

Return to Full-Time Study: A workbook for older students returning to full-time higher education



BRADFORD
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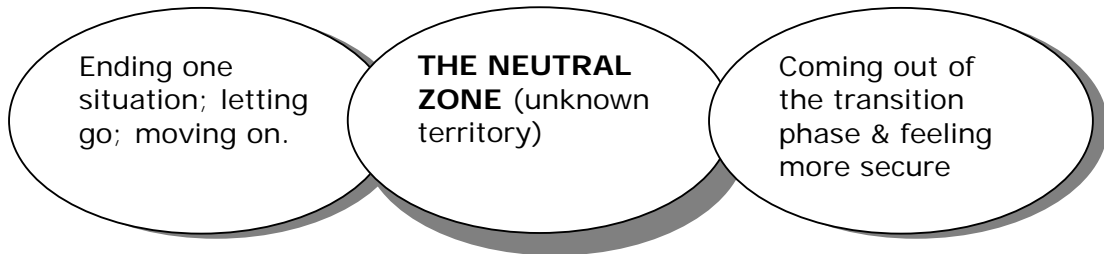


Return to full-time study

RETURN TO FULL-TIME STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Welcome back to education.

William Bridges in his book *Managing Transitions* describes a situation of moving from a relatively settled life situation to another. In the process, we move into an unknown middle area, which he describes as the 'Neutral Zone':



(Bridges, 2003)

Bridges argues that when we move into the 'Neutral Zone' our anxiety level rises, as we do not know what to expect. To compensate, we often overload ourselves with tasks or revert to old ways of doing things; things that may no longer be appropriate to the new situation.

YOU AND THE 'NEUTRAL ZONE'

Returning to formal education after a lengthy break is such an example of moving into relatively unknown territory: the 'Neutral Zone'. The zone throws up many questions for returning students, including these:

- Will I be able to **manage the time** commitment involved?
- Will I be able to **understand** all the information that is presented– particularly theoretical ideas?
- Will I be able to **write essays and reports** in the way expected of me?
- ...and what is **expected** generally of students on this course?

This workbook will help you to prepare for your full-time studies and to emerge quickly from the 'Neutral Zone' into a situation where you feel more secure and able to manage your studies to their successful conclusion. When you do this you will have become an **effective learner**, and this is the starting point for this workbook, so read on...

EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Colin Rose in his book *Master it Faster* argues that there are six stages to becoming an effective learner.

He uses a mnemonic: **MASTER** to help people remember these six stages:

M: MOTIVATION. You need to feel **positive** to learn. If you lack belief in your own ability or cannot see the point of what you are learning, you will not do well.

A: ACQUIRE (information, facts). You need to plan the time to search for and read the information you need for your studies.

S: SEARCH. You need to search for a personal **meaning** in what you read. If you just try to remember facts without understanding them, you will soon forget what you have read or heard. You can seek for personal **meaning** in what you read by asking, for example, ' *how can I use this idea?*' or, ' *how does this connect with my life, my experiences?*'

T: TRIGGER (trigger your memory). You cannot remember all you read or hear, but you can take notes in ways that help you remember **key points and ideas**.





E: EXAMINE (examine what you know). You should test out your knowledge at regular intervals to help reinforce in your mind what you have learned. This is often best done informally with other learners (an informal study group).

R: REFLECT (reflect on learning). You should reflect on **how** you learned, including how you felt about a particular topic or learning situation. There is, for example, great potential to learn a lot from our mistakes, providing we keep positive about them.

(Rose, 2000)

EFFECTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

The remainder of this workbook will introduce some effective learning techniques and particularly those that you will find helpful in the early stages of your course. These are:

<p>TIME MANAGEMENT</p> 	<p>Pages 4 - 13</p>
<p>MANAGE YOUR READING</p> 	<p>Pages 14 - 20</p>
<p>NOTETAKING</p> 	<p>Pages 21 - 29</p>
<p>WRITING</p> 	<p>Pages 30 - 51</p>

TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing time – and in particular juggling all the things they have to do in life - is probably the greatest challenge that students returning to education face. In all surveys of the experiences of older students, whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate, this issue comes out top of their list of concerns.



So make time now to read the following article!

SCHEDULE FOR PASSING THE TEST OF TIME

I was in a student coffee bar during my first week at university soaking in the atmosphere when a student announced calmly that he intended to get a first. He would work 25 hours a week, study five hours a day on weekdays and leave the weekends free. That would be sufficient.

I was vaguely committed to endless hours of work. I imagined that at some point I would spend weeks of intensive study. The vice-chancellor had told us in his address to look at the person on either side and note that in all probability one of us would not be around the following year. The message struck home: I would turn myself into a paragon of academic virtue. I could see that the other student had got it all wrong, or was bluffing.

Three years later he sailed to his first whilst other friends struggled to very modest achievements. As I discovered when sharing his lodgings, he worked more or less to the plan he had outlined. He slept late in the mornings, only stirring himself if there was a lecture to attend. He played cards with the rest of us after lunch. Then he moved to his desk and stayed there until around seven. The evenings he spent more wildly than most – hence the late mornings.

Nevertheless, when I came to look back I realised he had studied more than anyone else I knew. Through sticking assiduously to a modest

but well-defined, realistic plan, he had achieved a great deal. He had enjoyed work much more, too.

He argued that it was not possible to work productively at intensively intellectual tasks for more than a few hours at a time. I aimed to do much more. But I was easily distracted. By the time it was apparent that whole stretches of a day had slipped away, I felt so guilty that I blotted studies out of my mind, comforting myself with the thought of all the days that lay ahead.

I was too inexperienced at looking after my own affairs to realise I was already failing one of the major tests of successful study: the organisation of time. I thought that success in studying was to do with how brilliantly clever and original you were. I had yet to discover that one of the central challenges of adult life is time management.

At School the work timetable was defined for us and teachers made sure we fitted all that was required into the school year. At university however, I was in trouble! Time came in great undifferentiated swathes. What to do with it all? With 168 hours in a week – or 105, allowing nine a day for sleeping and eating – how many was it reasonable to spend on study? Individuals vary and different subjects make different demands. Nevertheless with a target you can plan your studies, not just stumble ahead in hope. Even the sketchiest of weekly timetables, setting aside 40 hours to cover all study, is an invaluable aid in defining time. Then you can divide it into segments and use it strategically, rather than let it dribble away.

Defining what to do is harder. Take the booklists. How many books are students expected to read? How long should a book take? It took me so long to read just a few pages that I felt defeated when I looked ahead. Should I take notes? How many? What would I need them for?

I would sit in the library for a whole day, dipping into one book after another, often with glazed-over eyes. What was my purpose? How would I know when I had achieved it? By comparison I went to lectures gratefully – at least I knew when they started and finished. Although my lecture notes weren't up to much, I could tell myself I had accomplished something, which would bring down my anxiety level.

Much later I discovered I could learn a great deal from close reading of selected sections; that taking notes could sometimes be very satisfying and at other times was not necessary. The trick was to take control; to decide what I wanted to find out – something specific – and then work at it until I had taken in enough to think about for the time being.

Dividing big jobs into smaller sub-tasks helps to bring work under control, allows you to set targets and check your progress. There is so much pressure to be ambitious – to go for the long dissertation, to read the huge tomes. Yet achievement arises out of quite modest activities undertaken on a small scale. The trouble with the big tasks is that you keep putting them off. Their scope and shape is unclear and we all flee from uncertainty. The more you define your work as small, discrete, concrete tasks, the more control you have over it.

Organising tasks into the time available can itself be divided into strategy and application. It is useful to think of yourself as 'investing' time. Some tasks require intense concentration and need to be done at a prime time of day, when you are at your best and have time to spare. Others can be fitted in when you are tired, or 'as warm-up' activities at the start of a session. Some, such as essay writing, may be best spread over several days. Some need to be done straight away.

There are few reliable guidelines. Essentially you have to keep circling round a self-monitoring loop: plan an approach to a task, try it out, reflect afterwards on your success in achieving what you intended and then revise your strategy.

Once you start to think strategically, you begin to take control of your studies rather than letting them swamp you. (Source: Northedge, 1991)

On the following page are some questions for you about this article.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

In the last third of the article the author deliberately uses the same word on four occasions to reinforce his message. What is this recurring word?

What would you say are the four main points of this article? Summarise in your own words the four main points of the article in the spaces below.

