

NEPDP Research and Writing Module

Overview

Research and writing is the most important thing you will do to earn marks to pass courses to get your certificate. Many of your courses will not have an exam, and many of the exams will be take-home research papers, so you need to get this right. To do research, you ask a clear question, do enough research to answer it, and write a clear and convincing answer. Part of the answer might be “we don’t know” and it will almost certainly include the useful phrase, “more research is required.”

Undergraduate papers usually use one of three techniques. Most common is RABOS-WAP. This means “read a bunch of stuff, write a paper”. Sometimes you will conduct interviews, leading to BALOP-SRT, or “bother a lot of people, summarize random thoughts”. If human sources are part of a research plan, then you need to think about a research ethics submission. If you think you know the answer before you start, you might do a HAT-WAP-LAFFN — have a thought, write a paper, look up a few footnotes. The give-away for a HAT-WAP-LAFFN is footnotes that don’t really have much to do with the substance of the paragraphs. I have a separate site addressing qualitative methods for thesis and graduate students but be cautious about how much time you spend on methods, because the purpose of the research paper is to produce the paper - on time, on target.

Assignments – 10-step approach

Assignments may be essays, reports, dissertations, literature reviews, presentations, seminars, exams, reading records, annotated bibliographies, or digital artefacts (Burns and Sinfield, 2016, 167-170). Each of these has their own formats and challenges, but the following ten steps are a generic way to approach the process of research and writing (Burns and Sinfield, 2016, 170-175):

1. Preparation - understand the assignment, speak to the professor to confirm your understanding, do your time appreciation and reconcile demands with other projects. We’ll practice this with scenarios for research and writing.
2. Targeted research and active reading -
3. Make paragraph patterns
4. Write-read-write
5. Do a complete first draft
6. Leave it!
7. Review, revise, edit (this is the best stage to get help from the Writing Centre)
8. Proofread (it’s easy to miss errors. Ask someone else to proofread it, or try turning the text upside down to make typos stand out)
9. Hand it in
10. Get it back

Research help

You have at least five sources of help for research.

1. Your professor - a great place to start. Look at your course notes and texts beforehand to have a good starting point. Sharp questions elicit better help than blank-stare 'help me' moans.
2. Other professors - a good option if the subject has come up, or you know they write on related subjects. Professor's interests are listed on their web pages.
3. Librarians - they are information management experts
4. Your peers at RMC - they have similar problems. Share the burden trading sources - good journals to check, search terms, and course resources they are using better than you...
5. Subject experts outside RMC - you probably know useful people for militarily relevant courses. Check your rolodex. Expert witnesses can be footnoted as reliable primary sources, if they are.

Online research exercise

Scenarios for research and writing

Go back to the course outlines that you have. Find one which requires an essay as part of the course requirements. How long is the paper? When is it due? Are there interim tasks like submission of topics, abstracts or bibliographies? Pick an essay requirement from a real course for the following exercises. e.g. Professor Boulden's POE410 requires a research essay worth 25%:

Research Essay

Using the "core analytical elements" in section 2 (beginning on page 12) of the GSDRC report as a guide, provide a conflict analysis of your conflict. In particular, use Table 1: Guiding questions for conflict analysis as your guide.

In the last section of the essay, using other tools from the course, provide an analysis of where you think the conflict is heading, and what conflict management tools could usefully be implemented at this or later stages with what possible result.

This is a research essay. Footnotes should be used, and a bibliography provided. Take a scholarly approach to the exercise.

The essay should be double-spaced using 12-point font. Length – 15-20 pages. (3750-5000 words).

Now do the estimate for this tactical problem. You don't know how long it will take you to write a 5000-word paper, so start early. When is it due? You'll find a separate section, deliverables by date, which tells you it's due on 27 March. You don't get time off for essay-writing, so you have to plan to fit it around your other courses and assignments. Larger blocks of time often work better for essay work. Do a timeline for each major assignment (the ten-step approach might work for you)

Research with Google Scholar

Please watch the Homework Help video, "How to research with Google Scholar"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtbpGZI-lQ> "Homework help is a good resource for many basic study skills. Google Scholar is a potentially valuable asset which you will often use outside the university framework"

How to identify bad science <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttvGmBR1RyQ>

See also the checklist, more geared towards natural than social science, but relevant to both:
<https://www.compoundchem.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Spotting-Bad-Science.pdf>

You can play with Google Scholar a bit now if you want, but we'll come back to use it for an exercise later in this module.

