Academic Writing

for International Students of Business

Second Edition

Stephen Bailey

Academic Writing for International Students of Business

International students of Business or Economics often need to write essays and reports for exams and coursework, and this new, second edition of *Academic Writing for International Students of Business* has been completely revised and updated to help them succeed with these tasks.

This book explains the academic writing process from start to finish, and practises all the key writing skills in the context of Business Studies. The book can be used either with a teacher or for self-study, and is clearly organised into four parts, with each divided into short units that contain examples, explanations and exercises for use in the classroom or for self-study:

1   **The Writing Process**, from assessing sources to proofreading
2   **Elements of Writing**, practising skills such as making comparisons
3   **Vocabulary for Writing**, dealing with areas such as nouns and adjectives, adverbs and verbs, synonyms, prefixes and prepositions, in an academic context
4   **Writing Models**, illustrating case studies, reports, longer essays and other key genres

This is an up-to-date book that reflects the interests and issues of contemporary Business Studies, with revised exercises, updated reading texts and a new glossary to ensure accessibility and maximise usability. Students wanting to expand their academic potential will find this practical and easy-to-use book an invaluable guide to writing in English for their degree courses, and it will also help students planning a career with international companies or organisations, where proficiency in written English is a key skill.

•   All aspects of writing clearly explained, with full glossary for reference
•   Full range of practice exercises, with answer key included
•   Use of authentic academic texts
•   Fully updated, with sections on finding electronic sources and evaluating internet material

Stephen Bailey is a freelance writer of materials for English for Academic Purposes. He has taught students in Barcelona, Tokyo, Johor Bahru, Prague and Toulouse, and more recently in the UK at Derby University and the University of Nottingham. His other books include *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students* (Routledge) and *Heartlands: A Guide to D. H. Lawrence's Midlands Roots* (with Chris Nottingham) (Matador).

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many students I have taught over the past 30 years, whose needs have provided the impetus for this book. Their enthusiasm and resilience has been a constant inspiration for me.

My wife Rene has provided me with invaluable support, encouragement and advice on many aspects of academic writing during the development of this book. Final thanks are due to my daughter, Sophie, for helping me to keep the whole subject in perspective!

Introduction for Teachers

This course has been developed to help international students of Business and Economics with their writing assignments in English, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. There is significant research (e.g. Bacha and Bahous, 2008) to suggest that such students tend to underestimate the difficulty of completing these tasks, in terms of both the reading and writing skills involved.

In addition, lecturers at Nottingham University Business School, Nottingham Business School, Birmingham Business School and Manchester Business School have shared their concerns with me about the writing challenges faced by their international students. These focus on difficulties with vocabulary, and the lack of critical thinking skills, with regard to reading and writing. Concern was also felt about students' failure to answer the specific question and their inability to develop answers logically. Issues around plagiarism and referencing skills are also significant worries.

The second edition of *Academic Writing for International Students of Business* sets out to address these and other problems directly. Although the trend towards the internationalisation of Business courses has substantial benefits, and international students are not expected to write perfect English, it should be understood that accurate and effective language use is an essential skill for such students. What may be individually minor problems with prepositions, word endings, spelling and articles can result in essays that are barely comprehensible to the best-motivated marker.

This book has been designed for use both in the classroom and for self-study/reference. This is a recognition that foundation, in-sessional and pre-sessional courses are inevitably time-constrained, and that some students may prefer or need to work by themselves. All exercises can be done individually or in pairs and groups. Students can check their work using the answer key. The book is designed for ease of access and simplicity of reference, which is achieved via the structure:

Part	Topic	Main application
1	**The Writing Process** from analysing titles to proofreading	Classroom use
2	**Elements of Writing** from argument to presenting visual information	Classroom use and self-study
3	**Vocabulary for Writing** from abbreviations to synonyms	Classroom use, self-study and reference
4	**Writing Models** from case studies to surveys	Classroom use, self-study and reference
	Answers	

Students are guided through the stages of the writing process in Part 1 and then the related writing skills are explained and practised in Part 2. Part 3 is designed to assist students with aspects of academic vocabulary, understandably a prime concern for many non-native users of English. Part 4 provides models of some common writing formats such as case studies. Cross-references are included to help students find relevant material, in this format:

▶ **See Unit 2.13 Style**

Teachers may wish to work through the writing process in Part 1 while referring to units in Part 2 as the group progresses. (Part 2 is not intended to be taught from start to finish: note the alphabetical organisation of Parts 2, 3 and 4). Revision exercises are provided at the end of Parts 1, 2 and 4.