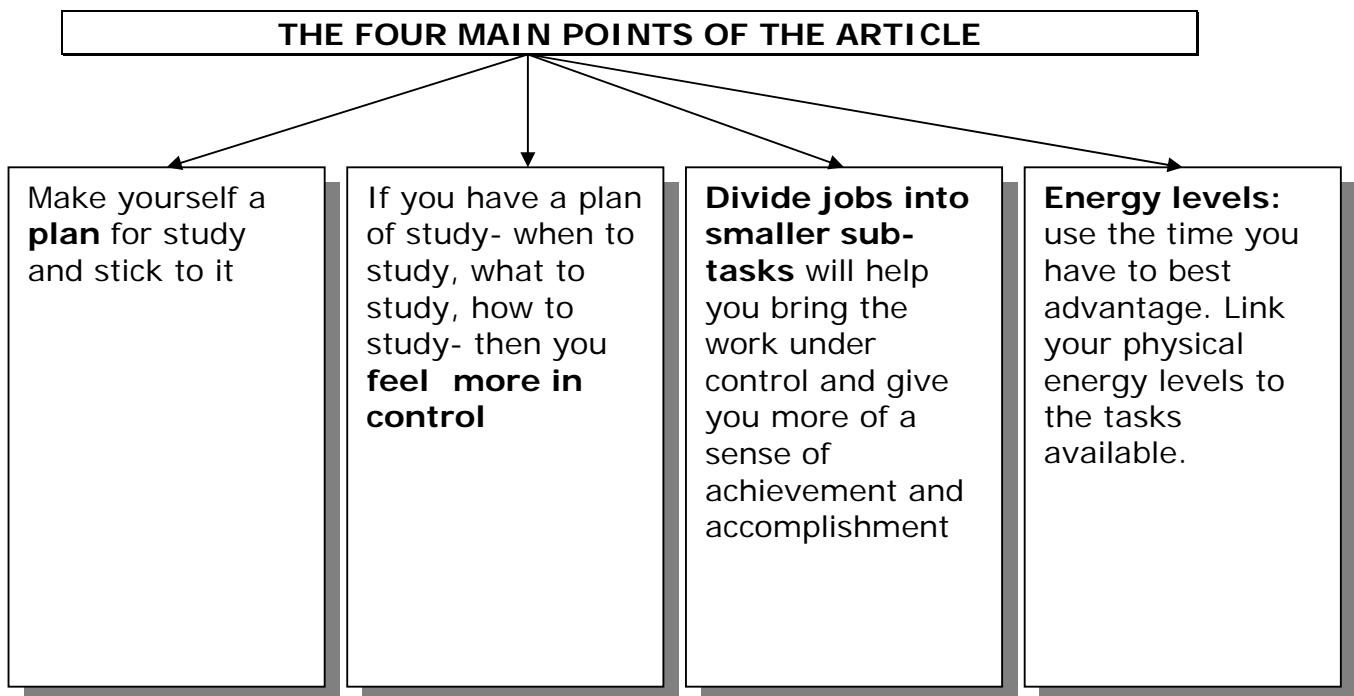
1.	2.
3.	4.

Check your answers out against ours on the next page.

RECURRING WORD:

Control

Andrew Northedge uses the word repeatedly to reinforce one of the main points of his article: the importance of **feeling in control of your studies**.



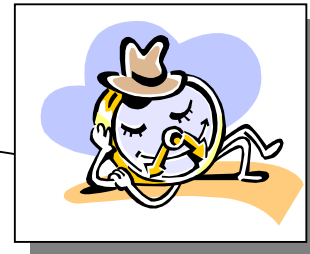
Andrew Northedge makes some useful general points about time management. However, time management problems for students can usually be isolated into four specific categories:

- 1. Underestimation of time it will take to complete a task**
- 2. Anxiety about beginning a task**
- 3. Over-inflating the task (making it bigger than it is)**
- 4. Problems prioritising time available**

Now read the following case studies where these problems have arisen.

STUDENT CASE STUDIES

1. UNDER-ESTIMATING TIME TO COMPLETE TASKS



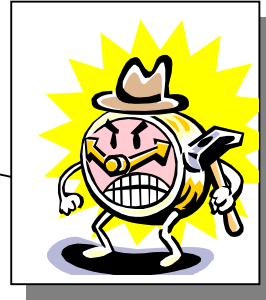
Zak keeps missing deadlines for handing in assignments. He tends to underestimate the length of time it takes to complete the different stages there are to write essays and reports. This is a very common problem for many students.

What **Zak** could do about this:

He could:

- map out his week, so he is clear exactly where he spends his time
- try listing each stage to complete an assignment and working out when he will complete each stage. Once he has done this he knows exactly what he has to do, and when.
- be conscious of the ways he avoids getting started on work or gets distracted easily from work he has to do
- try and make his study time more organised, more pleasurable and less of a chore. There is a workbook titled '*Accelerated Learning*' available from the Effective Learning Service that suggests creative ways to learn based on your skills and personality. You could also look at the Effective Service booklet '**20 Tips for Effective Learning**'; most of the tips came from students themselves. Contact the Effective Learning Service for a copy of the workbook or booklet.

2. ANXIETY ABOUT BEGINNING A TASK



Suzy often delays starting an assignment because she is worried about her writing ability, which leads to a fear of getting started. She rarely leaves enough time to redraft and proof-read work, which means her writing is full of unnecessary errors. Essentially, Suzy is afraid of failing, but, paradoxically, her fear is contributing to a situation that worries her most!

What **Suzy** could do about this:

- she should begin to write her assignment ideas, or talk her ideas into a voice-recorder, as soon as they occur to her. The process of writing should begin as soon as she knows the assignment title.
- Suzy should not worry about organising her ideas into a readable form at this stage. The important thing is to gain confidence by **just getting ideas down on paper, or onto tape. The more practise she gets at doing this the better.**
- Suzy should also set herself more than one day for writing her assignment. She should not attempt to try to start and finish it in one session. She should, for example, set aside time simply to write the first draft. The draft can be written out quickly, roughly, and without worrying about spelling, punctuation or grammar at this stage.
- Suzy can then put the work to one side and then come back to it later to improve it gradually and over one or more additional sessions.
- Suzy should and find someone to work with: a 'study buddy', and someone who is positive and will make constructive suggestions for improving the writing. In return, Suzy can do the same for this other person. In the process, both will improve their confidence and their writing abilities.

3. OVER-INFLATING THE TASK (IMAGINING IT BIGGER THAN IT REALLY IS)

John has a tendency to build a task up in his mind into something bigger than it really is, and beyond what is really expected of him by his tutors. He becomes convinced he cannot deliver what he thinks is expected of him, which reduces his confidence, increases his anxiety and (like Suzy) leads to procrastination in starting assignments.



What **John** could do about this:

- John needs to aim at being 'good enough', and not 'perfection'. 'Perfection' as a concept and a life target is impossible to attain, as perfection will always elude us; a voice in our heads will always say '*more, more, more*'. John needs to aim at doing his best in a conscientious way. If he makes mistakes, so what? This is how we learn.
- John also needs to 'deconstruct' the assignment by rephrasing the task into simple, manageable terms. With assignment questions, for example, he could try writing a mini-essay (50 words) that simply highlights the main point, or by explaining to another person his opinion on the subject. When you do this you reduce seemingly difficult tasks into something within your grasp. Even complex concepts have **key points**, around which other ideas revolve. Get to the key points, understand the key points, and you start to **control** the written task.
- John could also break the assignment task down into easy manageable sub-tasks, and tackle each one of these separately. Often it is the apparent magnitude of the assignment task, combined with 'perfectionism' tendencies, which lead to procrastination. Dividing tasks up into bite-sized chunks can be the way out of this emotional impasse.

4. PROBLEMS PRIORITISING TIME AVAILABLE

Anwar finds it difficult to prioritise her time according to the tasks she has to do. She tends to get overwhelmed with all the things required of her. It is not just the course work she has to do, but all the other things in life: cleaning, cooking, shopping, and looking after children that she has to do before and after attending university.



What **Anwar** could do about this:

- Anwar could start each day by **listing in writing** the things she has to do on that day, and into the near future. When she has done that she can organise what she has to do by listing these under one of the four categories below:

**IMPORTANT
& URGENT**

Must be done
TODAY

**URGENT, BUT
NOT
IMPORTANT**

Do it soon & set a
date for
completion

**IMPORTANT
BUT NOT YET
URGENT**

Make a start
before it becomes
urgent

**NOT IMPORTANT
& NOT URGENT**

Don't worry about
this!

A time management sheet is on the next page.

GET A GRIP ON TIME

This is a way of prioritising your time. Use yellow 'post-it' stickers to remind you of tasks you will do today & will do by a set date. Photocopy & keep this time management sheet where you will see it.

WILL DO TODAY

WILL DO BY.... DATE

MANAGE YOUR READING

Students can feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to do – particularly the reading.



The difficulties include:

- Having to read to prepare for up to six different assignments that are all required within a few weeks of each other
- Having to read in preparation for lectures & tutorials
- Wanting to read to get an overall idea about a subject – but finding little time to do this
- Struggling with English, which may be a second language for many students

However, one approach to managing your reading is in the **SOS** approach

S: SELECTIVE: You can read in a *SELECTIVE* way

O: ORGANISE: you can *ORGANISE* your time by having a reading plan

S: SMART: You can become a *SMART* Reader

S: READ SELECTIVELY

You are **not** expected to read set or recommended books from cover-to-cover. You are meant to read them selectively. If you can find the time to read them cover-to-cover, fine, but it is unlikely you will be in such an advantageous position!

So, first, it is worth thinking **why** you are reading. Take the most common reasons for you to read on your course:

1. Reading for information and to prepare to write assignments
2. Prepare for a lecture or tutorial
3. Preparation for exams
4. General knowledge: a strong interest in a subject that may not currently feature in any assignment or exam

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In examples 1-3, the purpose of reading will be to help you grasp the **main ideas** relating to a subject, **plus sufficient data or examples** to illustrate these main ideas in an assignment, examination or to contribute intelligently to tutorials.

In example 4, you may want to go beyond this, because your interest in the subject may encourage you to seek out as much as you can find out about it.

But in most instances, the main point of reading for course work is to grasp the main ideas – and not to remember every detail.

