

MBA/DBA WRITING ESSENTIALS:

20 HOURS TO SUCCESS

REPORTS, CASE STUDIES, AND ACADEMIC
WRITING FOR BUSY PROFESSIONALS

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MBA/DBA Writing

Essentials: 20 Hours to

Success

(Reports, Case Studies, and

Academic Writing for Busy

Professionals)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	7
Introduction	8
UNIT 1: Understanding Business Writing in an MBA/DBA Context	9
1.1 What is business writing?	
1.2 Types of writing in MBA/DBA programs	
1.3 Sample excerpts	
1.4 Audience and tone	
1.5 Writing for clarity	
1.6 Summary and next steps	
UNIT 2: Structure and Format of Business Reports	15
2.1 Why structure matters	
2.2 Common components of a business report	
2.3 Formatting tips for clarity	
2.4 Sample report structure example	
2.5 Annotated sample extract	
2.6 Practice activity 1: Report outline	
2.7 Practice activity 2: Formatting exercise	
2.8 Mini quiz: Business report structure	
2.9 Video recommendations	
2.10 Summary and next steps	
UNIT 3: Analyzing Case Studies	23
3.1 What is a business case study?	
3.2 Purpose and structure of case studies	

- 3.3 Identifying key problems and stakeholders
- 3.4 Critical thinking in case analysis
- 3.5 Sample case study extract
- 3.6 Practice activity 1: Case problem identification
- 3.7 Practice activity 2: Analyzing solutions
- 3.8 Mini quiz: Case study analysis
- 3.9 Video recommendations
- 3.10 Summary and next steps

UNIT 4: Writing Introductions and Thesis Statements 29

- 4.1 The purpose of an introduction
- 4.2 Components of an effective introduction
- 4.3 Examples of introductions
- 4.4 Writing thesis statements
- 4.5 Practice activity 1: Identify the thesis
- 4.6 Practice activity 2: Write your own introduction
- 4.7 Mini quiz: Introductions and thesis statements
- 4.8 Video recommendation
- 4.9 Summary and next steps

UNIT 5: Building the Body — Problem Analysis 35

- 5.1 The purpose of problem analysis
- 5.2 Structuring problem analysis paragraphs
- 5.3 Example paragraph
- 5.4 Practice activity 1: Analyze a problem paragraph
- 5.5 Practice activity 2: Writing your own problem paragraph
- 5.6 Linking paragraphs
- 5.7 Practice activity 3: Connect paragraphs

5.8 Mini quiz: Problem analysis

5.9 Video recommendation

5.10 Summary and next steps

UNIT 6: Developing Solution Paragraphs & Introduction to Conclusions

41

6.1 Purpose of solution paragraphs

6.2 Structure of a solution paragraph

6.3 Example solution paragraph

6.4 Practice activity 1: Analyze a solution paragraph

6.5 Practice activity 2: Write your own solution paragraph

6.6 Linking ideas: Compare and contrast

6.7 Practice activity 3: Linking practice

6.8 Introduction to conclusions

6.9 Practice activity 4: Draft a conclusion

6.10 Mini quiz: Solutions and conclusions

6.11 Video recommendation

6.12 Summary and next steps

UNIT 7: Organizing with Headings, Bullet Points, and Effective Formatting

51

7.1 The power of headings

7.2 Using bullet points and numbered lists

7.3 Formatting tips

7.4 Introduction to APA style

7.5 Sample in-text citation and reference

7.6 Practice activity 1: Organize with headings

7.7 Practice activity 2: Bullet points

7.8 Practice activity 3: APA citation practice

7.9 Case study excerpt

7.10 Mini quiz: Formatting and APA

7.11 Video recommendation

7.12 Summary and next steps

UNIT 8: Extended Problem and Solution Sections — Case Study Analysis & APA

Integration

62

8.1 Case study: Tech Solutions Inc. – Navigating rapid market changes

8.2 Analyzing the case study

8.3 Writing extended problem analysis

8.4 Writing extended solution paragraphs

8.5 APA citation practice

8.6 Practice activity: Draft problem and solution sections

8.7 Mini quiz: Extended writing and APA

8.8 Video recommendation

8.9 Summary and next steps

UNIT 9: Language Refinement, Tone, and Finalizing Reports with APA Referencing 72

