Study Helps for Assignments

Some men who train at London Seminary are used to studying. For others it can be daunting. Studying is an essential part of life in the ministry, however, and your time at seminary provides a great opportunity to establish a pattern of studying that works for you.

Organising Yourself

Work out a sensible timetable and be disciplined. Do not be distracted by other students who may work at a different pace from you. Choose a setting where you can be comfortable and alert, for example at your own desk in your bedroom or in the library. If you work best with music playing, do not inflict this on others who may need silence.

Making The Most Of Lectures

Concentration is demanded. Try to grasp the overall meaning and essence of the subject matter rather than just remembering small details which can be checked afterwards in the lecturer's notes or recommended reading lists. Note-taking will be an aid to this. Be prepared to ask relevant questions for clarification etc.

Note-Taking

This is a skill which you can develop and improve over the course. Use abbreviations to increase your speed but do not try to take down every word because you are unlikely to be able to keep up. Find time to think about the lectures at the end of the day. Go over the main ideas, read up and make extra brief notes where possible.

Effective Reading

Reading is an essential part of your ministry. You will need to keep it up throughout your life, and you will learn to be selective. On the course, spend as much time as you can reading. You will have plenty of reading material recommended to you. Make notes as you go, jotting down points which may prove useful in your studies and for sermons etc. You also need to develop the ability to skim or scan through books. This gives you a quick idea of the contents, and you can note chapters which will be of more importance than others. At other times, you will need to read a book slowly and thoroughly. Some people find it helpful to mark their books. But do not mark library books. Discussing books with fellow students and staff is another useful way of increasing your understanding.

Internet Resources

A vast amount of information is available online and is very easy to access. It is much harder to discern which information is reliable and useful. Much of the best and most up-to-date material in many subject areas is not available electronically. Older material is often available online because it is out of copyright. Material on the internet has often not been peer-reviewed, nor has it had to pass the exacting scrutiny of a reputable academic publishing house. For this reason, you should use internet resources judiciously and sparingly. When you do use them, this needs to be properly acknowledged and referenced, as you would with books and articles.

Writing Essays

Unless otherwise directed by the lecturer, please use the guidelines below for essays. Almost all of what follows also applies to written seminar reflections.

Required Format Of Documents For London Seminary

Because we now operate a paperless system for the submission of assignments, you will need to format your documents as follows:

Assignments must be presented as portrait-format A4 documents in a clear, readable 12-point typeface such as Arial, Calibri, Helvetica or Times/Times New Roman. It is worth checking when choosing a typeface whether the font installed on your computer has a full range of Greek and Hebrew transliteration characters (there is some more information about this towards the end of this document). Your document should be 1.5-line spaced and you should set 3cm margins right and left of the page. This will enable markers to annotate your assignment. It may be a good idea to create a template for all your assignments at the Seminary, formatted in this way.

Labelling Your Documents

Your assignment must be given an electronic file name in the following format:

[your surname] [module] [assignment] [date].pdf

e.g.
smith OT essay 020620
smith OT seminar refl. 020620

The file name you are to use (apart from your surname) will be given on the assignment brief.

You must submit your assignment as **both** a **Word document** and a **pdf**. If you are an Apple-Mac user and don't have Word, you should still be able to export your file as a Word document from Pages.

At the top of the first page of your assignment, you must include the following information:

Name:	[e.g. A. Student]
Assignment:	[e.g. Essay/Seminar Reflections]
Title:	[the question on the brief]
Module:	[e.g. Old Testament, Church History, etc]
Lecturer:	[e.g. A. Lecturer]
Word Count:	[your words used, not the word limit, e.g. 2758]
Date Due	[i.e. deadline]

Your Assessed Assignment

Your assignment will be marked with annotations to the text and an assessment slip giving grades and comments will be attached to the front. It will be returned to you electronically as a pdf.

Other Points about Submission of Written Work

Deadlines – these will be given in the brief and are strictly applied.

Word-Count – Your word-count should **exclude** footnotes and bibliography. See below on 'footnotes' as to what may be included in them.

Length – you will be given a word limit which is not to be exceeded. A piece of work which exceeds the word limit will be marked down and if the limit is exceeded by more than 100 words, it will be failed. Work that is less than 70% of the word limit will also be failed.

Footnotes – should be used if you quote from a book or article, to give a note of the author, title, date of publication, and page reference. They should not be used for additional information or discussion that properly belongs in the text. **Bible references** should be put in parentheses ( ) in the text, e.g. '(Rom 1:16).'

Bibliography – at the end of the essay, provide a list of the books and other material you have consulted for the project.

