Skills Support for Academic Departments 2024/25

The Academic Skills Centre can offer support for taught students in the following areas:

# [Section A: Learning at University](#_Section_A:_Learning)

# [Section B: Research Skills](#_Section_B:_Research_1)

# [Section C: Digital Skills](#_Section_C:_Digital_1)

# [Section D: Writing Skills](#_Section_D:_Writing)

# Section A: Learning at University

## A1: Strategies for Effective Learning (Suitable for Welcome)

Students will be able to:

* Gain confidence with some essential learning skills, including time management, notetaking and communication
* Discuss and reflect on their own study strategies and areas for development
* Understand the importance of independent, reflective and collaborative learning
* Use some digital tools and apps to enhance learning

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto recording**

We also offer a session on Time Management and Digital Tools (C1)

## A2: How do we learn? (Suitable for Welcome)

Students will be able to:

* Understand what we mean by learning
* Have a greater awareness of the different ways of learning
* Identify personalised strategies for learning

**Available as: Workshop**

## A3: Returning to Education (Suitable for Welcome)

A version of Strategies for Effective Learning particularly aimed at mature students or those returning to education after a break. Students will be able to:

* Better understand what’s expected of them at university
* Explore strategies for studying alongside other commitments
* Get to grips with some essential learning skills
* Use some digital tools and apps to enhance learning

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto recording**

## A4: Reading and Notetaking Strategies

Students will be able to:

* Apply strategies for reading effectively and critically
* Make active and useful notes while reading
* Consider a range of digital note-taking tools

**Available as: Workshop**

## A5: Critical Thinking

Students will be able to:

* Identify, construct and evaluate arguments and their components
* Detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in own & others' reasoning
* Apply techniques for systematically solving problems

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## A6: How to Critique an Academic Article

Students will be able to:

* Understand what is involved in critiquing an article
* Understand the role of different sections of an article
* Develop a thoughtful, questioning approach to reading
* Identify, summarise, and evaluate the ideas and information presented
* Write in a critical and concise way

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto recording**

## A7: Critical Analysis in the Sciences

This session is suitable for students undertaking degrees with a scientific component.

Students will be able to:

* Think and read critically
* Critique scientific papers in more depth
* Demonstrate critical analysis in writing

**Available as: Workshop**

## A8: Presentation Skills

This session can be adapted to cover different delivery types e.g. in- person, recorded or online presentations.

Students will be able to:

* Understand what goes into an effective presentation
* Deliver a presentation with more confidence
* Structure a presentation to grab and hold attention
* Include effective and accessible visuals.

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## A9: Working Collaboratively

This session can also be paired with C4: Collaboration and Sharing Tools

Students will be able to:

* Plan group roles and set clear aims for team projects or assignments
* Work and communicate effectively and productively in a team
* Deal with difficult situations when working with others
* Explore a range of digital collaboration tools
* If appropriate to the assessment, develop skills for writing collaboratively

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## A10: Exams and Revision

This session can be tailored to suit different types of exams e.g. essay based, MCQs, remote or in-person.

Students will be able to:

* Understand what the type of exam involves and how to prepare for it
* Reflect on their own approaches to revision
* Apply different strategies to revision
* Know what to expect on the day of the exam

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## A11: Using Feedback to Improve Grades

This session can be tailored to cover whole class feedback.

Students will be able to:

* Better understand the language of feedback
* Apply feedback to their next assignment
* Devise an action plan of areas for improvement and development

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## A12: Using Generative AI tools for study

Students will be able to:

* Understand what Generative AI is and how it functions
* Be familiar with university guidance on using Generative AI
* Explore practical ways to use Generative AI tools for studying

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

# Section B: Research Skills

## B1: Using Library Resources for Learning (Suitable for Welcome)

Students will be able to:

* Access information on the full range of resources, services and study support provided by the library
* Use Resource Lists and FindIt@Bham, our library catalogue
* Know where to ask for advice and support with their studies

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto video, Canvas resource**

## B2: Finding, Using and Evaluating Information.

This session can be adapted to suit different levels and different projects e.g. for dissertations. The session can also have a focus on primary resources or advanced literature searching techniques if applicable.

Students will be able to:

* Access and use key resources for their discipline, including journals, databases and other relevant sources of information
* Plan and implement an effective literature search
* Use techniques for searching effectively online
* Evaluate the available literature in terms of quality and relevance

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto video, Canvas resource**

## B3: Good Academic Practice: Referencing

Students will be able to:

* Understand and apply the concept and principles of referencing
* Paraphrase and quote effectively in their work
* Get started with University supported reference management software

**Available as: Workshop, Panopto video, Canvas resource**

A computer cluster room with lectern should be booked for B1-B3 workshops. These workshops can be up to 90 minutes. Smaller groups (up to 50 students) allow for more 1-1 assistance. Online synchronous presentations using Zoom may be a more practical alternative for larger cohorts or students based off-campus.