Alternatives to Google

Some alternatives to Google are Bing, DuckDuckGo, and Yahoo. There is actually a Search Engine Journal which regularly runs articles comparing search engines and strategies (www.searchenginejournal.com). Here's an article comparing 17 alternatives to Google (<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/alternative-search-engines/271409/>). Search engines are free because they are harvesting and selling your "behavioural surplus" – your interests, habits, connections, and personal data. See Shoshana Zuboff (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. Privacy becomes an issue for me when the associated advertising and messaging becomes intrusive enough to interfere with what I am trying to do. I use ad blockers (Adguard) and Norton VPN, but because most of my Google searches are academic and within my areas of research and teaching, I usually don't use "incognito" mode in Google. Google remembers my searches and my relevant hits improve over time.

Research at Massey Library

I have not been able to complete this section because the RMC website, including Massey Library, has been inaccessible since a cyberattack on 3 July. We'll just bypass this for now.

From Massey Library: "I strongly encourage you to have a look at Scholars Portal for e-books and journal articles as well as the typical databases. We have access to tens of thousands of e-books on Scholars Portal and the journal index has over 40 million entries. Not to mention data..."

<http://www.scholarsportal.info/>

To test your access here, select Journals, and choose < Go to Scholars Portal Journals >

We'll use POE317 as an example. You have to write a paper on measures of power and you are looking for secondary sources (peer reviewed articles) about how to measure state power. Start with the search term "state power" in the abstract only.

You want to select for articles written since 2000, and ones which are open access, or accessible to you. Finally, you want to limit the search to social sciences. Check the right boxes and hit search.

Anything useful? Why? Try some other search terms, or combinations of terms. Note the Boolean search pattern. You can keep hitting the + sign to add additional terms on the search and you can change the connector (and, or, not, near).

There's a lot of stuff here.

Now you want to find a specific book. You have heard of a book by Dan Slater, *Ordering Power*, something about contentious leviathans in Asia.

Go back to Scholars portal and this time select books.

You're not certain about the details but try "Slater" in the author and two constraints in title – "power" and "asia". Include everything and all sources and hit submit.

It looks like the reference matches (but the cover doesn't – don't judge a book by its cover!). You can click the title and see the detailed description, but you'll notice that it's only available to the University of Toronto. On the right, you can see several suggestions for refining your use of keywords.

What are your other options to get the book if you really want it? Now you have all the details, you can order it through interlibrary loan and maybe see it in a few weeks, but the semester goes quickly. Two other options are Amazon.ca and Google books. From either source you should be able to get partial access for free, and the full e-book for just \$25, delivered to your phone or laptop in minutes, so you can decide how badly you need it.

Research with CF Virtual Library

The CF Virtual Library is accessible both through DWAN and online but requires login credentials provided by CFC Library. [\[check with CFC\]](#)

Annotated Bibliography exercise

You may have noticed from the Scholars Portal exercise that you have to know what you're looking for in order to find it effectively in library search engines. Commercial search engines are better if you are starting with a broad question, because your initial results let you refine it (see above, Google research). Make sure you watch the Homework Help video about how to research with Google before you start the exercise.

We're going to leverage Google Scholar now with an annotated bibliography exercise. It should take about an hour. This does not produce an annotated bibliography for submission. That requires more of your own work. Rather, we are going to focus on copy-paste and comment techniques that will help you to assemble research material for an assignment, quickly and efficiently.

In this exercise, we're going to assume that you are taking HIE477 Introduction to the History of Terrorism, and you want to write your major paper on Basque terrorism as an example of nationalist or liberation terrorists.

Start with Google (not Google Scholar) and try "ETA Basque". The Wikipedia article gives you dates and basic facts that are useful for narrowing your searches. Take a few minutes to skim through the other sites for background (fas.org, bbc.com, politico.eu, cia.gov, etc.) Jot down useful search terms – names of key leaders, organizations, attacks, government programs. You

will also see suggested search terms, e.g. “Basque nationalism (political ideology)”. Limit this to about 15 minutes for this exercise. You should have a list of 10-15 search terms, with asterisks beside the ones that seem most relevant. Keep them fairly general at this stage.