You could also use the Internet to help you search for and identify sources of information for your assignments. The following is a list of some useful sites for business and management studies students:

SOME USEFUL INTERNET SITES FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

BIZED (useful site for business studies students)
www.bized.ac.uk/

BIDS (academic publications)
<http://www.bids.ac.uk>

CAROL (Company Annual Reports Online): Annual report site with direct links for companies in Europe, Asia & USA; news on mergers & acquisitions and links to other sites.
www.carol.co.uk

DTI Publications (UK government)
<http://www.dti.gov.uk/publications>

Economist (magazine)
www.economist.com

Emerald (academic publications)
<http://fiordiliji.emeraldinsight.com>

European Union
www.europa.eu.int

Europages (a business directory covering thirty European countries; choice of languages and is searchable by company name or product/service).www.europages.com

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FAME (financial and other data from Companies House)

<http://fame.bvdep.com>

Financial Times (news and annual reports service)

www.ft.com

FreePint (range of useful Market Research resources, including featured articles, archive and student 'bar' for help on tricky research questions & issues)

www.freepint.com

HRM (links & guides for HRM in UK, USA, Canada & Australia)

www.HRMGuide.net

HSBC (Business Profiles: economic & business information for over 40 countries)

www.hsbc.com.hk/hk/bps

ICAEW (accounting publications)

<http://www.icaew.co.uk/library>

Ingenta (academic publications)

<http://www.ingentaselect.co.uk>

Institute of Fiscal Studies (UK taxation and economics)

<http://www.ifs.org.uk>

ISI Web of Science (citation index)

<http://wos.mimas.ac.uk>

JISC (academic publications)

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk>

Listed Companies (annual reports for listed companies in Europe and USA)

www.carolworld.com

National Statistics Online (UK government)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Mintel (market analysis)

www.mintel.co.uk

NISS (news, publications & other information & good links to academic libraries)

<http://www.niss.ac.uk>

Small Business Portal

<http://www.smallbusinessportal.co.uk/index.php>

Small Business Service (UK government)

<http://www.sbs.gov.uk>

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Social Sciences Information Gateway (including business, economics & research methods)
www.SOSIG.ac.uk

UKOnline (UK government information)
<http://www.ukonline.gov.uk>

United Nations (news & publications)
<http://www.un.org>

WWW Virtual Library (useful links to business related sites)
<http://www.vlib.org>

O: ORGANISE – your time

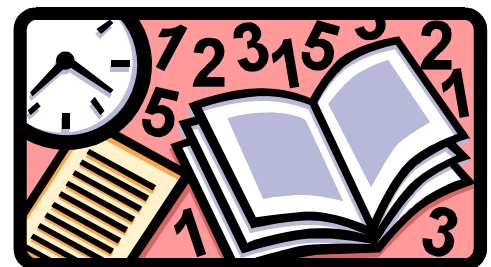
It is a good idea to have a reading plan (there is a blank reading plan form on the next page).

But don't try and read for course work every day. Build yourself a day off in the week when you **don't** do any serious reading. This will give you something to look forward to, and if you have a reading plan, you should find building in a free day becomes possible.

SET YOURSELF A SHORT TIME LIMIT FOR READING AT ANY ONE STRETCH

40 – 45 minutes tends to be the maximum time most people can read before their concentration slips. At the end of the set time, stop and take a break.

The relatively short time you set yourself for reading at any one stretch will help to concentrate your mind.



During the break your mind is likely to be thinking over what you have read, which serves to reinforce the learning

But you also can also **read smarter** to make maximum use of your time (see next section)

READING PLAN

It is a good idea to have a reading plan and to schedule in blocks of time, e.g. 40 minutes per topic on selected days throughout the week. Try and stick to your plan.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
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Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic
Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic	Topic

S: SMART READING

You can become a **smart** reader by:

- reading the summaries or conclusions of books or articles first to gain an overview of a chapter, or even a book itself. Sometimes, this may be enough to give you the **key ideas** that you need;
- making photocopies of important pages and use a marker pen to highlight main points. Alternatively, make your own notes and summarise in your own words the **key ideas**;
- using a voice-recorder to summarise the **key ideas** verbally, as this really makes you concentrate on the reading and helps you to summarise/paraphrase what you have read in your own words.

What are **key ideas**? Where do I find them?

Most books, articles and other well-written sources are broken up into paragraphs or sections. Within each paragraph or section you should try and identify what is or are the **key idea sentence(s)**, which means the sentence(s) upon which all the others are built. If we take, for example, the following extract from an essay:

The main advantages to employers of using the Internet for recruitment purposes are in the speed of operation, breadth of coverage, particularly if recruiting on a worldwide basis, and cost saving that can occur. Electronic advertising can quickly connect with job seekers in many different places that might not otherwise be contacted by more conventional methods. Small to medium sized enterprises too, find that they can compete effectively electronically with larger companies and can begin to attract high-calibre recruits to their web sites, which might not otherwise be the case with more traditional methods of recruitment. With regards to cost saving, it has been estimated that expenditure on newspaper advertising and 'head-hunter' fees dropped in the USA by 20 per cent as Internet expenditure increased (*Boehle, 2000*). On-line recruiting, if it is used effectively, is also estimated to cut a week off the recruitment process (*Capelli, 2001*). Large organisations, like L'Oreal and KPMG, use the Internet to recruit staff on both cost-saving grounds, and because they feel it increases their visibility and attracts high-calibre recruits. With KPMG, for example, the Human Resources staff were dealing with 35,000 paper applications a year, but decided to switch all their UK recruitment online from May 2001 to save time and printing costs (*Carter, 2001*).

The **key idea sentence** in this paragraph is the first one:

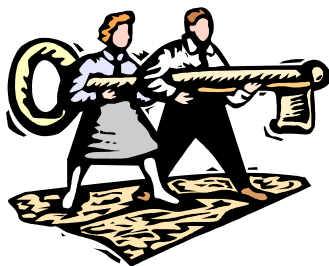
The main advantages to employers of using the Internet for recruitment purposes are in the speed of operation, breadth of coverage, particularly if recruiting on a worldwide basis, and cost saving that can occur.

The first sentence tells the reader what the main advantages of using the Internet **generally** for recruitment purposes are. The other sentences build on this one: by giving examples to support this opening statement.

When you take notes, you can try and identify the key idea sentences from each paragraph. It might be the first one in the paragraph or section – but not always. Sometimes you may find there are introductory sentences that lead on to the main one. Try and distinguish between sentences that present key ideas and those that just offer examples or illustrations to back up these key ideas.

A few other points:

- distraction problems can occur when the subject being studied appears totally removed from the real world. So, to overcome this, as you read, keep asking yourself, **'how does this relate to real life?'** Try and connect the subject to the world about you and your everyday life, or your work experience;
- if you are reading in preparation for a written assignment, it is a good idea not to surround yourself with too many books as you read. This can create a pressure on you to read all of them! It can be better to find just one or two books and use these as your main source of ideas, as you will find there are likely to be references in them to other useful examples/data etc that you would find relevant to your assignment.



The secret of smart reading is to be an active reader and to look for the **key ideas** in any text and make a note of these as you read.

NOTE MAKING

Note making means **writing in summary form** what you read, see or hear. But it can also take the form of **highlighting** a particular section of something that is printed (e.g. photocopy of article; a book you own; a print-out from the internet etc.)

Whether you take written notes yourself, or highlight what is printed, the principle of effective note-making is the same: look for the **key points** and isolate these from the rest of the text.

You will find that you will need to make notes (or highlight text):

- As you read, in preparation for a written assignment or tutorial
- As you listen to a lecture
- As you watch and listen to any film, broadcast or audio tape

EXERCISE: PRACTISE note-making

First, quickly read without taking notes an extract from the following article: 'A Short History of the Future'.



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FUTURE

What will the world be like in 2050? Despite the psychological traumas caused by the events of 11 September 2001, many of us barely recognise the reality of the changes taking place around us and where they are leading us. This report is most directly based on a decade of work by the Futures Observatory, which is funded by multi-national companies and world governments. It reflects what more than 5,000 organisations, including most of the Fortune 500 companies, expect of the future. The work was a joint venture between the Open University, the World Future Society's (WFS) UK chapter and the Strategic Planning Society.

The global panic that followed the destruction of the World Trade Centre will die down, to be replaced -- outside of the US at least -- by a mature view of the possibilities for a better world as peace and stability return. Although terrorism, aided by the Internet, will develop international dimensions, the few hundreds of victims dying from its activities, compared with the millions dying from civil wars in previous decades or from starvation even now, will prove more of a psychological

threat than a real one. Rather than military threats from "evil empires", it is the self-interested economic policies of the US that will result in the worst deprivations on the global scene, the survey suggests.

Life and lifestyles

The most important trend is the continuing development and personal empowerment of every individual. By 2050 we will have learned to effectively enforce the whole range of our personal rights as, even more radically, will the citizens of the developing world. This will be the "women's century". Even the most aggressive commercial organisations will have replaced hierarchical management with networking between self-managed teams, most often led by women, who are already graduating in greater numbers than men. Westerners will draw on a rich library of lifestyles to suit every mood. We will download the resources needed for these, ordering physical products and collecting new knowledge and ideas, from the Web. Most lifestyles will then be so inner-directed as to be almost spiritual. Sales of most physical products will have plateaued, with many purchases made for us by software-implemented buying agents. Conspicuous consumption will be seen as a social faux pas.

We will pursue knowledge to meet our personal development needs, especially in terms of life-long learning delivered on demand, wherever we may be. Most of us will have a number of post-graduate qualifications; education will occupy much of our leisure time. Distance learning, a leading e-commerce industry in the next 50 years, may move from first place in industry sales rankings to second, but it will still generate trillions of dollars of revenue.

