Frequent advice on academic writing and literature references in deliverable no. 2

1. Never comment on the qualifications, academic standing, *etc.*, of the cited authors

Absolutely refrain from doing this. It is seen as condescending. Examples:

* "Shlomit Schaal M.D and the other qualified authors […]”
* “the author Dr. Fernando has solid credentials […] a PhD in optics from the University of Murcia”
* "Jeffrey Levenson M.D and Alan Kozarsky M.D are board certified ophthalmologists and authors of a book which […]"
* "Dr. Barney Dalgarno is the Director of Learning Online at Charles Sturt University. He has been contributing to research for over 23 years”
* “these studies were conducted with common authors: Kinateder, Max; Dunn, Matt J; Jarosz, Wojciech; Yang, Xing-Dong and Cooper, Emily A. all of whom are reputable academics with relevant qualifications in computer science, psychology, and optometry, among others.”

Instead of such phrases, just write nothing. You need not replace this with anything.

Another reason why the above is not done is that academic writing operates under the preconception that everybody has the same right to make a claim. Scientific claims should be judged without any regard for the person that makes them. This equality is reflected in avoiding not only mentioning any personal merits of the authors, but even their titles. Refer to authors by their surname only. It is Dalgarno, never Dr. Dalgarno.

2. Do not discuss the “status” of a referenced publication

It is seen as inappropriate to justify a claim with the status of the journal where it was published. Results from a technical report can be as correct as claims from articles in Nature or Science can be wrong. It is also not an argument that “paper X has been cited Y times”. This means that passages like these should be avoided:

* “The research conducted by Carmigniani *et al.* (2011) received 440 citations to date, which shows the importance and quality of research”
* “The article was published in a reputable journal that focuses on optometry and vision: The Optometry and Vision Science Journal, which gives some credit to the findings of the paper”

Again, instead of such phrases, write nothing. You do not need anything like this.

There may be very rare cases where you can deviate from this rule – but really think twice.

3. Place citations within the text, not outside the text

It should be clear where you are citing a reference. The reference is technically part of the sentence. Depending on citation style that could be realized as:

* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments (Houwen *et al.*, 2008).
* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments, *cf.* Houwen *et al.* (2008).

Or if you use numerical labels, assuming reference no. 1 is the appropriate one:

* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments [1].
* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments.1

Do not position the reference outside the text. Do not do it as follows:

* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments. (Houwen *et al.*, 2008)
* 60% to 70% of children with visual impairments are born with other motor, sensory or other learning impairments. [1]

The above is wrong because the references are positioned outside the sentences. The exception where a similar positioning would be allowed is as a superscript index.[like this]

4. Do not capitalize function words (of, and, on, …) in journal names or document titles

Do not capitalize prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns other than “I”, and similar words, even in a context where you are capitalizing the other words. That could be as part of an expression that is equivalent to a proper noun, or as a document title. A paper title might be reproduced in one of the following ways, with or without capitalization:

* An Investigation of Head Motion and Perceptual Motion Cues’ Influence on User Depth Perception of Augmented Reality Neurosurgical Simulators
* An investigation of head motion and perceptual motion cues’ influence on user depth perception of augmented reality neurosurgical simulators

In particular, using any of these conventions, “of”, “and”, and “on” remain in the lower case. This also applies to unabbreviated journal names. The following is correct:

* International Journal of Arts and Technology
* IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics

It is also common practice to abbreviate journal names. These words then disappear:

* Int J. Arts Technol.
* IEEE Trans. Vis. Comput. Graph.

5. Do not discuss the style of the referenced literature

It does not matter if a paper is well-written, easy to understand, you subjectively liked its content, and so on. Including any such remarks makes your literature discussion look off topic, and similar as above, it will come across as condescending toward the authors.

Examples:

* [The referenced article …] “is written in a very clear manner with illustrations and pictures showing exactly what the system looked like.”
* [In the referenced article …] “the author clearly explains his own ideas in a manner that is very easy to understand”
* “The background of Dr. Dalgarno speaks volumes in terms of the length of time that he has been a researcher and it comes through in the writing.”

This does not belong in a literature review – as above, instead of this, write nothing.

6. In the manuscript text, abbreviate more than two/three co-authors using “*et al.*”

In a citation, use the “*et al.*” abbreviation as soon as there are four or more co-authors (using Harvard style) or as soon as there are three or more co-authors (most other styles). In the bibliography itself, list all the authors unless you urgently need to save space.