Now go to Google Scholar (Scholar.Google.com) and check settings (bottom of the left-hand margin, usually). I select articles, not patents or case law. I use the default 10 per page, and I don’t select open in new window, because it tends to get cluttered. Easier to use the back arrow. I don’t use reference links (see below).

Now return to the search window and start with “Basque nationalism”. Your hits won’t be exactly the same as mine or your classmates, because Google remembers your preferences and previous searches. Decide whether you want to use incognito mode (in privacy settings).

Open a Word or text file, preferably with the same software you will use to write the assignment.

Note the options on the left (date ranges, relevance, citations). Look on the right for full-text, and below the content quote for “add to my library”, reference, cited by, and related articles. About halfway down the first page you’ll find “related searches” – make note of the ones that look useful.

You decide the Payne (1971) source with full text available is a good place to start. Get the full reference for your research notes. I prefer APA, but you can choose your style—use the style for the assignment to avoid duplicated effort – click the quotation marks, copy and paste into a word or text file. Now you want an abstract or summary, but you don’t want to stop and read the article at this stage. Copy the link and insert it as a hyperlink or paste it with the reference. Now you are looking for a few key points so you can tell what this source is useful for. It looks like it’s mostly historical and mostly about Catalonia – so skim through it for the Basque stuff. Do Control F, enter Basque in the search bar then scroll down for the highlighted bits. The first 4 pages are pre-19th Century, and we don’t get to Basque Nationalism until p. 31. Here you can start copy-pasting, as in the example. Remember to insert quotation marks so you don’t accidentally plagiarize and note the page numbers to save time later. In Word, using “keep text only” reduces your formatting problems. I keep everything together as one paragraph to make it possible to sort by author without separating a source from my notes. Using a hanging paragraph and space between paragraphs helps you to see unwanted paragraph breaks that can lead to orphan notes when you sort alphabetically. Now add highlighting or notes in a contrasting colour to focus on what you got out of this source that you want to use in your assignment. Try not to spend too long on one source – you can easily go back when you need to, if you keep all the links and details.

Now let’s try a more recent source – Muro (2005). Here we have both full text and a handy abstract. Copy-paste the reference and abstract to your notes, highlight the useful parts and add your comments. Here I have used a hyperlink, which is tidier than the full link I used for Payne (1971) but which risks getting lost if you convert formats.

Now let's look at a book. Sullivan (2015) could be useful. Can you get it? If Massey library is up, you can search its collections. The site is still down, but let's assume it's not there. A quick way to get a summary of the book is to go to Amazon. Copy the title into the search bar. Now copy some of the descriptions from Amazon onto the reference, remembering to use quotes and note source. Now you can actually see the book, correct the reference. Sometimes there will be double names, misplaced edition or series information on Google Scholar. In this case, it's Routledge Library Editions that's in the wrong place. Now you know roughly what it's about. Before you search for a library copy, you can get the contents, introduction and part of the first chapter from the digital free sample on Kindle, and you can get most of the actual book on Google Books. Again, looking at the actual book (in Kindle or Googlebooks) you can see that the 2015 date is a reprint of a 1988 book, which explains why the title is 1890-1986. You're probably not going to spend \$65 on this.

We could go further with this, but let's switch terms. You are doing your initial search to help define your research subject, so you don't want to go too far before you have a more refined research question. A simple descriptive question is, "what is the history of ETA Basque Terrorism?" Payne (1971) and Sullivan (1988) are good starts in that direction. Or you might ask about *causes* of nationalist terrorism, or particular theories about the character or nature of Basque political violence. Let's explore that second line a bit further.

In the "Related Searches" you'll find the term, "Basque nationalism ethnicity and violence". This looks promising. We're going to look specifically for historically grounded explanations of Basque violence, including the state response and international dimensions, because we think that relates to the subject of the course and the interests of the professor. We'll focus mainly on articles that we can access, full text.

First up is Zabalo and Saratxo (2015). See the notes in that entry below to explore some of the new directions it suggests for your research. Incidentally, if you lose the link to a reference, the fastest way to find it is usually to enter the full title into a google scholar search.

On a separate note, you'll find the doctoral thesis of Diego Muro Ruiz full text (reference below). By definition, a doctoral thesis includes a fairly exhaustive literature review, so this is a good source to mine for references, *after* you have research focus. If you do it before you have decided your research focus you will likely be pushed towards following the argument and logic one author too closely, and your work won't be as original as it should be. See the next exercise.

