

GAC005 Practical Academic Documents and Protected Collaboration

GAC Computing

Choose tools for the actual academic task

Your group researches school transport. One member uses a phone. Another works offline. A third needs large text. The newest app may not suit them.

These additional notes teach practical GAC005 skills. Keep the original handout beside them. Follow your centre's current task, required software and submission rules.

A **word processor** helps you create and revise a formatted document. A shared editor can support joint writing. Presentation software organises visual support for a talk. Video software combines recorded sound and images. Choose tools by the task, rather than using one tool for everything.

Compare access, formats, cost, privacy, offline use and helpful reading features. Test headings, tables and comments on the actual devices, including after conversion.

For a new or **emerging technology**, first test a small, non-sensitive task. Check who runs it, what information it stores and what you can export. Keep a usable copy outside the tool. A fluent-looking automatic answer still needs source checking. Follow the centre's rules on permitted assistance and acknowledgement.

Store, protect and recover your information

Put related files in a clearly named project folder. Separate sources, working drafts and submission copies. Names such as **transport_report_2026-10-02.odt** are clearer than **new_final_final.doc**. Use the same naming system throughout the group.

Access permission controls who can read or change information. Give editing access only to people who need it. A public link can reach people outside the group. Check the sharing list before sending a file. Store participant details separately from a report, under the centre's rules. Do not collect identifying information just because a form allows it.

Use a strong, unique password and **multi-factor authentication** where available. This uses more than one kind of evidence to confirm your identity. A password and a code from another device are one example. Do not share sign-in details to share a document. Verify an unexpected message before opening its sign-in link. Update supported software and lock a device when you leave it.

Synchronisation keeps copies aligned. A **backup** gives a separate recovery copy. They are different: synchronisation may copy an accidental deletion too. Keep a separate, permitted backup and test that you can restore a harmless sample file. Version history may help recover changes, but its retention and detail depend on the service.

Worked case. Mei deletes a paragraph, and the change reaches everyone's device. Repeatedly downloading the current document keeps the deletion. The group checks version history, restores the correct paragraph and verifies the result. If that history is unavailable, a separate earlier backup may help. Neither method excuses checking the final file.

Create and revise an academic document

Start with the centre's report structure. For this practice task, use a title, research question, method, findings, discussion and references. Create a short outline before adding paragraphs. Keep a source record while researching: author, title, date, location and the claim it supports.

A **paragraph style** applies a named set of formatting choices. Use Heading 1 for main sections and Heading 2 for subsections. Use the normal text style for paragraphs. Large bold text alone may look like a heading without being recognised as one. Do not skip heading levels just to get a smaller font.

For example, LibreOffice Writer offers paragraph styles. Place the cursor in a heading paragraph and apply its named heading style. Change the style when you want every heading of that level to change. Page styles control page layout, including margins, headers and footers. Menu names may differ by version or language; use the installed program's Help.

Add a small table through the table tool. Give each column a clear heading and include units where needed. Enter data in cells, rather than aligning it with repeated spaces. Put a figure close to the text that explains it. Add a meaningful caption and its source where required. A table does not need a chart unless the chart helps explain the data.

Use page breaks when a new section must start on a new page. Do not press Enter repeatedly to push text down. Add page numbers using the program's page-number field. If the brief needs a contents list, create it from heading styles and update it after editing.

Revise meaning before appearance. Check whether each claim has evidence, whether the methods answer the question and whether limits are clear. Then check spelling, names, units and references. An automatic spelling suggestion can change a technical term incorrectly. Read the corrected sentence yourself.

Collaborate on an open-source platform

Open source means the software's source code is available under a licence allowing specified use, study and changes. It does not mean every hosted service is free, private or open to everyone. An online tool is not automatically open source.

LibreOffice Writer is an open-source desktop word processor. It is useful for individual document work. For joint browser editing, a centre can provide a suitably configured Nextcloud service with an office editor. Nextcloud's documentation describes collaborative office editing and the required document-server integration. Use the editor actually enabled by your centre; do not assume any Nextcloud installation includes it.

Practise with non-sensitive sample text. Each group member signs in with their own account. The owner creates one shared working document and gives the group suitable permissions. Agree an outline, roles and dates. Add a comment explaining a proposed change. Another member responds. Use a review or suggestion feature if the installed editor supports it; otherwise record proposals in comments.

Review the content together before accepting changes. Check the current document, comments and available history. Keep a short decision record: what changed, why, who checked it and what remains unfinished. History helps show activity, but the group must still explain each member's actual work.

If offline edits create two copies, do not silently choose the newest file. Compare the changed sections and merge the intended work. Confirm that no member's paragraph or source record disappeared. Then agree which shared copy is current.

Export, check and share a submission copy

Keep an **editable file** for future corrections. A **PDF** is often useful for sharing a stable page layout. Exporting a PDF does not replace the editable source. Use the formats required by the centre.

Check headings, font size, contrast, table headings and useful image descriptions. Run an accessibility check where available, then read the document yourself.

Export a sample PDF and open that exported file. Check every page: missing text, broken characters, empty pages, clipped tables and correct page numbers. Search for an expected sentence to test that text is present. Ask a group member to open the submission copy on their device. A file that works only on your computer is not ready.

Share the correct submission copy with the intended audience. Check access using the actual recipient's permitted account or the centre's approved procedure. Keep private drafts separate. Record the submitted filename and date. Correcting the source later does not change a PDF already sent.

Practise a complete academic workflow

Original practice brief. Prepare a short group report and a three-minute talk on school transport. Use approved existing information, or gather new responses only with the required permission. This practice brief is not an official assessment.

1. Define the question and group you can study. Record sources and their limits.
2. Test tools, headings, tables and shared comments. Set suitable permissions.
3. Agree roles and dates. Draft a report with headings, evidence and references.
4. Revise together and record decisions. Keep the editable file and test recovery.
5. Build slides with clear messages. Explain evidence and limits aloud.
6. Rehearse with a timer. If video is required, check shots, sound and media permissions.
7. Inspect exports on another device. Submit the required files and preserve the group record.

Finishing the notes is preparation, not evidence that you have completed these practical tasks. Keep the actual files and revision evidence required by your centre.

Practice and explained answers

Questions. 1. A phone-only member cannot edit the format. What should you test? 2. Why is synchronisation insufficient recovery protection? 3. Why use heading styles? 4. Does online editing prove open-source software? 5. Two offline drafts contain different new paragraphs. What should happen? 6. Does fixing the source change a PDF already sent? 7. What evidence shows a completed workflow?

Explained answers. 1. Test editing, conversion and sharing on the actual device. 2. Deletions may spread; use a separate permitted backup and test recovery. 3. Named styles give recognised structure and consistent revision; they can support navigation and a contents list. 4. No; check the licence and source availability. 5. Compare and merge intended changes, then agree the current copy. The latest timestamp alone is insufficient. 6. No; export and check a corrected PDF, then follow the correction procedure. 7. Show the source record, editable report, revisions, access check, tested recovery copy, final exports and rehearsed presentation.