The material in this course has been extensively tested in the classroom, but improvements can always be achieved in future editions. Therefore, I would be very glad to receive any comments or suggestions about the book from teachers of Business, Economics or English for Academic Purposes.

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Reference

Bacha, N. and Bahous, R. (2008) 'Contrasting views of business students' writing needs in an EFL environment'. *English for Specific Purposes* 27, 1, 74–93.

Introduction for Students

Why is writing English more difficult than speaking?

Many international students who arrive at college to study in English can speak the language well enough for normal life: shopping, travelling and meeting people. But the same students are often surprised to find that writing essays and reports in English is much more difficult. It can be helpful to think about the reasons for this situation.

First, speaking is usually done face to face. If your listener can't understand you, then they can look puzzled and ask you to repeat. But this doesn't work with a reader! When we write, we usually have little idea who may read our work, so we have to write as clearly as possible so that it is easy to understand.

With academic writing, writers and readers have to learn special conventions, such as using capital letters in certain places. If you do not follow these conventions, your meaning may be unclear and your teacher can have difficulty assessing your work. Another issue is vocabulary. Most academic subjects require writers to use semi-formal language, which is different from the idiomatic language used in speech. One example is using a verb such as 'continue' instead of phrasal verbs such as 'go on'.

What is the purpose of the book?

This book is designed to help you succeed in the writing tasks you may be given as part of your Business or Economics course. The kind of work that you are given may be different from the work you have done before, and this may be the first time you have had to write long essays or reports in English.

Your teachers know that English is not your native language and will be sympathetic to the problems you have in your writing. But at the same time, you will want to learn to write as clearly and accurately as possible not only to succeed on your current course, but also in preparation for your career. Almost all large companies and organisations expect their staff to be able to communicate effectively in written English, as well as orally. Therefore, during your

studies, you have the ideal opportunity to learn to write English well, and this book can help you achieve that goal.

In addition to accuracy, students on Business and Economics courses are expected to take a critical approach to their sources. This means that your teachers will expect you to question and evaluate everything you read, asking whether it is reliable or relevant. You are also expected to refer carefully to the sources of all your ideas, using a standard system of referencing. *Academic Writing for International Students of Business* will help you to develop these skills.

How is the book organised?

The book can be used either with a teacher or for self-study and reference. Each unit contains practice exercises that can be checked using the answer key at the end of the book. For ease of use, it is divided into the following sections:

Part 1: The Writing Process
This follows the process of writing from the reading stage through to proofreading.

Part 2: Elements of Writing
The key writing skills, organised alphabetically from argument to visual information.

Part 3: Vocabulary for Writing
This section deals with different aspects of academic vocabulary, again arranged alphabetically, from abbreviations to synonyms.

Part 4: Writing Models
Gives examples of the main types of written assignments such as reports, case studies and longer essays.

To help you get the most out of this course, note the following points:

- Instructions are printed as shown here:

  ■ **List your ideas below.**

- Links to relevant units are shown like this:

  ▶ **See Unit 2.13 Style**

  (These links help you to find extra information, but do not have to be read in order to complete the exercises.)

- Answers are provided for most exercises in the answer key at the end of the book. If no definite answer can be given, an example answer is usually offered.

- The **index** can be used to locate specific information. The **glossary** explains academic terms that you may not be familiar with.

