

MS CAMMY MAN (2): ADVICE ON LEGAL WRITING

What are the main challenges that students encounter in legal writing?

One of the major challenges would be we have to keep the words to the word limit imposed by the professors. So, that is a really big challenge because after reading lots of materials, we have a lot of ideas that we'd like to put down or include in the passage. However, the space is limited. We have to keep the presentation or the expressions short and simple while at the same time we do not cut the content as well.

What advice do you have for students who are learning legal writing?

In terms of content, I would advise students to read more materials before they jump to start writing their articles because when you have more materials, you get to know better what is the focus or what is the information that's very important in writing in that aspect. And after reading those materials, it's very important to get it structured and organized, so that when you write it, you know where to put those information in. And also, at the same time, after start writing those paragraphs, it's very important to start editing them, so that you know what expressions would be better to present that idea because at the time when you write it, you may not be very mindful of what expressions you use while you write them, so we should also spare enough time after writing the articles to edit them as well.

What should students pay attention to in their writing?

I think there is a tendency that students usually pick the easiest way to write an article. For example, there is a mainstream in writing the articles informing that view, so it's easier for students to find more supporting authorities to write in that stance. However, I would recommend students to read a wider variety of articles, so that they can know what are the conflicting views of other scholars. So not only can they more enhance their legal knowledge, but at the same time when they write it, they learn to write how to address those conflicting comments and how to find other scholar views to support them to oppose to those conflicting views.

What can students do to write better?

One way to learn to write better would be for students to treat every task they do and every assessment or assignment they do seriously, so after they write the article or the assignment, they can get their teachers to mark it and they can seek advice as to how they can improve further. Because usually students would think, 'It's okay, after I hand it in, I can get a mark or I can pass it anyway', but it's more important to treat the task more seriously, so that we can get teachers' feedback which is very constructive, so that we can improve further next time.