We will have right of control over our own bodies. Average life spans in the developed world by 2050 will exceed 100 years. Healthcare developments, led by the widespread use of genome surgery and spare parts replacement, will increase significantly the length of working lives. Society will be so much richer that questions about funding any aspect of a welfare state need no longer be asked. A far more equitable distribution of wealth will seem natural.

We'll gain control of our brains. In part, this will also be through drugs, enhancing performance at work by improving memory and even intelligence, and enriching our private lives with pleasure-enhancing chemicals -- legalised in most nations and produced safely by the pharmaceutical industry. Microchip implants in the brain will be increasingly available and will enable us to communicate directly with computer networks to create a symbiosis and allow us instant access to global knowledge. This will undermine the monopolies in expertise held by some professions. But it will revolutionise the nature of education, which will, by then, be concerned with managing the overwhelming flood of data rather than adding to it.

Crucially, this will facilitate a form of telepathic communication, brain to brain, between individuals. We will be able to share our emotions directly, and this will give a dramatic boost to the virtual reality industry, initially driven -- as has often been the case in e-commerce -- by the pornographic industries. Sex with a girlfriend on the other side of the world will become a real possibility.

Increasingly, we will spread parts of our intellectual selves, especially our memories, across computer networks. So much of ourselves will live on in our databanks that the death of the physical body will become almost irrelevant, and legislation may be proposed to protect the increasing numbers of "ghosts" living on in such limbo.

In 2050 face-to-face meetings, even with close family and friends, will probably be through the medium of three-dimensional video screens. With the world already criss-crossed by massively under-used webs of fibre-optics, the cost will be so negligible that extended families and friends will once more provide important support.

These developments, along with tax incentives justified by reducing car travel, will encourage home working on simplified technologies. By 2050, we will spend most of our working week at home, though irrational social needs will still drive us into our offices or to local business groups.

Family and friends

Families will once more put down strong local roots; many changes of job will be able to be effected electronically. Community life will re-emerge and energise beneficial social changes over the longer term. The main limitations will be posed by the difficulty of converting homes. Such a home office will need space. With housing stock across Europe, for example, only turning over once a century, this will still present problems in 2050. Instead it will lead to a boom in companies mass-producing the components for "plug-in offices", to replace the double garages and conservatories that were so popular at the end of the 20th century. The combination of these two real estate developments will also underpin the general economic booms over the latter part of the period.

The very nature of work will change. The uncertainty caused by the move from industrial to post-industrial society at the end of the 20th century will have been replaced by booms in demand for new services. The resulting shortages of skilled labour will dramatically alter organisations' attitudes to their workers who will, by then, have taken their place as the new stakeholder group to be cosseted. The "gold in worker's heads" will have become the main item on any organisation's real balance sheet. To retain them, employers will try to make work attractive.

Large multinationals will still exist, though a significant amount of the new business in a knowledge society will have returned to individual "guild-workers". These will be registered experts, in literally thousands of new fields of human knowledge and endeavour. More mature workers, with significant experience and personal savings to back their aspirations, will form the most important part of this new group.

(Source: *Mercer*, 2003, reprinted with permission of author).

Now re-read the article again more slowly and look at each paragraph in turn. Underline in each paragraph what you think are the key or main sentences.

When you have done that it is a good idea to **summarise in your own words what you think are the main points in the article**. You could use the blank note-making sheet on the next page for this purpose.

The use of bullet points can be good way of summarising individual points, e.g.

- *The report is based on what 5,000 global organisations predict the world will look like in 2050.*
- *The report suggests that insular economic policies of the US could prove more destructive to world stability than the threat from terrorism*
- *Individual choice will become more important and the Internet more important for catering for individual lifestyles*
- *Women will play an increasingly important role in the workplace.*

You also need to start to **evaluate** what the author says. Summarising the ideas of others in your own words helps you to clarify and to think about the points made by an author and, in this particular example, to what extent you believe or doubt the feasibility of some of the ideas advanced. You also need to look out for any particular political or ideological bias in the writing that might have influenced the ideas presented.

NOTES:


- *The report is based on what 5,000 global organisations predict the world will look like in 2050.*
- *The report suggests that insular economic policies of the US could prove more destructive to world stability than the threat from terrorism*
- *Individual choice will become more important and the Internet more important for catering for individual lifestyles*
- *Women will play an increasingly important role in the workplace.*

(try continuing this yourself now...)

Using bullet points to summarise the main ideas from this article would look like this:

Source: Mercer, D. (2003) A Short History of the Future. Enterprise (Reed) Dec 2002/Jan2003, issue 42, pp.28-31

- *The report is based on what 5,000 global organisations predict the world will look like in 2050.*
- *The report suggests that insular economic policies of the US could prove more destructive to world stability than the threat from terrorism.*
- *Individual choice will become more important and the Internet more prominent for catering for individual lifestyles and women will play an increasingly significant role in the workplace.*
- *Flexible learning throughout life will become more important, particularly the growth in post-graduate qualifications; distance-learning opportunities will increase and the production of distance learning courses & material will continue to be a major commercial activity*
- *We will gain more control over our bodies, and particularly our brains; we will gain more access to legalised drugs to improve memory and our social lives.*
- *Longevity will increase in the developed world to 100+ years*
- *Microchip implants in our brains will develop our abilities to communicate with others, including sharing our emotions telepathically with others.*
- *These implants will also help us cope with increasing amounts of information. We will also be able to store aspects of our identities, e.g. memories, in databanks*
- *We will increase our use of electronic systems to communicate with others, e.g. three-dimensional*



Don't forget to make a note of your sources.

video systems. The continued growth of electronic communication will encourage more people to work from home, although there will still be a need to meet colleagues socially

- *The trend toward home working will result in less work-related mobility and will encourage the development of community life. However, the lack of mobility may result in fewer houses coming on the market for sale or rent*
- *Service sector work will expand and result in a shortage of skilled labour. Employers will need to make work attractive to their employees in order to retain them*
- *There will be a movement away from working in large multinational companies, to more individual forms of working*

Comment

The article presents us with a future scenario nearly half a century from now. You may have found certain ideas easier to accept than others, e.g. the increasing trend toward home working; growing significance of the internet in retailing; growth of consumer choice and 'individualisation' of society, as these trends have already been identified and quantified by social commentators.

Some ideas may have seemed harder to believe, e.g. microchip implants in the brain. However, when you consider the technological strides the world made between 1900-1950, then perhaps the ideas become more believable. However, why would someone want a brain implant, when other forms of technology are so advanced? On the other hand, The ideas about the storage of cognitive data, e.g. memories for the future does seem feasible, and could appeal to many people who want to leave a cognitive legacy of their lives behind them when they die.

The comments about the US in the second paragraph might reflect a certain political bias, based perhaps on the economic balance of power in the early part of the 21st Century. (The author, in fact, goes on to discuss in

the remainder of the article how 'super-regions', e.g. European Union; China & neighbouring countries, could develop that could overshadow the dominance of any one nation).

So note-making is not just about recording what an author says, but it is also a first step for evaluating what an author says and recording **your** responses and comments to the ideas presented. These personal reflections are important as the basis for writing an assignment on the subject.

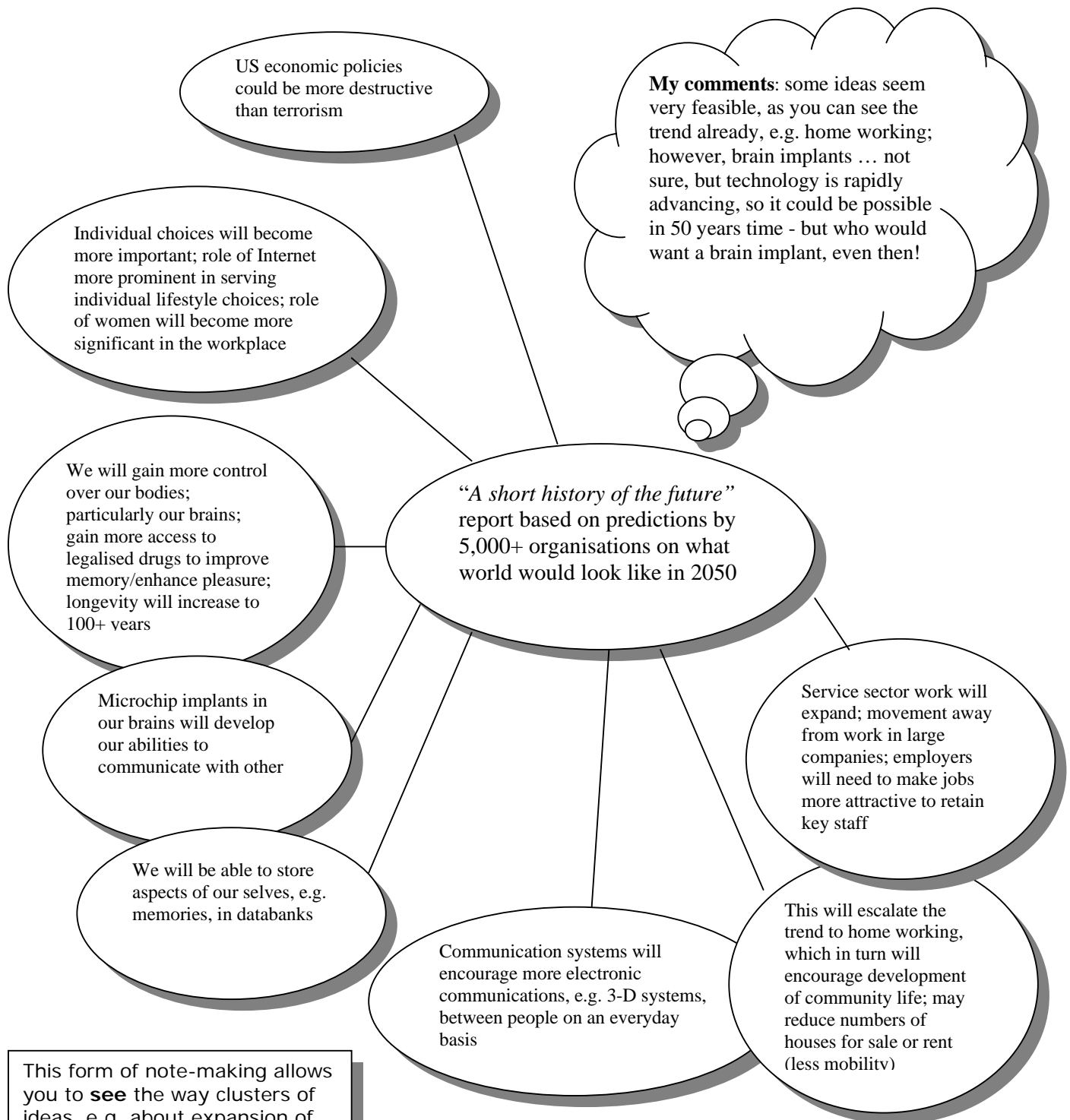
These personal reflections and responses to what you read are also important in relation to one of the six elements of effective study:

S: SEARCH. You need to search for the **meaning** in what you read. If you just try to remember facts without understanding them, you will soon forget what you have read or heard. You need to seek for personal **meaning** in what you read – you can do this by asking, for example, 'how can I use this idea?' or, 'how does this connect with my life, my experiences?'

There are other ways of note-making, including those that draw on students' **visual abilities**. Visual forms of note-making can be very helpful in showing the connections between ideas and they can help you recall important ideas in examinations. Visual images, for example, can be easier to remember when you have to rely on your memory in closed book examinations.

An example of visual note-making is shown on the following page.

VISUAL FORMS OF NOTEMAKING

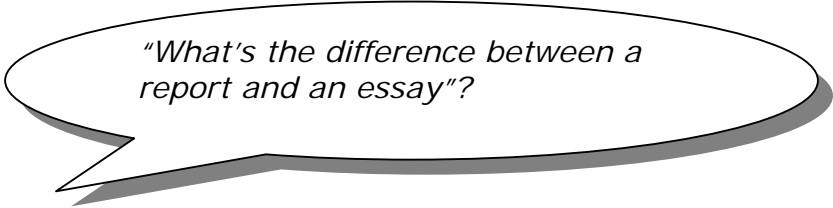


This form of note-making allows you to **see** the way clusters of ideas, e.g. about expansion of communication systems, connect (don't forget to always record the full source).

Source: Mercer, D. (2003) *A Short History of the Future*. Enterprise (Reed) Dec 2002/Jan2003, issue 42, pp.28-31

WRITING

You will be expected to write essays and reports for assignments on your course, and also write 'mini-essays' in examinations. Clearly then, writing will be an important part of your studies.



"What's the difference between a report and an essay"?

Essays give you more opportunity to expand on possibilities, ideas or concepts. **Reports** deal with describing and/or analysing actual past events. Reports can be written that make predictions or recommendations for the future, but these are usually the result of an analysis of past events or of current or past social, cultural or economic phenomena.

The famous English statesman, Sir Thomas More, wrote an essay titled *Utopia*, which visualised an ideal state or 'perfect world'. He couldn't have written a report on the same topic!

There is a convention in higher education that essays should be written in the third-person, avoiding the use of the word 'I'. Like most conventions however, this is subject to the winds of change, but it is likely that the majority of your tutors will still prefer you write in a seemingly detached and objective third-person way. However, in reports you may have more flexibility and choice – although many tutors prefer you write reports for academic purposes in the third-person/detached way, too (ask your tutor what style of writing they prefer).

Reports are also usually broken up into headings and sub-headings, but short essays, e.g. around 2,000 words, are not; essays are written in paragraphs.

Have a look now at the essay that follows. In particular, note the style of writing, which is detached and uses the 'passive voice': the writer does not use the word 'I', but presents ideas in a neutral and seemingly objective way.

SAMPLE ESSAY

Evaluate the impact of the Internet on practices for recruitment and selection employed by firms.

(This sample essay has had paragraph numbers added to aid the discussion on paragraphing that follows later in this workbook. Essays would not normally have numbered paragraphs.)

1. The Internet has had a significant impact worldwide on recruitment practices within organisations of all sizes. In the area of selection, advances have been slower, but there are, nevertheless, some interesting on-line selection initiatives. These include automated filtering of applications, initial psychological testing of applicants and networking systems for selecting developing job specifications and for interviewing and selecting candidates. This essay will attempt to describe and evaluate the impact the Internet has had on both these two aspects of human resources management.
2. The Internet is a system of connecting computers around the world. Linked to this is the 'Intranet', which is a way organisations can communicate internally. The population connected to the Internet in 1999 totalled some 196 million people, predicted to rise to over 500 million by the end of 2003. By the start of 2000, the daily number of Emails sent exceeded – each day – the number sent in total for the whole of 1990 (*Globalisationguide, 2003*).
3. The Internet has had a significant impact on the way both firms and job seekers seek each other out. In Britain in 2000, the Chartered Institute of Personnel estimated that 47 per cent of all employers were making use of the Internet for recruitment purposes (*Dale, 2003*). In the USA the Association of Internet Recruiters estimated that 45 per cent of companies surveyed had filled one in five of their vacancies through on-line recruiting (*Charles, 2000*). More than 75 per cent of Human Resources personnel in the USA are now making regular use of Internet job boards in addition to traditional recruitment methods of newspaper advertising and links with employment agencies (*HR Focus, 2001*).
4. The main ways that firms use the Internet include developing their own web sites, making use of recruitment agency websites, or using 'job boards': external websites that carry sometimes thousands of vacancies that job seekers can scan. Increasingly, external recruitment agencies are specialising in particular types of niche vacancies, or acting as career managers for job applicants and helping to both place the applicant in the right job and support that person during their career.
5. Job seekers too, use the Internet to contact prospective employers by placing their CVs or work résumés on to websites that employers can scan. A survey in the USA in 1999 suggested that 55 per cent of graduates had posted their résumé on to an online job service, and that three-quarters had used the Internet to search for jobs in specific geographic locations (*Monday, Noe & Premeaux, 2002*). Some job seekers, with high demand skills, offer their

labour in electronic ‘talent auctions’, with job negotiations, once a successful match has been made, facilitated by the Auction House representatives on behalf of the applicants.

6. The main advantages to employers of using the Internet for recruitment purposes are in the speed of operation, breadth of coverage, particularly if recruiting on a worldwide basis, and cost saving that can occur. Electronic advertising can quickly connect with job seekers in many different places that might not otherwise be contacted by more conventional methods. Small to medium sized enterprises too, find that they can compete effectively electronically with larger companies and can begin to attract high-calibre recruits to their web sites, which might not otherwise be the case with more traditional methods of recruitment. With regards to cost saving, it has been estimated that expenditure on newspaper advertising and ‘head-hunter’ fees dropped in the USA by 20 per cent as Internet expenditure increased (*Boehle, 2000*). On-line recruiting, if it is used effectively, is also estimated to cut a week off the recruitment process (*Capelli, 2001*). Large organisations, like L’Oreal and KPMG, use the Internet to recruit staff on both cost-saving grounds, and because they feel it increases their visibility and attracts high-calibre recruits. With KPMG, for example, the Human Resources staff were dealing with 35,000 paper applications a year, but decided to switch all their UK recruitment online from May 2001 to save time and printing costs (*Carter, 2001*).
7. However, despite the obvious impact the Internet has made on the recruitment process, there are a number of concerns and drawbacks to using this medium. These include the issue of relevance of the medium, confidentiality, the large numbers of applications generated, and the problems that job seekers find in navigating websites and communicating electronically with employers.
8. The first question recruiters need to ask themselves is ‘to what extent do members of the target recruitment group have access to the Internet?’ Despite increasing use of the Internet, there are still considerable numbers of people, particularly older adults, who do not have access to a personal computer either at work or in their homes. It is estimated, for example, that more than half the adults in West Yorkshire currently do not use the Internet, and that 27 per cent of businesses in the region do not use computers (*LSC, 2001*). It is clear that the Internet is a major source of recruiting administrative, IT related or senior and middle management staff from a wide geographical area. However, it is used less for recruiting at junior clerical or administrative levels, for manual and practical jobs, or for jobs in a specific locality. And even among the target groups, networking and personal contacts, or using trusted professional recruiters, tend to be the strategies most frequently currently mentioned as most effective for both job-seekers and employers (*Feldman & Klass, 2002*).
9. The issue of confidentiality poses a number of concerns both to job seekers and employers. The Data Protection Act, 1998, stipulates that if a person’s details are submitted for one purpose or job they should not be stored or

used for any other purpose without the candidate's permission. However, recruitment agencies or employers may want to hold on to candidate's information for longer periods in case other opportunities arise. Whilst many candidates would not object to this, there are fears expressed by job seekers about the commercial use employers or agencies might make of information supplied, or that the information sent electronically could be intercepted by third-parties (*Carter, 2001*).