Thousands of students have already found that *Academic Writing for International Students of Business* helps them to write more clearly and effectively. This new edition has been developed using their feedback and ideas, and I would be very glad to receive comments and suggestions on any aspect of the book to help develop future editions.

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Academic Writing Quiz

■ **How much do you know about academic writing? Find out by doing this fun quiz.**

1 The main difference between academic writing and normal writing is that academic writing:
   (a) uses longer words
   (b) tries to be precise and unbiased
   (c) is harder to understand

2 The difference between a project and an essay is:
   (a) essays are longer
   (b) projects are longer
   (c) students choose projects' topics

3 Teachers complain most about students:
   (a) not answering the question given
   (b) not writing enough
   (c) not referencing properly

4 The best time to write an introduction is often:
   (a) first
   (b) last
   (c) after writing the main body

5 Plagiarism is:
   (a) a dangerous disease
   (b) an academic offence
   (c) an academic website

6 Making careful notes is essential for:
   (a) writing essays
   (b) revising for exams
   (c) all academic work

7 An in-text citation looks like:
   (a) (Manton, 2008)
   (b) (Richard Manton, 2008)
   (c) (Manton, R. 2008)

8 Paraphrasing a text means:
   (a) making it shorter
   (b) changing a lot of the vocabulary
   (c) adding more detail

9 Paragraphs always contain:
   (a) six or more sentences
   (b) an example
   (c) a topic sentence

10 The purpose of an introduction is:
   (a) to give your aims and methods
   (b) to excite the reader
   (c) to summarise your ideas

11 Proofreading means:
   (a) getting a friend to check your work
   (b) checking for minor errors
   (c) rewriting

12 Teachers expect students to adopt a critical approach to their sources:
   (a) sometimes
   (b) only for Master's work
   (c) always

The Writing Process
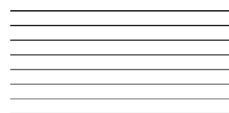
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Background to Writing

Most business schools assess students mainly through written assignments. These include coursework, which may take weeks to write, and exam answers, which often have to be written in an hour or less. This unit deals with:

- the names of different writing tasks
- the format of long and short written texts
- the structure of sentences and paragraphs.

1 The purpose of academic writing

Writers should be clear why they are writing. The most common reasons for writing include:

- to answer a question the writer has been given or chosen
- to report a piece of research the writer has conducted
- to synthesise research done by others on a topic.

■ **Can you suggest any other reasons?**

- _____

- _____

Whatever the purpose, it is helpful to think about the probable readers of your work. How can you explain your ideas to them effectively? Although there is no fixed standard of academic writing, it is clearly different from the written style of newspapers or novels. For example, it is generally agreed that academic writing attempts to be impersonal and objective. What are its other features?

■ **Working alone or in a group, list your ideas below.**

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2 Common types of academic writing

Below are the most common types of written work produced by business students.

■ **Match the terms on the left to the definitions on the right.**

Notes	A piece of research, either individual or group work, with the topic chosen by the student(s).
Report	The longest piece of writing normally done by a student (20,000+ words) often for a higher degree, on a topic chosen by the student.
Project	A written record of the main points of a text or lecture, for a student's personal use.
Essay	A general term for any academic essay, report or article.
Dissertation/ Thesis	A study of something that has happened (e.g. a survey a student has conducted).
Paper	The most common type of written work, with the title given by the teacher, normally 1,000–5,000 words.

3 The format of long and short writing tasks

Short essays (including exam answers) generally have this pattern:

Introduction

Main body

Conclusion

Longer essays may include:

Introduction

Main body

> Literature review
>
> Case study
>
> Discussion

References

Conclusion

Appendices

▶   **See Unit 4.4 Longer Essays**

Dissertations and journal articles may have:

Abstract

List of contents

List of tables

Introduction

Main body

> Literature review
>
> Case study
>
> Findings
>
> Discussion

Conclusion

Acknowledgements

References

Appendices

■   **Find the words in the lists above that match the following definitions:**

(a) A short summary of 100–200 words that explains the paper's purpose and main findings.

