

# HOW TO WRITE WELL<sup>1</sup>? SOME RESOURCES FOR ECM STUDENTS.

Although we assume that you know how to write from your previous education, we are also aware that writing in English and/or academic writing and/or in social science disciplines is not easy. At the university, writing well follows its own rules, which might be different from other types of writing—the writing tips shared below might even be considered bad practice in other contexts. This document provides some resources that we believe may help you to write better assignments and ultimately theses in the *Environmental Communication and Management (ECM) MSc* programme.

Knowing how to write well is however not the same as writing well. Just like effective (environmental) communication, writing well needs to be learned and practiced. For that, it is important to **read a lot** in the target language, and maybe the target genre (academic texts), but also to **practice writing**. Crucially, we are quite bad at reading or reviewing our own texts, so if you would like to write better, find yourself a writing buddy and **give feedback to each other!** They can read your texts, ask you to clarify things, and may give tips on what you can do better, or at least what is not intelligible. Critically reading someone else's text will also help you to bring across your arguments better. You may also get support from SLU library from their library drop-in or a language tutor (see below). Even the most experienced researchers will never hesitate to ask for feedback on their writing, because **communicating ideas in text is the core of being at the university**.

In the following sections, we list a number of resources for students who wish to improve their writing for its own sake or for the purpose of getting higher grades. We hope they are useful.

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<sup>1</sup> When in this document referring to 'writing well', we explicitly mean the context of the degree programme. There is no intention to say anything about writing in any other circumstances.

## CONTENTS

General Writing.....	3
Essay Structure .....	3
Paragraph Structure.....	3
Sentences.....	4
References .....	4
Editing and Improving your Text.....	4
Other Common Issues.....	4
SLU Library Sources.....	4
Other resources .....	5
Writing and study support from SLU services .....	5

## General Writing

- Lund University has a free Coursera course titled *Writing in English at University* which you can start anytime and according to the syllabus takes 23 hours to complete:  
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/writing-english-university>
- All videos from their course can also be found on YouTube if you are more selective:  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeVxAnFsasIqlc8b03kHA3tw-xflwgO2M>
- Lund University also has a website on Academic Writing in English, a few pages of this are linked below: <https://awelu.srv.lu.se/>
- This well-known blog related to academic writing might also be helpful when you look for specific topics: <https://patthomson.net/>
- If you rather read on paper, there are also some books you might want to look at. Possibly the most student friendly might be *They Say, I Say* (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006), but you might also want to look at *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White, 1999), or *Stylish Academic Writing* (Sword, 2012).

## Essay Structure

Generally, there are two types of essays structures you will be asked to write:

The **3-part structure** consists of *Introduction*, *Body*, and *Conclusion*.

The **IMRaD structure** consists of *Introduction*, *Methods*, *Results*, and *Discussion*.

You can find more information on what this means and how to write these in the following sources:

- Both: <https://lnu.se/en/library/Writing-and-referencing/the-structure-of-academic-texts/>
- 3-part: <https://awelu.srv.lu.se/the-writing-process/writing-stage/structuring-the-text/structure-of-the-whole-text/>
- IMRaD: <https://awelu.srv.lu.se/genres-and-text-types/writing-in-academic-genres/research-articles-ras/three-versions-of-the-ra/>
- IMRaD: Nair, P. K. R., and Nair, V. D. (2014). Organization of a Research Paper: The IMRAD Format. In *Scientific Writing and Communication in Agriculture and Natural Resources*, Nair, P. K. R., and Nair, V. D. (Eds.), p. 13-25. Springer International Publishing.

## Paragraph Structure

Paragraphs are the thinking units of academic texts and should help communicate single thoughts or thought processes. You can find more information on paragraphs below; they all follow the same general approach to paragraphs, but use very different ways to explain them. That might be useful for some?

- Paragraphs in different parts of essays with a lot of examples:  
[https://www.deakin.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/810596/Guide-to-essay-paragraph-structure\\_Deakin-Study-Support.pdf](https://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/810596/Guide-to-essay-paragraph-structure_Deakin-Study-Support.pdf)
- General paragraph structure (plus video explanation): <https://awelu.srv.lu.se/the-writing-process/writing-stage/structuring-the-text/structure-within-paragraphs/>

- General paragraph structure and common issues: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/writingforresearch/2017/07/17/how-to-write-paragraphs-in-research-texts-articles-books-and-phds/>

## Sentences

Even sentences are important to consider when writing. When you know what you want to write but not how, have a look at the 'Phrasebank' linked below. On top you can continue to phrasing ideas for different parts of academic texts. On the left you find phrasing ideas for general issues in the text, such as expressing caution or critical engagement:

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

## References

In line with the majority of SLU, we suggest you use Harvard style for references.

- How to reference/cite: <https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/write-and-cite/writing-references/in-text-citations-using-the-harvard-system/>
- How to write a reference list: <https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/write-and-cite/writing-references/referenslista-enligt-harvard/>

## Editing and Improving your Text

There are a number of tricks you can use to help you improve, edit, or proofread your text:

- A summary of helpful tips for editing and proofreading: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/editing-and-proofreading/>
- Reverse outlining, understanding your text after you wrote: <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/reverse-outlining>
- Revising content: <http://writing.ku.edu/revising-content> and organisation: <http://writing.ku.edu/revising-organization>

## Other Common Issues

- Strategies to help you start the writing process: <http://writing.ku.edu/prewriting-strategies>
- Making Outlines: <http://writing.ku.edu/outlines>
- On whether and how to use 'I': <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/should-i-use-i/>
- Using cautious language: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/using-cautious-language/>

## SLU Library Sources

SLU biblioteket might be able to help you out as well.

- Writing tips, some of which are identical to those listed here: <https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/write-and-cite/writing-and-language-support/academic-writing/>
- Modules on academic writing by the SLU library: <https://slu-se.instructure.com/courses/186>

- The centre for academic language support has drop-in support, language tutors, and special support for those students who qualify. Find more information here:  
<https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/write-and-cite/writing-and-language-support/about-centre-for-academic-language/>

## Other resources

- Podcast on thesis writing, with some useful tips for writing in general.  
<https://open.spotify.com/show/73a1WuqysTAcApno8uSch>

## Writing and study support from SLU services

**Language guidance** <https://www.slu.se/site/bibliotek/skriva-och-referera/skriv-och-sprakhjalp/boka-sprakhandledning/>

There the student gets help with:

- the writing process (getting started, drawing up a work plan)
- concrete language help (language and style, structure and outline)
- dyslexia or longing for speech
- presentation techniques (eg visual design of poster or PowerPoint presentation, oral presentation)
- study technique

**Study Techniques** <https://slu-se.instructure.com/courses/2054?epslanguage=sv>

Canvas course in study techniques, not sure if it is available in English yet, but translation should be underway.

**Seminar series - Support for master's students who write their dissertation, all master's students in the last semester are invited via email**

- 10 February: Getting started with your thesis (Guest: SLU Center for Academic Language)
- 17 March: Getting things done and avoiding procrastination (Guest: Student Health Service at Lund University)
- 5 May: Preparing your presentation and defense (Guest: SLU Center for Academic Language)

**IT support** <https://student.slu.se/studieservice/it-stod1/support/>

**Student Health** <https://www.uu.se/en/students/support-and-services/health-care/>