10. Other pitfalls of using the Internet include processing the large numbers of applications received electronically by large organisations and difficulty job seekers have experienced in using some websites. These difficulties include locating jobs on some employer's websites, navigating sites, lack of specific and relevant job descriptions and difficulties in customising, formatting and downloading CVs to companies' specifications (*Feldman & Klass, 2001*). Indeed, the problems of processing large numbers of electronic applications has encouraged employers to look at using the Internet more effectively for the selection stages of the recruitment process.
11. Automated filtering of applications received is becoming more common through the use of software designed to search CVs for key words or skills. There is in this a potential discrimination problem, as all candidates must be given an equal chance to apply, and electronic screening of applications must try and take into account the cultural and language differences of applicants. However, online screening has the potential to also reduce discrimination, as the emphasis can be placed less on academic qualifications and more on softer skills, such as team working, negotiating skills and leadership ability. Applicants may also be faced with initial screening by online verbal, numerical or other psychometric tests, although there is a potential here for fraud by some candidates, who might ask a third party to take the tests on their behalf.
12. There are also interesting developments in the use of Internet for final selection stages of the recruitment process. Colleagues, separated by distance, can come together to establish job descriptions and selection criteria or view job candidates through video-conference or Internet communications, then communicate with each other by Email to give their respective opinions of them. A panel can interview candidates and the interview relayed to colleagues elsewhere electronically. These distant observers can send their questions or comments to candidates or pass their own observations of the interview. However, comments sent electronically can help to reduce discrimination or bias, because these can be recorded and stored, which may subsequently encourage a more sober and objective assessment of candidates (*Tullar & Kaiser, 1999*).
13. Despite the increase in use of the Internet for recruitment and selection purposes, many Human Resources personnel are still cautious about its use or implementation (*Carter, 2001*). The cost of making the proper investment into the electronic infrastructure is a key prohibiting factor, but another is in the feeling that the Internet should not replace the 'personal touch', particularly in the intermediate or final selection stages. Whilst the Internet

can certainly assist in identifying potential candidates, it cannot tell a company how good they are, although, it can certainly facilitate the process of bringing a wide range of opinions of applicants to the final judgement. Whilst the recruitment side of the process is likely to expand and develop in the future, selection of candidates is likely to remain a much more personal affair and in the hands of people, rather than machines.

(1500 words)

REFERENCES

- Boehle, S. (2000) *Online Recruiting Gets Sneaky*. Training. Vol. 37, pp.66-74
- Capelli, P. (2001) *Making the Most of On-Line Recruiting*. Harvard Business Review. Vol.79 (3), pp.139-146
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WHAT ARE TUTORS LOOKING FOR IN ESSAYS?

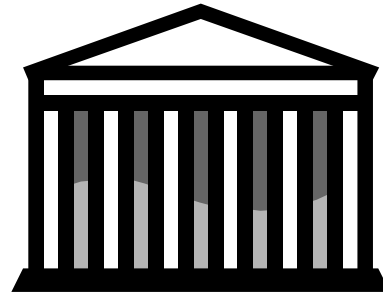
To begin to answer this question, we need to consider what tutors are looking for in essays from students. There are four main expectations regarding:

1. Structure and Approach
2. Effective Use of Sources
3. Reasoning, Argument & Analysis
4. Good Presentation

Structure & Approach

The tutor will ask him or herself the following questions:

- *Is there a logical **structure**, including an introduction and summary/conclusion?*



also

- *Is the student's work relevant to the question or essay topic?*
- *Does the student go into sufficient depth with the essay?*
- *Is there any evidence of originality and creative thought?*



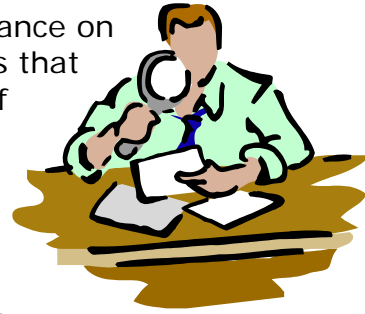
Effective Use Of Sources

Tutors will expect you to show evidence in your essays that you have read a variety of texts concerned with the question topic, that you can be selective which material to use in your essay and that you keep an open mind about anything you read.

You don't **have** to agree with what you read. Just because it is written down in print does not always necessarily make it true, valid or applicable to all situations!

Reasoning, Argument and Analysis

Tutors respect students who take a critical stance on reading and who can present valid arguments that counter any particular theory, idea or point of view. (An 'argument' is a point of view supported with reliable **evidence**, e.g. from articles, books, statistics etc.).



Tutors will encourage you show clear understanding of ideas and be able to provide examples of ideas and concepts presented to you by them. They will want you to develop your own point of view, based on a thorough analysis of the subject.

Good Presentation



Tutors expect that you will take pride in the way you present your essay. It should look good, e.g. word-processed, and free of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors can interrupt the process of communication between you and the tutor. If an essay or report is difficult to understand, because of grammatical or spelling errors, it makes it difficult for a tutor to follow your line of thought.

All students should make a real effort to present an assignment that is as clearly written as possible.

With these four marking criteria elements in mind how effective do you think the essay was? What mark would you give it?

Now go to the next page.

Return to full-time study

How successful do you think this essay was in these four areas? Use the marking grid on the next page to guess what mark this assignment was awarded.

Imagine you were the tutor marking this assignment that had been submitted by an undergraduate student in his or her final year. That student had already completed two years full time higher education and had written essays before.

The grid below shows you how many marks could be awarded maximum in each of the four areas.

Decide how many marks you feel **you** would award this essay in each of the four criteria and write in the blank 'Mark Awarded' columns.

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded
Structure and Approach	10	
Investigation and Use of Sources	30	
Reasoning, Argument and Analysis	50	
Presentation and Style	10	

Overall Mark Awarded

Now decide what comments you would give this student on the work as a whole. This might take the form, for example, of saying what were the strengths of the essay and what the student might do to improve it.

Your Comments:

Now read what a tutor at the School of Management had to say about this essay – see next page.

Tutor's Comments on Final Year Undergraduate essay

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded
Structure and Approach	10	6
Investigation and Use of Sources	30	23
Reasoning, Argument and Analysis	50	30
Presentation and Style	10	9

Overall Mark Awarded

68

Tutor's Comments:

"This was a strong essay, clearly structured (although both introduction and conclusion could be more detailed), and making appropriate use of relevant literature.

Advantages and disadvantages of the Internet with respect to recruitment and selection are considered. Although ideally the essay should have built on these to fully evaluate (i.e. debate) the effectiveness of the Internet as a tool – ideally comparing it with other tools – to add to the conclusion you draw".

The mark awarded, 68, is a **good one** (in the 2.1 undergraduate honours range), but clearly with a little more work the student could have moved into the top 'A' or first class range of marks (70+).

The mark that would be awarded would depend however, on the stage of learning the student was at. Students at post-graduate level would be expected to engage with the subject in a deeper level way.

If this assignment had been submitted by a postgraduate MA/MBA student, the tutor's comments would have been different – see next page.

Post-graduate students

The tutor's comments of this essay at postgraduate level (MA/MBA) would have been, as follows:

"A sound answer which makes good illustrative use of literature and effectively discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet. It could however have better balanced the consideration of recruitment and selection and importantly been more detailed in its evaluation – moving beyond consideration of advantages and disadvantages to debate the effectiveness of Internet techniques over conventional methods".

So you can see that at post-graduate level of study, a more **in-depth and analytical** answer was needed. But it still received a clear pass mark of **58** (the module pass mark at post-graduate level is 50).

You can see from the tutor's comments that more emphasis should have been placed on the 'selection' aspects of the Internet and that the student needed to move beyond just a description of advantages and disadvantages to a more detailed evaluation of Internet methods of recruitment and selection, compared with other methods.

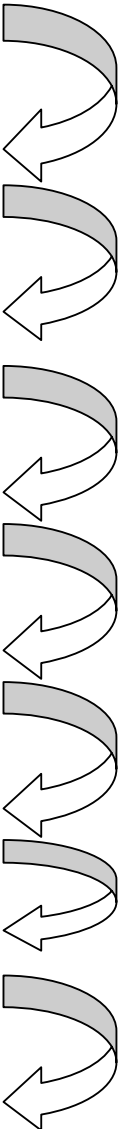
Nevertheless, this was, as the tutor suggested, a 'sound' answer, and fairly typical of essays that students often submit at an early stage of their post-graduate studies.

At both the undergraduate and post-graduate level, the tutor considered that this was a well-structured essay. What made it so?

The answer is in the way the ideas and comments in the paragraphs connected well, one with another. There was a good 'flow' of ideas from one paragraph to another.

Have a look at the way the essay was structured – see next page.

STRUCTURE OF SAMPLE ESSAY

Paragraph 1: Introduction: informs the reader what the essay will attempt to do, (e.g. '*describe and evaluate the impact the Internet has had...*') 

Paragraph 2: Sets the context, e.g. describes the Internet and its rapid advance in recent years.

Paragraphs 3 to 5: Description: how Internet is currently used for recruitment purposes, e.g. by both employers & job-seekers

Paragraph 6: Advantages: outlines the main advantages to employers of using the Internet

Paragraph 7: Signals a change of direction (note use of word '*However*' to alert the reader to this shift in perspective, and lists the issues to be discussed).

