The Writing Process Steps 4 and 5: 
Revise and Editing an Assignment

Revising

Revising is the fourth step in the writing process recommended by the Centre for Academic Writing. Revising means making large-scale changes to the draft of your essay or another writing assignment. Changes made during the revising stage typically involve re-developing and re-drafting paragraphs, sections of your paper's main body, and parts of your introduction and conclusion.

When you are writing assignments for your university courses, expect to revise your written work a minimum of three times before it is ready for assessment.

To revise an assignment, check the clarity of your argument and the logic of your paper's structure. You may need to move sections around or re-draft certain areas to strengthen your paper's argument or organisation.

While revising, you may have to return to the inventing stage if you find that a sub-section of your paper is weak, and you may need to do some more reading, discussing, or mind mapping to generate ideas for drafting additional material. You may also have to return to the planning and drafting stages if you find that your assignment lacks organisation in part or overall.

By moving back and forth between the first four steps of the writing process (inventing, planning, drafting, revising), your central argument and supporting arguments will begin to emerge and be strengthened.
Questions about your paper

- Does the paper you are writing answer all parts of the assignment brief?
- Have you formulated a clear thesis statement/statement of argument?
- Have you included convincing evidence for each key point?
- Have you given a full explanation of each point?
- Have you pitched your writing style appropriately for the intended reader of this paper?

Consider the individual elements of your assignment:

Introduction/introductory paragraph

- Have you written the introduction in an attention-grabbing way?
- Have you provided enough contextual information to introduce your topic to your reader?
- Have you defined key terms?
- Have you narrowed and focused the topic?
- Have you introduced your main sub-sections?
- Have you included the thesis statement/statement of argument?

Main body/series of paragraphs

- Have you created a strong thread of argument throughout your paper connecting the individual points/paragraphs to your thesis statement/ statement of argument?
- If your paper is a long essay/assignment, have you created clear sub-sections? Is each introduced and summed up, with transition sentences linking each sub-section?
- Have you given evidence to support each point, with thorough explanations?
- Have you provided clear in-text citations for all sources?
Conclusion/concluding paragraph

- Is the thesis statement/statement of argument reiterated and developed at the end of the main body section, just prior to the conclusion?
- Are the main points that you made in the sub-sections of the paper’s main body summed up here?
- Are your conclusions opened out to apply to industry or professional practice if appropriate?

A revision tip

After writing a first draft of a paper, students often take ideas from their conclusion and put them into their introduction. Doing so helps to forecast, for the reader, what angle the paper will take and what conclusions it will argue toward. If you use this strategy, also be sure to re-draft your conclusion to make it more in-depth and convincing.

Try these revision techniques

1. Ask a friend to read your draft and comment on the quality of your thesis statement/statement of argument and supporting points in the light of the assignment brief.

2. After writing a draft of your assignment, give yourself a few days, then look again at the criteria and re-reread the draft you have written. Re-draft for logic, evidence and thoroughness of explanations.

3. Read your draft aloud to yourself. If you find an awkward-sounding sentence it might be grammatically incorrect and may need re-wording.

Editing

In contrast to revising, editing means making smaller-scale (often final) changes to your draft. Be sure not to leave editorial changes to the last moment, however, as editing requires time and care.
Aim to carry out two stages of editing work: read the assignment through carefully yourself, and also ask a friend to read it through.

Comment on the following:

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Typing mistakes
- Your presentation: typeface, font size (12-point Arial)
- In-text citations (these should be in the Harvard reference style laid out in the CU Guide to Referencing in Harvard Style)
- The List of References (this should be in the Harvard reference style laid out in the CU Guide to Referencing in Harvard Style: www.coventry.ac.uk/cuharvard)
- Language: is it formal enough?
- Register: is the style suitable for your audience (your tutor, who is an expert in the field)?
- Your sentence construction and variety of sentence length
- The document integrity of your draft: changes made while revising and editing may cause a mismatch between parts of your essay. One common type of mismatch is incorrect placement and labelling of figures, tables and illustrations.

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