There are various styles of referencing, and you should become familiar with one of these and use it consistently in all of your assignments. You can find books on referencing styles in section Pink 1.0 in the library. If you are considering further study through the Pastor's Academy, it makes sense to start using to the style required at PRTS on their ThM and PhD programmes. Your bibliographical references should provide enough information for the reader to go to the precise source you have used. For example:

> **Books:** Author's NAME, *Title of Book*, place of publication (Publisher), date
> **Articles in anthologies:** Author's NAME, 'Title of article,' in Editor's NAME, *Title of Book*, place of publication (Publisher), date, page numbers
> **Journal articles:** Author's NAME, 'Title of article,' *Journal*, number, date, page nos.
> **Online resources:** The web address for online resources should be given precisely, to enable the reader to access the specific location within a site where you have found your information. You should also include the date when you accessed online resources, as they can be changed or taken down.

Analysing The Question

On the day you get the brief, spend half an hour or so thinking about what it is asking you for, especially if you do not intend to begin work on the assignment straight away. Otherwise, you will start to formulate ideas about what you will write based on an inaccurate recollection of what the assignment is about. When you begin to write, your first move must be to decide what the question is actually asking you for. Consider very carefully the wording of the question. It is not merely a starting point for your thoughts about the subject: an assignment should do nothing more or less than answer the question. There will be key words in the question, such as 'trace', 'evaluate', 'discuss the importance of', 'explain', 'analyse', etc. Let these determine the direction of your essay.

It is usually possible to break a question down into different elements and this can provide focus for your research. Begin by tracking down information related to the question. Look at your lecture notes, read the suggested reading material in books, journals and magazines, etc. Write down the full bibliographical reference for everything you read straight away. This will generate your bibliography for you. Do not include books or articles that you have not actually read. When you read, keep in mind what you are looking for to address the question.

Structure

A good structure for the essay as a whole is vital. Once you have decided what the question means, plan an outline. This must have the basic structure of introduction, main body and conclusion. Don't just set off writing as a 'stream of consciousness' or voyage of discovery. You should have a good idea of where you are going before you set out. Note the word limit and determine how much space to give to each part of your answer. Don't reach the word limit and just stop. Your essay, like a good sermon, needs to crescendo – build to the point of maximum impact.

At the same time, don't spend too long on the outline – sometimes the best structure for an essay becomes clear only when you start writing it. A good deal of re-arranging of sentences and paragraphs and re-stating of thoughts is generally necessary to produce a good end-result. The research is only half the battle!

Introduction

You need a brief introduction, rather than launching straight into the first main point. The introduction should introduce - i.e. should bring the reader into the subject, rather than throwing him in at the deep end. It should be no more than a paragraph consisting of a few sentences, setting out your goals and mentioning what aspects you will deal with, the main issues etc., as well as your planned approach. A good introduction gives the reader reasons to read on.

Main Body
This is the main content of the essay.

- It must always be relevant to the question. Keep reading the question so that it is always in view and so that the whole body of your essay will be working towards fulfilling the instructions in the question.

- Back up your points and arguments with examples and/or references.

- Generally, each paragraph should make just one main point. It needs to argue and possibly illustrate that point, but it should be focused on the one point. If you argue a number of related points in one paragraph, this simply creates confusion in the reader's mind, as he can't follow where you are going.

- Make your points in a logical sequence so that the reader will easily follow the flow of reasoning you are putting forward.

- The argument of the essay needs to develop and progress in a logical manner - one point must lead to another, rather than just having one point after another. Clear connections between one paragraph and the next are therefore necessary, so that the reader understands the link and thus keeps track of your argument. Keep the line of your argument in view at all times. This is an approach which applies also to preaching!

- As the argument progresses, you will need to deal with likely objections and you may need to deal with potential confusion by clarifying the precise point at issue.

- Do not take whole chunks from books and string them together. Your tutor knows these books! You must rephrase material in your own words, showing that you understand what you are saying. Phrases or sentences may be quoted from authors but must always be in quotation marks and correctly referenced.

- Write short sentences rather than long involved ones. Try to be concise. A short essay is better than a lot of waffle (words really saying nothing).

Conclusion
You need a good concluding paragraph, which brings together the main points you have made - a certain amount of brief re-stating may be appropriate here. You should also bring out any relevant implications that you have argued for in dealing with the question or topic assigned. The aim is, in this final paragraph, to show that all the points you have made build to a final climactic conclusion, which should be summarised in your final sentence.

Reviewing Your Essay
Having completed your essay, ask yourself: Have I answered the question and will it be understandable to the reader? Read it over carefully and adjust where necessary. It is a good idea to aim at the word limit, expecting to cut our some words in the final edit. These will be unnecessary words saying things that can be assumed to be understood, or 'interesting' digressions. Take care not to cut out the parts that convey your argument. Remember also to run a final spelling and grammar check on all your written work before submission.