Paragraphs 8 to 10: Counter-discussion: looks at some of the drawbacks of using the Internet for recruitment purposes

Paragraphs 11 & 12: Selection issues: use of Internet in the selection stage of recruitment: looks at some examples of this.

Paragraph 13: Conclusion: attempts to pull ideas together and reach a conclusion

The 'Golden Rule' of Essay Writing

The 'Golden Rule' of essay writing = **one key idea per paragraph.**

You will notice that in the sample essay there is only **one key idea** in each paragraph (often found in the first sentence). The key idea sentence is then usually followed and supported by examples, evidence and other illustrative points.

REFERENCES

You will notice too, in the essay, that there are sources cited and references listed.

References in essays are used:

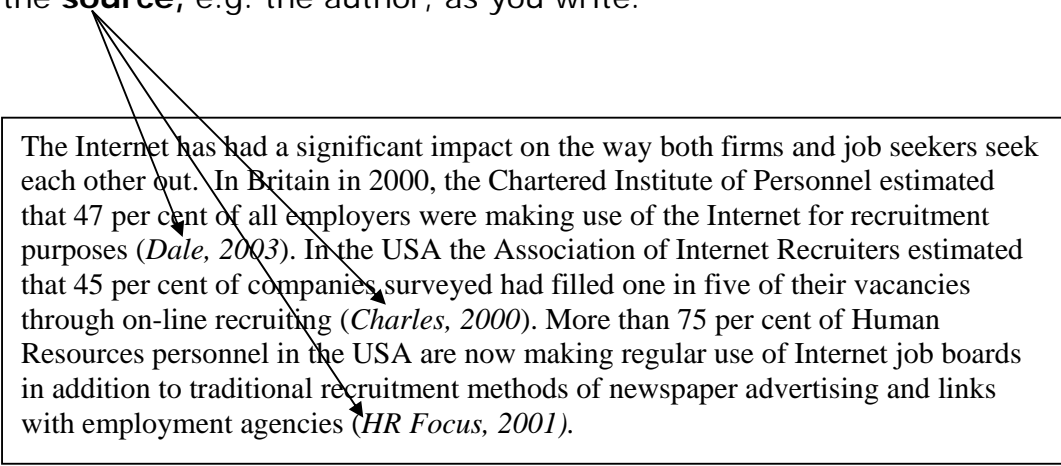
- **To give the reader the source of statistics and other data**
- **To give support for your own arguments**
- **To refer the reader to the source of a quotation**
- **To acknowledge a writer who has clearly influenced your own thinking**
- **To avoid accusations of plagiarism**

Plagiarism

To plagiarize means to deliberately take and use another person's invention, idea or writing and claim it as your own work. In the realm of science, academic or literary ideas, plagiarism is the equivalent of fraud or theft. Plagiarism is treated very seriously and plagiarised work is usually disqualified.

Using references in essays is the way to avoid accusations of plagiarism, as it shows the reader very clearly that you are presenting evidence from sources you have read to support the ideas you are presenting in your essay.

The School of Management requires students to use a system of referencing called the **Harvard System**. This involves citing the **source**, e.g. the author, as you write.



The Internet has had a significant impact on the way both firms and job seekers seek each other out. In Britain in 2000, the Chartered Institute of Personnel estimated that 47 per cent of all employers were making use of the Internet for recruitment purposes (*Dale, 2003*). In the USA the Association of Internet Recruiters estimated that 45 per cent of companies surveyed had filled one in five of their vacancies through on-line recruiting (*Charles, 2000*). More than 75 per cent of Human Resources personnel in the USA are now making regular use of Internet job boards in addition to traditional recruitment methods of newspaper advertising and links with employment agencies (*HR Focus, 2001*).

You will notice that in the essay you give a **partial reference** (known as a citation) i.e. last name of author and date of publication), and at the end of the essay you list in full all the sources you referred to in your essay:

REFERENCES

- Boehle, S. (2000) *Online Recruiting Gets Sneaky*. Training. Vol. 37, pp.66-74
- Capelli, P. (2001) *Making the Most of On-Line Recruiting*. Harvard Business Review. Vol.79 (3), pp.139-146
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- Tullar, W.L. & Kaiser, P.R. (1999) *Using New Technology: the Group Support System*, in Eder, R.W. & Harris, M.M (eds.) The Employment Interview Handbook. London: Sage, pp. 279-292.

The basic rule of the **Harvard System** is that you list all your references in alphabetical order (by author's last name) at the end of your assignment.

You will notice that in the references there is a particular sequence:

Authors last name comes first, then his/her initials, then date of publication, then title of book/article/chapter, then details of the publication/publisher. There is some slight variation with Internet referencing, but this is still the basic idea.

There is an Effective Learning Service workbook you can read: **'References & Bibliographies'** that will explain referencing in more detail.

REPORT WRITING

Reports are written in a different way to essays.

A report is a form of **communication** that will do one or more of the following:

- **Describes**
- **Analyses**
- **Summarises**
- **Criticises or praises**
- **Makes predictions about**

... a subject and is **based on an analysis of current or past events or identifiable phenomena.**

If you are studying on an undergraduate or postgraduate course you will be expected to write reports and to present findings in both written and verbal and/or audio/visual forms. You will, for example, write reports:

- for module assignments – usually summarising what you have learned on a particular topic
- presenting the results of individual research projects
- summarising the result of a group project and presentation
- reflecting on a work experience or other placement you were involved in

You will also be asked occasionally to present the results of individual or group work to fellow students and tutors in verbal form, usually enhanced by audio/visual aids.

Differences Between a Report and an Essay

Report	Essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Describes/analyses past events➤ Presentational style different to essays, e.g. use sub-headings; can use bullet points➤ Can use either the 'passive' or 'active' voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Allows you to pursue hypothetical ideas and possibilities➤ You don't normally use bullet points➤ You would use the 'passive' voice, e.g. detached, objective style of writing

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A report can include, if relevant:

- bullet points
- diagrams
- charts
- illustrations
- sub-headings
- references
- recommendations for action

An essay would not normally include bullet points, and the use of diagrams, charts and illustrations would be very limited. It would be very unusual too, for an essay to have 'recommendations for action'.

EXAMPLE OF A REPORT

The following is an example of a 1500 word report of a one year survey to discover the range of salaries offered by employers in Britain to graduate trainees.

SURVEY OF GRADUATE SALARIES

INTRODUCTION

There is an estimated 100,000 graduates now leaving UK universities each year from first degree courses and the majority of these seek employment, often for the first time, in careers of a semi-professional or professional nature. This report summarises the result of a survey of employer vacancies in just one career publication aimed at graduates to discover the range of salaries offered and to identify the average and median salaries offered to graduate trainees between 2002 and 2003.

SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The survey analysed vacancies advertised in the weekly graduate vacancy publication *Prospects Today*. The study examined 2,359 vacancies, of which 966 (41%) provided salary information, advertised by employers between 1 May 2002 and 30 April 2003.

Prospects Today contains immediate job vacancies, further study and training opportunities. Thirty five thousand copies are distributed to careers services and individual subscribers each week. All the latest vacancies are also updated daily.

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See ‘Limitations of the Survey’ section for a list of facts which **must** be taken into account when making inferences from this survey about the overall population of new first degree graduates.

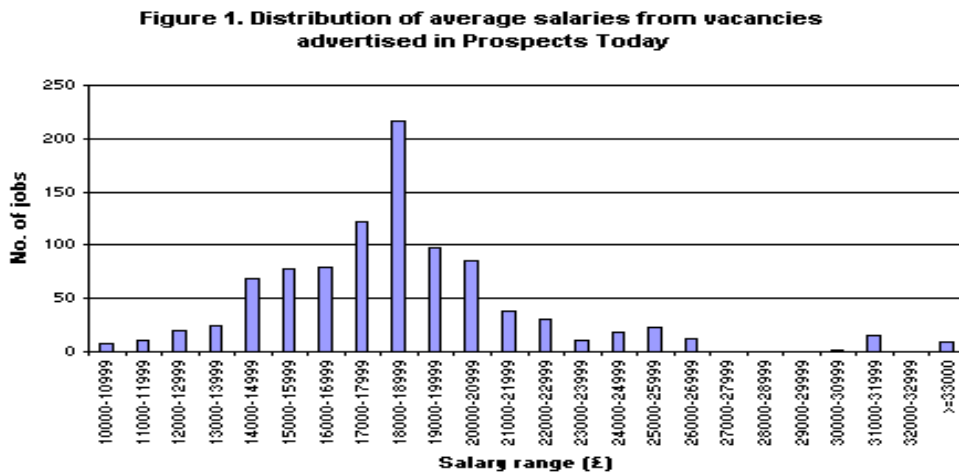
GENERAL KEY FINDINGS

The table below shows the salary distribution for the vacancies analysed in this survey, and Figure 1 shows the distribution of average salaries within broad salary bands.

Vacancies advertised in Prospects Today between 1 May 2002 and 30 April 2003

Sample size (vacancies)	2,359
Sample size (salaries)	966
Lowest salary	£10,800
Highest salary	£36,000
Mean salary (UK only)	£18,411
Mean salary (UK and overseas)	£18,343
Lower decile (bottom 10%)	£14,368
Lower quartile (bottom 25%)	£16,000
Median salary	£18,000
Upper quartile	£20,000
Upper decile	£22,180

Note: With the exception of mean salary (UK only), all other categories include data from UK and overseas.