Find out more about support for research students and staff, please visit the [Library Services Research Support pages](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/library/research)

The Cadbury Research Library can also work with Schools to help students engage with their resources.

To find out more, please visit the [Special Collections page](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/rlt/index.aspx)

# Section C: Digital Skills

The topic areas we support are:

# [The digital student](#_The_digital_student)

# [Office tools](#_Office_tools)

# [Multimedia](#_Multimedia)

# The digital student

## C1: Time Management and Digital tools

Students will be able to:

* Understand the concepts of time management and prioritisation
* Reflect on their time management skills
* Consider strategies, techniques and tools for making the most of their study time
* Have a better awareness of some time management tools including Office365, OneNote and FocusKeeper

**Available as: Workshop**

## C2: Developing a Positive Online and Social Media Presence

Students will be able to:

* Understand what a Digital Footprint is
* Understand the negative consequences of a Digital Footprint and how to limit them
* Understand how to develop a positive digital footprint

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C3: Online Safety

Students will be able to:

* Learn how to protect yourself, your computers and mobiles devices against fraud, identity theft, viruses etc
* Keep your computer safe by updating software
* Safely use networks and the internet

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C4: Collaboration & Sharing Tools

This can also be paired with C8: Working Collaboratively

Students will be able to:

* Use OneNote & Microsoft365 to share and collaborate on a document
* Create, organise and share digital notebooks using OneNote

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C5: Collaboration Tools in Canvas

Students will be able to:

* Use Discussion forums for asynchronous collaboration
* Use Collaborations and Google Docs for real-time collaboration
* Use Conferences for online meetings and presentations

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C6: Using Webinars and Online Meetings

Students will be able to:

* Select the most appropriate tool for online meetings
* Use Zoom, MS Teams and Canvas Conferences
* Plan and host an online meeting

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C7: Microsoft Teams

Students will be able to:

* Plan and host an online meeting
* Collaborate on files
* Schedule and track tasks

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C8: Introduction to Mind Mapping using MindGenius

Students will be able to:

* Create, build and work with mind maps
* Capture unstructured ideas with mind maps
* Use colour and images to highlight information

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C9: Introduction to PebblePad

Students will be able to:

* Create an e-portfolio in Pebblepad
* Add images, video and hyperlinks to their portfolio
* Share a portfolio with others to enable collaboration

**Available as: Digital resources**

# Office tools

## C10: MS Office 365

Students will be able to:

* Use Office 365 apps, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, Teams & Sway
* Use the apps for team collaboration
* Use OneDrive to store files in the cloud

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C11: Creating Accessible Office Documents

Students will be able to:

* Create documents that are accessible to all, e.g. with assistive technologies such as screen readers
* Check Word, PowerPoint and PDFs from Word or PPT documents for accessibility issues
* Use the MS Office Accessibility Checker

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C12: Creating Long Documents in Word

Students will be able to:

* Structure a document using styles
* Create an automated table of contents
* Create sections utilising different headers and footers

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C13: MS Excel

Students will be able to:

* Generate basic formulae and charts
* Use formulae and functions in a worksheet
* Create and use pivot tables

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C14: Using MS OneNote for Note Taking

Students will be able to:

* Create and organise digital notebooks using OneNote
* Share digital notebooks
* Search across notebooks

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C15: Using MS Forms for Surveys

Students will be able to:

* Create surveys, quizzes and polls using a variety of question types
* Share forms with others
* Handle responses to forms

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C16: MS Word

Students will be able to:

* Format documents and work with pages
* Use tables to display numbers, text and graphics
* Manage long documents using Word’s automated features

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C17: MS PowerPoint

Students will be able to:

* Create and present slideshows
* Insert multimedia into presentations
* Use animation functions to enhance presentations

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C18: MS Access

Students will be able to:

* Understand Tables, Queries, Forms and Reports
* Understand the principles of database design
* Build a database in MS Access

**Available as: Digital resources**

# Multimedia

## C19: Designing, Creating and Writing a Digital Academic Poster

Students will be able to:

* Plan a balanced layout of their poster
* Use appropriate text and images to enhance the poster
* Identify and effectively summarise key information for the poster
* Write in a clear, concise way suitable for the audience

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C20: Innovative Presentation Tools

This session can also be paired with A7: Presentation Skills.

