

CASPIAN SCHOOL OF ACADEMICS

Harvard Referencing Guide

Academic Year 2026/27

Institutional standard

This guide sets out Caspian School of Academics' recommended Harvard author-date approach for students. It is aligned with current Cite Them Right Harvard principles and the 13th edition of Cite Them Right (2025), but it is an original institutional summary rather than a reproduction of that publication.

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Document control and scope

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Caspian School requirement: programme and awarding-body guidance

Harvard has several variants. Where a module handbook, awarding university, awarding organisation, module tutor or assessment brief specifies a different referencing style or Harvard variant, Caspian School of Academics requires students to follow the specified requirement. Law programmes may require OSCOLA. Where clarification is required, students should consult the module leader before submitting assessed work.

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1. What referencing is and why it matters

Referencing is the process of acknowledging the sources of ideas, evidence, words, data, images and other material used in academic work. Harvard is an author-date system: a short citation appears in the body of the assignment and a fuller reference appears at the end.

- Shows where your evidence came from and allows readers to locate it.
- Demonstrates the breadth and quality of your research.
- Separates your own analysis from the work of other people.
- Supports academic integrity and helps prevent plagiarism.
- Allows tutors to check the evidence behind your claims.

Core rule

If an idea, wording, fact, image, table, dataset or other material is not your own and is not common knowledge, acknowledge the source.

1.1 Citation, reference list and bibliography

A citation is the brief source acknowledgement placed within your text, for example (Ahmed, 2024).

A reference list contains full details of the sources you actually cited in your assignment.

A bibliography may also include relevant sources that you consulted but did not cite. Use a bibliography only where your programme or assessment instructions require one.

2. Academic integrity, plagiarism and responsible source use

Academic integrity means producing work honestly and transparently. Plagiarism occurs when another person's words, ideas or work are presented as though they were your own without appropriate acknowledgement.

- Copying text without quotation marks and a citation.
- Paraphrasing too closely to the original wording without acknowledgement.
- Using an image, chart, table or dataset without crediting its source.
- Submitting work written by another person or generated by an AI tool when this is not permitted.
- Inventing references, page numbers, quotations or sources.
- Reusing your own previous assessed work where this is not permitted (self-plagiarism).

Good practice

Take accurate notes as you research. Record author, date, title, publisher/journal details, DOI or URL, and the date accessed where relevant. This is much easier than reconstructing references at the end.

3. In-text citations

Use the author's surname (or organisation name) and the year. Include page numbers for direct quotations and when they help the reader locate a specific point.

3.1 One author

Narrative citation

In-text: Patel (2024) argues that effective induction improves student transition.

Parenthetical citation

In-text: Effective induction can improve student transition (Patel, 2024).

3.2 Two or three authors

Two authors

In-text: Khan and Lewis (2023) identify three common barriers to engagement.

Three authors

In-text: This approach has been widely discussed (Khan, Lewis and Brown, 2023).

3.3 Four or more authors

Use the surname of the first author followed by italicised *et al.* in the citation. List all authors in the full reference where the required style instructs you to do so.

Four or more authors

In-text: Rahman *et al.* (2025) found a relationship between timely feedback and student confidence.

3.4 Organisation as author

Corporate author

In-text: The Office for Students (2025) emphasises the importance of clear information for students.

3.5 No named author or no date

- If no author can be identified, use the title in place of the author.
- If no publication date can be found after reasonable checking, use (no date).

No date

In-text: The guidance recommends early planning (Caspian School of Academics, no date).

3.6 Several sources at the same point

Separate sources with semicolons. A common Harvard convention is to present them chronologically, earliest first.

Multiple sources

In-text: Several studies report similar patterns (Ali, 2021; Morgan, 2023; Yusuf *et al.*, 2025).

3.7 Same author, same year

Distinguish works using lower-case letters after the year and use the same letters in the reference list.

