

# Academic Skills Workshop

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## Handout 3: Writing Essays

### Introduction

All assignments at university level are designed to challenge you to write in different forms. The purpose of them is to give you an opportunity to demonstrate several things:

- Your knowledge and understanding of a topic;
- Your ability to research a specific aspect of the topic set in the assignment; and
- Your ability to organise supporting information and evidence within a structured piece of academic writing.

### What is an essay?

An essay is a specific argument, which has a theme, logically expressed from start to finish.

- It tests your knowledge and understanding of a topic, supported by research.
- An essay is also an exercise to develop and handle relevant ideas, construct a clearly expressed argument and refer to the arguments made by academics.
- An essay is a powerful learning tool that will help to develop your understanding of a subject.

### The ingredients for a good essay are as follows:

A good essay:

- Uses connecting words and phrases to relate each point/idea to earlier and later points;
- Is made easier by prior planning;
- Makes it clear how you are going to address the question, where you are going, and why;
- Sets out your main ideas clearly;
- Makes it clear how the main ideas relate to each other;
- Takes the reader through your answer in a logical, progressive way;
- Helps the reader to remember what you've said;
- Organises groups of related information in paragraphs.

## The Essay Structure

### The introduction

#### Introduction = 5% length

Tells the reader how you will answer the Question.

Your introduction should:

- Comment on the title or topic of the essay.
- Define or explain any difficult or ambiguous terms in the title.
- Direct the reader by stating which aspects of the topic you intend to cover and why.

**Write this last, once you know where the essay is going.**

### The body of the essay

#### Body = 80% length

Answer the question!

Build a chain of paragraphs that build and present a CASE.

Each paragraph should contain:

- One big idea
- Introduce
- Define
- Offer argument
- Offer evidence and discuss
- Make final point

The Reader is asking you – and your writing should answer – the following questions:

- What is this paragraph about?
- What exactly is that?
- What is your argument on this (in relation to the question)?
- What is your evidence? What does it mean?
- What is the final point (in relation to the question)?

### Conclusion

**Conclusion = 15% length**

- Re-state arguments
- Re-state points
- No new evidence
- Could make recommendation(s)
- Proves that you have answered the whole question

(Some say you should write this first so you know where you are going – but re-write when you have finished changing your essay.)

### Bibliography / References

**Reference List or Bibliography: What's the difference?**

Some academics use the terms reference list and bibliography interchangeably.

- **A Reference List includes details for everything that you cite in within your assignment.** It should be in alphabetical order by author with all the different types of material in one sequence. A Reference List is always required when you cite other people's work within your assignment.
- **A Bibliography contains any other sources which you haven't referred to in your text, but nevertheless were part of your research** (think background reading).

#### Reference list features

- arranged in alphabetical order by author
- appears at the end of your document
- you don't need numbers, bullet points, start or any other pretty symbols to decorate your references. Keep it plain and simple! :)

#### Bibliography features

- appears at the very end, after the reference list
- arranged in alphabetical order by author
- it may or may not be a requirement for your assignment. If in doubt, check with your school

Make sure you know what is required for your assignment if you are studying at another institution. Check the course/module guide before you complete your assignment.

All ORMS and RGU assignments require the following sections:

- References
- Bibliography

### Appendices

Appendix - a single one

Appendices - more than one appendix

## Appendices: When appendices might be necessary

Appendices allow you to include detailed information in your paper that would be distracting in the main body of the paper. Examples of items you might have in an appendix include mathematical proofs, lists of words, the questionnaire used in the research, a detailed description of an apparatus used in the research, etc. You don't need to include published or publicly available material.

### Format of appendices

Your paper may have more than one appendix. Usually, each distinct item has its own appendix. If your paper only has one appendix, label it "Appendix" (without quotes.) If there is more than one appendix, label them "Appendix A," "Appendix B," etc. (without quotes) in the order that each item appears in the paper. In the main text, you should refer to the Appendices by their labels.

The actual format of the appendix will vary depending on the content; therefore, there is no single format. In general, the content of an appendix should conform to the appropriate Harvard style rules for formatting text.

### Size of Appendices

Appendices are not included in the word count, but should not be more than about half of the total word count for the assignment

### Core Material

Core material is defined as text that the assessor would need to read in order to understand and appreciate your work fully. If the assessor finds that core material has been placed in the appendices, it will be regarded as part of the word count, unless there is a specific instruction in the assignment brief to place material in the appendices.

### Footnotes and End notes

Footnotes and Endnotes are not compatible with the Harvard style of referencing. **Don't include them!**

## Acknowledgements

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### Revision History

Date	Version	Reason for Change	Author
17 January 2017	1	Creation of document	R.Trangmar
28 January 2019	2	Changed to RGU referencing format	R.Trangmar

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