



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY  
*(International) in the United Kingdom*  
Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

## Introduction: Why Write Abstracts

An abstract provides an overview of the book and makes reading the text easier and more efficient. It saves librarians and researchers time.

### Writing an Abstract - How to Begin:

- Find a book which fits with the themes of the MCA project and which corresponds to your field of interest.
- Email the title of the book or encyclopaedia to the MCA team. Once the titles have been approved, read the book or encyclopaedia, and start writing the abstract.

### Types of Abstracts:

There are two types of abstracts: informative and descriptive.

**Descriptive Abstract:** An abstract only outlines the topics covered in a book and is not more useful than a table of contents. It does not fulfil MCA purposes.

**Informative Abstract:** An informative abstract provides details about the substance of a piece of writing. Abstracts in any discipline typically follow this format:

**1) Purpose/Content:** The scope of the work / summary. What gap is this research filling or claiming to fill? What is interesting about this book? Does it have an impact?

**2) Methods/Procedure/Approach/Organisation:** Does it have a method / a special approach?

**3) Results/Findings/Shortcomings:** What can be learned from this book? What kind of evidence does the author provide? Are there any shortcomings or biases? How is the overall quality?

**4) Conclusion:** Concise statement of the major points.

### Some Advice

- It is important to note that the weight afforded to the components mentioned above can vary by discipline.



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- Following a **checklist strategy** in gathering information should make it easier to write an abstract.
- Bear in mind that the **target audience** of the abstract are scholars as well as general readers (even if the selected book was not intended for both groups).
- Within this framework, one can still **be creative**.

### **Tips for Writing Quality Abstracts:**

- The usage of **key words** in an abstract is vital, as in cases where the information is stored electronically, it may allow interested parties to locate the abstract more easily.
- Sentences and paragraphs have to be **concise**. Abstracts are not detailed book reviews; therefore they have to be focused and should establish the scope of the book.
- Take notes as you read, **highlighting the major points** of the piece and outlining the significant details: list the **ideas** that the book communicates.

### **Other Considerations:**

- An abstract should be self-contained and not make vague statements.
- Meet the **word count limit**.
- List keywords

### **Finally:**

Writing an **efficient abstract** should not necessarily be hard work if these few steps are followed. With practice you will not only become a good abstract writer, but also a good communicator as you will be able to put across ideas in a clear and succinct manner. Through your involvement with the MCA, your work will be read by many people and you will have the opportunity to develop valuable academic relationships.