Student Learning Centre

PREPOSITIONS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

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A preposition is a noun and can be defined as *"any member of a class of words found in many languages that are used before nouns, pronouns, or other substantives to form phrases functioning as modifiers of verbs, nouns, or adjectives, and that typically express a spatial, temporal, or other relationship, as in, on, by, to, since."* www.dictionary.com, viewed 4 July 2013

The following prepositions are the ones most commonly used in academic writing. You may like to add to the list as you come across more prepositions in your own reading.

About/Concerning

- comments about
- a conference about
- data about
- a debate about
- issues about
- a lecture about
- legislation about
- a policy about
- research about
- statistics about
- a theory about
- a thesis about
- to worry about

Against

- discriminated against

As

- to conceive of something as
- to emerge as
- to identify someone/something as -ing
- to perceive something as
- its status as

At

- at the end of the semester
- to estimate something at
- at fault
- at a university
- at a/the x level

Between

- a comparison between
- a connection between
- a contrast between
- a differentiation between
- a distinction between
- an interaction between
- a partnership between

By

- allocation by
- followed by
- offset by
- preceded by

For

- adequate for
- to apply for something
- appropriate for
- available for
- a capacity for someone
- a challenge for someone
- compensation for
- a contract for
- criteria for
- difficult for someone to do something
- imperative for someone to do something
- to have implications for
- an incentive for -ing
- a justification for
- a mechanism for -ing
- a need for
- an option of someone
- to prepare someone for
- a problem for someone
- problematic for someone
- responsible for
- scope for
- strategies for
- to be suitable for
- a tendency for someone to do something
- for a year (e.g. statistics for 2004)

From

- derived from
- a deviation from
- to discourage someone from doing something
- excluded from
- protected from
- removed from

In

- in the area of
- in conformity with
- in a university department
- to engage in
- an error in
- to have experience in
- in . . . field/sphere
- to fill in
- in . . . font
- in . . . format
- an improvement in
- inherent in
- interested in
- involved in
- to have instruction in
- intrinsic in
- to invest in
- current issues in
- to be involved in
- in a . . . manner
- to occur in
- participation in
- persistent in -ing
- proficiency in something
- in . . . region
- to conduct research in
- resident in
- a revolution in
- to have a role in doing something
- . . . in scope
- in the first semester
- a shift in
- significant in
- in a topic
- to have training in something

Into

- to conduct research into
- integration into
- an investigation into

Of

- accused of
- an analysis of something
- to analyse something
- ashamed of
- an awareness of
- on behalf of
- capable of -ing
- composed of something
- to conceive of something (as)
- constraints of
- critical of
- a definition of something

CRICOS Provider No: 00114A

- to define something
- evidence of
- an extract of
- a fear of something
- a guarantee of
- an implication of
- the importance of
- an incidence of
- an indication of
- indicative of something / to indicate something
- of interest to
- an instance of
- issues of
- a limitation of
- to make use of
- an objective of
- on the part of
- proud of
- of relevance to
- the scope of
- a source of
- the status of
- a survey of
- a theory of
- to be unaware of
- (in) violation of
- a vision of

On

- on average
- on a . . . basis
- (to) comment on
- a concentration on
- to have an effect on something
- to affect something
- an emphasis on something
- to emphasise something
- (to) focus on
- (to) impact on
- imposed on
- information on
- a lecture on
- a levy on
- to major on
- a perspective on
- to prevail on something to do something
- to answer questions on
- a questionnaire on
- a reliance on
- to rely on
- to do research on
- to put/lay stress on someone/to stress something
- a thesis on

To

- to have access to
- accustomed to
- adjacent to
- an adjustment to something
- to adjust something
- allocate something to
- an amendment to something
- to amend something
- analogous to
- to be apparent to something
- to apply to something
- an approach to
- appropriate to (do) something
- an alternative to
- an attitude to/towards
- a challenge to something
- to challenge something
- a commitment to
- committed to
- confined to
- to consent to
- a contribution to
- corresponding to
- devoted to
- due to
- equivalent to
- exposure to
- external to something
- fundamental to
- grateful to
- important to something
- identical to
- inherent to
- intrinsic to
- known/unknown to
- to object to
- obvious to
- prior to
- proportionate to
- a reaction to
- related to
- relevant to
- reluctant to
- resistant to
- restricted to
- significant to
- similar to
- specific to
- subordinate to
- subsequent to
- supplementary to
- to transfer to

With

- to agree with
- to argue with something about something
- associated with
- to coincide with
- compared with
- (in)compatible with
- concurrent with
- in conformity with
- to be consistent with
- to deal with
- familiar with
- to identify with someone/something
- interaction with
- partnership with
- to provide someone with something
- satisfied with

These words are mostly taken from Coxhead, A, *The academic word list*, viewed 21 June 2005, <http://massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/sublists.shtml>.

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