Same year

In-text: (Jones, 2025a) and (Jones, 2025b)

3.8 Page numbers and timestamps

Single page

In-text: (Ahmed, 2024, p. 37)

Page range

In-text: (Ahmed, 2024, pp. 37-41)

Video/podcast

In-text: (Learning Futures, 2025, 12:40-13:15)

Note: Use a timestamp where it helps the reader locate the relevant passage.

4. Quotations, paraphrasing and summaries

4.1 Direct quotations

Use quotation marks for short quotations and include the page number where one is available.

Short quotation

In-text: Ahmed (2024, p. 37) states that "feedback is most useful when students can act on it".

For longer quotations, use an indented block rather than quotation marks. Follow your programme's formatting instructions. Avoid overusing long quotations.

4.2 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means expressing a source's idea accurately in your own words and sentence structure. A citation is still required. Changing only a few words is not adequate paraphrasing.

Paraphrase

In-text: Clear, actionable feedback can help students improve subsequent work (Ahmed, 2024).

4.3 Summarising

A summary condenses the main point of a larger source or section. Cite the source even when the summary is entirely in your own words.

4.4 Ellipses and additions

Use an ellipsis (...) to show that words have been omitted from a quotation. Use square brackets to indicate words you have inserted for clarity. Do not change the original meaning.

5. Reference list and bibliography

- Place the reference list at the end of the assignment.
- Arrange entries alphabetically by the surname of the first author or by organisation/title where appropriate.
- Use one consistent Harvard variant throughout the work.
- Use the exact author and date details that correspond to your in-text citations.
- Keep capitalisation, italics, punctuation and ordering consistent.
- Include a DOI for journal articles when available. If a DOI is provided, prefer it to a long database URL.
- For online sources that can change, include a URL and access date where required.
- Do not include sources you have not read or used merely to make the reference list appear longer.

Reference-management software

Tools such as Zotero or Mendeley can save time, but generated references must still be checked against the required style. Imported metadata can be incomplete or incorrect.

6. Common source types: templates and examples

The examples below show Caspian's recommended Harvard presentation for common sources. Replace the example details with the details of the source you actually used.

6.1 Book

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) Title of book. Edition (if not first). Publisher.

Example

In-text: (Hughes, 2024)

Reference: Hughes, T. (2024) Managing organisations in practice. 3rd edn. Northbridge Academic.

6.2 Chapter in an edited book

Template

Reference: Chapter author surname, Initial(s). (Year) 'Chapter title', in Editor initial(s). Surname (ed./eds.) Title of book. Edition. Publisher, pp. xx-xx.

Example

In-text: (Malik, 2023)

Reference: Malik, S. (2023) 'Inclusive assessment design', in R. Evans and J. Thomas (eds.) Contemporary higher education practice. 2nd edn. Meridian Press, pp. 82-101.

6.3 Journal article

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) 'Article title', Journal Title, volume(issue), pp. xx-xx. DOI.

Example with DOI

In-text: (Shah and Morgan, 2025)

Reference: Shah, N. and Morgan, P. (2025) 'Student engagement in blended learning', Journal of Learning Practice, 18(2), pp. 44-61. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jlp.2025.0182>

6.4 Website or webpage

Template

Reference: Author/Organisation (Year) Title of webpage. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

Example

In-text: (Office for Students, 2026)

Reference: Office for Students (2026) Information for students. Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/> (Accessed: 13 September 2026).

6.5 Online report or organisational publication

Template

Reference: Organisation/Author (Year) Title of report. Publisher/Organisation. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

Example

In-text: (Quality Assurance Agency, 2025)

Reference: Quality Assurance Agency (2025) Annual review of quality in higher education. Quality Assurance Agency. Available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/> (Accessed: 13 September 2026).

6.6 E-book

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) Title. Edition. Publisher. Available at: DOI/URL (Accessed: Day Month Year), where required.

6.7 Newspaper or magazine article

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) 'Article title', Newspaper/Magazine, Day Month. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year), if online.

6.8 Thesis or dissertation

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) Title. Degree type. Institution. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year), if online.

