

Microsoft Word for Essay Writing

Some formatting techniques you need to know to prepare an academic essay

Academic Skills Centre University of Canterbury

www.academicskills.canterbury.ac.nz

Setting up your document

: Select the *Page Layout* ribbon > Margins. A wider right margin leaves more room for the marker to write comments. Custom options are at the base of the drop-down menu.

: Good things to put in the header are the course code and your student usercode, in case the cover pages become detached. Both can be found as buttons on the *Insert* ribbon.

: These usually go in the footer at the bottom right of each page: *Insert* ribbon > Page Number is better than editing the footer.

: If you need to push something on to the next page, *Insert* ribbon > Page Break is far better than just hitting Enter repeatedly.

Paragraphs

: Click on the Paragraph Dialogue Box button () on the *Home* ribbon > under *Spacing* select *Line spacing* of either 1.5 or double.

vs. : Word now automatically creates gaps between paragraphs so do not hit the enter key twice after each paragraph.

It is more space-efficient, however, to use a first-line indent (Use the TAB key and adjust the indent size in the *Home* ribbon). Word makes default indents too big; they only need to be 0.5 cm or so (around 5 – 6 spaces).

are necessary for your reference list. Select the text and click on the Paragraph Dialogue Box button () on the *Home* ribbon > under *Special*, select *Hanging*. Adjust size as necessary.

: Some quotations are too large to leave in-text and need their own paragraph; left-