   _____

(b) A list of all the sources the writer has mentioned in the text.

   _____

(c) A section, at the end, where additional information is included.

   _____

(d) A short section where people who have helped the writer are thanked.

   _____

(e)   Part of the main body in which the views of other writers on the topic are discussed.

_____

(f)   A section where one particular example is described in detail.

_____

4 The format of academic writing

There is considerable variation in the format of academic writing required by different business schools and departments. Your teachers may give you guidelines, or you should ask them what they want. But some general features apply to most formats.

■   **Read the text below and identify the features underlined, using the words in the box.**

> sentence   heading   sub-title   paragraph   title   phrase

(a)   <u>The Effectiveness of Microcredit</u>

(b)   <u>An evaluation of programmes in India and the Philippines</u>

(c)   <u>Introduction</u>

(d)   <u>In the last ten years</u>, considerable claims have been made about the value of microcredit (also known as microfinance), the provision of unsecured small loans to the poor in developing countries. (e) <u>But it has proved surprisingly difficult to accurately measure the effectiveness of these loans, without interference from other non-commercial factors.</u>

(f)   <u>Two recent studies have attempted to compare the effects on randomly chosen groups of people with access to microcredit, compared to those without. The first (Bannerjee *et al.*, 2009), based at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), looked at slumdwellers in the city of Hyderabad in India, while the second (Karlan and Zinman, 2009) compared borrowers and non-borrowers in the Philippines. Overall, neither study found evidence that microcredit had any effect in reducing poverty, although it may have some other positive aspects such as reducing the consumption of alcohol or tobacco.</u>

(a)   _____   (d)   _____

(b)   _____   (e)   _____

(c)   _____   (f)   _____

5 Other common text features

(a) **Reference** to sources: *The first (Bannerjee et al., 2009) looked at slumdwellers . . .*

(b) The use of **abbreviations** to save space: *Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)*

(c) **Italics** used to show words from other languages: Bannerjee *et al*. (= and others)

(d) **Brackets** used to give subsidiary information or to clarify a point: *(also known as microfinance)*

(e) **Numbering systems** (1.1, 1.2) are often used in reports, less so in essays.

6 Simple and longer sentences

■   **Study the table below.**

Dragon Motors – vehicle production 2009–2013

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
135,470	156,935	164,820	159,550	123,075

All sentences contain verbs:

In 2009, the company produced over 135,000 vehicles.

Between 2009 and 2010, vehicle production increased by 20%.

Simple sentences (above) are easier to write and read, but longer sentences are also needed in academic writing. However, students should make clarity a priority, and avoid writing very lengthy sentences with several clauses until they feel confident in their ability.

Sentences containing two or more clauses use **conjunctions**, **relative pronouns** or **punctuation** to link the clauses:

*In 2009, Dragon Motors produced over 135,000 vehicles **but** the following year production increased by 20 per cent.* (conjunction)

*In 2011, the company built 164,820 vehicles, **which** was the peak of production.* (relative pronoun)

*Nearly 160,000 vehicles were produced in 2012**;** by 2013, this had fallen to 123,000.* (punctuation)

■   **Write two simple and two longer sentences using data from the table above.**

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

▶   See **Unit 3.6 Numbers**

7 Writing in paragraphs

■   **Discuss the following questions:**

•   What is a paragraph?
•   Why are texts divided into paragraphs?
•   How long are paragraphs?
•   Do paragraphs have a standard structure?

■   **Read the text below and divide it into a suitable number of paragraphs.**


INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Most people want to invest for the future, to cover unexpected financial difficulties and provide security. Different people, however, tend to have different requirements, so that a 25-year-old just leaving university would be investing for long-term capital growth, whereas a 60-year-old who had just retired would probably invest for income. Despite these differences, certain principles apply in most cases. The first issue to consider is risk. In general, the greater the degree of risk, the higher the return. Shares, for example, which can quickly rise or fall in value, typically have a higher yield than bonds, which offer greater stability. Therefore, all investors must decide how much risk is appropriate in their particular situation. Diversification must also be considered in an investment strategy. Wise investors usually seek to spread their investments across a variety of geographical and business sectors. As accurate predictions of the future are almost impossible, it is best to have as many options as possible. A further consideration is investor involvement. Some investors opt for a high degree of involvement and want to buy and sell regularly, constantly watching the markets. But personal involvement can be time-consuming and worrying, and many prefer to leave the management of their portfolios to professional fund managers.