Research Bibliography: Nationalist Basque Terrorism

Prepared for HIE477 Essay Assignment

- Payne, S. (1971). Catalan and Basque nationalism. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6(1), 15-51.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002200947100600102?casa_token=vqsWdBlhOfkAAAAA:-VOJX43jAtmKy5ZpiVAtwW_tcgFkieg6kE_EfNdb5J26vZSroSZs1HCl6L7K8yKusuzrPsAkiVYM. "Basque nationalism developed more slowly and weakly than the Catalan movement and was partly derived from its example." (31) "The final abolition of the fueros was met by the hostility of nearly all politically conscious elements in the Basque country and Navarre. During the early years of the restored monarchy a Foralist party was organized but attracted only limited support." (35). "In 1893 the Spanish government first tried to raise Basque and Navarrese tax quotas, which were still set at the very modest levels of 1841. This led to violent public demonstrations; the quotas were finally raised, but still remained proportionately well below the taxes paid in the rest of Spain. It was at this time that the first nucleus of Basque nationalism took form." (35) [1893-1903] see rest of article for connections between political efforts and violence – possible connection to frustration-aggression hypothesis? See also greed vs grievance?
- Muro, D. (2005). [Nationalism and nostalgia: the case of radical Basque nationalism](#). *Nations and Nationalism*, 11(4), 571-589. "ABSTRACT. This article argues that the myth of the Golden Age is a key mobilising element within radical Basque nationalism. By using an ethno-symbolist approach, this article argues that nostalgia, a catchword for looking back, usually relates to an idealised past. It then proceeds to explain how ETA in particular has domesticated the past to justify its political violence which is currently exalted as a means of honouring the fighting spirit of their ancestors. From this perspective, violence is presented as a redemptive act that can stop the decay of the Basque nation and bring a new political future in which the inspiring ancient virtues will be rediscovered. This nostalgic gaze upon the past continually 'reminds' radical Basque nationalists of an imaginary, yet familiar, past which can only be regained by using revolutionary violence." [typical of the Romantic era in which Basque nationalism originated – does this still fit frustration-aggression, or is it a different causal mechanism?]
- Sullivan, J. L. (1988, 2015). *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi 1890-1986*. Routledge (RLE: Terrorism & Insurgency). [kindle \$65] Amazon: "This book traces the formation of ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna) and the tensions created by its combination and aims: socialism and Basque nationalism. The Basque Nationalist movement emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to the rapid transformation of Basque society by industrialisation. The influx of Spanish-speaking workers to Basque territories seemed to threaten the stability of Basque society. Gradually the immigrants became absorbed into the radical struggle, with the creation of illegal trade unions and the need to resist the Franco regime by whatever means. Over the next half century Basque consciousness developed until the radical nationalist organisation ETA was

formed in 1959.” [Looks like chapters 2&3 will have the most useful content about its campaign strategy]

Zabalo, J., & Saratxo, M. (2015). [ETA ceasefire: Armed struggle vs. political practice in Basque nationalism](#). *Ethnicities*, 15(3), 362-384. Abstract: “In October 2011, the Basque armed organization ETA announced an end to its activities. This article aims at studying the reasons leading up to this unilateral decision which had been taken without prior negotiations or agreements. To this end, a large part of existing bibliography on the subject was consulted and most of the documents released by ETA in recent years, including those for internal use, were also reviewed. In our opinion, ETA reached this decision on the basis of two conclusions and an overall view of the state of affairs. The first of these conclusions found that the two main channels opened up in 1975 to reach its tactical goals, namely, negotiation with Spain and a national front, had been fully exploited. The second concerns the great difficulty in continuing to defend armed struggle on the grounds that it helps reinforce these two channels. Moreover, the belief that it is possible to make greater advances without, rather than with, armed activity, was widespread, paradoxical as that might seem. Forty years after its political positioning with respect to post-Franco Spain, convinced that both channels had been exhausted, and of its limited legitimacy to explore new ones in its capacity as a political movement, ETA reassessed the situation, and once again changed its discourse and practice, with an aim to attaining its strategic goals.” [the end of violence in 2011 provides a good bookend if we want to focus on period of violence – what started it, what stopped it; could also relate this to advances in theory of nonviolent civil resistance, see www.nonviolent-conflict.org for related resources, but this might be more a politics paper than a history paper. Check with instructor. Need to look into this further to distinguish between tactical and strategic goals. Was there also a generational change? Technology and policing influences?]

