

Writing in my first year – Mele Tākai, BNurs, 2nd year

When I started studying at uni, I found myself panicking all the time because of the challenges I faced. First off, even though I understood that we had to write our own opinion and answer essay questions to show our knowledge, I didn't understand why we had to include other people's ideas. If they really want our opinion, why do we have to reference other people? I just thought lecturers did that to cause unnecessary pain. The second challenge for me was to maintain an academic and objective tone in my writing. My writing tended to have an emotional tone, and I was always told to keep my emotions out - which I found really hard! I also found it difficult to structure my work so rigidly. I don't really like a rigid structure and repetitiveness, but I had to start changing my view on that.

To overcome these challenges, I approached Student Learning Services where I was advised to think differently. I also researched online, asked people who had done the same thing previously, and even talked to lecturers, and I realised that everyone was saying the same thing. So I thought the advice I was being given must be right! So I took it on. When it came to structuring my work, for example, I started to break down and rearrange things so I could fit the structure to my style of learning. It took a while to figure this out, but I eventually got better at it.

In my first year at university, I wasn't very good at organising my work and time. I used to do my assignments literally the night before. But with more experience I now start thinking about an assignment as soon as I'm given it. I do this even before I start researching on the topic or writing anything. Because I start engaging with it so early, I notice that by the time I start writing the essay, words just come. However, if I start an assignment without having thought about it before, it's a lot more difficult to write and I generally get worse marks.

Since I have been applying these strategies, I have definitely noticed that my writing is easier and nicer to read. I used to be really embarrassed to give other people my essays to read because I knew how horrible they were! But now it flows much better and it's easier for the reader to understand what I'm trying to say. I also have a longer reference list than I used to. It helps to make it more credible and the lecturers seem to like it.