Writing Essays

- what an essay is and the different types of essays
- the general structure and style of essays
- how to write an essay
What is an essay?

An essay is an extended piece of writing that presents an argument or arguments for a particular position on a topic. The position is outlined in the thesis statement, found in the introduction of the text, and must be supported by current theory and research, and by logic.

Why write essays?

An essay is an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to:
- follow instructions,
- search for and select appropriate resources,
- read widely,
- analyse and critically evaluate what you read,
- explore and consolidate what you are learning,
- organise your thinking,
- work to deadlines, and
- communicate effectively in writing.

All of these skills are valued by employers and will benefit you as a practising professional.

Essays are different from Reports


**Essays**
- Present arguments
- Need to be read in their entirety
  - there are usually no headings and sub-headings
- Contain longer, connected paragraphs
- Rarely make recommendations

**Reports**
- Present information
  - often in tabular or graphical form
- Can be scanned quickly and out of order
  - headings and sub-headings make this possible
- Contain short, concise paragraphs and in some cases dot points
- May make recommendations
There are many different types of essays:

- argumentative,
- descriptive,
- analytical,
- exploratory,
- review, and so on.

The assessment question and task instructions determine the type of essay you will write.
Essay Structure

The content of an essay depends on the type of essay that is to be written, but all essays have the following structure:


- **Introduction**
  - contains the thesis statement

- **Body**
  - the content
  - presents the arguments for the thesis statement in detail and with support

- **Conclusion**
  - paraphrases the thesis statement
  - summarises the research that supports it

- **References**
  - the end-text references must match the in-text references
The 7 steps for writing a successful paper

1. Analyse the question
3. Make a plan
4. Research and select appropriate resources
5. Read, make notes and take referencing details.
6. Write and revise
7. Edit and proof-read to produce a final draft.

Remember, your written product should expand, explain and provide evidence for your thesis statement; your writing should be focused and answer the question.
The 7 steps for writing a successful essay

1. Analyse the question
3. Make a plan
4. Research and select appropriate resources
5. Read, make notes and take referencing details.
6. Write and revise.
7. Edit and proof-read
Step 1. Analysing the question

Read your assessment task questions and all instructions carefully.

Identify the question and analyse it. Identify:

- the type of essay you are required to produce – task words such as discuss, analyse, explain, compare etc. provide this information;
- the subject or topic of the essay and the types of information that will be included in the body of the essay – content words provide this information; and
- the parameters or limits of the essay – limiting words that restrict or control the essay, for example, the time frame and the location. Limiting words also include the word count and the number and type of resources required.

Remember to view the marking rubric before you start your assessment, it often provides further clarity.

Example

Identify the task words, the content words and the limiting words in the following question:

While most university courses require students to write essays as part of their assessment, graduates are never required to write essays in the workplace.

In an essay of 500 words, discuss the validity of setting essay assignments as a component of student assessment at university.

Discuss means to examine, giving the details and the points for and against. You must develop a logical argument backed by sound evidence.
Step 2. Brainstorming. Pre-reading.
Writing a Provisional Thesis Statement.

Find out what you know about the topic already:

- review the lecture notes
- review the reading you have already done and the notes you have already taken
- brainstorm to produce a concept map (Remember a concept map includes the relationships between different information and concepts.)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZJj6DwCqSU
- do some initial pre-reading on the topic

Can you answer the essay question you been asked in one sentence? This should become your **provisional thesis statement**.

A provisional thesis statement will help you write an outline, plan or map for your essay and should help direct your research and selection of appropriate resources.
Brainstorming

Brainstorm the following essay question, then use it to produce a concept map.

In an essay of 500 words, identify what makes a successful essay.
Pre-reading

What pre-reading can you do to prepare to begin your assessment task?

