USING LEARNING RESOURCES

There are a number of resources at your disposal at university. You should learn how to access these resources and how to pick the correct and appropriate information for assignments, research and reports. It is important that you are able to identify credible resources that are relevant to your subject and to the topic that you are researching. Examples of resources that are available to you:

- **BOOKS**
- **PRINTED ACADEMIC JOURNALS**
- **ONLINE JOURNALS**
- **NEWSPAPERS**
- **THE INTERNET**

USING THE INTERNET AS A RESOURCE

Unlike the other resources the Internet can be an unreliable source of information. Anyone can create a website and add information which may be incorrect or biased. Therefore it is important that you are able to distinguish between credible sources and unreliable ones.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU ACCESS RELIABLE INFORMATION:

- Avoid using Wikipedia as a resource. Information on Wikipedia is not always accurate. You can use it as a starting point to find possible reliable sources or to first get a basic understanding of a topic.

- Verify that your source is valid by checking to see who wrote the article or blog post that you want to use in your research. You should check (by using Google, for example) if the person who wrote the article is qualified and an expert on the subject.
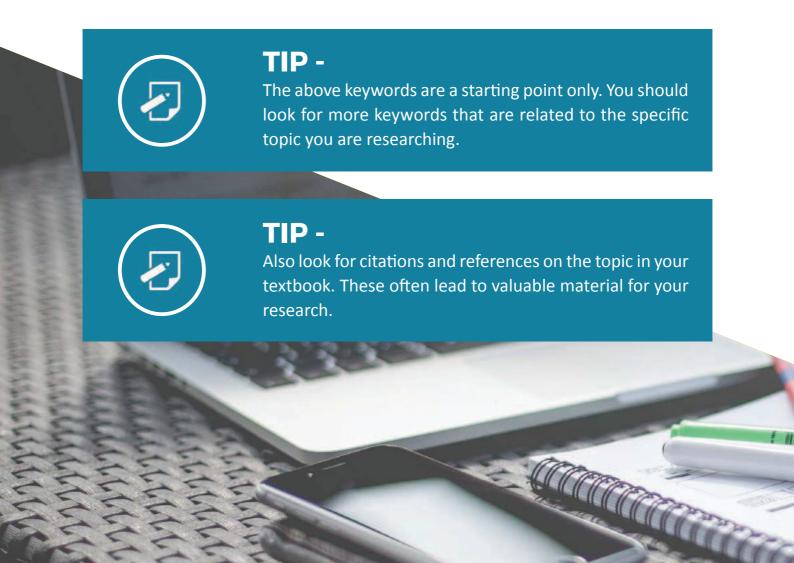
- If the information you find is not written by a credible author or organisation it is best not to use it in your research or assignment.

SELECTING RELEVANT INFORMATION

When you first begin to research a topic you usually start with your assigned textbook or other reading material that the lecturer has provided. You read through the topic in your initial material and pick out keywords that are relevant to the topic or question that you need to research. Use these keywords to find information in other resources. Look out for the following keywords in your initial material:

- Important names
- Theories
- Concept headings
- Acronyms
- Organisations

TIP -
The above keywords are a starting point only. You should look for more keywords that are related to the specific topic you are researching.

TIP -
Also look for citations and references on the topic in your textbook. These often lead to valuable material for your research.

TECHNIQUES TO USE WHEN SEEKING RELEVANT INFORMATION

If you have access to an online library system you can use keywords in a search to find relevant books, journal articles and papers. This is a quick way of finding the appropriate resources. When reading through these resource materials you will need to do a further selection as the information presented can be vast and overwhelming.
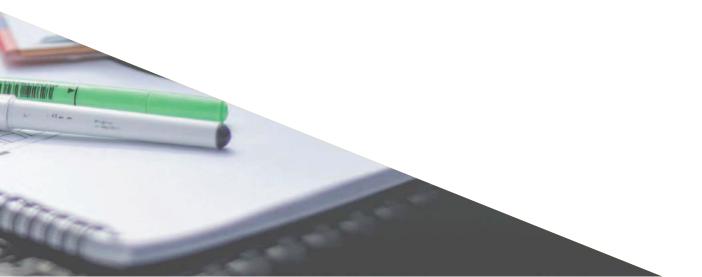
The following two techniques can be useful:
- Scanning
- Skimming

SCANNING

Scanning involves moving your eyes swiftly up and down and side to side across the page, while looking for specific keywords. Do not read the material or attempt to understand it, but simply scan for keywords. Also look for the author's use of 'organisers'. Organisers include numbers, letters, steps, or words such as ' first', 'second', or 'next'. Note words that are in bold or italic. Once you have established whether the document or section is relevant to your research, you can skim through it.

SKIMMING

Skimming is used once you have decided that the document will be relevant to your research. You will then skim through sections that contain certain phrases, ideas or concepts that you have identified with your keyword search. Skimming should be done faster than when you read through an entire document.

10 REASONS WHY
your essays are not getting distinctions

#WriteLikeAChamp

You did not understand the question / topic.

You did not read the question thoroughly.
It is important to identify what the question is asking of you.

You started too late with the assignment and/or research on the topic.

You are being too vague and/or deviating too far from the topic/ question.
Always do exactly what they question asks of you. i.e. When asked to write an opinion on circumcision as a religious right in the Muslim community, don't write about initiation that includes circumcision in African culture.

Not concise enough.
Don't say something in 14 words if you can say it in 7.

Introduction and conclusion are not referring to the question.
i.e. your introduction can contain a brief history or statistics on the questions but it means nothing if it does not relate to your question. Similarly, in your conclusion you should ensure that you answer the question posed in your introduction.

Sloppy spelling and grammar!
With all the online tools available to check spelling and grammar there is no excuse to have a poorly spelled essay.

Structure?
Essay structure does not support the logical flow of the argument.

Incorrect referencing.
i.e. your introduction can contain a brief history or statistics on the questions but it means nothing if it does not relate to your question. Similarly, in your conclusion you should ensure that you answer the question posed in your introduction.

You used secondary references.
Instead of looking up the original = plagiarism!