Ruiz, D. M. (2004). *Ethnicity and violence: The case of radical Basque nationalism*. London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom). <https://core.ac.uk/reader/46519284> [this is a doctoral thesis from LSE, and it seems Diego Muro Ruiz is sometimes listed as Muro and sometimes as Ruiz, but it's the same guy]

~~~~~ End of Research Bibliography Sample ~~~~~

## Reference management software

You may hear about reference management software like RefNote, EndNote, BibNote, Zotero, Sente, Mendeley, etc. Some of these are much more than just reference management software – they provide tools for sharing and collaborating on research (Sente, Zotero and Mendeley). However, if you are looking for ways to make reference management easier in a one-year program, don't waste time with specialized reference management software unless you are planning a long academic career with a large body of technical literature and a high output. In



any other situation, the juice is not worth the squeeze. They start to be useful for graduate students going on into academic careers.

Max Masnick (2018) Thoughts on Reference Management Software,  
<https://maxmasnick.com/projects/reference-managers/>

## Writing exercise: abstract, outline, free-writing, and organizing

You have now spent about an hour on the research bibliography exercise. You started with a broad topic area – ETA Basque separatist violence – and followed it far enough to envision several different research questions for which you could readily find secondary sources for a starting point.

Now we will do a writing exercise that culminates in an abstract (QADOR) and outline and suggests searches that augment the initial research you started above. Think of this as an iterative process.

### The QADOR loop

Remember that the purpose of the research essay is to answer a question. To pass the essay you must ask a clear question, do enough research to answer it within the limits of your resources, and express the answer clearly and effectively without significant errors. The marking rubrics are posted.

The QADOR loop is a way of thinking through a question – it's always easier to go all the way to the end quickly to see where you are going, rather than stare at a blank piece of paper and make it up as you go along.

Begin with a puzzle or **question**. Ask, what might an **answer** to the question look like? This is like a hypothesis, but you may need to refine it. The next step is critical. What are the key words you need to **define**, especially loose words like effective, useful, adequate, or necessary? This helps you determine what sort of data you need to answer the question. You can then **outline** the major parts of the paper, and finally describe why this is a useful or **relevant** question to answer. Do this loop quickly, and at least three or four times to help refine your concept for the paper. Each time you go through it, the paper will look a bit different, and this will help you to get started.

Here's an example from one of the prerequisite courses, POE205 Canadian Government and Society.

Student: "I really liked the question brought up in class of "Does federalism make Canada weaker or stronger?". I was wondering about your thoughts on this question as a topic. I like it because I am genuinely interested in researching this as I'm not sure if I know the answer, or even if the answer is as simple as just "yes" or "no". Would you recommend adding to the

question to make for a more in-depth answer that looks at specific regions or specific ways in which federalism improves or hinders our country's success?"

That could work. Let's work through the QADOR loop.

**Question:** Does Federalism make Canada weaker or stronger?

Possible **answer** (hypothesis): Providing avenues for political solutions to the problems of living together makes the regions more likely to stay together, but sometimes federalism makes it harder for Canada to provide a united response. We have means of forcing unity, but these can have consequences that reduce willingness to stay together (e.g. National Energy Policy 1982, Conscription Crisis 1917, War Measures Act 1970)

**Definitions:** the tricky words are "weaker" and "stronger" - you need measurable ways to assess them. You might just apply a quantitative measure of power, like Cline's (1977) formula - population, landmass, GDP, military manpower, etc. - and obviously Canada has a higher "power" score together than as individual provinces, but that really dodges the question, I think. The existential threats to "Canada" are dissolution and absorption, either of which would end it as it exists today. You might argue that stronger means less likely to dissolve or be absorbed and weaker means more likely. Now your task is to link different characteristics of Canadian federalism to the pressure to dissolve or the ability to respond to external (mainly American) restrictions on Canadian decision-making

**Outline:**

- (1) introduction, QADOR
- (2) federalism: the basic division of powers from CA1867; the added elements of CA1982 (especially sections 1 and 33 of the Charter) (primary sources, plus the text as a tertiary source) Making Canada weaker...
- (3) what makes Canada more likely to dissolve - provincial powers? Failures to amend the constitution?
- (4) what makes Canada more likely to lose autonomy (be absorbed) - weak federal powers? Making Canada stronger...