Example

In-text: (Iqbal, 2024)

Reference: Iqbal, R. (2024) Digital engagement among commuter students. MSc dissertation. Example University.

6.9 Conference paper

Template

Reference: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year) 'Paper title', Conference title, location, date. Publisher/Organisation, pp. xx-xx, where applicable.

6.10 Dataset

Template

Reference: Creator/Organisation (Year) Title of dataset [Dataset]. Version, if given. Publisher/Repository. DOI/URL (Accessed: Day Month Year, where required).

6.11 Standard

Template

Reference: Standards body (Year) Standard number: Title. Publisher.

6.12 Software or mobile app

Template

Reference: Developer/Organisation (Year) Name of software/app (Version) [Software/Mobile app]. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

6.13 Module lecture or VLE material

Template

Reference: Tutor surname, Initial(s). (Year) Title of session/material [Lecture slides/Module material]. Module code/title. Institution, date if relevant.

Use primary sources where possible

Do not rely on lecture slides as a substitute for the academic sources they summarise. If the original source is available, read and cite it directly.

6.14 UK legislation

For programmes that use Harvard for legal materials, include the Act title and year and its chapter number. Where a law programme requires OSCOLA, follow OSCOLA instead.

Act of Parliament

In-text: (Higher Education and Research Act 2017)

Reference: Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (c.29). London: The Stationery Office.

Online Act

Reference: Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (c.29) [Online]. London: The Stationery Office. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/contents> (Accessed: 13 September 2026).

Statutory Instrument

Reference: The Higher Education (Fee Limits and Fee Limit Condition) (England) Regulations 2024, SI 2024/0000. London: The Stationery Office.

Note: Use the exact title and SI number from the legislation you consulted.

7. Generative AI and academic work

Generative AI tools can produce text, images, code and other outputs. Whether you may use them in assessed work depends on the assessment instructions, programme rules and awarding-body requirements. Referencing an AI output does not automatically make an otherwise prohibited use acceptable.

- Check the assessment brief and module guidance before using generative AI.
- Never present AI-generated material as your own work where this is prohibited.
- Verify factual claims, quotations and references produced by AI; AI systems can invent sources or details.
- Do not enter confidential, personal, commercially sensitive or copyrighted institutional material into an AI tool unless you are authorised to do so.
- Keep a record of significant prompts, outputs and how you used them where the assessment requires transparency.
- Use original academic sources for substantive evidence wherever possible.

Caspian School guidance: referencing generative AI

There is not yet one universally adopted Harvard format for generative AI. Where a module or awarding body specifies a format, Caspian School of Academics requires students to use the specified format. Where generative AI use is permitted but no format is prescribed, students should follow the transparency approach below and confirm the approach with the module leader.

Caspian recommended fallback format

In-text: (OpenAI, 2026)

Reference: OpenAI (2026) ChatGPT response to prompt on approaches to formative feedback, 13 September [Generative AI]. Available at: <https://chatgpt.com/> (Accessed: 13 September 2026).

Note: Where practical, retain the prompt/output as an appendix or evidence record if your assessment requires this. Do not include sensitive information in the prompt.

For AI-generated images, identify the tool, date and a concise description of the prompt or output, and follow any assessment-specific requirements for figure captions and appendices.

8. Secondary referencing and missing information

8.1 Secondary referencing

Secondary referencing occurs when the source you are reading discusses an earlier source that you have not read. Whenever possible, locate and read the original source yourself.

Secondary citation

In-text: Taylor (1998, cited in Morgan, 2024) argues that ...

Note: Only Morgan (2024), the source you actually read, should normally appear in your reference list.

8.2 Missing author

If no author or organisation can be identified, use the title of the work in the author position. Do not invent an author.

8.3 Missing date

If no date can be identified after reasonable checking, use 'no date' consistently in both the citation and reference.

8.4 Missing page numbers

Webpages and some electronic sources have no stable page numbers. Omit the page number; for audio or video, use a timestamp if it helps the reader locate the material.