Helpful Reading
Michael Jensen, *How to Write a Theology Essay*, London (Latimer Trust; Latimer Briefing 11), 2012

Common Abbreviations In Theological Literature

You will encounter the following common abbreviations in the course of your studies. You may use them in your assignments without explanation

AD	years after the birth of Christ (often now replaced in secular literature by 'CE' 'Common Era')
Akk	Akkadian
ANE	Ancient Near East(ern)
BC	Before Christ (often replaced in secular literature by 'BCE' 'Before Common Era')
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
CE	see AD
DOTT	Documents from Old Testament Times
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls (see QL)
EVV	English versions
Gk	Greek
Hb, Heb, Hebr.	Hebrew
LXX	Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT and Apocrypha)
K, Kt	Kethib ('what is written' the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible; see Qr)
MS, MSS	manuscript, manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text (of the Hebrew OT)
MT	Majority Text (of the Greek NT)
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NUT	Nestlé Union Text (of the Greek NT)
SamP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Syr.	Syriac (version of the OT: Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic)
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
Tg	Targum (Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew OT); TgJon: Targum Jonathan; TgOnk: Targum Onkelos
TR	Textus receptus (= Received Text) of the New testament
Ug, Ugar	Ugaritic (Semitic Language, people and culture flourishing in 2nd millennium BC)
Vg, Vulg	Vulgate, Latin translation of the Bible originating with Jerome
QL	Qumran Literature or Dead Sea Scrolls. Q often identifies a particular DSS, e.g. 1QIsa = the great Isaiah Scroll
Q, Qr	Qere ('what is read' when the Masoretic vocalisation differs from the consonantal text; see Kt.)

The following Latin abbreviations are falling out of use, but will often be found in older scholarly works:

c.	circa 'around' – usually with dates (c. 500 BC = 'around 500 years before Christ')
cf.	confer 'compare' (not 'see' which is vide)
ibid(em)	'in the same place' (usually in a footnote referring back to a previous footnote)
idem	'the same' (author, work, etc. mentioned before; to avoid repetition in footnotes)
infra	'below' e.g. in vide infra, 'see below'; vide supra 'see above'
loc. cit.	'in the place cited'
op. cit.	'in the work quoted'
sc	scilicet 'namely'
q.v.	quod vide 'which see' in dictionaries, indicates a term which has its own entry elsewhere in the dictionary
v, vide	'see'
viz, videlicet	'namely'

Some Important Conventions in Writing

Please follow the following conventions in your written work:

Bible Terms and Names
The word 'Bible' should always have a capital letter because it is a title, like 'Odyssey' or 'Quran.' This is not a question of 'reverence' or fashion. The word 'biblical,' however, should not begin with a capital letter (because it is an adjective), unless it is in a heading, such as 'Biblical and Exegetical Reflections.'

Names which end in —s should take an additional 's' after an apostrophe: Thomas's' not Thomas'. The exception to this rule is the name Jesus, which should be written Jesus'.

Some other rules about apostrophes:
> *the apostle's teaching* is the teaching of one apostle
> *the apostles' teaching* is the teaching of several apostles
> *it's* means 'it is'; *its* means 'belonging to it' – never the other way round
> plurals are never formed using apostrophes even though it is common to find apple's, orange's and video's advertised for sale: this usage may be common but is incorrect

'Less' and 'fewer' are often confused. 'Less' should be used with singular nouns: less space, less time; 'fewer' should be used with plural nouns: fewer trains, fewer ideas. In other words, 'there was less apple in the pudding because there were fewer apples to pick.'

Biblical Commentary Series

The following abbreviations refer to series of biblical commentaries

AB	Anchor Bible
TOTC/TNTC	Tyndale Old Testament/New Testament Commentary (IVP)
BST	The Bible Speaks Today (IVP)
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
NICOT/NICNT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament/New Testament
Word	Word Biblical Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
Welywn	Welwyn Commentary Series (EP)
EPS	Evangelical Press Study Commentary
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
NAC	New American Commentary
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary

Roughly speaking, these commentaries can be placed on a spectrum as follows:

technical/linguistic → exegetical → expository → applicatory → devotional

NIGTC - Word - NICOT/NICNT - AOTC PNTC - TOTC/TNTC - EBC EPS NAC - NIVAC - BST Welwyn

Technical and linguistic commentaries may be less conservative in their view of Scripture, whereas commentaries towards the expository, applicatory and devotional end of the spectrum tend to be more conservative and confessionally evangelical. All have their value, so long as you know what to use them for.

Hebrew and Greek Characters

Characters for Hebrew, Greek and transliteration are available in some unicode fonts. Times New Roman has a full set of these, accessible through the 'insert symbol' function in Microsoft word (or 'character viewer' in Mac OS), e.g. דָּבָר dāḇār, ῥῆμα rhēma. Transliteration characters are found in other fonts such as Arial and Calibri. This should be sufficient for the few terms that will need to be given in the original languages in assignments at London Seminary. Better fonts are available but if you use one of these remember that the fonts you use may not be installed on the recipient's device.