▶   See **Unit 1.9 Organising Paragraphs**

Critical Reading
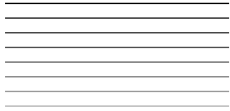
Students often underestimate the importance of reading effectively, but good reading techniques are vital for success on any business course. This unit:

- examines the most suitable text types for academic work
- explores ways of locating relevant materials in the library
- explains different reading methods
- introduces a critical approach to potential sources.

1 Academic texts

You need to read a variety of text types, such as websites and journal articles, for your course. It is important to identify the most suitable texts and recognise their features, which will help you to assess their value.

■ You are studying Tourism. Read texts 1–4 on pp. 10–11 and decide which are the most suitable for academic use.

Text	Suitability?
1	*Yes, it summarises some relevant research and includes citations.*
2	
3	
4	

1

To promote tourism and market destination, it is important to study the tourists' attitude, behaviour and demand. The studies of Levitt (1986) and Kotler and Armstrong (1994) suggest that an understanding of consumer behaviour may help with the marketing planning process in tourism marketing. The research of consumer behaviour is the key to the underpinning of all marketing activity that is carried out to develop, promote and sell tourism products (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999; Asad, 2005). Therefore, the study of consumer behaviour has become necessary for the sake of tourism marketing.

2

The romance of travel has always fascinated me, and our recent trip to Thailand lived up to expectations. We flew from Gatwick and after a comfortable flight arrived in Bangkok just as the sun was rising. Our stay in the city lasted only a couple of days before we set off for the hill country around Chang Mai, where we were planning to visit some of the indigenous tribes who live in this mountainous region. When we arrived, the weather was rather disappointing, but after a day the heavy rain gave way to sparkling clear sunshine.

3

Holiday trips to the Antarctica have quadrupled in the past decade and last year more than 46,000 people visited the land mass and surrounding oceans. However, safety fears and concerns about the impact visitors are having on the delicate frozen landscape have soared and members of the Antarctic Treaty – an agreement between 28 nations, including the UK, on the use of the continent – are now meeting to discuss ways to regulate tourism.

British officials are seeking to establish a 'strategic agreement for tourism' around the South Pole. If successful, it will see treaty members introduce new measures to improve the safety of tourist trips, while also reducing the impact that visitors will have on the environment. The regulations could see limits on the number of ships

and landings, restrictions on how close they come to shore, a ban on building tourist facilities and hotels on the continent, and rules on waste discharges from ships.

4

Equally, from a political perspective, the nature of state involvement in and policies for tourism is dependent on both the political-economic structures and the prevailing political ideology in the destination state, with comparisons typically made between market-led and centrally planned economies. For example, the Thatcher-Reagan-inspired neo-liberalism of the 1980s, and the subsequent focus on privatisation and the markets in many Western nations, contrasted starkly with the then centrally planned tourism sectors in the former Eastern Europe (Buckley and Witt, 1990; Hall, 1991). At the same time, of course, it has also long been recognised that the political-economic relationship of one nation with another or with the wider international community (that is, the extent of political-economic dependency) may represent a significant influence on tourism development (Telfer, 2002). Thus, in short, tourism planning and development in the destination tends to reflect both the structures and political ideologies of the state and its international political-economic relations.

■ **The main features of academic texts are listed in the table below. Find examples of each using the texts above.**

Feature	Example
1 Formal vocabulary	*the marketing planning process in tourism marketing …* *the extent of political-economic dependency …*
2 Use of citation	
3 Impersonal style	
4 Long, complex sentences	