**Advice on presentation of essays**

The School’s assessment criteria (see Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria) make explicit reference to referencing, expression, and presentation. It’s easy to lose sight of these things when concentrating on content, argument, and structure – this is very often why students don’t do themselves full justice when writing essays. This page gives various tips and guidelines - I'd suggest you use it as a checklist when writing your assignments.

[Section 5.2 of the SLLF Handbook for Undergraduate Students](http://qmplus.qmul.ac.uk/mod/book/view.php?id=314648&chapterid=39285) gives quite full guidance on essay writing, and you should read the relevant sections as part of your preparation. Please note that the School has a *preferred referencing style*, which forms part of the assessment criteria. So, make sure that you follow this format. i.e. author-date references in brackets within the body of your essay, with the necessary details supplied in your bibliography.

Bibliographies should be divided into primary and secondary materials, and alphabetically ordered by the author’s surname. You’d be surprised how often people forget to do this!

For primary texts, references in the bibliography should include details of the editor and/or translator. The references to the set texts in the module guide follow the required format (with one exception: in a bibliography the author's surname should be placed first, e.g. "Rodenbach, Georges" rather than "Georges Rodenbach"), and should be used as a template.

When quoting from a text, if your quotation is short (up to two lines) it should be run on in your main body, and enclosed in single quotation marks. If you’re quoting a longer passage, it should be ‘displayed’, i.e. laid out as a separate paragraph with spacing above and below, and indented (*not centred*). ‘Displayed’ quotations don’t need quotation marks. Remember that quotations of any kind should *not* be italicized, whatever language they may be in.

Take care also with spelling, punctuation, and syntax: there are some pointers on this in the [Handbook for Undergraduate Students](http://qmplus.qmul.ac.uk/mod/book/view.php?id=314648&chapterid=39285). In particular:

* Make sure that punctuation marks are used where they are needed, and that you use the right punctuation marks. For example: in the sentence ‘he sat on the bed; it was old, but comfortable’, it’s an outright mistake to put a comma after ‘bed’. The basic principle is: if you can put a full stop somewhere without producing an incoherent  sentence, it’s *syntactically wrong* to put a comma there! In such cases, if you don’t want to use a full stop, use a semicolon instead.
* Avoid expressions that are verbose, unnecessary, or distorting. For example: don’t say ‘arguably’ when what you mean is ‘perhaps’ (a very common tendency); avoid lengthy phrases like ‘due to the fact that’ (what’s wrong with ‘because’?); and don’t say ‘I think/feel’ when setting out your view (just argue the point).

Finally, please remember the basics of presentation. Your work should be word-processed in *at least* 11 point font, with double line spacing (*including quotations and bibliography*), and with pages clearly numbered. An easy way of ensuring this is to use the SLLF coversheet as the first page of your assignment (i.e. save the coversheet under an appropriate filename and edit your assignment into it). It's set up with page numbers (starting from the first page of the coursework, not including the coversheet), appropriate margins, and double-spacing.