

## Citation/Referencing Advice

Dear QUB Law students,

Following an approach by the Student Law Society, I agreed to prepare the following advice on citation/ referencing in law student writing. I hope you find it useful.

Regards,

Professor Therese Murphy

### TOP TIP

Some law student tasks are challenging; citation/ referencing is not. To be good at referencing, you simply need to be **organised**:

**organised** when you take notes or make copies of sources

Ensure you have full details for any material that might need to be referenced, including eg: volume and issue numbers for the journal in which an article was published; the start page of the article and the page(s) on which the quote can be found; and if it is a chapter in an edited collection, not just the details of that chapter, but also the name(s) of the editor(s), the title of the book and the publication details

**organised** when you are (i) preparing and (ii) finalising assessed coursework

Ensure you give yourself sufficient time both to complete all footnotes and the bibliography by reference to OSCOLA, and to proofread your coursework at least twice.

Remember to proofread is not to scan or glance over. Proofreading requires you to engage in close, thorough scrutiny. It requires intense concentration.

In summary, citation/ referencing is a technical task, which above all requires you to be organised. Keep concerns about it under control: citation/ referencing ranks low down on the 'law-student challenge scale' and, if you inflate the challenge involved, you are not assisting yourself.

### TIPS DERIVED FROM THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES I ENCOUNTER

In what follows, I include not just citation/ referencing mistakes but also common presentation errors.

1. Paginate your coursework (this assists the examiner in providing feedback, eg 'exemplary analysis on p 4')
2. Full stop at the end of each footnote
3. Citing cases: italicise the parties' names and the 'v'; do not italicise the law report details
4. Check your use of apostrophes: eg, It's is the shorthand for It is.

5. OSCOLA does not capitalise the 'i' in 'ibid'; so 'ibid' is correct even if it is the very first word in a footnote

6. If you begin a sentence in the main text of your coursework with a reference to a statutory provision, use 'Section' rather than 'S'

7. If you need to use an abbreviation for the House of Lords in a footnote (eg at the end of a case citation), it should be HL, not HOL

8. Your bibliography should feature all of your secondary sources, **listed via author surname** and without reference to specific pages (eg, just the start page of a journal article, rather than the page featuring eg the quote you used in the main text of your coursework). You do not need separate sub-headings for books and articles. Similarly, blog references do not need a separate sub-heading.

Where required, the bibliography should be followed by (i) a case list and (ii) a legislation and international instruments list. These are the places where you list the primary sources.

9. If the full name of a case is given in the main text of your coursework, then the corresponding footnote needs the citation alone, ie, no need to repeat the case name in the footnote

10. Practice v practise: 'practice' is the noun; 'practise' is the verb

11. 's' or 'z': choose one and use it consistently, eg emphasise v emphasize

12. In the main body of your coursework, indent each new paragraph *unless* the paragraph follows a heading, sub-heading or a block-indented quote

13. If a quote you wish to include in the main body of your coursework is more than 40 words/three lines, it should be block indented and single-spaced

Do not enclose the block indent with quotation marks; the indent signifies a quotation. (But note that shorter, non-indented quotes do require single quotation marks.)

*Do not put the quotation in italics*; italics are used for emphasis.

Avoid lots of lengthy quotes; it is likely they will disrupt the flow of your argument.

When quoting from a source, be exact; avoid errors in transcription.

14. Where, in a sentence in the main body of your coursework, should you insert the footnote symbol?

The following detailed advice is taken from OSCOLA, but the emphasis is mine—it draws attention to rules that are often ignored by students:

Indicate footnotes with a superscript number which should appear *after the relevant punctuation in the text*(if any).

Put the footnote marker at the end of a sentence, unless for the sake of clarity it is necessary to put it directly after the word or phrase to which it relates.

If the word or phrase to which the footnote marker relates is in brackets, put the marker before the closing bracket.

A quotation need not be footnoted separately from the name of the source from which it is derived if the two appear in the same sentence. Otherwise, separate notes should be used.

*Where more than one citation is given in a single footnote reference, separate them with semi-colons.*

## **RESOURCES**

1. OSCOLA: The Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities

<https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/publications/oscola>

This page includes:

- i. the most recent edition of OSCOLA (4th edn 2012)
- ii. a one-page quick reference guidance to the 4th edn
- iii. a dedicated guide to referencing international law, which dates from 2006

2. Attached find a guide I prepared for one of the modules I taught in recent years. My guide follows OSCOLA, but you may find it useful in that it is (i) less detailed than the full 2012 OSCOLA guide and (ii) more detailed than the one-page quick reference guide.