# Essay Writing Video Transcription

## Introduction

This vidcast is divided into chapters. Chapter one explains how to plan and structure an essay. Chapter 2 outlines how to write the introduction, main body and conclusion of the essay. Chapter 3 explains the main features of referencing. Chapter 4 outlines why critical discussion is required and some common problems that appear in students’ essays.

The aim of this vidcast is to explain how to plan an essay and structure the essay which includes the introduction, main body and conclusion of an essay. The vidcast continues by outlining the importance of critical discussion. The level of critical discussion can transfer a medium level mark into a high mark and is particularly important for students tackling both undergraduate and post graduate level essays.

Finally the vidcast will explain why accurate referencing is important and some academic writing conventions.

Initially it is a good idea to take the essay questions apart in order to ensure that the question is being answered correctly. This is because the most common reason for failing an essay by students is failure to answer the question. This may be because the student does not understand the task words and or the content words.

The task words direct the writer into directing the focus of the answer and includes words such as ‘ explain, discuss, critically analyse, critically evaluate.

The content words are also an important part of analysing the question as they explain the question’s content. In order to aid your understanding why not circle the task words and underline the content words. So for example, consider the following question: Identify and summarise two key ethical issues associated with the testing of electronics and or software systems in relation to the Toyota acceleration controversy.

The task words are identify, summarise, whilst the content words are two key ethical issues, testing electronics software systems Toyota acceleration controversy. By carrying out this process, this helps you, the writer direct your focus of the answer, which in turn helps to prompt questions to aid your critical reading.

Once you have gathered your information, you are now ready to plan your answer.

This section illustrates the process you may go through in planning and preparing your essay. You may feel that this takes time, but it is essential that you spend time planning as this means that your essay will follow a logical structure and order.

This is an example of a typical essay structure. However, please note that this is only one format and there may be individual differences within each academic programme. Note the three distinct sections; the introduction, the main body and the conclusion. Within the main body this section is further subdivided in that depending on the length of the essay there will be three or four subsections. Each of these sections expands on a central idea which in turn is where the idea is extended with appropriate citations in order to provide evidence.

Most essays follow a standardised format in that there should be an introduction, main body and a conclusion. Generally the introduction and conclusion is 10 percent of the essay, so in the example of a 2.000 word essay the introduction would comprise of approximately 200 words, the main body 1,600 words and the conclusion would be approximately 200 words.

The purpose of an introduction is to give the reader an indication of the subject matter that will be discussed in the main section of the essay. If you do not commence with an introduction, this is very confusing for the reader, as the reader will have no idea what the main topic of your essay is. You need to remember that it is the first time that your reader will read your essay and it should not be a guessing game of ‘I wonder what this essay is about?’

If you are unsure about what an introduction looks like, read the first few paragraphs in articles in a quality newspaper or in a journal article in your subject area. Do you know what the author is going to write about? Do you know what stance that article is following? Have you an idea about the main focus of the article? In most cases, the introduction should be written in the third person, for example reflection is important for practitioners, as this process enables staff to consider their actions and learn from best practice.

There are different ways to commence an introduction, you could commence with a quotation, but if you do so, it should be a short quotation that is relevant to your subject, and should be referenced correctly; or you may use an opening sentence such as the one I used earlier re reflection. Try to use different approaches; improving your essay writing is an important part of your developmental learning process at university. Do not repeat the question, the lecturer knows the question! s/he set the question. Rather the introduction should give the reader your interpretation of the question. You may use references in your introduction to support your evidence and remember to write a series of sentences in structured paragraphs.

This is a blank proforma for you to use to assist you in your planning of your essay.

Many students say ‘I know what I want to put in my plan but I do not know how to extend my ideas.’ Earlier in this vidcast, I explained that the main body is comprised of different ideas. Each of the ideas should be extended. If I continue the idea of reflection, although I have said that reflection is important, I have not explained why it is important , I could do this by defining what is meant by reflection or explaining why it is important. Then I could use a quotation, but be careful about the number of quotations you use in an essay. As you progress through the university, in most of the academic programmes, it is expected that you should paraphrase i.e. that you explain the idea using your own words. If you do decide to occasionally use a quotation, then remember to use quotation marks and include the Author, year and page number.

In the case of reflection, you could give an example of how reflection is applied in your profession or how it has been used in a journal article. You should where possible use other research to reinforce your first sentence. You could also make some critical comments about your initial explanation about the importance of reflection. You could then refer to research which reinforces your main point.

Again remember when you are using other people‘s ideas you must cite these references, if you do not, this is plagiarism. Finally your last sentence in that paragraph should link to the next paragraph so that you are writing in flowing text, rather than a series of stilted sentences. It is very important that you do not use the first person as in we or I. or you. However, check with your lecturer when answering essays on reflection as at times in those essays you may be expected to use the fist person.

Conclusions should sum up the main points and refer back to the introduction. It is very annoying for the reader if you decide to write a conclusion that does not link with the main body or the introduction as the reader is left wondering whether s/he is reading a different essay. Again, similar to the introduction this should be approximately 10 per cent of the word count. You may be asked by your lecturer to give a personal opinion about its relevance for practice or you may be asked to give recommendations. But please note that you will be told by your lecturer if s/he wished you to do this. Do not add in new points if you do so it is almost as if you are saying to the reader oh I forgot….

Unless instructed by your lecturer this section should also be written in third person so once again unless instructed by your lecturer do not use I, we or you.

Referencing is essential, if you do not reference correctly you will be accused of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offence and in extreme cases you may be put off the course. For more guidance on referencing please refer to your Academic programme’s guidelines which should be on Blackboard and or the university’s guidelines which are available in an online guide**.** You may also choose to use the data base Refworks, which carries out your referencing electronically. for more information on that database please refer to the library website or visit The Learning Development Centre .

There a number of common problems that appear in students’ writing. These include incorrect referencing in the text and in the references at the end of the essay. Why not type your references in the text in a different colour and check that they are correct before you submit the essay. Remember of course to change the colour back to black before submitting. If you are unsure about how to complete your references at the end of the essay please check your Academic School guidelines.

Your lecturer may give feedback saying that there is too much descriptive writing and little analysis. This means that you are explaining too much about the theories or studies and not comparing or critically reviewing these.

Your mark can be strongly affected by your style of writing, try to vary your use of language, use a thesaurus or a dictionary to expand your vocabulary. Watch the length of your sentences; if they are too short then use some linking words. On the other hand if your sentence has too many clauses, then it can be difficult for your reader to follow your argument or discussion.

Try not to use too many quotations. Your lecturer wants you to paraphrase, this means writing using your own words but always stating your source. If you do decide to use a quote, then it should be short and relevant and you must note the author, year and where possible the page number. Please remember to also place your quotation in quotation marks.

Remember to reference all of your ideas, otherwise this is plagiarism. Try and avoid everyday or casual language such ‘ this was done to the client. ‘ When you are writing course work at university, there is an expectation by your lecturer that you will apply the appropriate terminology that is used on your course. When you read journal articles you will have noticed that they are written in formal language and your course work should also reflect that style.

Try to be specific in your writing if you use phrases such as ‘many authors’ several authors’ your lecturer will almost certainly expect a n umber of references to be listed. Plus can you provide evidence that there are a number of authors? Have you truly reflected the authors’ meanings and intentions?

It is easy for a lecturer to identify when you are merely filling the essay with words or descriptive writing, this is referred to as padding.

So in essence a good quality essay should be cautious in its tone as you are supporting or suggesting a concept/ idea/ intervention but you are not giving the absolute answer. Your ideas have all been referenced with evidence and are written in a coherent and interesting style.