Contents

Acknowledgements xiv

Introduction xv

The aims of the book xvi
Organization of the book xvi
Terminology and other practices xvii

Part one: GENERAL ISSUES IN ACADEMIC WRITING AND COMMUNICATION 1

1 Managing the writing environment 3

Effective self-management 3
Networking for support 4
Pre-planning: maximizing effort 7
Avoiding occupational hazard 12
Managing the writing 12
Managing multiple communication tasks 12
Being realistic about the demands of writing 15
Handling critical feedback 17
Communicating with lecturers and supervisors 19
Resolving uncertainties 19
Email communication issues 20
Issues in cross-cultural writing and communication 22

2 Preparing the ground 26

The graduate writing culture 27
Mastering (inter)disciplinary writing practices 28
Treating information critically 31
Critiquing: critically evaluating source materials 31

Critically evaluating theory 34
Critical enquiry and the status of existing knowledge 36
Working with different types of information 36
Following your hunches 37
Ensuring task-focused information **38**
Assessing the academic merit of source materials 39
Avoiding the urge to rush into data-gathering 40
Defining reading goals 42
Reading intensively and skimming 42
Strategies for information storage **46**

3 Reflecting on current practice **49**

Reviewing your approach to writing **50**
A question of efficiency 50
The mechanics of academic writing **51**
Ensuring consistency of practice 51
Spelling, grammar and proofreading 52
Punctuation 53
Plagiarism and referencing **53**
Avoiding plagiarism 53
Choosing an academic referencing style 57
Citing sources from the Internet 58
Selecting a reporting tense/verbs 59
Attending to audience needs **60**
The reader as disciplinary practitioner 61
The reader as subject specialist 61
Signposting: signalling your intentions 62
Clarity: the first rule of style **64**
Conciseness (low fat writing) 65
Aspects of voice and tone 67
Other style issues 71

4 Whole text development **74**

Visual mapping of material **75**
Brainstorming 75
Mind mapping 76
Sequential outlining **77**
Using sub-headings effectively 79

Developing texts 81
Controlling paragraph development 81
Strategies for linking paragraphs 84
Manipulating sentence structure 87
The 'discards' file 88
Improving overall structure 89

Part two: ISSUES SPECIFIC TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATION PROCESSES 91

5 Research essays, book or article reviews and coursework exam papers 93

Research essays 93
'Essays' and their synonyms 94
The short essay 95
The research essay as formal argument 95
Decoding the meaning of 'argument' 96
Distinguishing ideas from opinions 96
Basic criteria applied in assessing essays 97
Topics (or questions) 98
Setting up your own topic 98
Analysing a given topic 100
Compiling an introduction 102
Establishing the context 102
Defining important terms, phrases or concepts 103
Laying out a position 103
Making a procedural statement 104
Evidence and reasoning 105
Arguing from sources 105
Avoiding faulty reasoning 106
Strategies to strengthen argument 107
Developing a position 110
Ensuring structural coherence 111
Determining relevance 112
Working up a conclusion 112
Cutting to meet word length 113
Reviewing the essay presentation 114

Book or article reviews 114
The different types of reviews 114
Conducting an academic review 115
Structuring a review 117
Coursework exams 118
Setting up a revision plan 119
Stage 1: Focusing your plan 119
Stage 2: Systematizing your plan 120
Stage 3: Testing the efficacy of your plan 123
Exam room strategies 124
Interpreting exam paper instructions 124
Determining the order of your answers 125
Working out a time schedule 125
Starting on answers in the 'permitted study period' 126
Writing the exam paper 126
Essay papers 126
Short answer papers 127
Multiple-choice papers 128

6 The literature review, reports and research proposals 130

The literature review 130
Scoping a review 131
Determining task objectives 133
Structuring a review 134
Review mode and orientation 135
Critical engagement with the literature 137
Positioning your research in relation to the literature 139
Audience: signalling your intentions 140
Reports 140
Possible audience considerations 141
Business reports 142
Focusing a business report 142
Experimental or technical reports 143
The interlocking relationship of the structural divisions 144
Focusing the different parts of the report 145
Formal reports 149
Two prominent structures 149
Distinctive features of the formal report 149
Field reports 151
Keeping precise records 151

Progress reports 153
The purpose of a progress report 153
Research proposals 154
The different purposes of proposals 154
Focusing a proposal 156
Structuring a proposal 160

7 Thesis writing 163

Prior considerations 164
Some intellectual property issues 164
Orientation to thesis writing 165
Managing the project through writing 167
Setting up a thesis writing schedule 169
Settling on typography and formatting 170
Expectations of theses 170
Standard expectations 171
Bringing examiners into view 171
Longer theses 173
Focusing an 'original' contribution 173
What PhD examiners say in their reports 174
Summary observations on examiners' reports 179
Shorter theses 181
Different topic orientations 181
Orientation and practice 182
Structuring a thesis 183
Dividing up the text 184
Key structuring strategies 186
Providing a thesis statement 186
Chapter structuring options 188
A science model 189
The illustrations-based model 189
A 'photographic' model 189
A sequential model 191
Gaining overall thesis control 192
Visually mapping core chapters 192
Brainstorming the table of contents 192
Producing a detailed thesis outline 194
Writing specific parts 196
Developing the abstract 196
The thesis introduction 197

The issue of length 197
Timing the writing of an introduction 198
Focusing an introduction 198
The thesis conclusion **200**
Processing findings 201
Drawing out implications 201
Grounding speculations 202
Organizing a thesis writing group **202**

8 Oral and visual presentations **205**

The nature of oral presentations **206**
Distinctive features of presenting 206
Part 1: The different types of presentations **207**
Tutorial and seminar presentations **207**
Distinguishing these two types 207
Clarifying expectations 207
Forestalling criticism in progress review seminars 209
Conference presentations **210**
Generating funding 210
Locating appropriate conferences 211
Getting a paper accepted 212
Poster presentations **214**
Factors that might influence design 214
Design principles 215
Part 2: General issues in presenting **217**
Planning for success **217**
Audience analysis 217
Language appropriateness 219
Venue needs 219
Building 'time' into a plan 220
Formatting options **221**
Using scripted notes 221
Reading a paper as a presentation 222
Reworking a lengthy paper to present 223
PowerPoint presentations 224
Multi-media formatting 224
Fine-tuning and rehearsal **226**
Encoding audience management 226
The value of prior rehearsal 229

On the day: issues of delivery 230
The presenting venue 230
What to do with yourself while presenting 231
Dealing with the unexpected 231
Canvassing audience questions 232
Managing nervousness 233

9 Journal article and book publication 235

Publishing while producing a thesis 235
The pros and cons of publishing 236
Co-authorship and thesis requirements 237
Including supervisors as co-authors 237
Targeting an appropriate journal 238
Profiling the targeted journal 239
Shaping a paper for publication 240
Following editorial instructions 240
Focusing the abstract 240
Reviewing practices in published articles 241
Engaging the reader 241
Approaching a book publisher 243
Strategic considerations 245
Coping with peer review 246
What reviewers look at 247
Dealing with the outcome of peer review 248
Electronic publishing (eJournals) 249
Forming a publication syndicate 250

Appendix 1 Words and phrases for developing discussions 252

Appendix 2 Example of a detailed thesis outline 254

References and further reading 262

Index 265