third USQ graduate skills:

- Ethical research and enquiry
- Academic and professional literacy [for further information on USQ Graduate Qualities and Skills please access the Learning and Teaching website link below].

Research and referencing – the student view

University is a research-based culture which is unfamiliar to many undergraduate students and some postgraduate students. Despite the fact that they have researched material for school, work or pleasure – often on the internet - the idea of writing assignments based on a body of published text is often not familiar and many students are not sure where to start. The protocols of referencing, too, are overwhelming and quite daunting for some students. This lack of experience can lead students to inadvertently *cut and paste* or plagiarise the work of others.

Benefits of embedding referencing activities in your course

While generic workshops can assist some students, current research suggests that embedding activities into the course structure benefits a greater number of students, more successfully. The advantage of embedding activities into your course is that course content is the focus, rather than generic material. This situates students' thought processes in the discipline they have chosen to study. Their understanding of discipline specific concepts and processes develops hand-in-hand with their academic skills, including referencing.

By providing a series of exercises or tasks throughout the teaching process in your course, you are giving students the opportunity to understand and develop these skills prior to the major assignment. Students then have a greater chance of submitting a quality assignment and ultimately being successful in your course.

How do I begin the process?

- by determining the steps a student must take to produce a quality final piece of assessment
- by developing some exercises that support these steps, starting with simple skills followed by more complex skills. These exercises can take the form of formative activities, or you can incorporate activities that include referencing tasks in an assignment early in the course.

If referencing practice is built into your course, students can develop their referencing skills at the same time as they develop other academic skills, such as paragraph-writing or problem-solving. In this way,

