

UTS:

HELPS

HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE AND PRESENTATION SUPPORT

Writing an Essay 1: Overview

UTS CRICOS PROVIDER CODE: 00099F

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Workshop Objectives

- To understand the **genre** of essays in terms of purpose, language and overall structure
- To become aware of the University's expectations and the thinking skills involved in writing an essay
- To understand the process involved in writing an essay
- To practise analysing an essay question, planning to write, then analysing a model in terms of overall structure

Discuss

- What's the **purpose** of the essay?
- What does the **structure** look like?
- How can you **plan** for it?

Academic Thinking Skills

What is expected of university students?

- Acquire knowledge
- Demonstrate knowledge
- APPLY that knowledge

- Analyse and synthesis information
- Critically evaluate information

University students are not only required to acquire knowledge and demonstrate their comprehension of what they have learnt but they must also be able to show that they are able to **apply that knowledge** appropriately within their discipline.

In order to further progress along the continuum of learning, they must be able to **analyse and synthesise** information, theories and concepts, and then **critically evaluate** such information to question its validity, further develop ideas, make recommendations, devise solutions, and discuss implications.

Academic Thinking Skills

BLOOMS TAXONOMY



Adapted from: Vanden Zander, W. J., 1984, *Bachelor of Building in Construction Economics – Preparatory Studies*, course notes, UTS, Sydney.

Fail vs. D/ HD

Better academic results require **deeper analysis**.

This means drawing on sources, identifying contrasting positions, identifying outcomes and implications and critically commenting on the theory.

Fail vs. D/ HD

The cat sat on the mat

- **Fail** The cat sat on the **ground**.
- **Fail/ Pass** The cat sat on the **mat**.
- **Pass** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, **and this indicates that cats should be kept off mats**.
- **Credit** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, and this indicates that cats should be kept off mats. **Studies by Smith (1996, p. 7) show that cats sitting on mats have a positive effect on mat compressibility.**
- **D / HD** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, and this indicates that cats should be kept off mats. **Studies by Smith (1996, p. 7) show that cats sitting on mats have a positive effect on mat compressibility. In contrast, Brown (1997, p. 34) claims that cats do not make mats flat. However, his observation was based on a study of newborn kittens so this cannot be judged as reliable.** Therefore, if mats are to be kept in an uncompressed condition, it is preferable that cats not be allowed to sit on them.

Adapted from Jones, G. 2006. UQSS Course, The Learning Centre, UNSW, Sydney

Types of Assignments

- Essay
- Report
- Case study (practice/theory; problem/possible solutions)
- Critique (analyse and evaluate - text, theory, practice, person)
- Literature Review (read topic widely; evaluate each text)
- Reflective Journal (map your learning/thinking)
- Research Review (examine research against set of questions)
- Abstract/Executive Summary/Synopsis (separate summary)
- Annotated bibliography (overview and relevance of text)

Essay Types – what's the purpose?

Expository or Explanatory

(informs and explains)

- A Description of events (history) or a process (science)
- An Explanation of something (causes-outcomes)
- Comparison/Contrast eg. Compare theme in poems; compare policies of political parties

Discussion/Argument Essay

(presents arguments; points of view; supports view with evidence; compares and contrasts other views)

The Writing Process

ESSAY QUESTION

Understand links to the course
Clarify key terms

RESEARCH

6-8 sources (1500 words)
10-12 sources (2500 words)

READING

To gain familiarity with the topic
To understand the question

READING/ WRITING

Note-taking
Summarising

WRITING – FIRST DRAFT

Rough plan
Select key ideas & notes

WRITING – SECOND DRAFT

Develop key points
Paragraph structure

WRITING – THIRD DRAFT

Organise ideas more clearly
Check logical links between ideas
and back to the question