- The lecture notes
- The required and recommended reading for the unit
- The textbook
- Another textbook

Peer reviewed journal articles (often the preferred or required type of resource for an assessment task) can be difficult to read. Begin by reading materials that are easier to understand. A basic understanding of the topic will enable you to comprehend more difficult types of texts such as some peer reviewed journal articles.
Writing a Provisional Thesis Statement

A successful essay has three key elements: A, B, and C.

A successful essay has three key elements: a strong thesis statement, logical organisation, and clear writing.

A successful essay has three key elements: focus, organisation, and clarity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sx42_C10zw

Specific points that will be made in the body of the essay. May also indicate the organisation of the information in the body.
Writing a Provisional Thesis Statement

Write a provisional thesis statement for the following essay question:

While most university courses require students to write essays as part of their assessment, graduates are never required to write essays in the workplace.

In an essay of 500 words, discuss the validity of setting essay assignments as a component of student assessment at university.
Step 3. Make a plan

A comprehensive essay outline, plan or map will contain the following information:

**Introduction**
- thesis statement
- approximately 10% of the total word count

**Body**
- the content
- the number of paragraphs
- the single idea to be developed in each paragraph
- approximate word count per paragraph

**Conclusion**
- paraphrases the thesis statement
- summarises the research that supports it
- approximately 10% of the total word count

**References**
- the end-text references must match the in-text references
A plan, an outline, an essay map

Write an essay plan for the following essay question:

While most university courses require students to write essays as part of their assessment, graduates are never required to write essays in the workplace. In an essay of 500 words, discuss the validity of setting essay assignments as a component of student assessment at university.
A plan, an outline, an essay map with topic sentences

Introduction

Body

Conclusion

- Restate the thesis statement.
- Summarise the main points (topic sentences).
- General statement.
Step 4. Search for and select appropriate resources.

Familiarise yourself with the library home page and the databases most suitable to your discipline.

Remember the 4 Rs: relevant, reliable, recent and readable.
Step 5. Read, make notes and take referencing details.

Plan how you are going to take notes. Do it in an organised way that enables you to take notes from a variety of resources on the same point and collect the referencing details.

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<tr>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Bibliographic details</th>
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<td>Body Para 2. B</td>
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<td>Body Para 3. C</td>
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Step 6. Write and revise.

Begin with the provisional thesis statement.
Write a preliminary introduction.
Write the body. Include in-text references as you go.
Revise the body.
Revise the introduction.
Write the conclusion.
Step 7. Edit, revise and proof-read.

- As soon as you finish writing the first draft, begin editing, revising and proofreading.
- Consider a specific issue on each pass.
- Start broad, edit for overall organization first, then revise in more detail: consider paragraph structure and organization and then sentence construction, especially word choice. Finish with proofreading.
Edit, revise and proof-read.

**Edit** - for overall organisation of your paper.

**Revise** – paragraph structure and organisation, and then sentence structure and word choice.

**Proof-read** – for grammar, punctuation and spelling.
Academic Style

Academic style:

- is clear and concise
  - position has meaning (in most instances, place your subject up front)
  - avoid any unnecessary words, make every one count

- uses active voice when possible
  
  https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=CNGBqXQGb7c

- is objective
  - avoid personal pronouns

- uses full sentences with correct grammar and spelling

- is organised into paragraphs
  - each develop a single idea
  - presented in a logical sequence

- contains accurate referencing
Formatting

- Separate title page
- Separate References page

Read your task instructions carefully. Ask questions of your tutor, lecturer, or unit coordinator to clarify any instructions that are not clear.
An essay is an extended piece of text that argues a position on a subject.

An is composed of well structured paragraphs: an introduction, body paragraphs presented in a logical order and a conclusion.

A thesis statement in the introduction controls the content of the body if the text.

A concept map will help you realise what you know and understand already. It will help you write a draft thesis statement and an essay outline or plan.

Plan your essay before searching for resources, reading and taking notes.

Make notes in an organised way and include references with your notes.

Write a draft, revise, edit and proof-read in order to submit your best draft.