

Student Orientation

Chapter 2

Writing Expectations



INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
Master's Degree Program at West Virginia University

Importance of Using Citations

As a graduate student, you will participate in lively debates on a variety of topics. While some of these conversations will include ideas of your own, many will focus on the ideas of others, requiring that you properly reference the originator of the idea.

Plagiarism occurs when you present another person's ideas or words without properly giving credit to them as the original source. Therefore, when presenting someone else's opinion, theory, idea or comment, you should always make certain that you cite the source of your information. A good rule of thumb is that if it isn't information that is common knowledge, then you need to make sure to reference your source for that information.

To avoid plagiarism, use quotation marks around any information copied exactly as it is printed elsewhere. You must also reference the source where the information was found by using footnotes or end notes. If you paraphrase the information you found, and don't present it in exact word for word form, you do not need to use quotations, but should still reference where you found the information with end notes or footnotes.

Use the APA Style Manual

The IMC Graduate Program is a very writing intensive program. Weekly papers are the norm, so it is important that you exhibit strong writing skills in order to be successful.

All papers should be submitted in APA style. This refers to a writing style outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. This is a required text for students in IMC 610 and should be retained for reference throughout your time in the IMC program.

Use the manual to determine proper grammar and punctuation, as well as how to best express your ideas and format your papers. This should also be your primary source on how to cite various sources of information like books, magazines, websites and other sources of research.

Primary and Secondary Research Sources

As you research various ideas and use this research to reinforce your own thoughts on a topic, it is important for you to understand the difference between primary and secondary research sources.

Primary research sources are original documents with first hand information. This isn't information that has been interpreted or summarized by someone else but instead, serves as the origination of the information. Primary research sources include interviews, letters, works of literature, photographs, diaries and speeches.

Secondary research sources interpret or summarize ideas that are found already found elsewhere in primary research. Secondary research sources include biographies, journal articles, and dissertations.

Clearly, primary research sources serve as much stronger foundations to support your point of view. However, secondary research sources can also play an important role in supporting your ideas.

While the Internet provides you access to a number of research sources, be careful to make sure that you are using credible information. Remember, anyone can create a website and state information there, so make sure you are using a credible resource that has some respected authority on the topic you are researching.

Most academics do not consider Wikipedia to be a credible source of research. Because it uses visitor contributions to develop its content, there is little control in knowing how knowledgeable or respectable these contributors are. Also, this open forum for contributions increases opportunities for inaccurate information or information presented with a heavy bias. Please try to refrain from using Wikipedia in your research and stick to more academic sources of information.

Use a Draft and Proofread

The demands of graduate school can be daunting, but it is important to budget your time and not wait until the last minute to begin an assignment. Your written work should be clear, concise and well-written. It may take several drafts of your work to get it to that point. Therefore, allow yourself plenty of time to write, reflect and then re-write.

Writing errors and typographical errors are not acceptable at the graduate level. Therefore, proofing your work is essential. Although using spell-check can help reduce such errors, it won't eliminate problems if you have used the wrong word but spelled it correctly. It is still important to proof your work for errors.

Be Clear, Concise and Cover the Topic

In graduate school, your work will be evaluated on a number of criteria including the quality of the information provided, the support of your ideas, and the overall quality of your writing.

Be sure to cover your topic fully. Don't leave your reader guessing or speculating because of a lack of complete information. Go beyond the obvious and dig a bit deeper to showcase the originality of your thoughts and research. This is the kind of extra effort that will set your work apart from others in the course. How many pages should the assignment be? The number of pages that it takes to cover the topic in depth and illustrate that you fully grasp the concepts that the instructor has presented may vary.

While full information is needed, don't dilute your papers by presenting the same points repeatedly. Careful organization and concise communication of your content is critical. Be clear, but concise. Avoid unnecessary repetition of words and phrases.