EDITING

Check logic & clarity
Check grammar & spelling

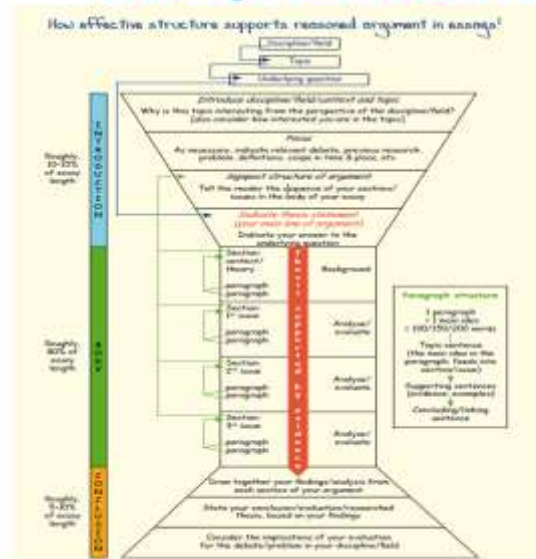
REFERENCE LIST

Check details

FINAL PROOF READING

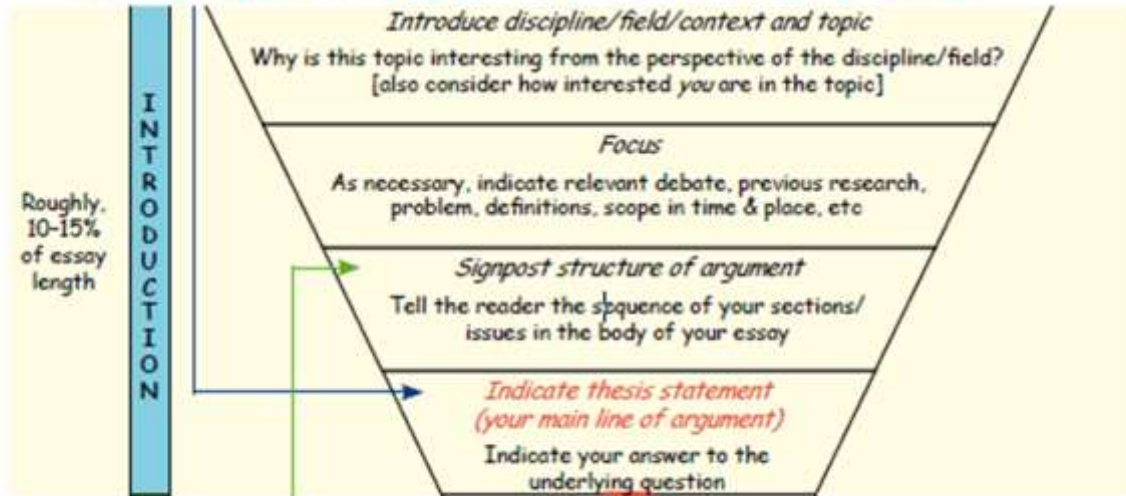
Minor adjustments

Essay Structure



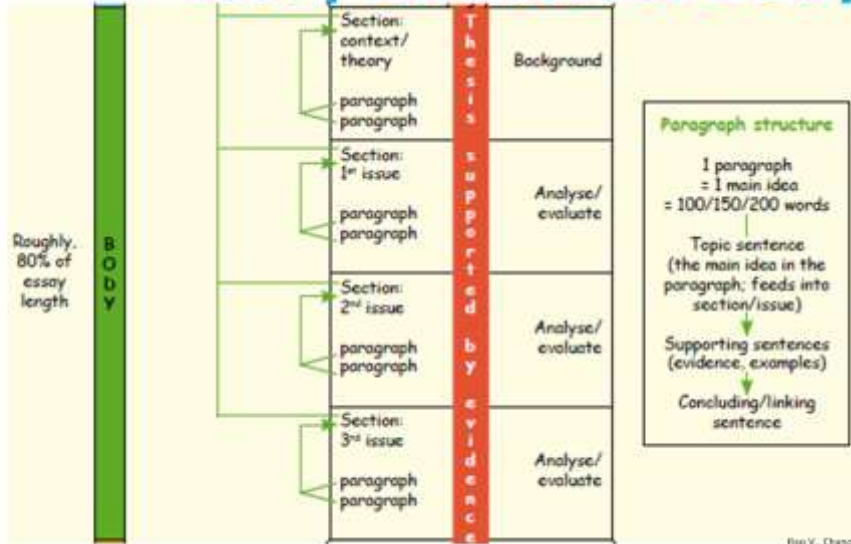
Rao, V., Charoob, K., & Krishnar, L., 2007, A visual guide to essay writing: How to develop and communicate academic argument, Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL), Sydney.

Essay Structure: Introduction



FileV, Charock, K., & Krishnan, L., 2007. A visual guide to essay writing: How to develop and communicate academic argument. Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL), Sydney.

Essay Structure: Body

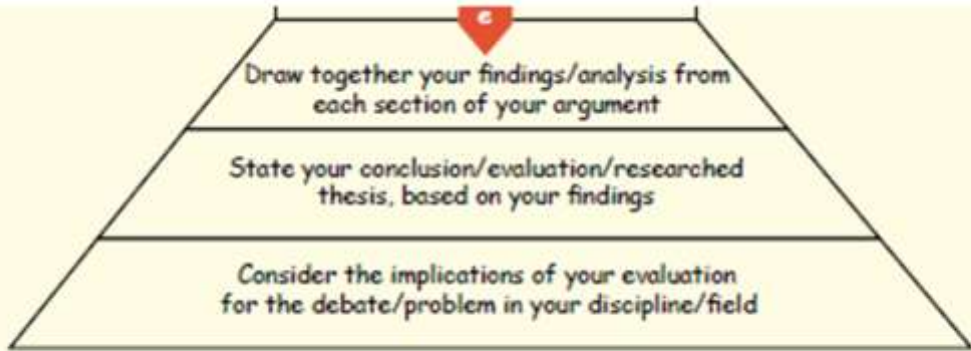


Rao, V., Chasock, K., & Krishnar, L., 2007. A visual guide to essay writing: How to develop and communicate academic argument, Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL), Sydney.

Essay Structure: Conclusion

Roughly,
5-10%
of essay
length

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Rao, V., Charoob, K., & Krishnan, L., 2007, A visual guide to essay writing: How to develop and communicate academic argument, Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL), Sydney.

More on Essay Structure

- HELPS website

<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/academic-writing/essay-writing>

Activities

1. Analyse the following essay question:

In the last 20 years, rates of divorce have risen significantly in Western countries. Critically analyse some of the different explanations given for this phenomenon. In your discussion you should consider what implications these explanations might have for social policy.

2. How would you plan to answer this question?

To see how an essay is planned from question to 1st draft: Monash University, 2012, *Language and Learning Online*, Sydney, viewed 14 November 2016, <http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/llonline/writing/index.xml>

3. Now look at the sample student essay and answer the questions on the handout.

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