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- In the year to 30 April 2003, the average salary offered by advertisers in *Prospects Today* was £18,343 with a median of £18,000, up 4.5% and 2.9% respectively from a year ago.
- If only vacancies in the UK were taken into account, the average salary was £18,411, an increase of 3.7% from 2002.
- Salaries offered ranged from £10,800 to £36,000. The highest salaries were offered by the Government to experienced operational research analysts and principal engineers. The lowest salaries came from teaching posts in Korea, which offered free flights and free accommodation.

KEY FINDINGS BY LOCATION

	Median (£)	Mean (£)
A Scotland	20,000*	20,796*
B North	17,000*	16,426*
C North West	17,000	16,921
D Yorkshire and Humberside	17,959	19,800
E Wales	18,000*	17,994*
F West Midlands	16,000	17,799
G East Midlands	16,750	16,872
H South West	18,000	18,044
I South East	18,000	18,244
J Eastern Region	18,000	18,237
K London	18,387	19,340
Overseas	10,800*	13,377*

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those areas where there were 30 or more

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vacancies offered. Discussion of salaries is limited to those areas where there were 30 or more vacancies with salary information. Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

The following key points focus on the period 1 May 2002 to 30 April 2003:

* Note: The North, Scotland, Wales and overseas had less than 30 vacancies with salary information in this survey.

- The highest mean salaries for vacancies advertised in Prospects Today in the year to April 2003 by region were in Yorkshire & Humberside (£19,800) and London (£19,340). The highest paying vacancies in Yorkshire & Humberside were for experienced operational research analysts working for the Government (£36,000) and sales consultants for a telecommunication company (£31,000).
- London offered the highest median salary of £18,387. ** The lowest was offered by the West Midlands (£16,000).
- Compared with the same period a year earlier, the highest growth in mean salary was recorded in Yorkshire & Humberside (up 12.8% to £19,800), due to the appearance of the high paying jobs as mentioned above. A year ago, the highest paid occupations in the region, finance, only offered up to £28,000.
- South West and London also recorded above average mean salary growths of 5.0% and 4.8% respectively.
- For vacancies with the regions of work specified, the majority were in London, with 18.1% of the total number of advertised vacancies. This was followed by the South East (15.1%) and North West (8.4%).
- All regions have seen vacancies decrease compared with a year previously due to the economic slowdown.

** Scotland, with a median of £20,000, is not included in the discussion because it has fewer than 30 vacancies with salary information.

KEY FINDINGS BY JOB CATEGORY

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those job categories where there were 30 or more vacancies offered. Discussion of salaries is limited to those job categories where there were 30 or more vacancies with salary information. Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

The following key points focus on the period 1 May 2002 to 30 April 2003:

- For job categories which had more than 30 vacancies with salary information, economists and statisticians offered the highest mean and median salaries of £23,468 and £22,180 respectively. This was followed by property & construction (mean £19,287; median £19,185) and engineering & technology (mean £19,256; median £18,500).
- The highest numbers of vacancies advertised in *Prospects Today* in the year to April 2003 were in buying, selling & retailing (18.7% of total), administration (16.3%) and engineering & technology services (13.7%), contributing to almost half of the vacancies advertised in *Prospects Today* during the period studied.
- As well as having the highest number of vacancies, buying, selling & retailing also offered an above average mean salary of £18,556.

KEY FINDINGS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYER

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those types of employer where there were 30 or more vacancies offered. Discussion of salaries is limited to those types of employer where there were 30 or more vacancies with salary information. Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

These key points focus on the period 1 May 2002 to 30 April 2003.

- The highest mean salary by type of employer was offered by entertainment & leisure (£20,675) where there were some high paying sales occupations. This was followed by the Civil Service (£19,843), where there were some

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well-paid operational research and engineering jobs, and food, drink & tobacco (£19,675).

- The highest median salaries were offered by food, drink & tobacco (£20,000) and energy & natural resources (£19,463).
- The lowest mean (£14,813) and median (£14,000) salaries were offered by publishers.
- The highest concentration of vacancies was found in transport & communications (9%) and engineering products (8.2%).

KEY FINDINGS BY SUBJECT OF STUDY

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those disciplines where there were 30 or more vacancies. Discussion of salaries is limited to those disciplines where there were 30 or more vacancies with salary information. Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

These key points focus on the period 1 May 2002 to 30 April 2003

- early two-thirds (64.6%) of the vacancies on offer in *Prospects Today* in the year to April 2003 were open to graduates from any discipline. The average salary offered to these graduates was £18,049.
- Among the main subject groups, the largest numbers of vacancies were offered to graduates from engineering & technology (11.5% of total number of vacancies).

LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

The following facts **must** be taken into account when making inferences from this survey about the overall population of new graduates.

- Vacancies advertised in *Prospects Today* are aimed specifically at graduates. A substantial number of graduates, however, obtain posts that are not specifically targeted at degree holders. As a result, the average salary offered in *Prospects Today* is likely to be higher than the average graduate starting salary, as there is a bias towards larger firms and specific graduate jobs.
- Although this survey is large, it still only includes a small sample of the total number of posts on offer to graduates, and trends identified from such small

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samples may not necessarily be representative of the overall graduate recruitment market. Of vacancies advertised in *Prospects Today* between 1 May 2002 and 30 April 2003, around 41% supplied salary information.

- Occupations that require additional qualifications, such as law, medicine and education, are not covered in this survey.
- Many smaller graduate employers recruit locally and do not require the scope offered by advertising in *Prospects Today*.
- Salaries are recorded at the lowest base level reported in the advertisements, so do not include commission or other bonuses, and other increments based on, for example, age, unless these are incorporated into the salaries given without having specified that this is the case.

SUMMARY

Based on this survey, which focused on just one publication containing details of vacancies specifically for undergraduates from first degrees, the average salary for graduates in the UK between 2002/3 was £18,343, with a median of £18,000.

The writer of this report has decided to use bullet points and include graphs and charts to illustrate points made. Note the sub-headings and how the student has chosen sub-headings relevant to the subject of this report.

There is a 'passive voice' in the report and the writing is clear, succinct and to the point. There are no references, as this was an original survey that did not refer to any previous work done on a similar topic.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Bad reports are often written in ways that that obscure their message. Look at the following sentence:

“ Although solitary under normal prevailing circumstances, racoons may congregate simultaneously in certain situations of artificially enhanced nutrient resource availability.”

Did you struggle to make sense of the sentence? Yes? Don't worry, so did we!

What the writer was trying to say (in a very complicated way) is that racoons are solitary animals but will group together if food is left for them!



Some students feel they have to write in a complicated way because they are at university; **NOT TRUE!**

When writing:

- ✓ **Be simple and concise**
- ✓ **Make sure of the meaning of every word**
- ✓ **Don't fill your report with unnecessary detail**

FINALLY...

EVERY ENDING IS A BEGINNING

You have reached the end of this workbook and you are likely now to be at the beginning of your undergraduate or postgraduate course.

The majority of older students who return to formal study do very well indeed. They are, for the most part, highly motivated and want to succeed, and so they do. However, if you begin to run into problems with your studies, do something about it early on; don't wait until the problems grow out of control.

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You will find that the teaching staff will help you with particular questions or difficulties that you have with your course or with a specific module.

You can also contact the Effective Learning Service (ELS) for confidential and one-to-one advice & information. The ELS can be contacted via the School of Management Home Pages on the Internet: go to the School Home Page, then click onto 'Resources', then 'Effective Learning Service'. You will see on the ELS site a wide range of workbooks, like this one, that you can print off. If you are studying a long way from Bradford there is also an '**Any Questions**' link to me, Colin Neville, the Effective Learning Officer, on www.brad.ac.uk/acad/management/external/els

Good luck with your studies.

References

- Bridges, W. (2003) *Managing Transitions: making the most of change*. London: Nicholas Brearley Publishing.
- Mercer, D. (2003) *A Short History of the Future*. Enterprise (Reed) Dec 2002/Jan2003, issue 42, pp.28-31
- Northedge, A. (1991) *Schedule for Passing the Test of Time* in 'The Guardian' (24/9/1991). Manchester: Observer Group Newspapers.
- Rose, C. (2000) *Master It Faster: how to learn faster, make good decisions and think creatively*. London: Industrial Society.

FURTHER READING

Effective Learning Booklets

These are all the titles in booklets in the 'Effective Learning' series:

1. Return to Part-time Study
2. *Return to Full-time Study*
3. *The First Semester*
4. *Time Management*
5. *Accelerated Learning*
6. *20 Tips for Effective Learning*
7. *Six Steps to Effective Reading*
8. *Effective Note Making*
9. *Effective Writing*
10. *Essay Writing (1) stages of essay writing*
11. *Essay Writing (2) planning and structuring your essays*
12. *Essay Writing (3) finding your own voice in essays*
13. *Essay Writing (4) liven your essays*
14. *References and Bibliographies*
15. *Report Writing*
16. *Pass Your Exams*
17. *Your Assignment Results – and how to improve them*
18. *Presentations*
19. *Group Work*
20. *Introduction to Research and Research Methods*
21. *Foundations of Good Research*
22. *Writing Your Management Project Report or Dissertation*

You can download any of these from the School of Management Homepages: **Resources– Effective Learning Service** link, or contact the Effective Learning Service, tel. 4414 (internal), E-mail: C.Neville@Bradford.ac.uk, or visit room 0.10 Airedale Building at the School of Management.

This booklet was written by Colin Neville, University of Bradford, School of Management and must not be reproduced without permission. Last updated March 2007. C.Neville@bradford.ac.uk