9.1 The importance of language refinement and tone

9.2 Advanced language techniques

9.3 Common grammar and punctuation issues

9.4 Detailed APA referencing guide

9.5 Practice activity 1: Language refinement

9.6 Practice activity 2: Grammar and punctuation editing

9.7 Practice activity 3: APA citation and reference list

9.8 Case study: RetailCo's e-commerce expansion challenge

9.9 Practice activity 4: language refinement in case study writing

9.10 Practice activity 5: APA referencing

9.11 Mini quiz: Language and APA

9.12 Video recommendations

9.13 Summary and next steps

UNIT 10: Writing a Complete Business Report & Introduction to Dissertation Planning

90

10.1 Case study: Global Foods Ltd. - Market expansion strategy

10.2 Writing the compete business report

10.3 Dissertation writing: Overview and planning

10.4 Dissertation proposal: Key components and planning

10.5 Practice activity 1: Write a compete business report

10.6 Practice activity 2: Draft a dissertation proposal outline

10.7 Final APA referencing practice

10.8 Mini quiz: Business reports and dissertation

10.9 Video recommendations

10.10 Summary and final thoughts

Conclusion 106

Appendix A: Comprehensive Business Report Samples with Case Studies and Analysis 108

Appendix B: Comprehensive APA Referencing Guide for MBA/DBA Students 120

Appendix C: Comprehensive Dissertation Planning and Writing Toolkit for MBA/DBA Students 124

Answers and Explanations for Exercises in Appendices A, B, & C 130

Free Online Resources for MBA/DBA Students 136

Preface

Welcome to *MBA/DBA Writing Essentials – 20 Hours to Success*.

This course was developed especially for busy professionals in MBA and DBA programs who need to strengthen their writing skills for academic and professional success. Whether you're preparing business reports, analyzing case studies, or beginning your dissertation, clear and effective writing is essential.

Many graduate business students are non-native English speakers balancing full-time work, study, and family commitments. That's why this course is practical, self-paced, and time-efficient, just 20 hours in total, broken into 10 focused units that guide you step-by-step through the types of writing most relevant to your program.

You can complete the units at your own pace, revisit sections as needed, and apply the techniques immediately to your coursework and professional tasks. By the end of the course, you will have the tools and confidence to produce clear, well-structured, and impactful writing across academic and business contexts.

It is hoped this course helps you not only succeed in your studies, but also grow as a communicator and leader in your field.

Introduction: How to Use This Course

Course Structure

This is a self-study course made up of 10 units, each designed to take approximately 2 hours to complete. You may move through them in order, or focus first on the areas most relevant to your current writing needs.

Each unit includes:

- A clear focus topic
- Key concepts and language tips
- Short writing tasks or reflection questions
- Practical examples and model texts
- Space for your own notes and practice

Who This Course Is For

This course is designed for:

- MBA/DBA students using English as a second or additional language
- Professionals returning to academic study after time in the workplace
- Learners who want a flexible, efficient guide to business and academic writing

What You Will Learn

By completing all 10 units, you will:

- Understand the structure and style of professional business writing
- Analyze and respond to case studies clearly and logically
- Write business reports with clear organization and persuasive recommendations
- Improve sentence clarity, paragraph flow, and academic tone
- Apply writing strategies to your thesis or dissertation work

Recommended Approach

It is suggested that you through one unit at a time, completing any tasks and reviewing the sample materials. You can also use the self-assessment rubric and checklists at the end of the course to review your own writing or prepare for submission.