Students will be able to:

* Create a presentation using a range of digital tools
* Incorporate multimedia, such as video, audio, images and animation
* Use automated features to aid design and presentation

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C21: Image Editing Tools

Students will be able to:

* Select an appropriate tool to edit images
* Use simple tools such as PowerPoint, Paint, Pixlr and Canva
* Use tools such as PhotoShop, GIMP and Paint.NET for image editing techniques

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C22: Presenting your Idea for a Mobile App

Students will be able to:

* Wireframe a plan for a mobile app
* Generate screen mock-ups for a prototype
* Create a prototype app with working navigation

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C23: Introduction to Video Editing

Students will be able to:

* Understand the use of the timeline in video editing
* Understand common editing techniques
* Be familiar with a range of video editing tools

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C24: Animated Explainer Videos

Students will be able to:

* Learn how to structure an explainer video
* Identify good examples of explainer videos
* Create an explainer video with a range of online tools

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C25: Creating a Website Using Web Builders

Students will be able to:

* Select an appropriate software tool
* Use good design principles
* Make the website accessible

**Available as: Workshop, Digital resources**

## C26: Creating a Blog

Students will be able to:

* Understand how to write a blog and how to enhance it to entice readers
* Share the blog with others and cross-connect to other online content
* Select an appropriate digital tool to create and publish the blog

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C27: Create a Podcast and Editing Audio

Students will be able to:

* Record and produce a podcast
* Edit audio using Audacity

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C28: Creating Digital Promotional Materials

Students will be able to:

* Use online tools to create a range of digital promotional materials, e.g. posters, social media posts, logos
* Understand good design principles for digital promotional materials
* Ensure digital designs are accessible for all

**Available as: Digital resources**

## C29: Introduction to Padlet

Students will be able to:

* Create an online Padlet and add text, images and video
* Share their Padlet with others and use it to collaborate
* Use Padlet to create organisation charts, portfolios, timelines, file sharing and slideshows

**Available as: Digital resources**

If your students require digital skills support for topics not listed, and the skills link to an assessment or programme learning outcome, please let us know on the booking form. We will happily discuss how we may be able to support.

# Section D: Writing Skills

## D1: Academic Writing

This workshop is usually 50 mins long and we cover the basics of academic writing such as planning and structuring, commenting on evidence, writing clearly and concisely. If you’d like this session to be more bespoke, we could accommodate a ‘pic n mix’ approach of the following:

* Getting started with the assignment question
* Planning and structuring a piece of writing
* Using introductions and conclusions effectively
* Writing effective paragraphs and commenting on evidence
* Paraphrasing and using referencing effectively
* Conveying meaning clearly and concisely as possible
* Editing and proofreading techniques

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## D2: Writing your Dissertation

* We can tailor this session to suit primary and secondary dissertation structures.
* It is also possible to request the Literature Review element only or focus on sections most useful to students.
* We are unable to support students with subject specific areas like research methods, narrative synthesis, thematic analysis, critical appraisal (including review tools like Covidence) and data analysis.

Students will be able to:

* Plan timescales for tackling a dissertation
* Define what the different sections of their dissertation should achieve
* Understand the purpose of a literature review
* Read critically and organise their literature
* Structure and write up the review
* Write an effective discussion section
* Manage transitions and create a sense of ‘flow’ within a long piece of work
* Edit and proofread a long piece of work

## Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource

## D3: Managing your Research Project

Students will be able to:

* Cultivate an effective relationship with their supervisor
* Develop time management skills to successfully complete the project
* Consider what makes an effective research question

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## D4: Reflective Writing

Students will be able to:

* Understand the purpose of reflective writing
* Develop and apply reflective practice
* Write reflectively, and understand how this may be different from standard academic writing
* Use reflective models to structure the piece of writing
* Link theory and practice in reflective writing

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## D5: Report writing

This is suitable for the kind of reports written in a Social Sciences context.

Students will be able to:

* Understand the purpose of a report
* Define what the different sections of the report should achieve
* Effectively use structure to guide the reader
* Apply theory to practical situations and contexts
* Convey meaning as clearly and concisely as possible

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## D6: Scientific Writing (including Lab Reports)

Students will be able to:

* Structure a piece of scientific writing effectively
* Write
* ascritically in a scientific context
* Write in a concise scientific style
* Paraphrase scientific ideas
* Write a scientific report, or lab report, according to typical conventions

**Available as: Workshop, Canvas resource**

## D7: Writing a Research Paper or Journal Article

This may be suitable for students writing a research paper or journal article instead of a dissertation project.

Students will be able to:

* Understand the role of different sections of the paper/article, with a particular focus on literature reviews and the discussion section
* Write critically ensuring an engagement with relevant research
* Convey meaning as clearly and concisely as possible
* Identify some effective approaches to editing and proofreading work

**Available as: Workshop**