- (5) less likely to dissolve - provincial autonomy? Asymmetrical federalism? Compromises and evolution?
- (6) less likely to lose autonomy, be absorbed - Quebec as "poison pill" preserving distinct bilingual political culture? Local centres of power, divided loyalties?
- (7) conclusion: weaker or stronger?

**Relevance:** for general audiences, we want to address criticisms of federalism fairly; for overseas nation-building (Iraq, Libya, Nigeria) we want to understand the dynamics of a federal structure that might be used to manage domestic conflict without resorting to violence. If the latter is our main goal, we might want to reframe the question and definitions, go back to the beginning of the QADOR loop.

## Abstract

When you have a satisfactory QADOR, you can convert it easily into an abstract or executive summary which will guide your research and writing. Like an introduction, this is just a draft until you finish your papers. You always come back to rewrite your introduction, conclusion,

and abstract based on the finished product, rather than where you started. For the example above we might develop an abstract like this, which articulates a coherent starting point for our argument:

*“How does the federal division of powers in Canada affect Canadian unity? In this paper I argue that provincial control of education is the critical weakness, because it permits political socialization at a regional rather than a national level, encouraging divergent regional views that threaten Canada with dissolution. To explore this thesis, I examine the original division of powers and its evolution with the 1982 Canada Act and subsequent legislation. I argue that crises of threatened separation can be traced to provincial education systems, citing high school history textbooks as primary sources that illustrate divergent understandings of Canada. The UNESCO Culture of Peace program might provide a paradigm for reconciling provincial differences to strengthen national identity. This issue is important because a high proportion of federal states dissolve or experience conflict.”*

(Scott and Garrison, 2017, chapters 2 and 3)

Scott and Garrison describe writing as a simultaneous tangle of activities. We'll focus this part of the exercise on getting started. You can use the Basque Nationalism example or the Canadian Federalism example or pick a different subject entirely.

### Creative Thinking

Your first task is to think creatively – brainstorm the content of your paper, using either the QADOR loop, mind-mapping, or brainstorming. You might go from brainstorm (throw stuff up on a whiteboard or a big piece of paper, connect the ideas, add possible sources) then go to a mind-map to organize it, and finish off with a QADOR loop, which is more structured. Take photographs of your work at various stages to share with the group.

This example might be helpful. SJSU Writing Centre “How to Brainstorm an Essay,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApKXbdpgEMM> (this describes outlining and clustering in a few minutes).

### Free writing

Now you have a lot of ideas, many of them probably encapsulated in short bullet points or buzzwords, which might not mean much to you by tomorrow morning. While your brain is still crowded with ideas, try a free-writing exercise. This can be on paper or a screen, whatever you can do fluidly and comfortably – don't let technology interrupt you. Spread out whatever notes and outlines you have, start with your abstract or summary, and plan to spend at least 30-45 minutes uninterrupted. Write in complete sentences and start a new paragraph every time you come to a new idea. It's ok for a paragraph to be only one sentence. Block out any distractions. Keep the flow moving. Don't worry about spelling, footnotes, or any other details. Concentrate on substance. If you speak better than you write, try dictating into a recording device or speech recognition software.

The most common challenge with a free-writing exercise is thinking faster than you can get ideas recorded. If you don't have this problem, then you may need to go back to the pre-research or brainstorming stage. You can also use free-writing to tackle one section of your paper at a time.

We'll compare notes on this with the group.

## Tone in Writing

What is tone in writing? Conrad van Dyk, The Nature of Writing

"An informal or casual writing style tends to use contractions, colloquial (slang) language, a subjective perspective, as well as other traits. By contrast, a formal tone is more polished and focused. Learn how to recognize the tone of a piece of writing and improve your own prose."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1X9QZwLRg6k>

## The RMC Writing Centre

The RMC Writing Centre is a great resource, newly incorporated into a larger structure called the student success centre, which addresses literacy, numeracy, and factors in success. More to follow on this.

The best way to use the writing centre is to limit exposure to one or two sessions, preferably with an advisor in the same discipline as your assignment, because the conventions are different in each discipline. They won't correct your paper, but they will help you get past obstacles and improve your toolset for writing. This includes all the steps we went through in the exercises above, although each professor has different ways of making students aware of these steps. Plan well in advance in order to make an appointment and get feedback in time to adjust your paper and hand it in in time.