Unit 1: Understanding Business Writing in an MBA/DBA Context

Unit 1: Understanding Business Writing in an MBA/DBA Context

Approximate study time: 2 hours

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the purpose and key features of business writing in graduate studies and professional settings
- Identify different types of writing commonly required in MBA/DBA programs
- Understand the importance of audience, tone, and clarity in business writing
- Recognize the differences between business reports, case study analyses, and dissertations

1.1 What is Business Writing?

Business writing is a clear, concise way to communicate information, ideas, and recommendations in professional and academic settings. Unlike creative or informal writing, business writing focuses on purpose, clarity, and action.

Key features of business writing:

- **Clear and direct language** – Avoid unnecessary words and focus on precise meaning.
- **Logical structure and flow** – Ideas should progress naturally from introduction to conclusion.
- **Focus on the reader's needs and expectations** – Think: “What does the reader need to know, and in what order?”
- **Formal but accessible tone** – Professional, respectful, and easy to read.
- **Use of headings, bullet points, and visuals** – Helps organize information and makes it easy to scan.

Mini Activity 1:

Read a short article or email you recently received. Highlight any sentences that are unclear or overly long. Rewrite them in one or two clear, concise sentences.

1.2 Types of Writing in MBA/DBA Programs

Writing Type	Purpose	Typical Features
Business Reports	Analyze problems and recommend solutions	Formal structure, headings, data support
Case Study Analysis	Evaluate real-world business situations	Critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning
Dissertation/Thesis	Present original research and argument	Academic style, extensive referencing

1.3 Sample Excerpts

Example A: Business Report Executive Summary

(This summary introduces the report's purpose, main findings, and recommendations in a clear, concise way.)

“This report analyzes the recent decline in XYZ Corporation’s sales within the Southeast Asian market. Key factors identified include increased competition and shifting customer preferences. The report recommends diversifying product offerings and increasing digital marketing efforts to regain market share.”

Annotation:

- Clear statement of the problem
- Brief summary of findings
- Direct recommendations
- Formal tone, easy to follow

Mini Exercise:

Identify the problem, key factors, and recommendation in the excerpt above. Could you rewrite it in two shorter sentences while keeping all key information?

Example B: Case Study Analysis Introduction

(An introduction to a case study response focused on a logistics company facing supply chain challenges.)

“The case study examines ABC Logistics’ operational difficulties caused by global supply chain disruptions. The analysis will assess the company’s current strategies, identify weaknesses, and propose actionable solutions to improve efficiency and reduce costs.”

Annotation:

- Sets clear scope for analysis
- Defines focus areas
- Uses professional tone and vocabulary

Mini Exercise:

Highlight all action words (verbs) in the excerpt. Think about why active verbs strengthen business writing.

Example C: Dissertation Thesis Statement

(A thesis statement outlining the focus of a research study on sustainable business practices.)

“This dissertation investigates the impact of sustainable supply chain management on the financial performance of manufacturing firms in Southeast Asia, with a focus on identifying best practices that balance profitability and environmental responsibility.”

Annotation:

- Clearly states research topic and scope
- Indicates purpose and significance
- Uses formal academic language

Mini Exercise:

Underline the research focus and the intended outcome. How does this help the reader understand the study’s purpose quickly?

1.4 Audience and Tone

Effective writing depends on understanding your audience. For MBA/DBA writing:

- Use professional, respectful language
- Provide clear explanations and justifications
- Avoid slang, idioms, and overly casual expressions
- Focus on clarity and precision

Mini Activity 2:

Choose one sentence from an email you've written in English. Rewrite **it more formally and with clearer purpose**, imagining it is going to a professor or business executive.

1.5 Writing for Clarity

Tips to improve clarity:

- Use short, simple sentences
- Avoid jargon (or explain terms when necessary)
- Define acronyms on first use, e.g. UN (United Nations)
- Use active voice when appropriate:

Passive voice:

The report was submitted by the marketing team yesterday.

Active voice:

The marketing team submitted the report yesterday.

- Break content into sections with headings and bullet points

Mini Exercise:

Take a paragraph you have written in the past.

1. Identify any passive sentences.
2. Rewrite them in active voice.
3. Break the paragraph into bullet points where possible.