9. Figures, tables, images and other media

Images, figures, diagrams, charts and tables taken or adapted from another source must be acknowledged.

- Give each figure or table a number and concise title.
- State the source beneath the figure/table or in the caption, following your programme's formatting requirements.
- Include the full source in the reference list.
- If you adapt rather than reproduce a figure, use wording such as 'Adapted from ...'.
- Check copyright and licensing conditions before reproducing material.

Figure source

In-text: Figure 2. Student engagement model (adapted from Rahman, 2025, p. 64).

Reference: Rahman, L. (2025) Student engagement in higher education. Northbridge Academic.

9.1 Video

Online video

Reference: Creator/Channel (Year) Title [Video]. Platform, Day Month. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

9.2 Podcast

Podcast episode

Reference: Presenter/Producer (Year) 'Episode title', Podcast title [Podcast], Day Month. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

9.3 Social media

Social media post

Reference: Author/Organisation [@handle] (Year) First words or description of post [Platform], Day Month. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).

10. Final referencing checklist

- ☐ Have I cited every source of ideas, words, data, images or other material that is not my own?
- ☐ Do all in-text citations have a matching entry in the reference list?
- ☐ Does every reference-list entry correspond to a source cited in the assignment (unless a bibliography is required)?
- ☐ Have I used the Harvard variant required by my programme or awarding body?
- ☐ Are authors' names and publication years consistent between citations and references?
- ☐ Have I included page numbers for direct quotations?
- ☐ Have I used a DOI for journal articles where one is available?
- ☐ Are URLs and access dates included where required?
- ☐ Have I checked the spelling, punctuation, italics and order of every reference?
- ☐ Have I identified any secondary references clearly and avoided them where the original source is available?
- ☐ Have I acknowledged any permitted use of generative AI in the way required by the assessment?
- ☐ Have I checked that every cited source is real, accessible and accurately represented?

11. Quick-reference examples

Source	In-text	Reference pattern
Book	(Hughes, 2024)	Hughes, T. (2024) Title. 3rd edn. Publisher.
Journal article	(Shah and Morgan, 2025)	Shah, N. and Morgan, P. (2025) 'Article title', Journal, 18(2), pp. 44-61. DOI.
Website	(Office for Students, 2026)	Organisation (2026) Page title. Available at: URL (Accessed: date).
Report	(Quality Assurance Agency, 2025)	Organisation (2025) Report title. Organisation. Available at: URL (Accessed: date).
Direct quote	(Ahmed, 2024, p. 37)	Full reference for Ahmed (2024).
Four+ authors	(Rahman et al., 2025)	List authors in the full reference according to the required variant.
No date	(Organisation, no date)	Organisation (no date) Title. Available at: URL (Accessed: date).

AI, if permitted	(OpenAI, 2026)	Tool provider (Year) Description of response, date [Generative AI]. URL (Accessed: date).
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12. Further guidance and sources used

This guide was prepared as an institutional summary using the earlier Caspian Harvard guide as a starting point and updated against current referencing guidance available in September 2026.

Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2025) *Cite Them Right: The Essential Referencing Guide*. 13th edn. Bloomsbury Academic.

Bloomsbury Academic (2025) *Cite Them Right*, 13th edition: publisher information and description of updated coverage, including AI-generated material.

University of the West of England Bristol (2026) *Cite Them Right Harvard and In-text citations guidance*.

University of the West of England Bristol (2026) *Using generative AI at UWE Bristol*.

University of Leeds Library (2026) *Leeds Harvard referencing examples*, including guidance for Acts of Parliament and contemporary source types.

Need help?

If you are unsure which referencing style or variant applies to your assessment, check the module handbook or assessment brief first, then ask your module leader. Do not wait until the submission deadline to resolve referencing questions.

Version note

Version 1.0 (September 2026): New institutional guide. Updated to reflect current Harvard author-date practice, DOI use, modern digital source types, secondary referencing guidance, UK legislation examples, and responsible use and acknowledgement of generative AI.